PART II
CHINA
VIII
THE BEGINNINGS OF CHINESE CIVILIZATION

'Seek to act always in accord with Reason.'
'Human nature is essentially good.'

I

China, like India, is a triangle—though a much less obvious one. Its apex is the Pamirs, its base the ocean: its irregular sides are: on the north Turkistan and Russia; on the south Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, French Indo-China—many of whose peoples are akin to the Chinese in race and language. This vast triangle, nearly four and a half million square miles in area, slopes like India from the roof of the world to the sea, and has like India many kinds of climate and many varieties of soil—from the bare uplands of Gobi to the rich and populous river valleys. As on the banks of the Indus and Ganges in India, so on those of the Yellow River and the Yangtse, vast populations live. And, again as in India, mountain-ranges fan out from the roof of the world, nearly five miles high, to the ocean, dividing the vast continent. The rainfall here too depends upon the monsoon, and the great range of climate between uplands and sea helps to account for many differences between south and north, differences of temperament and of achievement.

If the Southerner is more poetic, he is also more adventurous—these qualities are akin—and as in India, so in China, early merchant-adventurers were first found in the south. The Northerner has tended, on the other hand, to dominate the political and more prosaic life of China. Early migrations were from east to west, and from north to south, and a number of races have fused and united to form the Chinese nation: not only the five whose colours made the flag of the First Chinese Republic, but earlier

1 Red—Chinese; Yellow—Manchus; Blue—Mongols; White—Turks; Black—Tibetans.
groups of invaders, Huns, Scythians, and Turks, frontiersmen who have given new energy to China, and have driven the aborigines, Miao and others, ever southward.

Thus China of to-day is very intimately related to the peoples on her borders, and her rulers have largely come from them. They have conquered only to be absorbed, and have adopted Chinese culture even as they gave it new vigour and brought out its characteristic genius. Possibly the relative positions of these peoples is still very much what it was at the dawn of history—from east to west Koreans, Manchus, Turco-Mongols, Turco-Tibetans, Mongols, Tibetans. The whole of the left bank of the Yellow River was for long controlled by various tribes of such ‘Tartars’, and the theatre of early Chinese history is small, and subject to inroads from all sides.

The great territory between the Yellow River and the Great Wall was almost entirely outside this area. Into it they slowly moved from north and east, themselves gradually changing from nomadic to settled life. ‘If the Tartar is a nomad Chinese, the Chinese is a settled Tartar,’ says Okakura Kakuzo, who has written so brilliantly of the unity of Asia. Yet the Chinese people had a long start in civilization, and we may picture them at the dawn of history—as they have pictured themselves ever since—a civilized group surrounded by barbarians gradually debouching upon the plains of the Yellow River, learning to clear their fields by fire and to irrigate them, improving their agricultural methods, and cultivating rice as well as millet. Marcel Granet in fact, while declaring that ‘the problem of Chinese origins remains entirely unsolved’, finds in the earliest texts evidences of this taming of nature and of the assimilation of small tribes of more primitive peoples, and suggests that in the mingling of the terrace-people, who cultivated and worshipped millet, with the plainsmen who cultivated rice, may be found the rise of a truly Chinese civilization: ‘The first may have contributed the influences of the steppe and the second those of the sea’.

If so, we have in primitive China as in primitive Japan
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a blending of two hardy peoples, one nomads from the uplands of continental Asia, the other seafarers, who settled first along the sea-coast, gradually making their way up the rivers, and meeting the Northerners on their march southward and eastward. The masses of China are still either hut-dwellers or boat-dwellers—farmers or fishers.

As in Vedic India, it is from the agricultural groups that the earliest songs have come down to us—though probably the seafarers had better songs—and we see them in the Shih-Ching or Book of Odes at work subduing nature by ritual dance and song as well as with plough and hoe:

Ho, there! Clear off the weeds,
Ho, there! Dig out the stumps!
Break up the clods with the plough,
Fall to in thousands with hoes!
Down to the valleys, up to the hillocks,
There go the chief and his firstborn,
Here are the little ones, helpers and journeymen!

If such 'chanties' helped them to swing the hoe and to plough the furrow, we may be sure that the Southerners had sea-chanties. These early hymns attribute the ordering of the country and the beginnings of its culture to heroic figures. We hear them singing as they work under 'King Yao':

Sun-up to work:
Sun-set to rest:
Dig thou to drink,
Work thou to eat.

And an ancient harvest-home song is also recorded in the history of Sse-ma-ch'ien:

Baskets filled in the upper fields,
Carts laden in the fields below!
May plenty bless our harvest-home,
Our fields producing plenteously.

Then, as now, it is an industrious and skilled people, getting wonderful results from their fields. Long before the classic

1 Shih-Ching, c. 439.
age they had four or five crops—rice, millet, soy beans, and wheat or barley, and they are said to get nearly twice as much wheat per acre to-day as the American farmer: for they return to the soil what they take from it, and hoe it with amazing zest.

The lands belonged to the overlord, but all got their share of the produce, and their toil was alleviated by great festivals of merry-making—sometimes developing into orgies. These are intimately related to the religious and sex-concepts of the people.

In the plains of Old China two moments are clearly marked. The climate is continental and the alternating rhythm of the seasons has an arresting character. Both short-lived, coming between the hard dry cold of winter and the warm summer damp, the spring and autumn, with their gentle rains and their changing sky, are like two wonderful moments. Nature, at one breath, begins or ceases to live. A sudden blossoming and a quick fall of the leaf, the return and departure in a body of migratory birds, the rapid swarming and disappearance of insects, which one by one herald in the fields the pathetic awakening of life or its untoward ending, make a kind of dramatic framework for the changes which the Chinese peasants impose upon themselves after the likeness of their own sky. Thus at one blow they revolutionize their habits. Forgetting, in the confusion of the moment, their everyday interdicts, they feel the necessity of coming to the help of nature, and co-operating amongst themselves.

When the Chinese philosophers wished to build up a theory of love they explained that in springtime the girls were attracted by the boys, and in autumn the boys by the girls, as though each of them in turn feeling his nature to be incomplete, was suddenly seized with the irresistible desire to perfect it. Spring was the season of betrothals: in old times the initiative came from the girls. Autumn was the time for setting up house: the wife must come, without delay, to live at her husband’s home. In autumn the husbandmen were rich in grain, garnered for the winter: but the women, in spring, had abundance of still more precious riches, stuffs newly woven. At first the women weavers had the means of attracting the husbandmen: then they, in their turn, had the means of making themselves agreeable to the weavers. All, alternately, had their charms and were able to realize their desire.
Far from avoiding each other then, as they did in the ordinary course, they sought each other out: 'Weave your linen no longer!—go to the market-place! dance! dance!'—'Withered leaves! withered leaves!—the wind will come and blow upon you!—Come sirs! come sirs! sing, we will join you.' In autumn and in spring, once the labours of the fields and of the weaving were finished, great assemblies were held in the open country, where the boys and girls from the neighbouring hamlets met. Winter was about to imprison each family in its lonely village, or else summer would compel men and women to live apart from each other. Held in autumn or spring, the meetings began by confirming in every heart the feeling of the need for solidarity. Exclusive groups and rival corporations confirmed their alliance while they proceeded to the collective festivals of marriage.

These festivals consisted of communions, orgies and games. After so many days of a life of restraint wasted in self-centred labours and sordid thoughts, a feeling of generous rivalry seized upon the re-united multitudes. Nothing came amiss to feed the passion for sport which was suddenly let loose in them, it was all turned to account in merry meetings and courteous rivalries.¹

Such are the crude yet colourful beginnings of Chinese civilization which in this pre-industrial form was to last three thousand years or more, and to reach great heights. How has it been built up? What are its characteristic achievements and abiding values, now in danger of being lost? These are interesting and important questions, for this great and virile people—at once stable and mobile, stoic and sensitive—has still a great part to play in the family of nations, and has been, like India, the teacher of her neighbours: Indo-China, Korea, and Japan can only be understood in the light of China, and to all India has also made great gifts of the spirit. Asia must indeed be studied as a unit, however the great constituent countries differ from one another.

II

Unlike India, China begins her traditional history with great men of affairs, idealized as symbols of a golden age—the three August Ones, and the Five Sovereigns. For

while Sse-ma-chi'en begins his history with the latter group, there are legends and bas-reliefs of three August Ones, Fu-hsi (Tamer of Animals), his sister, Nu-kua, and Shen-nung ("Divine Farmer"), who are thought of as inaugurators—the first two of marriage-rites, and the third of laws of agriculture and of ploughing. Shen-nung, whom Fu-hsi appoints as his successor, is god of husbandry and of the cleansing fires which prepare the fields for sowing. Another early hero is Yu the Smith, a kind of Demiurge who commands the thunder; and in their honour great annual feasts are held. Are these idealized personalities, or stages of progress personified? Probably the latter, and when names like 'Nest-possessor' or 'Fire-man' appear in these legends the probability becomes certainty. It is characteristic of China that she idealizes farmers, engineers, and other men of action rather than seers and mystics.

The first Five Sovereigns are also heroic types—representing the Five Elementary Virtues, and radiating Peace and Harmony. They cause order to rule among men, and inspire their ministers to great inventions like the making of arms and of pottery, good specimens of which are found in China at least three thousand years old: they instruct them to observe the High Heavens and to make reckonings of stars and constellations: they are divine Sages, types of Chinese wisdom, proofs of her early emphasis on the virtues of peace. Of the three last we find an account in the Shu-Ching, or 'Book of History', edited by K'ung Fu-tse, or Confucius, and we are on firmer ground, if still in the rosy light of an ideal dawn.

'Three names summarize the history of China from 2145 to 1979 B.C., Yao, Shun and Yu. . . . There is no Chinese book which has not mentioned them, no Chinese scholar who has not remarked them.' If they are legendary yet they tell us much of Chinese ideals.

The first part of the Shu-Ching deals with Yao, who is said to have come to the throne in 2145 B.C. The name is a title meaning 'The High', and he is remembered as the

1 Wieger, E. T., *China throughout the Ages*, p. 10.
compassionate ruler who said, 'I hunger with all my hungry subjects, and am cold with all who are cold: with all the oppressed I suffer oppression.' To him Mo-tse, the altruist, looked back two thousand years later as the great exemplar, and his 'instructions' as to the solar and lunar calendar are famous.¹

Shun whom Yao chose in preference to his own son to help him as Regent, and whom he appointed to succeed him in 2105 B.C., is acclaimed as a friend of the aged and an educator of children. 'Those who want instruction may beat the drum: those who seek justice may strike the gong: those who have public business may sound the cymbal: those who are in need, the musical stone, and those who have other business, the tambourine', was the inscription on the fine musical instruments at his court, where he lived in humility and simplicity, and where music was the monopoly neither of superstition nor of a licentious nobility. Tasting the liquor invented in his reign, he said, 'It is good, but it would ruin the state'. To him is given the credit of winning the allegiance of 'the nine tribes and the landed class', and of centralizing authority in a council. He is famous, too, for filial piety, and this alone is enough to make him a model to all China.

Most remarkable of all was Yu, a great engineer, who controlled the flood, himself working in the midst of his people 'till his legs were worn smooth'. 'He divided the land . . . felled the timber, and fixed the boundaries.' Humble and simple, he organized vast public works, such as canals to control the waters, and to irrigate the fields. The enthusiasm with which his people remember him is also eloquent: benefactors of the masses are rare in Chinese history. The story of Yu's engineering feats no doubt embodies a memory of early days, when the great Yellow River had to be dammed, and its waters let loose on the dry lands of the plains. The Chinese understand such matters very well.

While still a subject, Yu was entrusted with the sup-

¹ Illustrative Reading, II (c).
pression of the rebellious Miao, turbulent aborigines who still survive in the south-west. The Shu-Ching tells us that this war lasted thirty years—and the Miao still held out. Whereupon Yu tried peaceful persuasion, and this succeeded. Yu wept with a condemned criminal as himself responsible, and those two incidents bring out very clearly both early Chinese pacifism and the representative character of the Ruler. These early figures seem to mark a stage of transition from the matriarchal to the patriarchal system. For Yao is said to have sent Shun, a man of the people and son of a blind musician, two daughters in marriage, to 'test' him, whereas under the matriarchal system the son-in-law went to live with his wife's family. His name, originally that of a plant, came to signify 'benefactor, holiness, and intelligence'.

We hear of his great interest in music: fifteen centuries later K'ung Fu-tse became an enthusiastic admirer and exponent of the 'nine airs' of this early religious music, which moved him by its numinous quality. They can still so move men: 'The tones so mysteriously reminiscent of the phenomena of nature, the rhythm which grips men and lifts them out of themselves, the pantomimic dances all imbued with a deep cosmic significance, produce an unmistakable effect of something transcending the soul of man and directly influencing terrestrial events'. Even under the Republic these old airs still resound on solemn occasions such as the birthday of Sun-yat-sen.

Any one who has seen the ritual dances of New Mexico and Arizona, listened to the pulses of their music, and watched the trance-like absorption of the dancers, may get a glimpse of those early Chinese ceremonies. Here is an art of other-worldly weirdness, devoted to securing worldly goods, and as there are Kosharis among American Indians to represent the departed spirits and to be bribed to give a blessing, so it was in China four thousand years ago. Religion then, as now, had its head in the heavens, but its feet upon earth.

Men and spirits, living and dead, gods and worshippers, were bound together by a common interest which had also a note of communion and of mysticism:

When we touch lute and harp and join in song,
See the ancestral spirits round us throng:
They take their places at the royal board,
And every prince a courteous welcome doth afford.

The *Shih-Ching* or *Book of Odes* is a collection of three hundred and five such early songs and ballads, chosen by K'ung Fu-tse and set to music: it is arranged under four heads: those sung by the peasantry, those sung at festivals and on grand occasions at court, and lastly, sacrificial odes. They mention the flute, the drum, the bell, the pipes, and the lute: they tell of sacrifices and incense of which 'God smells the savour and is pleased'. They tell too of a kindly agricultural society:

See the rolling banks of cloud,
The soft refreshing showers:
May it water first the common lands,
And visit next these farms of ours.

Here leave we uncut stalks of grain;
And here some sheaves unbound;
Here drop some corn for widows' alms,
Some herb to heal their pain.

As in India of the second millennium B.C., so in contemporary China we find a cheerful patriarchal society living about the village well and worshipping gods of hearth and home. Outside the village was a sacred grove and stream, where fertility-cults were practised. For here dwelt gods of soil and seed, and their cults mingled with Dionysiac revels, the young people in masks of cats and tigers dancing, the elders presiding. And as in Vedic India fire-rituals played a great part, so in early China fire was brought from the domestic hearth in spring, and duly carried back in autumn.

As in all ancient cults, offerings to the departed were made, and gradually a priestly kingdom grew up, which
became hereditary before the end of the neolithic age. Before the historic era opens, distinction was made between bright gods who dwelt aloft, and underground spirits to whom sacrifices were burnt alive in pits. Human sacrifices seem to have been gradually done away—to revive later; but dark and weird rites were associated with the groves. At these K'ung Fu-tse shuddered.

Divination was made by the markings on tortoise and other bones, and by the diagrams collected later in the Book of Changes. This system seems to have developed from the trigrams of Fu-hsi (perhaps a series of numbers or letters), but was elaborated into hexagrams by Wen Wang, Duke of Chou, and his son Chou K'ung, and with them we come definitely to history.

The earlier dynasties, Hsia (c. 2205–1766) and Shang (c. 1766–1150), 'followed the usual path from glory to ignominy'. It is enough to note that monarchy became hereditary, and that coins were introduced by T'ang, who also figures as the hero in a disastrous famine. Offering himself as a sacrifice in a mulberry-grove, he prayed for mercy upon the starving masses, and as he prayed the rain came. From very early time the monarch is a Son of Heaven and also a symbol of his people.

Of the Shang Dynasty the bones discovered in large quantities in Honan tell us that while all were ancestor-worshippers, some were devout and others were sceptical. Much of the Shu-Ching and of the Odes is borrowed, and much may be corrected by further study of these valuable documents of the second millennium B.C. The discovery of these relics has already thrown much light on the Chinese of the twelfth or eleventh century B.C. and the early roots of their civilization. They know how to write, using characters which have passed beyond the pictorial form, and they engrave them on bone and ivory as well as on wood and bamboo. They are to develop this art into that of incising stone and making rubbings; and ultimately of printing with wooden blocks long before any other people. Some of the Odes collected in the Shih-Ching five
centuries later no doubt belong to this early civilization, and were actually written down in this way. Comparing the characters and ideas in them with the bones, scholars may yet settle this vexed question. We know too that the Shang had a developed bronze art, and used cowries for money. Their year had twelve lunar months of thirty days and each month had three ten-day periods.

Their territory stretched all along the east bank of the Yellow River to the Gulf of Pechili, north to the neighbourhood of what is now Peiping (Peking), south to the Yangtse, and west to the present borders of Shensi. These lands were held in fief for feudal lords, a system which was to endure another millennium, and these lived in palaces of considerable size, centres of settled communities, courts of justice in peace, and forts in war.

During the severe winter all hibernated about their chiefs in small huts where they spun hemp and silk, wove, made tools for hunting and farming, and prepared for the strenuous work of spring, summer, and autumn. They cultivated millet, rice, and other grains, and hunted for sport as well as for food. Their passion for the chase in fact early became a menace, and an ode laments the growing luxury of the chief and his hunting, and the bitter toil of the people in the fields.

This is a lament which sounds all down the ages—not more in China than elsewhere, perhaps, but more articulately. The poets were the voice of the poor, and living in the country, saw what the luxury of cities cost the people.

Ancestor-worship is seen as the basis of feudalism; and the chief’s house is temple as well as fort and court of justice. For the early ruler was priest as well as king, and made numerous sacrifices of bulls’ blood and of whole animals to ancestors as to other ‘gods’. Temples clustered about the palace, and there were no doubt assistant-priests as there were prime ministers and other officials of secular life. We read their requests for oracles upon crops and weather, campaigns and treaties; and learn that their armies consisted of chariots and horsemen armed with bronze
weapons—some of which survive—and with leathern shields, bows, and arrows. So early history may be gradually disentangled from legend and the symbols of later Chinese art may be traced to their sources. Dr. Li Chih has argued that the so-called tieh or 'ogre's head' of Chou and later bronzes is a bull's head which marked the sacrificial vessel for blood, and that the comb of girls' head-dresses is a cock's head symbolizing industry. For they must rise at dawn, and this is their badge of servitude, proudly worn as an ornament, stylized almost beyond recognition.

This early oracle-seeking people who dwelt in and about Honan was finally conquered in the twelfth century B.C. by the western Chou, living west of Shensi, whose odes reveal them as worshippers of Shang-ti (the Supreme God) and of Hao-t'ien (the August Heaven). These they held to be just and friendly powers.

These beliefs were gradually blended into what may be called Sinism, the classical religion of China, with its twin pillars of ancestor-worship and obedience to the Divine Will. A hierarchy of spirits was indeed soon established. Shang-ti in company with the gods of Sun, Moon, and Stars and other objects of Nature together with the deified ancestors of the race form the upper tier: below them were family spirits and tribal gods. As newly conquered peoples were added to the empire and foreign influences penetrated it, this pantheon continued to grow. In it to-day there are many Indian as well as frontier gods side by side with Taoist and Sinitic figures.

III

The early sacrificial bronzes are works of art—revealing 'plastic harmonies of the most surprising kind', and this many centuries before the Greeks. China begins in fact to show her supremacy in art. She attributes the beginnings of bronze-casting to the Yellow Emperor, about 4500 B.C., and also believes that Yu cast nine three-legged vessels of metal brought in as tribute from the nine pro-
vices of his kingdom. If these are legends they are to some extent borne out by the forms of early neolithic pottery—three-legged and very similar to the bronzes of the classical age.

The earliest forms of Chinese ideographs as found on the bones of the second millennium B.C. are clearly pictures: and painting and calligraphy are not only the most important of Chinese arts; they are very intimately related in origin and technique. 'There has hardly ever been a good painter who was not at the same time a good calligraphist,' says Dr. Tsai Yuan-Pei.

Even earlier than the Shang ideographs, however, are the painted pots of the neolithic age whose designs in red or black show decorative skill and are similar in form and pattern to those of the Indian pueblos of North America: using not only spirals and other geometric patterns but also animals, birds, and human beings. The discovery of these remains is as important in the reinterpretation of Chinese history as of that of the Indus civilization in India. It too seems influenced by Sumeria. 'Very probably', says Dr. V. K. Ting, 'divination, hieroglyphic writing, the calendar and the flood legend had their inspiration from Mesopotamia.'

These Chinese contemporaries of Hammurabi and of Moses have also the beginnings of a moral code and of a theocratic concept: many of its maxims are preserved in the *Shu-Ching*:

'Seek to act always in accord with reason.'

'God has granted to the people a Moral Sense: obeying it they will keep right.'

'To know is easy: to do is difficult.'

'The way of Heaven is to bless the good, and to punish the bad with misery.'

Education was carried out in schools set up by the monarchy for training certain classes: these sons of nobility learnt much besides book learning—the arts of war and music. Books of bamboo tablets were used, and such works as the *Shih-Ching* in its earliest form were no doubt
studied, together with legends of the great ones of the past. Ritual music and dances were taught, and music has from the beginning played a great part in Chinese education: 'Poetry is the expression of earnest thought and singing is its prolonged utterance', says the Shu-Ching, and the practice of the eight musical instruments was from the first a religious affair.\(^1\) To make such instruments as pitch-pipes and bells and gongs of jade requires mathematical knowledge, and this is shown also in early Chinese astronomy. These early Chinese had an accurate solar-lunar calendar; and their astronomy, mingled as it was with astrological practice, yet involved the use of spheres and tables for exact observation and calculation.

Archery was carried to a fine art, and long remained an essential of a gentleman's education. The Liu I or 'Six Arts' are ritual, music, archery, mathematics, calligraphy, and surveying or measurement.

In plotting out their lands began the arts of drawing and painting, in ritual those of music and drama, and in the decoration of canoes and weapons and of the instruments of their cult are the roots of that great art of bronze-casting of which they were soon to become masters. They call the practice of these arts i-shu or 'the mysteries of art', and the name sums up their appreciation of technical skill, and suggests the hereditary craftsman instructed in the mysteries of his art. 'Though a man be a genius, unless he is trained in technique, he cannot express his ideas', says a Chinese proverb.

In the mastery of the brush for writing or the earlier knife for incising there was a discipline which was exacting and educative, and which was to give to Chinese painting its peculiar verve and freedom.

As to the economic life of those days, we know that the government was supplied with adequate funds from land-taxes: under the Hsia each able-bodied man was given

\(^1\) 'The Chinese are nursed, if not born, to music, married to music, and buried to music. They worship to music, work to music, sell to music and even study to music', says Y. R. Chao. (Symposium on Chinese Culture.)
fifty mou of land and paid a tithe to the monarchy. Under
the Shang eight families cultivated a farm and paid one-
eighth in taxes. The first is known as ‘Tribute’, the latter
as ‘Aid’, but it is a difference chiefly in name. The pretext
of the Shang revolution under T’ang was that the Hsia
‘had no pity on the people’: for the Son of Heaven must
live up to his name, or Heaven abandons him. The History
of the Three Dynasties is in fact a commentary on this text.
It ‘sets out to show the principles underlying the greatness
and the decadence of the royal houses. Its task is done
when it has brought to light the glorious virtue of the
royal founders, and the fatal character of the kings of
perdition.’¹ In a word early Chinese history is didactic,
and almost as theocratic in tendency as that of early Israel.

Authentic history begins with the Chou, and to this—
the classic age of China—close attention must be given. In
the fusion of Shang and Chou Chinese civilization has its
roots. Early Sinism is a blend of Chou theism with
Shang divination and ancestor-worship.

IV

The vigorous and warlike tribes of the north-west who
supported the Duke of Chou are described by Meng-tse
(or Mencius) as barbarians, and the Chou themselves were
a hardy northern people, whom the Chinese regarded as
foreigners. But they had been settled for centuries, and
they soon made themselves at home, and became model
rulers. They called into being the real genius of China;
the era of the Chou (1150—249 B.C.) ‘is the beginning of
the classic period of Chinese civilization, the foundation
of all culture and all beauty, and has been regarded as a
mighty prototype throughout the ages’.²

The first Chou emperors owed their power not only to
the unpopularity of their predecessors: they were leaders
of men, and successfully brought feudal chiefs and bar-
barians alike to heel, and bound them to the throne by

¹ M. Granet, Chinese Civilization, E. T., p. 16.
² R. Wilhelm, The Soul of China, p. 95.
formulating a feudal system based on loyalty of the lords to the throne, and of vassals to their lords. They bound the people also to themselves by humane and wise rule; making it clear that they and their subjects had a common interest, and held the empire as common property. They took advantage of the emerging concept of the Ruler as Son of God, and encouraged the worship of the One God as against the old gloomy polytheism of the groves. This was made a mighty factor in empire, a centralized ruler on earth corresponding to the Supreme Ruler of Heaven.

Superstition now begins to fade away—at any rate in the cities, which become centres of enlightenment: and the court becomes a centre of refinement and of loyalty. The Emperor as Son of Heaven sacrificed for his people at the Winter Solstice, and the great ceremony became 'the foundation of all morals', so that K'ung Fu-tse could declare that he who understood the meaning of the Great Sacrifice could grasp the cosmic system clearly. Here were king and people bound in a solemn sacrament—as he to his vassals, so God to him, the centre and source of life.

Here art and music united to produce a symbolic pageant whose significance was clear to all: and the Chou by sacrificing to their own ancestors when they sacrificed to Shang-ti made it still more significant. The Emperor is at once Priest and Vice-gerent of Heaven: and the feudal lords are in their turn his vice-gerents, offering sacrifices to the local gods, who are satellites of T'ien and Shang-ti. All alike join in ancestor-worship: and the feudal hierarchy is marked by the number of ancestral shrines allowed to each rank. The later monarchs' robes were full of symbols—embodying the Chinese theory of kingship. Sun, moon, and stars are upon his shoulders for he is Vice-gerent of Heaven: the mountains on his upper garment are earth which he rules, powerful as the dragon and kingly as the phoenix, while upon his lower robe are the cup symbolizing his priesthood, the water-plant his literary elegance, the grain his husbandry, the flame his position
A CHOU BOWL OF THE TWELFTH CENT. B.C. WITH TAO-TIEH AND ELEPHANT HEADS
as head-smith, the battle-axe his leadership in war, and the
fu his harmonizing power.\textsuperscript{1} Here in symbols of a later
age we have the whole theory of kingship in China,
which remained unchanged for four thousand years.

As an example of the sacrificial vessels of the Chou era,
we may look at the ‘silver cauldron’ on plate 3 of the
Burlington Magazine monograph\textsuperscript{2} or at that illustrated
here, which is noteworthy for its inscription, as well as
for its superb craftsmanship. It is a four-handled bowl
of dark bronze, and has acquired a turquoise patina. Its
handles seem to be elephant-heads, and round the base
runs a conventional spiral. The archaic characters in
the interior are interpreted to be a grateful recognition of
the services of the Marquis of Hsing, and a statement that
the bowl was cast by his command in honour of the Duke
of Chou. For ‘God above forever commands the holders
of the Empire of Chou to pay honour to their departed
sire’.\textsuperscript{3} This then is a document of the twelfth century B.C.
and commemorates the Duke who had become the pattern
of devotion to the Throne.

We see here that bronze-casting very early reached a
high standard, that the Emperor’s title ‘Son of Heaven’ is
a very early one, that sacrifices to ancestors and the practice
of rewarding a man by honouring his parents are all of an
ancient order of Chinese civilization.

From such sources spring Chinese art, one of the greatest
the world has seen. In landscape-painting and in ceramics
it is supreme, and what remains of early sculpture has some
masterpieces. It is characteristic of this aesthetic nation
that it finds its first ancestor in Pan-ku, the artificer, and
that it traces the beginnings of its painting to the third
millennium B.C. At this time Sumerian art had passed its
zenith, and some scholars would find in the obliquely-set
eyes of Sumerian monuments, in their ideographic script,
and in the apparent identity of some of their ideographs

\textsuperscript{1} After E. T. Williams, \textit{A Short History of China}, p. 48.
\textsuperscript{2} Petrucci dates it twelfth century B.C. Bushell 812 B.C.
\textsuperscript{3} For full text see Illustrative Reading VI.
with some in ancient China, proofs of racial and cultural affinity. There are other affinities, such as the cycle of sixty and the seven-day period, which support the theory: and it is possible that invaders drove the Sumerians eastward to China as well as to India. But as to such matters nothing can yet be placed beyond conjecture.

The foundations of Chinese arts in general—pottery, weaving, jewellery, as well as painting, sculpture, and architecture, can be said to be well and truly laid before the end of the classical age of Chou.

As I have said elsewhere:1

During this era too the foundations of the joint-family system and of the guild—twin pillars of Chinese society—were firmly laid. As the family regulated and controlled the individual relations and duties of the Chinese, so the guild-system was the regulator of all group relations. Unofficial and self-sustaining, these were the real machinery of the country—its ‘web of life’, as the caste-system was of India—the basis of stability and order. Thus while governments have changed, society has ‘carried on’ without serious upheaval, and the Chinese have been able to regard government as relatively unimportant. The humorous tolerance of the masses occasionally gives way to the caustic criticism of a Lao-tse or a Chwang-tse, for whom the chief duty of government is an extreme policy of wu-wei or laissez-faire: for the family and the guild are natural and spontaneous, whereas the formalism of the court and of the official is artificial and unnatural.

‘The family is for China the unit, and family life, patriarchal in theory, often in fact dominated by the grandmother, was a rigidly disciplined affair. The spirit of it was one of accommodation and forbearance, each member knowing his place and keeping it, as the stars their orbits. A typical Chinese story is that of a great family of 1,200 which was given a grant by a Sung Emperor for its family loyalty. And when the patriarch of another family was asked the secret of unbroken harmony he wrote the character for “forbearance” a hundred times.

‘It must be remembered that innumerable villages in China are in reality large clans, all having the same family name, and that the ancestral hall and common lands are family possessions. Such a clan

1 The Heritage of Asia, pp. 18, 20.
can control every movement of every member, and a very thorough­
going communism is practised. Property is held in common, and
without the village council (i.e. the family elders) nothing is done.
They are like the panchayat of the Indian village, but are often
of one clan, and so more likely to be conservative. In normal times
no official of the empire was needed, no criminal code, and equally
no paternalist measures of charity-organizations or insurance. The
village was an autonomous family: the family a self-supporting and
self-governing village.

'This is the setting for the Chinese emphasis on filial piety: it was
an economic and patriotic as well as a religious duty to have children
and to support parents, and public pressure could be brought to bear
most heavily at just those points which in the West are usually
considered most intimate and personal.

'What the joint-family system was in such matters the guild was
in matters economic. It framed and carried out regulations of
production and distribution, fixed standards of quality, weights and
measures, trade ethics and procedure, and was in effect a commercial
tribunal; for each guild, like each village, had its committee of
elders, and the individual much preferred their arbitration to the
tyanny and graft of some strange official. They assessed penalties
and could expel from the guild any one who refused their decision.
Thus the individual lived within a network of unwritten yet binding
regulations, which, however, protected him even from the powerful
imperial officials. In the family and in the guild he was a free man
—free to do right—that is, to conform to traditional folkways. Yet
the family and the guild have both changed, adapting themselves to
changing conditions, and are to-day in a process of very rapid transi­
tion.'

Next to the family and the guild comes the school,
which has always been in China a place for the study of
the classics. These were state-supported from Chou times
till the eighth century A.D. From then on education has
been a private affair: government supplying the special
examiner and controlling the supply of graduates, but
leaving education to private initiative.

The Chinese boy to-day knows the same basic classical
works as he learnt more than two thousand years ago: after
a preliminary course in such elementary works as the
Canon of Filial Piety and the Book of a Thousand Characters
he studies first the Four Books, which include the Analects and the Sayings of Meng-tse, and then the Five Classics, which are: *I-Ching*, or *Book of Changes*; *Shu-Ching*, or *Book of History*; *Shih-Ching*, or *Book of Poetry*; *Li-Chi*, or *Book of Rites*; and the *Ch’un Ch’iu* or *Spring and Autumn Annals* of the Chou Dynasty.

Chinese children are first instructed, in a word, in the duties and models of filial piety, and are indoctrinated with the native goodness of human nature, and the great men who showed this in its classic form. They are then trained to guard and cherish their body and their heritage in general;¹ and are impressed with tales of youths who have won eminence and fame through uprightness and sobriety and obedience to the family. These are the qualities most emphasized for boys. For girls similar exemplars are held up, and it is interesting that the earliest Chinese painting now in existence illustrates the *Admonitions of a Court Lady* written by Chang Hua in the third century of our era. On this foundation of sound moral instruction is raised the whole Confucian system as contained in the other books, and if the student is baffled by the *Book of Changes*, he has the comfort of knowing that the great K’un Fū-tse was himself unable to make much of it, and for the rest that he himself either wrote or edited and commended the other books to his countrymen as the basis for a sound society.

Lastly in the *Li-Chi* and in the “Annals” the Chinese finds a thesaurus of the customs and morals of his nation, some account of her administrative machinery, and of his own duties to his country and to heaven.

This system of education co-operated with the family and the guild to make China stable if conservative, and to set the character of her people in a mould. The ideal man was to be like the horse, obedient, disciplined, and brave: the ideal woman was to be like the cow, industrious, chaste, and gentle.

The boy on completing his education, which lasted till about his twentieth year, was initiated with great ceremony:

¹ Illustrative Reading (f) in Ch. II.
his hair was done in a different style, the two tufts of boyhood being cut off, a new name was given him, and a man's hat. He was now free to become a soldier, and to hold land in fief from the sovereign or in his own right, and to enter upon an official career. Service to the King, the Son of Heaven, was his ambition, and under royal favour he could become a rich and powerful lord, even a prince or one of the three dukes to whom the Sovereign intrusted the guardianship of his son.

V

Of the personalities of the early Chou rulers we know enough to say that the vigour of their northern blood persisted for some generations. If King Wen was a great and wise ruler and Duke Chou a model governor, it is to Duke T'ang, grandson of the Founder, that China owes great precedents. He is to Wen what Asoka is to Chandragupta, and both houses justified their usurpation of the throne. In China the example became classical, and the theory that if the Son of Heaven misbehaved too seriously he could not be tolerated was from now on tacitly accepted. China's last sovereign expressed his dignified acceptance of the wish of the people as the voice of Heaven, and the first of whom we know in detail based his rule upon the same theory.

The Chou administration too became formative for all the Far East. With its six great ministers, in spite of their poetic titles, here was a true civil service functioning under the Ruler. Their titles express the cosmic beliefs as well as the theory of government of this age. Thus the Minister of Heaven was Prime Minister and Controller of Court and Treasury, the Minister of Earth had the portfolio of Education, Commerce and Supervision of the feudal states; the other four ministers, called after the seasons, were responsible for such mixed duties as Ritual and Foreign Affairs, Court ceremonial and Law and Order. These are much more closely connected in the mind of early China than with us.
The Founder was kept busy by the incursions of Huns on the northern frontier. Posthumously raised to royal rank as King Wen, he is called by Meng-tse 'a western barbarian', but his family can be traced back to the eighteenth century B.C., to the person of the Duke Liu, and they are no more 'barbarian' than the rest. The House of Chou had a clear goal from early times—that of the Imperial Throne, and to this end they had been moving before the time of Wen.

The people were sick of the debaucherries of the Shang, and when the last of them appointed Wen chieftain of the West he was already ruler in the eyes of all. Organizing the country into two great districts, Shao, outside China proper, and Chou, or the feudal states already leagued with the Throne, he and his successors established a strong patriarchal rule based on the monotheistic worship of Shang-ti, and the clear-cut concept of the Ruler as Viceroy became a dominant factor in unifying the empire.

But though they ruled for nearly a thousand years (1150-249 B.C.), and instituted much of great and permanent value, the House of Chou did not make great progress beyond their frontiers. Making heredity the rule of succession they were often well served, as when the great Duke of Chou was guardian of the grandson of Wen. By his example of loyalty he did much to establish the power of the Son of Heaven, and family life has remained as a basis of loyalty to the Throne. But many of the rulers were loyal neither to Heaven, nor to their House nor to their People, and only at long intervals does the spirit of the founders flash out, as in the delightful anecdote of Duke Wen, who as late as the mid-seventh century showed a royal magnanimity. His war-horse having strayed was eaten by peasants, who were caught and brought before him: 'They'll get indigestion unless you give them some wine. Give it then and let the poor devils go,' said the Duke, and in his bitter need in a civil war he was saved by their courage and devotion.

China delights in such tales, and sees the Chou era
BEGINNINGS OF CHINESE CIVILIZATION

through rose-coloured spectacles. But though the era set many good standards, this tendency was overdone, and its examples tend to stereotype Chinese life.¹ Nor was the treatment of the people by the Chou much better than that of the earlier dynasties. Forced labour and conscription bore heavily on them. In the sixth century B.C. an essayist, Lu, proposes money payment for all crimes, but the letter rather than the spirit of this law ruled in Chinese courts and elsewhere. Literary honours were often sold by corrupt officials, with the offices that went with them. The spirit of reverence for ancestors also led to the horrible practice of burying numbers of concubines and servants alive, and in 621 B.C. 177 persons were so immolated with the dead body of Duke Mu. An Ode of the era expresses the people's horror, but the evil practice went on for centuries. In the sixth century the poor were taxed as much as one-fifth of the produce of the land, and violence and corruption continued till the Chou Dynasty went down in ruin.

On the other hand we must note that a mint was established in 1103 B.C., minting bronze coins with a square hole in the centre. China shares with India and Lydia the honour of the invention of coins, and in the seventh century she made salt, which has played so great a part in her history. As we have seen, the education of the upper classes thrived: but knowledge remained their prerogative and the peasantry were neglected. 'Ritual does not reach down to the masses, nor does the penal code reach up to the lords', is a saying applied by Dr. Wilhelm to this age; and the splendour of all ancient dynasties is dimmed by the dumb pain of the mass of their subjects: always hungry and always taxed to support the rich, yet not unhappy in their unremitting toil, protected by their guilds from too great oppression, and finding relief in song and drama and dance.

That the poor were not always without a voice in China

¹ 'Its conventionality restricted human ingenuity and its literary canons set various boundaries to individual expression,' says King Chu, a former minister of education.
is to the credit of her literary men, from the singer of early Odes, which contrast the lot of rich and poor, to Mo-tse, the great altruist of the closing years of Chou, and the later poets. At times the peasants' discontent has expressed itself in direct action, as when they provided King Chao (1052–1000 B.C.) with a leaky boat, and let him drown on one of his punitive expeditions, as a penalty for his ruthless methods of hunting: as in our own day when street-cars, the juggernauts of the modern age, have been wrecked by an army of riksha-pullers. If K'ung Fu-tse, China's greatest son, is an admirer of the throne and court, and seeks to revive the whole patriarchal system, others, like his disciple Meng-tse and his rival Lao-tse the heretic, are its harsh and severe critics. The former insists that the throne is less important than the people, and the latter pays little heed to it.

The stage is set for these great and formative teachers by the decline of the House of Chou, and with it the break-up of the feudal system into a muddle of warring states, and the intrigues and feuds of rival vassals. Let us instead of following the tedious details of this decline and fall of the dynasty look somewhat closely at the great teachers of this age. If it is necessary to know the Gita to understand India, it is as necessary to know the Analects and the Tao-te-ching, to understand China. These little books, so tremendous in their influence, show us the impression which K'ung Fu-tse and Lao-tse made upon their disciples, and it is not necessary to discuss the vexed question of the authenticity of all their sayings. On almost all is the impress of master minds.

The Analects, or Lun-Yu, help us to understand China in its urban life, in the formality of its court, in the twin ideals of the patriarchal family, and the theocratic state. The Tao-te-ching on the other hand, helps us to realize the revolt of the countryside against its formalism and its extravagance. If the keynote of this first is good form or Li—courtliness—that of the second is Wu-wei—spontaneity or naturalness.
BEGINNINGS OF CHINESE CIVILIZATION

Here, too, perhaps, the poetic and mystical in the Chinese is contrasted with the practical and secular. It is a combination which makes an individual or a nation great.

THE SPIRIT OF EARLY CHINA

I. FROM THE SHIH-CHING

(a) Shen-nung, Emperor and God of Agriculture (2838–2008 B.C.)
That my harvest land thrives
   All my farmers rejoice:
With lute and with tambour
   The Farm-God we voice;
As we pray for sweet rain
On our millet and grain,
   May a harvest of children
Make blessed our wives.

(b) The Lord Above
Majestic is the Lord On High
Over-ruling the world with wisdom:
He sends his Four Quarters
To test the souls of men,

(c) He rewards King Wen
The Lord on High heard of King Wen's goodness. He was pleased and gave his high command to King Wen to slay the Ying.

(d) King Wen's Reward
King Wen has gone on high:
He lives in glory above,
His goings and his comings
Are to the Divine Presence.

(e) The Cry of the Poor
How free are the wild geese on their wings,
And they find rest on the bushy yu trees!
But we, ceaseless toilers in the king's service,
Cannot even plant our millet and rice.
What will our parents have to rely on?
O thou distant and azure Heaven!
When shall all this end? (Pt. I, Bk. X, viii.)
Shoes thinly woven of the dolichos fibre
May be used to walk on the hoar-frost!
And the delicate fingers of women
May be used to make clothes!
Sew the waistband and sew the collar!
And the good man wears them!

The mother-wort of the valley
Is scorched everywhere.
There is a woman left homeless
Ever flow her tears!
Ever flow her tears!
But of what avail is her lament?

(Pt. I, Bk. IX, i.)

(Pt. I, Bk. VI, vi.)

Tr. Hu Shih.

(f) An early poet questions God's Love

The great God is inconstant in His kindness,
And He has spread famine and destroyed the nations.
The great God is wrathful: He thinks not, nor plans.
Let alone the guilty ones who are destroyed.
How about the innocent ones who perish with them?

II. FROM THE SHU-CHING

(a) He punishes the wayward

The people of Miao abandoned reason... killing the innocent...
The Lord on High was angry: and misfortune befell them?
They could not escape punishment;
They perished from the earth.

(b) Advice of Chi-tse to the last Shang Emperor

'If you are in great doubt, consult your conscience, consult your ministers, consult the people, and consult the oracles (tortoise-shell and millet).
'If you are in favour of a step which the oracles commend and find that ministers and people approve it, the measure is good. If the people are for it, the oracles support it, and you and your ministers oppose it, the measure is good.'

(c) The Calendar (2145 B.C.)

The Emperor Yao spoke saying, 'Listen, O Hsi and Ho. The
solar year has 366 days. Make the lunar year tally with it by means of intercalary months, and establish the four seasons'.

(d) The Founder of the Dynasty of Chou to his troops

(Eleventh century B.C.)

When the army was set in battle array the Duke of Chou addressed it, holding in his left hand his axe and in his right the horsehair standard. Saluting them he said, 'We have come so far, O men of the West, Princes my allies, ministers, chieftains, and captains, and you my men of many races, lay down your shields, for I would speak.

... The Ruler of Shang listens only to his wife. Stupid with lust he forgets the ancients and his own parents. He has given office to evildoers and the empire has become a tyranny. I am now to pronounce and apply the sentence of Heaven. To the attack! ... Courage, brave soldiers. ... Cowardice will be punished with death.

III. FROM THE CODE OF THE TENTH CENTURY B.C.

Let both parties be heard by the Judges. Let them consider whether the crime draws one of the five punishments, or one of the five fines. If not, let them declare it an involuntary misdemeanour. ... Let them beware of doing so from wrong motives. Such as fear, or favour, or for disgrace or for bribes. ... Branding is the punishment for a thousand crimes. Amputation of the nose is another such. Amputation of the foot is one for five hundred, castration for three hundred, death for two hundred. ...

For ransom from each thief—from six hundred ounces of copper for escape from branding to six thousand for escape from the death penalty.

IV

A Great Drought

(Ninth century B.C.)

Glorious shone the milky way
Revolving radiant in the heavens,
When the King cried, Ah me!
What crime has my people done
That T'ien sends death and disaster
And famine comes upon us once more?
There is no spirit to whom I do not sacrifice,
There is no victim which I have refused:
Our ritual acts are all performed—
How is it that no one hears my cry?

V

The Lament of the Soldier's Wife

It is autumn, the tenth month of the year.
Truly the Emperor's service must be done!
My wifely heart is full of anxious care:
Will they come back, our soldiers dear?
It is spring again, the trees in new green dressed:
Truly the Emperor's service must be done!
But my wifely heart is restless and distressed,
Why come they not, my soldier and the rest?
Are their chariots worn out, their horses spent?
Truly the Emperor's service must be done!
With trembling heart I scan the omens bent,
O joy, our soldiers soon retread the way they went.

VI

A Chou Inscription

In the third month Jung and the Minister of the Interior proclaimed the royal decree: "Hsia, Marquis of Hsing, in recognition of your services, We bestow on you the people of the three regions, Chou, Chung, and K'uo, to be your subjects". [The Marquis] bowed his head [to his hands, and then] to the ground. In the Temple at Lu, which is like that of the Son of Heaven, he took part in the sacrifices that bring blessings, and diligently performed the rites to the Three Royal Ancestors. [He said:] "Unceasingly to the end of my days shall I [strive to deserve] this grant from the House of Chou. Mindful [of the merit] of my forbear, I respond to [and extol the royal favour], and dare not let it come to naught. Wherefore I manifest the happiness bestowed, and covenant with these my [new] subjects.' The Son of Heaven caused a brevet of investiture to be drafted; and [the Marquis], in order to pay befitting honour to the royal charge, made this vessel in dedication to Chou Kung.

[Translation of inscription on the four-handled tui as given on p. 27, vol. i, of The George Eumorfopoulos Collection Catalogue of the Chinese and Corean Bronzes, &c., by W. Perceval Yetts (vol. i)].
IX

THE MASTER MINDS OF CHINA IN ITS CLASSIC AGE

The Tao is that by which the highest man guides the people. . . . KWAN-TSE.
Right living takes first place: all other things are of less importance. . . . BOOK OF RITES.
To attain harmony is the way of man. . . . DOCTRINE OF THE MEAN.
Knowledge is to know men. . . . LUN YU.
Sagehood is the ideal wisdom, kingship the ideal practice. The Sage Ruler unites the two. . . . HSUN-TSE.
Use nature do not praise her. . . . Ibid.
One who knows does not talk. One who talks does not know . . . TAO-TE-CHING.

I

It is becoming clear that China has a long succession of thinkers who may be compared with those of Greece, and who represent many types—from K'ung Fu-tse, moralist and preserver of tradition, to Chuang-tse, rebel and mystic, and from Mo-tse the theist to the atheist Chen Tuan.

From the sixth century B.C. on, there is the double strand of the Confucians and the Laoists. Of the former we must glance here at K'ung Fu-tse and Lao-tse with their great early exponents, and in considering the Han and Sung eras we shall see how the battle of interpretation of ancient wisdom developed.

All alike are concerned with the Tao or Way of Life: some finding it in Nature's spontaneity, others in her orderliness; and, as in India, some found grounds for theism in her workings, and some for atheism: some were more concerned with the metaphysical, some with the ethical aspects of this complex idea.

The Chinese are an emotional and poetic people, schooled to stoicism and formality; and if K'ung Fu-tse is the schoolmaster, Lao-tse is the exponent of the natural and even undisciplined life. Each makes articulate some aspect of the complex Chinese character: both are claimed,
justly, as types and norms of China; and modern Chinese critics renew ancient debates in discussing whether their people are rationalist and humanist or mystical and other-worldly. In the same volume appear these dicta: ‘the Chinese are by nature greater Taoists than they are by culture Confucianists’; ‘the Chinese are by nature rationalist and humanist’.1

Both Lao-tse and K’ung Fu-tse are true types of Chinese: both have innumerable followings. Tao, from which both start, is written in an elaborate character of which the components are order or progression and intelligence: and it may therefore mean the reason inherent in nature’s activities (with Lao-tse), or the way of ordered society based on the cosmic reason (with K’ung Fu-tse). If one emphasizes nature’s spontaneous quietism, the other is impressed with her orderly activism: ‘The Tao does nothing but achieves all’, says the former: but his master Kwan-tse, had said, ‘the Tao is that by which the ruler guides the people,’ and K’ung Fu-tse was a practical statesman who could not be content with paradoxes or the praises of nature. So conduct is for him a matter of li, good form: it is for Lao-tse wu-wei—spontaneity. Both insist that the good life must be rooted in nature.

Lao-tse (or Laocius) and K’ung Fu-tse (or Confucius), as early missionaries latinized their names, were born at a time of disillusionment and anarchy—intellectual and social. ‘The whole world is a seething torrent of change,’ said a contemporary; and like Hamlet, they could say, ‘the world is out of joint’. The Chinese for this is wu-tao—and Tao is the starting-point for understanding Chinese thought—religious, philosophical, and ethical. It is the Way or Norm—the process of Nature and the standard for man. For Lao-tse man embodies it best when he is autonomous and spontaneous: ‘all things live by Tao: it is the mother of all, by it all problems are solved.’ For K’ung Fu-tse—social reformer and restorer of ancient wisdom—it is the embodiment of order, and he sought to

1 Lin Yu-Tang and Hu Shih in China’s own Critics.
IN ITS CLASSIC AGE

turn man to a formal and disciplined life. 'A great man,' says the Shu-Ching, 'is in harmony with heaven and earth.' 'Man is born for rectitude', says K’ung Fu-tse, and he set about re-ordering the world of his day, and reminding men of the classical patterns of the earlier days of Chou.

But these two great teachers have much in common—a certain calm and humorous detachment, an authority which appeals to reason, an ideal of self-control and even of asceticism in the pursuit of truth.

‘Living on coarse rice and water, my elbow for a pillow, I can yet be merry,’ says K’ung, a Chinese Epicurus: ‘Preserve simplicity, conserve inner beauty, curb self-will, limit desires,’ says Lao-tse, a Chinese Zeno.

‘Ill-gotten gains and honours are a wandering cloud,’ says K’ung: ‘There is no calamity like ambition,’ says Lao-tse, ‘the root of honour is humility’.

K’ung, in fact, while he is the ideal Chun-tse or sage, comes near to being a saint after the pattern of Lao-tse. ‘Benevolent, wise, courageous’—that is the Confucian ideal: ‘Frugal, gentle, humble,’ that is the Laoist.

Lao-tse in his turn fulfils the ideal of K’ung; for he too is reasonable, wise, and kindly. Both too are critics of the existing order. But their diagnosis differs: ‘Too many laws and prohibitions,’ says Lao-tse; ‘Too great laxity,’ says K’ung.

A decadent dynasty—‘princes who are not princely’: parricides who talk of filial piety: ministers who make laws but do not keep them: fathers who set bad examples and yet demand obedience—such is the society of the sixth century B.C. in China. ‘All is indeed wu-tao’—unnatural, or out of joint, and K’ung Fu-tse’s is the voice of tradition calling men to the old cosmic Tao—orderliness or seemliness. China needed this call to discipline: but she also needed the call of Lao-tse to spontaneity, to natural family life on which all else depends, to an inner goodness without which rules are vain.

If Lao-tse sought Tao as the goal of a mystic and philosopher, K’ung Fu-tse sought it as a way of individual and
social conduct. If for the mystic it is 'unnameable and vague'—for the moralist it must be concisely and precisely defined. 'Words must be made to fit things,' says K'ung Fu-tse—a counsel of perfection in an age of change. Asked by a disciple what he would do first if he were to be ruler, he replied: 'It must needs be the rectifying of words. If speech does not obey its own ruler, nothing can be established. A superior man is never careless in the use of words. To govern is to rectify.'

Lao-tse insists that an inner discipline is better than a strait-waistcoat. And he is justified by history: Confucianism has indeed become a bed of Procrustes to the Far East. 'That is what it has done to us', said a Japanese statesman, pointing to a stunted tree in a formal garden. The dimmer figure of Lao-tse is like a giant cryptomeria rising amidst the mists of some mountain shrine—a free untrammelled growth of the native genius.

This spontaneity seems to have been attained in old age by K’ung Fu-tse:

At thirty I stood firm:
At forty I had no doubts:
At fifty I knew the will of heaven:
At sixty I had an ear attuned to truth:
At seventy I could follow my inclinations without sin.

Both had served their state as officials, and had learnt much of human weakness, and both gave to the world maxims and aphorisms which have a permanent place in the treasury of the race. But K’ung Fu-tse held the posts of Prime Minister and Minister of Justice, Lao-tse only that of Librarian, and this will help to explain the differences. Another explanation is that one is typical of the mountains and the other of the plains—one of the unattached life of the country poet, the other of the ordered life of the walled city.

For the rest, their teachings must speak for them. They reveal K’ung as a princely teacher—precise, reasonable,

1 Lun Yu, Analects, xii. 17.  
2 Lun Yu, xii. 15.
humorous, liberal, sometimes prosaic, sometimes pompous; and Lao-tse as the most elusive of mystics, the most paradoxical of poets, the most anarchical of reformers. So the soul of China stands revealed—both rationalist and mystic: both humanist and religious: both practical and visionary. If one laughs at the other, so does the Chinese laugh at himself. If officials take themselves seriously and walk circumspectly, they too become poets, leaving the city for the hill-side, and li for wu-wei, formality for spontaneity, K'ung Fu-tse for Lao-tse.

II

Let us look at the Saint of Lao-tse.

He teaches not by words but by acts:
He acts but seeks no reward:
He works out perfection, seeking no credit.
His preoccupations are with the inner life.
He puts away excess, and egoism, and softness;
 Honour and dishonour are alike to him,
All are his children. The Tao is his mother.

The saint is compared to water. Gentle and ever seeking the lowest level, water is irresistible and omnipotent: so the saint seeking nothing for himself gains all; emptying himself is filled, avoiding honours gains the chief honour; humbling himself is exalted. Of all the ideals of Asia he comes nearest to the man of the Beatitudes.

The Chun-tse or Scholar of Confucius is also a delightful figure:

‘firm but not quarrelsome, sociable but not clannish. He seeks what he wants within himself, while the inferior man seeks it from others. The superior man is courteous but not obsequious, the inferior man is obsequious but not courteous. The superior man takes duty as the groundwork of character, blends it in action with a sense of proportion, displays it in a spirit of unselfishness and perfects it by adding sincerity and truth. He pays special attention to nine points, to see clearly, to look kindly, to behave respectfully, to speak circumspectly, to work earnestly. When in doubt he makes careful inquiry, when in anger he reflects upon the consequences, when tempted by gain he thinks only of duty.’
Chinese officials have made their own such parts of this ideal as are not too difficult; they have treated it as we have treated the Sermon on the Mount, but they have much more nearly approximated to their ideal than we. This is partly because the Confucian ideal is the educated Chinese at his best, whereas the Christian ideal is corrective of the natural man—frankly impossible except through Divine Grace. In Christianity this is central. In the Confucian system on the contrary the ethical is central, and the religious is kept very much at the margin.

Yet it is quite untrue to say as many modern Confucians do that K'ung Fu-tse was irreligious, just as it is untrue, though very common, to say that the Chinese are 'secular'. From ancient times China has accepted the doctrine of T'ien or Heaven, and of Shang-ti as the Father in Heaven.

'He hears and sees; he enjoys offerings; he has a heart or mind; he is aided by men, and deputes his work especially to kings and their ministers; he can be honoured and served; he is awe-inspiring, of dread majesty and to be feared; he confers on men their moral sense, and makes retention of his favour dependent on moral character; his will is glorious, may be known and must be complied with; a virtuous king is after his own heart, but he will have no regard for the ill doer.'

The Tao is universal: man must be in harmony with it. T'ien is just: man must do its will.

With the superstitious veneration of his people for good spirits, and their placation of evil ones, K'ung was less in sympathy. 'Honour them,' he said, 'but leave them alone. We do not know how to serve men; how should we serve spirits? We who have not understood this life how should we know of the life hereafter?' It is these sayings that have led to the common idea that K'ung Fu-tse was merely a moralist. He was rather a sanely religious reformer combating spiritualism and necromancy. Like Sakyamuni he attacked religiosity in the interests of religion; and when his life was threatened he revealed the

1 W. E. Soothill, *The Three Religions of China.*
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hidden heart of his serenity and fortitude. ‘Heaven,’ he said, ‘has entrusted me with my work, what can my enemies do against me?’ When he was grievously sick and a disciple wanted to offer up prayers on his behalf, the master said quietly, ‘My prayers began long ago’. In a true sense his life of service to men was a life of prayer to God.

K‘ung Fu-tse was in fact, as he was fond of saying, ‘a transmitter rather than an originator,’ a reformer who saw the golden age of the empire as a thing of the distant past, and who did much to stabilize Chinese society by reverence for ancestors and ancestral custom.

With much of his teaching Lao-tse would agree. But with regard to the old Sinism he took an agnostic and even anarchist attitude. ‘We cannot know Shang-ti, and all these ceremonials and observances are ruining the empire.’ This was his attitude, and it is here that one great difference between the two giants is to be found: for K‘ung took up ‘a middle position with leanings towards the left’ says Hu Shih. Another difference is related to this: their point of view differs with their objective.

One is world-affirming—the other world-denying: one is an official, the other an anarchist: one is a social reformer, the other a naturalistic visionary. And yet both agree that man must be true to the Tao. When the Duke of Chi asked him about the art of government K‘ung Fu-tse said: ‘let the ruler be ruler; let the minister be minister; let the father be father, and the son son’.

This is li—good form or correctness; and though Laoists mocked at its fussy rectitude it is not so different from their master’s wu-wei or spontaneous expression of Tao as it may seem. Both would agree that in these natural relations the China of their day could find her true self.

Lao-tse insisted that it is when things go wrong that men talk of duty; and bade men ‘abandon benevolence and put away sagacity. . . . I love quietude and the people become righteous. . . . I practise non-action, and the people reform themselves’. 
In a word, it is largely a matter of technique which separates these masters—of temperament and of emphasis too, rather than of philosophy. Perhaps we may say that if Aristotle with his formal logic and regimented ethic is a pupil of the poetic and communist Plato, so K'ung the moralist and formalist is a pupil of the mystical anarchist Lao-tse, whom he visited in 518 B.C.

The social, political, and religious life of China from very early times is recorded in two books which K'ung Fu-tse and all Chinese have held in great respect: the Shih-Ching or Book of Odes, covering the period about 1800 B.C. to about 600 B.C., and the Shu-Ching or Book of History, containing fifty-eight documents of various periods down to the Chou Dynasty. The former he edited, choosing some 300 poems which fitted his ideas; from the latter he drew examples of classical rectitude.

K'ung is the first and greatest of the Confucians, the typical Chinese, and his descendants are still in office.

There is no more impressive spot in China than his tomb in Shantung, with its shrines to his great disciples, its gardens, ancient timbers, and tiled roofs. Here are a calm dignity, a spaciousness and a harmony, eloquent of the Master. Scholar, teacher, musician, statesman, he is one of the world's great men.

As an educator he ranks high: 'I learn,' he said, 'without satiety, and teach without weariness,' and he insists that 'words must conform with things,' and that his students must work out their own problems. He realized that the first aim of education is to produce men of character, 'troubled not that men do not know them, but that they do not know men,' controlled by the voice of conscience, informed by high ideals, trained in industry and constancy of purpose, enjoying the pleasures of the mind and spirit rather than of the senses, guided by reason.

To this end he made much of music, the polish and harmonizer of character, set the Odes to music and revived ancient ritual. 'By the Odes the mind is roused: by the
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Rule of Li character is formed: by music polish is added — this is his curriculum; and if he is the Socrates of China he is also its Plato.

Lao-tse has been called its Protagoras by Hu Shih, who regards him as a philosophical nihilist and a destructive critic. But it is not easy to account on these lines for his immense influence: he too appealed to something fundamentally Chinese, an attitude of detachment and dislike for centralized government, a recognition of the futility of war, a mystical sense of the transcendent and ineffable.

The remark of K’ung Fu-tse, ‘To-day I have seen the Dragon—who can follow his tracks in the sky?’ admirably expresses the grandeur of the mystical thinker whose deep sayings form the core of the Tao-te-Ching. This little pamphlet of five thousand characters is one of the world’s great books, yet it is intelligible only to those acquainted with transcendental or mystical literature and experience. It is the ‘Book of the Tao and of Te’—of Nature and a Natural Ethic. Yet the Tao is not the Absolute of the metaphysician, but the Ineffable of the saint: here is no text-book, but a series of ejaculations. Like the Rishi of Vedic India Lao-tse is a seer of the Invisible, a speaker of the Ineffable. He reminds us that ‘The Tao that can be told is not the true Tao’—yet it is the source of all life, of all thought, of all that is. If K’ung Fu-tse accepts the Tao, Lao-tse is in love with it; and this gives his intuitions a strangely penetrating quality.

As all Indian systems of thought go back to the mysticism of the Upanishads so the Tao-te-Ching inspires the deepest Chinese thinkers. It is tragic but inevitable that in both lands these mystical ideals have also given birth to magic and superstition; for only the mystic can understand the language of mysticism. ‘Eternal Life’—a state of transcendental consciousness to the mystic—becomes ‘Immortality’ to the masses. The mystic’s flight on eagle wings gives place to the paganism of short-cuts to longevity, such as the Taoist pill of immortality, and the mantras

1 Lun Yu, viii. 8.
of Indian shamans. The dictum, 'The corruption of the best is worst,' is here well illustrated. So too is the saying, 'The good is the enemy of the best.' For magic has come in both countries to replace the original mysticism; and to understand it aright we must put off the spectacles of the learned and put on the mind of children, of poets, and of lovers of the Unseen. Lao-tse means the Revered Sage, and the legend is that he was ninety years in his mother's womb. This is a Chinese way of saying that his wisdom is the result of long and brooding meditation, as his emblem, the dragon, is an expression of the soaring and dazzling flights of his intuitive genius. Nor does this symbol express only the greatness and the difficulty of his teachings: the dragon is also the symbol of the mysterious in nature, of which Lao-tse is the mouthpiece.

Another legend describes the writing of the Tao-te-Ching. Having devoted himself during a long lifetime to silent study, and having mastered the Wisdom of the Ancients, he set out on his last journey. Arriving at the frontier he was addressed by the warden of the pass, 'Leave us, I pray, a writing to guide us'. Whereupon he wrote the Tao-te-Ching, and disappeared from human ken.

No book has stirred more controversy than this pamphlet: 'This absurd little volume,' says the Nestor of British sinologues, who believes it to be a shameless forgery: 'It is the sublime Rule of kings—the inestimable Treasure of the people,' said T'ai Tsu, founder of the Ming Dynasty, who found it a great help in governing the empire.

It is indeed a classic of mystical and ethical aphorisms—in praise of the meek and lowly and of the spontaneity of the ways of nature. But it is also a Chinese treatise on politics, and has been so accepted for twenty-five centuries by the school of laissez-faire, and by the pacifists who have seen with realistic eyes what war costs the people.

' Govern a great state as you cook a small fish . . .'
'To become a world-ruler occupy yourself with Tao.'
'How sad if the lord of a thousand chariots conduct himself frivolously.'
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'The more rules the poorer the people. The more laws the more law-breakers.'

'He who is compassionate conquers.'

'He who has won a battle should stand in the place of mourning.'

Thus are aphorisms for the man of affairs set side by side with the paradoxes of the mystic, and in the Far East the way of the mystic has often been made that for the man of action. For Buddhism and Laoism have indeed been the inner core alike of quietism and activism; and Lao-tse is, like Sakyamuni, both visionary and teacher of affairs.

If the Tao is the unseen reason the Te is its embodiment in life. It means truth—'What ten eyes see is firmly established'—and is equivalent to virtue: to mores becoming the way or standard of morals.

Whether or not the book is his own composition, it is accepted as such by his followers, and the long and learned controversy as to its authenticity is not unlike that concerning the Homeric poems. Were they written by Lao-tse or by some one of the same name? Or are they his thoughts collected and edited like those of K'ung Fu-tse, of Buddha, of Jesus, of all the greatest teachers? What matters is that they are ours to-day. Those who argue most understand least.

III

The book consists of three parts: the first deals with the problem of moulding oneself according to the Tao; the second with the method of moulding others according to the same mysterious prototype, and the third with the way of ruling a country according to its principles.

Tao is the ancient Chinese symbol for that which is from Eternity, and in it is the abiding proof that the thought of China is not after all so different from that of India. In his concept of a Natural Order, a Divine Reason, lies Lao-tse's claim to be a philosophical as well as a mystical thinker. Using an idea already current in China he deepens it and fills it with new meaning, conceiving it as Primae-
val Source as well as Indwelling Power of the Universe: 'From it proceed all things . . . in all things it is found.'

It is Norm and Nature as well as Source and Sustainer: 'Heaven itself obeys the Tao.' To work with it or rather to let it work in us is true virtue: 'By it the Sage is made strong: he humbles himself before it, and it exalts him.'

'In the beginning was the Tao.' So Christian missionaries have agreed to translate the first words of the Fourth Gospel; and some Indian scholars would translate the first words of the Tao-te-Ching by substituting the word Brahman for Tao. Like the Brahman of the Upanishads, the Tao is 'that from which words turn back'. 'We look at it and do not see it: we listen for it and do not hear it: we seek to grasp it and do not take hold of it. We call it the invisible: the elusive: the subtle.'

These are expressions familiar to all students of mysticism: 'O world invisible, we view thee, O world intangible, we touch thee,' says Francis Thompson. Nevertheless the Tao, ineffable though it may be, is in all things, is the Mother of all things, and human wisdom is to apprehend it, and to let it work in men. Lao-tse says of himself, 'I differ from others, for I seek the nourishment of the Mother of all'. He is the 'Old Child' both because he was born wise and because he was a wise child ever at the breast of mother Nature. He lived in the mountains, and he saw the irresistible power of water, which ever seeking a lower level wears out great valleys and cleaves great mountains. 'The highest goodness is like water. It benefits all things, and it occupies the lower place. It is like the Tao.'

'Without the Tao to lighten them, the heavens would be rent; without the Tao to give it peace, the earth would be dissolved; without the Tao to give life all nature would suffer destruction; without the Tao to bring harmony, rulers would lose their position: hence therefore humility is the root of honour, abasement is the foundation of exaltation.' We are reminded here of the Old Testament

1 Tao-te-Ching, 34.5.  
2 Ibid. 25.  
3 Ibid. 35.
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doctrine of the Spirit of Wisdom, and of the man of the Beatitudes, meek before God and loving to men.

Having sought to express the inexpressible, Lao-tse goes on to teach the doctrine of wu-wei: 'Clay is made into pots: it is their emptiness which makes them useful.' So the Sage is to empty himself that he may be filled, to seek nothing that he may gain all things, to deny himself that he may be perfect.

This is Te, a natural morality based on the Tao. It is an ideal of quietism, but he does not hesitate to apply it to the problems of the empire. 'When the empire is ruled by the Tao, fine horses are discarded like rubbish; when it is ruled without the Tao, there are war-horses on all sides.' Wars are against the order of nature: 'A well-equipped army is not an auspicious instrument. All nature opposes it. He who possesses the Tao has nothing to do with it.' It is not least as an early pacifist that Lao-tse has an abiding message for the world.

'Great armies are followed by briars and thorns. He who has killed many should stand in the place of mourning. A great victory should be followed by obsequies,' and like Tolstoi and Gandhi, Lao-tse sees in the criminal judge also an example of violence and wrongdoing. He is at best a usurper. 'He tries to be a master-carpenter: not many can do it without cutting their own hands.' To all alike Lao-tse holds up the ideals of wu-wei—natural view in action: of simplicity: of humility: of poverty. Acquisitiveness is the greatest of evils: selfish desire the root of trouble. 'Heaven abides and earth endures. For they live not unto themselves. The Sage puts himself last but is found in the front place.'

To imitate the eternal Tao—to empty oneself that the eternal may enter in—this is the wisdom of Lao-tse. 'Those who follow the Tao desire not to be full of themselves.' And the Tao—'how still it lies—seeming to do nothing it does all. Seeking no praise it completes its work. Master of all, it claims not the lordship.' 'To return to the Tao and Te based upon it', says Lao-tse, 'is to return
to the standard of the Ancients.' For him as for K'ung the Golden Age was past, but might be renewed; and a great Emperor said truly of this mystical booklet, 'It is the sublime Rule of Kings, and the inestimable Treasure of the People.' Incalculable has been its influence on the civilization of China. Its art and its politics alike owe to Lao-tse a great debt. And he and his sayings are the abiding proof that there is in this nation a poetical and mystical strain too often unrecognized. In them as in the sons of India there flows a deep current of the otherworldly and the romantic, and there are many disciples of Lao-tse amongst China's thinkers, artists, and poets.

IV

Great as is the renown of K'ung Fu-tse, then, it must not be supposed that he has gone uncriticized. Lao-tse's attack on the formalism of the good is an attack on li, K'ung's ideal of 'good form'; and even if they agree in emphasizing love there is a vast difference between its spontaneous and its calculating forms.

Nor within the school of his own followers does K'ung Fu-tse hold undisputed sway. While Meng-tse or Mencius finds him too much a royalist and emphasizes the claims of the masses, Mo-tse, the great fifth-century altruist, goes much further. He is a teacher who deserves close study, though he has been almost neglected until to-day.1 Too little have 'the blue-clothed masses' been the concern of the literati of China, though there is a minor key in many of her poets from the Odes on, and an implicit criticism of other rulers in her adoration of Yao, Shun, and Yu, friends of the poor. It is the glory of Mo-tse that he voices their claims, and that universal love is his ideal.

Mo-tse was like K'ung Fu-tse, a native of Lu, and is best understood as a Confucianist disgusted by the very ceremonies which delighted his master. He saw in the teachings of the older sage 'enough to ruin the world': its long

1 In the T'ang era he had an admirer in Han Wen-kung (768–824), but the Confucian mind has consistently condemned him to oblivion.
mourning, its ceremonial and music, its fatalism, its reticence as to a Divine Ruler, its lack of deep sentiment.

Mo-tse was utilitarian in his desire to see the poor helped in their need; but he stands out also as the great idealist who saw in benevolence to all men everywhere a panacea. He believed that the world is ruled by a loving God, and that man ought to be as loving. His *Universal Love* is a book to which China is at last looking with serious eyes, and its fifty-three articles are packed with practical wisdom and shrewd insight. 'Let us look at history,' he says, 'and realize that the great Sage-Kings—men like T'ang the Restorer and Wu—changed the destinies of the state.' They made history. They refused to let it make them.

This is the test of pragmatism: Did a principle work in the past? To this he adds two others: Does it work now? Will it work in the long run? A principle then is to be based on the conduct of dead sages, on the judgement of the masses, on the practical effects which follow its application.

Like K'ung Fu-tse, he spoke of the Will of Heaven, but made much more of it. 'The Will of Heaven is to me like compass and square. The wheelwright uses the one, and the carpenter the other. I measure by a more perfect standard. The Will of Heaven is to love all people everywhere, for it is all-inclusive and impartial in its activity, untiring in its providence.' This is like the Sermon on the Mount, but Meng-tse and others felt it to be a very dangerous doctrine, destructive of the intense love of family and clan and nation.

Like Lao-tse, Mo-tse is something of an anarchist; yet he bases his teachings upon a close study of Nature, and his ethic is therefore spontaneous. 'Nothing else has worked or will work,' he seems to say, 'why not try love?' He applied laboratory methods to philosophy, and a strenuous note is given to his romantic ethic by the call to work. Let men work as Yu did—then they will prosper. Let them be thrifty, and they will not be poor. Clothing
and houses are for protection, not for ornament. Government is for the people, not for the rulers. Let wise and virtuous men be put in high position, and they will rule with this in mind. Criticized by Meng-tse, he yet seems to have imparted to him and to many others lessons of democracy. His economic views would to-day be labelled socialist, and his altruism admired but disregarded as a vain dream. His pacifism, too, would be praised—in times of peace—and denounced as anarchy in times of war.

In a rough and turbulent age he showed that war is the worst of evils and loved to believe in an ideal of simplicity and of loving-kindness. A modern Chinese scholar has said, 'In his deep consciousness of Heaven or God and his sincere devotion to men Mo-tse is comparable to Christ.' And China has not risen to the stature of Mo-tse any more than the West to that of Jesus. Dr. Hu Shih, historian of Chinese philosophy, sees in Mo-tse also the discoverer of logical method, with a development of paradox akin to that of Zeno, and also considers him the originator of scientific observation. A man who is compared by sober minds to Jesus in religion, to Zeno in logic, and to Archimedes in science is one to reckon with in this day of transition in China. Neglected for two thousand years or more, Mo-tse is coming into his own. Here is an ancient stock on to which new ideas may be grafted. The key-notes of the Confucian ethic are Shu and Jen, negative and positive aspects of benevolence: man is not to do to others what he would not have them do to him—this is Shu. He is to be positively kind and sympathetic—this is Jen; and it is best understood if we look at the great figure of Mo-tse, who about two centuries later arose to call men to universal love.

If K'ung had insisted that men return justice for justice, and Lao-tse that they return good for evil, Mo-tse insists that universal love is a panacea for the world's troubles. God is loving; let man be loving too: there is no other way out of the world's troubles.
With regard to the old Sinism, Mo-tse is the most conservative of the three—holding fast to the God of his ancestors.

And if K'ung wanted a League of Peoples, Mo-tse wanted to abolish war, except as a last resort. Like Lao-tse he was a pragmatist and pointed to the ruinous folly of armed disputes. If God is love, war must be sin; and he went about as a minister of reconciliation till Meng-tse who opposed him could say: 'Mo-tse loved all men and was ready to wear himself out for the good of humanity'. And Chuang-tse, while maintaining that no one could live at these heights, exclaims, 'But Mo-tse was truly a glory to the world.' A practised teacher, he developed the logical theories implicit in Chinese thought: reasoning must be backed by a classical authority, it must be true to present-day experience, and it must have pragmatic proof in utility. 'This was the beginning of logic in China,' says Dr. Hu, and once more the visionary stands revealed as the rational thinker.

Yet this great man had to wait twenty-four centuries for a biographer, and of the fifty-three books attributed to him by tradition, perhaps none was actually his. But his main ideas are clear, and can be studied side by side with those of his fore-runners, successors, and critics in our illustrative readings.

As with some other logical defenders of the faith, his disciples were entangled in their own sophistries, and China became a cockpit of intellectual wrangling. But the humanist tradition lived on side by side with the mystical. If Meng-tse is the true descendant of K'ung Fu-tse—more democratic but as humanist—Chuang-tse is the spiritual child of Lao-tse—more naturalistic and more sceptical. And as the latter school became fatalist, the former called the more loudly for strenuous activity, for man to master nature and to strive with optimism: 'to neglect human effort and to speculate about nature is to misinterpret the universe,' says Hsun-tse in the third century, in what Hu Shih calls a Baconian Song. He and Han Fei were the inspiration of early empire-builders and belong
to that line of practical men which goes back to the legendary founders. If courage was one of the cardinal virtues of K'ung, progress was a generally accepted principle of social and political thinking of the third and second centuries B.C. And while one school of Mo-tse’s followers became preoccupied with his religious idealism, another developed his scientific and logical method.

In a warring age, when the State of Chin was conquering all its rivals, this was more timely than his pacifism and altruism.

‘To reward those who kill their enemies and in the same breath to praise acts of mercy and benevolence—to honour those who storm cities and at the same time to confess belief in universal love—how can such confusion produce a strong and efficient state?’ asks the logical mind of Han Fei. But these are later developments, and to the classic age belongs Chuang-tse to add scepticism to mysticism, and to re-affirm the naturalism and anarchism of Lao-tse in exquisite parables and pungent aphorisms, and to add to them a touch of cynicism and of humour. He is seen fishing when a deputation arrives to offer him the position of Prime Minister of the State of Chu.

‘I hear,’ he said without looking up, ‘that there is a sacred tortoise which your Prince keeps in a chest in his ancestral shrine though it has been dead these three thousand years. Do you suppose it would prefer to be venerated in death, or to be wagging its tail in the mud alive?’

‘Surely the latter,’ said the officials.

‘Then away with you’, said the philosopher, ‘and leave me to wag mine!’ This is what a modern critic calls the ‘old-rogue’ spirit in so many of China’s scholars.

Equally impertinent was he to the memory of K’ung Fu-tse—whom he called ‘a word-spinner’ throwing dust in the eyes of rulers and turning scholars from the true Tao, making much of filial piety, and confusing men with ancient sophistries. ‘Though we know little of his life we know much of the teachings of this Diogenes of China.

1 Hu Shih, The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China, p. 61.
Well does Sse-ma-ch’ien say, ‘He wrote to asperse the school of K’ung Fu-tse, and to glorify the mysteries of Lao-tse.’ Though he is not practical enough for the Chinese, they treasure his works as literary masterpieces. Who, even in the West, has not heard of his Berkeleyan idealism? ‘Once I dreamt I was a butterfly. I awoke, and there I was, a man. Now I know not if I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or if I am now a butterfly dreaming I am a man.’

His style may be judged by two other well-known examples, printed here as illustrative readings, and in death he remained true to his whimsical self.

His disciples, wishing to give him a grand funeral, Chuang-tse said, ‘With heaven and earth for my coffin and shroud, with sun, moon, and stars for regalia, with all creation to escort me, are not my funeral pomps to hand?’ ‘We fear,’ said the disciples, ‘lest the kite eat our master’s body.’

‘Above ground,’ said he, ‘I shall be food for kites, below, I shall be food for mole-cricket and ants. Why rob one to feed the other?’ This is a theme early artists delighted in, and his is a truly picturesque life. In his sense of the all-pervading Tao, he met death serenely.

In the epilogue to the Chuang-tse it is written, ‘In paradoxes, in daring words, with profound subtlety he let his imagination soar. . . . Above he roams in the Company of God: below he is the companion of such as are beyond life and death, and deny the reality of beginning and end.’

In Chuang-tse on the one hand and in Hsun-tse on the other the world-denying and the world-affirming tendencies of Chinese thought find their full fruition. But until the Sung era no systematic philosophy appears, and the age-long debates as to whether man is by nature good or evil are as barren as the question whether the debaters are by nature rationalists or mystics. Man is both good and evil: Chinese man is often both mystic and rationalist.

Chinese history is in some ways parallel to that of the Greeks. Both peoples inherit an older culture, and develop
a classic civilization with a succession of notable thinkers who influence their whole future. If China's Socrates is K'ung Fu-tse and her Protagoras Lao-tse she has also her scientific humanists of the type of Thales and Anaxagoras, and owes much to an imported mysticism akin to that of Pythagoras.

As with the Greeks, too, individualism and rivalry defeat early attempts at federation, and while there is a parallel quest for harmony and reason, there is also the constant lapse into superstition and the persecution of innovators, who are judged by outworn codes and the dead hand of tradition.

But the Chinese men of science make no great or consistent progress as do those of Greece, and barbarians, while they are civilized by Chinese culture as Rome by Greece, are more continually at the gates. These three enemies—individualism, classicism, and invading hordes—trouble the long history of China, and though like Greece she develops an upper class of scholars and a measure of social democracy through education, she has remained almost to the present the milch-cow of dynasties founded by strong rulers and petering out through their own sensuality and superstition.

In aesthetic achievements she is the peer of Greece, and in sculpture, bronze-casting, and landscape painting has had no rival; yet in drama and other forms of literature most will agree that a day at Athens is worth a 'cycle of Cathay'. And her philosophers have wasted centuries in discussing false antinomies: 'Man is good by nature', says one ancient: 'No, he is bad,' says another. 'Action is easy, knowledge difficult,' says one modern: 'Knowledge is difficult, action is not easy,' says another—and causes a grave scandal. And always the activist is persecuted by the passivist and paper maxims are regarded as better than moral effort.
THE SPIRIT OF CHINA’S CLASSIC AGE

I. Pre-Confucian

The Cost of Empire

(a)
What leaf is not sere?
What day has no march?
Who is not sent to roam
A soldier at some frontier?
What leaf has not withered?
Who is not torn from home?
Ah! Pity the soldier—
Is he not also a man?

II. xii. 10.

(b)
Under the broad sky
All is the Emperor’s:
Within the sea-board
All are his serfs . . .
Some lie at ease,
And some are worn out:
Some loll on couches,
And some never rest.

II. vi. 1.

(c)
At dawn we rise,
At eve we rest,
Dig wells to drink,
Till fields to eat;
What is the might of the Ruler to us?

Odes. (After Hu Shih.)

(d) The Tao

The people follow him who has the Tao as the starving go after food set before them.

Kwan-tse (7th cent. B.C.)

If a ruler cleave to the Tao all will spontaneously come to him.

Lao-tse (6th cent. B.C.)
THE MASTER MINDS OF CHINA

All creatures by the Tao do live:
Princes and Kings from It receive,
The Rules which to the world they give.

(e) Aphorisms of Lao-tse
Ponder the ancient Tao
And you may manage the affairs of to-day . . .
When Tao was lost
Duty and rectitude appeared.
Wisdom and shrewdness followed
And great hypocrisry:
The natural relationships were upset
Filial piety became a duty,
Kingdoms, clans, families fell out
And loyal ministers made their appearance.

TAO-TE-CHING.

He who stands on tiptoe is shaky:
He who stiffens his legs can't walk
He who boasts has no merit
He who vaunts himself perishes.

(f) Wu-Wei
He who acts destroys: he who grasps loses.
Therefore the saint grasps not nor acts:
He who humbles himself shall be saved;
He who bends shall be made straight;
He who empties himself shall be filled.

(g) The Three Jewels of Lao-tse
I have three precious gems—gentleness, frugality, and humility.

II. CONFUCIAN
(From the Lun-yu)
(a) The Cardinal Virtues of K'ung Fu-tse
The princely man has three virtues. . . . He is truly benevolent and free from care: truly wise and free from delusion: truly brave and free from fear.

(b) Li
The princely man will regulate his knowledge by the inner rule of Li—good form . . .
Without this courtesy becomes ceremonious,
Prudence becomes timidity, valour becomes violence, and candour rudeness.

(c) The Chun-tse

K'ung Fu-tse said: The superior man has nine things which are subjects with him of careful consideration: In regard to the use of his eyes he is anxious to see clearly. In regard to the use of his ears he is anxious to hear distinctly. In regard to his countenance he is anxious that it should be benign. In regard to his demeanour he is anxious that it should be respectful. In regard to his speech he is anxious that it should be sincere. In regard to his doing business, he is anxious that it should be reverently careful. In regard to what he doubts, he is anxious to question others. When he is angry he thinks of the difficulties (his anger may involve him in). When he sees gain to be got he thinks of righteousness.

He who aims to be a man of complete virtue in his food does not seek to gratify his appetite, nor in his dwelling place does he seek appliances of ease; he is in earnest in what he is doing, and careful in his speech, he frequents the company of men of principle that he may be rectified; such a person may be said to love to learn.

The Master said of Tsze-Ch'an that he had four of the characteristics of a superior man: in his conduct of himself he was humble, in serving his superiors he was respectful, in nourishing the people he was kind, in ordering the people he was just.

There are three things that the man of high rank should consider especially important: that in his deportment and manner he keep from violence and heedlessness; that in regulating his countenance he keep near to sincerity; and that in his words and tones he keep far from lowness and impropriety.

To be able to practice five things everywhere under the Heavens constitutes virtue. They are: Gravity, generosity of soul, sincerity, earnestness, and kindness.

(d) World Brotherhood

When Ta T'ung, or World Brotherhood, becomes effective, all men everywhere will live for the common good; leaders of worth and ability will be selected; their words will be trusted and they will be makers of peace. Men will not love their own parents to the exclusion of parents of others, nor their own sons to the exclusion of sons of others. They will provide sustenance to the aged as long as they live, employment to the able-bodied, opportunity for
development to the young, friendly care to widows, orphans, childless men, and the disabled, for each man a task and for each woman a home. Not wishing to be wasteful of their possessions, they will nevertheless not keep them only for personal use; as to their strength, not wishing to be inactive, they will on the other hand not exert it in their own behalf alone. Thus evil devices will cease and fail to prosper; robbers and traitors will be out of work; and outside doors will not need to be closed; this will be what we call Ta T'ung, or World Brotherhood.

K'ung Fu-tse, in *The Book of Rites*, vii. 2; translation by D. Willard Lyon.

III. Parables of Chuang-tse

(a) 'Have you never heard of the frog in the old well? The frog said to the turtle of the eastern sea, "Happy indeed am I! I hop on to the rail around the well. I rest in the hollow of some broken brick. Swimming, I gather the water under my arms and shut my mouth. I plunge into the mud, burying my feet and toes; and not one of the cockles, crabs, or tadpoles I see around me are my match. (Fancy pitting the happiness of an old well, ejaculates Chuang-tse, against all the water of the ocean!) Why do you not come, sir, and pay me a visit?"

'Now the turtle of the eastern sea had not got its left leg down ere its right had already stuck fast, so it shrank back and begged to be excused. It then described the sea, saying, "A thousand Li would not measure its breadth, nor a thousand fathoms its depth. In the days of the Great Yu, there were nine years of flood out of ten; but this did not add to its bulk. In the days of T'ang, there were seven years out of eight of drought; but this did not narrow its span. Not to be affected by duration of time, not to be affected by volume of water,—such is the great happiness of the eastern sea."

'At this the well-frog was considerably astonished, and knew not what to say next. And for one whose knowledge does not reach to the positive-negative domain, to attempt to understand me, Chuang-tse, is like a mosquito trying to carry a mountain, or an ant to swim a river—they cannot succeed.'

(b) 'Chuang-tse one day saw an empty skull, bleached, but still preserving its shape. Striking it with his riding whip, he said, "Wert thou once some ambitious citizen whose inordinate yearnings..."'
IN ITS CLASSIC AGE

brought him to this pass?—some statesman who plunged his country
in ruin, and perished in the fray?—some wretch who left behind
him a legacy of shame—some beggar who died in the pangs of
hunger and cold? Or didst thou reach this state by the natural
course of old age?'

'When he had finished speaking, he took the skull, and placing
it under his head as a pillow, went to sleep. In the night, he dreamed
that the skull appeared to him, and said, "You speak well, sir; but
all you say has reference to the life of mortals, and to mortal
troubles. In death there are none of these. Would you like to hear
about death?"

'Chuang-tse having replied in the affirmative, the skull began:
"In death, there is no sovereign above, and no subject below. The
workings of the four seasons are unknown. Our existences are
bounded only by eternity. The happiness of a king among men
cannot exceed that which I enjoy."

'Chuang-tse, however, was not convinced, and said, "Were I
to prevail upon God to allow your body to be born again, and your
bones and flesh to be renewed, so that you could return to your
parents, to your wife, and to the friends of your youth—would you
be willing?"

'At this, the skull opened its eyes wide and knitted its brows and
said, "How should I cast aside happiness greater than that of a king,
and mingle once again in the toils and troubles of mortality?"

(Tr. by H. A. Giles.)

IV. AN EARLY REBEL

'Neither Nature nor Government is kind to the people. Nature
cannot stay plague and pestilence nor save men from dying of them:
Nor does Nature give long life to all good men. Therefore I say
that Nature is unkind. Burglars and cheats are driven to crime by
poverty. But Government punishes them by ruthless law. There­
fore I say that Government is unkind."

[Attributed to Teng Shih who in the sixth century B.C. 'taught
the relativity of right and wrong', and was put to death for opposing
the Government of Tze Tsan (d. 522 B.C.) and for persistent
pamphleteering. His new Penal Code was later adopted by the
Government he criticized.]

(See Hu Shih, The Development of Logical Method, pp. 12–13.)
V. Mo-tse (Between 500 and 420 B.C.)

The big rivers do not despise the little brooklets as tributaries. And great men do not neglect any menial task or reject any trifle, and so they become vessels for the world. (Befriending the Learned.)

Any virtue that does not spring from the heart will not remain and any (result of) action that is not aimed at by one’s self will not stay. There is no short cut to fame and there is no trick to praise. The superior man regards his body but as the vehicle for his character. None who places much importance on personal gains but lightly sacrifices his fame has ever become a gentleman in the world. (Self-Cultivation.)

The virtuous who are prosperous must be exalted, and the virtuous who are not prosperous must be exalted too. If it is desired to continue the ways of Yao and Shun, to exalt the virtuous is indispensable. Now exaltation of the virtuous is the root of government. (Exaltation of the Virtuous, i.)

Even Heaven does not discriminate among the poor and the rich, the honourable and the humble, the distant and the near, and the related and the unrelated (to those in power). The virtuous were promoted and exalted; the vicious were kept back and banished. (Exaltation of the Virtuous, ii.)

Let him who has strength be alert to help others, let him who has wealth endeavour to share it with others, let him who possesses the Tao teach others persuasively. With this the hungry will be fed, the cold will be clothed, the disturbed will have order. When the hungry are fed, the cold are clothed, and the disturbed have order—this is procuring abundant life. (Exaltation of the Virtuous, iii.)

If every one in the world will love universally; states not attacking one another; houses not disturbing one another; thieves and robbers becoming extinct; emperors and ministers, fathers and sons, all being affectionate and filial—if all this comes to pass the world will be orderly. (Universal Love, i.)

He who rules a large state does not attack small states: he who rules a large house does not molest small houses. The strong does not plunder the weak. The honoured does not disdain the humble. The clever does not deceive the stupid. This is beneficial to Heaven
IN ITS CLASSIC AGE

above, beneficial to the spirits in the middle sphere, and beneficial to the people below. (Will of Heaven, i.)

If the gentlemen in the world really desire to have the world rich and do not want to have it poor, desire to have it orderly and dislike to have it in confusion, the doctrine of fatalism must be rejected. (Anti-Fatalism, i.)

(Tr. Y. P. Mei, in Probsthain's Oriental Series.)

VI. MAN'S ESSENTIAL NATURE

Discussion between Meng-tse and Kaou-tse

Kaou-tse: 'Man's nature is like the willow; righteousness is like a cup or bowl. Fashioning benevolence and righteousness out of man's nature is like making cups and bowls from the willow.'

Meng-tse: 'Can you, leaving untouched the nature of the willow, make of it cups and bowls? You must do violence to the willow before you can make cups and bowls of it; (on your principles) you must in the same way do violence and injury to humanity in order to fashion from it benevolence and righteousness. Your words, alas, would certainly lead all men on to reckon benevolence and righteousness to be calamities.'

Kaou-tse: 'Nature is like water whirling round. Open a passage for it to the east, and it will flow to the east; open a passage for it to the west and it will flow to the west. Man's nature is indifferent to good and evil, just as water is indifferent to east and west.'

Meng-tse: 'Water indeed will flow indifferently to east or west; but will it flow indifferently up or down. The tendency of man's nature to good is like the tendency of water to flow downwards. There are none but have this tendency to good, just as all water flows downwards. Now, by striking water and causing it to leap up, you make it go over your forehead, and, by damming it and leading it, you may force it up a hill: but are such movements according to the nature of water? It is the force applied which causes them. When men are made to do what is not good, their nature is dealt with in this way.'
THE HAN ERA AND ITS AFTERMATH

A clever man builds a city,
A clever woman lays it low. ODES

What is needed is not speculation but law. HAN FEI.

I

The decadent House of Chou was brought to an inglorious end by the revolt of the State of Ch'in; and in the person of Ch'in-shih Huang-Ti of that State China found her first Emperor. Of uncertain parentage, he succeeded in 221 B.C. and set about the task of breaking up feudalism and unifying China. He divided the country for administrative purposes into thirty-six provinces, and created a new nobility of civil servants to rule them for him. Against the barbarians of the frontier he waged war, and completed that immense fortress the Great Wall, which stretched from Central Asia to the Pacific Ocean, 1,500 miles, a greater achievement than even the great trunk roads of the Mauryas, his contemporaries in India.

Like Chandragupta a successful usurper, he also unified his country; and like Asoka he sought a spiritual and moral as well as a political unity. A new religion was needed: so, though a superstitious materialist, he developed a cultus centring in himself, and his unscrupulous minister Li Sze—another Chanakya—encouraged him in this, and in the destruction of the Books. He is said to have buried alive four hundred scholars for attempting to hide copies of them. But this is probably a libel.

The horror with which literary China has always regarded his vandalism has obscured alike the sound motive—to free China from a dead past—and the fact that he carefully preserved books of agriculture and other technical subjects, including medicine and pharmacy. But

1 See Illustrative Reading.
divination was also protected and the books of the magicians spared, and the Emperor's interest in the occult has been exaggerated till he has seemed a mere dupe of the magicians and the foe of all culture. Yet he was a man of immense energy and of brilliant gifts—a strong and purposeful iconoclast, who believed that the feudal system and its literature hung together, and must go together. China owes to him the realization of her ideal of unified statehood. And the Han who succeeded him owe him a magnificent lead. Timid by comparison, they carried on his work—and recovered the Classics, which could not be destroyed while scholars lived.

The chief thinker of the First Empire was Han Fei, a pupil of the great pragmatist Hsun-tse, who died about the time that his other pupil Li Sze became Prime Minister, or perhaps some years earlier.

As we have seen, Hsun-tse attacked the sceptical and fatalistic school, and urged that man had been overlooked in the deification of nature. The Tao, he thought, is not the way of heaven but of man: man can and must seize the helm, and control nature to his ends.

The proper study of mankind is man—not speculative theories and argumentation. Men need authoritative government; the wise ruler 'establishes authority over the people, guides them by truths, constantly reminds them by ordinances, brings truth home to them by exposition, and forbids delinquencies by penalties.'

Han Fei—a Prince of Han—is a strangely modern figure, and like Socrates, had to drink the poison sent him by the State. His old fellow-student Li Sze could hardly criticize him for being in advance of his age, and for criticizing old theories and ideals, for he was himself an iconoclast and a pragmatist. He was perhaps jealous of Han Fei, a legalist who insisted that men must be governed by law, not by moralization, and that all men are equal before the law. This of course brought bitter opposition from the privileged classes—especially from officials who have been too often in China above the law,
and from Li Sze who, as prime minister, could not uphold the theories of his youth. The corruption of this class, Han Fei argued, was China’s chief peril: ‘If they are successful they reach great power; if they fail they attain great wealth’; and ‘they are promoted for party reasons, and direct their energies to social entertainments’.

What the State needed was not ‘talented persons’ but an infallible system of inexorable law. This was a development of Hsun-tse; and like Shan-tao, another of his teachers, Han Fei had his own radical theory of kingship. Here he was a Taoist: ‘The king should do nothing; the king is for the use of the state, not the state for the use of the king; we must fit officials for office; not make offices to fit officials.’

It is small wonder that the autocrat Shih-huang-ti and the ambitious Li Sze disliked such radical views. It is to their undying shame that they killed the greatest man of the age, or drove him to suicide. Yet they too were progressive men, and many of their acts are in keeping with Han Fei’s teachings.

If the Chou era is that of a classic culture it is also that of excessive reverence for the past, and Ideal Norms—men like Yao and Shun—helped to stereotype its views. The Chin Age, or rather Generation, is one of unification and new ideals of statehood, and is followed by the Han era which combines these tendencies. It recovered the ideals of Chou, and in its unification and expansion of the empire carried on the work of Chin.

But much of its success is due to the policy of wu-wei or laissez-faire taught by Han Fei and deliberately adopted by T’sao Tsan who became Prime Minister in 193 B.C. After the misery and devastation of a long war this was what the people needed—to be let alone; and prosperity returned in full flood.

If this Laoist ideal worked wonders the superstitious elements in Taoism and in the spirit-worships of the barbarian West did much to corrupt the religion of the Court, and to involve it in intrigue and corruption. ‘The
THE HAN ERA AND ITS AFTERMATH

state religion of the Han Empire was the result of cooperation between the Confucian scholars and the magicians, the alchemists and the occultists. And many of the Confucian scholars ‘were devout believers in most of these occult things’, says Hu Shih.

II

The era may be divided into that of the Western Han (206 B.C.—A.D. 25), and that of the Eastern Han (A.D. 25—220). The former in its turn may be subdivided into a century of centralization and expansion, and a century of decay: the latter into a half-century of literary splendour, and a century and a half of decay.

This early part of China’s middle ages is of such importance that her northern peoples still call themselves Sons of Han. They regard it as the era of their greatest achievement, when they made progress in many fields—organizing and extending their empire, exploring neighbouring lands, entering into friendly relations with some, and conquering others. China now prepared herself for the great role of civilizing Eastern Asia, and to this end she not only organized her own religious and philosophical life, and gathered up the records of past achievement: she received also the immense impetus of Indian culture coming to her in Buddhist guise, and bringing something of Hellenistic art in its train. But she failed in spite of all this to attain a unified political life, and the Han Dynasty fell from the high example of its founders, and wallowed in superstition.

The Han rulers came at a dark time in China’s history, which Sse-ma-ch’ien, court-astrologer and father of Chinese history, describes in these words:

‘When the House of Han arose, the evils of their predecessors had not passed away. Husbands still went off to the wars. The old and the young were employed in transporting food. Production was almost at a standstill, and money had become scarce. Even the Son of Heaven had not carriage-horses of the same colour; the
highest civil and military authorities rode in bullock-carts, and the people at large knew not where to lay their heads.'

The times called for a strong leader. He came in the person of the northern Liu Pang—a village warden on the Han River, after which his dynasty is called. Getting into trouble through negligence, he became a bandit, and gathering an army, made himself master of China in 206 B.C. Making Ch’ang-an his capital, he beat back the nomads of the north-west, and inaugurated an era of expansion. He established the national cult of K’ung Fu-tse by visiting the tomb of the Sage, and offering sacrifice to his spirit.

China’s reverence for her greatest son is thus expressed in a famous passage in the Odes:

While reading the works of K’ung Fu-tse, I have always fancied I could see the man as he was in life; and when I went to Shantung I actually beheld his carriage, his robes, and the material parts of his ceremonial usages. There were his descendants practising the old rites in their ancestral home, and I lingered on, unable to tear myself away. Many are the princes and prophets that the world has seen in its time, glorious in life, forgotten in death. But K’ung, though only a humble member of the cotton-clothed masses, remains among us for many generations. He is the model for such as would be wise. By all, from the Son of Heaven down to the meanest student, the supremacy of his principles is fully and freely admitted. He may indeed be pronounced the divinist of men.1

The Han Dynasty realized the great value of the teachings of K’ung Fu-tse: ‘I grieve for this,’ said Hui-ti, the second emperor, in 189 B.C., as he saw the damage to music and rites done by the burning of the books; and he and his successors made strenuous efforts to collect the scattered fragments. Themselves of lowly origin, the Han emperors became patrons of learning. In 150 B.C. Ching-ti, a son of the fifth emperor, was enlarging his palace in Lu, and demolished the house where K’ung Fu-tse himself had lived. Hidden in a wall were copies of

1 H. A. Giles, Chinese Literature, pp. 103 ff.
the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and of the *Analects*. Before the end of the dynasty, all the classics were incised on marble slabs, to protect them from further catastrophe or change. For the recovered copies of the *Analects* were found to differ in certain points, and the fixing of the canon was done by Imperial command. This is one reason for the Chinese regard for the Han: another is their success in war. They paid the bills by a poll-tax: and by a uniform levy of five per cent. on all property.

The most noteworthy of the Han emperors in this field is Wu-ti, who came on the stage in 140 B.C. as sixth emperor, and reigned fifty-four years. For more than half of this time he was at war, driving back the Huns of the north-west, conquering Turkistan, and pushing the frontiers of China as far as Parthia. He also annexed the northern part of Korea and reconquered the southern kingdom of Yueh, which had revolted. He completed the colonization of Kan-su and Manchuria, and acquired immense new territories.

But he also sent embassies of peace to many neighbours, and showed a scientific spirit of investigation. At his command the great explorer Chang Ch’ien (whose Odyssey from 138 to 125 B.C. is full of adventure and of marvel) penetrated the Tarim basin, and determined the routes to India by Khotan and Kabul, and so to the sea. He thus opened up trade with the West, and an embassy from Marcus Antoninus is said to have come to China towards the end of the dynasty. Certainly the Romans delighted in her silks, and knew her people as the Seres or silk-folk. Throughout this era Persian influence was increasingly felt, and Greek medicine introduced. Pills, powders, and poultices were made, and a Chinese *materia medica* compiled. Greek geography, too, made itself felt: a third century map of China being made in squares representing definite areas, after the Greek manner.

Chang Ch’ien seems to have acquired other important knowledge such as that of the sources of the Yangtse, and of the customs of the frontiersmen; he also brought
back the grape, alfalfa, and hemp, as well as the bamboo, the walnut, and other useful plants.

Another explorer, T'ang-mang, was in the meantime busy penetrating from Canton up the valley of the Si-kiang.

Did they bring too the first news of Buddhism and its art? It seems certain that one of the Chinese generals had brought back images and monks as early as 217 B.C., and it may well be that others came with caravans from India and Balkh, or by the southern route.

New religious ideas and a new art were slowly penetrating China during this period of her political expansion; as we shall see, the seepage was to become by the end of the era a mighty flood. And if China needed great men at this time, she also needed new ideals and a new hope. It was an age of pessimism and of superstition. Like contemporary Rome, China, great in empire, was weak in spirit. Men sought certainty from omens and wizards: necromancy offered assurances of a dim life after death, and the official religions had no clear word to utter. We see Confucianism and Taoism entering into an alliance, more or less official, with one another, and with the magicians, and recognizing the gods and spirits of the barbarians.

Many of the early Han emperors were at once organizers and revivers of Confucianism and superstitious clients of the magicians. Thus we find Wu-ti, like Ch'in-shih Huang-ti before him, described as a dupe of these practitioners. This credulity led to a family tragedy. His son and heir was accused by a minister of using magic to destroy his father: who thereupon had him and all his family barbarously executed.

It is difficult to form a just estimate of Wu-ti. A great imperialist, a soldier, and an administrator, who carried further the attack of his predecessors on the great feudal families, he was in constant need of money and obtained it at times by unjust means, using informers, selling office and titles when the poor could bear no more burdens, and lavishing upon his own palaces and gardens immense sums.
He sought to fight profiteering by setting up State monopolies in salt and iron, an imperial mint, and a transport system. A great patron of learning, he was at the same time the victim of the magicians, longed for immortality and for commerce with genii and fairies, and himself became the high-priest of a syncretist cult. A new god inaugurating a new age, he continued old practices of consulting tortoise-shells and chicken-bones for oracles, and of animal sacrifices on high places, and spent great sums on alchemy and spiritualism.

He sought to impress the world with the splendour of his person and household, rather than to unify the State: his fiscal reforms aimed at the creation of royal by the extinction of seignorial rights, and taxation remained a kind of tribute or a way to advancement. It is a tragedy that he found no far-sighted minister to check his own opportunist policies, and to create a unified state. Restless and despotic, he was surrounded by men of narrow outlook. But the tragedy is relieved by his repentance and the repeal of unjust measures before his death in 87 B.C. Ruthless to opposition, his despotism continued to the end, and it was in spite of him that his line continued.

When, suspicious of witchcraft, he executed his son and all his family, one infant, reported to be a grandson of the prince, was saved and brought up by the jailor with his own children: and in due course became eighth emperor in 75 B.C. These early years of poverty proved useful to Hsüan-ti, for he sympathized with the poor, and he and his peasant wife brought a breath of domestic goodness into a court which during almost the whole era was the scene of scandal and intrigue.

The story of the rulers of China as a whole is the story of sinister feminine influence, and the Han were no exception. The poor groaned under excessive taxation, which went to pay for the extravagances of the royal mistresses. One of them, the dancing girl Chao-fei-yen ('Flying Swallow'), was actually made empress, and the bad example of the court led officials everywhere to oppress the peasants,
and to live lives of idle luxury. Nepotism was rife, and the power of the eunuchs a menace. Honours were sold, and justice too was venal.

By the beginning of the Christian era the time was ripe for a revolt. A new usurper appeared in Wang Mang. He was appointed grand marshal by his aunt the aged Dowager Empress, and in 8 B.C. the boy emperor P'ing-ti was married to his daughter. But Wang Mang stopped at nothing, poisoned his son-in-law at the very moment when he was worshipping in the Temple of Heaven, and by A.D. 9 had proclaimed himself emperor—founding a one-man dynasty, that of Sin, the New.

He ruled well, was spartan in his habits, and active in reform. Reverting to ancient models, he sought to take China back to a more primitive economic system. But many things of abiding value, such as a new and uniform currency, and the abolition of slavery, are to his credit: 'From now on,' he proclaimed, 'the slave is his own property,'—'and,' he added, 'the land belongs to the State.'

This, too, was a much-needed reform; for great estates had been filched from the people; but it meant vassalage for all. If the people could not be sold, neither could the land; and a number of monopolies were created—in salt, wood, and water, for example: a kind of nationalization of the necessities of life. Public storehouses were built, prices regulated, works of irrigation begun, and ministries of Agriculture, of Public Works, and of Forests, set up.

In the reforms of Wang Mang there is then an interesting blend of a kind of state socialism with archaic centralization of power: and he himself was a complex and baffling personality. Lofty idealism and dastardly crimes, ripe scholarship and fanatical superstition, simplicity of life and overweening egoism, are found side by side in this remarkable ruler, whom China has agreed to regard as a traitor, but who nevertheless did much for the 'blue-clothed multitudes'.

Chinese history has been too exclusively written by
officials. Wang Mang 'made all vested interests his enemies', and they have taken their revenge in painting a very dark picture of him.

The social and political changes of this first period of the Han Dynasty, from Liu Pang to Wang Mang, cover almost exactly two centuries. The founder of the dynasty, like its first disrupter, sought centralization, but realized, as Wang Mang did not, that the support of the people as a whole, and of the army and great barons in particular, was essential to stable government. He saw to it that men of his family held the chief positions; he divided the empire into many districts directly responsible to the throne, and we read of 143 of his officers as well as of his eight sons, receiving grants of land.

Wen-ti, the fourth emperor (179—156 B.C), is memorable for certain humane reforms—modifying the appalling punishments of the time, which included castration and loss of nose and feet. His successor, Ching-ti (156—140), made further inroads into feudalism by confiscation of the estates of seven leading vassals who had rebelled against him, and by bringing all such landed gentry under authority of the imperial officials.

Wu-ti much further subdivided the empire, and brought the ablest men to the capital, so centralizing power. He was guilty of gross nepotism, and court intrigues on the part of the empresses and their kindred play a great part in this era of decay.

The rôle played by women and eunuchs in the affairs of the Han was undoubtedly a main factor in their fall: even the strong Wu-ti was weak and sensual in his private life, and flaunted his harem before his people.

Well do the Odes declare

A clever man builds a city,
A clever woman lays it low.

But neither they, nor K'ung Fu-tse, nor the China which quotes them, realize that it is a clever man too often in her long history who has brought women low.
III

The story passes now to the Eastern Han. Wang Mang having succeeded in making himself disliked by powerful interests, certain Han princes found no great difficulty in getting a following. Liu Siu, leader of a rebel band and descendant of one of the Han emperors, defeated and slew Wang Mang, burnt his capital, and set up his head in the market-place.

Becoming emperor as Kuang Wu-ti (A.D. 25—58), he transferred his capital to Lo-yang in the east, and made himself a noteworthy ruler. He was a Confucian scholar, and carried on the work of the earlier Han in reconciling Taoism and Confucianism, and in making religion the basis for loyalty to the throne. Education was encouraged, and moral and religious ideals were taught in the schools. The emperor's time of exile and hardship yielded good fruit too in his care for the poor. He had a census of people and lands taken, and redeemed the name of his house.

His successor Ming-ti (A.D. 58—76) is credited with his initiative in summoning to Lo-yang a Buddhist mission. Their coming marks an era more momentous than that of the conqueror Wu-ti. It gave to the Chinese new concepts of god and man, new art forms, a new mystical philosophy, a new spiritual impetus.

It is significant that the first book to be printed in China was the Diamond Cutter Sutra, which is strangely unlike any of the Chinese classics, and has exerted great influence. It is a difficult work of transcendent and mystical nature, only to be understood by the initiate, and very different from the social ethic of the Analects.

Buddhism has in fact succeeded in China because it is complementary to her native religions. As an eminent Chinese writer, himself no friend of Buddhism, says, 'It came with irresistible force ... it broke down the fatalism of Confucianism and Taoism ... and brought home to the

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1 Critical scholarship finds in the story of his dream a pious fraud.
Chinese the idea of the indestructibility of the soul, for neither Confucianism nor Taoism maintained the importance of personal salvation.\textsuperscript{1}

The first act of the missionaries was to settle at Loyang, where in the Pai-ma-se, or White Horse Monastery, the emperor established them. Their little book,\textit{ The Sutra of Forty-two Sayings}, is much more intelligible than the \textit{Diamond Cutter}. It puts the wisdom of the Buddha into Confucian form: as the \textit{Analects} begin each section, ‘The Master said,’ so this little missionary tract is a series of paragraphs, each beginning, ‘The Buddha said’.

It contains monastic precepts which were to have immense influence on China: sets forth the Buddhist virtues and vices: reminds the reader that no one can harm the good man; that to attempt to do so is like spitting at Heaven; that evil desire is the dust which clouds the mirror of the mind; that forbearance is the way of peace.

This is all sound monastic Buddhism of the orthodox Theravada type, and Chinese piety was startled by the saying, ‘Man is shackled by wife and child as in a prison’. Nor did the ideal of a sexless purity ‘like lotus-blossoms in a muddy pool’ appeal to many. But, as if to answer the criticism, the Sutra goes on to tell of a monk who was homesick in the monastery, and who when the Master asked him, ‘What did you do at home?’ replied, ‘I loved to play the lute.’ ‘O monk,’ said the wise Teacher, ‘if you played it with lax string or with string too tightly stretched, what music did it give? Just as a lute must be tuned, so if the mind is to reach the harmony of Nirvana it must be exercised: let it be neither lax nor over-taut.’ In a word, the right kind of discipline is needed—not austerity, but asceticism.

The book ends with a contrast between the mirage of rank and wealth and the abiding realities of the True Way. All things are passing but Nirvana.

For the next three centuries many missionaries poured into China from India and the hinterland—men like An-

\textsuperscript{1} Hu Shih in \textit{Chinese Social and Political Review}, vol. xi, pp. 142-50 \textit{passim}. 
shi-kao of Parthia, who translated the popular Amitabha scriptures, and the great Kumarajiva, contemporary of Fa Hian and Kalidasa—whose translations of such works as the *Lotus of the Good Law* are still classics. Their optimistic promises of Buddhahood or of Paradise, and their apocalyptic visions, profoundly moved China; and their influence is manifest in the awakening of the pictorial arts. From the flat bas-reliefs on Han tombs to the strong sculptured images of Buddha and his disciples in the great caves at Lung-men is an immense advance. And with it China passes out of a dim flat world of spirits, good and bad, to a world of powerful and compassionate gods visualized in superhuman form. Weariness had numbed the soul of Han China as of imperial Rome its contemporary; and to both came a refreshing tide of other-worldly faith and of hope for this life; and a new concept of personality, human and divine, was its fruit.

In China as in Rome, men were seeking guidance from omens, and thronging the booths of the magicians—when there came to both the assurance that truth and right will prevail in a world governed by benevolent law, and that the way of salvation is open to all men of goodwill.

If there is any literature sadder than that of the world-weary Roman, it is that of the Han general, Li-ling, whose letter provides our fourth illustrative reading. And with this we may compare the rosy picture of the Paradise of Amitabha, where there is no more sorrow and sighing, no more want, but jewels and music and joy. And as to the exile of Patmos came the promise ‘There shall be no more sea,’ so to the mountaineers of the frontier a land flat as well as fertile is promised hereafter.

In other words, Buddhist apocalyptic writings came into this weary land as the Christian ‘Revelation’ came to the sad world of slave and martyr and prisoner in the Roman empire.

To the scholar and the prosperous, too, Buddhism made its appeal: as Christianity launched its message to the intellectuals in its Gospel according to St. John, so the
Buddhist missionaries to Han China translated the philosophical treatises of Nagarjuna and of other schoolmen, and many a world-weary politician, as to-day, began to find solace in the transcendentalism of these scriptures, and in the mountain-temples a refuge from the world.

That no Chinese were ordained for several centuries testifies to the national conservatism, and of the power of the Confucian literati, who objected that Buddhism was both unnatural and superstitious, and who, as we have seen, set up at this time the cult of K'ung Fu-tse, and made an alliance with Taoist philosophy.

The Taoists were later to imitate the Buddhist cultus; already in the Han era they were beginning the practice of adopting public men into the pantheon as 'Heavenly Counsellors'. But Confucian scholars have kept up a continuous attack on Buddhism as a foreign superstition, and Lao-tse has been deified to offset the worship of Sakyamuni.

The Han emperors swung between these different groups. We have seen Liu Pang worshipping the spirit of K'ung Fu-tse. Wu-ti, at first a good Confucian, became the dupe of magicians. His mother's influence has been blamed for this degeneration; but the court as a whole was given over to alchemy: the transmutation of metals and the quest of the elixir of life were the vogue. No wonder the Sutra of Forty-two Sayings insists that, 'Gold and precious stones are as brick or sand,' and calls men to the undying treasures of the true immortality!

IV

Of the family life of the Han Dynasty it may be said that its laxity is relieved by certain examples of filial piety. They were often good sons and usually bad fathers. Liu Heng, a son of the founder by a concubine, showed his devotion to his mother by refusing to change his clothes for three years after her death. He is one of the twenty-four classical examples of filial piety—a strange exception
to the usual humour of the Chinese, and to their insistence upon sanity and right relations. Surely this is to forget the claims of the living in an immoderate and theatrical filial piety.

If we compare with this piety Wu-ti's butchery of the whole family of his son and heir, we may get a fair picture of the Han, whose passions were strong, and whose natural affections were too often blunted by licence. They were often poets and scholars: Liu-che the sixth emperor, for example, was a great patron of the arts and of literature. Under him flourished the historian Sse-ma-ch'ien and other writers, and he emphasized the importance of music in education.

The Shih-chi or 'Historical Record' of Sse-ma-ch'ien is a history of China for a thousand years down to the writer's time (100 B.C.). It has 130 chapters, and is arranged under five heads: (1) Annals of the Throne, (2) Chronological Tables, (3) Music, Rites, Calendar, &c., (4) Annals of the Nobility, (5) Biographies of Eminent Men. Loose and incoherent in style, yet it became the model for all Chinese history. Written on bamboo tablets, this immense book of over half a million words was printed on paper at a later date. For both are early Chinese inventions, paper being made in the Han era, and block-prints some centuries later. Already by the end of the second century A.D. rubbings were being taken of the incised stone tablets of the Confucian books, and in A.D. 400 the invention of ink led on to the use of wood-blocks. The first experiments in book-printing were made as early as the sixth century in Buddhist monasteries, and Japan is the proud possessor of the oldest printed book in existence, made in A.D. 770, very near the beginnings of her civilization.

As we have seen, this age recovered and edited the Classics. In A.D. 175 they were engraved on stone, and from now on the Book of Rites, the Book of History, the Book of Changes, the Book of Odes and the musical airs arranged by K'ung Fu-tse to accompany them, are models, and with, his dry record of the State of Lu—Spring and Autumn
Annals—are the Five Classics of China. They are a valuable source-book for early Chinese ideas, and are being critically edited so that we can say to a large extent what is of great antiquity, and what belongs to Chou and Han editors.

Some 5 of the 305 Odes belong to the second millennium B.C., the majority to the first.

Similarly of the Book of History about one-third is pronounced to be forgery; yet it contains much belonging to the times with which it deals.

The Book of Changes is a work of divination—all the more esteemed because it is unintelligible,¹ and from all these classics China has drawn inspiration and guidance. In them her officials have been examined since the Han era, and they and the Four Books have been the core of her educational system for two thousand years.

These Four Books are: the Lun Yu or Analects compiled by the disciples of K'ung Fu-tse; the Ta Hsieh or Great Learning—compiled in the Han era from the Book of Rites: the Doctrine of the Mean, Chung Yung, also a Han work, and a key to the understanding of Chinese moderation and sanity in morals and art as well as in institutions. Last of the Four is the Teachings of Meng-tse; and if China owes much to these great works she has been to a large extent shackled by them. Not only their ideas, but their form and idiom have been binding upon her scholars for two thousand years, and made her mentally sluggish. Part of her present awakening is a rebellion against this bondage of the past.

Chinese literature has been tortured on this Procrustean bed. But the poets of Han enjoyed freedom and a measure of spontaneity. Most of their lyrics are songs, and it is impossible to reproduce them or even to suggest their rich content for the Chinese mind and eye, which revel in the characters as much as in the sound, and in the allusions as much as in the actual content.

¹ The key to the Eight Diagrams of this early system may be lingual or mathematical: and they may yet become intelligible. If they are really mathematical then, by the third millennium B.C., China had discovered the method of symbolizing values by position—as we do.
Perhaps the illustrative passages at the end of the chapter will suffice as specimens of this literature, and it may be compared both with its classical predecessors, the Odes, and with its T'ang imitators. We can read here the sadness of the age and the other-worldly comfort offered by Buddhism; the greatness of empire and its cost; the joys of the simple life and the artificial luxuries of the court; the artistry of nature in all her moods. Poets turn away from the sad world of men to that of animals and birds and trees, or to the security of monastic life.

Some of this poetry is especially interesting as the work of men like Wu-ti or women like Hsi-chun, a type of many poetesses of the age, who had good cause for tears. And in the works of Wang-I (A.D. 120) and his son Wang Yen-shou there are some great poems. The latter's 'Ape' is as good as Ralph Hodgson's 'Bull', or Rupert Brooke's 'Fish'.

The Shi-chi is a semi-historical work—a precursor of the long Chinese novel, and its interest in the common man is symbolic of a new age.

Astronomers as well as astrologers were busy during the later Han era with the problems of solar and lunar calendars, and some such as Liu Hung obtained notable results. Hemispheres and seismographs were made by Chia-k'uei. A drawing of one ingenious and artistic instrument of his has been preserved. It is a copper cylinder with dragons' heads, each holding a ball in its jaws. Below sit frogs open-mouthed, and this amazing instrument is said to have worked successfully even in the case of a distant earthquake—the dragon of that direction dropping his ball into the frog's mouth!

It is not easy to see why China needed so bizarre a seismograph; but the same people also invented gunpowder, and used it for fireworks. The age of invention began early in China, but for the age of 'the invention of invention' the world, both East and West, waited almost two millennia.

Prognostication and divination went on side by side with such beginnings of scientific investigation: the former
HAN BRONZES
by the use of the Eight Diagrams, the latter by that of tortoise-shells and chicken-bones. A good history, that of Pan Ku (d. A.D. 98) has much information as to peoples ancient and contemporary. The Canon of the Chinese script was compiled about A.D. 200. It contains over 10,000 characters and variants, and is based largely upon the Classics.

But perhaps the chief achievements of the Han Age are the discovery of the art of paper-making in A.D. 105 and the development of the brush for writing and painting on both paper and silk. These were to make her greatest arts possible. Potters, ironsmiths, and other skilled craftsmen abounded, and the age was fruitful of luxuries. Our illustration shows a very delicate painting: the earliest Chinese brushwork known to us, it is on the lid of a lady’s toilet box, and is eloquent of a luxurious age.

In spite of all these achievements the era ended in ignominy in A.D. 220 after a long struggle between eunuchs and scholars, and the chaos which follows is the result of long years of anarchy, till China breaks up into the Three Kingdoms—Han on the west, Wei on the north-east, and Wu on the south-east.

It is a dark tale yet full of adventure and romance. The greatest Chinese novel, San Kuo or ‘The Three Kingdoms’, deals with the years 190–220—the decline and fall of the house of Han; and the theatre has no more popular figures than the protagonists in this struggle, though none of them was great or good. This vast novel, an epic of Han China, is the work of a great artist, and though no western mind can follow its great crowds of actors, yet the chiefs are strongly and clearly portrayed. As in our own modern novels there is no plot, and as in life the figures come and go and vanish from our ken.

Ts’ao Ts’ao, wily and treacherous, is a successful general who subdued the Yellow Turbans, and slew the last Emperor Hsien-ti in 215. With the loyal and generous Kuan Yu Chang—later worshipped as God of War—he is the hero of the book. ‘The most popular man in China,
type of the successful scoundrel,' says Père Wieger,¹ who has
given a long and studious life to China and the Church, and
writes caustically of much which China admires. There is
indeed much to criticize in the post-Han rulers. The suffer­
ings of the people during two centuries were indescribable.
Famine and war reduced the population in the first half
of the third century, and in the fourth Turks ravaged and
plundered the Han capital Loyang, as well as Ch'ang-an,
that of the earlier dynasty. It is in tragic contrast with the
great empire of the first century of the era, which extended
east to Korea, south to Cambodia, west to Tibet, and
north to Inner Mongolia. So the Dark Ages come down
on China, leaving her old civilization shattered but not
ruined—still capable of a glorious renaissance. For in
these dark centuries the spiritual forces of Buddhism were
at work with those of Taoism and Confucianism to produce
another great awakening. The first five centuries of the
Christian era are for China a period of travail. Many
great Buddhist scholars were at work translating the
scriptures, Fa Hian was bringing back inspiration from
Guptan India; Bodhidharma the quietist and Chi-i the
systematizer were at work in monastery retreats to give to
China a spiritual and philosophic basis for her national life.

Nor must we forget Confucian scholars like K'ung Jung,
put to death by Ts'ao Ts'ao, but not before he had written
some fine poetry. A descendant of K'ung Fu-tse in the
twentieth generation, he reminds us that the great tradi­
tion of the Sage lived on unbroken.² Ts'ao Ts'ao himself
was an accomplished scholar and poet, of whom a rousing
drinking-song has come down to us.

The Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove were a third-
century group of poets and musicians who make it notable,
and the tale of China's literary men is a long one even in
this age, so unfavourable to the arts of peace.

Pagodas and temples also continued to rise, and massive
images of Amitabha Buddha and Kwan-yin were sculp­
tured in stone or cast in bronze. We read of one image

¹ China throughout the Ages, E. T., p. 410. ² See Illustrative Reading II (d).
KU K'AI-CHIH'S SCROLL

‘ADMONITIONS OF A COURT-LADY’
forty-three feet high, and the noble sculptures of Yung-
kang and Lung-men were being made, a reminder to all
men of other-worldly peace in the midst of turmoil and
travail-pains. Of painting, alas! almost nothing remains—
but enough to prove that China had risen to mastery in
this field also.

The scroll of the ‘Admonitions of the Lady Historian’
by Ku K’ai-chih, painted in the fourth century and illu­
strating a third-century book, is a superb work. Whether
it is an early copy or an original, this great masterpiece
shows to what good effect the brush was being wielded.
Earlier than the greatest of the Ajanta frescoes, this is the
work of a master. Over eleven feet long, it has eight
scenes, which no one who sees them can forget. They tell
tales familiar to ancient China, the brave lady of the Court
confronting a bear, who is seen rushing towards the
emperor; another, equally brave, refusing to ride in his
palanquin; a toilet scene of great elegance, and so on. One
has interesting architectural details, and one a primitive
landscape, very naïve in contrast to the finished and mature
painting of the figures, stately and tall princesses, clad in
flowing robes, which speak of a high civilization.

In actual beauty, modulated brush line, ravishingly sweet yet
confident in power, no painting of later ages surpasses this [writes
Laurence Binyon of this work]. It is suave and tender, yet never
soft or weak; firm and precise, yet never dry. The calligraphic
element is there, as in all Chinese painting; but there is also lifelike-
ness and marrow. How beautifully felt is the action of the hands
of the tall maiden knotting up the veil of hair in the toilet scene!
How delightfully realized the boy struggling on his nurse’s knees!
How one feels pride, courage, and will in the attitude of the lady
who faces the raging bear! How the bearers groan and struggle
under the weight of the palanquin bearing the serene Emperor!1

It was said of this great artist that he excelled in poetry,
in painting, and in folly. Laurence Binyon quotes a good
saying attributed to him: ‘It is easier to illustrate the verse,
The hand sweeps the four strings of the lute than this other

1 Painting in the Far East, pp. 42-3.
verse, *The eyes follow the flight of the wild goose*. This contrast between the painting of the artificial and the natural is admirably illustrated by his only surviving work, and may well suggest the beginnings of that mastery of bird-painting which was to become characteristic of Chinese art.

Strangely different in style is the archaic (or better archaizing) scroll attributed to Ku K’ai-chih in the Freer Collection at Washington. It depicts a fairy paradise of the Taoists, and is possibly a very early copy of a scroll by this great master. For Chinese artists adapt their style with uncanny skill to suit their theme, and a court scene calls for realism much more than a heavenly paradise.

A list of his works shows that in addition to secular and to Taoist themes Ku K’ai-chih was fond of Buddhist subjects, and the tale of his subscription to a Buddhist monastery is revealing. Having rashly put himself down for a million cash the artist entered into the monastery, painted a vast fresco of the lay saint Vimalakirti and collected the money from the crowds who came to gaze at it. Ku K’ai-chih was in a word an original and erratic genius, and as such he is typical of this age, a time of revolt from the conventional.

As the Court and Throne weakened, the revolt of Lao-tse against convention and propriety made itself felt. ‘I don’t crook my back for cash,’ said Tao-chien on being appointed a magistrate. His poem on his retirement is justly a classic. Like the Indian Vanaprastha, the Chinese poet had consolations in leaving the world.

The development of sculpture within the Han and early post-Han era is of great interest. We can watch the impulse of Buddhism at work—and with it that of Hellenism and of Scythian and Iranian cultures. Most characteristic are the bas-reliefs of Han tombs. Two series of these, one dated 129 and the other A.D. 147–9 are in Shantung, the province of K’ung Fu-tse; and we may accept the view that they are attempts to make fresco permanent. In other words, this art is copied from a developed fresco painting,
HAN SCULPTURE
and conventional as it often is, shows mastery of outline and design.

K'ung Fu-tse is said to have seen frescoes of figures of good and evil spirits and of a court of justice at the Chou Court; and in the great architectural era of the Han its practice no doubt continued. In early Korean graves such frescoes have been found; their sinuous line and delicate charm is akin to the applied art of our illustration. These and the grave-sculptures of China are made with the idea of giving the spirits lasting pleasure. The subjects are historical and mythical, and sometimes the incised surface is filled with coloured gesso: the figures are often life-like and vigorous—processions of splendid chariots and cavalry in which the Chinese love for horses comes out as vividly as that of India for elephants; and historical scenes which tell us much of their civilization. Here is a frieze in the flat, and also a precursor of Japan’s inimitable battle scrolls.

It was an age of architectural activity, and we see here tiled roofs, decorated walls and columns with splendid finials of phoenix and other heraldic birds. We read of a famous Palace of the Copper Cocks, and in a poem of Wang Yen-shou written in the reign of Wu-ti is a delightful description of the decorative arts used in such palaces: the details, as Ashton points out, following almost line for line those details of the Wu reliefs only sixteen miles away:

On moulding and on panel lotuses upright
Breathe art and beauty, bud and opening flower:
Poppies burst, and drop their petals white:
The wood takes on the form of birds in flight,
And beasts: see here the tiger leaps to 'light
Upon his prey: his hair bristles with power.

The extraordinary vigour of this early art rises to greatness in a phoenix discovered in 1914, ‘possibly the finest piece of Han sculpture extant,’ says Ashton.

‘The pose . . . is superb, one leg indolently raised to step forward. Both wings are open, beating the air with lofty pinions; the tail flaunts behind and the proud carriage is marked in every curve of

1 Aften L. Ashton, An Introduction to Chinese Sculpture, p. 23.
the body, in every turn of the head. The technique is of the simplest, a free-cut outline, a slight modelling of body, wings and talons, a series of deep-cut lines to indicate the decoration of feathers. The simplicity emphasizes the grandeur of the design.¹

These early animal and bird forms suggest Scythian influence, and it is possible that they were also influenced by Sumerian art—which rejoiced in the decoration of long lines of figures and processions. There is certainly a continuity between Chou bronze decoration and this heraldic animal art, and in that early Chinese achievement there is something of the power and rhythmic movement of the Scythians. But what is of more interest and has much stronger historical basis is the influence of the Buddhist missions. This can be readily grasped by comparing early Han art with that of the Northern Wei of the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. We can see the flat bas-relief giving place, first to deep-cut reliefs, and then to fully sculptured figures.

These Tartar conquerors came from the region of Lake Baikal into northern China in A.D. 311 and founded a dynasty with its capital at Ta-t'ung-fu in north Shensi, and later at Lo-yang. They became Buddhists, and great patrons of painting and sculpture, and the caves near both their capitals remain as their memorial, full of images of the Buddhist Pantheon. Our illustrations show their interest in the Buddha legend. Above is the delivery and the reception of the infant Siddartha by the gods. Below Queen Maya stands under a highly conventionalized tree, and the child begins to walk, a lotus springing up at each step. Beside him stands the foal Kanthaka with his mother, and the Bodhi tree with a tree-spirit in it. The tree is here represented apparently as a genko—a Chinese tree—and the costumes of the long graceful figures are all Chinese. The new impetus of the great themes of Buddhism is evident, and the incised stone, like early Han carvings, is still strongly influenced by painting.

Some of the figures of the Yun-kang and Lung-men

EARLY TARTAR BUDDHIST STELES ILLUSTRATING
THE BUDDHA'S BIRTH
(6th Century A.D.)
caves are earlier still and show the same graceful curves—notably an image of Kwan-yin floating on the clouds, which prepares us for the masterpieces of the next era. These caves, the first series at Ta-t'ung-fu, the second near Lo-yang, are to early China what the Ajanta caves are to India, and like them preserve for the student a series of works of art of the fifth and sixth centuries. Hollowed out of low cliffs, they are fashioned into halls of worship, and supported on pillars. All, at one time, like Ajanta, glowed with rich colour: now only broken sculptures remain; but there is enough to show us that the art of the Tartars blended influences from Gandhara and India on the one hand and from China on the other. The grottoes of Lung-men were dedicated by an empress in the year 516, and a Chinese visitor has inscribed the poem: 'Here the rocks themselves attain to Buddhahood'. Here as at Ajanta, a stream runs past a sheer cliff, and here dwelt the great poet Li-po of the T'ang era.

Once again we see Buddhism at its work of refining the barbarian and bringing to the civilized a new impetus. The work of these Tartar sculptors is noteworthy for 'the genius of rhythm' of which Chinese art henceforth is to make so much, and it may be studied in a stele set up in A.D. 534.¹ Here are Sakyamuni and two Bodhisattvas: one is Kwan-yin, and one seems to be Manjusri. They represent compassion and wisdom, twin qualities of the enlightened, and above their heads fly heavenly choirs. The inscription is of interest as revealing the reverent spirit of these Tartars, and the stele is a living link between Han and T'ang, and a proof that in the inspiration of Buddhist art on Chinese dark ages, all was not dark. China was in fact learning much from the outer world: from Syria the art of making glass, from Persia the arts of design in rich fabrics, and from the Indo-Bactrian world the technique of fresco-painting. If she learnt from Iranians how to sit on chairs she taught them how to make silk. Buddhist friars carried as far as Constantinople silk-

¹ Now in the Philadelphia Museum.
worms hidden in their bamboo staffs, and brought back from their travels Indian books, images, and the knowledge of western kingdoms. Soaring pagodas such as they describe at Nalanda began to rise on many a lovely hillside, and by the shores of lake and ocean, and the unification of Asiatic civilization went on apace. No longer was China an island ‘within the four seas’ of barbarism. The ‘barbarians’ are in fact now becoming parts of China—Hiung-nu chiefs and other nomads, Tibetans, and Wei Tartars. All in turn set up dynasties, and from 316 to 446 north China sees the rise and fall of sixteen kingdoms, while in southern China the eastern Chin give place to other Chinese families—Sung, Ch’i, Liang, and Ch’en—all ruling in Nanking. One of the Liang, Yuan-ti, was a minor poet who when forced to abdicate, ended a reign of violence and an era by destroying 200,000 books and paintings, crying, ‘The culture of Liang ends with Yuan-ti!’

The barbarians themselves often married Chinese ladies of lesser families, and were gradually absorbed into Chinese life; patrons of Buddhism, they did little else to promote civilization.

Not until the seventh century is there any serious attempt to re-unite the empire against the Turks or Tukueh. This is the work of Sui (589–618) and of T’ang (618–906) with whom Chinese culture attains another glorious epoch. More catholic than that of Han, the civilization of Sui and T’ang is yet rooted in the classic past, and in calling themselves sons of T’ang as well as sons of Han the Chinese people are claiming to be protagonists of a civilization rather than founders of an empire.

The principal Chinese Dynasties are:

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<td>Han</td>
<td>A.D. 220–264</td>
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THE SPIRIT OF HAN

I. Pre-Han Policy

In the thirty-fourth year of the First Emperor (213 B.C.) the Emperor held a feast in the Hsien Yang Palace. Huen-yu-yueh, one of the seventy doctors of the Imperial Court, said to the Emperor: ‘That the Shiang and Chou dynasties lasted over a thousand years, was because both had created their generals members of the royal family, as vassal lords who acted as the outposts and supporters of the central government. Now that your majesty has united the whole empire, your children and members of your household possess no titles nor land. In case of usurpation of power by some of the ministers, how can the dynasty maintain itself without outside help? Actions which are not modelled after the wise ancients, can never last long.’ The Emperor thereupon ordered this advice to be considered by his counsellors. The Prime Minister Li Sze presented this reply: ‘The Five Emperors did not exactly copy one another, nor did the Three Dynasties mould their policies each after its predecessor.

Yet each dynasty achieved its own success, not because they wanted to differ from one another, but because they had to deal with entirely different times and conditions...’

But the Prime Minister went on to say: ‘In former days the several contending states greatly encouraged private teaching and travelling scholars. Now that the empire is settled laws and ordinances proceed from a unitary source, the common people should devote themselves only to farming and the crafts, and the children need only to know the laws to avoid things that are forbidden. But
the scholars of to-day refuse to study the present, and devote them­ selves to the ancients on whose authority they dare to criticize the government and mislead the people.

‘Your majesty's servant, the Prime Minister, therefore ventures to say this. In olden times when the world was in great disorder, and without a unifying authority, there arose numerous schools of thought, each upholding the ancients to block the policies of the present, each cunningly adorning its empty speculations to the confounding of reality, and each praising its own teaching with which to criticize the actions of the government. Now that your Majesty has united the whole empire, and established a unitary authority for the judgement of right and wrong (literally of black and white), therefore, all those who uphold their own teaching and criticize the laws, who entertain secret opposition to the government and even openly deliberate upon its acts and policies, who take pride in disobedience and rebelliousness, who lead the people in creating complaints against the government,—all these, if not proscribed, will tend to lower the prestige of the government and create parties and partisanship among the people. It is expedient that these be proscribed.

Your majesty's servant therefore recommends that all histories not kept by the Imperial Historian be burned: that, outside of the documents in the Imperial College, all literature and all books of the various schools in the possession of private individuals should be delivered to the magistrates of the several localities to be burned in their presence: that hereafter all those who dare to hold open discussions on the forbidden books should be held liable to capital punishment, that all who uphold the ancients to criticize the present government should be punished by death together with their whole families: that all officers of the law who fail to report any such offences within their knowledge should be punished with the same penalty as the offenders themselves: and that any one who fails to burn his books within thirty days after the date of the ordinance should be sentenced to periods of hard labour. Only books on medicine, divination, and horticulture are exempt from this law.

Hereafter, the people who wish to know the laws and orders of the government, should go to the officers of the law.’

And the Emperor decreed: ‘Let it be done’.

Sse-ma Kuang's History (Bk. VI).
II. Han Poems

(a) Wang Yen-shou, son of Wang I

(c. a.d. 130)

The Wangsun

Sublime was he, stupendous in invention,
Who planned the miracles of earth and sky.
Wondrous the power that charged
Small things with secret beauty, moving in them all.
See now the wangsun, crafty creature, mean of size,
Uncouth of form; the wrinkled face
Of an aged man; the body of a little child.
See how in turn he blinks and blenches with an air
Pathetically puzzled, dimly gazes
Under tired lids, through languid lashes
Looks tragic and hollow-eyed, rumples his brow,
Scatters this way and that
An insolent, astonished glare;
Sniffs and snorts, snuffs and sneezes,
Snick and cocks his knowing little ears!
Now like a dotard mouths and chews;
Or hoots and hisses through his pouted lips;
Shows gnashing teeth, grates and grinds ill-temperedly,
Gobbles and puffs and scolds.
And every now and then,
Down to his belly, from the larder that he keeps
In either cheek, he sends
Little consignments lowered cautiously.
Sometimes he squats
Like a puppy on his haunches, or hare-like humps
An arching back;
Smirks and wheedles with ingratiating sweetness;
Or suddenly takes to whining, surly snarling;
Then, like a ravening tiger, roars.

He lives in thick forests, deep among the hills,
Or houses in the clefts of sharp, precipitous rocks;
Alert and agile is his nature, nimble are his wits;
Swift are his contortions.

1 A kind of small ape.
Apt to every need,  
Whether he climb tall tree-stems of a hundred feet,  
Or sway on the shuddering shoulder of a long bough.  
Before him, the dark gullies of unfathomable streams;  
Behind, the silent hollows of the lonely hills.  
Twigs and tendrils are his rocking-chairs,  
On rungs of rotting wood he trips  
Up perilous places; sometimes, leap after leap,  
Like lightning flits through the woods.  
Sometimes he saunters with a sad, forsaken air;  
Then suddenly peeps round  
Beaming with satisfaction. Up he springs,  
Leaps and prances, whoops, and scampers on his way.  
Up cliffs he scrambles, up pointed rocks,  
Dances on shale that shifts or twigs that snap,  
Suddenly swerves and lightly passes. . . .  
Oh, what tongue could unravel  
The tale of all his tricks?  
Alas, one trait  
With the human tribe he shares; their sweets his sweet,  
Their bitter is his bitter. Off sugar from the vat  
Or brewer’s dregs he loves to sup.  
So men put wine where he will pass.  
How he races to the bowl!  
How nimbly licks and swills!  
Now he staggers, feels dazed and foolish,  
 Darkness falls upon his eyes. . . .  
He sleeps and knows no more.  
Up steal the trappers, catch him by the mane,  
Then to a string or ribbon tie him, lead him home;  
Tether him in the stable or lock him into the yard;  
Where faces all day long  
Gaze, gape, gasp at him, and will not go away.

Arthur Waley.

(Chinese Poems.)

(b) The Autumn Wind

By the Emperor Wu-ti (157–87 B.C.)

The wind of autumn rages, white clouds race,  
Trees and grasses wither, geese fly south apace.  
Yet orchids bloom and sweet chrysanthemum  
To call to mind my love; I cannot find relief.
White waves rise round us in mid-stream,
The rowers chant to lilt of lute and drum:
Amidst our feasting sad reflections come:
The foot of age how sure, youth's span of life how brief.

(c) The Price of Empire
(100 B.C.)

(The lady Hsi-chun, married to a nomad of Central Asia for political reasons, laments.)

My own people have married me off;
An exile in this far-off corner of earth.
They've sent me to an alien land
To the old chief of an alien clan;
My home a tent
With walls of felt,
My food raw meat
Mare's milk to drink:
Of mine own land I ever think,
And sad my lonely heart doth beat.
O that I were a yellow crane,
And to my own might fly again.

(d) K'ung-jung on his Dead Infant

The father sent on an imperial mission
Will return when the year is at an end,
And coming home will ask to see his son.
To hear only the wailing of the women . . .

Holding up his robes he'll seek the grave
Among damp wormwood and greenery:
There under a small mound lie the little bones,
The flesh is dust already on the wind,

Born, he knew not his begetter:
Dead, who will know his spirit,
Abandoned to wander in the darkness
Homeless and uncherished?

Ah! I had looked to you to bear my name
And still my thought cleaves to you, my child.
One's days are doubtless numbered, yet I cry
Why should Fate allot so few to you, ah why?
A Han Wedding

On both river banks a wedding,
The hour is here but no boat comes.
The longing heart is hopeless
Not seeing its heart’s desire.

III. Han Philosophy

Hsun-tse

You meditate on what makes a thing a thing:
Why not so order things as not to waste them?
You vainly seek the cause of things:
Why not lay hold of them and use them?
To neglect man and speculate about nature
Is to misunderstand the facts of the universe.

Han Fei

A wise man does not expect to follow ancient ways, nor to set up principles for all time. He studies the conditions of his own age, and then devises means to meet them.

When laws are adjusted to the times there is good government.
Subtle speculation is no business of the people... the actual need is common-sense.

Tr. Hu Shih.

IV

A Han Exile, Li Ling, to Tzu-Ching

O Tzu-ching, O my friend, happy in the enjoyment of a glorious reputation, happy in the prospect of an imperishable name,—there is no misery like exile in a far-off foreign land, the heart brimful of longing thoughts of home! I have thy kindly letter, bidding me to be of good cheer, kinder than a brother’s words; for which my soul thanks thee.

Ever since the hour of my surrender until now, destitute of all resource, I have sat alone with the bitterness of my grief. All day long I see none but barbarians around me. Skins and felt protect me from wind and rain. With mutton and whey I satisfy my hunger and slake my thirst. Companions with whom to while time away, I have none. The whole country is stiff with black ice. I hear naught but the moaning of the bitter autumn blast, beneath which all vegetation has disappeared. I cannot sleep at night. I turn and listen to the distant sound of Tartar pipes, to the whinnying of
Tartar steeds. In the morning I sit up and listen still, while tears course down my cheeks. O Tzu-ching, of what stuff am I, that I should do aught but grieve? The day of thy departure left me disconsolate indeed. I thought of my aged mother butchered upon the threshold of the grave. I thought of my innocent wife and child, condemned to the same cruel fate. Deserving as I might have been of Imperial censure, I am now an object of pity to all. Thy return was to honour and renown, while I remained behind with infamy and disgrace. Such is the divergence of man's destiny.

Born within the domain of refinement and justice, I passed into an environment of vulgar ignorance. I left behind me obligations to sovereign and family for life amid barbarian hordes; and now barbarian children will carry on the line of my forefathers. And yet my merit was great, my guilt of small account. I had no fair hearing: and when I pause to think of these things, I ask to what end I have lived? With a thrust I could have cleared myself of all blame: my severed throat would have borne witness to my resolution; and between me and my country all would have been over for aye. But to kill myself would have been of no avail: I should only have added to my shame. I therefore steeled myself to obloquy and to life. There were not wanting those who mistook my attitude for compliance, and urged me to a nobler course; ignorant that the joys of a foreign land are sources only of a keener grief.

O Tzu-ching, O my friend, I will complete the half-told record of my former tale. His late Majesty commissioned me, with five thousand infantry under my command, to carry on operations in a distant country. Five brother generals missed their way: I alone reached the theatre of war. With rations for a long march, leading on my men, I passed beyond the limits of the Celestial Land, and entered the territory of the fierce Huns. With five thousand men I stood opposed to a hundred thousand: mine, jaded foot-soldiers, theirs, horsemen fresh from the stable. Yet we slew their leaders, and captured their standards, and drove them back in confusion towards the north. We obliterated their very traces: we swept them away like dust: we beheaded their general. A martial spirit spread abroad among my men. With them, to die in battle was to return to their homes; while I—I venture to think that I had already accomplished something.

This victory was speedily followed by a general rising of the Huns. New levies were trained to the use of arms, and at length another hundred thousand barbarians were arrayed against me. The Hun
chieftain himself appeared, and with his army surrounded my little band, so unequal in strength—foot-soldiers opposed to horse. Still my tired veterans fought, each man worth a thousand of the foe, as, covered with wounds, one and all struggled bravely to the fore. The plain was strewn with the dying and the dead: barely a hundred men were left, and these too weak to hold a spear and shield. Yet, when I waved my hand and shouted to them, the sick and wounded arose. Brandishing their blades, and pointing towards the foe, they dismissed the Tartar cavalry like a rabble rout. And even when their arms were gone, their arrows spent, without a foot of steel in their hands, they still rushed, yelling, onward, each eager to lead the way. The very heavens and the earth seemed to gather round me, while my warriors drank tears of blood. Then the Hunnish chieftain, thinking that we should not yield, would have drawn off his forces. But a false traitor told him all: the battle was renewed, and we were lost.

The Emperor Kao Ti, with 300,000 men at his back, was shut up in Ping-cheng. Generals he had, like clouds; counsellors, like drops of rain. Yet he remained seven days without food, and then barely escaped with life. How much more then I, now blamed on all sides that I did not die? This was my crime. But, O Tzu-ching, canst thou say that I would live from craven fear of death? Am I one to turn my back on my country and all those dear to me, allured by sordid thoughts of gain? It was not indeed without cause that I did not elect to die. I longed, as explained in my former letter, to prove my loyalty to my prince. Rather than die to no purpose, I chose to live and to establish my good name. It was better to achieve something than to perish. Of old, Fan Li did not slay himself after the battle of Hui-chi; neither did Tsao Mo die after the ignominy of three defeats. Revenge came at last; and thus I too had hoped to prevail. Why then was I overtaken with punishment before the plan was matured? Why were my own flesh and blood condemned before the design could be carried out? It is for this that I raise my face to Heaven, and beating my breast, shed tears of blood.

O my friend, thou sayest that the House of Han never fails to reward a deserving servant. But thou art thyself a servant of the House, and it would ill seem thee to say other words than these. Yet Hsiao and Fan were bound in chains; Han and Ping were sliced to death; Chao Tso was beheaded. Chou Po was disgraced, and Tou Ying paid the penalty with his life. Others, great in their generation, have also succumbed to the intrigues of base men, and
have been overwhelmed beneath a weight of shame from which they were unable to emerge. And now the misfortunes of Fan Li and Tsao Mo command the sympathies of all.

My grandfather filled heaven and earth with the fame of his exploits—the bravest of the brave. Yet, fearing the animosity of an Imperial favourite, he slew himself in a distant land, his death being followed by the secession, in disgust, of many a brother-hero. Can this be the reward of which thou speakest?

Thou too, O my friend, an envoy with a slender equipage, sent on that mission to the robber race, when fortune failed thee even to the last resource of the dagger. Then years of miserable captivity, all but ended by death among the wilds of the far north. Thou left us full of young life, to return a greybeard; thy old mother dead, thy wife gone from thee to another. Seldom has the like of this been known. Even the savage barbarian respected thy loyal spirit: how much more the lord of all under the canopy of the sky? A many- accredited barony should have been thine, the ruler of a thousand- charioted fief! Nevertheless, they tell me 'twas but two paltry millions, and the chancellorship of the Tributary States. Not a foot of soil repaid thee for the past, while some cringing courtier gets the marquisate of ten thousand families, and each greedy parasite of the Imperial house is gratified by the choicest offices of the state. If then thou farest thus, what could I expect? I have been heavily repaid for that I did not die. Thou hast been meanly rewarded for thy unswerving devotion to thy prince. This is barely that which should attract the absent servant back to his fatherland.

And so it is that I do not regret the past. Wanting though I may have been in my duty to the state, the state was wanting also in gratitude towards me. It was said of old, 'A loyal subject, though not a hero, will rejoice to die for his country'. I would die joyfully even now; but the stain of my prince's ingratitude can never be wiped away. Indeed, if the brave man is not allowed to achieve a name, but must die like a dog in a barbarian land, who will be found to crook the back and bow the knee before an Imperial throne, where the bitter pens of courtiers tell their lying tales?

O my friend, look for me no more. O Tzu-ching, what shall I say? A thousand leagues lie between us, and separate us for ever. I shall live out my life as it were in another sphere: my spirit will find its home among a strange people. Accept my last adieu. Speak for me to my old acquaintances, and bid them serve their sovereign well. O my friend, be happy in the bosom of the family, and think
of me no more. Strive to take care of thyself; and when time and opportunity are thine, write me once again in reply.

Li Ling salutes thee!

V. The Paradise Mahayana. (c. 100 A.D.)

Where the Wicked Cease from Troubling

Queen Vaidehi, chief consort of King Bimbisara, grieved beyond endurance by the conduct of her unnatural son who has imprisoned his father, comes to the Buddha on the Vulture Peak, and speaks as follows:

My only prayer, World Honoured One, is this: tell me of a world where there is no sorrow and pain, whither I may escape this world of evil where the wicked abound. Let me not hear, I pray Thee, the voice of the wicked any more, let me not set eyes upon them.... May the Sunlike Buddha enlighten me.

Then the World Honoured One flashed from his brow a golden ray, and illuminated the innumerable worlds of the ten regions, resplendent and lovely, that the queen might take her choice. She chose the realm of the Buddha Amitayus, the Land of Bliss, Sukhavati.

'O Vaidehi,' said the World Honoured One, 'knowest thou not that Amitayus is not far from thee? Do thou apply thy mind to such as have wrought out the good deeds that lead to rebirth in his Paradise. They who would go thither must cultivate a threefold goodness. First they must act with filial piety and support their parents; they must serve and respect teachers and elders; of compassionate mind, let them harm none, but keep the ten precepts. Second, let them observe the vows, taking refuge in the Three Jewels; let them honour all moral precepts and act with dignity in the ceremonial of worship. Third, let them give their whole mind to the attainment of Perfect Wisdom, put steadfast faith in causality, study and recite Mahayana scriptures, and lead others to join them. ... Again, O queen, thou art but an ordinary person endowed with poor intelligence, yet all beings not born blind can see the setting sun. Take thy seat, therefore, looking to the West, and set thy mind to meditate upon the sun when it is about to set, and hangs like a drum in the heavens. Then let its image remain clear and fixed whether thine eyes are open or shut....' Such is the First Meditation.

Meditations on water, ice, lapis lazuli, and fourteen others follow, which lead to the vision of the Buddhas of the ten regions, and
especially of Amitayus and his attendant Bodhisattvas, Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta, the embodiments of Compassion and of Might.

The queen and her women attain to these visions and to full Enlightenment.

*Amitayaur-dhyana Sutra*, 5. 10.
(1st or 2nd century A.D.)

*The Land of Bliss*

The Sukhavati of the blessed Amitabha is prosperous, rich, delectable, fertile, lovely, and thronged with gods and men. No hells are there, no brutes nor ghosts nor untimely births. . . . It is fragrant, adorned with jewel-trees, and resounds with the song of sweet-voiced birds. Its trees are of gold and silver, of crystal and coral, of pearl and diamond. . . . Vast lotus flowers abound, and from each there spread rays of light innumerable. There flow great rivers murmuring sweet music, and heavenly instruments take up the lovely sound, deep, clear, delightful, unwearying as though they murmured 'transient unreal, full of peace'. . . . Nowhere is there in that Land of Bliss any sound of sin, sorrow, affliction or destruction. It is above pleasure and pain: therefore it is called Sukhavati, the Land of Bliss.

*Larger Sukhavati Vyuha*, 16–19 passim.
(1st or 2nd century A.D.)

Both the above books are translated in Volume xlix of the *Sacred Books of the East*. They belong to the popular Paradise Mahayana of about the end of the first century A.D. or earlier. They seem to have been introduced to China as early as A.D. 170 and played a very great part like the *Lotus Scripture* in popularizing Buddhism in the Far East. Childish in some ways, they yet voice the demand of the human heart for a Heavenly City, and Han China needed hope and comfort.

VI. THE DECADENCE

At this epoch, the coinage in use was so heavy and cumbersome that the people themselves began a new issue at a fixed standard of value. But the laws were too lax, and it was impossible to prevent grasping persons from coining largely, buying largely, and then holding against a rise in the market. The consequence was that prices went up enormously. Rice sold at 10,000 cash per picul; a
horse cost 100 ounces of silver. But by and by, when the empire was settling down to tranquillity, his Majesty Kai Tsu gave orders that no trader should wear silk nor ride in a carriage; besides which, the imposts levied upon this class were greatly increased, in order to keep them down. Some years later these restrictions were withdrawn, still, however, the descendants of traders were disqualified from holding any office connected with the State.

Meanwhile, certain levies were made on a scale calculated to meet the exigencies of public expenditure; while the land-tax and customs revenue were regarded by all officials, from the Emperor downwards, as their own personal emolument. Grain was forwarded by water to the capital for the use of the officials there, but the quantity did not amount to more than a few hundred thousand piculs every year.

Gradually the coinage began to deteriorate and light coins to circulate; whereupon another issue followed, each piece being marked 'half an ounce'. But at length the system of private issues led to serious abuses, resulting first of all in vast sums of money accumulating in the hands of individuals; and finally, in rebellion, until the country was flooded with the coinage of the rebels, and it became necessary to enact laws against any such issues in the future.

At this period the Huns were harassing our northern frontier, and soldiers were massed there in large bodies; in consequence of which food became so scarce that the authorities offered certain rank and titles of honour to those who would supply a given quantity of grain. Later on, drought ensued in the west, and in order to meet necessities of the moment, official rank was again made a marketable commodity, while those who broke the laws were allowed to commute their penalties by money payments. And now horses began to reappear in official stables, and in palace and hall signs of an ampler luxury were visible once more.

Thus it was in the early days of the dynasty, until some seventy years after the accession of the House of Han. The empire was then at peace. For a long time there had been neither flood nor drought, and a season of plenty had ensued. The public granaries were well stocked; the Government treasuries were full. In the capital, strings of cash were piled in myriads, until the very strings rotted, and their tale could no longer be told. The grain in the Imperial storehouses grew mouldy year by year. It burst from the cramped granaries and lay about until it became unfit for human food. The streets were thronged with horses belonging to the
people, and on the highroads whole droves were to be seen, so that it became necessary to prohibit the public use of mares. Village elders ate meat and drank wine. Petty government clerkships and the like lapsed from father to son; the higher offices of State were treated as family heirlooms. For there had gone abroad a spirit of self-respect and of reverence for the law, while a sense of charity and of duty towards one's neighbour kept men aloof from disgrace and shame.

At length, under lax laws, the wealthy began to use their riches for evil purposes of pride and self-aggrandisement and oppression of the weak. Members of the Imperial family received grants of land, while from the highest to the lowest, every one vied with his neighbour in lavishing money on houses, and appointments, and apparel, altogether beyond the limit of his means. Such is the everlasting law of the sequence of prosperity and decay.

Then followed extensive military preparations in various parts of the empire; the establishment of a trade-route with the barbarians of the south-west, for which purpose mountains were Pierced for many miles. The object was to open up the resources of those remote districts, but the result was to swamp the inhabitants in hopeless ruin. Then, again, there was the subjugation of Korea; its transformation into an Imperial dependency; with other troubles nearer home. There was the ambush laid for the Huns, by which we forfeited their alliance, and brought them down upon our northern frontier. Nothing, in fact, but wars and rumours of wars from day to day. Money was constantly leaving the country. The financial stability of the empire was undermined, and its impoverished people were driven thereby into crime. Wealth had been frittered away, and its renewal was sought in corruption. Those who brought money in their hands received appointments under government. Those who could pay escaped the penalties of their guilt. Merit had to give way to money. Shame and scruples of conscience were laid aside. Laws and punishments were administered with severer hand. From this period must be dated the rise and growth of official venality.

Sse-ma Kuang (tr. H. A. Giles).
VII. A PRE-T'ANG POEM

_Wild Geese_

By Shen Yo (A.D. 441–513)

Where bright waters flood the spring shore
A journeying flock swerves on bended wing;
They sip the wavelets, tug the yielding weeds,
Their folded wings flaked with icy dew.
A flock they sail, pushing the quiet stream,
Or singly each his own gleam pursues.
Now almost earthward they trail a dipping flight;
Now upward quavering tumbled legions rise.
Each rushing wing skims the rippled lake;
At one swoop they are gone to their native land.
SCROLL OF FLYING GEESE
(MI FEI)
XI
THE SPLENDOUR OF T'ANG
(A.D. 618-905)

See the splendours of the Imperial City
And know the majesty of the Son of Heaven.

'Confucian learning is as necessary to the Chinese as wings to a bird.'
KAO-TSU, FIRST T'ANG EMPEROR.

'Your example will do far more than your laws.'
T'AI-TSUNG TO HIS SON

THAT the Chinese abroad still call themselves men of T'ang
(T'ang-jen) is their tribute to a great man and a great age. Whatever its faults at home, the house of T'ang made China famous abroad. Li Yuan, its founder, was a successful general who revolted against the luxurious K'ung-ti, last of the house of Sui—an able but oppressive ruler whose father had united China after nearly four centuries of misery and anarchy, and of barbarian domination.

Li Yuan ruled as Kao-tsu from A.D. 618 to 627 and his son, Li Shih-min, succeeded him as T'ai-tsung (627—50), the greatest ruler of China—general, statesman, patron of art and learning. T'ai-tsung is honoured as the organizer of a model government and the promoter of international relationships which made China the leader of an admiring Asia, and brought embassies from afar. Greater than Charlemagne, he ruled a China far more civilized than any of her contemporaries, and made his capital, Ch'ang-an, the centre of a splendid cosmopolitan culture.

In a word, he seized the moment when China was being unified in spirit to extend and deepen her influence. As Li Shih-min he waged a five years’ war to subdue rebellious kings, and as emperor brought outlying provinces into subjection. A wise ruler, he listened to the advice of such ministers as Wei-chang, on whose death he lamented, 'Alas! I have lost my mirror!' He realized that as the tree needs the pruning knife, so the ruler needs criticism, and
that the people are the waters which bear up the imperial barge—but may also upset it. These are sayings from his famous 'Golden Mirror', which he wrote for his son, and which was to become a model for the Japanese of the next two centuries.

His empress was a noble helpmeet, who began by clearing the Augean stables of the Court—sending away the legions of concubines, and living herself in great simplicity. When she died T'ai-tsung, like Shah Jahan in later days, would gaze out from his palace at her tomb, remembering her wisdom and her goodness.

Their sons were unworthy of such parents. The eldest conspired against the emperor; the ninth succeeded as Kao-tsung. But he was dominated by a former concubine of his father, whom he took from her asylum in a Buddhist nunnery. This evil but brilliant woman killed her own child, accused the empress of the crime, and became the notorious Empress Wu. Ruthless but brilliant, sensual but indefatigable, she ruled for fifty years, conquered Korea, and drove out Khitans and Tibetans. With the Han Empress Lu and the late Dowager Empress she is one of a trio of masterful and able women who have dominated China. To her succeeded Ming-huang or Huan-tsung (713–56), who, beginning as a ruler of great promise in an age of brilliant achievement, fell under evil influences, and ended in tragedy.

First of his ill-omened friends was Li Lin-fu, who weakened the frontier army and opened the door to the Tartars; second was the darling of his old age, Yang Kuei-fei, a concubine of his own son, whom he took into his harem. Her passion for the Turkic general An Lu-shan wrought havoc, and led to the sack of Ch'ang-an, to her own death, and to the abdication of the emperor. In him, however, China had for a while a great ruler, who saved his dynasty as a youth by crushing a conspiracy of the Empress Wei.

He further subdivided the empire into fifteen provinces, and kept peace for thirty years, while he stimulated the
intellectual and moral development of his people. Paying respect alike to Confucianism and Taoism he encouraged scholarship—founding the Han Lin academy of forty scholars, and choosing his chief advisers from their ranks.

In his reign the great poets Li Po (705-60) and his younger friend Tu Fu (712-70) throve; but they lived on into an old age of disillusionment, as the great dynasty degenerated; and their poems reflect at once the splendours of the court, the joys of youth, and the sorrows of defeat, poverty, and old age.

It is these contrasts which make the T'ang Age so vivid. It was an age of joy and vitality unsurpassed, especially when emperors like T'ai-tsung and Ming-huang gather about them scholars, poets, painters, and men of science. But the poor paid the bill, and such rulers were rare: of the nineteen emperors of this dynasty some were murdered, three abdicated, some succumbed to experiments with the elixir of life, and only eight died a natural death. Eunuchs, concubines, and magicians took the place of the poets, painters, and scholars of T'ai-tsung, and the dynasty after a late revival ended in ignominy.

'The reign of the few energetic rulers, notably Hsien-tsung (805-20) and Hsun-tsung (847-57) may be likened,' says Li Ung Bing of the later T'ang, 'to sunset views on the western horizon'.

In 907 the dynasty petered out in a pitiful boy of sixteen, who went into exile, handing over the empire to the barbarians, who for the next half century reinvigorated China with new blood.

II

The cultural achievements of T'ang are such as almost to blind us to the corruption and superstition of the Court and the sufferings of the masses, who groaned under heavy taxation in land and salt, and under forced labour. We are told that in the year A.D. 815 the imperial treasury exacted 50 million pieces of silk for military expenditure alone. We read too that civil strife reduced the population from about
50 million to 25 million; and superstition walked hand in hand with murder: except for the two or three great men of the dynasty, the rulers were the dupes of wizards, eunuchs, and courtesans. Yet the empire spread from Siberia to the Himalayas and from the Caspian Sea to Korea; and to the great city of Ch’ang-an with its nine gates, soaring marble pagoda, and gorgeous palaces came scholars and merchants from many lands. We know from the collections at the monastery of Tun-huang in Kansu how cosmopolitan was the life of the time. There were found not only a wealth of T’ang paintings and frescoes, but also a vast library of early documents, a hymn to the Trinity, and Hebrew, Nestorian, and Manichaean MSS., as well as Buddhist and Taoist books. The monks who made this great collection were typical of their age, eagerly awake to a rich and varied world, and, like the empire, they went down before the barbarians, leaving their treasures walled in and secure in that dry land.

We know, too, that a Nestorian mission arrived in the seventh century, and is commemorated by the great tablet set up in 731; and if Christians were thus giving in a simplified form the fundamentals of their faith,1 Zoroastrians were also preaching their dualistic religion, and Muhammadans their stark monotheism. It was a tolerant age: ‘All religions seek the salvation of men,’ says T’ai-tsung; and if he proclaims Nestorian Christianity to be ‘at once pacific and reasonable, mysterious and useful’, even the Muhammadan merchant Abu Zeid exclaims that the Chinese painters of his age excelled all others. We find Buddhists and Christians working together in the comparative study of religion, and the great Kuki of Japan wrote what is the first systematic treatise on this subject after a three years’ stay in Ch’ang-an.

T’ai-tsung resembles Akbar in his interest in religious synthesis and in his patronage of the arts: at his Court, as at that of Vikramaditya, mathematicians and astronomers as well as artists and poets found a ready welcome, foreigners

1 See below, p. 320.
as well as Chinese. There is in the Forbidden City in Peking an amazing scroll of foreigners bringing tribute, which belongs to this age. As I was looking at it recently a Chinese soldier, with characteristic friendliness, leaned over my shoulder and said, 'They are the peoples who do not eat pork'. They are certainly Semites—Jews and Muhammadans, whose visits at this time, like embassies from the Caliph Harun-al-Rashid, China accepted as homage. Such embassies carried back to the West tales which were to inflame the imagination of Franciscan friars and Venetian merchants: and when they came later to see for themselves they exclaimed like the Queen of Sheba, 'The half was not told me.'

In this age every one was a poet, and a Manchu anthology published two centuries ago contains nine hundred books, with poems by over two thousand hands. The T'ang emperors themselves made such collections, and the poems of Po Chu-i were engraved on stone by imperial decree. He is perhaps the greatest poet of the age, who in simple and poignant verse sang the sorrows of the poor so that none could fail to understand. His lyrics were sung by farmer and boatman as well as by emperor and courtier, and he came very rapidly into prominence. Son of a poor magistrate, he settled at Ch'ang-an in 801, and lived there in the sunshine of that friendship with other poets which is the Chinese idyll. But 'not being a master of elegant accomplishments such as Calligraphy, Painting, Chess, which bring men together', he was at first content with the society of court-ladies, one of whom was his cousin, at the decadent court of the debauchees with whom the dynasty ended.

Criticizing the mismanagement of military affairs and satirizing the harpies of the public service he heard the cry of the poor. For this he was banished, and then 'promoted' to be governor of Chung-chou, a remote town, to be recalled in due season to the capital.

Again protesting at the high-handed impotence of the Emperor Mu-tsung he was again exiled, this time to
Hangchou, until he was able to retire with two dancing-girls, two cranes, and some poultry, to the country. But in 825 his idyll was disturbed, he was made governor of Soochou, and entered upon a very gay official life. Here, living in a government house, he longed for his thatched hut on the Wei River, and after other public duties he retired, and in 832 became a hermit in a mountain monastery, where he died in 846.

He is said to have tried his poems on an old peasant woman; till they were simple enough for her he was not satisfied. A Chinese Horace, he is also a Hesiod. In his didactic poems he defends the impossible theory that art is nothing but a way of instruction; and as it was his satires and sermons in verse which won him exile once more, it is evident that he really believed his own theory. With more show of reason he criticized Li Po and Tu Fu for their lack of earnestness. He is, however, best known for poems which are more in their style—impressions of a passing mood, and he, too, longs for quiet, laughs at himself, and grows old with gay detachment.

His immense popularity during his lifetime is an indication that the age needed a moral tonic, and the poor a champion. His poems were on the tongues of all: Michizane in Japan and the scholars of Korea knew them. He is, says Arthur Waley, ‘the subject of a No Play, and has even become a kind of Shinto deity’.

He illustrates the three stages which his translator ascribes to the typical poet in China, and which we may compare with the four stages of the Hindu Dharma.

In the first we find him with his friends at the capital, drinking, writing and discussing: burdened by his office probably about as much as Pepys was burdened by his duties at the Admiralty. Next having failed to curry favour with the Court he is ‘exiled’ to some provincial post, perhaps a thousand miles from any one he cares to talk to. Finally, having scraped together enough money to buy husbands for his daughters, he retires to a small estate, collecting round him the remnants of those with whom he had shared the ‘feasts and frolics’ of old days.1

1 A. Waley, Chinese Poems, p. 6. Constable. As sixty of these are by Po Chu-i and are easily available I quote only a fragment.
Such was the career of Po Chu-i, and he did well to avoid elegance in telling of the horrors of misgovernment and of war and the sorrows of the people. Plain speaking is best plain-set. His simplicity, directness, satire, and sympathy are all brought out in our brief illustrative readings. Po Chu-i tells us with critical judgement of the works of his predecessors Li Po (705–60) and Tu Fu (712–70) of which there are many translations. They are in some ways an admirable pair, typical of Chinese friendship and of the independent spirit which sits aloof even to imperial authority: they prefer the bohemian society of the ‘Idlers of the Bamboo Valley’, a guild of poets and artists: they rejoice in the freedom of the mountains, and despise the artificialities of the Court. As their friend Wang Wei, painter and poet, sings:

The world is a passing show
What can be better than returning home?

All were influenced in fact by the Buddhist emphasis on the transiency of this fleeting show, and belonged in old age to the period of disillusionment, when the dynasty was sowing the seeds of its own destruction. They sought to drown their sorrow in wine as well as in the beauties of nature, but they show also a love of freedom and of the poor.

Tu Fu says of Li Po ‘there is virtue as well as delicacy in his poems’, and, we may add, a passionate love of life alternating with fits of melancholy:

Awake through long night hours I sigh and weep,
As o’er the empire tragic sorrows creep.

In other moods he is very frank, and tells us that wine gave him release:

Three cups will open wide the door to bliss,
Toss off a goblet and the world is yours.
What ecstasy from out the wine-cup pours;
The sober may not quaff its mysteries!
Why do I live in far-off mountains green?
I laugh and answer not; my soul serene
Lives in a heaven and earth that none else knows;
The peach blooms vanish as the river flows.
Chinese poets and painters are often at their best when wine removes the inhibitions of scholarship and the trammels of tradition. Li Po is called ‘The Fairy in Exile’ and his poem on ‘A Visit to Chong-nan’ expresses his devotion to a favourite haunt near the capital to which he escaped when eunuchs, concubines, and courtiers were too much for him:

It is evening. I come down the mountain in the blue darkness. The moon seems to walk with me, and if one turns back to see how far he has travelled he loses himself in the profundity of night. We come holding hands to the threshold of a rustic hut. A young boy opens a gate of withes; down a narrow path we make our way, and the tufted bamboos shroud the entrance in mystery, while the green shrubs brush our silk robes joyously. Joy seizes us that we are come to so charming a retreat. We drink to one another in wine of exquisite fragrance. I sing and sing, a song of the wind which breathes across the pines; and my spirit does not grow weary till the Milky Way pales in the sky.

Li Po’s love of solitude breathes also in this lyric on the Ching-ting Peak:

Flocks of birds have flown high and away;  
A solitary drift of cloud, too, has gone wandering on.  
And I sit alone with the Ching-ting Peak towering beyond,  
We never grow tired of each other, the mountain and I.

For Li Po’s affection Nature’s only rivals were wine and Tu Fu. Born in 712 he went as a boy to the court of Ming-huang, and here found much to charm and captivate eye and mind. Long afterwards in exile he was to turn wistfully to these halcyon days in an enchanted city, a city of lakes and canals, of gardens and parks, as well as of palaces, art-galleries, and libraries.

And I that scan the distant view  
Of torn white clouds and mountains blue,  
Lift to the north my aching eyes:  
’Tis there—’tis there the city lies.

As Ujjain was ‘the City’ for Kalidasa, so for Tu Fu was Ch’ang-an.

2 Ibid., p. 154.
Refusing office in a distant province, the poet chose rather to remain with his friend Li Po, and to enjoy the gaieties of the Court. ‘At sunset how good it is to get into a boat and launch forth: a light wind rises, and the surface of the water is ruffled. Soon tufted bamboos invite us to rest beneath their leaves: nenuphars scent the air in this quiet place, and the young lords are busy making iced drinks, while lovely girls wash the lily-roots to prepare a banquet.’ But the joys of his gilded youth passed into melancholy and a passionate partisanship of the poor; and when he was appointed Censor of the Empire by Sou-tsung he made many enemies by his outspokenness, till the women of the Court secured his banishment. He lived in disguise among the shepherds of Ssech’uan, and died in 774 at the age of fifty-nine. Of his friendship with Li Po he writes: ‘We slept under the same coverlet, and wandered hand in hand’, and they are classical examples of that romantic friendship between men which has played so large a part in Chinese culture, as well as of that ironic detachment from the etiquette and fussiness of the Court which has affected so many gifted minds. Imitating the Han poets they yet sat loose to classical models, used the speech of the people, and widened the range of sentiment.

To this age belong also prose writers like Han Yu (768–824) and Liu-chung Wan (773–819): the former was a robust critic of the superstition of the age, who wrote best when anger against Buddhists and Taoists moved him; and the latter was also a clear and forcible writer. Nor were men of science lacking: Li-chun-feng (602–70) invented an instrument to study the stars, and wrote works on astronomy. In this science, in mathematics and medicine, as well as in art, Buddhist influence reached its zenith, and produced, in spite of Confucian opposition, a great harvest.

Not only did Chinese masters visit India, and Indian missions continue in China: large numbers of exiles driven out by persecution in India settled in the Far East.

1 Quoted by R. Grousset, Histoire de l’Asie.
It is interesting to trace the stages by which China adapts the new religion. Staggered at first by its very complexity and by the grandeur of its metaphysic (Han era), she proceeds to simplify and to fit it next to Laoist ideas (T'ang era); and lastly wins a complete victory over it by rethinking Confucianism in its light (Sung era).

That is, I think, a true if schematic account of what happened; but some critics would say that it was rather Buddhism conquering first one fastness of the Chinese soul then another, and some go so far as to call this the domination of Buddhism and the sterilization of China. But the victory was won only at great cost, and if Hindu and Moslem in India forgot their own rivalries in a common attack on the Buddhists, Confucian officials in China were not all as tolerant as T'ai Tsung. Nor is it true that Buddhism fitted the Chinese. It had rather to be fitted to them—a process which began with the first mission and lasted a thousand years.

If it began in Confucian form in the Sutra of Forty-two Sayings Buddhism was now adapted to the Laoist Chinese, and its influence is largely due to the reinterpretation of such men as Tao-hsuan (d. 667) and Tao-i (c. 750), masters of Chan (Dhyana, or meditation) who were steeped in Laoist mysticism.

Among the first Buddhist books to reach China were works like the Yogacara-Bhumi and the Amitayur-dhyana-Sutra—manuals for the mystic. And these were given a Laoist tinge from the fourth century on; Tao-an (d. 387) making much of inactivity and of forgetfulness, as a technique for overcoming desire.

Tao-hsuan includes 133 names of such Chan practitioners in his biographies of Buddhist leaders.

‘Without meditation no insight’ is an old Buddhist adage, and these leaders were so far orthodox. Even the paradise schools make much of meditation—to contemplate the Buddhas and their paradises is to find one’s true self.

But the monks knew their public, and were as busy

1 e.g. Messrs. Wu Chihui and Hu Shih. See ‘China’s Own Critics’.
holding up paradise as the goal as the Taoists were active (forgetting Wu-wei) in offering men the medicine of longevity.

The higher religion in each case—Laoism and Nibbanism—is a religion of quality of life: they made it, as the vulgar will, a religion of quantity and duration.

The great Chan masters called both back to reality and to simplicity. Most popular and rugged is Bodhi-dharma or Puti-tamo, ‘the wall-gazing Brahmin’, who snubbed the eager Wu-ti, and settling near Loyang kept silence for nine years—profoundly impressing a loquacious and contentious age.

His date is A.D. 526 and he reminds us of Chuang-tse, but he no less reminds us of the Upanishads and of the Buddha, for mysticism is of no age or land. It is timeless and universal. ‘Seek the Buddha within: so will you find yourself,’ is Tamo’s summary: ‘Find your true self and you will be Buddha.’ His snub to Wu-ti—who asked, ‘Is there not much merit in my building of monasteries?’ only to be told, ‘None’—begins a technique developed in the next century by Tao-seng as ‘the school of sudden illumination’; and his rugged character inspired such reformers as Tao-i, and gave a new pedagogical method to the school. To bring oneself back to the spontaneous and free life—this is one purpose of the new teaching. Simplicity to the point of bareness—honesty to the point of rudeness—industry to the point of austerity—these are hall marks of such teachers as Hui-neng and Tao-i.

Instead of mendicancy—work; instead of ritual—silence and stillness; instead of superstition—illumination; instead of logic—intuition.

Here is at once a reformation and a simplification of Buddhism and of Taoism.

But to be oneself one must think for oneself; and the rough technique of bringing man to himself by a kick or a snub is characteristic of the Chan or Zen master.

The following anecdotes are typical, and artists loved to paint these bizarre teachers at their task of illumination.
Tien-san of Tan-hsia was an early Zen master (d. 824) who chopped up a Buddha image to make a fire. When he was criticized he said, 'I am burning the image to get the jewel relic in it'. 'You can't find that except in a real body'. 'Well, then, I am only burning wood,' was his reply.

More drastic still was Hsuan-chien. 'Bodhidharma was an old hairy barbarian. The Bodhisattvas are night soil-men. The books are only—paper for base uses: what have all these to do with salvation?'

This was a technique for making the seeker find truth for himself and in himself—of snubbing the discursive reason, and letting intuition have free play.

I am indebted to Dr. Hu Shih for the following admirable summary:

The methodology of Zen has often been misunderstood. Some regard it as mysticism; others call it sheer humbug. There is no doubt that there is a clear method behind all the apparent madness for which many Zen masters were famous. The method, as far as I can understand it, has two important phases. First, the master must not make things too easy for the novice; he must not preach to him in too plain language, or even in any language. This is so important that one of the great masters once said: 'I owe everything to my teacher because he never told anything nor explained anything to me.'

When the novice comes to the master with some such abstract question as the meaning of Zen or the message of Buddhism, the teacher will say to him: 'When I was in Nanking last time, I made a coat, weighing 7 pounds'. Or he will say to him, 'My dear fellow, how fine are the peach blossoms on yonder tree!' Or he will shout at him a deafening shout. Or, if he is really deserving, he will get a box on the ear.

So he retires to the kitchen, puzzled and probably burning with shame or with pain. He stays on and, after a while, will be told to leave the place to try his luck at some other great monastic school. Here begins the second phase of the method which is technically called 'travelling on foot'.

He travels from one hill to another, presenting his silly questions to the various great masters presiding over the monastic schools. If he fails to understand, he moves on. Most of the famous teachers
A monk travels always on foot, carrying only a stick, a bowl, and a pair of straw sandals. He begs all the way for his food and lodging, and often has to seek shelter in decayed temples, caves, and ruined houses by the roadside. He has to suffer the severities of the weather, and is subject to all forms of danger and hardship.

But all hardships intensify his zeal. The beauty and grandeur of nature ennobles his mind. He comes into contact with all sorts of people, and studies under the greatest minds of the age. He meets kindred souls troubled more or less by similar problems, and he lives with them, befriends them, and discusses things with them. In this way, his experiences are widened and deepened and his understanding grows. Then, some day, he hears a chance remark of a charwoman, or a frivolous song of a dancing-girl, or the chirping of a bird in yonder tree, or smells the fragrance of a nameless flower, and he suddenly understands! All his previous inquiries and searches and experiences become correlated somehow, and the problem seems so clear and the solution so evident. The miracle has happened and he attains his Sudden Enlightenment.

And he travels long distances back to his old master, and, with tears in the eyes and gladness at heart, he gives thanks and worships at the feet of his great teacher who never told him anything.

This is Zen in the Chinese sense.

And inasmuch as great persecutions drove hundreds of thousands of monks into poverty and loneliness, destroying their temples and confiscating their lands, this new inwardness and simplicity was timely.

The more spiritual teachers survived the persecution of 845-7; and as in sixth-century India, it only served to scatter missionaries to remote districts and to neighbouring lands. In Japan especially Zen masters produced a new civilization. For the rest we may note that the first two centuries of T'ang were favourable to Buddhism of the orthodox schools, and art and architecture throve; side by side with Zen the popular Buddhism went on. Men like Jinagupta (528-605) of Peshawar came by way of Khotan, were sometimes welcomed and sometimes driven out of China, carrying with them scriptures and images to Mongolia, Tibet, and other provinces. Jinagupta
converted the Khan Dobo of Mongolia and was eventually made head of a monastery at Lo-yang where he translated the Buddhacarita and other texts. This may help to account for the great interest in the life of the historic Sakyamuni evident in the sculpture of the sixth century, and in the early Chinese painters.

Fa Hian, too, had turned the mind of China to the historic sites of the Faith and to its colourful legends of the founder. He had told China of the honoured place of Buddhism in Guptan India—though in his fourteen years of pilgrimage he found many signs of neglect. More than two centuries later Hiuen Chang found it flourishing in Gandhara and Kashmir, but derelict in northern India and in the holy land about Benares where resurgent Hinduism had recaptured its ancient citadels. But at Nalanda he found the peace and the intellectual centre he needed, and from it brought back to China the inspiration of learned monks and traditional interpretations going back to the great schoolmen Asanga and Vasubandhu who had brought much Brahmanic subtlety into their adopted faith.

In Siladitya, king of Kanauj, too, he found an ardent champion of the Mahayana who gave him a royal welcome to his capital not only as a scholar and a Buddhist but as representing T'ang China and the new Asiatic entente. Kanauj was no mean contemporary of Ch'ang-an—and here the last great Chakravarti dreamed out his days with poets and philosophers and monks, dying in 648, two years before the great T'ai Tsung, who seems to have regarded him as a vassal, and whose armies brought his successor Arjuna in triumph to Ch'ang-an, captured by Tibetan subjects under the great Srong-Btsan-Gampo. Thus the picture of 'an Asia united for a thousand years by missions of goodwill' and of 'Buddhism as the religious bond of union' is unhistorical. Mighty as it was in its work of civilization Buddhism like Christianity had enemies without and within, and Buddhist sovereigns were as seldom consistent as their Christian contemporaries. It is perhaps enough justification that as the one great way produced its Fa Hians,
HIUEN CHANG RETURNS
(A JAPANESE PAINTING)
A CHINESE SHADOW-PLAY OF HIS JOURNEY
its Hiuen Changs, its Bodhidharmas and Jinaguptas, the other had its Augustines and its Nestorians—missionaries of goodwill in an empire of the spirit. The real cultures of Guptan India and T'ang China on the one hand and of the Europe of Charlemagne on the other are in large part the by-product of their devotion to the Unseen.

It is one of the tragedies of history that the rising tide of Islam, while it was the carrier of another great culture, destroyed so much of what it disliked and set up a great barrier between east and west, which is not yet thrown down.

The intolerance of the Semite has waged perpetual war upon the Aryan interest in the new and the Mongolian reasonableness, destroying where they were content to tolerate and absorb. Thus, while the dreaded Turks poured into Europe and battered upon the gates of India, and while Christians, equally resolute, sought by force to win a pagan world, forgetting their Greek heritage in their zeal for their Semitic one, Buddhists bowed to the storm of persecution and became missionaries of the cross-fertilization of cultures.

Or to put it in other words the heretics of both worlds—Nestorian Christians, Buddhist Hindus—driven alike by intolerance in their own groups and by the sword of Islam, became pioneers of goodwill and of international co-operation in the T'ang Age.

The Buddhists brought a new artistic and spiritual impetus. The greatest works of T'ang sculpture and painting are Buddhist, and in our illustration we see the Master of the Law, Hiuen Chang, returning from India to China after his long pilgrimage laden with books and images; he plays a very notable part in sending China to study things Indian, and the great T'ai-tsung tried to make him a Minister of State. When the Master refused, saying that he was as ignorant of secular things as of Confucian scholarship, the Emperor established him in the Monastery of Great Joy by the gate of the city, bidding him write an account of his travels. In 648 the Prince Imperial honoured the monk
by writing a preface to this work, and one of the most delightful incidents of the time was the friendship between the monk and the Emperor, who himself presided at a great festival, when the treasures brought back from India were officially received. The scene is vividly described by M. Grousset:

It was a gorgeous festival, at which the royal presence enhanced the splendour of Buddhist ritual. The sacred books and images were borne on fifteen hundred chariots gaily decorated, and one might see two statues of the Buddha, one in silver and the other in solid gold, innumerable statues of Bodhisattvas, of which some must have belonged to the Gandhara school; two hundred painted banners by the most famous masters in India, Gandhara and Kashgar, no doubt resembling the frescoes found at Tumchuk and Tun-huang. Before these images moved a procession of monks scattering flowers and singing hymns; and above their heads floated five hundred banners of silk embroidered in gold, and three hundred sunshades of precious stuffs. The Imperial bands sounded their drums, their gongs and their bells. The veterans of T’ai-tsung, returned from the Tartar wars, lined the streets, and the Emperor, installed with all his court in one of the pavilions at the city-gate, burned incense as the procession passed him.¹

At the death of the Master there were nearly four thousand Buddhist monasteries in China.

III

The greatest Buddhist painter of the age is Wu Tao-tse—the Chinese Michael Angelo—who worked with creative genius in developing the already eminent school of Chinese painting. He is described as painting ‘as if a whirlwind possessed his hand’, and we are told that his strong and bold brushwork set a new standard. But unfortunately there is nothing left of it, and the Manjusri of our frontispiece, part of a triptych in Japan, is probably a copy. Other rival schools are represented by Wang Wei, whom we have already described as an eminent poet, and Li Ssu-h’sun. The latter is well represented in the album of Royal

Palaces in the British Museum, and is the first example known to us of a familiar style of Chinese painting, in which gold lines enrich the blue and green of rock and mountain.

Wang Wei, who made his house into a Buddhist monastery, painted mountains, undulating hills, and admirable pines. A good example of his style may be seen also at the British Museum in the landscape scroll by a later imitator—Chao Meng-fu. Of Wang Wei it was said that every poem was a picture and every picture a poem. His school is known as that of the South, while that of Li Ssu-h'sun is known as that of the North, the difference between them being largely concerned with methods of brush work, that of the South being more suave and that of the North more vigorous.

To interpret a mood, not merely to record a fact, is one of the canons of Chinese art, and another insists that into the skeleton of the picture must be infused the rhythm of nature. The well-known canons of Hsieh-ho, who belonged to the sixth century, admirably express the ideals of this poetic art, and are summarized in our illustrative reading. Dealing with portraiture they insist upon a careful knowledge of form as well as upon grace of line and balance of composition. As Lao-tse had insisted upon the importance of emptiness, so these artists realized the great value of empty spaces, alike in painting and in poetry—‘the value of reserves and silences, the invitation to our imagination in the thing left unexpressed’. The artist, too, must pierce beneath the mere aspect of the world to seize and to be possessed by the rhythm of the universe, which is to pour itself through him as the wind through a flute. In our illustration of a typical landscape by Wang Wei we can understand the dominating position which he reached: the vigour of these skeleton trees and the rolling masses of these snowy mountains were copied by great artists down to the time of Sesshu and his school in Japan. This scroll is covered with the seals and appreciations of the Emperor Hui-tsung, the Jahangir of the Sung, himself a
great painter, and of scholars of later dynasties who are lyric in its praises. 'It is truly a song without words,' says a modern Japanese artist, and it makes one long to see the great little scroll described by his friend Tu Fu in our reading, which blent the bold and intricate, great spaces and minute detail—'ten inches for a thousand lively scenes'.

This great eighth-century trio—Li Po, Tu Fu, Wang Wei—were heirs of a grand tradition.

Of Yen Li-pen (an official and painter of the seventh century) we have several works of great power. Of one of them—the Emperor T'ai-tsung handing 'the Golden Mirror' to his young son—there are several versions: I have seen three. All are excellent paintings, and it seems likely that one of them, and a part of the great scroll of Emperors in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, are authentic works. This amazing work is seventeen and a half feet long, and has portraits of thirteen early emperors, from Han to Sui, with their attendants—a reliable record of personalities and costumes. There are also occasional notes: thus of Wu-ti of the Later Chou we read: 'He destroyed the Buddha's Law'. Not all Chinese rulers were as tolerant as T'ai-tsung. This scroll is mentioned by the great Mi Fei of the Sung Dynasty: he was well qualified to appreciate it, and it has many autographs and comments of other Sung critics.¹ The portraits are strong and vigorous, showing insight into character, and it is interesting to remember that Yen Li-pen regarded himself rather as a scholar than as a painter, and flew into a rage when the Emperor bade him make a sketch of a strange bird that interested him. T'ai-tsung praised him as 'a master of divine power'.

Further light is thrown on the painting of the later T'ang by discoveries of Chinese scrolls in Kansu and in Turkistan. While mostly painted by monks and craftsmen working for them some are fine portraits of donors, and some groups show noble composition. One discovered

¹ See the admirable Bulletin of the Boston Museum by Kojiro Tomita, xxx.
T'ANG HORSES
(The lower from tomb of T'AI-TSUNG)
BODHISATTVAS OF CHINESE TURKESTAN AND KOREA
(7th or 8th Centuries A.D.)
CAVES OF TUN-HUANG AND SOKULAM
by Sir Aurel Stein at Turfan has strong affinities with the early screens at Nara—the tall elegant figures of such early masters as Ku K’ai-Chih have given place to stouter forms with rounded faces and full lips. Perhaps here we may see the result of Tartar invasions. There are also portraits of the ninth century preserved in Japan, attributed to Li Chen; and some splendid statues are finding their way from these frontier collections into Western museums. Notable is that brought from Tun-huang to the Fogg Museum by Mr. Langdon Warner—a masterpiece of clay modelling with the gay original colours preserved in that dry upland, and showing the costume and head-dress of late T’ang.

‘The imagery and formula are Indian, but the artistic idiom is Chinese,’ says Mr. Binyon of the wall-paintings and scrolls thus miraculously preserved in a remote monastery. They make us eager indeed to discover a genuine masterpiece—some spirited group of horses by Han Kan or some great altar-piece by Wu Tao-tse.

It seems clear that as each artist was also a calligraphist and often a poet, so many were not content to paint on silk or clay but also used the chisel or engraved their work on stone, and it is far from impossible that some portrait of Confucius or some Buddhist Paradise of T’ang will be found—successors of the Han bas-reliefs and the incised Wei Tartar steles of the Buddha’s nativity. The great scrolls of his Nirvana still treasured in Japan are no doubt successors and imitations of paintings of this time.

Similarly the great Buddha of Lung-men—a T’ang masterpiece—can be traced back to the ‘strong pillar-like form’ of the T’o-shan figure1 which belongs to the sixth century—and behind that through the long succession from Gandhara and Mathura to the caves of Yun-kang, which show very little Chinese influence. The Buddhist sculptor in fact worked by fixed canons of iconography, and only gradually did local influence assert itself.

It is interesting to watch the development at these caves from the flat to the more deeply incised bas-relief, and then

1 11a in Siren’s article in the Burlington Magazine monograph.
to the fully rounded sculpture of the main images. While the drapery is Graeco-Indian in the earlier figures, and Gupta influence is evident in the later examples, yet Wei Tartar art has its own characteristic verve and energy. From the lovely Maitreya of our illustration to the Sakyamuni of the Kondo at Horiuji, early Chinese art develops by logical steps: and is characterized by its use of cylindrical and ovoid forms and flat draperies of graceful and sweeping curves.

The relation of sculpture to painting may be expressed by saying that if the Han reliefs are transcripts of painting, the brush of some of these T'ang artists, such as Wu Tao-tse, was almost a chisel, so statuesque were their great figures. Three hundred painters are known to us by name as belonging to this era, but almost all their work has perished—to live on in inspired memories and less inspired copies. Yet even in these we can rejoice in the grandeur of mountains, range beyond range, and in the bird’s-eye perspective which looks up to mountain-tops and down into valleys. The hieratic figures of Buddhas and saints also reveal how greatly Indian culture had stimulated the Chinese. Though it is the fashion amongst modern Chinese scholars to decry the influence of this 'alien mysticism' it did in fact fit the poetic Chinese, and with Laoism saved them from the rather sterile rationalism of the Confucian schools, who continued to oppose it and often to persecute the monks.

The sculpture of the T'ang Age reveals a gradual waning of Buddhist influence and a growing secularism. But the early masterpieces—in religious art the colossal Buddha of Lung-men, and in secular art the spirited chargers of the tomb of T'ai-tsung, are great achievements. Expressing on the one hand spiritual calm and on the other vivid action, they are both symbols of Indian influence on this age; and China has passed far from the dim world of Han, and even from the classic world of Wei.

Famous amongst T'ang sculptors is Yang Hui-chih, a friend and fellow-student of Wu Tao-tse, but most of the works that have survived are anonymous, and it is only in
BAS-RELIEFS AND STATUES OF LUNG-MEN
A BUDDHIST COLUMN
such rare centres as Tun-huang that we can see T'ang masterpieces in their true setting or be sure of their history.

The wooden pillar of our illustration, if it is genuine, was perhaps one of a colonnade once bright with colour, which led the eye of the worshipper through a long vista of fair forms to the majestic Buddha of the high altar in some ‘Hall of the Great Hero’. Here Greek draperies and Indian eikon are fused in the crucible of T'ang genius—itself a blend of Wei Tartar and pure Chinese. Of the statelier figures of this age perhaps the greatest are two series of Lohan here reproduced, magnificent in their serenity as in their realism.

The animal forms of T'ang graves—camel and war-horse and bull—suggest the grandeur of the works of such masters as Chang Seng-yu—and the lovely Tanagra-like figures of dancers and minstrels are eloquent of an age of luxury; the dead were critical indeed if they were not content with the company of so much charm and sensuous grace. From the wood and clay burial-figures of Han China has advanced to this great climax. Greek and Indian genius have met that of China in this cult of the dead.

Outside T'ang tombs stood great winged horses, and noticeable among them is a superb figure, at once natural and symbolic, at the tomb of Kao-tsung, erected in A.D. 683, and reminiscent of the Scythian animal-forms which play so interesting a part in the funerary art of Europe and Asia. The great emperors saw that such lasting memorials should keep their memory green. Dynastic histories did the rest, and court-historians flourished, for the T'ang like the Han encouraged the writing of eulogistic history. Liu Chi-ki wrote his Comprehensive Survey of Historical Works, and Tu Yu (who died in A.D. 812) his General Institutions, which deals with politics, government offices, military science, geography, national defence, and other institutions and their development.

More ambitious still is the history of Sse-ma-ch'ien (1019–86) who in the Sung era wrote a comprehensive account of the preceding five and a half centuries. 'To
him', says Dr. Wilhelm, 'history was no lifeless store of knowledge, but a living mirror, the right use of which would supply the basis for right government.'

In spite of this verdict the learned critic says that the appointment of historiographers in the early days vitalized Chinese historical literature, and in the later days paralysed it. For in the attempt to obtain objectivity by having the history of a dynasty written in the time of its successors, dullness ensued. History, like other art, must be 'infused with the life-spirit' of the imaginative intellect, and not reduced to the mere 'skeleton' of a chronicle of events.

The art and architecture of China lived on in Korea and Japan and with a study of these countries and of the Sung era we can obtain a better understanding of its grandeur and of the principles which guided the artist. Of the character of Chinese drama, too, much can be gleaned by a study of the No and of other Japanese plays; but there is an unbroken dramatic tradition in China itself, and as it was Huan-tsung who first patronized the 'Disciples of the Pear Orchard' singers and dramatic dancers, whose present chief Mei Lan-fang is well known 'in the West, we may comment on this great art as a characteristic product of the T'ang Court.

As a small boy of four the poet Tu Fu saw a famous dancer of the 'Pear Blossom Orchard', and later wrote this poem:

On all sides men are stirred at her dancing;  
It is the dance of the 'Two-edged Sword':  
Tier on tier they gaze breathless:  
Her posturing would move Earth and Heaven:  
Her scarf is loosened; it is the nine suns  
Falling, as Prince Li lets loose his shaft. 
She rises: it is like dragons soaring three abreast. 
She comes: it is the first clap of a thunder-storm, 
Rattling and making men shudder with fear.  
She makes an end: it is clear light on seas and rivers of ice.
ARHATS IN MEDITATION

(Glazed Porcelain)

(Stone)
Where is there a more exquisite figure to-day than the Yang Kuei-fei of Mei Lan-fang as she enters the Pavilion of a Hundred Blossoms, singing languid lyrics to the moon, or as she begins her drunken dance when she finds the emperor has deserted her and seeks to drown her sorrows in wine? The theatre is still a mighty force in China where, as in India, it educates millions of 'illiterate' peasants to know their country's history, and to appreciate the subtleties of its art. Dr. Tagore has told us of a village audience in Bengal sitting spellbound at a play in which strolling artists, without properties and lit only by the flare of a naphtha lamp, dramatized the subtleties of Hindu metaphysics: so the Chinese villager has seen scores of dramas and tales such as the famous *Tale of the Three Dynasties* which have played a large part in inspiring the chivalry of Japan. Half the human race is to-day educated chiefly by wandering minstrel and actor and story-teller.

Dr. Hu Shih, known as the father of the Chinese renaissance, says, paradoxically,

Nowhere in this modern world are to be seen such vivid presentations of the irrevocably lost steps in the slow evolution of the dramatic art as are seen on the Chinese stage to-day. There one sees every historical survival preserved and carried out with artistic perfection. The mask is seen in the gorgeously painted face, the dance in the conventionalized rhythmic movements, the acrobatic games in the mimic fight on the stage, the soliloquy in almost every play; and the symbolic scenery... is most skilfully handled by the property men.

In Japan we have drama of the Sung era crystallized in the No plays, where the old aristocratic art of poetical soliloquy may be seen in the process of popularization. The subtleties of dance and poetry are not enough for the crowd, which demands also action and dialogue.

It needs a trained eye to note with one of Mei Lan-fang's Chinese admirers that his facial expression 'may be compared with the adaptability of running water, which placed in a square basin is square, but in a round basin is round'. But which of us cannot enter into the intoxication

— San Kuo Chih.
of Yang Kuei-fei, first with love, then with wine, and into the miseries of her jealousy and lust so marvellously suggested in the difficult poses of the great actor? Here his waist 'strong and straight as a poplar on a mountain-side... like a sail in a brisk breeze', and his feet 'moving in dainty animation', suggest to the crowd what eyes and hands might tell to the critic, and the long sleeves of his lovely costumes 'fluttering like a frightened swan, swift as a sportive butterfly' add a joy to the eye which the more intellectual drama despises.

The religious background of many Chinese plays is interesting; the Confucian ethic of filial duty and of loyalty, the calm quiet and the splendid ritual of Buddhist temples, the fairyland of Taoist imaginations—these strike a familiar note, and go far to prove that religion plays a considerable part in the everyday life of the Chinese. 'To know their theatre is to know, in no small degree, the Chinese people.'

The form of the typical play deserves study. First comes a brief prologue which hints at what is to come. Then come couplets by the actors, who announce their names, and then go on to a more detailed statement of the theme.

Here, as in approaching any other work of art, there is ceremony and preparation of the mind for the play. It begins with recitative or song, and rhythmic dance, and concludes with a recitation of four lines of poetry. For the rest, the splendid costumes and the weird strident music combine to make a deep impression even upon the Western mind, which can at best understand but little of the real significance of this great art.

Immensely popular too are shadow-plays and puppets. Originally of a religious character, the shadow-plays are now thoroughly secular and often caricature the pious. First mentioned in the History of Sse-ma-ch'ien, where we find it as a kind of necromancy, this art rapidly sought its inspiration in the stirring deeds of the 'Three Kingdoms' or in the Travels of Hiuen Chang to India (here illustrated), and through it culture is widely disseminated to-day.

The puppet-plays of China begin in the T'ang era,
brought to Ch'ang-an from Turkistan, but originating in Greece. As in the ancient West, these puppets brought gaiety and instruction into the home, and gradually a religious colour was given to them by use at funerals; in such ways they still play a part in instructing simple people and children. Our illustration shows how readily the adventures of the monk lend themselves to the edification and amusement of the home,¹ and illustrates the processes of mass education in Asia.

THE SPIRIT OF T'ANG

I. THE SIX CANONS OF HSIEH-HO: PRE-T'ANG CRITICISM

The canons of painting of Hsieh-ho (6th century) apply only to portrait and figure paintings; they emphasize:

I. Rhythm and spiritual tone.
II. The art of rendering the bones, i.e. organic structure.
III. Form answering to nature.
IV. Accurate and appropriate colour.
V. Composition and grouping.
VI. The study of classical models.

'The first of these canons is the all-important one, for the others are concerned rather with means to attain the end which the first defines.' Laurence Binyon in the *Flight of the Dragon*, p. 13.

II. EARLY T'ANG STATECRAFT

JUDGEMENTS OF T'AI-TSUNG

(a) On Christianity

Religions vary—religion is one: it is for the salvation of men. Carefully examining this doctrine we find it profound, mysterious and spiritual: it establishes the importance of our birth and growth: and is profitable to men. It should circulate wherever we hold sway.

(b) On Good Government

(To his son—a last will and testament)

Be just, but above all be humane. Rule yourself, and you will easily rule the hearts of men. Be sparing with punishments—generous with rewards. Postpone no boon: but rather postpone punishment.

THE SPLENDOUR OF T'ANG

III. T'ANG POETRY

A. Li Po

(a) The Lady Yang Kuei-fei at the Peony Festival

(i)
Glory of trailing clouds is in her dresses,
The bloom of peonies upon her silken cheek;
Do I behold her at the moonlit lattice
Fanned by the dewy breezes of the spring:
Is this the royal palace and the Emperor's Lady,
Or faëry vision of the Jade Mountain-Peak?

(ii)
She is herself a flowering branch of peony,
But richer in fresh fragrance of honey-dew:
Her's is the glamour of the vanished fairy,
Who broke the heart of the dreaming Emperor
In that old tale of 'Cloud Who Changed to Rain'.
Pray who in the glorious Han Palaces
Can we compare to our own Emperor's Lady,
Save Flying Swallow clad in all the freshness
Of her incomparable loveliness?

(iii)
Upon the balustrade behold her leaning,
In the Aloe Pavilion of Chen-hsiang-ting.
Conquered is love's unconquerable longing
Wafted into the heart by soft winds of spring.
The queenly flower and the flowery queen together
Rejoice in the amorous glances of their Lord and King.
The original is in twelve lines of seven words each.

(b) Coming to Wine

(i)
Sirs, have you not seen the Yellow River waters coming from the distant heights?
It rushes on even to the sea, and never returns.
Or have you not seen a bright mirror in a high tower, sadly reflecting white hair?
In the morning of life it was like black silk, in the evening it has become snow.
To fulfil its mission a man's life must exhaust all its joy.
No one would raise an empty goblet to the moon.
Heaven gave me life, and must have had use for such stuff as I.
A thousand gold coins all scattered will come back to you;
Cook the sheep, kill the ox,—all for pleasure!
We meet, and for this one drink we will need three hundred cups.
My master Chin, my pupil Tan Chiu,
Come to the wine, let not your cups pause,
I will sing a song for you,
Please, sirs, lend your ears, and listen.
I wish only to be drunk and I do not wish to sober up.
From of old the good and wise have lived in solitude unknown,
Only the drinkers have left a name.
Once upon a time the king of Chen feasted in peace and pleasure,
With ten thousand measures of wine in reckless merriment.
Why, gentlemen, do you talk of being short of cash?
Trifles may be sold to get you drink,—
My spotted horse, my thousand dollar fur coat,—
I'll call the boy to take and exchange them for good wine,
And with you, together we will dissolve the wrongs of ten thousand years.
(Tr. by H. W. Houlding.)

The things I know when wine has mastered me
I'll never tell to those who are not drunk.

(c) About My Own Business
Because of wine I had not known that it had become dusk.
Falling petals had covered my clothes.
Drunken I strolled along the moonlit stream.
Birds had gone to rest and men were already few. . . .

(d) Green Water Quatrain
Green water bright with the autumn moon,
In the South Lake picking white water-lilies
Where the lotus charms and whispers of desire,
Melancholy smites the girls in the boat with longing.
(e) On Going Down the Yangtse Gorges
This morning I left Pai Ti (White Lord) in the midst of coloured clouds,
Passing in one day the thousand li to Chiang-ling.
On both banks monkeys wailed unceasingly;
The light boat has passed ten thousand heavy mountains.

(f) To A Japanese Friend
Ah! my friend, thou leavest the Imperial City
To sail the Seas of Isles of many a story.
Forever the bright moon sinks in the blue depths of ocean,
And dark clouds of sorrow fill the far southern sky.

(g) Chuang-tse's Dream
Chuang-tse became a butterfly in his sleep:
The butterfly awoke from Chuang-tse's dream.
Which was the real—the insect or Chuang-tse?
Who can tell the end of endless change?
The waters lost in the far-off ocean deep
Return again to the clear shallows of the stream;
The gardener growing melons by the City Gate
Was once maybe the Prince of the far Eastern Range.
Rank vanishes, and riches pass away;
Ye know it—yet toil on—to what end pray?

Li Po has been called 'the poet of heroic abandon'; he urged his age to live dangerously and to revolt against dullness.

B. Tu Fu

(a) On a Landscape of Wang Wei
Ten days to paint a mountain,
Ten days too to paint a rock?
The true artist works slowly,
And Wang Wei is a great master.
Here are the King-lun mountains,
Here too the village of Pa Ling:
I seem to hear the very noises
Of the little crooked village streets.
Here is the Lung-ting Lake,
And here the silver thread of a rivulet.
The wind sighs in the tree tops,  
And the clouds pile up in masses:  
Will that lonely fisherman  
Rowing there so desperately  
Find shelter before they break?  

Wonderful is a landscape scroll!  
Ten inches of paper  
And a thousand lively scenes;  
Would that I might snip off an inch  
Of this tremendous landscape—  
The kingdom of Wu and the province of Sung  
Would be enough to satisfy my needs.

(b) Separation
(The theme, says Arthur Waley, of half the poems of China.)

We had not met for a generation,  
Moving like stars in opposite hemispheres;  
When will this night return for another night?  
All this is like the light of lamps or torches;  
Lit for a moment—how long can they last?  
The hair on my temples is already grey;  
I visit old friends, and half of them have become spirits;  
Startled, I cry from the pain at my heart:  
How could I know that in these twenty years  
My worthy friend's children would fill the hall?  
When I left, he had not yet married;  
Now his boys and girls are before me in a row—  
Joyous, yet in awe of their father's old friend.  
They ask whence I have come,  
And ere the questions are answered,  
His boys and girls have laid out wine and sauce.  
'Tis night, and raining, and we slice the spring garlic,  
And fresh yellow millet slowly steams.  
My host acknowledges it will be hard to meet again;  
So we pledge in many cups,  
Yet with many cups we are not drunk.  
I am a sentimental fellow, and so affection lasts long.  
The next day hills and mountains separate us,  
And the affairs of the world carry us far apart.

(Tr. by H. W. Houlding.)
C. Other Poets

(a) Business Men
(Chen Tse-ang, A.D. 656–98)

These business men to vaunt their skill are wont,
Yet they are children in philosophy.
They boast of cunning in chicanery,
To the end of life itself they give no thought.
What should they know of that Master of Mystery
Who saw the world reflected in a bowl,
Till, soaring clear of earth and sky, his soul
On wings of change passed on to Changelessness?

(b) The Red Parrot
(Po-chüi)

A parrot, gift from far-off Annam sent
Scarlet as peach-bloom, imitates man-speech:
Can he escape the cage in which he's pent—
Like all the learned and the eloquent?

(c) A Blanket for the Poor
(Po Chu-i)

What can I do to help the cold and poor?
No use to warm a single shivering wretch.
Would I'd a rug ten thousand feet or more
To cover all the city at a stretch.

(d) Yen Li-Pen to his Son

‘In my youth I was a devoted student of letters: yet I am known only for my painting—as if I were a servant. I therefore advise you to refrain from practising this art.’

(e) Wang Wei

Pushing aside the floating lotus leaves glides the prow of the fisher’s little boat.

(f) The Cost of War
(Chien Tun, A.D. 879)

The hills and riverbanks of this fair land
You soldiers turn into a battle-field.
How shall the villagers beneath your hand
Make them grow hay or even fuel yield?
THE SPLENDOUR OF T'ANG

Let me not hear one vain ambitious word
Of titles or promotion to be got.
To make a reputation for a single lord
Ten thousand poor men die and rot.

IV. T'ANG CONTROVERSY

A Petition of Han Yu against the Buddhists
Addressed to Hsien-tsung (A.D. 820)

The religion of Buddha is barbarous and unknown to antiquity. It was brought in in an age of decadence, and when the T'ang Dynasty was founded by Kao-tsu he considered exterminating it. Alas! His ministers, unskilled in the wisdom of the ancients, dissuaded him. I am furious when I think that this salutary step was not taken. And you, Sire, a clearsighted, wise, and scholarly ruler the like of whom we have not seen for long—you at your accession forbade the building of new temples or the making of novices. Alas! Your orders were not carried out. And now, what do we hear? Can it be that you have ordered that a bone-relic of Buddha be brought in state? Maybe you do it—not yourself believing—to make a show for the people. But they in their ignorance will think you believe. Their rustics will say 'See the Son of Heaven, how he honours Buddha—and shall not we?' They will burn camphor on their scalps, and scorch their fingers with incense. They'll throng the temples, and cart their goods to the monks to get redemption and salvation from dangers to come! . . . These things ruin our morals and make us ridiculous in the eyes of strangers. For after all it is a barbarian we honour, who could not speak our tongue; who knew nothing of the Sages; who disregarded filial piety. And you allow a dry bone, a dirty bit of his corpse, to be presented to your Majesty! . . .

Ah, have it sent, I beg, to the headman that he may throw it into the fire, and get rid of this root of calamity. So will you preserve your people from seduction and error. And if the Buddha learns of it and can act—well—I take the responsibility—let him take vengeance on me.

V. T'ANG RELIGION

(a) The Essence of Buddhism

There are things deep, hard to realize and to understand, but leading to calm and joy; subtleties not to be grasped by logic, but only to be known by the wise.
These things the Realizer, who has seen them, has set forth.

Pali Nikaya.

The true Bodhi is deep, hard to realize and to understand.

Lotus Scripture.

The Buddha is within you: enlightenment must come from within.

Hui-neng.

(b) The Nestorian Account of Creation

(Ch'ang-an, A.D. 731)

Behold the Changeless, true and invisible,
Existing through all eternity, uncreated:
Far-seeing, perfect Intelligence,
Whose mysterious Being is everlasting.
From primaeval substance He made the world,
He more excellent than all holy intelligence,
For He is Source of all things honourable.
He is Aloha, eternal, triune, and mysterious.
He traced a cross to fix the four directions,
And moved the primaeval spirit to produce the two principles (of Nature).
The dark void was changed,
Heaven and earth were spread out.
Sun and Moon were set in motion,
Day and Night came into being.
Having perfected all lesser things He created man:
And bestowed on him a good nature,
Making him ruler over all creatures:
Pure and simple was he, obeying his own true nature:
His mind unsullied and growing, was free from inordinate affection.
On the collapse of the House of T'ang China fell into the hands of Turkoman and other invaders known as the Five Dynasties. For half a century chaos prevailed, and provincial governors had a free hand to plunder a diminishing and overburdened people till T'ai-tsu, a northerner of strong and virile character, appeared to restore order, to subdue all rivals, and to repel invaders.

With him dawns another great era, the Augustan age of Chinese literature and philosophy—an age of experiment and of freedom, of revolt against the trammels of tradition, of romanticism rather than of classicism; but also of scientific materialism, and naturalism. This is the Sung era, and while the Mongols are always at the gates, Chinese culture thrives under rulers of taste, many of whom are connoisseurs and collectors, and some of whom are ready for experiments in government as well as in art and letters. A glance at some of them will suffice. The founder, who reigned from 960 to 976, was wise and humane as well as strong, treating his lieutenants well and his people with kindly consideration. He revived the cult of K'ung Fu-tse, collected a library, and issued a new criminal code.

Shen-tsung (1068-84) encouraged a vast experiment in State socialism—largely to meet the ever-growing expenditure upon the army, and to give hope to the discouraged farmers. The Dowager Empress Kao (1084-93) ruled so well that the people called her the 'Yao and Shun' of her age. Hui-tsung (1101-25) was a notable collector and
critic, and to him the world owes a great debt for conserving treasures of painting, which were scattered when the Mongols sacked his capital, but which without him would probably have perished altogether.

For the rest it is an age notable rather for scholars and artists than for rulers. In spite of an army which reached the colossal figure of one and a half millions the northern capital fell before the Niüchi in 1126, and Nanking and Hangchou were both sacked and looted within the next four years. So priceless collections either perished or were scattered, and great pictures, now recovered, have gone through many vicissitudes. Some of them bear the seal of Hui-tsung, who was then taken captive, and many claim to be from his own brush, especially pictures of hawks and eagles; but these were probably done by his court painters. Fortunately the great books were now in print, and could not be demolished. For under the Five Dynasties printing from wood-blocks had been invented (in A.D. 932), and the Sung era owes its great achievements in scholarship in great part to this device—to this and to the spirit of inquiry and of freedom of thought and speech which in China as in the Europe of five centuries later accompanied—perhaps stimulated it.

And as the roots of the European renaissance were hidden in the dark ages, and those of the Hindu renaissance in the chaos of pre-Guptan times, so in China the dark age of the Five Dynasties was a period of preparation for the enlightenment of Sung.

Encyclopaedias, catalogues, and Se-ma Kuang's great history—the fruit of nineteen years' work—were printed, as well as collections of Confucian and Buddhist works; and as early as 978 a library was built to house 80,000 volumes. A college adjoined it, and academies became possible in many cities as books multiplied—schools of philosophy and sometimes of wisdom. Printing made popular works—novels and dramas—accessible to the masses, and greatly stimulated authorship. It also made paper money available: the first note being printed in
THE SUNG ERA

A.D. 970. The clash of intellectual swords is heard throughout this age: ‘pig’ and ‘dog’ are names for opponents, and as the entry to public service was by the gate of scholarship the discussions were often practical as well as heated. When Wang An-shih as prime minister under Shen-tsung began his reforms, he supported them by quotations from the classics, and his opponents drew their bitter attacks from the same source.

The new freedom and individualism of the age are well illustrated in this great man, who came first into prominence as an exponent of political science, and was appointed to a teaching position in the Han-lin Academy. Maintaining that everything belongs to the emperor, people as well as land, he insisted also that the Son of Heaven is the father of his subjects, and must cherish and help them. Paying special attention to the peasants and farmers, he found them paralysed by the demands of statute labour, and by the intolerable exactions of the tax-gatherer. His State socialism was aimed both at alleviating their lot, and at getting better results from them and their fields. Criticized by conservatives as a visionary, he yet set new standards and actually accomplished so much that the emperor supported him for eighteen years in his reforms; and it was in large part the corruption and ineptitude of the official class, his main critics, which defeated him. Complaining of their lassitude and inertia as well as of their chicanery he worked resolutely on. His first reform was a survey of all lands, and a reduction of the land-tax. A tax in kind was substituted, and the burden shifted to the backs of the wealthy by an income-tax. This, as always, was resented by the rich, and was too often evaded. Government loans of seed and tools were inaugurated, to be paid for by an interest of two per cent. a month on the crops. The surplus, bought at a fair price by the government, was sold at a fair profit; and transport was nationalized to make this possible and to prevent famine. Military service was also nationalized, and government made federal rather than local. These measures naturally met with opposition from the upper classes, and
from local governors, and the attack was launched by the scholar Cheng Hsiang and his son, who argued that Confucian teachings were being disregarded, and who saw in the unkempt appearance of the reformer proof that he was no gentleman. The emperor allowed the critics to 'retire' into exile; but the historian Se-ma Kuang was on their side. His great history, completed in 1084, marked him as an eminent authority, and he continued his attack upon the reforms, playing upon local irritation at the centralization of government, and aiding and abetting the wealthy who, then as now, saw in State socialism an enemy of all thrift and individual effort, as well as of private property. They could indeed point to the breakdown of government machinery, and when drought came they argued that it was a punishment for these breaks with tradition. 'Natural causes,' replied Wang An-shih, 'are the explanation of such phenomena: they do not spring from moral causes.' But the moment the emperor did away with the reforms, the rain came down in a deluge, and Wang An-shih went into exile. Se-ma Kuang succeeded him as prime minister. Though many of them disbelieved in it, Heaven had vindicated the conservatives.

This vast experiment in socialism lasted nearly twenty years, and stirred China socially and intellectually to its depths. To it is due the emergence of the great philosopher and commentator Chu Hsi in the next century, who edited Se-ma Kuang's new history and the old Confucian classics so skilfully that for seven centuries his text-books have been classical models, and have further crystallized and standardized Chinese life. An honest and fearless official, Chu Hsi was also an honest and bold thinker; a pupil of Li Tsung, he passed from Buddhism to Confucianism, and claiming to seize the essential points in the masters of Chinese thought and to bring out a central unity, he gave to China a much less religious philosophy than she had hitherto enjoyed. He is in fact a dynamic materialist—like all his school everywhere, naively positing the power of matter to move, but unlike most of them accepting men
too as free beings. Eternal energy or force is for him a more intelligible concept than Shang Ti or the Heavenly Ruler; and he expounds K’ung Fu-tse more negatively than is just, as Wang An-shih goes beyond Mo-tse in his socialism. Chu Hsi’s dogmas that man is by nature good, and has for his guidance a system of infallible classical teaching consistent with itself, are no more ‘reasonable’ in themselves than Mo-tse’s acceptance of a loving God and of man’s salvation through universal altruism. Ch’i or ‘universal energy’ may seem best conceived as impersonal, but personality is a higher and better category.

Between these poles China, like the West, has swung, and is still swinging: and at the moment Wang An-shih’s reforms are being carefully studied and found to be consistent with sound Confucian teaching, while Mo-tse’s theism and altruism are also being revived. It seems clear that Chu Hsi was influenced by the Indian Sankhya system in his distinction between Sing, spirit which is good, and Ch’i, matter which clouds it, at once its necessary vehicle and its enemy. Certain tendencies of Sung philosophy such as the pantheism of Chang Tsai and the atheism of Chen Tuan must be reckoned as elements in the system of Chu Hsi, and they too were influenced by Indian philosophy. Some idea of these rival teachers may be gathered from our illustrative readings; and something also of the philosophy of their great contemporary, the artist and critic Kuo Hsi.

In him is revealed the artistic ideal of the age. Here too a new breath of freedom is blowing, and a new suavity and romanticism is expressed in such great painters as Li Lung-mien (Li Kung-lin), who died in 1106 after a very active and brilliant career as a painter of landscape as well as Buddhist subjects. If his work is not as strong as that of Wu Tao-tse it is notable for mastery of delicate line and colour, and his Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are serene and lovely creations. Still more famous are his Lohan—some gnarled and rugged as an old oak, some smooth and polished as Confucian scholars—two types of saintliness
which China acknowledges. For the saint may retreat from the world and despise its conventions, or he may follow the nobler and more humane course of mingling with it and co-operating with its best efforts. Such is the Sung ideal, and Kuo Hsi voices it for the scholars of his age.

In cities like K’ai-feng and Hangchou life was good as well as pleasant, and Marco Polo, who knew Venice in its glory, exhausts his epithets in praising Hangchou, its gardens and lakes, its palaces and restaurants, as well as the friendliness and culture of its people. He seems to have seen nothing of its great artists or philosophers, to have taken back to Venice no printed book or picture. What a sensation these would have made in Venice; and how the sailors of Genoa would have crowded about a specimen of the compass then being used in China! As it was, Europe had to wait three centuries for its ‘discovery’ of printing, and Marco Polo’s own journal is known in many manuscript editions, while it was not till 1492 that Columbus, kindled maybe by the keen interest of ‘Marco Millioni’ in the wealth of Zipangu or Japan, and in the splendours of Khambaluk or Peking, set out on his momentous voyage.

II

What are the great and formative elements in this age? We have mentioned the spirit of freedom and inquiry. We may place next the quietism of the Ch’an school—a Chinese development of meditative Buddhism associated with the names of such ‘patriarchs’ as Bodhidharma and Hui Neng.

The earliest documents which tell the strange story of these masters belong to the Sung era, but there are much earlier biographies of monks who practised these meditations, and they are of the very essence of Buddhism. ‘Without meditation no insight’ is one of its axioms, and meditation is indeed the main task of the Buddhist monk as almsgiving is of the Buddhist layman in this religion of enlightenment and compassion. So Buddhism enhanced and systematized the Chinese tendency to quietism already
articulate in Taoism: and if Taoism laid stress on the spiritual reality of all nature as an embodiment of the Tao, Buddhism emphasized its transience. Nature was a dream, but a beautiful one; and men could see in it an embodiment of the Buddha—real so long as men had to be incarnate in bodily form. The Sankhya school had imbued a Buddhist philosophy with its insistence on this transient yet real union of spirits with bodies, and it was this aspect of Hindu thought which, with its emphasis on meditation as the way of escape, influenced China in this era. Moreover, both Taoism and Buddhism held out the lure of obtaining magic or transcendental powers, and this long search played a great part in the history of a people whom an excess of rationalism has continually driven beyond the borders of mysticism into the realm of magic.

Such men as Tao An, who died in A.D. 385, and his pupil Hui Yuan (d. A.D. 416) had indeed sought to reinterpret Buddhist meditation or dhyana in terms of Taoist thought. How readily wu-wei or non-activity fits in with Buddhist ideas, and Nibbanism with the eternalism of Lao-tse! How easily both degenerate into magic practices! The practical Chinese wanted proofs of this mystical technique, and their scholars sought a simplification of the essential content of the Indian religion now overloaded with metaphysics. They saw in Buddhism a method of sudden enlightenment, and in the pursuit of this they invented the Dark Sayings, or Koan, which aim at snubbing the discursive intellect and at giving intuition free play. They sought to kick away all crutches and artificiality and to take man back to nature, and to experience. Body and mind were to be freed from all bonds, and by the ninth century this new gymnosophy had developed into a potent influence. Chinese reason had taken Indian mysticism and made it at once simple and austere. This led to beauty in the simple open spaces of Buddhist monasteries, to austerity of line in their architecture, to ‘cleanliness’ and good taste as opposed to the florid and the over-decorated.
It led to elimination of the non-essential: this was its own origin and essence.

And if its influence was great upon the artists and thinkers of this age in China it was even greater in Japan, where the element of austerity and of the bizarre strikes a congenial note, and where Zen came as a timely reaction from effeminacy and over-refinement. The tea-ceremony, the quiet meditation-hall, the simple beauty of a garden which is itself the result of much pruning and elimination, the lines of a picture reduced to the bare bones of the subject, these and above all the quiet enjoyment of nature and the art of meditation are the fruits of Ch'an or Zen Buddhism. Whatever intensifies and beautifies life, whatever reveals the beauties and grandeur of nature, whatever brings chosen souls together in mystical union will make for great art and great thinking. The Sung era enjoyed the rich by-products of two centuries of such contemplation. They had reunited man to nature, and had sent him back to read her profound lessons. They had linked Lao-tse and Sakyamuni in a new and very fruitful friendship.

If T'ang is the era of the interpenetration of Taoism and Buddhism, Sung is that of the fusion of Buddhist philosophy with Confucian social theory and politics.

Some Chinese critics see in this process a victory for Buddhist quietism and the paralysis of Chinese activism: others claim it as a revival of Confucian rationalism which now adopts the technique of mysticism in order to defeat it. The truth is surely that China yielded to a better metaphysic, but reaffirmed her native social theory, adopting a technique which she needed: and if we must use the metaphors of conflict for this cross-fertilization of cultures it was a victory for K'ung Fu-tse rather than for Sakyamuni. It was the culmination of a long process of canonization of the typical Chinese. If there was sterilization as well as fertilization that is equally true of the analogous influence of Aristotle in the West. The surest way of turning a benefactor into a curse is to canonize him and his works till there is no freedom left.
We have seen the mandarins 'veiling their faces', as Wang An-shih dares to think for himself and to interpret nature differently from their orthodox cosmism; earthquakes and other calamities, he dares to teach, are due not to sin but to natural causes. His great opponent Chu Hsi (1129–1200) is seen, when China is overrun with Tartars, solemnly telling the emperor that the cause of all this misery is in his own mind.

This may be Buddhist idealism misapplied, but it is also orthodox Sinism, and Chu Hsi went for his authority to the Book of Changes and to the pamphlet Ta Hsieh ('Great Learning') discovered by his predecessors Cheng Hao (1032–85) and Cheng Yi (1033–1108). It is an anonymous work belonging to the Li-chi and in it they discovered a logical method: 'when things are thoroughly studied knowledge will be increased to the limit. Then ideas will be rectified, minds clarified and character improved. So families will be well ordered and States well governed.'

This is the old Sinism, but by re-emphasis a method of reasoning is developed, and to investigate into things becomes the essence of philosophy.

But just as in the West the age-long battle rages between the discursive reason and intuition, so in China were the Sung philosophers challenged in the fifteenth century by Wang Yang Ming (1472–1529) whose intuitionism became a great force in Japan also.

'The ruler of the body is the mind,' says Wang Yang Ming; and it might be Plotinus or a Cambridge Platonist speaking. For the mind is for Wang Yang Ming that intuitive process, without which no investigation will avail. And here is a teaching which combines the pragmatic and the poetic and is well suited to the genius of the Far East.

Many scholars regard Chu Hsi as a liberator of the Chinese spirit—who resolved the old Confucianism 'from a series of frozen formulae into a living stream'.

But others—very brilliant Chinese thinkers such as Hu Shih—condemn him as the chief agent in freezing the stream of Chinese thought.
In the clash of opinion his real work is often neglected. He is in effect the subtlest metaphysical mind of China, the architect of the only system of philosophy she has produced—a synthesis of Indian quietism and Chinese rationalism. His aim is to account for the world and man; and he begins with non-being, Wu-ki, a potential cosmos, and with the absolute Tai-ki—pure being—'nearer to the transcendental God of Saint Thomas than to the Brahman of the Vedantist'. It is in effect spirit—'everywhere, most exalted, most excellent . . . conscious soul, self-conscious, conscious of its workings'.

Li—Law—moulds matter—Ki: 'it is as it were the master of the house, the host who abides while the guests come and go'.

It liberates energy-in-matter: it is thus the creative power imminent in this Cosmos, which is 'a reflex and an emanation of the Absolute'.

It is like the moon which lights up the night: one with the sky it spreads its gentle radiance on waves and lakes, and is reflected in their surface—yet it is one indivisible, and keeps its own identity.

So the Tai-ki is at once the Source of all, the Soul of all—akin to the Wisdom of the Hebrew, and the Logos of the Greek.

And if it is akin to the Dharma of India, it is also akin to the Tao of China. Like both it leads on to sound morality: and Chu Hsi does not hesitate to bid his emperor meet a great drought (1179) by putting the army to work at agriculture: 'You will then have more harvest and fewer mercenaries.' Nor did the philosopher hesitate to attack court intrigues; and for his boldness was exiled by Kuang-tsung. This was the fate too of the great statesman, poet, and artist Su Tung-po (1036–1101), who used his exile to good purpose—draining the marshes and widening the canals of Hang-chou, and saving the people in a flood at Soo-chou.

The old activism of Yu and the early rulers revives in the men of Sung: even those who took opposite sides—
COURT LADIES: ATTRIBUTED TO THE EMPEROR HUI TSUNG (1082-1135)
(Boston Museum of Fine Art)

LANDSCAPE BY TUNG YUAN (SOUTHERN SUNG; TENTH CENTURY)
(Boston Museum of Fine Art)

SUNG PAINTINGS
Wang An-shih who persecuted Su Tung-po, Sse-ma Kuang who attacked Wang An-shih—are in their way men who believe that the country must be ruled in the interests of the people, and that man can control the forces of nature.

And in its intellectual activity the Sung Age is one of intense vigour, when Zen concentration contributes to worldly success, and stimulates artist and poet to a new insight and a new love of nature.

Yet Chinese critics of great insight and ability see in the Neo-Confucianism of Sung a victory for Buddhism in paralysing the real mind of China—rationalist and humanist—with its other-worldly mysticism.

III

Let us look at some of the great painters who inherited this spirit—and we shall see how the sentiment of man’s oneness with nature animated them. The rhythm of nature pulses through their work, but it is with a romantic sense of its kinship and sympathy with man.

Of the earlier Sung painters we may mention Li Cheng, a descendant of the House of T’ang, whose unique picture ‘Studying the Tablet’ is still preserved in Peking—a lovely landscape with a scholar and his boy studying an ancient writing. He loved wintry scenes, one of which, ‘Winter Magpies’, is in the Metropolitan Museum. It is one of those masterpieces which make one feel as well as see the chill of winter, with its bareness and snowy hills. These artists could indeed ‘paint the north wind’. Others depicted dragons, or horses, which were said, like those of the great Greeks, to come to life and leave the picture. But unlike the Greek Zeuxis they made no great attempt at realism.

The Sung emperors had a great and notable collection known as the Hsuan-ho from the name of the palace where it was lodged, and the catalogue of it may be the work of the great Mi Fei. It classes pictures as religious works, human figures, palaces, dragons and fishes, landscapes, animals, birds and flowers, bamboos and vegetables, and contains the names of painters as early as the third century.
A.D. and the titles of their works. There are also records of Mi Fei’s own great collection. With Kuo Hsi and Chao Ling-jang he is one of the great landscape artists of the northern Sung.

A few notes on each must suffice. Kuo Hsi is perhaps the greatest. Two works attributed to him are in the Metropolitan Museum, and illustrate his maxim that ‘landscape must be viewed from a distance in order to be appreciated’. As so often in Chinese landscape the eye is placed at a height above the subject, and a bird’s-eye perspective is obtained. These pictures of travellers in mountain ranges with their distant and near peaks and their suggestion of great spaces are the very poetry of art, and Mi Fei and Chao Ling-jang are great exponents of it. The former comments upon a work of the latter that in a small compass he has shown a wonderful breadth of scene, and his famous paintings of wild geese suggest the same wonderful spaciousness.

Mi Fei was a great man of letters and a calligraphist as well as a painter who ‘piled ink on as if he was working in oil’.

Painting on paper he has left a few specimens of his work such as ‘Mist on the Hills’ which might be better called ‘A Mountain Peak in Mist’, and illustrates the Chinese passion for Shan-shui or Shan-chuan (‘hills and water’), the usual names for landscape; for in spite of the maxims of Kuo Hsi many continued to rejoice in the solitude and grandeur of the mountains.

Between the maps of early China and those grand interpretations and impressions of her modern age how great is the development, not only in technique but in the poetry and philosophy of art. Never topographic or meticulous, these Sung workers produce an impression of the grandeur of an idealized scenery. Full of subtlety and mystery and charm, they allure the eye and mind as no other painting can do, and are full too of religious and solemn feeling. The ‘numinous’ is present as in some great cathedral, and man is attuned to harmony with the eternal Tao.

1 John Ferguson, *Chinese Painting*, p. 100.
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‘Landscapes are an inexhaustible source of life,’ says Kuo Hsi, and the Sung Age in particular developed this religious sense of nature’s mysteries. Nor has any age surpassed it in the portrayal of divine beings. The great Kwan-yin of Mu Chi is flanked by apes and cranes, symbols of lonely and beautiful scenes, and the saints and Buddhas of Li Lung-mien are visions of majesty and sublimity, as great as those of his mountain peaks. Heaven, Nature, and Man are the three-in-one of this great art; and men like Li Lung-mien and Mi Fei and Su Shih would gather in the famous Western Garden for aesthetic enjoyment and inspiration. A scroll of Li Lung-mien shows them gathered in this lovely spot. He has also left us a vigorous portrait of Wang An-shih entitled ‘Meditations’. The great man is seen passing under an avenue of old trees; and a further glimpse into his character is given us in his poems, one so typical of the sensitive spirit of his time that we may well quote it here:

'Tis midnight, all within the house is still:
The water-clock has stopped—no sound of any kind;
Yet sleep is banished by the moon, whose skill
Throws ever-changing shadows on the blind.

With Zen monks and Japanese literati this delicate spiritual discernment and this almost morbid sensitiveness to beauty passed to Japan, where it may be studied in the Ashikaga era, and seen at work inspiring Sesshu and his school. It spreads westward too to Persia, and so to India; and China is once more a centre of great and sublime inspiration.

Treasured in Japan for example are the exquisite black and white studies of Mu Chi or Mokkei, whose son became a Japanese and founded a school. These Zennists deepened that natural love of beauty and of cleanliness and order which make Japan unique in Asia. In Persia the miniaturist found new inspiration in the exquisite forms of plant and insect, as in the romantic loves of heroes and heroines. For man and nature are one; and nature is felt to be in sympathy with man’s life, as man attunes himself to hers.

The pantheism of the Sung philosophers now deepens
the old Taoism, and their humanism corrects the monastic tendency of both Buddhist and Taoist thinkers. This new delight in beauty reveals itself also in the minor arts—in porcelains of exquisite surface and tint, and in the patina of lovely bronzes and lacquers.

As the men of Sung refused to turn their back on society, but loved life and enjoyed its luxury in great cities, so they found in matter itself a living pulse. Beauty is all about us, and Kuo Hsi bids the artist cultivate a catholic taste, and observe comprehensively and widely, noting the essential features of a scene and ignoring the non-essentials. Such is the philosophy of the day—strong in its objectivity but also in its subjective interpretation, and artists under great patrons like Hui-tsung were sure of a critical yet appreciative public, and of a reasonable livelihood. Their grand landscapes are notable for spaciousness and quiet beauty, and they were critical of the existing works of an earlier day. Even Ku K'ai-chih comes in for scathing comment so far as he attempted landscape; and only Wang Wei is acknowledged as really great by the critic Su Tung-po. With a few bold strokes these masters, especially of the Southern school, suggest great spaces, and there is no trivial detail to disturb the eye or mind, as some gnarled fir-tree leans over a chasm, while a poet at its foot contemplates eternity.

In two albums, one belonging to Marquis Kuroda and entitled The Garden of Brush-culture and another to Mr. Strehlnneek of Shanghai, from which a painting is here reproduced, miniature-drawings of these great masters are preserved, and here their vigour and poetic imagination can be very conveniently studied. Here Taoist teachings of the value of emptiness and Buddhist practices of contemplation are revealed in the use of space and in the spirit of ecstatic calm. A great example of figure and landscape painting with these qualities is in the ‘Sakyamuni coming down from the Mountains’, treasured in Japan. Our illustration of a typical Sung sculpture reveals a certain weakening and softening when compared with its T'ang prototypes.
CHINESE LANDSCAPE WITH PALACES
(Ming (?) ; Peiping)
KWANYIN IN POSE OF PRINCELY EASE

A FAN BY MA YUAN

SUNG ART
As to the poetry of this era, it too is largely imitative of the T'ang masters: 'Wan Yu-chang,' says the caustic Father Wieger, 'was accurate and limpid, and went into ecstasies over peonies—that was all.' But he saw in the peony what Tennyson saw in the 'flower in the crannied wall,' or Wordsworth in the daffodils; and there is something of real pathos in his lines quoted in our reading. Where is a too typical Chinese scene more poignantly depicted? Side by side go the luxury of the court and the bitter poverty of the people now as ever, and as ever it is a poet who voices the cry of the destitute. What need of originality when nothing changes?

But originality and a very 'modern' spirit are not wanting in such poems as those of the disillusioned statesman Su Tung-po. Among the enemies of Wang An-shih such a spirit would mock at any official: it is a classical Chinese type.

As to medical and astronomical science they seem to have made little progress. Hysteria was regarded as demon-possession, and treated with acupuncture to let out the devils, or to drive them from more vital to less vital spots. Drugs were used with some skill, though Father Wieger (forgetting what was done in contemporary Europe) makes fun of the treatment of gastric complaints with a powder of ginger and olibanum. The burning of moxa and other gums and the repetition of Buddhist and Taoist texts went on—as it still does in modern Japan; and modern America spends untold millions in astrology and quackery of every description. No nation has yet been truly scientific, or truly religious.

Taking it all in all, this was a great era, and its fruits are in the museums of the world, and in the living tradition of Japanese drama and painting. Let us seek further light there, and leave China with Marco Polo, seeking to get his story of her grandeur accepted, and Kublai Khan upon

1 Illustrative Reading, IV (a).
2 Ibid., IV (b).
the throne of Peking and casting covetous eyes on Japan. For the Sung gave place to the Mongol; and already old China had died as new China was reborn in the new spirit of romanticism and of philosophic idealism of this age. Her history has been that of many dynasties and their degeneracy, of the coming of new vigour with hardy northerners, and of their gradual weakening. When the Manchus came to the throne a wise but cynical philosopher said, ‘Give them all they ask, and they’ll be finished in three hundred years.’ And this was foresight based on a score of such tragedies during two thousand years, and was fulfilled almost to the letter.

Before we leave this great nation and look at its pupils in Japan and Korea we must look also at the barbarians. Huns, Uigurs, Mongols, Tungusians, Scythians, Turks, Kitans—who are all these peoples who have played so great a part in history?

Of kindred blood the Huns or Hiung-nu are the inveterate scourge of the Chinese: ‘If the Chinese are settled Tartars the Tartars are nomad Chinese,’ says Oka-kura Kakuzo, and China was long occupied with the double task of repelling their invasions and of assimilating them when they got a foothold. During the Sung era Kitans and Tungusians waged continuous war on China, and she was humiliated by having to recognize them and to pay what was virtually tribute: her very name in Europe, Cathay, is a corruption of the word Kitan, and it was under such Mongol conquerors as the Great Khan that Europe first knew China by anything less vague than rumour or an occasional embassy.

What Attila was to Europe the Mongol Khans were to China seven centuries later; but they were also to do for China what their cousins the great Moguls did for India, and they must on the whole be reckoned not only ‘Scourges of God’ but also vivifiers and builders.

‘They begin by savage and senseless destruction. They end, not only by leaving everywhere—in Persia, in India, in Asia Minor, in Constantinople—marvellous monuments
of their greatness and the most beautiful tombs in the world, but by developing to the highest point of which it is capable the genius of the peoples whom they have conquered, and, as it were, quickened to intenser life," says an acute observer.

We have seen how much Han China owed to the Huns, and how the Wei Tartars were the carriers of Greek sculpture and Buddhist thought to China; these are but two examples which show that harassing as were the constant invasions of her frontier they were no unmixed evil.

In the T'ang era Kitans and Turks were driven back only to swarm to the attack of the dying dynasty. And in 936 the former—a Tungusian tribe—established themselves as the Liao or 'Iron' rulers of Liao-tung. When a Chinese sovereign killed their people in his territory, these warlike hordes swarmed all over China, looting and ravaging. They sent the royal house into exile in Tartary; and all through the Sung era we find them playing an aggressive role.

But a branch of the Tungusians threw off their yoke and set up the Kin or 'Golden' Dynasty. With them Hui-tsung made an alliance against the Kitans, and when they won and grew arrogant he turned to the Kitans to help him against the Niüchi. Defeating this alliance the latter ravaged his land, looted his capital, and carried off his person and his family. When the Mongols in turn arose, Niüchi and Sung went down in a common destruction.

But Niüchi, Turks, and Mongols all in turn become Chinese, teach Chinese letters and literature, and bring in new energies to throne and people. It was Kublai Khan who planned and built Khanbaluk or Peking, most splendid of capitals, and who from this centre looked out for fresh lands to conquer. As ruler of all China and grand Khan of the Mongols he had become the greatest emperor of his time, and Marco Polo was not wrong in his high estimate of his patron.

1 Émile Hovelaque, China, E.T., pp. 95–6.
THE SUNG ERA

THE SPIRIT OF SUNG

I. SUNG CRITICISM

A. Kuo Hsi (d. A.D. 1088) on Landscape

(a) The Lure of Landscape Painting

Why do good men love landscapes? They are an inexhaustible fount of life. . . .

By his very nature man loves the greenery of gardens, the play of water on rocks, the cries of monkeys and the flight of cranes voicing their love of nature. . . .

Nothing is so odious as the noise and dust and bondage of human habitations, and men naturally envy the lot of hermits living amidst the beauties of nature.

But in these days of peace when emperor and people are in accord and work together for the common weal it were wrong to leave society and retire to the mountains. This is no time to abandon the life of the busy world . . . and most of us cannot indulge in the joys of nature. . . .

How delightful for the lover of woods and waters, of haze and mist, to find them in the work of a master. Here is the abiding vision of mountain peak and river, the abiding call of apes and the song of birds.

(b) The Moods of the Painter

If a painter forces himself to work, his painting will be spiritless and weak: for he cannot put his full energies into it. If he feels worried or anxious when he paints, his form will be vague and his line uncertain. This comes from lack of serious purpose. If he work hurriedly or feverishly his composition will be rough and arbitrary, lacking unity. This comes from a lack of reverent toil.

B. Su Tung-po on Wu Tao-tse

Wu Tao-tse’s figures might have been drawn as shadows on a wall. They seem to walk out of the picture and into it again. They are solid, and can as it were be seen from both sides. The flat planes and the angles fit into each other as by a natural law of mathematics.

C. Tung Yu on the same

(12th century)

They are like sculpture: when he paints a face the cheek bones project, the nose is solid, the eyes hollow, the cheeks dimpled. But
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these effects are not got by heavy shading: they seem to be spontaneous and inevitable.

D. Others on Painting

Painting and writing are one and the same art. Who ever knew a good calligraphist begin by making a sketch? Chou Shun.

The artist must place himself in communion with his subject. Chao Chang.

II. SUNG REALISM

Use Your Resources

Wang An-shih (d. A.D. 1086)

The Empire lacks neither resources nor men. But people lack intelligence or energy in using these resources—these men. In old days it was not so. Rulers made inquiry, got information, turned to good account the resources and men available. To cite but one example: Nan Yu for long owed its supremacy to the care bestowed on making arrows of the best wood tipped with the best metals, and winged with the best feathers. So made they pierced men at a thousand paces... One must use wise selection to get the best results. But those in office are apt to content themselves with sighing and complaints of men and mankind. It's a good excuse: but you can't make me accept it. No, we have the men and the resources too.

III. SUNG PHILOSOPHY

Chu Hsi (1130–1200)

Chu Hsi is called by Father Wieger 'a tiresome preacher, always without flair or tact, prolix and nil'. It is strange that he should have dominated the mind of China for so many centuries. The following are typical passages.

There is but one nature in the world: the nature of man is one with that of heaven and earth, with that of birds and beasts. We need not talk of vain, far-off things; if we would know Reality we must seek it within.

Each has within him the principle of right. This we call Tao. It is the road along which we must walk.

Virtue is the practice of this moral law.

The Buddhists keep talking of controlling the heart. Let us see what this means... Truly the heart governs man's being. It is not
only lodged in the body, it is its master. It commands and is not commanded. It judges of external things and decides issues. Neutral, it can be influenced . . . so it is necessary to be on guard. But this is not to sit motionless and abstracted—as the Buddhists use. To control the sentiments and correct actions we need no ecstasy leading to unconsciousness . . .

Wrongly interpreted, men read the text of the Shu-ching to mean that man has two hearts—one reasonable and one human. They are wrong. Man has one heart subject to two influences. Another error is to distinguish heart and body. The heart is one with the body. . . . Abstraction of one from the other, abstraction of the heart from the world about us, is contrary to nature and leads to annihilation.

IV. SUNG POEMS

(a) A Famine
Wang Yu-chang

No food anywhere:
No smoke rises from the huts.
But the sun has pity on the poor,
And a slight warmth is in the air.
On the road some beggars pass,
An old man and his old sick wife:
Three children follow crying—
A bushel of wheat and a string of cash.
Driven by famine they have left Chang-an,
The children lost their mother on the way;
They buried her alone in foreign soil,
And pushed on, hungry, pale and wan.
Seeking for work their bitter way they wend.
But in some valley on a snowy day
I fear they’ll leave their bones to rot,
I, a degraded officer, am poor, God wot,
But they are poorer, without house or friend.

(b) On the Birth of a Son
Su Tung-po (1036–1101)

When a child is born the family
Devoutly hope ’twill be intelligent.
I through intelligence am spent
And hope my little son will be
Blest with such crass stupidity
That he will crown a life secure
With cabinet-rank—a sinecure.

Su Tung-po succeeded Sse-ma Kuang as prime minister, only to be exiled in 1094. He had three sons, one of whom was the great artist-scholar Su Kuo, landscapist and calligraphist. We do not know whether his prayer was answered in the respectable dullness of another.

(c) On Middle Age

Ou-Yang Hsuin (1007–72)
The water from the pools is vanishing;
The mellow sunshine floods the lattices,
The wind of autumn fans us pleasantly.
Acacias glow with gold and vivid green,
And o’er the lintel of his summer gone
There falls the shadow of a lonely man.

Sung poetry is largely imitative of T’ang, but has both a pathos and an irony of its own—here illustrated. Yet even these qualities are in part imitated from Po Chui and other T’ang masters.

V. Post-Sung China

Marco Polo on Hangchou

The inhabitants of the city are idolaters, and they use paper money as currency. The men as well as the women have fair complexions, and are handsome. The greater part of them are always clothed in silk, in consequence of the vast quantity of that material produced in the territory of Kin-sai, exclusive of what the merchants import from other provinces. Amongst the handicraft trades exercised in the place, there are twelve considered to be superior to the rest, as being more generally useful; for each of which there are a thousand workshops, and each shop furnishes employment for ten, fifteen, or twenty workmen, and in a few instances as many as forty, under their respective masters. The opulent principals in these manufactories do not labour with their own hands, but, on the contrary, assume airs of gentility and affect parade. Their wives equally abstain from work. They have much beauty as has been remarked, and are brought up with delicate and languid manners. The costliness of their dresses, in silks and jewelry, can scarcely be imagined. Although the laws of their ancient kings ordained that each citizen should exercise the profession of his father, yet they were allowed,
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when they acquired wealth, to discontinue the manual labour, pro-
vided they kept up the establishment, and employed persons to work
at their paternal trades. Their houses are well built, and richly
adorned with carved work. So much do they delight in ornaments
of this kind, in paintings, and fancy buildings, that the sums they
lavish on such ornaments are enormous. The natural disposition of
the native inhabitants of Kin-sai is pacific, and by the example of
their former kings, who were themselves unwarlike, they have been
accustomed to habits of tranquillity. The management of arms is
unknown to them, nor do they keep any in their houses. Contentious
broils are never heard among them. They conduct their mercantile
and manufacturing concerns with perfect candour and probity.

VI. LATER CHINESE PRAGMATISM

Wang Yang Ming (1472–1529)

There are no crises and problems beyond those of passion and
change. Are not pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy passions of men?
Seeing, hearing, talking, working, wealth and honour, poverty and
lowness, sorrow and difficulty, death and life, all are vicissitudes
of life. All are included in the passions and feelings of men. These
need only to be in a state of perfect equilibrium and harmony, which,
in turn, depends upon being watchful over one’s self.

Pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are in their natural condition in
the state of equilibrium and harmony. As soon as the individual
adds a little of his own ideas, he oversteps and fails to maintain the
state of equilibrium and harmony. This implies selfishness. In sub-
duing one’s self, one must clear out selfish desire completely, so that
not a bit is left. If a little is left, all sorts of evil will be induced to
make their entrance.

If a person unceasingly applies himself truly and earnestly, he
will daily better comprehend the subtle essence of the moral prin-
ciples of the mind, as well as the subtlety of selfish desires. If he does
not use his efforts in controlling himself, he will continually talk and
yet never comprehend the meaning of moral principles or of selfish
desire.

(Tr. F. G. Henke, Open Court.)

VII. THE TRUE CHINESE

Meng-tse

Man’s impulse is to do good, for his nature is good. That he does
not do good is not the fault of his natural faculty. A feeling of sym-
pathy everybody has; a feeling of shame everybody has; a feeling of
deference everybody has; a sense of discrimination everybody has. The feeling of sympathy is humaneness (jen); the feeling of shame is justice (i); the feeling of deference is propriety (li); and the sense of discrimination is intelligence (chi). Humaneness, sense of justice, propriety, and intelligence are not what is moulded into us from without. They are inherent in us, only men are not conscious of them.

Therefore, a man without a feeling of sympathy is not human; a man without a feeling of shame is not human; a man without a feeling of deference is not human; a man without a sense of discrimination is not human. The feeling of sympathy is the starting-point of humaneness; the feeling of shame is the starting-point of justice; the feeling of deference is the starting-point of propriety; and the sense of discrimination is the starting-point of intelligence. A man has these four starting-points as he has four limbs; and those who, having these four starting-points, plead incapability, are mutilating themselves.