



INTRODUCTION TO
ORIENTAL
CIVILIZATIONS

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Sources of
Chinese Tradition

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The sage orders these affairs by the principles of the Mean, correctness, humanity, and righteousness, considering tranquillity to be the ruling factor. Thus he establishes himself as the ultimate standard for man. Hence the character of the sages is "identical with that of Heaven and earth; his brilliance is identical with that of the sun and moon; his order is identical with that of the four seasons; and his good and evil fortunes are identical with those of heavenly and earthly spirits."² The gentleman cultivates these moral qualities and enjoys good fortune, whereas the inferior man violates them and suffers evil fortune.

Therefore it is said: "The yin and the yang are established as the way of heaven; the elements of strength and weakness as the way of earth; and humanity and righteousness as the way of man."³ It is also said there: "If we investigate into the cycle of things, we shall understand the concepts of life and death."⁴ Great is the *Book of Changes*! Herein lies its excellence!

Selections from An Interpretation of the Book of Changes

[From *T'ung shu*, in *Chou Lien-ch'i chi*, 5:1a-b, 17b-19a, 38b]

CHAPTER 1: SINCERITY

Sincerity (*ch'eng*)⁵ is the essence of sagehood. "Great is the heavenly principle, the Originator. All things obtain their beginning from it."⁶ It is the source of sincerity. "The Way of the heavenly principle is to change and transform, so that everything obtains its correct nature and destiny."⁷ In this way sincerity is established. It is pure and perfectly good. Therefore, "The successive movement of the yin and the yang constitute the Way. What issues from the Way is good and that which realizes it is the individual nature."⁸ Origination and development characterize the penetration of sincerity, and adaptation and correctness are its completion [or recovery]. Great is the *Changes*, the source of nature and destiny! [5:1a-3b]

² *Book of Changes*, hexagram 1.

³ *Book of Changes*, Hsi Tzu 1.

⁴ A fundamental concept in the *Mean*, where it represents not only sincerity but also absolute genuineness or realism.

⁵ *Book of Changes*, hexagram 1.

⁶ *Book of Changes*, Hsi Tzu 1.

⁷ *Book of Changes*, Shuo-kua 2.

⁸ *Book of Changes*, hexagram 1.

CHAPTER 4: SAGEHOOD

"The state of absolute quiet and inactivity" is sincerity. The spirit is that which, "When acted on, immediately penetrates all things."⁹ And the state of subtle emergence is the undifferentiated state between existence and nonexistence when activity has started but has not manifested itself in corporeal form. Sincerity is infinitely pure and hence evident. The spirit is responsive and hence works wonders. And emergence is subtle and hence abstruse. The sage is the one who is in the state of sincerity, spirit, and subtle emergence. [5:17b-19a]

CHAPTER 20: LEARNING TO BE A SAGE

Can one become a sage through learning?

Yes. . . . The essential way is to attain oneness [of mind]. By oneness is meant having no desire. Having no desire one is "empty" [absolutely pure and peaceful] while tranquil, and straightforward while in action. Being "empty" while tranquil, one becomes intelligent and hence penetrating. Being straightforward while active, one becomes impartial, and hence all-embracing. Being intelligent, penetrating, impartial, and all-embracing, one is almost a sage. [5:38b]

A NUMERICAL UNIVERSE IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF SHAO YUNG

In so far as his ultimate problems are those of human nature and society, and in so far as his main source of inspiration is the *Book of Changes*, Shao Yung (1011-1077) is a true Neo-Confucianist. But actually he is in a class by himself. Like Chou Tun-yi, he was profoundly affected by Taoism, but his conclusions differ widely from those of Chou.

The distinctive characteristic of his philosophy is his theory of number as an essential element of existence. In a rudimentary way this concept is found in the *Lao Tzu*, the *Book of Changes*, and the writings of the Han philosopher Yang Hsiung. But Shao Yung was the first to make numbers the basis of all things and to evolve a definite formula for their production and evolution. Instead of using the number 2 (yin and yang) as in the *Book of Changes*, Hsi-tzu 1.

Book of Changes and Chou Tun-yi, or the number 5 so popular in the apocryphal literature of the Han dynasty, Shao Yung preferred the number 4. This is the number which, by simple progression, will arrive at 64, the number of hexagrams in the *Changes*. Han interpreters had claimed that these hexagrams exercised definite influence over periods of time, physical existence, and all human events. Likewise Shao Yung classified all possible existence into categories of four, such as four heavenly bodies, four periods of time, four kinds of creatures, four types of mandates of Heaven, and so forth, each group corresponding to the other groups and each going through one cycle after another without end. Nowhere else in Neo-Confucianism is this idea of cyclical change so dominant.

The theory of number, with its many charts, is too complicated to be presented adequately without lengthy quotation. From the short selection below it will be clear that the evolution begins with the Great Ultimate, goes through yin and yang, then spirit, then number, then form, and finally reaches materiality. Shao Yung also applied this theory of numerical growth and cycle to history, dividing the past into fixed and distinctive periods and classifying past events according to numerical categories.

These mathematical theories of Shao Yung were too obscure, complex, and arbitrary, it appears, to have any great influence upon the men of his time, who preferred a simpler cosmology such as that of Chou Tun-yi. It is rather in his concept of the sage—the perfect man who, because his mind consciously grasps the underlying unity of all existence, is able with complete objectivity to comprehend and respond to all things—that Shao Yung influenced his contemporaries and successors. This view of man's nature, colored by Taoist ideas of quietude and the unity of existence, played an important part in the development of Neo-Confucian thought.

SHAO YUNG

Selections from the Supreme Principles Governing the World

NUMBER

[From *Huang-chi ching-shih shu*, SPPY ed., 7A:24b-8B:23a]

As the Great Ultimate becomes differentiated, the two primary modes appear. The yang descends and interacts with the yin, and yin rises to interact with yang, and consequently the four secondary forms are con-

sisted. Yin and yang interact and generate the four secondary forms of Heaven; the element of weakness and the element of strength interact and generate the four secondary forms of earth; and consequently the eight trigrams are completed. The eight trigrams intermingle and generate the myriad things. Therefore the One is differentiated into two, two into four, four into eight, eight into sixteen, sixteen into thirty-two, and thirty-two into sixty-four. Thus "in the successive division of yin and yang and the mutual operation of strength and weakness, the six positions [of the lines in each hexagram] in the *Book of Changes* form an orderly pattern."¹⁰ Ten is divided into 100, 1,000, and 10,000. This is similar to the fact that the root engenders the trunk; the trunk, branches; and the branches, leaves. The greater the division, the smaller the result, and the finer the division, the more complex. Taken as a unit, it is One. Taken as diffused development, it is the many. Hence the heavenly principle divides, the earthly principle unites; the *chen* hexagram [symbol of development] augments, and the *sun* hexagram [symbol of bending] diminishes. Augmentation leads to division, division leads to diminution, and diminution leads to unity. [7A:24b]

The Great Ultimate is One. It produces the two [yin and yang] without engaging in activity. The two constitute spirit. Spirit engenders number, number engenders form, and form engenders material objects. [8B:23a]

Forms and numbers in the universe can be calculated, but their wonderful operations cannot be fathomed. The universe can be fully investigated through principles but not through corporeal forms. How can it be fully investigated through external observation? [8A:16b]

HISTORY

[From *Huang-chi ching-shih shu*, SPPY ed., 5:15a-b]

Therefore from the times of old in the administration of their empires rulers have had four kinds of Mandates: Correct Mandate, Accepted Mandate, Modified Mandate, and Substituted Mandate. Correct Mandate is that which is completely followed. Accepted Mandate is that which is followed with certain changes. Modified Mandate is that which is partly followed. Substituted Mandate is that which is changed completely. That which is followed completely is continued completely. That which is followed with certain changes is continued with some detentions.

¹⁰ *Book of Changes*, Shuo-kua 2.

That which is mostly changed but partly followed has [a great deal of] deletion followed by continuation. That which is changed completely is deleted completely. That which is changed completely is work meant for one generation. That which is mostly changed but partly followed is work meant for a hundred generations. That which is followed completely is work meant for a thousand generations. That which follows what ought to be followed and changes what ought to be changed is work meant for countless generations. Work meant for one generation, is this not the way of the Five Overlords? Work meant for ten generations, is this not the way of the Three Kings? Work meant for a hundred generations, is this not the way of the Five Emperors? Work meant for a thousand generations, is this not the way of the Three August Sovereigns? Work meant for countless generations, is this not the way of Confucius? Thus we know that the overlords, kings, emperors, and sovereigns had what were called Mandates for a limited number of generations. But the Mandate of Confucius transcends generations.

MAN

[From *Huang-chi ching-shih shu*, SPY ed., 7A:4a-8B:26a]

The origin of Heaven and earth is based on the principle of the Mean [centrality]. Thus the heavenly and earthly principles never deviate from this central principle of existence although they are engaged in incessant transformation. Man is central in the universe, and the mind is central in man. The sun is most glorious and the moon is full when they are in the central position. Therefore, the gentleman highly values the principle of centrality. [7B:4a]

Our nature views things as they are, but our passion causes us to see things subjectively and egoistically. Our nature is impartial and enlightened, but our passions are partial and deceived. When the material endowment in man is characterized by the Mean and harmony, the elements of strength and weakness in him will be balanced. If yang predominates, he will be off balance toward strength, and if yin predominates, he will be off balance toward weakness. As knowledge directed toward the nature of man increases, the knowledge directed toward things will decrease.

Man occupies the most honored position in the scheme of things because he combines in him the principles of all species. If he honors his

own position and enhances his honor, he can make all species serve him. The nature of all things is complete in the human species.

The spirit of man is the same as the spirit of Heaven and earth. Therefore, when he deceives himself, he is deceiving Heaven and earth. Let him beware!

Spirit is nowhere and yet everywhere. The perfect man can penetrate the minds of others because he is based on the One. Spirit is perforce called the One and the Way (Tao). It is best to call it spirit. [8B:16a-17b]

The mind is the Great Ultimate. The human mind should be as calm as still water. Being calm, it will be tranquil. Being tranquil, it will be enlightened.

In the pursuit of prior existence [spiritual culture] sincerity is basic. Perfect sincerity can penetrate all spirits. Without sincerity, the Way cannot be attained.

Our substance and nature come from Heaven, but learning lies with man. Substance and nature develop from within, while learning enters into us from without. "It is due to our nature that intelligence results from sincerity,"¹¹ but it is due to learning that sincerity results from intelligence.

The learning of a gentleman aims precisely at enriching his personality. The rest, such as governing people and handling things, is all secondary.

Without sincerity, one cannot investigate principle to the utmost.

Sincerity is the controlling factor in one's nature. It is beyond space and time.

He who acts in accordance with the principle of Heaven will have the entire process of creation in his grip. When the principle of Heaven is achieved, not only his personality, but also his mind, are enriched. And not only his mind but also his nature and destiny are enriched. To be in accordance with principle is normal, but to deviate from principle is abnormal. [8B:25a-26a]

OBSERVATION OF THINGS

[From *Huang-chi ching-shih shu*, SPY ed., 6:26a-8B:27b]

When the mind retains its unity and is not disturbed, it can act on, and rectify, all things harmoniously. Thus the mind of the gentleman

¹¹ *Men*, 21.

is "empty" [absolutely pure and peaceful] and is not disturbed. [8B:29a]

By viewing things is not meant viewing them with one's physical eyes but with one's mind. Nay, not with one's mind but with the principle inherent in things. There is nothing in the universe without its principle, nature, and destiny. These can be known only when principle has been investigated to the utmost, when the nature is completely developed, and when destiny is fulfilled. The knowledge of these three is true knowledge. Even the sage cannot go beyond it. Whoever goes beyond it cannot be called a sage.

A mirror reflects because it does not obscure the corporeal form of things. But water [with its purity] does even better because it reveals the universal character of the corporeal form of things as they really are. And the sage does still better because he reflects the universal character of the feelings of all things. The sage can do so because he views things as things view themselves; that is, not subjectively but from the viewpoint of things. Since he is able to do this, how can there be anything between him and things? [6:26a-b]

When one can be happy or sad with things as though he were the things themselves, one's feelings may be said to have been aroused and to have acted to the proper degree. [8B:26a]

We can understand things as they are if we do not impose our ego on them. The sage gives things every benefit and forgets his own ego. To let the ego be unrestrained is to give rein to passion; to give rein to passion is to be deluded; and to be deluded is to be ignorant. To follow the natural principles of things, on the other hand, is to grasp their nature; to grasp their nature is to be in possession of spiritual power, and to possess spiritual power is to achieve enlightenment. [8B:27b]

CHANG TSAI AND THE UNDERLYING UNITY OF MATERIAL-FORCE

Chang T'ai (Chang Heng-ch'ü, 1021-1077), the second major thinker in the traditional line of Neo-Confucian succession, continued the efforts of Chou Tun-yi to develop a Confucian metaphysics. As the basis of his system Chang T'ai posited the existence of a single primal substance composing all the universe, *ch'i* or material-force. The concept

of *ch'i* had long been a part of Confucian cosmological vocabulary. The Han Confucianist Tung Chung-shu described it as a "limpid, colorless substance" which fills the universe, "surrounding man as water surrounds a fish" and uniting all creation. But Chang T'ai far extended the implications of this basic substance, making of it the sole reality of existence. The world and all its phenomena are not illusory products of mind, as the Buddhists declare, but manifestations of this primal material-force which Chang T'ai identifies with the Great Ultimate, the source of all being. Nor is there, as the Taoists maintain, any dichotomy between nonbeing and being, between the Great Vacuity and the creatures of worldly existence. For this Great Vacuity, which appears to be nonbeing, is for Chang T'ai actually only the primal material-force in its original, undifferentiated state.

The characteristic of this primal force is that it is in a constant process of change, integrating to form human beings and the other creatures of the world, disintegrating again to return to the state of the Great Vacuity. Man's task in the world is to comprehend this process of change and harmonize his action with it, not, like the Buddhists, to try to achieve some state of suspension outside the process, or like the Taoists, to strive by drugs and magic arts to stave off the inevitable disintegration of the human substance and prolong life beyond its natural limits.

CHANG TSAI

Great Harmony

[From *Cheng-meng I*, in *Chang Heng-ch'ü ch'i*, 2:3b-10b]

Although material-force in the universe integrates and disintegrates, and attracts and repulses in a hundred ways, nevertheless the principle (*ti*) according to which it operates has an order and is unerring.

The Great Vacuity of necessity consists of material-force. Material-force of necessity integrates to become the myriad things. Things of necessity disintegrate and return to the Great Vacuity. Appearance and disappearance following this cycle are all a matter of necessity. When, in the midst [of this universal operation] the sage fulfills the Way to the utmost, and identifies himself [with the universal processes of appearance and disappearance] without partiality, his spirit is preserved