



The Moral Point of View of Chang Tsai

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Siu-chi Huang The moral point of view of Chang Tsai^a

I. CHANG'S CRITICISM OF BUDDHISM

Ever since the fire-like spread of the Buddhist teachings into the Middle Kingdom, Confucian scholars have no longer allowed themselves to enter the gate of the school of the Sage, but have been attracted to and become engrossed in Buddhism and pointed to it as the great Way. Its vulgarity has extended everywhere under heaven, so that good and bad people, the intelligent and the ignorant, men and women, male and female servants, all have overtly believed in it. Even supposing that brilliant and talented persons have occasionally appeared, they already in childhood have become drowned in whatever they have been accustomed to hearing and seeing, and in youth they have followed the teachings stressed by popular but mediocre scholars. Thus they have been confused and driven away [from the learning of the Sage]. For [according to the Buddhists] one can attain sagehood without [moral] cultivation and can understand the great Way without learning. Thus, without understanding the mind of the Sage they have already considered it unnecessary to seek his path, and without knowing the purpose of the superior man they have already considered it unnecessary to study his literary works. This is why human relations have not been observed,¹ [the principles of] things have not been understood, government has been neglected, morality has been in a chaos, and heterodox doctrines have filled the ear. From above there have been no rules of propriety to prevent their hypocrisy, and from below there has been no [true] learning to scrutinize their deficiency. For a long time, one-sided, absurd, heterodox, and elusive doctrines have arisen simultaneously—all of these in the course of the past one thousand and five hundred years have come from the Buddhist schools.² Unless one is independent, fearless, single-minded, self-confident, and in possession of talent greatly exceeding that of other men, how can one stand upright in such a situation to contrast between what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad?³

The lengthy passage above is indicative of Chang Tsai's uncompromising rejection of Buddhism as a force overwhelmingly destructive of public morality. Chang (1020-1077) was by no means the first opponent of Buddhist teachings, as more than two centuries before him such an outstanding T'ang scholar as Han Yü^b (786-824), among other earlier critics, had already openly attacked Buddhism, for which attack he had paid a heavy price.⁴ Han Yü's criticism was primarily based on the ground that Buddhism was a religion imported from

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¹ Here Chang Tsai must have had in mind the traditional five Confucian human relations (*wu lun*). See below, section IV.

² Apparently Chang made a mistake here, as Buddhism was officially introduced into China in the first century and therefore the length of time indicated should be about one thousand years.

³ *Chang-tzû Ch'üan-shu*^{ba} [Complete Works of Chang Tsai], *Kuo-hsüeh chi-pen ts'ung-shu*^{bb} edition (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1935), 3. 81 (i.e., *chüan* 3, p. 81). Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations herein are translated from this edition of Chang Tsai's works.

⁴ For an account of Han Yü's criticism of Buddhism, for which he was exiled, see H. H. Dubs, "Han Yü and the Buddhist Relic: An Episode in Medieval Chinese Religion," *Review of Religion* XI, no. 1 (Nov. 1946), 5-17; also Carsun Chang, *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, 2 vols. (New York: Bookman Associates, 1957-62), I, 84-86.

India, a foreign land, and his antforeign, or rather nationalistic, sentiment was probably shared by Chang Tsai. Therefore both men have been regarded as among the pioneers responsible for bringing about a renaissance of the Confucian classics. But Chang was the first to base his arguments on philosophical grounds *against* Buddhism on the one hand and *for* reassertion of the Confucian ethics on the other. The latter topic will be the main point of our discussion in this paper.

Elsewhere I have discussed in detail Chang Tsai's philosophical arguments against Buddhist metaphysics as being nihilistic.⁵ Now, what is wrong, in his opinion, with Buddhist ethics? Chang's answer would be: Buddhism is not an ethics, if ethics is defined in terms of philosophical thinking about moral problems and ethical judgments. In Buddhism morality had become merely a handmaid to religion. It offered only a set of stereotyped dogmas and tabus for people to follow and, as Chang observed, had become in practice a public superstition or blind faith—a faith which his contemporaries, educated as well as uneducated, had taken for granted as unquestionably true. The prevalent moral issue, as Chang saw it, was that there had been a lack of awareness of any moral issue as long as the Buddhist nihilist outlook on life was believed to be true. Chang repeatedly argued that, in spite of changes constantly taking place in the entire universe as expounded in his doctrine of *ch'i*, it is evident that the life of man, as part of the cosmos, is real. Therefore to believe in life as an illusion is to believe in spite of evidence to the contrary. A belief in this sense is blind faith and mere superstition. Furthermore, the Buddhist doctrine of *karman* and reincarnation demands belief in the existence of a personalized soul, a belief which lacks evidence.⁶ Hence a philosophical question arises: How can one believe in the immortality of the soul, which lacks evidence and is yet believed by the Buddhists to be real, and at the same time reject the reality of this life, which is evidently real and yet believed by the Buddhists to be illusory? For evidently, Chang would argue, the two propositions, that this life which is evidently real is illusory and that there is a soul which endures after death, do not follow each other. (It is doubtful that Chang as a skeptic would take seri-

⁵ See Siu-chi Huang, "Chang Tsai's Concept of *Ch'i*," *Philosophy East and West* XVIII, no. 4 (Oct. 1968), 254-259. More generally, this article focuses on Chang Tsai's life, works, and metaphysics.

⁶ For a brief account of ancient and medieval Chinese views on immortality, see Derk Bodde, "The Chinese View of Immortality: Its Expression by Chu Hsi and Its Relationship to Buddhist Thought," *Review of Religion* VI, no. 4 (May 1942), 369-383. In the article Bodde quotes a statement by T'ang Yung-t'ung^{bc} which is self-explanatory: "From the very beginning the Chinese failed to comprehend the deep meaning of Buddhism [as to the nonexistence of the *ātman*]. . . . Buddhism spoke about endless cycle of transmigration. Because of this, the doctrine that the soul does not perish, but is carried on as a result of karma, became a current belief [among the Chinese]" (p. 340). It is this current belief taught by the Buddhists that Chang criticized. The question of how accurately and adequately he comprehended the Buddhist doctrine of the self is beyond the scope of this paper.

ously William James's "will-to-believe" to justify belief in the second sense, namely, belief in spite of the lack of evidence.) Faith or belief, Chang would hold, is sound and meaningful when it is based on evidence, for example, belief in parental love. But he would probably argue that faith or belief is a religious, not moral, virtue, and it is the latter that he was primarily concerned with.

Chang Tsai condemned passive conformity as the main obstacle to intellectual progress. In its place he emphasized independent thinking and a critical, reflective, and skeptical attitude as essential for philosophical inquiry. Chang is well known for his advocacy of the spirit of doubt, as when he wrote, "If one does not doubt what is doubtful, one will never learn. Learning requires doubt" (7. 118). His skepticism is, however, methodological, comparable to the formula of Descartes that "to think is to doubt."⁷ As a learned scholar in the ancient classics as well as in Buddhist and Taoist literature, Chang highly prized the value of learning all available written texts—a task regarded as unnecessary by the Ch'an Buddhists, the sect of Buddhism which continued to be influential in Chang's time. But he kept reminding his reader that to believe is to understand, to understand is to learn, and to learn is to doubt. Chang's main concern as expressed in his works was that under the influence of Buddhism, morality had become chaotic. Apparently he was convinced that certain moral rules, principles, or ideals exist which are universally applicable, irrespective of any claims of ethical relativity, and that Ch'an Buddhism was but a subjective relativism ignoring any objective moral standards.⁸ In short, Buddhism as a nihilism was, according to Chang, religiously otherworldly and ethically an escapism which had for too long overshadowed the Confucian ethics—an ethics which, being essentially concerned with man in the light of his existence, not of his extinction, should now be revived, and on which Chang's own moral point of view is based.

II. "THE WESTERN INSCRIPTION"

Chang Tsai, though a cosmologist, was like most of the Neo-Confucianists interested mainly in laying a metaphysical foundation for his ethics. He is known

⁷ It is interesting to note that these two thinkers, who lived in utterly different cultures and in different times, shared one common philosophical task, namely, to react against the prevalent beliefs taken for granted without questioning. In both cases, however, skepticism is only a method employed at the beginning, not the end, of philosophical inquiry.

⁸ The four famous maxims indicative of Ch'anist subjectivism are:

- Special transmission outside the Scriptures;
- No dependence upon words or letters;
- Direct pointing to the soul of man;
- Seeing into one's nature and the attainment of Buddhahood.

See D. T. Suzuki, *Essays on Zen Buddhism*, 1st. Ser. (London: Luzac & Co., 1927), p. 7. Also, for a brief historical development of Ch'an Buddhism, see Carsun Chang, "Chinese Intuitionism: A Reply to Feigl on Intuition," *Philosophy East and West* X, nos. 1 and 2 (Apr. 1960), 39-42.

to the West largely through his famous essay *Hsi Ming*^d [The Western Inscription].⁹ The importance of the essay can be shown by the fact that it has appeared in several Western languages.¹⁰ Its length totals only 253 words in Chinese, and yet its profundity is such that Chang's central ethical ideas and ideals can be found in it. The essay is translated in its entirety as follows:

Heaven (*ch'ien*^e) is my father, and earth (*k'un*^f) is my mother; I, as a small, finite being, occupy a central position between them.

Therefore, what fills heaven and earth is my body (*t'i*^g), and what commands heaven and earth is my Nature (*hsing*^h).

All men are my brothers, and all things are my companions.¹¹

The great ruler is the eldest son of my parents [i.e., heaven and earth], and the ministers [of state affairs] are his stewards. [One should] pay respect to the aged and extend mercy toward the orphans and the helpless because they deserve such treatment. The virtue of the Sage is in complete union [with that of heaven and earth], and the wise man is the most accomplished [above all ordinary men. Therefore,] all under heaven, the aged, weak, maimed, crippled, helpless, lonely, widow, and widower, who are in distress and have no one to appeal to are my brothers. To care for these in times of need is to pay reverence [to heaven and earth].

He who is joyful and has no anxiety is purely filial; he who disregards [the Way of Heaven and human relations] is doing what is contrary to virtue; he who treads upon *jen*ⁱ is an outcast; and he who assists any evil cause is unable [to make right judgments].

But the filial is one who practices his good intentions.

He who knows [the principles of change in the universe] is able to carry forward the activities [of heaven and earth], and he who completely understands the spirit [of heaven and earth] is well qualified to perpetuate this purpose.

To feel no shame over an opening on the roof of a house [through which light shines] is doing no disgrace [to heaven and earth],¹² to preserve one's Mind (*hsin*^j) and cultivate one's Nature is not [to be regarded as] remiss.

The son of Ch'ung Po^k,¹³ who disliked the best wine, was able to give sup-

⁹ Originally the essay was entitled *Ting Wan*^{bd} [The Amendment of Stupidity]. The precepts of the essay were inscribed on the western wall of Chang's study. Later Ch'eng I^{be} (1033-1107) changed the title to *Hsi Ming* or "The Western Inscription." See *Chang-tzu Ch'üan-shu* 15. 304.

¹⁰ For an earlier English translation, see P. C. Hsü, *Ethical Realism in Neo-Confucian Thought* (Peiping, 1933), appendix, pp. xi-xii. For the French translation, see C. de Harlez, *Le Si-Ming, Traité philosophique de Tch'ang-tze*, avec un double commentaire, traduit pour la première fois (VIII Congress International des Orientalistes—Section de l'Asie Centrale et de l'Extrême Orient, 1889), pp. 35-52. For a scholarly German translation with a detailed commentary, see Werner Eichhorn, "Die Westinschrift des Chang Tsai, ein Beitrag zur Geistesgeschichte der Nördlichen Sung," *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 22, no. 7 (1937), 1-93.

¹¹ The Chinese character *wu*^{bf}, translated here as "things," seems to include both living creatures and inanimate things. Cf. Derk Bodde's translation of Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952-53), II, 493.

¹² The quotation is from *Shih Ching*^{bg} [Book of Songs], no. 256, meaning that one who has done no disgraceful thing can be free from shame before heaven and earth.

¹³ Ch'ung Po is another name for Yü^{bh} (2205?-2197? B.C.), traditionally regarded as founder of the Hsia dynasty (2205?-1766? B.C.) and one of the legendary sage-rulers of

port [to his parents]; Ying Feng-jen¹⁴, who advocated benefiting mankind, was able to impart his spirit to others.¹⁴ Shun^m with untiring efforts gained success in bringing happiness [to his father];¹⁵ Shen Shengⁿ, awaiting the death punishment [ordered by his father] showed his respect [for the elderly].¹⁶ Ts'an^o died without blemish,¹⁷ and Po Ch'i^p bravely obeyed the [cruel] command [of his father].¹⁸

Wealth, nobility, prosperity, and favor will enrich [the comfort of] living; poverty, lowliness, and sorrow serve to ennoble my character.

While I am alive, I follow and serve [my universal parents], and when death comes I rest [in peace]. (1. 1-8)

At the beginning of "The Western Inscription," Chang bluntly exclaims, "Heaven is my father, and earth is my mother"; the statement implies a two-fold affirmative proposition that the universe is not only real but also the cosmic origin of man. Such an assertion that heaven and earth are man's universal parents was motivated by the desire of attacking the Buddhist metaphysical denial of the cosmic and human reality. But just what is the meaning of "heaven and earth"? There are two senses of this double expression, both of which were used by Chang and the other Neo-Confucianists.¹⁹ (1) Heaven and earth, the symbols of which are called *ch'ien* and *k'un* respectively in the *Hsi Ming*, were sometimes used to mean the material universe or the visible world. (2) The dual terms were used to mean the *yang*^a and the *yin*^r principles which interact perpetually in the process of transforming and creating all things. However, the term *t'ien*^s or "Heaven," sometimes used alone, is identical with *li*^t or Reason, *tao*^u or Moral Order, and *shen*^v or Spirit conceived as the governing and underlying principle of the universe.²⁰ In fact, heaven or

the Confucian school. The passage was meant to show that Yü was filial to his parents by not indulging himself in wine.

¹⁴ For reference to Ying Feng-jen, i.e., a border guardian at Ying, as a filial son, see the *Tso Chuan*^{bl} [Tso's Commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*], in James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics*, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893-95), V, 4. (Legge's work will hereafter be cited as "Legge, *Classics*.")

¹⁵ Shun (2255?-2205? B.C.), one of the traditional sage-rulers and heroes of the Confucian school.

¹⁶ Shen Sheng, who committed suicide because he was falsely accused by his mother-in-law of attempting to poison his father, Duke Hsien of Chin (ca. 676-651 B.C.). See *Tso Chuan* (Legge, *Classics*, V, 141-142).

¹⁷ Ts'an, known as Tseng Tzū^{bj}, one of the chief disciples of Confucius. See *Analects* 8. iii (Legge, *Classics*, I, 72-73).

¹⁸ Yin Po-ch'i, a hero of the ninth century B.C., is said to have uttered no complaint over the cruel treatment of his father at the instigation of his stepmother.

¹⁹ Cf. the translator's remark in Fung Yu-lan, *The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy*, trans. E. R. Hughes (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1947), p. 175, n. 2.

²⁰ For a brief account of the historical development of the term "heaven," see Alfred Forke, *The World Conception of the Chinese* (London: Probsthain, 1925), pp. 133-159. According to Chu Hsi's interpretation of the word "heaven" as found in the Classics, it is used in three different senses: "In some passages the word refers to the Empyrean, in others to the ruling power, and in others to *li* only." See J. Percy Bruce, *Chu Hsi and His Masters* (London: Probsthain, 1923), p. 282.

t'ien is one of the early Chinese religious concepts which, according to the original drawing 天, etymologically connotes anthropomorphic qualities.²¹ One may therefore get the impression that Chang's appellation of father and mother for heaven and earth respectively implies human attributes to his universal parenthood. Actually he did not intend to make heaven into a personal god who, as in the Christian religion, cares for the world and man, for Chang's main interest was not in the god-to-man, but in the man-to-heaven, direction. Chang seems to be convinced that without postulating the reality of a universal deity or parenthood as the moral order, the institution of an objective moral standard would be impossible and the proposition of the brotherhood of men would be meaningless; the application of the latter is actually his main concern in the *Hsi Ming*. Therefore, according to Chang, the cosmic deity is at once a logical necessity and a moral order upon which ethical judgments depend. But, to be sure, Chang is an ethical humanist in the sense that to seek after a good life here in this world is primary and that the salvation of man and society rests not on any supernatural force, but on man's own determination and the actual efforts he himself makes.

III. THE DUAL CONCEPT OF NATURE

Man, according to Chang, though a small creature as compared to the grandeur of the cosmos, is to be placed on the highest plane among all creatures and things. But what is man that makes him occupy the central position in the universe? His answer is: man alone is endowed with a heavenlike Nature (*hsing*) and a Mind (*hsin*). Concerning his doctrine of *hsing*, Chang wrote in several passages:

The term *hsing* or Nature is derived from the combination of *hsu*^w or the Void and *ch'i* or the Vital Force (2. 24).

Where there is form, there is the Physical Nature (*ch'i-chih chih-hsing*^x). One should return to the goodness [of the Heavenly Nature] so that the Nature of Heaven and Earth (*t'ien-ti chih-hsing*^y) may then be preserved. Therefore, the Physical Nature is that to which the superior man does not allow himself to be attached (2. 42).

The Nature of Heaven pervades the Way to the utmost, [so that] the *ch'i*, no matter whether in a state of obscurity or brightness, is not [strong] enough to obstruct it (2. 41).

There is no evil [element] in the Nature of man; it depends on whether or not one returns to [the Heavenly Nature] (2. 42).

The Nature of Heaven in man is truly like the Nature of water in ice. Although freezing and thawing are different, their Nature is the same (2. 41).

²¹ For reference to the anthropomorphic qualities of heaven recorded in the Classics, see the *Book of Songs* II. 3. iii (Legge, *Classics*, IV, 521): "I was born in an unlucky hour, when heaven was at the moment in great anger." Also, the *Book of History* II. 3. iv (Legge, *Classics*, III, 74): "Heaven sees and hears as men see and hear, and intelligently approves or disapproves [of human action]; it inspires fear and reverence as men do."

The last passage indicates that, for Chang, there is something shared in common by men and things: that is, all are in possession of a universal Nature. The difference between the Nature of man and that of things, however, is that man by nature is able to be aware of his own nature and to do something about it, while things cannot. The two kinds of Nature of man are the Heavenly Nature, which is the *ch'i* in its original state of dispersion and which is said to be purely good, and the Physical Nature, which is the *ch'i* in its state of condensation and which is regarded as the metaphysical source of evil. Three possible sources seem to have exerted influence on Chang's dualistic conception of Nature. (1) Chang might have gotten the idea of the Physical Nature from Mencius^a (372?-289? B.C.), as in the *Mencius* the term *ch'i* connotes feelings or passions and is regarded as inferior to *hsin* or Mind, which according to Mencius is originally good, and is accepted as such by Chang.²² Chang, however, went a step further than Mencius to expound the *ch'i* in terms of its metaphysical basis to solve the problem of evil (see below, section V). (2) It is also not impossible that Chang's double aspect of *hsing* is derived from the twin terms *hsing* and *ch'ing*^{aa} (Feelings or Passions) used by Tung Chung-shu^{ab} (179?-104? B.C.).²³ But it should be recalled that there are also other thinkers prior to Chang Tsai who spoke of the difference between the two terms. For example, Han Yü and Li Ao^{ac} (died ca. 844) both considered *hsing* and *ch'ing* as opposite to each other.²⁴ It is therefore difficult to say precisely whether Chang borrowed the idea from Tung Chung-shu or Han Yü and Li Ao, the last of whom was definitely influenced by the Buddhist teaching of Nature.²⁵ (3) quite possibly Chang's dualistic theory of Nature was influenced by Buddhism, especially by the *Leng Yen Sūtra*^{ad} (*Laṅkāvatāra*), which he knew well and upon which his attack on Buddhism seems to have centered. The two different aspects of Nature that are mentioned in the *Leng Yen Sūtra* are the Harmonious Union (*ho ho*^{ae}) and the Original Condition (*pen jan*^{af}). The former is explained as that which unites all mixed things into one single body and the latter as that which is not harmonious and unified.²⁶ Chang's Heavenly Nature, which consists of the Void and the Vital Force, is somewhat similar to the *ho ho hsing* as expounded in the *Leng Yen Sūtra*, and his Physical Nature, which is degraded from the former, to the Buddhist *pen jan hsing*. Despite the

²² See *Mencius* IIa. 2, in James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics*, 5 vols. (London: Trübner & Co., II, 65; and *Chang-tzū Ch'üan-shu* 2. 41-44.

²³ For a brief account of these two terms by Tung, see Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, II, 32-34, especially Bodde's note.

²⁴ For the discussion of the subject by these two men, see *ibid.*, pp. 407-433.

²⁵ For Li Ao's being influenced by Buddhism, see *ibid.*, p. 100.

²⁶ One of the most brilliantly written sūtras appeared in the latter part of the T'ang dynasty (618-906). For a selected English translation of the *Leng Yen Sūtra*, see Samuel Beal, *A Catena of Buddhist Literature from the Chinese* (London: Trübner & Co., 1871), pp. 286-369; for these two aspects, see pp. 334-346. For a scholarly study of the sūtra, see D. T. Suzuki, *Studies in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* (London: Routledge, 1930).

fact that no evidence can be found as to whether or not Chang actually borrowed the Buddhist dual conception of Nature, it is not unlikely that he did so with or without intent, and that even if he borrowed intentionally, apparently he saw nothing wrong in availing himself of certain Buddhist terms and then reading into them his own ideas.²⁷ Whatever the influence may have been, Chang's duality of Nature made it possible for him to solve two ethical problems: one, the original goodness of human nature which is derived from the Heavenly Nature, and the other, the problem of evil which arises from the Physical Nature, as we shall discuss presently.²⁸

IV. MAN BY NATURE A MORAL BEING

Chang Tsai, as a follower of early Confucianism of the Mencian sort, maintained that man by nature is ethical. He is born as a social being and endowed with a moral sense which enables him to be aware of such moral qualities as *jên* or humanheartedness, *yi*²⁹ or righteousness, *li*³⁰ or propriety, and *chih*³¹ or wisdom, the four traditional cardinal virtues in Confucian philosophy. Chang seems to have regarded *jên* as an even more basic virtue than the others, and nowhere does he give better expression of its meaning than in "The Western Inscription." The essay may suggest to the reader that Chang was stressing the virtue *hsiao*³² or filial piety instead of *jên*. But as was pointed out by Chu Hsi³³ (1130-1200), in order to get across more explicitly the general principle of *jên*, which sounds somewhat remote due to its altruistic connotations, Chang cited particular cases of filial piety as concrete illustrations.²⁹ The essay is, therefore, a reminder of *jên* as the central ethical concept since Confucius (551-479 B.C.), a concept which Chang attempted to revitalize as the basic cardinal virtue.³⁰

The meaning of *jên* is, however, amplified by Chang. Without question, he accepted the gradation of *jên* in terms of five human relations (*wu lun*³¹)—lord and subject, father and son, brother and brother, husband and wife, and friend and friend. His emphasis on filial piety is evidence of his support of such a hierarchy for clarifying different duties—a father ought to perform his duty as a father, and a son, as a son, etc. But he was aware of the fact that there are

²⁷ For Joseph Needham's comment on Chang's being the one most responsible for introducing Buddhist elements into Neo-Confucianism, see his *Science and Civilisation in China*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1956), II, 458.

²⁸ For a brief account of Chang's term "Physical Nature," see T'ang Chün-i, *Chung-kuo Che-hsüeh Yüan-lun*³² [The Origin and Historical Development of Basic Concepts and Theories in Chinese Philosophy] (Hong Kong: Jen-sheng ch'u-pen she³¹, vol. I, 1966, vol. II, 1968), II, 325-334.

²⁹ See *Chang-tzū Ch'üan-shu* 1. 16.

³⁰ See Wing-tsit Chan, "The Evolution of the Confucian Concept *Jên*," *Philosophy East and West* IV, no. 4 (Jan. 1955), 295-319.

also people who belong to none of the five categories. The helpless, for example, may happen to be someone who is not my blood relation and yet he is my brother in the sense that he and I belong to the same universal parents, heaven and earth. Chang's view on this point was condemned by later scholars,⁸¹ on the grounds that his interpretation of *jên* was similar to the universal love (*chien ai*^{am})—a term which was also used by Chang⁸²—of Mo Tzū^{an} (465?-385? B.C.), for, as in the same argument given by the early Confucianists, especially by Mencius,⁸³ if the Mohist universal love based on the principle of nondiscrimination were put into practice, the Confucian code of *wu lun* would be destroyed. Apparently, according to Chang, there should be no conflict between loving one's relatives and loving strangers. The two moral points of view, the Confucian *jên* with its emphasis on maintaining harmonious family relationships and the Mohist *chien ai* with its aim of breaking down social prejudices and discrimination, not only are not contradictory to each other but can and should be put into practice. *Jên* was now universalized and interpreted by Chang as a synthesis of the traditional rival views. The ethical implications of the *ch'i* in terms of spiritual transformation are succinctly stated by Chang in these words: "When *jên* permeates itself in all transformations, it transcends all particularities. When *yi* submerges itself in spirituality, it transcends all restrictions" (2. 39).

Although man, for Chang, is by nature ethical in that he is originally endowed with a sense of humanheartedness toward his fellowmen, certain circumstances, such as those given in "The Western Inscription," require him to make efforts to fulfill his moral obligations. But why ought one to perform one's duty, and to whose advantage is it? In other words, why be moral? Chang's answer, like Kant's, would simply be: one is obliged to be moral. The illustrations cited in the *Hsi Ming* connote the idea that morality in its truest sense takes no personal gain or benefit, that is, self-interest, into account; all these cases are, therefore, considered to be praiseworthy acts, though each case is a particular one and different from another. This reminds us of Kant's categorical imperative that morality is unconditional, absolute, and universally valid: "Act so that thou canst will thy maxim to become a universal law of nature." Chang would therefore agree with Kant's deontological approach that rules or moral principles such as "we ought always to tell the truth," and "it is morally right not to harm anyone," are the standard of moral acts, regardless of whether or not such acts promote the good. Hence, do one's duty for duty's sake. One may get pleasure or satisfaction out of the duty one has done, but

⁸¹ For Chu Hsi's defense of Chang saying that the latter's original intention was to bring out the unity of the moral law and he should therefore not be regarded as holding a same view as Mo Tzū, see *Chang-tzū Ch'üan-shu* 1. 13-14.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 2. 41.

⁸³ See *Mencius* IIIb. 9 (Legge, *Classics*, II, 282-283).

such pleasure or satisfaction is to be regarded only as a by-product, not as an aim. Obviously, according to Chang, the *summum bonum* of man is to attain sagehood by doing what he ought to do, irrespective of what consequences it might bring to him and irrespective of the fact that it may cost him a heavy price, even his own life, to do what is deemed right. In short, be moral, said Chang persuasively, in order to “manifest the purpose of heaven and earth, to establish life for living men, to perpetuate the forgotten teachings of the ancient sages, and to found a lasting peace for the ten thousand generations to come” (14. 292).

Mention should be made here that, in addition to his emphasis on human-heartedness toward all men, who are to be treated as one’s brothers, Chang was also concerned with extending kindness to animals and inanimate things, and it is highly probable that such an idea was derived from the Buddhist teaching of compassion for all sentient beings.⁸⁴

V. THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Chang Tsai, like most Neo-Confucianists, asserted repeatedly that the original nature of man is in accord with the Heavenly Nature which is good. What then is the origin of evil? His answer is that it is due to the Physical Nature, a term which originated with Chang.⁸⁵ The expression ‘Physical Nature’ in Chinese consists of two characters, *ch’i* or Vital Force and *chih*⁸⁶ or Matter. The term *ch’i* used singly implies not only the idea that it is something visible in the state of condensation, but also that while in the state of dispersion it is invisible. That is to say, the Vital Force is ever present no matter whether the universe is in one state or the other. But when the *ch’i* is accompanied by the *chih*, it applies exclusively to the physical aspect as related to the nature of man, as “When there is form, then there is the Physical Nature” (2. 42). Basing his view on this premise, Chang attempted to solve the problem of evil.

A question arises, however, which implies a contradiction in Chang’s theory of *ch’i* as related to the problem of evil: if the *ch’i* permeates everything, including man, and man is born with the *ch’i*, which in physical form is the source of evil, how can this be consistent with the assertion that the original nature of man is good? There seem to be two possible explanations. First, since Chang argued that everything in the universe is an outcome of the interaction between the *yin* and the *yang*, the existence of the negative force is equally

⁸⁴ Cf. Kenneth K. S. Chen, *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 395, 471-472.

⁸⁵ See Siu-chi Huang, “Chang Tsai’s Concept of Ch’i,” p. 248. Also Carsun Chang, *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, I, 182. For the Neo-Confucian solution of the problem of evil, see Wing-tsit Chan’s essay in *Studies Presented to Hu Shih on His Sixty-fifth Birthday* (Taipei: Academica Sinica, 1957), pp. 780-783.

necessary as that of the positive in the manifold processes of the world of nature. Thus in winter the positive *yang ch'i* is dominated by the negative *yin ch'i*, while in summer the reverse is true. Likewise, in the world of man some are born with greater talents than others, for the *ch'i* with which men are endowed varies among individuals, and the more talented is considered "better." However, the gradation in this sense, that there are some things and some people "better" than others, is something man can do nothing about but accept as it comes to him. As Chang said, "What cannot be changed by the *ch'i* is life and death, longevity and brevity of life. Therefore, when life and death are said to be appointed [by heaven], this is said with regard to the *ch'i*; when wealth and honor are said to depend on [the appointment of] heaven, this is said with regard to the *li*. Those who have had great virtue must have received the appointment [from heaven]" (2. 44). The passage indicates that whatever *is*, is something which is entirely beyond human power, and that limitation of human power is not to be conceived as something bad in and by itself.

Second, good and evil when used in the moral sense are confined to the world of man, and it is man who himself is the decision-making agent of the problem of good and evil: "Whether or not wealth and nobility can be obtained, depends upon heaven. As to the way of virtue (*tao te^{ap}*), he who seeks for it can never fail to obtain it" (6. 112). Man is endowed with virtuous qualities, but is also born with the *ch'i* which, though amoral, is potentially either good or bad. The Physical Nature in its original state is morally neither good nor bad, but it has become degraded from the Heavenly Nature after having come into contact with other objects, men as well as things. Man's Nature in this sense is acquired by himself and is, therefore, a part of himself, although his originally good nature is inherited from the Heavenly Nature. Chang's solution of the problem of moral evil is best summed up in his own words: "The *ch'i* originates from the Void and is, therefore, originally pure and formless. When it becomes activated and productive, it condenses to become corporeal. Becoming corporeal entails being placed in opposition [against other corporeal things]; such an opposition results in enmity, but enmity always resolves in harmony. Thus the feelings of both love and hate are generated from the Great Void and eventually result in material desires" (2. 26). Evil doings, according to Chang, are entirely man's own voluntary choices resulting from his ignorance and/or his self-centered and undisciplined desires during the process of his intercourse with other men and corporeal things. Indeed, the solution Chang gave to the perennial problem of moral evil is not new, but the term 'Physical Nature' in relation to the *ch'i*, which he offered in solving the problem and attempting to reaffirm the Confucian concern with the moral obligation of the individual, is new.

VI. THE PROBLEM OF MORAL KNOWLEDGE

So much for a brief sketch of Chang's doctrine of Nature in relation to the original goodness of man and the problem of evil. Now, do we know what is morally right and what is morally wrong, and if so how? The answer to this question brings us to his theory of Mind or *hsin*,⁸⁶ which literally means "heart." This was a topic often touched upon by the early Confucianists, especially by Mencius.⁸⁷ The Neo-Confucianists also paid much attention to it; the Mind became one of the central themes of their ethics and, as time went on, was developed to such an extent that the later Neo-Confucianists, Lu Chiu-yüan⁸⁸ (1139-1193) and Wang Shou-jen⁸⁹ (1472-1529), were referred to as the philosophers of Mind.

Chang Tsai defines Mind in this way: "The name of Mind is derived from the union of the Nature and consciousness (*chih chio*⁸⁶)" (2. 24). Obviously Mind is not the same as Nature, although very closely related to it, because, besides Nature, consciousness is an important constituent of Mind. In other words. Nature is a possession common to all things in the universe, including men, but Mind is limited only to that which has consciousness. Nonliving things have no mind and perhaps not all living beings have mind, although no reference on the latter can be found in Chang's writings. To the phenomenologists who are deeply concerned with the problem of the relation of consciousness to things, Chang's emphasis on consciousness in his definition of Mind should be of especial interest. Knowing, for Chang, is a process of interaction between the conscious mind and external things; the latter are, however, objects for the former. That is to say, Mind is essentially a consciousness of object. When Mind, that is, the knower, becomes conscious of something, he reflects upon, manipulates, and expresses his attitude toward the thing, in accordance with the *ch'i* that is in him and with what the thing means to him. To be sure, Chang's interest in the concept of *hsin* was to give not a descriptive analysis of its epistemological processes, but a reflective examination of its axiological implications, since he, like most Neo-Confucianists, attempted to deal with the problem of how to cultivate and develop it for the sake of morality.

Man, according to Chang, is not only a creature with a mind, but the most spiritual among myriad things. It is man's Mind that enables him to develop his Nature and to manifest the illustrious virtues of Heaven, and it is also the Mind that may lead him away from the path of Heaven. Hence, whether the Way of Heaven is manifested or obscured is entirely due to the activities of

⁸⁶ For an excellent discussion on the subject, see T'ang Chün-i, "Chang Tsai's Theory of Mind and Its Metaphysical Basis," *Philosophy East and West* VI, no. 2 (Jul. 1956), 113-136.

⁸⁷ See *Mencius* VIa. 11 (Legge, *Classics*, II, 290).

man's Mind. There are two kinds of Mind, the enlarged Mind (*ta hsin^{at}*) and the closed Mind (*ch'eng hsin^{au}*),³⁸ which are explicitly distinguished by Chang in the following passages:

When one's Mind is enlarged, he is able to embody all things under heaven and earth. When things are not all embodied, there is still something outside the Mind. The minds of ordinary people are confined to only what they hear and see. By fully developing his Nature, however, the sage is able to prevent the Mind from being fettered by what he has heard and seen, for he regards everything under heaven and earth as his own self. That is why Mencius said, "He who has completely developed his Mind knows his Nature and Heaven."³⁹ Heaven is so great that there is nothing outside of it. Therefore, a [closed] Mind that leaves something outside is not capable of uniting itself with the Mind of Heaven. Sensitive knowledge (*chien wen^{av}*) results from the interaction of the senses and external objects. But knowledge of the virtuous Nature (*te hsing^{aw}*) does not, for such knowledge does not spring from seeing and hearing (2. 45).

The Mind deriving from phenomena is discerning; the Mind that depends solely on phenomena is lost. The Mind is that which knows phenomena. The Mind that merely preserves phenomena is but phenomena. Can it then be called the Mind? (2. 46).

By forgetting the closed Mind, one may make progress towards the *tao*. The [spiritual] transformation will take place when there is no closed Mind, for the closed Mind is called [selfish] thought (2. 47).

Parallel to the two kinds of Mind, as indicated in the foregoing quotations, there are for Chang two levels of knowledge: (1) perceptual knowledge, which deals with the phenomenal world, and (2) knowledge of the virtuous Nature, or simply moral knowledge, which deals with the extraphenomenal world, that is, morality. Perceptual knowledge is further divided into that which is acquired through one's individual perception and that which is gained through intersensory and intersubjective perception. Chang would therefore reject Berkeley's epistemological position that "to be is to be perceived" as unreliable and too subjective. He would probably accept the logical positivist verification principle as more reliable, so far as our knowledge of the phenomenal world is concerned, as it is not limited to one's private sense perception. As to moral knowledge, Chang seems to have equated it with direct insight which is intuitive, supersensory, independent of sense perception, and different from knowledge acquired through the senses; for the latter is liable to sensory limitations and errors while the former enables one to discriminate between what is morally right and what is morally wrong. Moral or intuitive knowledge, having some sort of Bergsonian "intellectual sympathy" to comprehend objects in total perspective, is placed on the highest level, over and above sensory knowl-

³⁸ *Ch'eng hsin*, here translated as closed Mind, implies the idea of a mind beset by prejudices and preconceived thoughts. Cf. Bacon's "Four Idols of the Mind."

³⁹ *Mencius* VIIa. 1 (Legge, *Classics*, II, 324).

edge. Here Chang would most surely reject the logical positivist ethical theory which, as proposed by Ayer, holds that "X is morally wrong in killing" is merely an "emotive" utterance and therefore cognitively meaningless. In opposition to this emotive theory, he would strongly argue that we intuitively *know* that such a judgment as "it is morally wrong to kill, therefore, X is morally wrong in killing" is meaningful, cognitively as well as ethically—a judgment which not only describes or reports an act of killing but also expresses the speaker's prescriptive evaluation of the act as blameworthy. It would seem that ethical judgments, for Chang, need no logical or psychological justification, for they are intuitive, self-evident, and self-justifying.

Chang's twofold aspect of Mind, the enlarged Mind corresponding to moral knowledge and the closed Mind corresponding to sensory knowledge, probably influenced the subsequent development of Chu Hsi's dualistic theory of Mind, expounded in terms of the Mind of Spirit (*tao hsin*⁴⁰) and the Mind of Man (*jên hsin*⁴¹).

VII. THE RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF LI

One more question that has often been raised by students of Chinese philosophy is relevant to our discussion in this paper: Is Confucianism a religion,⁴⁰ and if so, what religious aspects may be found in early Confucian and Neo-Confucian philosophy? Our concern here is whether Chang Tsai's Confucian ethics has any religious significance. Briefly, if religion is defined in terms of belief in a supernatural being, then obviously, as has been discussed above, the answer is in the negative. If religion, however, connotes a broader sense and includes ritual as one of the factors, then Chang's concept of *li* or propriety is definitely of religious significance—a concept which is parallel to Whitehead's "ritual" defined as "habitual performance of definite actions."⁴¹

Li is one of the traditional ethical virtues of the early Confucianists. Both Confucius and Mencius stressed it as one of the cardinal virtues, and the latter defined the term as "the feeling of modesty and complaisance as the basis of propriety."⁴² Later, Hsün Tzū exalted *li* as the chief virtue from which all other virtues stem.⁴³ On *li* Chang also had much to say:

⁴⁰ For a brief discussion on this point, see Fung Yu-lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Derk Bodde (New York: Macmillan Co., 1948), pp. 1-6.

⁴¹ See Alfred N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1926): "Religion . . . exhibits four factors or sides of itself. These factors are ritual, emotion, belief, and rationalization" (p. 18). *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁴² See the *Li Chi* [Book of Rites] VII. i. 4, in James Legge, trans., *Sacred Books of the East*, vols. 27 and 28 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), 27, 367; *Mencius* IIa. 6 (Legge, *Classics*, II, 79).

⁴³ For Hsün Tzū's emphasis on *li* as the cardinal virtue, see *The Works of Hsün-tzū*, trans. Homer H. Dubs (London: Probsthain, 1928), pp. 213-247.

Li is that which nourishes man's virtuous Nature (6. 111).

Li is the institutionalized law of the sage-kings. Aside from *li*, under heaven and earth there is no other [better] way [to put it into practice]. Hence to look after the welfare of the people, the practice of the well-field system (*ching i'ien*⁴⁴) is the first step; to govern the people, affairs such as education and punishment cannot be carried out without *li* (5. 97).

Li, which contains a body of moral rules instituted by the sage-kings and accepted by people, is according to Chang the essential means through which personal morality may be expressed outwardly. Undoubtedly Chang was not only an ethical theorist, but also a practitioner, for he insisted that cultivation of moral virtues inwardly is useless unless accompanied by outward expression in social and political actions in accordance with that which had been institutionalized by the sage-kings, such as the well-field policy, which, as Chang was firmly convinced, if put into practice would help to remedy the existing evils of unequal distributions. As a passionate champion of social justice, Chang was often distressed by observing the suffering of the needy and by his failures in the endeavors he had made in their behalf.⁴⁵ It would seem, therefore, that religion and morality are in essence the same for Chang, as man is by nature not only ethical but also religious—although functionally a distinction may be made in that morality connotes inward awareness of personal moral duty while religion connotes outward observance of the constituted rules of conduct.

VIII. SUMMARY

The originality of Chang Tsai's metaphysics as expounded in the theory of *ch'i* has received general recognition, particularly in the last two decades.⁴⁶ As to what is new in his ethics scholars past and present are of different opinions, ranging from reverence to condemnation.⁴⁷ We may conclude this paper, however, by generalizing that what is new is not so much what he said as the spirit in which he said it. True enough, some of the ethical concepts and ideas in his works sound familiar and therefore old (purely new ideas are, after all, few), but he gave them new interpretations, thus making the age-old Confucian ethi-

⁴⁴ For Chang's attempts to put the well-field system into practice, see *Chang-tzŭ Ch'üan-shu* 4. 83; 14. 296.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ For recent studies on Chang Tsai, see Wing-tsit Chan, *Chinese Philosophy, 1949-1963: An Annotated Bibliography of Mainland China Publications* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1967), pp. 38, 190-193.

⁴⁷ For a tribute paid to Chang, see Wang Fu-chih^{bm}, *Chang-tzŭ Cheng-meng chü*^{bn} [Commentary on Chang Tsai's Correct Discipline for Youth] (reprinted in Peking, 1965), preface, pp. 7-10. For a criticism of Chang's ethics as mystical idealism, see Chang Tai-nien^{bo}, *Chang Tsai: Shih-i-shih-chi Chung-kuo Wei-wu-chu-i Che-hsüeh-chia*^{bp} [Chang Tsai: Eleventh Century Chinese Materialist Philosopher] (Wuhan: Hupei Jen-min chu-pen-she^{bq}, 1956), pp. 40-58.

cal tradition relevant to the needs of his time. Indeed, he serves as a link between the past and the present. Most significantly, it seems, Chang, living in an age when passive submission was taken for granted as a virtue, had the courage to raise his voice, on the one hand in protest against the philosophical establishment as the predominant moral and intellectual force for the previous ten centuries (as has been pointed out above, section I), and on the other hand in challenging his contemporaries to think anew and act anew. Despite the fact that he was not always consistent and clear as a writer, Chang deserves to be ranked as one of the Chinese philosophers who, as well described by Hu Shih and Needham, "have kept the torch of intellectual freedom burning throughout the ages."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ See Hu Shih^{br}, "Chinese Thought," in *China*, ed. H. F. MacNair (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1946), p. 230; Joseph Needham, *op. cit.*, p. 395.

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| b 韓愈 | z 孟子 | ax 道心 |
| c 氣 | aa 情 | ay 人心 |
| d 西銘 | ab 董仲舒 | az 井田 |
| e 乾 | ac 李翱 | ba 張子全書 |
| f 坤 | ad 楞嚴 | bb 國學基本叢書 |
| g 體 | ae 和合 | bc 湯用彤 |
| h 性 | af 本然 | bd 訂頤 |
| i 仁 | ag 義 | be 程頤 |
| j 心 | ah 禮 | bf 物 |
| k 崇伯子 | ai 智 | bg 詩經 |
| l 穎封人 | aj 孝 | bh 禹 |
| m 舜 | ak 朱熹 | bi 左傳 |
| n 申生 | al 五倫 | bj 曾子 |
| o 參 | am 兼愛 | bk 中國哲學原論 |
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| t 理 | ar 王守仁 | bp 張載：十一世紀中國 唯物主義哲學家 |
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