NOTE TO USERS

This reproduction is the best copy available

UMI
Tang Chun-i's Idea of Transcendence:
with special reference to his Life, Existence, and the Horizon of Mind-Heart

by

Yau-Nang William Ng

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of East Asian Studies
University of Toronto

© Copyright by William Yau-nang Ng 1996.
The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author’s permission.
ABSTRACT

T'ANG CHUN-I'S IDEA OF TRANSCENDENCE:
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS LIFE, EXISTENCE AND THE
HORIZONS OF MIND-HEART

Yau Nang William Ng
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of East Asian Studies
University of Toronto
1996

This dissertation attempts to examine a central concept of the thought of T'ang Chun-i (pinyin: Tang Junyi 唐君毅 1909-1978), that of the transcendental dimension, with the hope of contributing to a resolution of several controversies regarding Confucianism in general and contemporary Neo-Confucianism in particular. I hope, above all, to demonstrate the extent to which contemporary Neo-Confucianism, in this case exemplified by T'ang's thought, has retained important religious dimensions, while experiencing changes with the introduction of Western philosophical terminology, concepts and ways of argument. Further, I aim to answer the assertion, which prevails both in the West and the East, that Confucianism is totally secular, without any idea of transcendence, by showing T'ang's thought to be imbued with a religious humanism which opens itself to the realm of transcendence. Finally, I wish to shed light on two interrelated problems, namely, whether Confucianism is a religion or not, and what kind of humanism contemporary Neo-Confucianism (here manifested in the thought of T'ang Chun-i) advocates.

Chapter 1 looks at the point of departure for T'ang's system, the concept of human nature. For T'ang, the key element of being a human being is the notion of consciousness of transcendence (chaoyue yishi 超越意識) which I interpret as the dynamic of transformation.
Next, T'ang's discussion of the Christian idea of transcendence will be examined mainly in two parts, one devoted to arguments supporting the existence of the realm of transcendence and the other dealing with the content of this realm of transcendence. These form Chapter Two.

Chapters Three and Four examine the Buddhist and Confucian Horizons of transcendence respectively. They are followed by an exposition of T'ang's system of doctrinal classification in Chapter Five. Chapter Six is an evaluation of T'ang's thought which includes the evaluation of T'ang's dual argument, and the discussions of the nature of T'ang's system in particular, and the nature of T'ang's thought in general.

The conclusion of the thesis is that T'ang's argument cannot support the notion of God (Absolute) that he wanted to establish. And perhaps T'ang did not mind. From the beginning, T'ang believed that the realm of transcendence was something ultimately beyond human discourse and therefore impossible to establish philosophically. Rather, what is important is the promotion of Chinese culture and the awakening of people's moral spirit. Under these considerations, the most important function of philosophical investigation is to lead people to the way of the sage, or, to use T'ang's word, to "replant the spiritual root" (linggen zaizhi 精根再植). T'ang's philosophical investigation aims not merely to achieve intellectual knowledge but to arrive at the truth. For him, knowledge is not an end in itself but a means to wisdom — to truth. If that is the case, and the realm of transcendence is ultimately beyond knowledge and language, then, strictly speaking, such a transcendent level of the learning of the mind-heart, should be outside the scope of philosophical speculation — that is, it is not completely the
object of rational knowledge. That is why T'ang's thought has non-rational aspects which contribute partly to its religious dimension. Perhaps, we should call it the religion of mind-heart and nature (xinxing zhijiao 心性之教). Therefore, in terms of its foundation, T'ang's religious humanism is moral humanism. But on account of its transcendent dimension, we can clearly see a profound religious spirit running through it.

Thus, contemporary Neo-Confucianism, in this case exemplified by T'ang's philosophy, is not any kind of secular humanism that discards the importance of transcendence. It is my assertion that T'ang Chun-i's thought is a religious humanism which is deeply grounded in humanity and in its openness to transcendence. It is precisely in this sense that we can say that Confucianism, exemplifies by T'ang's thought, has a religious dimension. I think any serious discussion of the nature of contemporary Neo-Confucianism cannot avoid this aspect.
Dedicated to my mentor,
Professor Sze-kwang Lao
on his 70th birthday.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to thank his supervisor, Professor Julia C. Ching, for her assistance and encouragement, and Professor Richard Guisso for his concern and support throughout his study at the University of Toronto. Special thanks go to Professors Bruce Alton, Milton Wan and Willard Oxtoby for reviewing several chapters and helping him formulate and polish some of the ideas in this dissertation without which it would not be possible.

The author of this dissertation owes much to his teachers in Taiwan among them he would like to mention particularly Professors Ming-hui Lee (李明輝), Vincent Shen (沈清松), Wei-ming Tu (杜維明), and M. L. Choi (蔡美麗). His greatest debt is to his mentor, Professor Sze-kwang Lao (勞思光), who steered him into this study and continues to inspire him with his penetrating philosophical insights.

Last, but not least, he would like to thank his friends, Paulino Belamide, Douglas Moore and George Erdosy for their supports and friendship.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.................................................................................................................. 1-33

A. The Thesis 1
B. Formation of a Stereotype of Confucianism 1-11
C. My approach and the Focus 11-27
  1. What is the so-called "dangdai xinruxue" 11-18
     or Contemporary Neo-Confucianism
  2. The Man: T'ang Chun-i 18-23
  3. The Focus: Transcendence 23-28
D. Some Methodological Considerations and a
   Note on the Sources 28-33
E. Organisation of the Dissertation 33

Chapter One: The Starting Point: The Transcendent Consciousness .......................... 34-63

A. Introduction 34-35
B. T'ang's Conception of the Transcendent Consciousness 35-41
   1. The Epistemological Aspect 36-37
   2. The Axiological Aspect 37-41
C. T'ang's Notion of Human Nature 41-52
   1. The Moral Self and Existential Self 42-49
   2. The Essence of Human Nature: the benxin benxing 49-52
D. Self-cultivation 52-63
   1. Self-awakening and Self-illumination 52-55
   2. To Establish One's Aspiration 55-58
   3. The Origin of Evil 58-61
   4. Self-transformation 61-63

Chapter Two: Christianity and Transcendence....................................................... 64-102

A. Introduction 64
B. The System of the Nine-horizons of the Mind-Heart 64-71
C. Fixing the Range of Reference of T'ang's Trans-subjectivity/objectivity Horizon 71-73
D. The Ontological Argument 73-81
E. T'ang's Moral Argument 81-89
F. The Nature of the Absolute in Itself 89-94
Chapter Three: Buddhism and the Transcendent Dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Introduction</td>
<td>103-106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. The Horizon of Dual Emptiness</td>
<td>106-114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Impermanence</td>
<td>107-108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Conditioned Co-arising</td>
<td>108-110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Anatta and Svabhava-sunyata</td>
<td>110-113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Enlightenment as Non-attachment to Dharma</td>
<td>113-114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Suffering and Universal Salvation</td>
<td>114-120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Suffering</td>
<td>114-116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Conditions for Liberation from Suffering</td>
<td>116-120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Compassion</td>
<td>116-119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Transcending the Division</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Foundations and Paths to Liberation</td>
<td>120-128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Karma and Attachment</td>
<td>120-121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Seed of Liberation: Buddha-nature</td>
<td>121-126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Three Lives</td>
<td>126-129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Reflections</td>
<td>129-132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter Four: Confucianism and the Transcendent Dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Introduction</td>
<td>133-139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. From Human to Heaven: Self-transcendent</td>
<td>139-145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Gantong and the Union with Heaven</td>
<td>138-141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Sequential Perspective</td>
<td>141-146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Different Levels of Ming</td>
<td>146-151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Establishing Ming</td>
<td>151-154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Rites and Worship: Applied Confucianism</td>
<td>154-157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Reflections</td>
<td>157-159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter Five: T'ang's Doctrinal Classification System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Introduction</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. What is panjiao?</td>
<td>160-161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. T'ang's System of Panjiao</td>
<td>161-170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The Notion of Life and Existence</td>
<td>162-163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Attitude to this World</td>
<td>163-165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Notion of Human Nature and Salvation</td>
<td>165-168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. The Notion of the Absolute 168-171
D. Reflections 171-174

Chapter Six: Conclusion 175-218

A. Introduction 175
B. Evaluation of T'ang's Arguments 175-190
   1. The Ontological Argument 175-184
   2. The Moral Argument 184-191
C. The Nature of T'ang's System 191-202
   1. T'ang and Western philosophy 192-194
   2. T'ang and Buddhism: Huayan and Tiantai 194-202
D. The Nature of T'ang's Philosophy 202-218

APPENDIXES AND SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY 219
APPENDIX A: On the Interpretation of Certain Technical Terms 220-222
APPENDIX B: Glossary of Transliterations 223-225
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY 226-248
A Note on Transliteration and Documentation

A. Transliteration

As regards transliteration, I shall follow the *pinyin* system with the following exceptions:

1) Terms that have become well known in their Wade-Giles version will be cited, with pinyin transliteration provided in parentheses the first time the term appears. The diacritical marks of those Chinese names in Wade-Giles system are omitted.

2) Authors (e.g. Chang Hao 張顥) who prefer to see their name in the Wade-Giles transliteration, or (e.g. Leung In-sing) in a transliteration that reflects the pronunciation of their particular dialect, will have their wishes respected, although once again pinyin versions of their names, as well as Chinese characters, will follow in parentheses the first time they appear; for example Leung In-sing (*pinyin*: Liang Yancheng 梁燕城). I may not be able to get the preferred way of romanization of the names of individual author but this is done to the best of my knowledge. A glossary of Chinese terms with their pinyin equivalents will be provided in Appendix B: "Glossary of Transliterations".

3) The original transliterations of titles of books and articles will also be retained to avoid confusion, and there no *pinyin* equivalents will be given.

B. Documentation

1) Footnotes are used instead of endnotes.

2) The names of the authors, editors, and/or translators and the titles of the books and/or articles are provided together with publication information, and page reference in the first reference. In order to save the reader the problem of finding out the source resulting from simplified citations (e.g. *ibid.* and *op. cit.*), all subsequent references to the same book and/or article will mention the authors, the titles, and page reference but publication information will be omitted.
Introduction

A. The Thesis

The task I have set for myself in this dissertation is to examine a central concept of the thought of T'ang Chun-i (pinyin: Tang Junyi唐君毅1909-1978), that of the transcendental dimension, with the hope of contributing to a resolution of several controversies regarding Confucianism in general and contemporary Neo-Confucianism in particular. I hope, above all, to demonstrate the extent to which contemporary Neo-Confucianism, in this case exemplified by T'ang's thought, has retained important religious dimensions, while experiencing changes with the introduction of Western philosophical terminology, concepts and ways of argument. Further, I aim to answer the assertion, which prevails both in the West and the East, that Confucianism is totally secular, without any idea of transcendence, by showing T'ang's thought to be imbued with a religious humanism which opens itself to the realm of transcendence. Finally, I wish to shed light on two interrelated problems, namely, whether Confucianism is a religion or not, and what kind of humanism contemporary Neo-Confucianism (here manifested in the thought of T'ang Chun-i) advocates. Given the complexities involved in these issues, only a carefully constructed chain of arguments is likely to satisfy critics and the first link in such a chain is a reevaluation of received wisdom about the secular nature of Confucianism, to which I must now turn.

B. Formation of a Stereotype of Confucianism

Considering the fact that Western conceptions of China have changed so frequently and drastically, it has been justly remarked that the "chameleon would
be a more appropriate symbol for China than the dragon." ¹ As regards Confucianism, its humanistic image in the West² was initially shaped by the "enlightenment mentality" that evolved in the 15th-17th centuries and matured during the Enlightenment of the 18th century. The intellectual trends of the times are best captured in the following statement:

And so between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, the West saw the emergence of a newly self-conscious and autonomous human being — curious about the world, confident in his own judgments, skeptical of orthodoxy, rebellious against authority, responsible for his own beliefs and actions, enamored of the classical past but even more committed to a greater future, proud of his humanity, conscious of his distinctness from nature, aware of his artistic powers as individual creator, assured of his intellectual capacity to comprehend and control nature, and altogether less dependent on an omnipotent God. This emergence of the modern mind, rooted in the rebellion against the medieval Church and the ancient authorities, and yet dependent upon and developing from......the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Scientific


2 In this dissertation I use the term West to refer to Europe and North America, and the term East to refer to India, China, Japan and Korea, since Tang Junyi and other contemporary Chinese scholars have used them thus. Modern Chinese Confucian scholars continue to think likewise, as shown by Liang Shuming (梁漱溟 1893-1988). whose ideas were discussed by Guy Alitto, The Last Confucian: Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity (L.A.: University of California Press, 1979) and Ha Yong 马勇, Liang Shuming wenhua lilun yanjiu (A Study of Liang Shuming's Theory of Cultural Consciousness 梁漱溟文化理論研究) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1991).
Revolution. These collectively ended the cultural hegemony of the Catholic Church and established the more individualistic, skeptical, and secular spirit of the modern age.³

The above description of the emergence of the modern mind is, of course, only a useful simplification, and one must note that several parallel, and even opposing, intellectual trends coexisted with it. All the same, such a mentality certainly represented the mainstream, and would go on to advocate a Deistic view of God, denouncing institutionalized religion, laying emphasis on the affairs of this world, and placing humanity at the center of the universe.⁴ And since the desire of progressive intellectuals to emancipate themselves from religious authority, Church authority in particular,⁵ coincided with the first transmission of aspects of Chinese culture to the West, it is not surprising that the latter came to be used as an independent, and hence particularly authoritative, confirmation of the principal ideas of the Enlightenment. In this context it is easy to see how the early Western


⁴ My understanding of this period has greatly benefited from the work of Richard Tarnas; in addition, I have consulted, among others, works by F.L. Baumer, Modern European Thought: Continuity and Change in Ideas 1600–1950 (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1977) and R. N. Stromberg, An Intellectual History of Modern Europe (N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1975), especially pp. 7–30.

⁵ It should be noted, incidentally, that “Atheism was still felt to be abhorrent……The philosophers of the Enlightenment did not reject the idea of God, however. They rejected the cruel God of the orthodox who threatened mankind with eternal fire. They rejected mysterious doctrines about him that there were abhorrent to reason. But their belief in a Supreme Being remain intact”. See Karen Armstrong, A History of God: The 4000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam (N.Y.: A. A. Knopf, 1993), pp. 296–310.
understanding of Confucianism, transmitted piecemeal by missionaries and, merchants represented more a projection of Western ideas than an objective understanding based on serious scholarship. As Julia Ching and Willard Oxtoby have pointed out, "China served Enlightenment thinkers partly as a mirror by which Europeans could scrutinize themselves, and partly as a model for improvements that they wished to propose."

Among the many other things that the rationalist philosophers of Europe sought, a value system that was independent of a Christian God is the most relevant for our discussion here, since this allowed Confucianism to be seen as an inspiration for an atheistic alternative to Christianity. Natural morality, a value system based on reason rather than revelation, was the ideal for the enlightenment philosophe, which is not surprising in an age when Church

---

6 In this context, Professor Davis has justly observed that "the fact is that many intellectual leaders of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries praised the enlightened beneficence of China's philosopher-kings without knowing much about them..." Quotation in J. Ching and W. Oxtoby ed., Discovering China: European Interpretations in the Enlightenment. (Rochester: University of Rochester Press. 1992), p. 15.


authority was under a particularly strong challenge.\textsuperscript{10} Although some important aspects of natural morality could hardly be found in Chinese thought, "the vast majority of the Western enlighteners were favorably disposed towards a people who has for centuries, they contended, had acted morally, without any inborn knowledge of God, purely on the strength of their humanistic ethical system".\textsuperscript{11} Such an image of Chinese culture in general, and of Confucianism in particular, was popular in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe. As R. Dawson asserted in his groundbreaking work,

"another aspect of the eighteenth-century image of China which has developed and adapted itself to modern needs is the rationalism and agnosticism of Confucianism which had a strong appeal for those who were opposed to traditional theological dogma in Europe. In modern times when rationalism and agnosticism are more respectable, it has an even stronger appeal. This conception of Chinese society continued to flourish during the nineteenth century because of the attitude of the Protestant missionaries, who saw in godlessness the source of China's evils.\textsuperscript{12}"

The atheistic or agnostic impression which the eighteenth century enlightenment philosophers attributed to Chinese culture in general, and certainly

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{11} W. Davis, "The Confucian ideal and the European Age of Enlightenment", in Julia Ching and Willard G. Oxtoby, \textit{Discovering China}, p. 20.
\end{itemize}
to Confucianism, continued to prevail for generations, and received particularly strong reinforcement from two German scholars, the great philosopher, Georg W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) and a founder of classical sociology, Max Weber (1864-1920). In his 1827 lecture on religion, Hegel writes that "the heaven of the Chinese is not a world that forms an independent realm above the earth (as we picture it with angels and the souls of the departed, or in the way of the Greek Olympus is distinct from life and death). On the contrary, everything is upon earth and everything that has power is subject to the emperor." For Hegel, even the heaven is earthbound and thus there is an absence of transcendence. Weber's *Konfuzianismus und Taosimus*, is a classic work on Chinese religion. To this day, Weber's thought as expressed in that work remains an intellectual well-spring as well as a maze to ponder upon. There is no agreement regarding his

---


14 I am using Hans H. Gerth's English translation, which has been renamed *The Religion of China* (N.Y: The Free Press, 1951).

15 To cite but one example, it is only recently that the Weberian notion of linking work-ethics with the rise of capitalism has caught the attention of Chinese historians. Scholars such as Tu Wei-ming (*pinyin*: Du Weiming杜維明), Liu Shu-hsien (*pinyin*: Liu Shuxian劉述先), and Yu Ying-shih (*pinyin*: Yu Yingshi余英時) have, in particular, dealt with this problem. The latter's book (*Yu, Zhongguo jinshih zongjiao lunli yu shangren jingshen*中國近世宗教倫理與閒人精神, 1987) goes back to the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) periods to trace the relation between Confucian ethics and economic development, while Tu's works (in particular, Tu Wei-ming ed. *The Triadic Chord*, Singapore: The Institute of East Asian Philosophies, 1991) focus on the so-called Industrial East Asia of the post-World War II era.
intentions, although the prevailing consensus is that he did view Confucianism as a secular phenomenon, even if his views remain to be fully understood. Perhaps the clearest exposition of Weber's views from this "orthodox" perspective comes from C.K. Yang, a specialist in Chinese social history, who wrote in his Introduction to Hans Gerth's translation of *Konfuzianismus und Taosimus* that "Weber treated Confucianism more as an ethical doctrine than as a theistic religion because of its lack of metaphysical foundations, in spite of its toleration of magic". In another article, while admitting that Confucius respected the supernatural realm, Yang reasserted the rationalistic characteristics of Confucianism, which, in his opinion, complemented the religious functions of other systems of belief in China, such as Buddhism and Taoism. Therefore, while one should not get the impression that Yang totally discounts the religious aspects of

---


Confucianism, he clearly favors its rationalistic side, which, in his view, enabled it to complement the other great religious traditions of China. The influences of Weber, especially through T. Parsons, and Hegel are so strong that this idea that Confucianism lacks the dimension of transcendence is very popular.

Scholars in other disciplines have tended to follow such a secular interpretation of Confucianism, notably John King Fairbanks (1907-1991), the most prominent and influential American historian of China in the twentieth century, who in one of his last books asserted that "Western observers, looking only at the texts of the Confucian classics, were early impressed with their agnostic this worldliness. As a philosophy of life, we have generally associated with Confucianism the quiet virtue of patience, pacifism, and compromise; the golden mean; reverence for the ancestors, the aged, and the learned; and, above

---


22 His East Asia: The Modern Transformation has been, and continues to be, widely used as a popular textbook both for the Advanced Level Education Examination in Hong Kong (Xianggang gaoji chengdu huikao 香港高級程度會考) and in colleges throughout North America. His United States and China likewise remains a popular book for American readers, and has received just as much attention from Chinese scholars. Cf. Yu Yingshi, "Fei Zhengqing di zhongguo yanjiu."
all, a meellow humanism — taking man, not God, as the center of the universe.”

Other popular textbooks followed a similarly secular interpretation, for example China: Traditions and Transformation, whose authors state that "While he [Confucius] fully recognized the spirits and Heaven (T'ian 天), sometimes showing a sense of mission derived from the latter, he was obviously not much interested in the superhuman realm ...... Confucius was a relativist, thinking in social and human terms."24

To discard these views as the product of Western ignorance about China would be all too easy, and one-sided. The truth is that Chinese scholars have frequently subscribed to similar views. Among them, Lin Yu-T'ang (pinyin: Lin Yutang 林語堂1894-1976) is perhaps the most popular in the Western intellectual arena. At the outset of his chapter on "Ideals of Life", in his My Country and My People, he pointed out directly that "to understand the Chinese ideal of life one must try to understand Chinese humanism ...... It implies, first a just conception of the ends of human life; secondly, a complete devotion to these ends; and thirdly, the attainment of these ends by the spirit of humanism, reasonableness or the Doctrine of the Golden Mean, which may also be called the Religion of Common Sense."25 Ku Hung-ming (pinyin: Gu Hongmin 翟鴻銘1856-1928)26 went even


25 See Lin Yu-tang, My Country and My People (London & Toronto: W. Heinemann Ltd, 1936), 95. Elsewhere, on page 100, Lin also writes that “I have often observed with interest the differences between a religious culture like that of Christendom and a frankly agnostic culture like that of the Chinese.”
further to say that "Confucianism is not a religion" and "in fact, the greatness of Confucianism is that, without being a religion, it can take the place of religion; it can make men do without religion". Indeed, Professor Wing-tsit Chan (pinyin: Chen Rongjie 陳榮捷), a renowned scholar of Chinese philosophy and a specialist in Neo-Confucianism, has pointed out that "to this day [1952] the Chinese are practically unanimous in denying Confucianism as a religion."27

Despite the apparent consensus, one has to be careful in passing a sweeping judgment, since all these scholars have their own interpretation of "religion", and thus they clearly mean different things when they deny that Confucianism is a religion. For example, what Lin Yu-Tang really stresses is that Confucianism was not an organized religion like Roman Catholicism, and not that Confucianism lacked religious elements. Indeed, Lin highly praises Confucianism as what he himself labeled in English, a "Religion of Common Sense" (zhongyong zhi dao 中庸之道)28. Others based their judgments on different criteria, such as the absence of a personal God, the absence of a clergy, the absence of revelational scripture, the method of intuition, and mystical experience, to name just a few. Such differing views of what constitutes a religion led to much confusion in the 1920s, during which there was a debate about whether Confucianism should be the state religion of China, although one should add that the real issue at stake was the fight against Yuan Shikai's (袁世凱 1859-1916) attempt at monarchical


28 It is interesting to note that Lin Yu-tang translated Dao (道) as "religion."
However, despite these differences, there are some common elements in the various judgments of Confucianism in both China and the West; and crucial among these is the view that Confucianism was concerned with the affairs of this world, and that it lacked any notion of transcendence.

C. My Approach and Focus

To clarify all the misconceptions just discussed would be too large a task within the scope of this dissertation. As I mentioned, I intend to limit my study to T'ang Chun-i's idea of transcendence. To justify my choice I shall have to answer three questions: 1) Why choose contemporary Neo-Confucianism? 2) Why choose T'ang Chun-i? and 3) Why focus on the notion of transcendence? I shall take these questions in turn.

1. What is the so-called "dangdai xinruxue" or Contemporary Neo-Confucianism?

The Chinese term xinruxue (新儒學), commonly translated as "Neo-Confucianism" in English, can refer to both the Confucianism of the Song (960-1279) and Ming dynasties and to Confucianism of the twentieth-century. For this

reason, Chang Hao (pinyin: Zhang Hao張灏)\(^{30}\) and others prefer the term "New-Confucianism" for the latter. However, as the term has not yet enjoyed widespread use, I shall prefer the expression, Contemporary Neo-Confucianism, to describe the Confucian philosophical developments of twentieth-century China.

There continue to be disagreements over who should or should not be counted among the Contemporary Neo-Confucianists (dangdai xinrujia當代新儒家). It seems to me that there is a general tendency among scholars in Taiwan and Hong Kong to use the term in the narrow sense of the intellectual succession starting from Master Hsiung Shih-li (pinyin: Xung Shili熊十力 1885-1968)\(^{31}\) and including scholars like Mou Tsung-san (pinyin: Mou Zongsan牟宗三 1909-1995)\(^{32}\), T'ang Chun-i, and Hsu Fu-kuan (pinyin: Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 1909-1982)\(^{33}\). Sometimes Carsun Chang (pinyin: Zhang Junmai張君勉 1886-1969) and Chien Mu (pinyin: Qian Mu錢穆 1895-1990) are included as well in a broader sense, although they were not students of Hsiung. In this dissertation I shall use the term "Contemporary Neo-Confucianists" in an even narrower sense, leaving aside Hsu


Fu-kuan since his thought appears to contain elements quite alien to the tradition. For stylistic variety, however, I shall also, at times, use the synonyms "Contemporary Neo-Confucian scholars" and "Modern Confucian scholars."

Turning to the first question posed above, the question of whether Contemporary Neo-Confucianism has a religious dimension is particularly fascinating, taking into account the fact that we are dealing with a reinterpretation of an old tradition, which relies on the terminology, inspiration and style of argument learned from Western philosophy. It is not far from the truth to assert that Contemporary Neo-Confucianism is a philosophical reconstruction. By saying that, I do not mean to judge whether the Classical Confucianism of the Pre-Qin period (i.e. prior to 221 B.C.) or the Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties were religions, schools of philosophy, or both. That would be outside the scope of my dissertation. What I mean is that Contemporary Neo-Confucianism is mainly the rejuvenation of an old tradition, interpreted in a Western philosophical framework. We should note that the resultant changes have been so drastic that they really represent a paradigm shift. Lively conversations between the masters and their disciples now change into rigorous philosophical discourse. The strength of philosophy lies not so much in awakening of one’s conscience by relating to one’s experience, but in establishing arguments based on sound, logical reasoning. Even more tangible is the adoption of Western philosophical terminology.

In sum, there is a shift in emphasis from conative to cognitive.

We are as yet far from uncovering all the changes in Chinese philosophical thinking, although some of the trends are clear. For example, we can observe the efforts of Mou Tsung-san and T'ang Chun-i to establish a dialogue with Western philosophy, German Idealism in particular. Mou is the only scholar in the world who has translated all of Kant's three Critiques, while T'ang's thought is famous for its Hegelian characteristics. Further, as Chan has pointed out, even Fung Yu-lan and Hsiung Shih-li, the forerunners and mentors of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism, would have been surprised if their philosophies had been characterized as religion. This is partly because of their equation of the notion of religion with Christianity, and partly because of their conscious philosophizing. They were, after all, professors in philosophy departments. It would not be missing the mark to say, therefore, that Contemporary Neo-Confucian thought can be classified as philosophy. At least, this is how T'ang and his contemporaries perceived it.

35 Chen Shaoming 陈少明 has pointed out several changes: 1) the transformation and the weakening of the function of ideology, 2) the reflection on modern science, and 3) the borrowing of Western philosophy. See his Ruxue di xiandai chuanzhe [The Modern Transition of Confucianism] (Shenyang: Liaoning daixue chubanshe, 1992), pp. 34-36.

36 Mou did not translate directly from German to Chinese but based his translation on the English translations.

37 Chan, Wing-tsit, Religious Trends in Modern China, p. 49.
While the distinction between philosophy and religion remains unclear, a common view is that philosophy relies mostly on reason, while religion does not see reason as the ultimate source for judgment. Given that, we might be able to say that the "Westernization" of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism is a process of philosophical rationalization, in which non-rational (i.e., religious) elements are either rationalized or put aside. Therefore, if after such a drastic process one can still perceive substantial religious elements, one must insist that the religious dimensions of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism cannot be overlooked as they have been by several generations of scholars. It is therefore particularly satisfying to see the emergence of several publications studying aspects of the religious dimension of the old tradition. Some call them "religiousness", others "religious dimensions" while some even claim that Confucianism is "profoundly religious" and that the "thread of religion... runs throughout the tradition. Incidentally, the literature in Mainland China also reflects similar views.

38 Shen V. 舒清松，"Zhexue zai Taiwan zhi fazhan: 1949-1985", pp. 3-35.


43 I am indebted to Professor Julia Ching for pointing me in the direction of literature from mainland China, which is imbued with similar views, although obviously inspired by different ideals, namely by a desire to eradicate Confucianism precisely because of its perceived religious character. As Louis Kam of Nanking
Unfortunately, however, while the religious aspects of Classical Confucianism, Han Confucianism, and the Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming periods, are comparatively well documented, Contemporary Neo-Confucianism has been almost completely untouched. This is why a study of Tang's idea of transcendence will fill a significant gap in our understanding of the entire tradition, since it will enable us to decide to what extent the now well-

University has concluded in his well-documented *Critiques of Confucius in Contemporary China*, “A number of broad generalizations can be made about evaluations of Confucius in the twentieth century... The changes in evaluations have been many, linked always with the numerous political changes that have occurred in this century. Confucius has been above all a political issue. Even in periods where a more scholarly kind of historical interpretation has been the vogue, despite the wealth of detailed research that might emerge, overall evaluation have still been related to political issues. As communism is the state ideology of that country, the interpretation of Confucianism is more or less an application of Marxist and Maoist ideology. The most frequent quotation found in mainland Chinese scholars on religion is: “religion is the opium of the people.” The mainland Chinese scholars assert that Confucianism is a religion in order to prove that it is an opium to paralyze the revolutionary spirit of the proletariat class and thus safeguards the continued exploitation of the feudal class enemy, slave owners and landlords.” One of the leading scholars in Chinese religions, Ren Jiyu任繼愈 writes, “The establishment of the system of the Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism is the completion of Chinese Confucian religion.” But his assertion of Confucianism as a religion aims at pointing out that what he perceives as elements of backwardness in Scholasticism such as hostility to science and disregarding production can all be found in Confucianism. Professor Charles W. Fu（傅偉勳）in his study on Mainland Chinese scholarship in philosophy also concluded that it suffers from a confusion and misuse of three levels of Marxism, namely the scientific, philosophical and social levels. See his “Dalu xuezhe di zhexue yanjiu pinglun” (Comments on the study of philosophy大陸哲學的哲學研究評論) in Zhongguo luntan ed.（中國論壇）*Haixia liangan xueshu yanjiu di fazhan* [海峽兩岸學術研究的發展 The Development of Academic Study in mainland China and Taiwan] (Taipei: Shibao chupanshe時報出版社, 1988), pp. 37-62. See also, Wang, Xuewen汪學文. *Zhonggong yu zongjiao* [China and Religions中國與宗教] (Taipei: Guoli zhengzhi daxue guoji guanxi yanjiu zhongxin, 國立政治大學國際關係研究中心 1986).
documented religious aspects of Confucianism survived the influence of modern Western philosophy.

While T'ang's works on Chinese culture and philosophy have often been cited, his philosophical thought has drawn little attention in the West. One of the few exceptions is provided by the works of Thomas Metzger, who devoted an entire chapter to T'ang's philosophy in his *Escape from Predicament: Neo-Confucianism and China's Evolving Political Culture*, published in 1977, but his work is in many respects unsatisfactory. To begin with, Metzger relied principally on T'ang's earlier works in his study; for example, although he cited 2 volumes of T'ang's *zhongguo zhexue yuanlun* (中國哲學原論 Discussions on the Foundations of Chinese Philosophy) in a footnote, he did not discuss them. We should also note that T'ang's last work, *Shengming cunzai yu xinling jingjie* (生命存在與心靈境界 Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart) had not yet appeared. In retrospect, it should be the focus of any study of T'ang's religious philosophy. More importantly, Metzger was principally concerned with fashioning a response to Weber's classic interpretation of Chinese religions, one which recognized the internal tension in the moral and spiritual pursuit of the Confucianists. This emphasis led him to put T'ang's moral and spiritual notions in the context of the relations between the sense of predicament and the "ethos of interdependence" in Chinese bureaucracy44, or, in other words, the conflict between conservatism and

---

44 One of the central problems Metzger treated is "to relate the sense of predicament to the anxiety stressed in the theory of dependency as well as to that spirit of Confucian self-fulfillment emphasized by T'ang." These factors, as interpreted by Metzger, "serve as routinely expressed administrative norms" which resulted in an "ethos of interdependence." See his *Escape from Predicament: Neo-Confucianism and China's Evolving Political Culture* (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. 15.
modernization in twentieth-century China. One of the principal aims of my investigation will, therefore, be to return T'ang's ideas back to the religio-ethical context in which T'ang himself had placed them, and thus examine the key notion of transcendence in order to show the religious dimension of T'ang's system of thought.

2. The Man: T'ang Chun-i

I must still answer the second question posed above; namely, what are the justifications for choosing T'ang Chun-i as the focus of my study. Born in 1909 in Yibin (宜宾), a remote county in Sichuan Province (四川省), T'ang grew up in a Confucian family. His father, T'ang Difeng (唐迪風) was a famous man of letters in the local community, and a devoted follower of Confucianism, who published several works among which Mengzi dayi (孟子大義) (The Great Meanings of Mencius) is still available. His mother was also brought up in the typical way of a Confucian gentry family, and her father, a Confucian scholar himself, worked as a private tutor of Confucianism in the local area. All this provided T'ang with a solid family background and while other youths of his age were struggling with the school curriculum, he was writing papers on the differences between Mencius (371-289 B.C.) and Xunzi (荀子 298-238 B.C.) on human nature, and on the central notion of Confucianism. Such a family background contribute to the making of T'ang into a Confucian interpreter45.

However, T'ang did not follow in his father's footsteps and did not become a Confucian immediately. He, like other youth of his day, experienced a period of rebellion against his parents. It was only after leaving his family for Peking, to pursue his college education, that his immense love for his father resurfaced, enabling him to see in this the manifestation of human conscience, the basic tenet of faith in Confucianism.

T'ang sharpened his already philosophical mind with the training he received at Peking University and at the Central University (zhongyang daxue 中央大學) in Nanking. In 1930 his excellent performance in his studies won him a position at Sichuan University (四川大學), where he taught Western philosophy even before completing his undergraduate degree. He obtained his B.A. in 1932, at the age of 23 and, after that, he taught in various schools and, at one point, even worked in the Ministry of Education.

One event deserves particular mention in this period. A famous Buddhist master, and the mentor of both T'ang's father and of Hsiung Shih-li, Abbot Ouyang Jingwu (歐陽竟無 1871-1943) invited T'ang to study under him so as to continue the succession of the dharma. However, while T'ang was aware of the honour which this invitation conferred on him, he seems to have decided to remain a faithful follower of Confucius.

46 For an introduction to Ouyang Jingwu, see Chan Wing-tsit, Religious Trends in Modern China, pp. 105-118.
In 1940, T'ang began working as a lecturer at the Central University in Nanking, and was promoted to a full professorship four years later. After the Communist takeover of mainland China in 1949, he fled to Hong Kong, since he saw in the rise of Communism the loss of the traditional Chinese value system. There, he devoted his life to studying and attempting to revitalize Chinese culture, as a way to save the people. His strong commitment to Chinese culture moved him to work with some other scholars to establish the New Asia College (xinya shuyuan 新亞書院), which later became the center of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism.

The college was organized at a time when the people and the economy had not yet recovered from either the Second World War or the Civil War that ensued, and its foundation and survival testify to T'ang's and his colleagues' commitment to the Confucian ideal of education. In the beginning most faculty members were volunteers and they often slept in the classrooms. Many of the students who had lost their families lived in the college as well and those who could not afford the tuition fee were welcomed on condition that they helped with cleaning the school.

To conclude, T'ang and his colleagues were not content with merely preaching Neo-Confucianism; they actually lived according to its principles and served as models for several generations of future scholars.47

47 The establishment of the Chinese College of Canada in Toronto in 1995 has been openly announced as a continuation of the spirit of the New Asia College.
The financial situation of the New Asia College improved considerably after it received donations from American institutions such as Yale in China in 1953, and T'ang could once again concentrate more on his research, instead of being preoccupied with administrative matters. In 1958 he, with the help of other scholars, drafted his famous "A Manifesto for a Re-appraisal of Sinology and Reconstruction of Chinese Culture" which captured the attention of Chinese scholars not only in Hong Kong but overseas as well. At the same time, the rising status of the College caught the attention of the Hong Kong government, and in 1963 it was included as one of the three founding colleges in the newly established Chinese University of Hong Kong (香港中文大學). T'ang worked there until 1974, when he resigned in protest against the centralization of the university, which for him signified the end of the New Asia spirit. He separated the graduate school from the University and formed the New Asia Institute, where he taught until his death in 1978.

In sum, T'ang spent his entire life teaching, advocating the values of Chinese culture and writing critically acclaimed books, and is thus, perhaps the best representative of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism. As Thomas Metzger writes, T'ang was "not just a great Chinese thinker, he was a great thinker of the 20th century."48

His philosophy has received increasing attention in recent years. Not only are papers on T'ang a constant feature of conferences on Chinese philosophy, but

two international conferences were recently devoted entirely to him. In addition, three anthologies, two books and numerous articles have dealt with him recently, and he figures prominently in both the Chinese edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica and The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy. Frederick Streng in his Understanding Religious Life, the introduction to the 15-volume series on world religions which he edited, chose Tang together with Paul Tillich and Keiji Nishitani as the three representative twentieth-century philosophers of religion. The rising importance of Tang and his thought in the

49 The first of these took place in Hong Kong in December, 1988, and the second in August, 1995 in Sichuan.


51 Zhang, Xianghao, Tang Junyi sixiang yanjiu (唐君毅思想研究A study of Tang Chun-i’s thought), (Tianjin天津: Tianjin remin chubanshe天津人民出版社,1994) and Wang Qiang韋強 and Zhao Guanghui趙光輝, Wenhua yishi yu dao de lixing [Cultural consciousness and moral reason文化意識與道德理性], (Shenyang瀋陽: Liaoning remin chubanshe遼寧人民出版社, 1994).


past few decades is in itself sufficient to justify my choice of him as a representative of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism.

3. The Focus: Transcendence

Before moving to other issues, we must address one last question. Why make the topic of transcendence in T'ang Chun-i's thought the focus of my research? Some, for example those following Paul Cohen\textsuperscript{55}, would immediately object to my choice as reflecting a "Western" approach to Chinese civilization, taking Western cultural phenomena - in this case religion - as the norm, and regarding Chinese thought as deviant and, hence, in need of explanation. Such scholars will likely view my study as leading to a distorted picture of Confucianism.

My response to this charge is threefold.

1) While it is true that the word "religion" was originally a Western import for the Chinese\textsuperscript{56}, by T'ang Chun-i's time it had been absorbed into ordinary Chinese vocabulary and into the Chinese mind. T'ang Chun-i had some mastery of English and lived in an international city with extensive exposure to Western culture, Hong Kong. We must, therefore, assume that he was capable of understanding the term in a Western language, and that this term had ceased be external to his thinking.

\textsuperscript{55} Paul Cohen, Discovering History in China, 1984.

2) Since T'ang himself, not to mention other scholars such as Lin Yu-tang and Ku Hung-ming, addressed the problem of whether Confucianism was a religion, we cannot regard religion as the exclusive concern of Western philosophers. In fact, from the late Qing dynasty onwards the Chinese have been trying very hard to decide the place of their cultural heritage in the course of building their country. "The use of Confucius as a political tool was to become a recurring theme in the twentieth century"57. Once again, there is no reason to assume that such a question on the nature of T'ang's thought needs to result in distortion.

3) In general, I agree with W.C. Smith in the sense that there is no such thing as a right or wrong question, even if some questions will be fruitful and others not. Smith holds that the wealth of traditions we study can yield very productive answers.58

We are, of course still left with the problem of defining "religion". While Paul Cohen never addresses it, W.C. Smith does, although for different reasons, and finds that the term is too ambiguous and should be abandoned. Such ambiguity will certainly account for the lack of agreement on what constitutes "religion"59. As early as 1912 James Leuba listed 48 different definitions, adding two of his own.


As Baird rightly says, "the search for an essence is frequently an attempt to find an identity in the numerous applications of an ambiguous word. There is no point in asking 'But what really is $x$?' when it has been shown that '$x$ is ambiguous.'"\(^{60}\)

For obvious reasons, I shall also abandon a lexical definition of "religion". Even if the appropriate term were found in its originally intended meaning in some ancient Indo-European tongue, there would still be no reason to force this definition upon a lexigraphical language system such as Chinese.

Instead, I shall offer a functional definition which is, according to Baird, a "semi-arbitrary act of stipulating that a certain word means a certain thing".\(^{61}\) The definition comes not from a detailed examination of the data, but from the author's judgment of its applicability in a certain context. Briefly put, it is the intention of this dissertation to understand belief in transcendence as an important feature of religions. This statement is not meant to signify anything about the author's attitudes to other features which are often taken to be defining features of religion, such as tradition, rituals, symbols, scripture, intuitive method or mystical experience. Rather, it will serve heuristically as a means of penetrating T'ang's thought. It merely defines my use of the term "religion" in the present context, and says nothing about my attitude to religion in general. However, the definition is not totally arbitrary. In view of the complexity of different religious traditions, John Hick, inspired by L. Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblances, claimed that it is

---


25
"illuminating to see the different traditions, movements and ideologies whose religious character is either generally agreed or responsibly debated, not as exemplifying a common essence, but as forming a complex continuum of resemblances and differences analogous to those found within a family."\(^{62}\) In like manner, I would assert that while a belief in transcendence cannot be viewed as the essence of religion, most forms of religion have affirmed a transcendent dimension.\(^{63}\) This is why the dissertation focuses on T'ang's idea of transcendence.

Moreover, there is little disagreement that the central theme of Chinese philosophy is the search of harmony (he和).\(^{64}\) Certainly, people differ on what is meant by this; Chinese ontology focuses on cosmic harmony, ethics on interpersonal harmony, politics on social harmony, morality on harmony between our conscience (xin心, heart-and-mind\(^{65}\)) and our behaviour, and Confucianism


\(^{64}\) Liu, Shu-hsien and Robert Allinson, *Harmony and Strife: Contemporary Perspectives, East & West* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1988).

\(^{65}\) The standard English translation for the Chinese character xin is heart. However, in the Chinese philosophical context, this character refers to both cognitive and emotional connotations. Thus, some scholars such as W. T. de Bary suggest that it should be translated as mind-and-heart. For a brief discussion of "xin", consult David Nivison's entry on "hsin" in Mircea Eliade ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (N.Y.: Macmillan Press, 1967), vol. 15, pp. 477-478. T'ang used the words xin (心) and xingling (心靈) interchangeably, and both refer to the same thing. In this dissertation, I use the term "mind-and-heart" and "mind-heart" interchangeably to refer to xin.
incorporates all these dimensions and adds a few more. However, one of the most important aspects of the notion of Harmony is the idea of the "Union of the Heaven and the Human" (Tianrenheyi 天人合一). It has always been the common ideal of all the "Three Teachings" in China, namely Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, and T'ang's realm of the transcendent deals exactly with this problem. In fact, T'ang represents a modern attempt to reiterate such a key concept through the employment of Western philosophical concepts, techniques and terminology. This alone will justify the central thrust of my study.

Since the idea of transcendence is itself in need of clarification, I must emphasize that I am using the term to signify what T'ang calls chaoyuejie (超越界), roughly rendered as "the transcendent dimension" or "the realm of the transcendent". I shall interchange these two terms throughout the dissertation for stylistic reasons, but will reserve a more detailed discussion of their exact meaning for T'ang for Chapter 2.

To conclude, my use of the transcendent dimension as the focus of my study is based on the following reasons: 1) I agree with John Hick that even if we have not yet found the essence of religions, we can find the idea of transcendence in most if not all faiths. 2) In his last work, where T'ang developed his own philosophical system to the full, he introduced nine horizons of the mind-and-heart.

---

66 Chan, Wing-tsit, Religious Trends in Modern China, p. 28.

(心靈九境 xinling jiujing), and the last three of these, seen as the highest manifestations of the human heart-and-mind, deal mainly with the realm of the transcendent dimension in Christianity, Buddhism and Confucianism, respectively. Since T'ang himself attached such importance to the realm of the transcendent, making it the highest stage in his system, I think that focusing on this issue will provide the best handle for grasping T'ang's thought in the mature stage of its development.

D. Some Methodological Considerations and a Note on the Sources

This dissertation should not be taken as a discussion on the transcendent dimension itself nor T'ang's experience but his notion of it as reflected in his works. The author of this dissertation relies primarily on the method of textual analysis. The so-called "text-problem" in recent debates in hermeneutics has convinced me, among other things, that a text gains autonomy from its author once it is written. It is open to understanding from many differing points of view, among which that of the original author is only one. It is important to point out, therefore, that while I continue to refer to T'ang Chun-i for the sake of convenience, what I really mean is the assertion of the relevant text under discussion at any particular time.

I have tried to interpret T'ang Chun-i's thought here through the comparative method, by placing it in juxtaposition to Western philosophical discourse. Although I am fully aware of the dangers of such an approach, I do not believe that comparisons are avoidable. For one thing, when we study a foreign tradition in

---

68 The nine horizons will be discussed in Chapter Two.
English, the very choice of words in a translation makes comparisons obligatory. For another, to quote Max Muller "he who knows one [religion], knows none".\textsuperscript{69} While the possibility of misinterpretation can never be totally avoided, as long as one resists the temptation to measure T'ang directly against a Western standard,\textsuperscript{70} comparisons will be valid.

In fact, T'ang himself made comparisons very often in his works. As Frederick J. Streng aptly wrote, "[T'ang] is aware of religions in the East and West and sensitive to the impact of scientific and analytical thought on modern life......[and he] tries to define religion, not in a particular tradition's history of religious ideas, but in the context of a worldwide human situation."\textsuperscript{71} In his writings, different philosophers and various religious and philosophical traditions were discussed. It is beyond the limited scope of this dissertation to comment on whether or not T'ang's understanding of them are valid. Rather, I shall take T'ang's interpretations of various traditions as a reflection of his own philosophy.

Moreover, my comparison, as most of other comparative works on East and West, can only deal with the mainstream or the representative currents in the traditions under discussion. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to deal with variations, though they are important in their own right.


\textsuperscript{70} The dangers of facile analogies and misleading comparisons involved in such a procedure have been clearly demonstrated by Dawson in his classic study, \textit{The Chinese Chameleon: An Analysis of European Conceptions of Chinese Civilization}, pp. 80-81.

\textsuperscript{71} Frederick J. Streng, \textit{Understanding Religious Life}, p. 258.
I am in agreement with authorities like Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, who have shown clearly the role of an interpreter's own philosophical tradition in conditioning research. I recognize the futility of a positivist approach seeking an objective, "truthful" interpretation. The days when Lord Acton declared that if one collects all the historical evidence history would speak for herself, are long gone.\(^2\)

What I am aiming at is simply one of a set of possible understandings of T'ang Chun-i's philosophy of religion, which claims validity only within the scope delineated by my perspective and by the sources I have chosen to work with.

T'ang Chun-i left behind a thirty-volume Complete Works of T'ang Chun-i (唐君毅全集T'ang Chun-i quanji).\(^3\) At the same time, not all these volumes contain the writings of T'ang Chun-i. These volumes contain not only T'ang's writings but also miscellaneous others.\(^4\)

---


\(^3\) The Complete Works of T'ang Chun-i (hereafter as Complete Works) was published from 1980 to 1990 by the Taiwan xuesheng shuju (Taiwan Students Bookstore 臺灣學生書局) under the chief editorship of T'ang's disciple, Professor Huo Tauhui (霍雛晦). This is the best edition of T'ang's works, better than those that appeared when T'ang was still alive, because everything was proofread and indexes were also provided for at least the principal works.

\(^4\) Volume 29, for example, contains T'ang's biographical data and list of publications (compiled by Professor Tang Duanzheng (唐端正) as well as the writings of T'ang's parents, Tang Difeng (唐迪風 also known as Tang Lang 唐烺) and Tang Chen Zhuoxian (唐陳
In order to define my focus even more sharply, I shall concentrate on the two-volume *Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart*, and what I say will be applicable mainly to this text. The reasons for this decision lie mostly with T’ang’s own opinions regarding his works. On January 15, 1978, that is, just nineteen days before his death, T’ang reviewed all his works and divided them into four categories. He clearly pointed out that *Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart* and *Introduction to Philosophy* (*zhexue gailun* 哲學概論) are "the writings which express my own understanding of the idea of philosophy, and my comments on Chinese and Western philosophy". These two works are the pure philosophical foundations of *The Spiritual Values of Chinese Culture*, the representative work of his middle age. Thus, I believe that one should use them as the principal sources for any study of T’ang’s philosophical thought. It should be noted at the same time that *Introduction to Philosophy* had been completed by 1961, and T’ang’s scholarship developed substantially after that time, as shown by his impressive six-volume *Discussions on the Foundations of Chinese Philosophy*. For this reason, *Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart* is probably the best representative of T’ang’s mature thought and should be viewed as the summation of T’ang’s philosophy. It consists of 1314 pages and consumes seven hundred thousand characters, and is clearly a massive work. The fact that T’ang insisted on proofreading it in spite of his rapidly advancing cancer shows how much value he placed on it. The Chinese language has a term, *xin xue li zuo* (心血卓德 also known as Chen Daren 陳大任). Volume 30, on the other hand, contains a collection of papers written in memory of T’ang after this death.

literally "the labour of mind and blood", which perfectly describes the effort that T'ang put into his final masterpiece. It will, therefore, form the centerpiece of my study, even if I shall refer to data of particular importance from other works of T'ang from time to time.

Before turning to the structure of my dissertation, a word on translation seems necessary. There are no English versions of any of T'ang Chun-i's major works. However, a handful of his articles have been translated into English, especially his contributions to international conferences. While quotations from these will follow the original English translation, the rest of the translations are mine, with the exception of a few adopted from Metzger's *Escape from Predicament* and from Lau Kwok-keung's doctoral dissertation. It is common knowledge, however, that Chinese philosophical terms are at times too rich in meaning to be captured in one term, not to mention the fact that they will defy any attempt at forcing them into a Western framework through careless translation. For such terms I shall merely provide transliterations in the body of my dissertation,

---

76 These have been collected, photocopied and reproduced as Volume 19 of T'ang's collected works, with the title of *Essays on Chinese Philosophy and Culture* (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1988).


and they will be discussed either in the body of the thesis, or in a "A Glossary of Technical Terms", which will form Appendix A of the thesis.

E. Organization of the Dissertation

There are six chapters in the body of this dissertation, the first of which will seek to explain the point of departure for T'ang's system, the concept of human nature. For T'ang, the key element of being a human being is the notion of consciousness of transcendence (chaoyue yishi 超越意識) which I interpret as the dynamic of transformation. Next, T'ang's discussion of the Christian idea of transcendence will be examined in two parts, one devoted to arguments supporting the existence of the realm of transcendence and the other dealing with the content of this realm of transcendence. These will form Chapter Two. Chapters Three and Four will examine the Buddhist and Confucian horizons of transcendence respectively. They will be followed by an exposition of T'ang's system of doctrinal classification in Chapter Five, and the thesis will conclude with an evaluation of T'ang's system in Chapter Six.
Chapter One

The Starting Point: The Consciousness of Transcendence

A. Introduction

In this chapter, we shall deal with the foundations and dynamics of transcendence, the inner force that enables human beings to transcend their existential situation and reach the transcendent dimension. We shall begin with an examination of T'ang's notion of the chaoyue yishi (consciousness of transcendence超越意識). Since it can also be perceived as a self which transcends the existential self, it is also known as the transcendent self (chaoyue ziwo超越自我) which, according to T'ang, is the true, or authentic, self (zhenwo 真我) or simply the moral self (daode ziwo 道德自我). 1 Authenticity must emerge from one's own self, not from pressure, manipulation and incitement.

1 T'ang used many other terms to refer to the consciousness of transcendence such as the moral self, spiritual self, metaphysical self, moral reason, mind-heart, etc. See my discussion later in this chapter. T'ang was not very careful in defining these terms but the central idea of these terms is the ability to transform ourselves and to transcend the existential situation. I also notice that T'ang was inclined to use the word "self" to refer to this foundation of goodness or the dynamics of self-transformation in his earlier years, but the word "consciousness" was used more frequently in his later writings (e.g. Wenhua yishi yu dao de lixing [Cultural Consciousness and Moral Reason文化意識與道德理性]), in The Complete Works of T'ang Chun-i, vol. 20.). I have found no explanation for such a change but I suspect it is because the concept of "self" is difficult to define, especially when one is talking about moral consciousness as a self within another self.
In the following, I shall first examine T'ang's conception of the transcendent consciousness. T'ang's understanding of such a kind of consciousness is related to his notion of human nature, an issue which I will examine after my discussion of the notion of the transcendent consciousness. What is important is that T'ang seems not to be especially concerned about providing a non-evaluative, ontologically neutral analysis. His analysis of the authentic self is, instead, also a search for, or better, a transformation of, our existential selves. The function of philosophical exposition here lies mainly, if not solely, upon rekindling the transformation power of the authentic self. The dynamics of such a process include mainly two inter-related notions: detachment from the existential self; and pursuit of the authentic self. All these involve a process of self-cultivation, the actualization of the chaoyue yishi. Thus, we shall end this chapter with a review of T'ang's ideas of self-cultivation. Four interrelated ideas will be examined. Self-cultivation starts with realization of the need to transcend the existential life. Thus, the idea of self-illumination will be examined first. However, one's acknowledgment of the need to change does not imply one's having the will to opt for it. Thus, the establishment of one's aspiration and will is important in one's self-cultivation. This will be followed by a discussion of the potential threat in one's cultivation; evil. The proper handling of the problem of evil lets us to be more successful in our moral and spiritual pursuit. Such a pursuit actually can be reflected in two interrelated aspects of transformation; self-transformation and the transformation of the world, the issues I will address to conclude this chapter.

B. T'ang's Conception of the Transcendent Consciousness
1. The Epistemological Aspect

Consciousness, for T'ang, cannot be adequately explained by taking an epiphenomenal position, that is, by reducing it to mere biological and neurological structures. It has several levels of meaning and the biological-neurological level is just one among them. For T'ang, consciousness has both subjective and objective sides. It is a response to contact with the external world and is always intentionally directed towards it. T'ang used the idea of gantong (感通) to explain this. Gantong refers to one's ability to feel and know an object or a situation and penetrate it with one's empathetic response. In the framework of gantong, there exists not just an experiencing mind-heart but also the object (world) of experience. This is why, despite the overriding idealism observed in T'ang's system of philosophy, the objective element (world) never loses its place by being reduced to a mere manifestation of the subjective consciousness. Thus, to label T'ang Chun-i as a Hegelian philosopher is at best a partial truth. T'ang's major disagreement with Hegel lies precisely in his preservation of individual

---

2 T'ang also discussed other levels of human consciousness and among them, the moral consciousness and the religious consciousness are more relevant to our present discussion. See his *Wenhua yishih yu daode lixing*, esp. chapters 7 and 8, pp. 462-514 and pp. 515-583 respectively.

3 T'ang's idea of the world is best examined by Lau Kwok-keung. Lau concluded that T'ang asserted "the existence of the material world and the mind." See Lau's *Creativity and Unity*, chapter V, pp. 114-156. Quotation can be found in p. 135.

4 A more detail discussion of the notion of gantong and its relations with the horizons of the mind-heart can be founded in Chapter 2.

identity. That is to say, for him individual consciousness is not merely a part of the Absolute, but has its own identity. However, it is also wrong to view our consciousness as a self-contained entity, since it is always a consciousness of something, and it should not be seen as a closed monad as Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) suggested. Rather, it is a bridge which links our mind and the external world. Such an understanding of our consciousness reveals the epistemological relationship between human minds and the external world. It points to the cognitive structure of our consciousness. I term this as the epistemological aspect of the consciousness.

2. The Axiological Aspect

T'ang's even-handedness towards the subjective and objective aspects of human consciousness does not represent the whole picture, because when he talked about moral, or transcendent, consciousness, he concentrated on the subjective realm, the inner structure of our consciousness instead of the world which is presented to human cognition. The question of the relation between the mind and its surrounding world is thus suspended and one's attention is directed solely to consciousness itself. In this sense, what T'ang was talking about was actually self-consciousness, which can be called pure consciousness, in the sense that it

6 T'ang's discussion of Leibniz can be found in his Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-heart, vol. 2, pp. 53-60.

is devoid of the external world. One may wonder how such a concept of consciousness without an object (e.g. world), reconciles with the notion that consciousness is always the consciousness of something. However, this is not a meaningful question. The epistemological structure of consciousness remains unchanged. The main difference is that the object of the consciousness has shifted from the external world to the immanent world of the subject. In fact, even when we talk about the external world within the epistemological structure of the consciousness, we are always referring to the external world as experienced and grasped by the knowing subject instead of the external world as such. Such a consciousness is a reflective consciousness.

In such a reflective endeavor, consciousness splits into two modes: the consciousness as a knowing subject and the consciousness as an observed object. In this process, the perceiving mode of our consciousness treats our own consciousness as an object under observation. In this sense, it no longer attaches to the consciousness under observation and thus can be said to have transcended the existing mode of our consciousness and has entered a reflective order. This is a reflection on the activity of our consciousness and such a kind of reflective activity can go on in like manner. That is to say we can also reflect upon our reflection. In T'ang's words, it is the "activities of reflection upon reflection" (juejuezhihuodong 覺覺之活動).\(^8\) One of the key characteristics of this kind of activities is that one is able to transcend the existing mode of consciousness. For this reason, I term this

---

aspect of our consciousness as the transcendent aspect of our consciousness. However, it is important to note that this transcendent aspect of our consciousness is not limited to the epistemological function of reflecting upon and knowing itself, but also generates dynamics to transform the present mode of existence of an individual.

Thus, the transcendent aspect also refers to the function of self-transformation, which enables one to transcend one's original limits and become a better person in a moral sense. It is here that one can most easily detect the Confucian in T'ang. Unlike other philosophers, who stop at describing the epistemological structure of our consciousness, T'ang pointed to an axiological aspect, its moral dynamics which enable one to move from the existential stage to a higher, moral, stage of existence. Such a transcendent consciousness is not a mere knowing faculty but also a transformative inner force. In traditional Confucian terminology, it is the conscience (liangzhi良知), or the original mind-heart (benxin本心).

---

9 The notion of liangzhi can be traced at least back to Mencius in the Confucian tradition, and is the central concept of Wang Yangming's (1472-1529) philosophy. Liangzhi is very rich in meanings and Professor Julia Ching has especially reminded us the danger of translating liangzhi in any one way such as "innate knowledge" or "innate moral intuition." While careful consideration should be paid to render Chinese philosophical terms, and very often transliterations should be preferred, it is the author's intention to avoid as many transliterations as possible. Thus, liangzhi is rendered here as "conscience" though it is a far from satisfactory translation. However, I must also remind the reader to bear in mind that "conscience" in this dissertation refers to the Chinese term, liangzhi, and should be understood in the context of Chinese philosophy. Julia Ching has provided a very useful interpretation of the concept: "it is that in man which enables him to discern between right and wrong, an inborn capacity to know and do the good, a capacity to be developed as well as a goal to be attained, since the perfect development of liang-chih signifies sagehood." She also pointed out that liang-chih
Two questions have to be addressed here. 1) Why does the cognitive aspect of consciousness relate to the transformative aspect? 2) What is meant by the original goodness of our pure consciousness?

Let us turn to the first question. T'ang asserted the attainability of the knowledge of the true self. Even if one is illiterate, s/he is able to know and become an authentic human being. In fact, we are not free to decide if we want to attain the knowledge of our self or not. For T'ang, one necessarily possesses a certain degree of such knowledge; in other words, the ability to know oneself and be oneself are both intrinsic to human beings.

What is more important, however, is that knowing the true self is not equal to knowledge of an external object. The latter may allow us to set apart the knowing subject and the object under observation and, crucially, isolate the former from any resultant influences. Thus, for example, one's knowledge of a car may not change one's personality. However, in a process of self-

---


10 T'ang also refered it as the xinzhi benti (心之本體). See T'ang, Moral Self, pp. 101-110. However, T'ang usually used “xinzhi benti” to refer to the liangzhi of many individuals instead of one single individual.

11 This is in line with the Neo-Confucian thought of Lu Xiang-shan. T'ang expressed this idea in many of his works. See his “Rendi xuewen yu rendi cuncai” in Zhonghua renwen yu Dangjiin shijie [Chinese Humanities and Contemporary World 中華人文與當今世界] (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1988), vol. 1, in The Complete Works of T'ang Chun-i, vol. 7, pp. 77-121.
understanding, not only are subject and object not apart, the process of being and knowing are one as well. A knowledge of who one is is actually a force which turns one towards a true self, and eventually transforms one into a better human being.\textsuperscript{12} In fact, there is no opportunity for us to wipe out this knowledge. One can ignore it for a while, but it will come back from time to time as the "call" of our conscience. This knowledge is capable of shaping the existential self into a true self or authentic self. This is a ceaseless process of transformation through which humanity is fully and concretely realized. In sum, the knowledge of the object, in this case ourselves, shapes and affects its subjects, which is why such self-knowledge is transformative knowledge. Such a transformative knowledge is a fundamental dynamic which calls not only for acknowledgment of the true self but also for detachment from the existential self. Thus, the cognitive aspect and the transformative aspect of the transcendent consciousness are simultaneous; we can even say that they belongs to a single continuum.

This points to another important aspect of T'ang's notion of the transcendent consciousness. The essence of the transcendent consciousness is not shaped by \textit{a posteriori} experience, let alone nourished by the external world. It is the "original" mind-heart, that is to say it is \textit{a priori} and innately good. This is exactly the issue of human nature in the Mencian tradition and the question I posted above which I must answer now.

\textbf{C. T'ang's Notion of Human Nature}

\textsuperscript{12} T'ang, \textit{Zhonghua renwen yu dangjin shijie}, vol. 1, pp. 91-93.
1. The Moral Self and Existential Self

The debate on human nature is an ancient one, dating as far back as the pre-Qin period (pre-221 B.C.). In fact, even as late as the T’ang dynasty (唐代618-907), there was not a single predominant notion of human nature. For example, the famous T’ang literary figure and Confucian, Han Yu (韓愈 768-824), criticized Mencius’s idea of human nature, which became orthodox with the rise of Neo-Confucianism during the Song Dynasty period (宋代 960-1279).

Following Neo-Confucianism, T’ang Chun-i centered his philosophical system on the notion of human nature. He believed that human nature is innately good and called the essence of human nature the daode ziwo (道德自我) which can be translated as the moral self. However, T’ang used different terms for it in different contexts: the chaoyue ziwo (超越自我 transcendent self), the jingshen ziwo (精神自我 spiritual self), the daode lixing (道德理性 moral reason), and the xingshang ziwo (形上自我 metaphysical self). He wrote,

13 Han Yu’s idea can best be found in his “An Inquiry on Human Nature”. See Chan, Wing-tsit, comp. and trans., A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy, pp.451-454. Han wrote, “In discussing human nature, Mencius said, ‘Man’s nature is good.’... (This) is to mention only the medium grade and leave the superior and inferior grades out of account and to take care of one case but to lose sight of the other two.” Quotation in p. 452.

14 Regarding discussions on the rise of Mencius, see Huang Junjie’s The Rise of Mencius (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Washington, 1978).
By *lixing* (理行), we mean the nature or the faculty (*xing*) of manifesting and following the Principle (*xianli shunli* 顯行順理). We can also say that the Principle is that faculty. Reason is what Chinese Confucians termed as *xingli* (性理), that is, what we call our "moral self", "spiritual self", or the essence or subsistence that constitute the moral self, the spiritual self, or the transcendent self.¹⁶

It should be noted that T'ang pointed to the fact that *lixing* is the ability to manifest as well as to follow. The character *shun* (順) can mean *shuncong* (順從) "be obedient to", *shunying* (順應) "comply with", or *shundao* (順導) "guide along its proper course". Thus, *shunli* (順理) means to follow the reason or to follow the principle.

It is obvious that T'ang's argument is heavily influenced by the so-called School of Mind (心學) or the School of Lu-Wang (陸王學派), a school of Neo-Confucianism named after its alleged founder, Lu Xiangshan (陸象山 1139-1193), and its best-known thinker, Wang Yangming (王陽明 1472-1529). Following the Lu-Wang School, T'ang saw the mind, or better the moral mind, as identical with that of the Principle. Thus, to say that the moral self shows or follows the Principle is not to mean that one has to follow any

---

¹⁵ The character *xing* is rich in meaning and it is difficult to maintain consistency in rendering the term. I translated it here as "faculty" because T'ang emphasises the innate knowing capacity of humans. For some other meanings of *xing* in the Confucian tradition, see Appendix A.

¹⁶ "吾人所謂理性，即能顯理順理之性，亦可說理即性。理性即中國儒家所謂性理，即吾人之道德自我、精神自我、或超越自我之所以為道德自我精神自我、或超越自我之本質或自體。" in T'ang, *Wenhua yishi yu dao de lixing*, p. 19.
norm which is imposed upon or learned from without. Rather, it is the manifestation of the moral self or one's innate goodness within. Thus, to follow the Principle is not to conform oneself to external rule or social norms but to follow the "call" of one's own conscience.

However, for the so-called the School of Cheng-Zhu (程朱学派), which was named after the founders, the Cheng brothers\textsuperscript{17} and Zhu Xi (朱熹1130-1200),\textsuperscript{18} the Principle is not identical with the mind. According to this school, the relation between the mind and the Principle is best summarized by Zhu Xi's famous maxim, \textit{bujibuli} （不即不離） which can be translated as "not identical, [but] not separate [either]." Such a view is drastically different from seeing the moral mind and the principle as one and the same thing.

T'ang did not naively believe that everyone in reality is morally perfect. He contrasted the notion of the moral self with that of the existential self. This is certainly in line with the tradition of the Book of History\textsuperscript{19} which differentiates the moral mind (\textit{daoxin} 道心) from the human mind (\textit{renxin} 人心).\textsuperscript{20} However, instead of viewing the moral self and the existential self as

\textsuperscript{17} Cheng Hao (程颢 also called Cheng Wingdao程明道, 1032-1085) and Cheng Yi (程頤 also called Cheng Yichuan程伊川, 1033-1107).

\textsuperscript{18} It is also known as the School of the Principle (\textit{lixuepai} 理学派).

\textsuperscript{19} The \textit{locus classicus} of this pair is the \textit{Shujing}, which says that "the jen-hsin is precarious; the tao-hsin is subtle. Remain refined and single-minded. Hold fast to the Mean." See J. Legge, trans. vol.3 p.61.

two separate entities, T'ang regarded the latter as the fallen stage of the former. The use of the two terms is only to suggest two stages of the same self/mind, not two independent entities. Both stages are realities of human experience which belong to the one human nature.

For T'ang, the existential self is not a true self. The moral self alone is the true self. Why? Because the existential self is a self which presents itself here and now. In other words, it presents itself within a temporal and spatial framework and is a physical self. In it, everything is changing and nothing is eternal. And, for T'ang, if a thing is ever-changing, it is illusory and therefore, unreal. For one thing, then, the existential self exists in time, an ever-changing sequence where one can find nothing permanent. Naturally, such a self can only be illusory and untrue. In contrast, the moral self is a self which transcends temporal limitation and thus is real. For another, the existential self presents itself in a spatial framework and since anything that exists in a spatial framework is particular, the existential self cannot be universal and thus is not real.

Therefore, T'ang thought that such a self which exists in the empirical world can never be real. As he wrote in his The Establishment of the Moral Self,

When I go to the graveyard, I think about those lying inside the tombs. They used to be lovely children or healthy youngsters. When I see lovely children and healthy youngsters, I think about their eventual scatter among the graves in
the fields.....Time is cruel. Everything is illusion and all must return to extinction.\textsuperscript{21}

However, even if we believe that the existential self is unreal, there still remains a question waiting to be answered: how to prove the moral self as real? According to T'ang, the moral self is trans-temporal. It is trans-temporal not because it is eternal but because one can always link the past and the future by remembering the former and imagining the latter. In this way, one can be said to be able to break the limitations of time. Secondly, the existential self is also a physical self which occupies a particular space. Since anything that exists in a particular space can only be a finite being, the physical self cannot be a universal existence. Unlike the physical self which can only exist in a particular space, the mind can speculate about visiting anywhere and thus, for T'ang, has no spatial limitation. Therefore, T'ang believed that the moral self is bound by neither space nor time. It is in this particular sense that one can say that the moral self enjoys a trans-temporal-spatial existence, which is why it is a true self.

Although T'ang's arguments are loose and inconclusive, they do reflect his own understanding and use, of the term, \textit{zhen} (真), which can be rendered as true, authentic, or real\textsuperscript{22}. For T'ang, a self is \textit{zhen} if and only if it is not bound by space and time. T'ang's arguments, despite their naivete, do reveal his criteria of an authentic self or a true self (\textit{zhenwo}真我): (1) It must

\textsuperscript{21} T'ang, \textit{Moral Self}, p. 99.

\textsuperscript{22} I use these three different translations of \textit{“zhen”} interchangeably in this dissertation.
be permanent, and (2) it must be universal. I think the reason for T'ang to establish a self or consciousness which is free from the limitations of space and time is that he wanted to establish the "transcendental" character of morality. By transcendental, we mean universal and necessary. That is to say, moral commands, on the one hand, do not discriminate between the individuals they bind. They apply to all, and thus is universal. On the other hand, they allow neither exceptions nor alternatives, and thus are necessary. 

T'ang also applied his criteria for the moral, or true, self to his judgment of an "authentic life" (zhenshi rensheng 真實人生) or a "moral life" (daode rensheng 道德人生). An authentic life for him is a life dedicated to the pursuit of virtue, and it contrasts with a life devoted to pleasure, wealth and fame, which can be anything but authentic. I termed this latter kind of life a materialistic life (wuzhi rensheng 物質人生).

What is wrong with a materialistic life? First, the attainment of material ends relies heavily upon external circumstances, which are almost wholly beyond one's control. No one can be secure of his/her possessions. Satisfaction will be short-lived. Note, however, that T'ang did not actually

23 This reveals a particular position in moral philosophies, that is, the Kantian understanding of "transcendental." A brief but authoritative introduction to I. Kant may be found in Paul Guyer ed., The Cambridge Companion to Kant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). See also Roger Sullivan, An Introduction to Kant's Ethics (Cambridge University Press, 1994).
oppose material possessions. Rather, he admitted that they are important and even necessary for realizing some of our moral actions. After all, a moral achievement such as building a school - something close to T'ang's heart - requires not only a morally good intention but also material things (such as financial support). Having said that, for T'ang, it is not right to have a materialistic mentality or in T'ang's words, "be attached to material things (xianni yuwu 陥溺於物)."

An authentic life or a moral life is a life of autonomy, where one can be the master of oneself. A materialist mentality dehumanizes us, for it always makes us the slaves of material possessions never their masters. After all, it is difficult for us to command pleasure, wealth, or fame, which depends mostly, if not totally, on external circumstances. But we have a better command of our own hopes and fears, our desires and aversions which are within us. T'ang did not think that all desires are bad and should be condemned. Neither did he believe that pleasure, wealth, and fame are all intrinsically evil. He realized that in order to carry out noble plans, material possessions can be very helpful. The important thing is to make sure that one has the right intention. Thus, one cannot refuse the reputation resulting from a good deed. But the same deed could never be counted as moral if


had been done for the sake of achieving a good reputation. This again points to the question of the purity of our heart-and-mind.

2. The Essence of Human Nature: the *benxin benxing*

Given the assertion of what is the real self, T'ang went on to explain what is the essence of the real self, the moral mind. For T'ang, the real essence is the innate goodness of human nature. He even asserted that the moral self is the *benxinbenxing* (本心本性), which can be literally translated as "the original heart-and-mind," and "original nature." To put it in a simplistic way, the characters *xin* (心) and *xing* (性) refer to human nature, while the character *ben* is an adjective which means not only "original" but something more. It means "originally good" in the sense Mencius understood the nature of human being. ²⁸

In this regard, T'ang was following closely in the footsteps of Mencius and Wang Yang-ming. Mencius has always been recognized as an important source of inspiration in Neo-Confucian teaching, which asserted that human nature is innately good, because human beings possess the so-called *siduan* (Four Indications, 四端), which include the heart of compassion, the heart of

²⁸ T'ang followed closely Mencius in seeing morality as a full realization of the *hsing* (nature) of human beings, which is inborn and is indicated by moral inclination of the *xin* (mind/heart). However, the meanings of the *xin* and the *xing* are very complex and include, among others, spiritual, moral, cosmological, anthropological and ontological implications. For a brief exposition of the meaning of *xin*, see Julia Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, p.267 and pp.55-61.

shame, the heart of dutifulness (the heart of courtesy and modesty), the heart of observance of the rites, and the heart of right and wrong (the heart of wisdom). These Four Indications correspond to the four Confucian "cardinal virtues" of (ren仁), dutifulness (yi義), observance of the rites (li禮), wisdom (zhi智). And since all are rooted in one's mind-and-heart, the nature of such a mind-and-heart must be good, and from them follows the doctrine of the innate goodness of human nature.

Mencius used the character duan (端) in the sense of duanni (端倪) or duanxu (端緒). Here, duan refers to "indications" of the presence or the "beginnings" kaiduan (開端) of the unfolding of conscience. To use a metaphor, duan is a piece of ice protruding above the sea: it indicates the presence of an iceberg, it is part of the iceberg but it is not the whole iceberg. Similarly, the siduan "indicate" the presence of conscience, or the starting points, kaiduan, of the disclosure of conscience. There is no doubt that the Chinese character duan denotes the sense of a beginning of a process of change. But we must emphasize that this process of change is not qualitative, in the sense of a change from evil nature to good nature. Human beings have, from the beginning, only one nature: good. Our conscience has always been there. We just somehow become indifferent or deaf to its admonitions. When we speak of moral cultivation, therefore, we mean essentially a return to what we truly are. For T'ang, this begins with the reaffirmation of our belief in the innate goodness of human nature, the foundation without which moral cultivation is impossible. T'ang wrote:

30 Mencius. 2A.6.

31 Mencius. 6A.6.
We must believe in the goodness of human nature. Only then can goodness be cultivated without ceasing. We must [first] believe in the goodness of human nature, then we understand the nobility and the dignity of human beings, and gain devout reverence towards them. We must believe in the goodness of human nature, then we can have confidence in the bright future of humanity. We must [first] believe in the goodness of human nature, then believe in humanity's unceasing realization of all the goodness that human nature possesses, thus making the present world better, more and more perfect, and precious.32

This, of course, is more a wish than an argument. From it, we can easily discern an important religious element; faith. Even if there is disagreement over the line between religion and philosophy, it is commonly agreed that faith belongs more if not solely to the realm of religion, while reason is the cornerstone of philosophy. T'ang said,

However, the Confucian must, at the very outset, positively and enthusiastically affirm the sublimity and existence of moral value, and the possibility of the existence of Sages... All these beliefs can directly be rooted and nurtured in the human mind/heart. They need not undergo rational and

32「我們必需相信人性是善，然後人之不斷發展其善才可可能。我們必需相信人性是善，然後了解人類之崇高與尊嚴，而後對人類有虔敬之情。我們必需相信人性是善，然後我們對於人類之前途之光明有信心。我們必需相信人性是善，然後相信人類不斷的實踐其性中所具之善，而使現實宇宙改善，使現實宇宙日趨於完滿可貴。」 See T'ang, Moral Self, p. 153.
philosophical justification. They are simply beliefs that arise by themselves.\textsuperscript{33}

If we agree with the use of the words "philosophy" and "religion," in the above senses, then it is clear that at least one important religious element, faith, is present in T'ang's thought.

D. Self-cultivation

It is easy to criticize the previous statements as ignoring the role of the external environment in the formation of the mind-heart. Studies in developmental psychology show clearly that the interaction with the external world is important for the growth of the human mind. However, T'ang would certainly agree with this view without finding any possible conflict with his belief in the original goodness of human nature. To say that there "is" a moral consciousness (or moral self) is a matter of ontology. That is to say, we are asking (1) if there exists a moral self or not; and (2) if there is a self, if it is innately good or not. It may have nothing to do with the question of cultivation and growth. Indeed, an innately good moral self still needs cultivation. This is the issue which we must now examine.

1. Self-awakening and Self-illumination

\textsuperscript{33}「然儒家則必須於開始點，即正面的積極的肯定道德價值之莊嚴性與其存在性，正面的積極的肯定聖賢之存在為可能……。此種信仰，可直接根植於人心，而在人心中自己生長，亦非必須通過哲學的理性之印證，而只為一自發的信仰。」See T'ang, "The Establishment of Confucian Teaching and Religion and the Ending of Religious Competition" (儒家之學與教之樹立及宗教紛爭之根絕), in T'ang, Zhonghua renwen yu dangqian shijie (Chinese Humanities and Contemporary World中華人文與當今世界), vol. 2., in The Complete Works of T'ang Chun-i, vol. 8, p. 75.

52
T'ang saw our inner moral life as a constant struggle between the "moral self" and the "existential self". He believed that the dialectical interplay of good and evil must be understood if we are to understand human nature. Human beings are usually reluctant to acknowledge the commands of the moral self within themselves. Rather, they are inclined to act according to the drives of the existential selves which seem to promise pleasure and promote self-interest, if not in the long run, then at least in the present moment. That is why self-cultivation is important for success in our spiritual pursuit. T'ang pointed out one of the most important notions of cultivation, the so-called *yinian zjue* (一念自覚), which literally means, "moment of self-realization".

......from a single moment, one can open a world of moral existence. A turn and one can recreate a totally new life. In a moment of self-realization, one comprehends/apprehends the totality of all moral value and the inexhaustible moral meaning. In a moment of self-realization, one grasps the wisdom of all morality.

If one day, in a moment of self-realization, you realize your transcendent self or the original nature of your mind-heart... then the unfolding of your moral life should have a boundless future -- that is, you should have absolute self-confidence.

On these matters, we will have no further discussion. We can only appeal to your deep intuition and enlightened vision resulting from your efforts/practice. They are more profound and lasting than what all languages can attain.\(^\text{34}\)

\(^{34}\) "......從當下一念可開劈出道德生活之世界，當下一念之翻轉，便再造一嶄新之人生。當下一念之自覺，含攝一切道德價值之全體，含攝無盡之道德意義，當下一念之自覺，含攝一切道德之智慧。如果由你當下一念之自覺，一朝真了悟到你之超越自我或你之心之本體，即一切道德價值之全體之本原所在，你對你之道德生活之發展，必可日進無疆，即有一絕對的自信。"
T'ang also pointed out that,

The great wisdom which moves the universe [meaning: a complete change of mindset] is nothing but this moment of self-realization. If we truly have such self-realization, we can by ourselves find answers to doubts and difficulties within us through self-reflection. Everything I mentioned above is not meant to tell others [what to do]. All I have said is meant only to inspire others to pursue self-realization and self-understanding.35

Yinian zijue, therefore, is a kind of self-awakening that marks a fundamental choice for the pursuit of goodness. In this context, the Chinese characters zijue are significant. Jue can mean two things: juezhi (覺知) and juexing (覺醒). The former can be translated as "being conscious/aware of", which has a cognitive connotation; literally, the latter means "to awaken from," which has an axiological meaning. I think T'ang meant both. Juezhi suggests that one is aware of the existential situation and the moral direction to follow. Juexing suggests not only that one has awakened from the slumber of ignorance; it also implies the capability to detach and transcend the existential situation. These two interrelated dimensions echo the above-mentioned structures of our consciousness.

Zi is significant because it emphasizes the fact that the process of awakening is a self-driven effort. It is self-driven in the sense that no external


agency, such as "God" or "gods", is involved. For T'ang, the inner self is a self-correcting, self-directing faculty capable of generating the inner dynamic of moral transcendence. 36

This points to the very nature of the moral self as a self-generating and self-energizing moral faculty. We might also call it "conscience." This might manifest itself as self-reproach, or self-restraint. No matter what, it is a kind of regulating force which moves one towards a morally right direction.

2. To Establish One's Aspiration

For T'ang, one of the most important directions, or the starting point of cultivation, is to lizhi (立志).37 This term, lizhi, is a verb that has several levels of meaning. First, etymologically speaking, the character zhi (志) means the direction or goal of one's mind-heart (心之所之). It should not be confused with the will in a psychological sense for zhi has an axiological connotation while the will in a psychological sense does not. In other words, zhi has to be either good or bad, right or wrong, and so on.

36 Scholars have suggested the creative power of the self in the Confucian tradition. However, the word "create" might suggest a certain sense of bringing into being from nothingness. Therefore, I think it is better to use self-correcting and self-directing instead.

37 See T'ang, Rensheng zhi tiyan xubian, ch. 4, pp. 75-95.
To *li*zhi means, literally, to establish one's aspiration and will.\(^\text{38}\) It refers to a personal commitment and, in particular, the setting of one's mind towards moral and spiritual pursuit. This is a fundamental choice regarding what one ought to be as a human being, and involves refusing any form of temptation for pleasure which would dehumanize oneself. Mencius' contrast between human beings and beasts is one of the most frequently quoted metaphors in the Neo-Confucian tradition. In a sense, to learn to establish one's aspiration is to learn for the sake of oneself.\(^\text{39}\) Thus, the establishing of one's aspiration is a fundamental choice to fulfill oneself, to complete oneself, or better to authenticate oneself.

But *li*zhi also has another level of meaning. Since it is a personal commitment which aims at transforming oneself, it has to be done by one's own effort. In this sense, *zhi* has to be individualistic. This characteristic of *zhi* is especially unique if we compare it with an ideal. First, the concept of *zhi* differed from the meaning of an ideal (\textit{li*xiang\textsuperscript{39}}) since, for \textit{T'ang}, an ideal is something external to strive for while *zhi* come from the "calls" from within.\(^\text{40}\) \textit{T'ang} wrote, "*zhi* is a real existence within myself, and it comes out profoundly from one mind-and-heart."\(^\text{41}\) Therefore, we can ask others to fulfill our ideals, if we discontinue our pursuit for different reasons (e.g. death). However, in the realization of one's *zhi*, which is inseparable from one's own inner life, only one's own self can help. There follows the second


\(^{39}\) \textit{Analects}, XIV: 24.

\(^{40}\) \textit{T'ang}, *Rensheng zhi tiyan xubian*, pp. 79-80.

\(^{41}\) 「志乃內在於我之實際存在，而由深心發出者。」\textit{T'ang}, *Rensheng zhi tiyan xubian*, p. 81.
difference between zhi and ideal. An ideal can be an object presented to a cognitive mind, and thus can be conceptualized as a universal. But zhi must be particular, for it arises from and targets one's individual inner life. T'ang termed this characteristic as the uniqueness (dutexing 獨特性) and irreplaceability (burong tidaixing 不容替代性) of zhi. No matter how we are going to term it, the individualistic character is clear. After all, Confucianism, especially Neo-Confucianism, is well-known for its emphasis on the aspect of learning for one's own sake.

However, we should be careful not to confuse this with individualism. A clarification on this issue leads us to a better understanding of T'ang's notion of transcendence. Professor Wei-ming Tu is certainly right in reminding us that one's learning for the sake of oneself should not be mistaken as a quest for one's individuality. According to such an understanding of human nature, the ultimate foundation of one's moral perfection lies in the very innate structure of being human, i.e. the conscience. Human beings are capable of becoming what they ought to be solely through the process of transformation. No external agency plays

42 T'ang, Rensheng zhi tiyan xubian, p. 80.

43 The works of W. T. de Bary and Tu Wei-ming, in particular, have contributed much to the exploration of this aspect. See de Bary's Learning for One's Self (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1991) and The Liberal Tradition in China (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1983). In true Confucian tradition, therefore, "learning for one's own sake" does not suggest that the pursuit of knowledge be directed solely to pure pleasure.

44 Tu writes, "Self, in the classical Confucian sense, referred to a center of relationships, a communal quality which was never conceived of as an isolated or isolable entity." See his "A Confucian Perspective on Learning to be Human," in his Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation (Albany: SUNY, 1985), p.53.
any role in such a process. Thus, it is a process of self-transformation or in traditional Chinese philosophical terminology, self-illumination (ziming自明).

Self-transformation can be seen as an unceasing process of self-appropriation. We adjust our existential selves to follow the command of our consciences instead of blindly following external social norms or divine laws. If one is to liken our life situation to living in complete darkness, we might say that the light comes not from sources without but from the rekindling of the candle which we always possess within but usually forget about. The thought that our selves are the sole source to rely upon is comparable to Wang Yang-ming's assertion of the "self-sufficiency of our human nature(吾性自足)." The main reason why we are capable of self-illumination lies precisely in the innate goodness of human nature. According to such an understanding of self-illumination, moral cultivation, in an ultimate sense, aims not at the acquisition of something new from without but at self-discovery from within. Thus, to discuss ways of moral cultivation in terms of internalization is not in concordance with the main current of Confucianism.

3. The Origin of Evil

The need for cultivation is another way of recognizing the existence of evil, and a comprehensive analysis of T'ang's idea of humanity requires an exposition of it. T'ang was well aware of the fallibility of human beings and the possibility that even the best of us would lapse into moral weakness. In fact, he was perhaps the only one among the various contemporary Neo-Confucian philosophers who paid the most attention to the problem of evil. He was also clear about the fact that our moral motivation can easily turn impure when it becomes partly sustained by
prudential interests. However, he did not see this as indication of the fact that a person is morally evil. Rather he saw it as a lack of virtue.

Indeed, T'ang's explanation of the existence of evil is a continuation of the school of Lu-Wang which is based mainly on Mencius. Mencius\textsuperscript{45} believed in the original goodness of human nature and maintained that evil results from a loss of one's original nature, that is, conscience. Following Mencius, T'ang also used the concept of \textit{xianni} (陷溺) which is composed with two Chinese characters that may be translated respectively as "capitulate to" and "obsessed with." T'ang wrote,

\begin{quote}
Why do human beings have evil [in them]? Where does evil come from? We say: Evil originated from the moment of human being's fall. The moment one becomes obsessed with the good taste of food and drink, he/she continues to seek good taste, thus becoming a glutton. The moment one becomes obsessed with sexual pleasure, he/she becomes a lascivious person. The moment one becomes obsessed with the praise and approval of others, he/she becomes hungry for fame and power. With obsessive desires, one proceeds to chase insatiably after external things and fight with others for wealth, sex, fame, and power.\textsuperscript{46}
\end{quote}

If one chases constantly after materialistic ends, all that matters is one's desires. If anyone stands between one and one's desires, one will always be

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Mencius}, 6A:7.

\textsuperscript{46} 「為甚麼人有罪惡？罪惡自何來？我們說：罪惡自人心一念陷溺而來。一念陷溺於飲食之美味，使人繼續求美味，成為貪食的饕餮者。一念陷溺於男女之欲，使人成為貪色的淫蕩者。一念陷溺於得人贊成之時矜喜，使人成為貪名貪權。由貪欲而不斷貪求外物，而與人爭貨、爭色、爭名、爭權。」T'ang, \textit{Moral Self}, p.155.
prepared to sacrifice other human beings to materialistic ends, because they are now more highly valued than other human beings. This kind of attitude naturally results in one's being indifferent to, separate from, and unconcerned with others. And this, in turn, results in not acknowledging the value of human beings as persons. One thus shows no compassion or respect for anything that hinders him in achieving his materialistic ends. However, a person who has no true respect and love for others will eventually lose respect for his own value as well. In other words, he will dehumanize himself as well as other human beings.

A true humanity is necessarily a humanity which stands against any tendency of dehumanization. A true human can stand with a strong moral will against any temptation. One of the real challenges is vice, i.e., a moral failing or an immoral habit. Vice is a result of embracing self-love as one's absolute principle, adopting the disposition to transgress the command of one's conscience whenever it conflicts with the possibility of pleasures one wants. We normally resist the disclosure of the true meaning of our authentic mode of being, ren (仁). The choice of our existence, or better, our freedom, is fundamental to the authenticity of human existence. To borrow the existentialist's terms, one can say that the fundamental ontological characteristics of everyday beings are existentiality and facticity. We engage in idle talk, where we enter the given view of the world entertained by others. This is a state of inauthentic being, since our own innermost potential for being human is hidden from us. By turning away from our true self, we commit evildoings and experience anxiety. Our conscience keeps on telling us the truth and blaming us for our wrongdoings with an aim of transforming us into a better person. The attempts to control or to eliminate evils and have a better hold of our lives are the process of self-transformation.
4. Self-transformation

Indeed, our greatest potential is to be free to take hold of our lives and choose who we are. Our potential unfolds itself in life so that we are oriented to what we can become: ren, a true human being. To realize our potential we must also become absorbed in concern for the world. We have concern for our fellow human beings and in turn we care about our "brothers and sisters within the four seas," and love all beings under Heaven. T'ang lamented that people submerge themselves into materialistic waves and lose their true selves. He labeled those who care for no one but themselves as selfish. Thus, an important part of cultivation is to train one's will to follow the command of one's conscience. That is to say, to let our conscience be the master of our selves. However, to become human is not merely an individual matter, it has a social dimension as well. Such an incorporation of a social dimension is perhaps best illustrated in the Confucian notion of learning.

Learning (xue 學) here means learning to be human, and this understanding is self-understanding. That is why it is called the learning of being human (renxue 人學)⁴⁷. The common sense of learning is based on acquiring knowledge from

⁴⁷ Tu Wei-ming has rightly pointed out that the Confucian proposition that human beings are perfectible is based on, in his terms, two interrelated ideas, the ontological postulate and the experiential assertion: “(1) The uniqueness of being human is an ethico-religious question which cannot be properly answered if it is reduced to biological, psychological or sociological considerations; and (2) the actual process of self-development, far from being a quest for pure morality or spirituality, necessarily involves the biological, psychological and sociological realities of human life.” See Tu, “The ‘Moral Universal’ from the Prespectives of East Asian Thought”, in Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation, p.19.
without. Our attention is directed externally. However, learning to become an authentic human being brings our attention to an inner pursuit. This is mainly a matter of developing one's own self but, more importantly, it is not limited to one's self alone. Indeed, T'ang's philosophy is ultimately based on an intuition of the circumstances of the human condition, humanity itself and its relation to the world. It is a kind of auto-archeological process which digs deeply to uncover a person's true self. However, for T'ang, it is not just a deepening process, it is also a broadening process.\footnote{Tu, Wei-ming uses the words "deepening" and "broadening" to describe the philosophy of the Great Learning. See his "The Confucian Sage: Exemplar of Personal Knowledge", in his Way, Learning and Politics: Essays on the Confucian Intellectual (Albany: SUNY, 1993), pp. 29-44.} It concerns not merely one's own benefit, moral or spiritual, but also the well-being of others. This contributes to the social dimension of becoming human. This kind of view is a continuation of the tradition of the Great Learning.

The perfection of oneself is not only a process of fulfilling one's self (chengji 成己); it is, for T'ang, also a process of fulfilling others (chengren成人), and the things (chengwu 成物).\footnote{T'ang, Rensheng zhi tiyan xubian, p. 127.} This is based on the assumption that the separation between one's own self and the selves of others is artificial and illusive, indeed impossible, for the mind which draws the dividing line is a mind aware of both the realm of one's own and that of the other. One must be able to see both oneself and others before one can separate the two. This primordial oneness of the self
and all others is the foundation for any possible separation which follows. This can be understood as the nature of mind-heart which never envelops itself in itself but remains open to all others.50

To sum up, the transformation of one's own self and concern for the transformation of the selves of others both point to detachment from the existential self. That is to say that it transcends not only the existential self but also the existential situation which causes present suffering. Such a transcending process points to a better way of life, or a higher stage of existence. This is what T’ang called "the horizon of transcendence", an issue we shall deal with in the next three chapters.

Chapter Two: Christianity and Transcendence

A. Introduction

T'ang believed that the existence of the 'dimension of transcendence' or, as he called it, the 'trans-subjectivity/objectivity horizon' (chaozhukeijing 超主客境) can in some sense be proven by rational arguments. In this chapter, we shall focus upon two such arguments he put forward, namely, the ontological and the moral. Then, we shall deal with the nature of the transcendent dimension in the Seventh Horizon, the horizon of Christianity. We shall leave our discussions of T'ang's ideas of the transcendent dimension as reflected in his discussion of Buddhism and Confucianism to the next two chapters.

Before we proceed, however, we must first delineate the dimension of transcendence or the chaoyuejie (超越界) which, as presented in T'ang's works, is a highly complex entity. In his Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart, T'ang placed it in the highest place in his comprehensive philosophical system, the so-called "Theory of Nine Horizons of Mind-Heart" (xinling jiujiuling伦心靈九境論). It is, therefore, useful to begin with a brief introduction to his system of horizons as a whole, before discussing the position of his realm of transcendence within it.

B. The System of the Nine-horizons of the Mind-Heart
In *Life, Existence and The Horizons of the Mind-Heart*, Tang talked about the 'Nine Horizons of the Mind-Heart', grouped into three separate categories. How do these horizons come about? For Tang, the human mind-heart is capable of *gantong* (感通), that is, feeling and knowing an object or a situation and penetrating it with one's empathetic response.\(^1\) Such a *gantong* process constitutes a certain direction, for the mind-heart has to reach out to the object or the situation with which it is in contact. Tang prefers to think in spatial terms, and concludes that the activities of our mind-heart, though complicated, can be grouped under three directions.\(^2\) The first is moving "from back to front" or "front to back," the second is moving "from inside to outside or vice versa," and the last one is "ascending from below to above." In other words, these three directions can be classified as sequential (*shunguan*順觀), horizontal (*hengguan*橫觀), and vertical (*zongguan*縱觀), respectively. Following different directions, the mind-heart sees (*guan*観) different realms of objects and situations, and such a vision which unites the perceiving mind-heart with the objects and situations being perceived is called the *jing* (境), that is, horizon. In this manner, a total of nine horizons are formed:\(^3\)

---


1. The horizon of manifold disparate individuals - (wanwu sanshuìjìng 萬物散殊境) the mind-heart sees the world as comprised of manifold, separated and individuated things.

2. The horizon of transformation according to classes (yi lèichéng huái jìng 依類成化境) - the mind-heart sees the world as comprised of classes in which individual things are always transforming from one class to another.

3. The horizon of functioning in sequence (gōngnèng xù yùn jìng 功能 序運境) - the mind/heart sees the world as comprised of functions in which everything is in the sequence of cause and effect or ends and means.

4. The horizon of inter-perceptions (gànjué hūshe jìng 感覺互攝境) - the mind-heart sees the world as comprised of perceiving subjects and perceived objects, with the perceiving subjects perceiving one another reciprocally.

5. The horizon of pure meaning (guānzháolíng xù jìng 觀照凌虚境) - the mind-heart sees the world as comprised of pure meanings or concepts, which have their own existence apart from concrete things.
6. The horizon of moral practice (*daodeshijianjing 道德實踐境*) - the mind-heart sees the world as comprised of ideals and values which the subject strives to realize.

7. The horizon of returning to monotheism (*gueixiangyishenjing 歸向一神境*) - the mind-heart sees the world as a world with a single deity.

8. The horizon of the dual-emptiness of the self and the *dharma*[^4] (*wofaerkongjing 我法二空境*) - the mind-heart sees the true nature of the world as emptiness.

9. The horizon of the manifestation of Heavenly Virtue (*tiandeliuxingjing 天德流行境*) - the mind-heart sees the world as one in which the Heavenly Virtue prevails and permeates, and one which marks the highest union of Heaven and humanity.

How do the activities of the mind-heart bring about all these horizons? We encounter in the world a myriad of phenomena. These appear initially to us as disparate, and our mind-hearts do not pay special attention to them. The first horizon refers to such a stage of encounter with an inattentive mind-heart. However, once, the mind-heart has perceived that some of these phenomena have similar manifestations (*xiang* 相), and, thus, can be grouped into classes. Then it moves to a perception of the second horizon, that of transformation

[^4]: T'ang used many Buddhist terms in his discussions and I will examine them in Chapter Three.
according to classes. Further, the transformation of an individual is also the
cause of others' transformation, and this chain of transformation actually reflects
a chain of cause and effect. Once the mind-heart perceives this, it moves to a
view of the third horizon. This is how the first three horizons of T'ang's system
emerge.5

When the mind-heart moves its attention from things in the world without to
the subject within, there appear the second group of three horizons. When the
mind reflects upon itself and sees itself as a subject, then all perceptions can be
subsumed under a perceiving subject, and this enables the assimilation of
perceptions. When, in addition, the mind-heart becomes aware of other
perceiving individuals, it reaches a horizon where the subjects perceive and
subsume each other. In this stage, which is the fourth horizon, the mind-heart is
still attentive to the manifestation of things. However, once it realizes that this
so-called manifestation is nothing but the picture perceived by one's mind-heart,
it then enters the horizon of pure meaning since the seeming manifestations of
external objects are merely subjective constructions, that is to say, meanings or
concepts. When the mind perceives this, it enters the fifth stage, that is, the
horizon of pure meaning.

However, the mind-heart soon finds that the existing world conflicts with
pure meaning, that is, the subjective concept. The meaning or the concept thus
becomes the ideal and the dynamic of change. This characterizes the sixth
horizon, that of moral practice.

5 See Lau Kwok-keung, Creativity and Unity: The Relationship between the World and
the Divine in Whitehead and T'ang Chun-i, p. 141.
The mind-heart eventually moves to a higher level which transcends both subject and object, and consists of the appropriately titled horizons of transcendence. In the first of these, that is the seventh of the whole system, the mind-heart tries to unite subject and object by affirming their common origin, God. Tang dealt with the notion of God in Christianity in this horizon which is named the horizon of the return to monotheism.

However, such a God is transcendent or external to a human being's mind-heart. And as the mind/heart probes deeper, it will discover that problems and suffering are the result of attachment to both the objective world and the subjective mind. It will find that the true essence of both the external world and the self is nothing but emptiness, and that there is, in fact, nothing to which to be attached. This stage is, thus, termed the horizon of the emptiness of both the dharma and the self. However, the mind-heart can still move one step further, to affirm both the world and ourselves. In such a stage, it not only fulfills itself but also participates in the creation of value in this universe and thereby becomes a part of an organic universe. In this universe, everything is linked together by sharing the same virtue of the creation of the universe. This is the last horizon, of the prevalence of "Heavenly Virtue" (Tiande 天德).

In conclusion, the nine horizons can be grouped into three categories, each with three horizons. At the outset, the mind-heart subject corresponding to the objective world produces the 'first three horizons': 1) myriad multiplicity; 2) class transformation; 3) ordered functioning. These result from conscious activity in the external, objective world. But as the subject thinks of and reflects upon the
object, the 'middle three horizons' arise: 4) sense of mutual assimilation; 5) pure meaning and concept; 6) moral practice/cultivation. These horizons come about as subjectivity absorbs or merges with objectivity. In other words, the first three horizons are about subjectivity perceiving objectivity; the middle three horizons, about subjectivity's self-awareness. If seen in terms of this subjectivity-objectivity relation, the first three horizons are about the known/knowable object; the middle three horizons about the knowing subject. The two are opposites, and it is the dialectical dissolution of their opposition which characterizes the transsubjective-objective horizon, the realm beyond forms, Absolute Reality itself. Transcendence, therefore, is the horizon or realm of the mind-heart/consciousness in which the subjectivity-objectivity distinction no longer applies, in short, is transcended. As indicated above, T'ang distinguished three horizons of transcendence: 7) return to monotheism; 8) enlightenment by the understanding of the dual-emptiness of the self and the dharma; 9) prevalence of heavenly virtue. T'ang's Nine Horizons of the Mind-Heart can thus be outlined in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle Three Horizons</th>
<th>1) sense of mutual assimilation</th>
<th>感覺互攝境</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) pure meaning or concept</td>
<td>視照凌虛境</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) moral practice/cultivation</td>
<td>道德實踐境</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Three Horizons</th>
<th>1) myriad multiplicity</th>
<th>萬物散殊境</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) class transformation</td>
<td>依類成化境</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) ordered functioning</td>
<td>功能序運境</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

70
All in all, this system aims at including all possible aspects of human experience: experience through the interaction between the human mind-heart on the one hand and the external world on the other. However, we cannot pursue a deeper discussion of this grand system, which is treated in T'ang's two-volume *Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart*. What is relevant to our present investigation is merely that the mind-heart according to T'ang's understanding is capable of reaching the realm of transcendence, which is the religious dimension of T'ang's thought. We can have knowledge of the realm of transcendence and we can even in some sense prove its existence.

C. Fixing the Range of Reference of T'ang's Trans-subjectivity/objectivity Horizon

Before we demonstrate how T'ang attempts to prove the existence of the realm of transcendence, let us first examine what are the referents of the transcendence dimension, or, in T'ang own words, the trans-subjective/objective horizon. In brief, the trans-subjective/objective horizon refers mainly to the religions of Christianity, Buddhism, and Confucianism (which T'ang regarded as a humanistic religion). For T'ang, the different names these religions use in
expressing the reality of transcendence are not very important, for they all refer to the same trans-subjective/objective and absolute reality.

For instance, in Eastern and Western thought [there are different ways to refer to the Absolute such as] the Heaven, Lord, Origin, Real Ruler, Great Ultimate, Great Harmony, Substance of the Dao, Great Oneness, Absolute Nothingness, Absolute Stillness, Brahma, Tathata, Tathagatagarbha, Absolute Real Being, All-encompassing Being, Absolute, Perfect Being, Greatest Being, Smallest Being, Infinite Being, Eternal Being, Ultimate, Ultimate Source, Ultimate Beauty and Good, Absolute Justice, and Sources of all love and virtues. They differ in names but refer to the same absolute reality which transcends and unites both the subject and the object.  

The above statement is very important. It shows that the religions of the world are essentially the same to T'ang in terms of the nature of their ultimate concern. The variety of nomenclature simply indicates a variety of symbolic functions, all representing the same Absolute Reality. But why the multiplicity of names for the same Absolute Reality? The main reason, T'ang believed, lies in the fact that human beings can perceive the same thing, including the Absolute, in different ways. Even if they share the same mind-set, human beings, under different circumstances or stages of awareness, can have dissimilar

---

6 T'ang, Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-heart, Vol. 2, p. 4. 「如東西思想中之天、帝、元、真宰、太極、太虛、太和、道體、太一、至無、至寂靜者、梵天、真如、如來藏、至真實者、有一切者、絕對者、完全者、至大者、至微者、無限者、永恆者、最究竟者、最根源者、至美至善者、絕對公正者、為一切愛、一切德本原者。此諸名之義，雖不同，然其所指向，為一超主客而統此主客之形上實在，則無不同。」

experiences. In addition, T'ang pointed out the inadequacy of any human language to fully express the reality of the Absolute. It is for this reason, we believe, that he did not assign much significance to the differences in the notions of God, Heaven, Buddha and other designations for the Absolute. For him, these different names were but different aspects or levels of experiencing the same Absolute Spiritual Reality. In fact, it is precisely this approach of searching for common ground while at the same time preserving the differences which makes T'ang's systematic philosophy grand and all-encompassing.

D. The Ontological Argument.

Now, we come to the question of how T'ang Chun-i established philosophically the existence of the trans-subjective/objective Absolute. In the second volume of his Life, Existence and the Horizons of the Mind-Heart, he advanced several arguments, the two most important of which are the ontological argument and the moral argument.

---


10 To the best of my knowledge, only Lau Kwok-kuang has discussed Tang's ontological argument. See his “Tang Chun-i dui tian zhiyunzai zhi lunzheng” (Tang Chun-yi's arguments for the existence of Heaven) in Tang Junyi sixiang guoji huayi lunwenji 唐君毅思想國際會議論文集 (Hong Kong: Fazhu chubanshe法住出版社, 1990), pp. 29-37. Lau's article is mainly a description of Tang's arguments.
The ontological argument is founded on the question of the essence of Being. One of its best known expositions in Western philosophy is by St. Anselm (1033-1109), who used it to prove the existence of God. Although T'ang's argument emphasizing the absoluteness of Being is different from the one proposed by Anselm, who dwelt on the infinite greatness of Being-God, they do share some similarities. Both are based on their understanding of the essence of Being, and both assume that it is possible to establish the existence of something nonconceptual from purely conceptual considerations. For this reason, I feel justified in calling T'ang's argument ontological.

How did T'ang develop his ontological argument, which is manifested in his discussion of the horizon of monotheism? To examine this question, we begin with his understanding of the term 'existence'. He said:

That a thing is said to not exist is due to the fact that it lacks some manifestation of [its] essence. The essence that this individual thing manifests is what I call 'essential characteristic/nature' (xingxiang 性相). Things have essential characteristics that can be manifested and essential characteristics that cannot be manifested. The reason why things are said to not exist is because they contain essential characteristics that cannot be manifested.12

---

11 In his ontological argument, Anselm argues that since God, by definition, is that than which nothing greater can be conceived, God must necessarily exist. See Sidney N. Deane, trans., St. Anselm: Basic Writings (La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing Company, 1962), 2nd edition, Monologium, chs. 1-4, pp.37-45. Modern scholars like Hartshorne, Malcolm and Plantinga have claimed that another argument can also be found in Anselm's work, but this does not concern us here.

This way of thinking clearly resembles scholasticism. According to St. Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-1274), everything in the world is finite, composed of essence and existence. Essence refers to potentiality, existence to actuality. T'ang termed things that cannot manifest their essential characteristics, as nonexistent. In terms of the scholastic ontological distinction, because essential characteristics are realized, those without essential characteristics - i.e., those whose potentialities are unrealized - remain in a state of pure potentiality and therefore can be regarded as nonexistent.

Whether things exist or not can be inferred from their manifestations. So, if a certain essence exists, then there should be a corresponding essential characteristic. If this essential characteristic cannot be manifested, then this thing does not exist. From this, T'ang inferred that the more essential characteristics a thing has, the more are its manifestations - which means, the more abundant is its nature. "From this", he asserted, "we infer that if a being/existence possesses all the essential characteristics possible of everything and includes them all in itself, then such a being cannot not exist. This is precisely how the notion of the necessary existence of the perfect being/Absolute came to be." T'ang's inference was based on his assumption that nonexistence is due to the incompleteness (imperfection) of essential

相，亦有不能表現之性相。物之所以有不存在之時，即以其有不能表現之性相，而不能表現之任何性相之故。

characteristics. Therefore, if there is something that possesses all the essential characteristics, such a thing would have no reason not to exist: "Such a perfect being must exist." The idea of existence here deserves more attention. T'ang said,

"Existence' in the phrase "the perfect being must exist", is an idea formed first by the existence of things in the world - that is, it is derived from what the human subjective consciousness could originally perceive and affirm as the existence of such things, and then use as the foundation to make up for what is lacking in such things.

Generally, the above passage tells us that, on the one hand, we affirm the existence of everything in the world of experience and, on the other hand, we are aware of the finite existence of everything in the experiential world. By making up, in our minds, for the imperfections of the finite, we form the notion of the perfect, necessary existence of the infinite. The meaning of the existence of the infinite, perfect being is founded on actual existence - on the actual existence of things in the experiential world - and not on mere empty concepts. According to T'ang, in this distinction lies the crucial difference between Eastern and Western ontological arguments - indeed, the superiority of his argument over the Western argument. As he pointed out:


Proponents of the Western ontological argument... want to assert God as a necessarily perfect being by directly asserting that the concept of God as a perfect being should include existence as one of the attributes of its nature to make it perfect.\(^{16}\)

In T'ang's view, the Western ontological argument begins with "concepts themselves": "The direction of the starting point is to go above the existence of empirical things and claim that they can not-exist."\(^{17}\) For T'ang, this is wrong. Why? First, the Western ontological argument does not begin by affirming the existence of the experiential world;\(^{18}\) in fact, it is a purely \emph{a priori} argument, the truth of whose premises depends not on experience but on the concept or definition of God. Second, it overlooks the notion that the perfect being or Absolute includes all beings in the world. Due to these shortcomings, T'ang denounced the Western ontological approach as "the great wrong way, the great roundabout [way], the great reverse [way]".\(^{19}\) More importantly, based on this view, T'ang rejected the cosmological argument and the teleological argument.

\(^{16}\) T'ang, \textit{Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart}, Vol. 2, p. 28. 「西方之本體成以者......，其謂自上帝為完全者之概念之自身，當包涵存在之一性質，方成其完全，以謂其必為完全。」


\(^{18}\) It is noteworthy that T'ang did not argue from disregrading the sensory experience, but charged that the Christian God lacked compassion, due to disregard for the pain and suffering of sentient beings.

\(^{19}\) T'ang, \textit{Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart}, vol. 2, p. 34. 「大歧途、大迂迴、大顛倒」
We are aware that Western histories of philosophy or philosophies of religion usually regard the ontological argument as a priori, and the cosmological and teleological arguments as a posteriori. However, for T'ang, these three traditional Western arguments for the existence of God commit the same error:

My idea now is that these two arguments share one thing in common with the former argument (ontological argument) and that is, they do not arrive at the existence of God directly from asserting the existence of things in the world. Rather, they first assume that things in the world are contingent beings, that is, they can be nonbeings. From this, they infer the existence of God. This is the result of a way of thinking which is a "wrong way", "roundabout way", a "reverse way" which leads to the source of all kinds of difficulties in these two arguments.

Whether T'ang's criticism is fair or not is another question and beyond the scope of this study. For us, its importance lies in the fact that it reflects his philosophical positions. Two things, in particular, can be said about it. First, the

---

20 A good example is Immanuel Kant who grouped the traditional approaches into three different kinds of arguments for the existence of God and such a distinction is usually followed by most historians of philosophy. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Norman Kemp Smith, trans. (London: Macmillan, 1961), pp. 499-500. For a brief discussion of the three arguments and modern debates on them, see Brian Davies, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 26-63.

affirmation of the existence of the experiential world reflects T'ang's realist position. Second, the assumption that the perfect being or Absolute must necessarily include all beings in the world makes T'ang, among other things, a pantheist. T'ang's argument was built upon them. As he said, "through the existence of things in the world, man contemplates the existence of God." Further, "we do not deny the existence and reality of matter. We believe in the existence of matter as firmly as all materialists." For him, therefore, the existence of the experiential world was a given. As he put it, "subjective consciousness intuits and affirms the existence of things in the world." This appears to be the realist position.

T'ang also asserted that by affirming the existence of things in the world, and by recognizing their finiteness and imperfection, we also form the notion of an infinite, perfect being, since what the human mind does is form a

__________

22 T'ang never doubts the existence of beings in this world. It also seems that he does not care much about proving his position on a theoretical level. Rather, he takes a "moral" approach, accusing those who doubt the existence of beings with indifference to the possible pain and suffering of beings due to the disregrading of their existence. Cf. note 15, above.

23 T'ang thought has panenthestic characteristics as well. I will discuss this issue in Chapter 6.


nonimperfect perfect being by making up what is lacking in the existence of things in the world. "In such a way, the human mind is not responsible for the existence of the perfect being; rather, it is merely responsible for making up for the perfection of the imperfect."27 Here, although he does not depart from the idea of "making up in order to complete", T’ang also clarifies the role of the human being in the existence of the perfect being/Absolute. In his view, we can endlessly investigate, contemplate, and make up for the imperfections of things in the world until there are no more imperfections to make up for. This process ultimately leads to the perfect being. Naturally, a perfect being/Absolute established in such a way, "includes not only everything that can be found in all imperfect beings, but also what is lacking in them."28 This obviously refers to what we have just mentioned above about T’ang’s pantheistic position.

As T’ang continued, "the human mind conceives at the same time of such a perfect being which transcends all the imperfect beings in the world and thus forms the meaning of existence that includes everything in the world, and [comes up with] the notion of a transcendent perfect being which transcends all the above."29 Of course, the point here is to establish man's ability to form this notion of an all-embracing unity. However, if the perfect being/Absolute can be


80
established in this way, then we have to assume that the nature of being/existence of the experiential world and of the perfect being/Absolute is the same. Therefore, T'ang said, "the meaning of existence in human thought has its origin and that is beyond question. It is because human beings can directly derive such a notion from all those which he affirms as existing. From this originates the notion of existence."30

He went so far as to claim that "in terms of this meaning of existence itself, the existence of God and of all things in the world is only one and the same existence."31 There is no doubt, therefore, about T'ang's pantheistic leanings. In his view, the being/existence of God and of the things in the world are of the same nature. The two do not constitute a separate duality but merely two ends of the same continuous reality - fullness and perfection on the one hand, deficiency and finitude on the other. Since everything in the world is included in the perfect being/Absolute, this perfect being is no different from that transcendent totality of all things. By totality, we mean not only a mere summation of all beings for the totality of parts is always more than a mere summation.

E. T'ang's Moral Argument


T'ang believed that all transcendence-based faiths can also be founded on morality. His moral argument consists of two steps. The first borrows from Immanuel Kant's notion of the 'highest good,'\textsuperscript{32} the second infers from the existential moral life the necessity of belief in transcendence. Of the first, T'ang said:

We affirm all these faiths not because they enable us to satisfy human emotional needs and allow us freely to believe or not. We affirm these faiths because they are a necessary result of our thought which we cannot help but follow so long as it follows the demands of the continuity of moral life and rationalization of life. This is similar to the Kantian idea.\textsuperscript{33}

Here, T'ang borrowed the Kantian analysis of the 'highest good' in regarding faith in transcendence as a necessity. The notion of the 'highest good' necessarily includes the fulfillment of moral conduct and the fruits of happiness. However, the necessary connection between moral conduct and happiness requires establishing the existence of God as a guarantee of transcendence. Of course, 'God' here does not refer to objective reality but to the postulate that satisfies our rational inquiry.\textsuperscript{34} In other words, God is affirmed through (established by) human subjective activity. The point is to render moral life a

\textsuperscript{32} For a brief discussion of this concept, consult Roger Sullivan, \textit{An Introduction to Kant's Ethics} (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 89-91.

\textsuperscript{33} T'ang, \textit{Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart}, vol. 2, p. 29. 「吾人今之說，則亦不以此諸信仰為滿足情感上之要求，可容人自由信仰者；而承認此諸信仰，為人依其道德生活求相續，其生活求理性化之要求，其思想必然產生之不容己的信仰，此略同康德之義。」

\textsuperscript{34} See Kant, \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, p. 147.
reasonable human activity. By arguing this way, one inevitably turns 'God' from being an objective real Being to a [mere] product of subjective activity.

We are aware of the three Western traditional arguments for the existence of God, which were all designed to establish God's objective reality and never to conceive God as [simply] a construction of human subjectivity. T'ang's argument, therefore, departs from the original meaning and intent of the arguments for the existence of God. This shows that his idea of transcendence (or of the realm of transcendence) differs from the notion of a transcendent God in Christianity. Further, it also points to the subjective character of T'ang's philosophy; indeed, it may be seen as a kind of philosophy of subjectivity. Therefore, even though T'ang criticized Kant's notion of subjectivity based on the postulate of God, he still followed Kant:

...faith in transcendence is the faith that is inferred from what is originally contained in our moral life and consciousness.....The light of wisdom that life and consciousness emits [envelops everything]. The light's core lies precisely in moral life and moral consciousness themselves.35

That the core of the act of faith lies within the subject itself and its activity poses no problems. The problem is that if the object of faith needs to rely on the subject's consciousness/mind-heart in order to exist, then such an object of faith does not have an independent existence. For this reason, it is our view that

______________________________
35 T'ang, Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart, vol. 2, p. 29.「......超越的信仰，皆為是本吾人當下之道德生活，道德心靈，所原具之涵義，所推廣而出之信仰，亦只是生活心靈所放出之一縱攝三世、橫照三千大千世界一智慧之光。此光輝之中樞，則在此當下之道德生活、道德心靈自身。」
T'ang's argument is insufficient for establishing the kind of transcendence that is an independent self-existence in the objective world.

T'ang was aware of this problem and he tackled it head-on - or, perhaps more accurately, he tried to explain it away. He understood that with Kant's argument, one can only explain the human being's rational will but not stipulate about the objective universe. Therefore, he clearly stated also that there is no necessary connection between subjective will and objective reality/situation:

Human moral consciousness necessarily demands and establishes this or that. But [the issue] whether, objectively, the universe is like this or that, or whether there is a God, remains a potential problem.36

However, T'ang still believed that "if we really understood what Kant meant, then this issue would not become a problem."37 Why? "For this reason, [that] if a man is a moral being, then, on his/her self-awareness [as such], he/she would demand the existence of a morally ordered universe and establish the existence of God. That is, faith would bear the burden [of establishing] the existence of the universe and of God, thus avoiding the problem described above and preventing [us] from using this issue to criticize Kant."38


38 「故人若爲道德之存在，則於其自知必當要求一有道德秩序之宇宙之存在，必當電定一上帝存在之後，亦即可直下以信仰承擔此宇宙與上帝之存在，而可更不發生上述之問題，而人亦不能以此問難康德也。」Incidentally, Mou Tsung-san has offered similar criticism, but is
As far as the moral subject is concerned, according to T'ang, faith in God is the real reason for a human being's self-confidence that things "must necessarily be" (bidang 必當) this or that. However, the phrase "must necessarily be" does not suggest that on account of this self-confidence, we can just banish all doubts, thus resolving the question about God's existence. What T'ang meant was that moral consciousness always demanded a consistency between morality and happiness. Based on this point, one also needs to hold that this universe and the demand for consistency are interrelated. In other words, the universe that moral consciousness understands and aspires to is "a morally ordered universe," a universe that has a God who can guarantee the consistency between morality and happiness. Otherwise, [without such a belief in a universal moral order], reason falls into self-contradiction and the universe becomes incomprehensible and meaningless. Hence T'ang's statement that "...faith would bear the burden [of establishing] the existence of the universe and of God, thus avoiding the problem described above and preventing [us] from using this issue to criticize Kant."

However, T'ang did not stop at the level of rationality. In his view, Kant's problem arose precisely because of his abstract, purely rational foundations.\(^{39}\)

---

more thorough and to the point. See Mou, *Kianxiang yu wuzishen* (Phenomena and Noumena 現象與物自身), (Taipei: Xuesheng shujyu: 1984), esp. pp. 41-119. See also Lee Ming-hui (pinyin: Li Minghui 李明輝), "Mou Zongsan sixiang zhong di rujia yu kangde" (Confucianism and Kantian Elements in the thought of Mou Zongsan) in his *Dangdai ruxue zhi ziwuchuanhua* (當代儒學之自我轉化), (Taipei: Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy, 1994), pp. 53-87, esp. pp. 82-86.

and his neglect of the concrete, existential human moral situation. This idea of morality based on concrete human experience constitutes the second step in T'ang's moral argument. For T'ang, Kant's position and the traditional three arguments for the existence of God fall into the same predicament. It is for the same reason that T'ang criticized Kant's theology for its abstraction from the real contents of human experience:

What Kant referred to as 'moral'......is no other than the individual person's formal [inner] law established by following the dictates of his/her rationality. It is not concerned with the objective contents of moral life/living and with [the role] these objective contents play in fulfilling human [moral] sentiments.\(^\text{40}\)

T'ang rejected the Kantian notion of moral law for its formalism and abstract subjectivism, adopting instead an intersubjective approach. He wanted to demonstrate, through intersubjective moral behavior, [the existence of] an objective spirit, a transcendent individual subject - God. Consequently, he stated:

According to the fact that such a universal self exists in the self of intersubjective moral behaviour, one can directly feel the existence of the universal self, that is to say, directly feel the presence of God within ourselves through the establishment of our moral life which results from intersubjective moral behaviour.\(^\text{41}\)

\(^{40}\) T'ang, Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart, vol. 2, p. 61.「康德之所謂有德者......唯是個人之自願從其理性而自建立之形式規律，而不重道德生活之客觀內容，亦不重此客觀內容對人之情操上任何滿足之故。」

\(^{41}\) T'ang, Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart, vol. 2, p. 61.「依於此普遍自我之即於存有相互道德行行為之自我之中，而人即可於此相互之道德的行行為，所成之道德生活中，以直感此普遍自我之存在，而亦直感上帝之即存於其自我之中矣。」
Analyzing this statement, T'ang's intention to tell directly from moral life/existence the existence of God is quite clear. A detailed discussion of this issue is to be found only in his discussion of the 'horizon of monotheism' wherein he said:

...in ordinary moral life, the human being must possess only the authentic interpersonal sentiments for fellow human beings in order to more clearly reflect.....that: there exist this interhuman/ intersubjective moral consciousness forming one single spiritual existence which always manifests itself in genuine interpersonal sentiments.42

In particular, T'ang pointed out that moral consciousness most easily manifests itself in the midst of a collective crisis, when human beings must sacrifice individual/selfish interest in order to promote the common good. At these times, T'ang said: "their mutuality [or: mutual concern], which does not distinguish between self and others, and which possesses the common will, feelings, and thoughts of the common consciousness, manifests itself in individual consciousness."43 Also, "at this moment, everyone subjectively has the feeling of being one in mind-heart with all the others; likewise, objectively, this one mind-heart is perceived to be in each and everyone and everyone can feel


the actions of this one mind-heart which exists in Heaven and Earth and is sufficient to move Heaven. Such a mind-heart pervades humanity (me and others) and heaven and earth. It is inseparable from them because its manifestation and existence depend on the mutual support of humanity and heaven and earth."\textsuperscript{44}

Perhaps what T'ang meant was that in the process of abandoning selfishness to uphold the common good, individual selves come together and form a collective consciousness. Subjectively, collective consciousness is seen as the one mind-heart shared by all; objectively, it is seen as the mind-heart that transcends everyone's individual selves and pervades everything - that is, the whole universe. To support the existence of this universal consciousness, T'ang cited the traditional Chinese notion about the union of Heaven, Earth and the Human Being. Such a consciousness that pervades and includes both subject and object is both transcendent and immanent as well. For T'ang, this consciousness may be called universal consciousness or Spirit. Further, T'ang said: "Since human being knows that this Spirit is [the] one, absolute, infinite Spirit that pervades and is manifested in all human subjective consciousness and everything in the universe, the manifestations of human subjective consciousness which correspond to the virtue of the existence of this Spirit can be viewed as the manifestations of such Spirit at the same time. Therefore, we

\textsuperscript{44} T'ang, Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart, vol. 2, p. 64.「此時，人即在主觀上各有萬眾一心之感，而在客觀上亦可說實有此一心在於萬眾，而人同時可覺此萬眾之一心之所為，存於天地，而足感動天也。此一心靈之充塞彌綣於人我及天地，未嘗相離，以其即由此人我天地之合以支持其呈顯而存在故。」
can say that each individual subjective consciousness mentioned here is the particular manifestation of this Spirit.\textsuperscript{45}

T'ang appreciated this consciousness (i.e. the Spirit) very much. As he said: "To such a universal consciousness or Spirit, human beings possess a sense of reverence and belongingness because of its transcendence; also, they feel a sense of closeness and mutual indwelling because of its inseparability from them".\textsuperscript{46}

We can say that this form of spiritual consciousness is neither too near and familiar nor too distant. By saying, on the one hand, that this spiritual consciousness is not too near and familiar, T'ang maintained God's transcendence. In this way, the sense of the sublime and the holy can be established. By saying that it is not too distant, on the other, he bridged the divide separating the sacred and the profane. Thus, it is possible for all human beings to become [like] the legendary sage-kings, Yao and Shun. This is, of course, a continuation of the Confucian assertion of the Perfectibility of the Human Being.

F. The Nature of the Absolute in Itself.

\textsuperscript{45} T'ang, Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart, vol. 2, pp. 64-65.「人既知此神靈為一絕對無限之神靈，而貫通於一切人我之主觀心靈與天地萬物之中，而一切人我之主觀心靈，與天地萬物，皆其表現之地；人之主觀心靈之表現，與此神靈之存在德性相應者，亦即同時可視為此神靈之表現；吾人即可說此中之一——主觀心靈，即此神靈自身之分殊的表現矣。」

\textsuperscript{46} T'ang, Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart, vol. 2, p. 64.「人亦對此普遍心靈或神靈，依其為超越，而有崇敬皈依之心，依其不離我，而對之有一親切之感，與互相感通之情。」
We now come to the next question that needs to be addressed: What is the nature of the Absolute in T’ang’s thought? Since this chapter deals with the Seventh Horizon, we shall limit our attention mainly in this horizon leaving T’ang’s idea of Buddhism and Confucianism as reflected in his discussions of the Eighth and Ninth Horizons in the following two chapters. However, the Confucian tradition will be contrasted at some points if T’ang himself related to it in his discussion of Christianity. The question we now address can be answered in two parts: first, the nature of the Absolute in itself; second, the nature of the Absolute in its relation to human being.

In terms of itself, the most important characteristic that I can attribute to T’ang’s understanding of the Absolute is ‘comprehensiveness.’ 'Comprehensiveness' may be understood in the following senses:

1. Infinite Potentiality. Since the concept of the Absolute originated from the notion of complementing imperfection, the Absolute’s absoluteness may be defined in terms of perfection. It contains everything and lacks nothing. It includes all possibilities. Thus, it is not pure act; rather; it is infinite potentiality.47

47 This concept marks the drastic difference between T’ang’s notion of God and that of the Scholasticism which views God as Pure Act. T’ang’s notion is closer to process theology. In fact, T’ang himself is aware of this. For a discussion of scholastic viewpoint, see Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, esp. Ch. 3.
2. Dialectic. Since the Absolute is infinite possibility, infinite potentiality, it can include all opposites and should transcend all opposites. Indeed, for T'ang, there are no real or absolutely irreconcilable contradictions. Contradictions exist only on certain levels — which, ultimately, can and must be transcended. This form of transcendence does not mean that the original two poles of the opposites should both be abandoned. Rather, it suggests, in the new horizon/dimension [resulting from] transcendence, the dissolution of contradictions thus enabling the original opposites to exist on a new [level of] synthesis. The reason why this level is [referred to as] the horizon of synthetic unity is because it includes opposites without mutually contradicting each other; at the same time, it eliminates contradictions and enriches itself. Indeed, T'ang had said that existing things "under different circumstances, manifest these opposite and contradictory natures. Since they manifest differently according to different situations, these manifestations do not contradict one another. The more seemingly opposite natures that a being can manifest, the richer the content it can possess." T'ang called this dialectic "transcending inclusivity" (chaoyue di baohan)

The so-called "transcending inclusivity" refers to the inclusion of these opposites and contradictions. At the same time, allowing these opposites and contradictions to mutually cancel and eliminate one another in order to become a 'being of nonbeing', or a 'being in nothingness', or an 'emptied being'.

---

48 T'ang, Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart, vol. 2, p. 44. 「所謂超越的包涵，即包容此相反而矛盾者，同時使此相反矛盾者，相銷而相泯，以成一非有之有，或無中之有，或虛倣化的有。」
I think the first half of this statement is not hard to understand — it describes the dialectical process. Worth noting in particular is what T'ang described as "becoming a being of nonbeing, or a being within nothing, or an emptied being." I think that this discussion is actually talking about hylomorphism. Above, we already referred to T'ang's Absolute as infinite potentiality. While potentiality is yet to be actualized, we can, of course, refer to it as nothing or nonexistent. From another perspective, however, we can also say that it is 'being'. But this being, insofar as its potentiality is yet to be actualized, can only be a 'being of nonbeing', or a 'being in nothingness', or an 'emptied being'.

3. Process. How is it possible to include or assimilate all opposites without giving rise to conflict or contradictions? This is the question involved in the third characteristic of T'ang's Absolute. According to the dialectical model discussed above, all possible limitations are all destined to be broken and transcended. All so-called contradictions and limitations may also be seen as the roundabout ways by which the process of transcendence proceeds. They render the Absolute's move to become absolute possible, and render Being to become even more fulfilled and perfect. Since the Absolute must undergo this dialectical process to become absolute, it is a 'becoming' rather than a perfected 'being'. Within the flow of time, the Absolute becomes unceasing; within the dialectical process, it fulfills itself continuously until it reaches perfection. T'ang said:

Therefore, the more a being can respond to different situations and manifest different natures to the extent that it can transform without limit and act
without obstacles, the greater is its ability to be, and the more perfect its being becomes.49

This statement contains at least two important points: first, the Absolute should not only have but also be able to manifest different natures or essential characteristics [xingxiang] so as to be comprehensive; second, the unlimited transformation and the free activity of the Absolute are both accomplished within the process of becoming — hence, the process character of the Absolute.

On the process character of the Absolute, T'ang particularly criticized the idea, by Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), that change or becoming implies imperfection.50 Of course, a thing in process is [always] limited in what essential characteristics it can manifest. However, from this, one cannot conclude, as T'ang argued, that thing is necessarily imperfect. As T'ang said:

It is unnecessary that a being, at a particular time and place, should totally manifest or realize all its possible natures or essential characteristics in order to be regarded as a more perfect being.51

This means that the Absolute need not, within a given time and space, completely manifest itself. Here, the main consideration lies precisely in the

49 T'ang, Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart, vol. 2, p. 44.「故一存在，若其愈能應不同情境，更迭的表現種種性質，以至於變化無方，自由無礙，則見其存在之能力愈大，其存在為愈完全。」


51 T'ang, Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart, vol. 2, p. 43.「並不須此一存在之在一時一地，將其所能表現之性質或性相，完全表現或實化，方稱為較完全之存在。」
fact that, within the same given time and space, one cannot resolve [essential] contradictions. Therefore, one must look into the process by which opposites are drawn together and assimilated in order to include all possibilities within the realm of the Absolute. For example, we cannot understand how something can be hot and cold at the same time; however, we can understand how something can be hot at a given moment and cold at another. In other words, T'ang placed the contradictions within the context of process and the apparent contradictions within a given being's process of becoming.

In sum, for T'ang, comprehensiveness is the essence of the Absolute and infinite potentiality the essential characteristic [or manifestation]. The Absolute is realized in terms of two conditions of possibility: dialectic and process. That is, through its dialectical and process character, the Absolute comprehends and assimilates all things and is involved in the becoming of everything in the universe.

G. The Relation Between Transcendence and the Human Being and its Foundation

T'ang's Absolute is not only 'being-in-itself' but also 'being-in-the-world.' In examining the nature of the Absolute, we cannot simply limit our investigation into the Absolute's own nature. We must look into its relationship with the world as well.
Among all things in the world, T'ang particularly focused upon human beings. He pointed out, through the human being's fundamental existence and essence, the human being's intimate relationship with Being or the Absolute. Human being differs from all other things in the universe. The basic difference lies in man's search for Being. This search manifests man's relationship with the realm of transcendence.

T'ang's view on the realm of transcendence was a continuation — or better, a modern reinterpretation — of traditional Confucian thought. However, in relation to other religious traditions, T'ang's notion of transcendence may represent an entirely different reality. An understanding of the realm of transcendence in Christianity points to the radical difference and total separation of divinity and humanity. For T'ang, however, transcendence and immanence, God and humanity, while distinct, are not two completely separate entities. The two are merely two ends of a spectrum; they constitute a continuum. What was most important for T'ang was the notion that the realm of the Sage is the realm of the Spirit; Sagehood and Spirituality are one and the same. It is precisely for this reason, that a human being, through self-cultivation, can hope to become a sage or attain the realm of transcendence (God, Heaven, Spirits, Absolute, etc.). As mentioned above, T'ang saw the Absolute in different

---

52 To be sure, different understandings of God co-exist in the Christian tradition. For example, George Brantl stated directly that “for Catholic thought, God is at once transcendent and immanent. His transcendence cannot be affirmed independently of His immanence, nor His immanence independently of His transcendence. He is the transcendent/immanent.” See Brantl ed., Catholicism (N.Y.: George Braziller, 1962), p. 39. John Macquarrie also writes that “dialectic requires us to say that if God is transcendent, he must also be immanent.” See his In Search of Deity (London: SCM Press, 1984), p.28.
religions as the same though they bear different names. Thus, to say that
Heaven and humanity are interlinked also means that God and human being
are interlinked. T’ang even indicated that, in theory, there is absolutely no
possibility that humanity and the realm of transcendence are separable. As he
insisted:

Following the criterion of conscience, we can say
that the God spoken of in all major religions are all,
in the ultimate sense, inseparable from human
conscience. If they ever become separate, then the
two must be affirmed by conscience. Such an
affirmation bridges the two and thus becomes one
again, or makes the relation between the two into a
one which is inseparable and mutually
complementary.\(^{53}\)

For T’ang, human consent permanently turns this duality into unity. This
being the case, conscience is the ability to transcend every division in order to
attain higher unity. Not only is the realm of transcendence forever totally
inseparable from human being; indeed, it is intimately linked with humanity. In
this respect, T’ang emphasized human beings’ relationship with Heaven and
Earth; with the ancestors, parents, and the sages (the ‘three

\(^{53}\) "依良知之標準，我們可說一切高級宗教中所謂之上帝、阿拉、梵天在究竟義上，都不能與人
之良知為二，而相隔離。如為二，則此二亦必須通過良知之肯定，此肯認即已通二為一，或使二者之關係成不離之相保合的關係。” See T’ang, “Woduiyu zhexue yu zongjiao zhi ze” (My
choice between philosophy and religion 我對於哲學與宗教之擇），in his Renwenjingshen
zhi chongjian [Reconstruction of Humanist Spirit 人文精神之重建] (Taipei: Xuesheng
veneration/worships', sanji 三祭). As we look into the relationship of human being to the realm of transcendence, therefore, we follow T'ang's approach.

First, T'ang saw Heaven as the originator/creator of everything. He always compared the relationship between Heaven and the human being to that of parents and children. As children love and respect and honor their parents in gratitude for the grace of being born, human venerates and worships Heaven and Earth for similar reasons. These kinds of sentiment are natural, not man-made.

T'ang also related creation to a kind of virtue/power (de 德). This, of course, is nothing new. In the Commentaries to the Book of Changes (xici 絹辭), it says: "The great virtue of heaven and earth is creativity." Also, in the Right Meanings (zhengyi 正義), we find: ".....Sages share with Heaven and Earth the same virtue, which is the creation of everything."55 Traditionally, we refer to this great grace of creation as the 'virtue/power of creative creativity' [shengshengzhide]. We can say that this ontology or cosmology leads to axiology. In this respect, T'ang followed his teachers Hsiung Shih-li (pinyin: Xung Shili 熊十力1884-1986) and Fang Tong-mei (pinyin: Fang Dongmei 方東美)

54 The Three Worships are very important for Tang. For a discussion in this regard, see Tang Duanzheng (唐端正) "Tang Chun-i lunzongjiao zhi jiazhi yu sanji zhi yiyi唐君毅論宗教之價值與三祭之意義); and Zheng Zhiming (鄭志明) "T'ang Chun-i xiansheng do zongjiaoguan chutan" (A preliminary study on Mr. T'ang Chun-i's idea of religion). They both can be found in T'ang Chun-i guoji huiyi lunwenji, vol. 2, pp. 1-12 and 13-28 respectively.

55 《繹辭·下》云：「天地之大德曰生。」《正義》曰：「...欲明聖人同天地之德，廣生萬物之意也。」Zhouyi zhengyi (The Right Meanings of the Book of Changes 周易正義). Ch. 8, p.9b.
1899-1977) who became known precisely for their rediscovery and reinterpretation of the traditional notion of the 'virtue/power of creative creativity' (shengsheng zhide 生生之德)\(^{56}\) However, in one particular aspect, T'ang differed with Fang: he lacked Fang's aesthetic dimension; instead, he followed Xung's emphasis on moral meaning -- what T'ang called the great virtue of the creation of heaven and earth. To this great virtue, human being will always feel a debt of gratitude, and when necessary, repay this debt of gratitude. How?

According to T'ang, we attain the self-perfection we seek through the practice of moral living. To fulfill humanity/human nature [ren] and attain virtue is an act of creation, the creation of value. Human being's accomplishment in the moral plane is of the same quality as Heaven and Earth's virtue of creativity. In such terms, the ancient Chinese concept of the union between Heaven and Human Being (Tianren heyi 天人合一) is purged of its mystical elements and turned into a mere "joint venture", between Heaven and Human Being, in the creation of value.\(^{57}\) The concept of union of heaven and human being thus become the union of heaven and human being in terms of virtue. That is to say, 'union' is existential -- in the sense of creating subjectivity -- rather than experiential. Human being's ability to pursue and attain virtue can be

---


\(^{57}\) T'ang, Renwenjingshen zhi chongjian, pp. 25-29.
understood as a kind of creation of virtue. This is one of the reasons why human being can also be considered as a creator, or perhaps better, human being is the one medium through which heavenly value is manifested in the world. In T'ang's scheme, this actually represents the last and highest horizon of the mind-heart – 'the horizon of the prevalence of heavenly virtue'.

According to T'ang, human beings possesses feelings of gratitude, love and respect towards Heaven. This is what makes Humanity and Heaven inseparable. For the same reason, human being also feels the same way towards his/her ancestors. Not even death can sever the bonds of love and friendship between human being and his/her departed relatives and friends. Sometimes the chasm between life and death makes the bond even stronger. For T'ang, this continuous bond -- between the living and the dead -- was a bridge that connects the realm of the living and the dead. This kind of love/bond is most clearly manifested in children's filial piety towards parents. However, T'ang added that this love/bond is not limited to blood relations; it manifests itself in all Confucius' five relationships (ruler-minister, father-son, siblings, husband-wife, friends, 君臣、父子、兄弟、夫妻、朋友)58 indeed in the

---

entire universe. Traditionally, this was referred to as the communion between heaven and earth, which is precisely the focus/heart of T'ang's thought.59

In fact, human life in the world is directly involved with all other living beings. Although most of them are not related to us by blood, like our parents and ancestors, we need, according to T'ang, to treat them all with kindness, not only by treating them like siblings but by completely giving play to our spirit of humanity (ren仁), bathing the entire creation in the all-embracing love which penetrates and fills the whole of the universe. Even if others fall into the deepest abyss of inhumanity or human degeneration, we should not cease to have love and concern for them. Our love for others [should] always surpass the wrath we feel for their fall. T'ang advocated that if others are unable to realize their inner virtue, we should, through greater love and kindness, complement what they lack in themselves. Because what others lack, we lack; others' imperfection is our imperfection. Therefore, repaying indebtedness is necessary and beyond question. More importantly, repaying others includes not just the forgiveness of other's wrongdoings but actually requites them with a greater love and virtue. This is a particular Chinese way of perceiving the notion of "bao" (repaying 報), that is, to repay other's wrongdoings with one's own loving virtue (yide baoyuan以德報怨). For T'ang, the entire universe is one big whole, one vast organism whose members are interrelated.

59 See also T'ang's discussion on the metaphysical and religious meanings of filial piety in T'ang, Zhongguowenhua zhi jingshen jiazhi [The Spiritual Values of Chinese Culture中國文化之精神價值] (Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, 1979), pp. 198-203.
In sum, man's debt of gratitude towards heaven and earth, man's deep devotion to the spirit of his/her ancestors and to the wisdom and virtue of the sages, man's lifelong feeling of gratitude and attachment to his/her origins -- these represent the linking of man and transcendence. This kind of feeling towards transcendence is not a feeling of dependence or worthlessness. It is not the feeling of a man who sees himself as pure creature, utterly inferior or trembling in awe and fear at the majesty and power of the most high creator. Rather, it is the feeling of gratitude towards the transcendent -- what T'ang would call the 'spirit of gratitude':

In Chinese culture, the most fundamental expression of the spirit of gratitude lies in the gratitude one shows toward parents and all those who have done good deeds. From this, we derived the rituals for the veneration of ancestors, for those who have contributed to the world, for the sages, and for the "gods" of the nation and heaven and earth for creating and fulfilling things. If heaven is God (Christian), then Buddha is a sage, then the feeling of gratitude towards God in Christianity and the practice of repaying Buddha grace in Buddhism, is one aspect of the spirit of gratitude in Chinese culture. 60


For T'ang, the fact that human beings owe a debt of gratitude to heaven and their ancestors, does not make them so humble — and, therefore, the transcendent unreachable — that expressing this gratitude becomes impossible. T'ang emphasized the proximity and attainability of the transcendent. For T'ang, the tension existing between God and humanity in Christianity does not exist in the transcendent-human relation. In other words, there is no place in T'ang's system for the 'wholly other' notion of transcendence.

T'ang's 'spirit of gratitude' implies a process. It necessarily includes both direct and indirect ways of expressing this 'spirit of gratitude'. Direct gratitude refers to the direct reciprocation of the benefactor by the recipient. In indirect gratitude, the recipient does not, as the terms suggest, repay his benefactor directly, but through others. Between the direct and the indirect, there is a process which places the 'spirit of gratitude' not only in terms of the link between man and the transcendent but within the much wider context of the universal unity and continuity of all life, both past and present.62

---

Chapter Three
Buddhism and the Transcendent Dimension

A. Introduction

T'ang was not totally satisfied with the monotheistic horizon represented by Christianity in his system. He turned to the East and found that Buddhism should assume a higher position than Christianity because the Buddhist teachings, as he understood them, point to or reflect a higher stage of transcendence. But before examining in more detail his understanding of Buddhism, a brief review of the development of this religious-philosophical tradition may be useful.

After the death of the Buddha, it is generally conceded that there arose a total of eighteen different sects of Buddhism\(^\text{1}\) which became collectively known as the *bupai foxue* (部派佛學). Of them, only the Theravada exists today.\(^\text{2}\) T'ang did not really pay much attention to these early developments and like most Chinese scholars, he dealt mainly with Mahayana Buddhism, the branch of Buddhism predominant in China.


\(^\text{2}\) Most scholars argue that there were two major different schools, the *Mahasthavira*, the sect of the Elders (Chinese: *shangzuobu*上座部) and the *Mahasanghika*, the sect of the laymen (Chinese: *dazhongbu*大衆部).
The word Mahayana means "Greater Means" or "Greater Vehicle" [of salvation] and contrasts with the label "Hinayana," meaning "Lesser Means/Vehicle [of salvation], that is attached to the early schools. Its origin can be traced back no further than 500 years after the death of Sakyamuni, when the Indian philosopher Nagarjuna (Chinese: Longshu 龍樹; 1st - 2nd centuries A.D.) developed a new school of Buddhism, which later came to be known as the Madhyamika (Chinese: zhongguan 中觀). Later, in the fourth century, Asanga (Chinese: Wuzhu 無著) and Vasubandhu (Chinese: Shiqin 世親; c. fourth century A.D.) established the Vijnanavada (Chinese: weishi 唯識) or the Yogacara (Chinese: yujiapingpai 瑜伽行派) school, representing the second major stage of development in Mahayana Buddhism. Finally, alongside the Madhyamika and Yogacara traditions there developed a third school, the Tathagata-garbha (如來藏), or zhenchang school (真常).

Although the Madhyamika and Yogacara are usually considered as the two most important branches of Mahayana Buddhism in India, and are often taken to represent Mahayana Buddhism as a whole in many textbooks, it is the third school, Tathagata-garbha, which influenced Chinese Buddhism most deeply. Today, it is regarded as highest stage of the development of Mahayana Buddhism.

---

3 Note that since only the Theravada school survives today, the label "Hinayana Buddhism" is often used interchangeably with it.

4 Scholars like Ui Hakuju (宇野伯壽), In Shun(印順) and others hold this view, while Takasaki Jikido (高崎直道) holds that the difference in the understandings of Buddha and the mind of sentient beings had led to the formations of the Yogacara and Tathagatha-garbha schools. See his Bukkyoshi gaisetsu 佛教史概說 (Kyoto京都: Heirakuji Shoten平樂寺書店, 1966), p. 94.
scriptures\(^5\) of this school include such \textit{sutras} as the \textit{Saddharma Pundarika Sutra} (or \textit{Lotus Sutra}法華經), the \textit{Avatamsaka Sutra} (or Flower Garland Sutra華嚴經), the \textit{Shrimala Sutra} (or \textit{The Sutra of Lady Shrimala}勝鬘經)\(^6\) and the \textit{Mahaparinirvana-sutra} (大般涅槃經). Indeed, the Lotus Sutra and the Flower Garland Sutra are the fundamental scriptures of, respectively, the Tientai and the Huayen schools of Buddhism which, together with the Ch’\(\text{a}n\) (Zen) and the Pure Land schools forms the backbone of Chinese, indeed, East Asian, Buddhism.\(^7\) Consequently, T’ang included all the three major schools of Mahayana Buddhism - the Madhyamika, the Yogacara, and the Tathagata-garbha - in his discussion of the so-called \textit{wofaerkongj\(\text{ing}\)}, which may be translated as the horizon of dual-emptiness of both the self and the \textit{dharma}(我法二空境).

\(^5\) In Shun (印順), \textit{Rulaizang zhi yanjiu} 如來藏之研究. (Taipei: Zhengwen chubdanshe 正聞出版社, 1988).

\(^6\) According to Buddhist legend, Shrimala was the daughter of King Prasenajit and the wife of the king of Ayodhya. The couple was very wise and helped to convert a lot of people to Buddhism. The Sutra takes the form of preaching by Lady Shrimala and expounds the doctrine of One-vehicle and Buddha nature is inherent in all sentient beings. The earliest Chinese translation of this work, by Gunabhadra, dates to 436.

\(^7\) Tantric Buddhism is a special branch of Mahayana Buddhism. Historically, it has not been as influential as other Buddhist sects, such as the Ch’\(\text{a}n\) or the Pure Land sects, in China, except perhaps during the Yuan dynasty. Some emperors of the early Qing period also paid high respect to the Tantric Lamas (i.e. priests). See W. Oxtoby ed. \textit{World Religions: Eastern Traditions} (Toronto, New York, and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), vol. 2, pp. 276-283, esp. pp. 282-283.
T'ang's exposition of this Buddhist horizon can be seen as a brief summary of the essence of the Buddhist teaching as he perceived it. We shall follow his order of presentation by first explaining what is meant by "the Horizon of Dual-emptiness.

B. The Horizon of Dual Emptiness

This horizon is also known as the horizon of the atman-sunyata and dharma-sunyata, the horizon of zhuanshengpudujing (眾生善度境) and the horizon of guanizhenfajie (觀一真法界). It is usually referred to as the erkongguan (二空觀) in Chinese, which can be literally translated as "the view of two emptinesses". Here, "two" (er 二) refers to the atman on the one hand and the dharma on the other hand. Therefore, there are actually two different but related concepts involved: atman and dharma. Let us explain briefly these two concepts. According to the Buddhist tradition, the atman, which can be translated as the Self or Ego, is composed of five kinds of elements, or skandhas (五蘊) and, accordingly, lacks an essence of its own. This is the meaning behind the emptiness of atman. As for dharma the word has its root in the verb "dhri" meaning "to preserve, to uphold." Dharma means the norms that should be upheld, "that which is held fast or kept, ordinance, statute, law, usage, practice, custom." It can refer to truth, morality, teachings and so on. The derived meaning of the word is all things, events and affairs, or Universal Law in general. Unlike atman, dharma is described as an entity bearing its own attributes. In brief, Dharma has two major meanings: teachings and phenomena. Thus, the emptiness of dharma means both the emptiness of teachings and the emptiness of phenomena.
However, before proceeding with the discussion of the idea of the dual emptiness -- that is, the emptiness of both dharma and atman -- we have also to define what is meant by sunyata, or "emptiness, nothingness." The word consists of two parts: the stem, sunya and the suffix, -ta. The former means "void, empty, the number zero," and the latter "-ness;" therefore, sunyata can be translated as "Emptiness." Etymologically speaking, sunya is derived from the root svi which means "to swell," and since a swollen thing usually is hollow, the derived meaning of sunya is "empty." Garma C. Chang (張澄基), a modern authority on Mahayana Buddhism, has offered a brief but useful definition of sunyata: "Sunyata as a spiritual term denotes the total liberation from change, impermanence, effort and longing. As a philosophical term, sunyata denotes the absence of any kind of self, or selfhood. All things are empty in that they lack a subsisting entity or self-being (Svabhava)." Tang's understanding of the concept of sunyata is close to this definition. I shall explain Tang's concept of sunyata in terms of the notions of impermanence, conditioned co-arising and anatta. Since all these point to the fundamental reality of both the self and the world as perceived by the Buddhists, that is emptiness, this explains why Tang termed this Buddhist horizon the horizon of dual-emptiness.

1. Impermanence (wuchang無常)

The term, "wuchang", refers to the fact that, for Buddhists, things in this world are momentary and constantly changing, going through a four-stage process of

---

formation, maintenance, destruction, and nothingness (cheng, zhu, huai, kong 成住坏空). And, since everything is in a state of flux, one cannot really say anything about the essence of things, except, perhaps, that things are ever-changing. To say that phenomena are empty means that they are illusory in the sense that they have no essence but are composed of the five elements. Put differently, each phenomenon lacks an inherent nature, and so all are said to share an empty "non-nature" as their "nature." The logical conclusion of such a view is that not a single phenomenon can ultimately be distinguished from another in terms of their essence because they all are empty.

Enlightenment can then refer to the understanding of the non-permanent nature of things, to knowing that since there is nothing that can be permanent, one should not attach oneself to anything. There is not one thing for us to be attached to at all, for ultimately speaking, all is emptiness. In addition, beings in the phenomenal world are not merely constantly changing, but change in a momentary manner. Since beings change from instant to instant, there is no such a thing as eternal matter. Everything in the phenomenal world is an instantaneous being. In one ksana (a very short unit of time, Chinese: chana 刹那) things appear, in another they disappear (ksana-bhanga; Chinese: chanashengmei 刹那生滅). This being the case, we can say that things are not permanent. This kind of understanding of non-permanence in terms of ksana is traditionally known as the chanawuchang (刹那無常). The notion of any durable existence of things is thus an illusion.

2. Conditioned Co-arising
T’ang also emphasized the idea of yuanqi, or dependent arising which is another way of understanding the notion of sunyata. This is one of the most fundamental doctrines of Buddhism, explaining the formation and nature of beings, mental or physical, and the entanglement of sentient beings in the circle of life and death (Skt: samsara). In brief, it teaches that all physical and psychological phenomena constituting individual existence are interdependent and mutually conditioned. Beings in this world come into existence by putting different elements together; thus they are conditioned by these elements, as well as being relative and interdependent.

This doctrine of conditioned co-arising (Chinese: yuanqi 緣起) is thus a principle of conditionality, relativity and interdependence. The existence and continuity of life, as well as its cessation, are explained in a chain of arguments, called the Shieryuanqi (十二緣起). Accordingly, all things come into existence

---

9 A popular Buddhist writer, Dr. Walpola Rahula, has put the doctrine in the following formula

i. Avijja (Chinese: wuming無明) Through ignorance are conditioned volitional actions or karma-formations. ↓
ii. Sankhara (Chinese: xing行) action-intention; blind volition ↓
iii. Vinnana (Chinese: shi識) consciousness ↓
iv. Namarupa (Chinese: mingse名色) body and name ↓
v. Sadayatana (Chinese: 六入) sixfold sphere of sense-contact ↓
vi. Phassa (Chinese: chu觸) contact (Experiencing activities) ↓
vii. Vedana (Chinese: shou受) sensation ↓
viii. Tanha (Chinese: ai愛) craving ↓
ix. Upadana (Chinese: qu取) grasping ↓
x. Bhava (Chinese: you有) becoming ↓
xi. Jati (Chinese: sheng生) birth ↓
xii. Jaramarana (Chinese: laosi老死) old age and death → Samsara: Suffering
through the principle of conditioned co-arising or dependent co-arising (*pratitya-samutpada*), and therefore, devoid of selfhood or their own beingness. This notion can be further examined in terms of the following two aspects:

1) Beings are nothing but a combination of various causes or factors, and have no selfhood. *SUNYATA* can be understood through the concept of "svabhava-sunyata" which means "without self-nature" (自性空).

2) Existence is relative, not absolute. Since the doctrine of conditioned co-arising teaches that all beings are the result of combination of conditions, it is impossible to identify any self-subsisting entity in any beings. There exists no independent being. Rather, their existence is due to other conditions. In this sense, the entire universe is empty or nothingness. Put differently, this teaching reveals the dependent nature of the streams of physical and psychological existential phenomena that are conventionally conceptualized as existing beings. Thus, we can see that since things in this world are both impermanent and dependent in nature, and they should be considered as empty according to the Buddhist tradition as perceived by T'ang.¹⁰

3. *ANATTA* (No-soul or No-self; Chinese: *wuwo*無我) and *svabhava-sunyata*
Having examined the emptiness of the world, the object under perception, the next question should be: "Is the perceiving subject also nothing but emptiness?" This should bring us to the notion of no-Self. It is precisely in this respect that T'ang differed sharply from the main current of Buddhism. Enlightenment, for T'ang, is to be attained by removing and destroying ignorance, weakness, fear, desire and so on by striking at their very root, the attachment to the Self. But what is the Self?

"Soul", "Self", and "Ego" are common English translations of the Sanskrit word, atman which, in general, refers to the belief that there is a permanent and absolute entity, an unchanging substance behind the changing phenomenal world. Xuan Zang's (玄奘 A.D. 596? 600? -664) Chengweishilun (成唯識論) defines the self as: "that which is perpetual, unchanging, unitary and autonomous."11 Buddhism, however, teaches that the idea of self is an imaginary, false belief.12 What is worse, it produces harmful thoughts of "me" and "mine," which lead to selfish desire, craving, attachment, conceit, pride, egoism, and other defilements.

---

11 Xuan Zang's definition represents one of the important interpretations. The English translation here is taken from G. Chang, The Buddhist Teaching of Totality: The Philosophy of Hwa Yen Buddhism, p. 76. See also Hsuan-tsang (pin-yin: Xuan Zang 596 ca. - 664), Cheng Wei-shih lin: The Doctrine of Mere-consciousness (Hong Kong: Ch'eng Wei-shih lun Publication committee, 1973).

12 However, we must also be aware of the fact that this doctrine is a controversial topic. Some scholars like Garma C. Chang believe that the idea of no-Self is only a meditational device. "Actually, in Buddha's teachings we do not find a philosophy of No-Self; what we find is a significant therapeutic device." See Chang, The Buddhist Teaching of Totality: The Philosophy of Hwa Yen Buddhism, p. 75.
This false notion of the Self is thus the source of all kinds of conflicts and suffering, and has to be eliminated before one can attain full enlightenment.13

The teaching of an-atman aims precisely at breaking down individual existence into empty components, devoid of essence14 while the teaching of conditioned co-arising works in the direction of synthesis by showing that all phenomena stand in some relationship of conditionedness, a relationship that can be understood in terms of simultaneity as well as succession in time. They both point to the fundamental reality of the world as perceived by the Buddhists:

13 Garma Chang has discussed, among other things, three important Buddhist objections to the notion of self:
   i. Unchanging identity:
      Buddhism teaches that Self does not, in truth, exist; that this allegedly unchanging and perpetual element within us is nothing but the delusion of a confused mind. As for a changing Self, "the inherent meaning of change implies the loss of identity, which is incompatible with the concept of Self." (Chang, The Buddhist Teaching of Totality: The Philosophy of Hwa Yen Buddhism, p. 77)
   ii. unitary or indivisible:
      A Self is composed of five aggregates.
   iii. autonomous:
      A common notion of the Self is that it is autonomous, which implies freedom, independence, and volition.

14 Psychologically speaking, fearing death and the possibility of our personal non-existence, we tend to impute and cling to permanence where there is none, imagining that something permanent underlies the flux of experiential conditions. According to Buddhist teachings, however, the individual is nothing but a sequence of psycho-physical states or even a flux of consciousness. It follows that when this sequence terminates (with death), it will be impossible to refer to the individual any more. Thus, to enquire about one's existence after death is fruitless. However, popular Buddhism does believe in the possibility of this kind of thing; indeed, much of Buddhist literature is devoted to this kind of theme.
emptiness. Thus, both the dharma and the self are nothing but emptiness and this explains the name given to the Buddhist horizon of dual emptiness in T'ang's system.

However, unlike some Buddhists who focused on the emptiness of the Self, T'ang focused more upon the problem of the attachment to the Self instead of the emptiness of the Self itself. T'ang believed that the attachment to the self leads to xianzhi (limitations), fengbi (closeness), and shufu (restraint). Enlightenment is mainly a result of transcending the attachment to both the world and the self. In T'ang's favored terms, it is the process of pozhiguankong (破執觀空), which means the breaking of attachments and the seeing of the emptiness.

4. Enlightenment as Non-attachment to Dharma

Since both the world and the self are nothing but emptiness, there is nothing that one can really be attached to. However, in this case should one be attached to the teaching of emptiness itself. Following the Mahayana tradition, especially that of the Madhyamika, T'ang challenged the identity of the world and that of the cognitive Self by showing that both of them are illusory. If this is an insight learned from the Buddhism, then carrying this teaching to its logical conclusion will result in holding the emptiness of Buddhist teaching itself as well. The teaching will then be regarded as but a skillful means for us to leave the cycle of samsara and pass

---


over to the other side of the river, to the "Western Pure Land", the land of peace and enlightenment. Once we are enlightened, however, we will not need to be attached to the teaching anymore than we would need to carry the raft after we have crossed the river. So, Buddhist teaching is useful in helping us to attain enlightenment, but if we continue to adhere to it, it will become just another kind of attachment and, consequently, a new source of suffering.

C. Suffering and Universal Salvation

1. Suffering

As we have just discussed, it is attachment to this world, to this self, and even to Buddhist teachings which causes all suffering. Therefore, T'ang paid special attention to the concept of duhkha, the first of the so-called four noble truths (satya-catustaya四聖諦)\(^\text{(17)}\). In Sanskrit, the word can mean several things: "imperfection, impermanence, emptiness, insubstantiality,"\(^\text{(18)}\) T'ang usually used the Chinese translation of this word, \(ku\) "suffering", which is also the most common English translation. In response to the endless suffering of beings, T'ang believed that we should not only strive to liberate ourselves from suffering; we should also have a compassionate heart and try to help others liberate themselves.\(^\text{(19)}\)

\(^{17}\) The four noble truths are duhkha-satya苦, samudaya-satya集, nirodha-satya滅, and marga-satya道.

\(^{18}\) See Walpola Rahula, What the Buddha Taught, p. 17.

\(^{19}\) T'ang, Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart, vol. 2, p. 76.
On this point, T'ang criticized Christianity for being indifferent to the suffering of beings by first not recognizing their existence. He believed that Buddhism faces the existence of beings without questioning the possibility of their non-existence as Christianity has done. On the basis of this recognition, human beings can have compassion and share the feelings of suffering which other beings experience. Through such shared experience, human beings can develop the heart of kindness and compassion.

Suffering, according to T'ang, results mainly from unsatisfied desires or unfulfilled aspirations. Moreover, there are conflicts in the world because people's goals and desires often conflict with each other. The satisfaction of one usually leads to the dissatisfaction of the other. All these result in suffering. By neglecting the diversities of human goals, one will eventually become indifferent to the pains and sufferings of the beings in the world. In T'ang's view, Christianity's emphasis on the glorification of God as the ultimate end of existence leads to a false sense of self that is manifested in selfishness or moral indifference to fellow beings (mamuburen 厭木不仁).

Ultimately, there is no fundamental difference among sentient beings since the essence of all sentient beings, for both Buddhists and T'ang, consists of kutung (suffering 苦痛) and fannau (煩惱 trouble, defilement, passion). Here, T'ang pointed out the crucial difference between Buddhism and Christianity in their

---


notions of salvation. In Buddhism, salvation means the elimination of sufferings and *kleshas*; in Christianity, salvation is a grace from above, from God. In Christianity, the quest for salvation is based on hope or expectation of divine intervention. In Buddhism, the essence of salvation lies in compassion for the suffering of all beings. From there, one gains unceasing hope for the saving of others.

2. Conditions for liberation from suffering

a. Compassion

T'ang strongly emphasized the phenomenon of suffering, human beings' awareness of it, and their unceasing quest to attain liberation. This awareness can be called the consciousness of transcendence — that is, the consciousness of transcending suffering. It is important to stress that for T'ang, this transcendence is mainly a process of self-transcendence. It begins with the insight about the true nature of this world: this world is empty; to cling or attach oneself to it is to bring suffering to oneself. Once we gain this insight, we are empowered to liberate ourselves without having to wait for or rely upon some external act of grace, divine or otherwise. In other words, this liberating insight is a self-generated wisdom which enables us to "see the dharmas of the dharma-world as the way they are;

---

and to witness the emptiness of dharmas and the Buddha-nature of all sentient beings."^{23}

This idea of self-liberation in T'ang's thought — or, as he termed it, baku (拔苦), which literally means "to uproot suffering" — reflect precisely the mainstream Mahayana position. However, T'ang emphasized that liberation does not only mean self-liberation. For him, baku also includes the intention to liberate others. T'ang believed that this intention to save others comes from one's compassion, called tongqinggonggan (同情共感) or "sympathy and co-feeling toward others" — in other words, in the capacity to share and understand the feeling of others. This view shows not only the kind of compassion necessary to become a good Buddhist, but also the radical sense of equality and interconnection through which Buddhists regard all beings.

This kind of compassion lies in our great Bodhicitta^{24} (Chinese: 菩提心) which literally means "the heart of great Buddha". T'ang's emphasis is on the great intention or heart to eliminate others' suffering or to free others from suffering.

---


^{24} T'ang's understanding of Bodhicitta accords with the mainstream of Mahayana Buddhism but differs from the Tibetan tradition which divides the Bodhicitta into the relative mind of enlightenment and the absolute mind of enlightenment, and refers it not only to the intention to save all beings but also to the actual entry into meditation and the vision of nirvana as well. Paul Williams has a discussion of the Tibetan understanding in this regard. See his Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundation (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 197-204. A brief note on the Bodhicitta can be found in Franz-Karl Ehrhand's entry on Bodhicitta in The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion (Boston: Shambhala, 1994), p. 38.
Thus, he related it to the *cixin* 慈心 and *beixin* 悲心 which represent the great intention to give joyfulness to others and to help them eliminate their suffering, respectively. These two "hearts" or intentions show two major capacities of the consciousness of transcendent, namely the ability to know and to feel other feelings, and thus to have com-passion and co-feeling; and the inability to remain indifferent to other's suffering. The former refers to a cognitive aspect while the later belongs to a religious-moral aspect.

Another cornerstone of T'ang's thought is that salvation comes from inner self-enlightenment, rather than from external sources. Although the great compassion of the Bodhisattvas has allowed them to take upon themselves the suffering of the world. However, for T'ang, all they can do is show the path towards liberation from suffering. That is what is meant by "to save the sentient beings by Way," to show the right (Buddhist) teachings to those who are suffering in this cycle of birth and death (*samsara*). Nor is the Way a miracle that provides instant liberation, which is why not a single reference is made to miracles, despite the fact that they abound in Buddhist literature. Rather, the Way to salvation in T'ang's description of Buddhism has been reduced into a way of understanding reality, that is, *sunyata*, and the Way that the Buddha employs to

---

25 *cī* means to give joy to the other while *bei* means to eliminate other's suffering. The two together with both *xi* (喜) and *she* (捨) form the Four Great Hearts (*四無量心*) in Buddhism. The Sanskrit words for these four terms are *mahamaitri*, *mahakaruna*, *mahamudita*, and *mahapeksa*.


28 One typical example is the *Baiyu Jing* (Hundred Parables Sutra百喻經).
save sentient beings is to make them know the dharma. This is, of course, a result of the compassion of Buddha and the Bodhisattvas; that is, those who are on the way to complete enlightenment but instead of going straight ahead to attain Buddhahood are willing to remain in this world to save others. T'ang's interpretation of compassion seems to reflect the essence of the Four Great Vows:

The troubles are endless but I vow to overcome them all.
The sentient beings are numerous, I vow to save them all.
The dharma gates are countless, but I vow to know them all.
There is nothing higher than the Buddha's way, I vow to attain it.

The Vows show the great compassion and firm determination that arise from the depths of one's transcendent consciousness, the volition to save the others. This kind of compassion and determination generate the Great Yuanxin (Chinese: dayuanxin 大願心), that is the "heart" or intention to help, and thereby the force of saving the others (Chinese: yuanli願力). All these come from a finite Self, but all beings which are suffering and will be suffering are infinite, so the intention to help thus also becomes infinite. Beings are countless and so is our compassion towards them. Thus, the heart of a Bodhisattva is as vast and deep as the ocean.

In other words, the ultimate ideal of Buddhism, for T'ang, is nothing but universal

---


31 Thus, it is called the yuanhai (願海) which literally means "the ocean of willingness".
salvation. Thus, he also named this horizon as the horizon for the salvation of all beings.\(^{32}\)

b. Transcending the Division

The basis of such an "altruistic" assertion is that the distinction between of myself and other-self, or I and the other, is simply an illusion which should be transcended.\(^{33}\) This is particularly relevant to T'ang discussion of the so-called trans-subjective-objective horizon which emphasizes the transcending of the distinction between subject and object. The appeal to the compassion of the Bodhisattva is an argument from an ethical viewpoint while the appeal to the non-differentiation of I and the other is an ontological argument. To put it most simply, all pairs of opposites contradict only in appearance. Ultimately speaking, there is no opposition which cannot be resolved. To view everything as having its own distinct identity is an illusory perception from an ordinary viewpoint.

D. Foundations and Paths to Liberation

1. Karma and Attachment

---

\(^{32}\) T'ang's notion of infinite compassion is illustrated by the Bodhisattva, Avalokiteshvara (Chinese: Guanyin 觀音), who is portraited as the Bodhisattva of unconditional compassion for every being, and thus possesses a thousand hands to enable him/her to help so many suffering beings.

\(^{33}\) T'ang, Life, Existence and the Horizon of Mind-heart, pp. 94-101.
The way to achieve nirvana, or "liberation", is to break the attachment to the Self (pochuwozhi破除我執) and to understand sunyata (tiwukongxing體悟空性). On the basis of the heart of compassion, the Buddhists use various famen法門 to eliminate the suffering and karmas of all sentient beings with a hope of rescuing them and helping them attain Buddhahood. This is an unceasing process and relies mainly on the great heart of compassion and the great promise (vow) of saving all beings. To become a Buddha is likewise a time-consuming pilgrimage which can mean an unceasing effort, life after life. Even after one becomes a Buddha, there is much work of grace to do.

2. The Seed of Liberation: Buddha-nature

A view of self-transcendence based on non-attachment to this world, combined with a concern for the suffering and salvation of others, is based upon the assumption of the existence of a "Buddha-nature" in every being. T'ang employed the Yogacara tradition to explain this, echoing the development of Chinese Buddhism that eventually assimilated the teaching of the ultimate
universality of Buddhahood with the *Mahaparinirvana* doctrine of the Buddha-nature, the *tathagatagarbha* teaching, or in Chinese, *rulaizang*.34

In early Buddhism, the personality factor of consciousness (*Chinese: shi 識*) was referred to equally as *vinnana*, *citta* (thought) or *mano* (mind-organ), and was classified into one of six types: eye-ear-, nose-, tongue-, body-, and mind-consciousness, each related to a particular sense-organ. In the Yogacara tradition, however, two more types of consciousness or *citta* are added, making a total of eight. An understanding of this tradition sees each *citta* as consisting of a series of momentary events, accompanied by an appropriate collection of "mental states." Among the eight different kinds of consciousness, it is the *alaya* consciousness which attracts T'ang's special attention.35

When a person performs actions, *karmic* traces are left on his unconscious: the 'seed' of future karmic effects sinks into the *alaya*, a receptacle which actively stores them. Thus, the *alaya* is usually called the Store House Consciousness, and differs from the Christian God in three aspects according to T'ang. First, he

34 The teaching of the Three Aspects (*S. Svabhava-traya*三性，三自性) is central to the Cittamattra tradition (*唯識*) which is also known as the Yogacara tradition (*瑜珈行派*). The first aspect is the constructed or conceptualized aspect, the *pianjìsuozhixìng* （遍計所執性, *S. parikalpitasvabhava*). This can be understood as the appearance of beings which is grasped by a perceiving mind through the employment of language and concept. The second aspect, the dependent aspect, is known as the *yitaqixìng* in Chinese （依他起性, *S. paratantra-svabhava*). This aspect refers to the dependent origination of dharman. It emphasizes on the One can attain the *yitaqixìng* if one can see there is no real self in the beings and understand that everythings is nothing but a combination of conditions. The third aspect is known as the *yuanchengshìxing* （圓成實性, *S. parinispamnasvabhava*). That is the true reality of beings, emptiness.

believed that it contains the seeds of both good and evil, while the Christian God is free from all evil elements. Second, unlike God's creation, which happened only once, the creations of the Store House Consciousness happen many times. Third, while the Christian God is eternal in the sense that he remains unchanged, the Store House Consciousness is everchanging. It consists of a series of cittas, accompanied by both karmic 'seed' and the 'seeds' of potential defilement and memories. These all reproduce themselves over time, thus accounting for the continuity of personality through death and periods of unconsciousness, when the seven active consciousnesses are absent. The alaya is also said to contain some intrinsically pure 'seed,' the source of religious striving. They arise from the profound depths of the alaya, the param-alaya or alaya which is beyond.

Not only does a Self have no identity of its own, each Self is also constantly changing. Each of us is the same Self for only a moment, or perhaps even less. Given the teaching of rebirth and reincarnation, what, then, is the link between this instantaneous being and this current of change? How can one's essential nature be passed on to the next birth? The problem is especially clear in the doctrine of karma. A person's karma is the power or force resulting from the voluntary actions of an individual, which shapes his or her succeeding life. Evil-doers will suffer and be reborn into an unpleasant form of existence while doers-of-good will be rewarded. One's fate is the result of one's own deeds. But if there is no Self, said

---


37 In the She-lun school (攝論派), the earliest Chinese version of the Yogacara, this is designed as a ninth, 'taintless', consciousness. This depth-aspect of alaya is seen to be beyond the dualisms of subject and object, existence and non-existence, and is known as the dharma-dhatu, the 'dharma-reals', or the world of dharma.
T'ang, who or what carries this *karma* force? Who is going to be punished and who is going to be rewarded?

If we do not assert the existence of a self that can pass from life to life to bear the consequence of actions in previous lives, what is meant by reward and punishment in the succeeding life? One has to assert not only the existence of *karma* but also some sort of existence in a continuous form of existence. T'ang explained this in terms of seeds (*zhongzi: 種子*), that are carried into the next life. *Karma* drives us to the endless pursuit of physical existence. This does not mean that *karma* produces the self. Rather, it is the dynamic which drives the no-Self to the next no-Self existence. However, the content of such an illusive life is the actualization of the seeds. Seeds thus can be viewed as instances of potential waiting to be actualized on the one hand, and the karmic residue of past deeds (actualization), on the other.

The actualization of the seeds is called the *xianxing* (現行), and it can reinforce the degrees of joy or suffering in the earthly world.\(^{38}\) This actually produces *karma*. The more frequently it actualizes, the stronger the seed will become. On the other hand, if one succeeds in suppressing the actualization of seeds, one is able to weaken them. The more strongly they are suppressed, the weaker they become, till they vanish into nothingness.\(^{39}\) When one reaches a


stage where all bad seeds have been eliminated, one becomes an enlightened one, a Buddha.40

T'ang used this kind of explanation to justify the attainability of Buddhahood. He asserted that while good seeds can never be eliminated, evil seeds can. They are the result of a flawed view of the world which, once one understands true reality, will be eliminated.41 To get rid of incorrect views, one has to understand that the world is actually a result of dependent co-arising,42 and to assert that the ultimate reality of the world is emptiness. This will set us on our way to enlightenment. The condition which makes this possible lies precisely in the fact that we have the seed of achieving enlightenment.43 This is not a mere result of self-effort for everything is conditioned or interdependent. The actualization of good seeds is no exception to this law of co-arising. Accordingly the process of pursuing Buddhahood is not merely a self-effort, and the result of such a pursuit is never a mere self-achievement. Thus, there is nothing for us to be really proud of. Even if one has the virtue of liuduwanxing (六度萬行)44 one should realize that it is

43 T'ang, Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart, vol. 2, p. 120.
44 The liudu refers to the six paramitas 六波羅蜜, that is the six things that ferry one beyond the sea of mortality to nirvana. They are charity, keeping the commandments, patience under insult, contemplation, zealous progress and wisdom. See William Edward Soothill and Lewis Rodus, A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chubangongsi新文豐出版公司, 1992), p. 130.
nothing but *sunyata* and should not attach oneself to it and think that it has a subsisting entity.45

3. The Three Lives

Becoming Buddha, or fully enlightened, is impossible to accomplish for most people in just one lifetime. In addition, after one becomes enlightened, the tremendous amount of good merits one produces can be extended to the future, that is, to numerous lives thereafter.46 T'ang used this to justify the existence life after life. While the existence of seeds can be implied by one's deeds, that is the actualization of seeds, the non-existence of certain deeds cannot be taken as a proof for the non-existence of such a particular kind of seed responsible for the deeds. According to Buddhist philosophy, the seeds and *karmas* of one individual do not vanish even after one's death. The seeds are stored in the so-called *Alaya*, or Store House of consciousness, so even if a particular seed does not activate any more, it does not mean that it no longer exists. However, it does mean that it is currently in a non-active stage and will neither strengthen nor weaken. The re-


activation of the dull seed must be caused by other conditions. It cannot reactivate itself.47

T'ang then combined the insights of Yogacara Buddhism with Immanuel Kant's argument to establish the rationality of the immortality of human soul. Kant, as perceived by T'ang, assumed the immortality of the soul in order to make possible the highest good. That is to say, even if one cannot achieve the highest good in one single life, one (soul) can still try again in another life. In a similar vein, Yogacara Buddhism argues for the existence of other worlds, those of past life and those of future life, since the good seeds produced by the moral actions of an individual cannot fully flourish in one life; they outlive our physical bodies, and wait for another chance of actualization in the next life.

If the seeds of compassion for the suffering of sentient beings become inactive and thus cannot be actualized, then it will be impossible to cultivate the virtue of compassion. Similarly, T'ang argued that if souls can be immortal, then there should be a world which allowed such an immortal soul to activate and actualize. Thus, for T'ang, we should be able to think about the existence of the

---

47 T'ang, Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart, vol. 2, p. 122. According to the Yogacara tradition, there are four kinds of karma which are responsible for producing future lives: xianshishouye 現世受業 that having immediate effect in this life itself, laishengshouye來生受業 that having effect in the next succeeding life, houshengshouye後生受業 that having effect in some after life, and jiyouye既有業 that whose effect has completely lost its potential force. What T'ang refers here is the last one, the jiyouye.
past, the present, and the future world. These are collectively termed by Buddhists as the sanshi (三世).\textsuperscript{48}

Rewarding good and punishing evil are then put in a chain of karma. Good deeds produce good karma, and evil deeds produce bad karma. If one does evil deeds in this life and is yet able to enjoy a comfortable life, this is explained by referring to the effect of good karma produced in past life, which may not yet have been exhausted. Thus, it is unnecessary to expect to see one punished in this life or even in the next. Everyone will eventually get his/her just deserved.

T'ang had thus come out with an answer for justifying the existence of the so-called "Three Lives." According to him, the existence of a future life is not merely a logical possibility but a real possibility (shineng: 實能)\textsuperscript{49}. The question of logical possibility belongs to the domain of epistemology while the question of real possibility is ontological. The main difference lies in whether the principle of actualization (chengwei xianshi zhi yuanze 成為現實之原則) is included in the possibility. Such a principle is included in a real possibility but not a logical possibility. T'ang believed that real possibility exists in the life and world of one's mind and can actualize itself without relying upon other conditions to actualize, and provides an example to demonstrate his point. He believed that our thought can disclose itself or conceal itself from us.


T'ang believed a thought can disclose itself to us if it is a real possibility. However, it would be wrong to think that it is necessary so. That is to say, a thought can remain in a stage of concealment instead of moving to a stage of disclosure. The reason, for T'ang, is that it might be suppressed by other thoughts and thus is unable to disclose to us. If one has a thought and does not have any other thought occupying one's mind, he can well remain under the horizon exhibited in the old thought. According to T'ang, people usually tend to remain in the old stage to which they are habituated. It is only when this kind of continuation of thought is interrupted, that other thoughts (i.e. other real potentials) can manifest themselves. An individual preoccupied with thoughts in daily time may not feel the existence of other real potential thoughts within himself. However, when he or she sleeps, these potentials may have a chance of freeing themselves from the obstructing force of those thoughts which pre-occupy one's mind during the day, and thus are capable of disclosing themselves to us. In sum, T'ang did not think that the non-actualization of one's potentials should be used as a means to deny their existence. Naturally, the existence of the future life cannot be denied simply because there is no way to provide any sensory or empirical evidence to disprove it from this life. After all, according to T'ang, our sensory experiences are limited to this life and thus cannot disprove the existence of any future life.

E. Reflections

---


Whether T'ang's interpretation of Buddhism is accurate or not, is not the focus of this dissertation. What concerns us here is T'ang's philosophy as reflected in his interpretation. Clearly, T'ang's interpretation reflects a Neo-Confucian position. Although it is certainly nothing new for Neo-Confucian scholars to read Confucian ideas into their interpretations of Buddhism, it is not my intention to suggest that T'ang's interpretation is a Neo-Confucian reading of Buddhism, let alone an intended distortion. Rather, I suggest important parallels between T'ang's interpretations of Buddhism and his own Confucian teachings. Among other important similarities, I would like to address one particular point which I perceive as most relevant to our discussion: this-worldliness.

We have already examined the notion of sunyata. For Theravada Buddhism, sunyata is understood mainly negatively, as liberation from the endless cycle of rebirth, or samsara. There is a sharp distinction between the realm of samsara and that of enlightenment. Generally speaking, withdrawing from this earthly world is extremely important if not absolutely necessary to attain nirvana according to the Theravada Buddhists. Therefore, a monastic life is especially profitable when compared to the life of a layman, although one should never think that a monastic life is the only path toward nirvana in this tradition. However, if nirvana means liberation from suffering and leaving the world behind, then it can also be viewed

52 One of the popular misunderstandings of Theravada Buddhism is to see it as a mere monastery tradition. Ninian Smart, an authority in Indian philosophy, has stated in one of his latest work that in the Theravada tradition "being a monk or nun is the bridge toward nirvana. You need to withdraw from the world to have a real chance of liberation. See his Worldviews: Cross-cultural Explorations of Human Beliefs (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1995). 2nd ed., p. 98-99. This kind of view overlooks the role of pratyeka-buddhas (Chinese: yuanjue 眠覺; dujue獨覺) who attain their enlightenment without leading a monastic life.

130
as a kind of selfishness that is indifferent to others' suffering. A true Buddha should have enough compassion to feel another's suffering beside his own, and a compassionate Buddha should thus care about not only his own salvation but the salvation of others as well. This leads to the emphasis on the notion of Bodhisattva in T'ang's discussion on Buddhism, where attention is paid towards suffering in this world, instead of the mystical experience of nirvana. Put differently, the focus has been shifted from the concern for the other-worldly experience to a true concern for this-worldly suffering. This has important implications for the notion of enlightenment. In the Theravada tradition, the world is the place of samsara, while nirvana or enlightenment is to leave samsara for enlightenment. For T'ang, to remain in this world of samsara and try to help save others is a path to enlightenment. In other words, nirvana should not only be sought but also be attained within this world. To assert "samsara is nirvana" (Chinese: shengsi ji niepan 生死即涅槃) means the world where life and death takes place is no different with the world where one can achieve enlightenment. Enlightenment is not beyond this world. Such a shift without doubt reflects the emphasis of the mainstream Mahayana teaching. As we have already mentioned earlier, T'ang's focus in his study of Buddhism is Mahayana instead of Theravada Buddhism. I would also venture to point out that the concern of this world is also one of the most important concerns of Confucianism.\textsuperscript{53} T'ang's critique of Christianity which is

\textsuperscript{53} Even though Neo-Confucianism is noted for its ontologization of the Confucian ethics, no Neo-Confucian scholars claim that their teachings were purely metaphysics or cosmology let alone indifferent to practical affairs (e.g. politics). Confucian central concern has never been this kind of speculation. Although, some Neo-Confucian scholars were fond of constructing ontological and cosmological systems, they did not intend to transform Confucianism into a mere speculative philosophy. I would rather say that they tried to lay the foundation of the Confucian ethics by providing a new ontology or cosmology based upon Confucian spirit as they perceived it.
based on his praise of the Buddhist teaching of great compassion for the suffering of beings can also be viewed as a criticism grounded in the Confucian concern for this world. T'ang's view of Confucianism is more clearly explained in his exposition of the so-called horizon of the Heavenly Virtue, which I will address in the next chapter.
Chapter Four

Confucianism and the Transcendent Dimension

A. Introduction

The highest stage in T'ang's system is the Horizon of the Prevalence of Heavenly Virtue (*Tiande liuxingjing* 天德流行境), also known as the horizon of the fulfillment of human nature and the establishment of heavenly mandate (*jinxingliming* 盡性立命境), or the horizon of perceiving human nature and the heavenly mandate (*guanxingmingjie* 觀性命界). In T'ang's system, this last horizon is represented chiefly by Confucianism, which he regards as the perfect example of the highest horizon of mind-heart.¹

This horizon can be characterized by the statement: "in human moral achievement, one sees the prevalence of Heavenly Virtue."² For T'ang, this is the supreme teaching that underlies Confucian moral praxis. This teaching belongs to the trans-subjective-objective horizon (*chao zhukejing* 超主客境), which, as mentioned in the preceding chapters, also includes the horizons of Christianity and Buddhism. The Confucian horizon, however, differs from these last two trans-subjective-objective horizons in several ways.

---

¹ T'ang also mentions that Taoism has partially reached this stage but the Taoist horizon is not as complete as that of the Confucian and T'ang does not dwell on it for long.

The way of attaining such a trans-subjective-objective horizon is, as T'ang stated clearly, to "follow the order of our lives and existence and show the order of the world before us. Then, by employing a sequential perspective - that is, a perspective which follows the order of earlier to later, of beginning to end and of fundamental to incidental - one can bridge the gap between Heaven above and human beings below, and the gap between oneself and other outside existence. Thus one becomes capable of harmonizing the opposition between the subjective and the objective and of attaining the trans-subjective-objective horizon." What makes this horizon so unique is T'ang's emphasis on the importance of the order or sequence of the transcending process. The transcendence from the human realm to Heaven, in T'ang's view, should follow the order of priority in the zhucong (主從) or benmo (本末) schemes in which the human realm is seen as the true origin of transcendence, not Heaven. This signifies, in T'ang's scheme, the priority of humanity over Heaven in the process of transcendence. T'ang called this the priority perspective (shunguan 順觀).

While T'ang called the horizon of Heavenly Virtue the "highest" of the three trans-subjective-objective horizons, he did not imply that the other two are inferior. T'ang saw the three trans-subjective-objective horizons as complementary horizons, and so when he referred to the Confucian horizon of Heavenly Virtue as the "highest", he meant it in the sense of being the main (zhu 主) complement, rather than the auxiliary (cong 從) one. However, a more important issue for T'ang concerns the foundation and the order of the process

---

of transcendence. For him, Confucianism constitutes the fundamental horizon from which one can establish the ultimacy of human beings (lirenji人極) and thus be able to perceive the Supreme Ultimate (jiántáiji見太極) or the essence of Heaven. This process of transcendence -- from the human realm to the realm of Heaven -- reveals the essential unity or continuity between humanity and Heaven.4

T'ang rejected the notion of a radical and unbridgeable gap between Heaven and Humanity as suggested, for example, by the Judaeo-Christian idea of a "totally Other" God. Cosmologically, T'ang saw here an interpenetrable universe -- or, more specifically, Heaven and humanity which mutually penetrate each other. However, in his humanistic vision of the universe, cosmology is really founded on and flows from anthropology, not the other way around. Accordingly, in the context of the Chinese trinity -- Heaven, Earth, and Humanity -- T'ang identified Christianity with Heaven (in the sense of its vertical God-centered horizon), Buddhism with Earth (in the Mahayana sense of its horizontal vision of compassion to all beings), and Confucianism with Humanity (in the sense of its radically human yet all-embracing vision of Human, Earthly, and Heavenly realities).5

Tang's humanistic vision becomes even more pronounced when he elaborates on his notion of the Horizon of Heavenly Virtue in contrast to the Buddhist and the Christian horizons. He said,


The Confucian teaching about the prevalence of Heavenly Virtue does not emphasize the mystical experience of divine revelation, the establishment of doctrines and organization of churches, and it also does not teach about other existence, past or future. It does not speak of the world of the six realms of existence beyond this world. It does not speak of the causes and consequences of good and evil in the Three Lives [past, present, future]. It does not speak of the universal salvation of beings other than human beings. It only speaks of our lives and existence here and now and about the events in this world.⁶

As indicated earlier, the progress from humanity to Heaven is a process of transcending the dichotomy between the subjective and objective dimensions. This is why the Confucian horizon belongs to the trans-subjective-objective dimension. Of course, the Christian and the Buddhist horizons are also trans-subjective-objective horizons. However, they differ from Confucianism in the sense that they either invert or only partially follow the right perspective on the order of priority in the Humanity-Heaven relation. To confuse this order of priority, in T'ang's view, results in a distorted vision of things.

For Confucianism, as T'ang understood, this world is the main concern of human life and existence. For T'ang, life is a single process of "being and non-being" (youwu 有無) or vice versa, or a process of activity and tranquillity.

---

(dongjing 動靜) or vice versa. Put differently, existence is a single succession of life and death. The importance of this view for T'ang is that we should acknowledge and value the reality of this world. We should not pretend as if this world is unreal so that we can escape from it and take refuge in some other-world. On the other hand, we should also not assume that life in this world is absolute and that we can therefore deny the reality of life after death or the existence of spirits. Here, it is obvious that T'ang was proposing an agnostic solution to questions about the unknown. Also, T'ang made it clear that his this worldly views were not to be equated with naturism (which takes nature as the ultimate reality) and anthropocentrism (which identifies man with God or Heaven).  

T'ang's focus on this-worldly existence emphasizes one very important point: responsibility in fulfilling or making this life and this world complete. In emphasizing this element of responsibility, T'ang wanted to show that valuing this life and this world does not necessarily imply selfish attachment to this world. Responsibility for ourselves and others imply, on the contrary, the ability to transcend selfish attachments.

This is a response to the Buddhist idea that all forms of attachment must be rejected because they prevent us from transcending the existential self which is an illusion. T'ang argued that not all attachments are undesirable. In his view, attachments, like filial piety (attachment to family or ancestors) and loyalty to one's country, are responsible attachments that enable one to transcend oneself.

---

In this context, the phrase *wudingzhi er zichaoyue* 無定執而自超越 — which translates as "[having] no fixed attachment in order to transcend oneself" — best captures T'ang's idea of responsible attachment. Human beings are capable of self-liberation from irresponsible attachments to existential needs and desires, and self-transformation into authentic human beings.

T'ang's views on attachment differ from the Buddhist view in two ways. One, for T'ang, attachment to this-life is not a consequence of ignorance. Two, attachment to concepts does not necessarily result in an illusive view of the world. T'ang referred here to two different kinds of illusion: illusion of the self and the illusion of the Dharma. Dharma, as mentioned earlier, can be subdivided into two categories: the Buddhist teachings and the world of phenomena. For T'ang, attachments to all these, Dharma and the self, are not necessarily illusory. The world is real; what is illusory is our distorted perception of it.

T'ang's position becomes clearer when he discusses the Buddhist worldview. Buddhists solve the problem of suffering in the world by renouncing the world (*dharma*) (the object of attachments), self (*atman*) (the subject of attachment), and eventually the Buddhist teachings themselves. T'ang did not agree with these ideas. He admitted the reality of suffering, but for him, the way out of it is not by denying the world but by affirming the value of life and our responsibility for it. The world must be taken as a given which for T'ang is the horizon that we all live in. We cannot discard it as an illusion. Whether attachments are good or bad depend not on the nature of the world but on our attitude towards it. The right attitude towards the world is to be responsible for it, and we are made aware of our responsibilities by a reflective mind-heart. If we
have a reflective mind-heart, we can detach ourselves from the world. In other words, self-reflection is transcendence (that is, self-transcendence).

T'ang did not hold the view that the mind-heart attaches (zhiqu 執取) to concepts. T'ang did not agree with the Buddhist claim that our mind is a xuwangfenbiexin (虛妄分別心), a mind that makes illusory distinctions. On the contrary, for T'ang, concepts and distinctions enable us to differentiate between good and evil. In this sense, the mind-heart that provide us with life orientation which, in T'ang's system, leads the Confucian horizon of the prevalence of Heavenly virtue.

B. From Human to Heaven: Self-transcendence

1. Gantong and the Union of Heaven and Humanity

As we mentioned in the first chapter, T'ang held human nature to be innately good and such innate goodness is the inner dynamic which drives us to become better persons. However, in order to realize our moral consciousness in the world, we cannot remain within ourselves and not be related and concerned with those around us. In T'ang, the ability to symphatize or feel with others is called gantong (感通). However, the ability to gantong is not limited to just the ethical and interpersonal. It also includes, what we may call, a religious dimension: the ability to unite with Heaven. The latter ability is the basis for T'ang's ninth horizon, the Horizon of the Prevalence of Heavenly Virtue.

---

8 See Chapter two.
The ethical and religious dimensions of gantong are not mutually exclusive; indeed, they are two sides of the same coin. He spoke about the "penetration" of Heaven and Humanity as a single process. We may say that this is T'ang's reinterpretation of the ancient Confucian ideal of tianrenheyi (天人合一), the union of Heaven and Humanity. Gantong is based on the notion of moral unfolding, the realization of the moral ideal — or the prevalence of Heavenly virtue — in the individual. Therefore, we cannot speak of Heaven-human union apart from human-human union.

But what precisely, for T'ang, is the nature of this "union" between Heaven and Humanity? It is my view that this kind of union cannot be characterized as mystical, in the sense of a union of a human being and a transcendent divinity. For T'ang, what matters is not seeking union with some deity but cultivating one's innate moral nature endowed by Heaven. A Confucian scholar, according

-----

Professor Louis Dupre of Yale University rightly pointed out that "no definition could be both meaningful and sufficiently comprehensive to include all experiences that, at some point or other, have been described as mystical." People come out with different definitions of the word. For example, W. T. Stace distinguished two major kinds of mysticism: introvertive and extrovertive. What I do here should not be considered as rejecting any other definitions. Rather, it reflects nothing but my own way of using the word, mystical. However, my understanding of the word is not arbitrary. As Professor Ileana Marcoulesco pointed out that "the experience of (mystical) union between the subject and its divine object is considered the supreme stage of mystical stage and of the contemplative path." Professors L. Dupre and Ileana Marcoulesco's discussions appear in the entries, "mysticism" and "mystical union" in the Encyclopedia of Religions (N.Y.: Macmillan and Free Press, 1987), vol. 10, pp. 245-261 and pp. 239-245 respectively. For a brief discussion of the mysticism in Christianity and Confucianism, see Julia Ching, Confucianism and Christianity, pp. 157-161.
to T'ang, focuses his attention on attaining that level of self-perfection which can be compared to Heaven. In Chinese philosophical tradition, it is called the union of the Heaven and Humanity in terms of achieving the same level of virtue (tianrenhede 天人合德). It is in this axiological sense that T'ang spoke of the union of Heaven and Humanity.

2. The Sequential Perspective

In T'ang's mind, life and existence in this world flow according to a definite path and sequence of, e.g., "before to after", "beginning to end". This is based on the more fundamental notion about the continuity of Humanity and Heaven. For T'ang, Humanity and Heaven is a dynamic continuum or sequence that begins with Humanity and culminates with Heaven. In terms of moral cultivation, Heaven is indeed the Human Ultimate (renji). Therefore, this perspective advocates the primacy of Humanity over Heaven in the sense that Humanity (human nature, relationships, and so on), not some extra-human power, is the true basis of moral cultivation and self-transcendence. In other words, the structure of moral cultivation and self-transcendence is fundamentally human. This was what T'ang referred to when he talked about sequential perspective (shunguan順觀).

According to the Great Learning, a Confucian should start with the cultivation of one's self, then take care of his/her family and, eventually, his country. This is another aspect of the sequential perspective. However, it is not be taken in a temporal sense or as a hierarchy of value. It does not suggest that the transformation of the self comes first and the transformation of the world later,
or that the former is more important than the latter. It merely suggests our relationship with others and the world follows a pattern of variation. For example, we love people in different ways and degrees depending on the nature of our relationship with them; likewise, the nature or quality of our concern for human beings differ from that which we direct to the natural environment or the universe. Our love for ourselves and our families is usually greater than our love for strangers and other beings in the universe. Again, the sequence here is from within to without, from the self to the universe. This outward movement of love and compassion is how we become truly human and transcend the individual confines of the self. This is the ethical aspect of gantong.

However, as we just mentioned, the notion of gantong is not limited to its ethical meaning. It also includes the religious transcendent dimension. Because of this latter dimension, Tang classified and placed the Confucian horizon with Buddhism and Christianity, which he regarded as transcendence-oriented systems, instead of putting it in the under the sixth horizon, the daode shijianjing (道德實踐境), that is the horizon of moral praxis.

We must now ask: how does one establish this connection with the transcendent dimension of the Confucian horizon? The human faculty to gantong is a means to transcend the limitations of individuality, the existential conditions of humanity, and communicate with the transcendent. This is possible because we can establish the ideal moral personality through moral practice. This moral personality does not only consist of the feeling of reverence towards other moral beings, but also the feeling of communicating or belongingness with them. Again, this is gantong. Such gantong enables us to transcend our
existential environment and be free of the limitations of time and space. Through it, we can, in a sense, be "friends" with the great sages and worthies of the past and the present, in the East and in the West. This, for T'ang, is the comprehensive extent of human perfection, the true meaning of universal love.

On the notion of universal love, I would like to clarify one point. In classical Chinese philosophy, the notion of love in Mo Zi (墨子) and Mencius are usually cited to point out the difference between universal love and hierarchical love. Some comparative religionists like to point out that Christianity teaches universal love while Confucianism teaches hierarchical love. Whether or not Mo Zi's and the Christians' idea of universal love are the same, is beyond the scope of the present discussion. What interests us here is whether T'ang held the hierarchical notion of love or not. The answer, I think, depends upon what the adjective "universal" means. If it means that there is no difference in the degree of our love towards others, then T'ang certainly cannot be counted as a believer in universal love. However, if by "universal" we mean only that love is directed to all without exception, then T'ang can be regarded as a believer in universal love. T'ang believed in universal compassion, but in a hierarchical manner. He taught that we should love more those closer to us than those who are not. This kind of universal love is certainly very much along the lines of the Mencian tradition.

What is special about T'ang's -- and other Neo-Confucian scholars' -- notion of "extending the mind-heart" is its more comprehensive coverage. In earlier Confucianism, love is limited to the realm of fellow human beings; in Neo-Confucianism, the universe (and everything in it) is also included. This is probably a result, in part, of the growing influence and importance of the Great
Learning among the Four Books which became the basis of the interpretation of the Confucian corpus.\textsuperscript{10} The tradition of the "great learning" outlines a process of cultivation which starts with one's self and ends with the universe.\textsuperscript{11} Tang's vision of the transcendent consciousness is thus a process of empathetic communion between ourselves and all other beings in the universe. To make an analogy, the awakening of our transcendent consciousness is like the throwing of a stone into a pond, resulting in the ripples on the surface of the water. The ripples reach further and further away from the center and eventually cover the whole pond. Similarly, the full manifestation of one's transcendent consciousness can be described as the full realization of one's essence, which can again be characterized as the inseparability of ourselves and the universe. This is made possible by the unceasing love and compassion towards every being in the universe. It is this primordial unity of humanity and the entire universe which constitutes the transcendental dimension of \textit{gantong} and Confucian universal love.

In sum, the sequential perspective gives us a tri-dimensional view of life: inward, outward, and upward. We have to carry out a kind of self-archeology, dig deep inside ourselves and rediscover our true essence: the good. An inward awareness of our true nature necessarily links us with all other beings. Such a

\textsuperscript{10} Among other reasons, the influence of Buddhist and Daoist ontology and metaphysics were important as well.

\textsuperscript{11} An eight-fold cultivation is outlined in the \textit{Great Learning}: investigation of things, extension of knowledge, authentication of the will, rectification of the mind, cultivation of personal life, regulation of family, governance of the state and peacemaking throughout the world. See Chan, \textit{Source Book in Chinese Philosophy}, pp. 86-87.
linkage is made possible by our spontaneous love and compassion towards others. It makes us go beyond ourselves. This is an outward self-expanding process. However, our mind-heart does not stop with this horizontal movement of self-expansion because love and compassion are in reality a "manifestation" of Heavenly Virtue. In this sense, the process of self-expansion may also be seen as an "upward" directed towards the realization of the mandate of Heaven (tianming 天命). This notion of a tri-dimensional view of the world may be illustrated by the following diagram:

Heavenly Virtue

This interconnectedness of the universe is made possible by the human faculty of "sym-pathy" and "com-passion" (tongqing gonggan 同情共感). All elements in the universe are connected to each other by Heavenly Virtue. Therefore, we can detach Heavenly Virtue from each and every element, and in this sense, T'ang argued for the common existence of Heavenly Virtue. Such a universe prevailed upon by Heavenly virtue refers to what T'ang called the "Horizon of the Prevalence of Heavenly Virtue". However, if Heavenly virtue is
really the ultimate realization of human virtue (the prevalence of human compassion to the entire universe), why call it "Heavenly"? This is the question that we will try to address in the following section.

C. Different Levels of Ming

To answer the question just posed, we have to clarify the relation between Humanity and Heavenly Virtue which coincides in the notion of ming. As mentioned above, another name for the Confucian horizon is the "Horizon of jinxing liming" (呪性立命境), which literally means "the horizon of the fulfillment of humanity (xing性) and the establishment of the destiny (ming命)". But first, a discussion of T'ang's understanding of xing and ming.

T'ang's use of these terms was unique among his contemporaries.12 Among all other meanings of Ming, it is those of "destiny" (mingyun命運), "life course" (mingtu命途), and "mandate" or "command" (mingling命令) which are most relevant, as T'ang's idea of liming includes all three.

First, Xing is the human nature that is capable of having an intuitive awareness of right and wrong (moral consciousness). Ming is the realm of thought governed by the human moral nature. In other words, Xing is the moral consciousness that distinguishes between good and evil; ming is the realm of

---

12 See Yang, Zuhan (楊祖漢), dangdai ruxue sui kungzi tianlun di quanshi (Interpretations of Confucius' notion of Heaven in Contemporary Confucianism 當代儒學對孔子天論的詮釋), paper presented at the Second International Conference of Contemporary Confucianism at the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy in Academia Sinica, Taiwan (May, 22, 1994).
pure goodness. Since *ming* is the realm of pure goodness, the direction it points to is necessarily good and should be followed like an order. Thus, it can also be taken as a command (*ming 命*). The *ming* here refers to absolute moral commands and should not be mistaken to mean *mingyun*, or "destiny".

Second, *ming* should not be taken as the command or will of a purposive and caring Heaven. T'ang clearly pointed out that *ming* is *ziminziling* (自命自令), which means that *ming* (command) is not some external coercive force but a self-imposed, self-regulated command. The character *zi* (自) is of extreme importance here, as it identifies the source of moral command, the self. Also, it is very important in terms of the kind of moral philosophy it implies: ethics of autonomy. According to such a moral philosophy, we engage in moral legislation producing moral commands for ourselves. We dictate moral obligations for ourselves to follow rather than receive commands from an external source (e.g. a God or a purposive Heaven). I think *ming* in this sense actually refers to *benxingzhiming* (本性之命), the "command" of human nature, which is originally good.

However, according to the Confucian tradition, human nature is also an endowment of the Heaven. Thus, the command of human nature can also be seen as the command of Heaven. T'ang said, "This human nature is rooted in Heaven....If one follows such a human nature and is capable of producing self-imposed command, such a self-imposed command is also a Heavenly command or decree (*tianming* 天命)."\(^\text{13}\)

Morality, according to the Confucian tradition, is not a purely abstract thing; it needs to be put into action, and when we put our moral principles into action, we will encounter limitations. There are two kinds of limitations which Tang addressed especially: externally, the course of life and, internally, what we inherit. We will deal with the former first. The course of our life is the "place" where morality can be actualized. Such a "place" is also called ming by Tang, a term which here more or less means mingtu (命途), or "course of life". From this sense, two other important meanings of ming can be derived. First, ming means "destiny" or "fate" (命運). In our lives, we necessarily encounter various situations. Some of them are good while some are bad. This kind of event in our life is also a kind of ming, meaning destiny or fate. Fate, no doubt, can suggest a kind of limitation to us. However, for Tang, it suggests something more. For him, such a ming is not so much a limitation as a challenge to be overcome, and which can eventually be beneficial. Fate is a combination of causes which are usually beyond our complete control. Life is not determined by fate but by how we respond to fate. Fate belongs to the realm of determination while our moral decision belongs to the realm of freedom. To the same situation, one can react in a moral way, or in an amoral or even immoral. Yan Hui (顏回), a disciple of Confucius who lead a life of severe adversity, perhaps demonstrated best the idea of freedom in morality. Yan's life, shows a great love and determination for morality despite an almost impossible life.

T'ang regarded all kinds of events in life, good and bad, as challenges for us to act morally. They indicate how we ought to respond morally (yisuodangwei
This kind of fate (ming) is thus a moral concept. Life is a conscience-perfecting process in which numerous challenges are presented before our conscience in order to exercise it to perfection. Put differently, life is a process of cultivation. T'ang contrasted this Confucian notion with Buddhist and Christian notions. He believed that both Buddhism and Christianity fail to take this life in this world seriously. Buddhism teaches the impermanence of all beings, while Christianity teaches that all beings are contingent. For them, the world is full of suffering or sinful. Presented with the same life situation, Confucianism does not put the existence of beings into question; rather, it focuses on what is the morally right response towards this or that fact of life. Every event in life, whether good or bad, is always a hint to act morally. This hint is considered by T'ang as another kind of ming, "command".

It is important to note that this is a case to case manner of actualizing morality. That is to say, when presented with a particular life situation, one should be able to provide a moral response that suits the particular situation. Thus, actualization of the moral command is also the particularization of the universal moral principle. Particularization does not mean that morality has become limited. It remains to be the source of all moral guidance and it responds to all kinds of human experience. Moral life is a continuous process of moral challenges and responses. It is an unceasing process of moral learning and unfolding that leads towards moral perfection. So much for this discussion.

---


of ming as "course of life". We shall now move to another aspect of ming: internal limitations.

Internal limitations refer mainly to individual tizhi (體質), "physical constitution," and qizhi (氣質), natural endowment, including temperament. Both are taken by T'ang as inherited limitations. However, T'ang did not view them as completely predetermining factors in life. Rather, he looked at them as signs of moral challenges to be transcended. Internal limitations, therefore, constitute a kind of ming, a ming that imposes limitations but which also challenges us to respond in appropriate moral ways.

However, again, it would be inaccurate to see all commands (ming) in completely human terms without the transcendent element. T'ang followed the Doctrine of the Mean and believes that "What Heaven imparts to man is called human nature (天命之謂性)." In his treatise on the Doctrine of the Mean, Centrality and Commonality: an essay on Confucian religiousness, Tu Wei-ming clarified the relation between human nature and Heaven by stating that, "it points to the mutuality of Heaven and man. By insisting upon a continuous interaction between them, the human way necessitates a transcendent anchorage for the existence of man and an immanent confirmation for the course of Heaven." Such an emphasis on the mutuality of Heaven and humanity in the Doctrine of the Mean is very much reflected in T'ang's philosophy. Humanity is not

---


separable from Heaven, and Heaven is always accessible to human beings in the sense that we all can relate to it. Thus, this Confucian horizon cannot be classified under either the subjective (human) or the objective (Heaven) side, it belongs to the trans-subjective-objective horizon. *Ming* viewed from the perspective of human beings is a self-imposing moral command rooted in our innate humanity, and such a kind of command is called *xingming* (性命), the command of our humanity. *Ming* viewed from the perspective of Heaven is a challenge, a "call", for moral response — in other words, the Heavenly Mandate (天命). Commands that originate from our human nature are termed by T'ang *neiming* (内命), or "internal commands," while commands from Heaven are called *waiming* (外命), or "external commands."

However, since *xing*, "human nature," is an endowment of Heaven, then the internal command is actually an indirect external command. From human nature, one perceives the immanence of the Heavenly Mandate. Thus *xing* can also be called *xingming* (性命) in this context. According to T'ang, "In reality, *xingming* and *tianming* should be seen as one." In my view, *xingming* for T'ang had two different meanings. First, it means *benxingliming* (本性立命): to "establish" command which is resulted from our human nature. Second, it means *yinxingjianming* (因性見命): to see the Heavenly decree in human nature which is endowed by Heaven. But, coming to the next question, how can we fulfill human nature and thus establish *ming*?

D. Establishing the *Ming*

---

Basically, there are two principal ways: jingyizixuechengl (靜以自學成己), "to be still in order to learn and fulfill oneself"; and dongyiyingwuchengwu (動以應務成物), "to act in order to fulfill [one's] duty and [thus] bring things to completion."19 Let us take a look at the former first.

The ultimate goal of learning is to learn how to become a true human being. This kind of learning is based on lingjue (靈覺). Ling (靈) here refers mainly to the capacity to illuminate one's life, that is to provide a value orientation. Jue (覺) is a state of awareness or consciousness. Thus, lingjue can be translated as "illuminating awareness". To have a value orientation, we have to transcend both internal and external attachments. By detaching ourselves from external attachments, we enable ourselves to purify our consciousness. The practice of "stillness" prepares us to respond to transcendence. "Stillness," in T'ang's words, makes possible the "opening of the Heavenly Gate". Taoists have likewise taught the importance of "stillness" to self-cultivation. However, for T'ang, Taoist self-cultivation is incomplete, in the sense that they overemphasizes "stillness" (靜) at the expense of "activity" (動). For the Confucians, it is not enough to be "still"; one also has to "act". One has to act positively to free oneself from all kinds of attachments and attain a state of clear-mindedness most conducive to the exercise of moral judgments. For T'ang, "stillness" is merely the precondition for the exercise of moral virtue or, to quote a Song Confucian saying, xujiingweirudezhimenhu (虛靜為入德之門戶), that is, "stillness is the gate to moral virtue." It is important to point out that stillness is

merely the "gate", or first stage toward the realization of moral nature, not the final stage. More importantly, it is also the "gate" through which one sees the Heavenly decree. This idea of "gate" is precisely what T'ang referred in the saying jiyijianming (即義見命), which literally means "to see the Heavenly decree in human morality." These two elements, human moral nature and Heavenly decree, constitute the two inseparable aspects of the Confucian horizon of the prevalence of Heavenly Virtue.

The second way of fulfilling the ming is dongyiyingwuchengwu (動以應務成物), "to act in order to fulfill [one's] duty and [thus] bring things to completion." Cultivation in the Confucian tradition is not merely a pursuit of the inner life, it also involves active participation in society. Indeed, maturity in morality, according to the Great Learning, involves not only growth in areas such as rectification of mind-heart and sincerity of intention but also the re-ordering of society. A person untested in actual life situations, however cultivated internally (e.g., a recluse) is like a plant growing in a protected environment; it will not survive exposure to the external environment. A mature mind-heart is one that is "well-tested" — that is, formed by the experience in the application of moral conscience in real life situations.

As mentioned previously, the Confucian cultivation is a tri-dimensional process. It begins from the self, yet it is not ego-centric in the sense that other things are all directed to the self. T'ang always mentioned that the mind-heart is not a self-sufficient monad which can subsist in isolation from the rest of the

---

world environment. The mind-heart always direct itself beyond the self. It forms the core of the centrifugal net of love and compassion. However, this net of relationship is sustained by mutual interaction. For T'ang, personal growth is impossible in isolation from the human community.

To sum up: self-cultivation in the Confucian tradition is not a purely individualistic concern but a holistic vision of self-perfection based on the notion of the "oneness" of the self and the universe. Confucian scholars differ in their understanding of this "oneness", but for T'ang, the emphasis clearly lies in the fulfillment of responsibilities toward the family, the country, and the universe, which is very much in line with teaching of the Great Learning.

E. Rites and Worship: Applied Confucianism

The inner life and the social life are not mutually exclusive: the two belong to each other. Also, the former is not superior to the latter in the sense that one can pursue the former by abandoning the latter. These are fundamental tenets in Confucian self-cultivation. For example, Wang Yang-ming, the most important Confucian scholar in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), in his advice to Liu Junliang (fl. 1523) who wished to retreat into the mountains to practice sitting meditation, warned against escapism, which according to him leads to pride and laziness. More importantly, Wang taught that the Confucian sage is one who manifests his virtue "not only by cultivating himself, but also by allowing self-cultivation to overflow into the fulfillment of responsibilities toward the family, the state, and

---

21 Some Confucianists see this oneness as a mystical concept or a cosmological unity (e.g. Dung Zhong-shu 董仲舒).
the world." T'ang's view on this issue is best summarized by Karl Jaspers words which say: "the individual cannot become human by himself. Self-being is only real in communication with another self-being. Alone, I sink into gloomy isolation - only in communication with others can I be revealed." 23

One of the main characteristics of Confucian social teaching and involvement, according to T'ang, is the importance it places on liyue (禮樂), "rituals and the arts". The function of the arts is to purify and pacify the mind-heart. Rituals, on the other hand, are practiced to regulate outward (e.g., social, religious) expressions and develop certain attitudes and values (e.g., respect and reverence). 24 The three greatest rituals are those which deal with (a) the ancestors, (b) the Sages and the Worthies, and (c) the Heaven and Earth. To worship is not to ask for favors but to show reverence and respect. Our ancestors deserve our worship for their role in continuing the human race in general and in giving us our life in particular. The Sages and Worthies are worshipped because of their teachings and moral examples which benefit the human race. We worship Heaven and Earth for several reasons: (a) they are the ultimate source of existence of all beings in the universe; (b) they represent the highest value of morality and ethics; (c) they are the ultimate source of humanity.

22 Julia Ching, To Acquire Wisdom, p. 72. Professor Ching also pointed out that "the extension of liang-chih is inseparable from the fulfillment of one's social responsibilities." See To Acquire Wisdom, pp. 119-120.


These objects of rituals and worship constitute the realm of transcendence. And for T'ang these objects of ritual truly exist: "the spirit of the ancestors, the spirits of Sages, Worthies and martyrs, and the spirits of Heaven and Earth, all exist in reality." However, while rituals enable us to come into contact with the transcendent realm, T'ang suggested that such contact or union cannot be characterized as mystical. This brings us back to T'ang's discussion of the origins of the universe which he summarized as pokungerchu (破空而出) and wuwueryou (無無而有). This pair of concepts is a response against Buddhism and Christianity.

Pokungerchu literally means "to break emptiness and emerge"; wuwueryou literally means to "neglect the notion of 'existence from nothingness'." Both refer more or less to same idea: creation, or the coming into being of life and other things in the universe, is not just a process of becoming from non-existence to existence/being, it is also refers to the unceasing and continuous process of re-creation and generation. In short, there are two stages of creation: the original stage when everything first came into being, and the later stage when creation re-creates itself. T'ang criticized the Christian doctrine of creation which, in his mind, overemphasizes the original creation, especially the divine agency behind creation, while overlooking self-generating ability of beings. Thus, for T'ang, the Christian concept of creation is only partially correct. T'ang did not bother to


discuss the original creation. For him, the more important thing is to focus on what we already have, the existential given, here and now. T’ang began with the fact that different kinds of beings already exist in this world, and these beings will continue the process of creation. In such kind of creation, everything is real, not empty. This is directed against the Buddhist teaching of emptiness. Also, T’ang did not believe that beings can come from absolute nothingness. He rejected the notion of creatio ex nihilo. T’ang’s creation is, actually, re-creation — the regeneration of beings that already exist.

What is relevant to our discussion here, however, is not only the notion that creation is an on-going process, but that human beings are conscious of the sources and origins of their existence (e.g., ancestors, Heaven and Earth). This, for T’ang, is the main thing that differentiates human beings from animals. In this context, ritual is designed to refresh and inspire in the mind-heart the attitude of gratefulness by recognizing its connection to its origins. Thus, the union between Humanity and Heaven in this sense, is simply the expression of our reverence towards the Great Sources (Heaven and ancestor). It cannot not, as already indicated above, be characterized as a mystical union.

F. Reflections

27 In fact, as Professor Julia Ching has rightly pointed out that “Confucianism has not developed any doctrine of creation. But the Confucian Classics clearly enunciate a belief in God as the source and principle of all things, the giver of life and the protector of the human race.” See her Confucianism and Christianity, p. 118.
There is no doubt that the central concern in T'ang's thought is Humanity. However, his main purpose is not to offer an objective study of human beings. Rather, in true Confucian tradition, T'ang's concern is offer a way on how to become an authentic person, a sage.

T'ang stressed that Confucianism differs from other religions in affirming the existence and innate dignity of human beings. Thus, he rejected ideas which view all beings as contingent or empty. The Confucian affirmation of life includes not only the existence of life but, more important, interconnectedness of all beings in the world. This world is a world of interrelation and interpenetration. Indeed, for T'ang's, the dignity of human existence is founded on reciprocity. Unlike non-sentient beings, human beings are capable of self-reflection. Self-reflection reveals that in order to be, we must interact and interrelate with others. We cannot live or grow in isolation, but in a world of beings. Our existence is always co-existence, the fulfillment of which lies in participating in others' life.

Genuine relationship with others is based on the principle of mutual reciprocity. We appreciate and care for one another. We feel and show compassion by feeling one another's joys and sufferings. In this reciprocal relationship, we give and take, we share and participate. We are not so much concerned with possessing what we care about, as we are interested in providing for those we care for. Reciprocity means that we do not grow alone; we grow together in our humanity. Through compassion, we expand our horizon and achieve the fullness of our humanity.  

---

\(^{28}\)It is precisely this element of compassion that distinguishes Confucian meditation from that of Taoism and Buddhism, according to some prominent figures in Neo-Confucianism. Genuine meditation is not a process of uprooting oneself from society.
T'ang's philosophy or, perhaps, wisdom is ultimately not based on some objectifiable and demonstrable foundation. Rather, it is based on a profound insight into humanity -- a profound experience of compassion and love -- which is difficult and sometimes impossible to communicate, let alone to prove. More importantly, it requires great faith in and true commitment to the innate goodness of humanity. Commitment makes possible human transformation from a lower stages of human existence to that of sagehood. This is the main emphasis in T'ang's notion of transcendence -- self-transcendence as moral transformation.
Chapter Five
T'ang's Doctrinal Classification System

A. Introduction

In the preceding three chapters, we have examined T'ang's understanding of three religio-philosophical traditions. Here and there, we have also mentioned some reasons why T'ang Chun-i placed Confucianism at the highest stage of the mind-heart horizon. It is now time to take a closer look at his doctrinal classification system.

B. What is Panjiao?

The book Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Ming-Heart is, in a sense, T'ang's attempt to understand and explain the totality of human experience. He sees in the many varied ways human experience have been expressed, different horizons of the human mind-heart. (According to T'ang, there are nine horizons of the mind-heart). In the last three horizons -- which he classified as trans-subjective-objective -- T'ang employed a system of doctrinal classification which would allow him to include different systems of thought into one big system. In Buddhism, this kind of classification is known as jiaoxiangpanshi (教相判释) or, in short, panjiao (判教). It is generally believed that this development is unique to Chinese Buddhism and those influenced by it. In the original Buddhist usage, panjiao means to classify and rank the different teachings of the Buddha and the different Buddhist schools in such a way that all can be included into one big coherent Buddhist religious system. How a teaching (or sutra) and the tradition
that reveres it is ranked, depends, of course, on which group is doing the classification. This is a very common practice of panjiao. Naturally, with the proliferation of different and competing interpretive traditions, there is no agreement on what sutra should be held the highest.

However, panjiao is also used in an inter-religious sense — that is, by including other non-Buddhist traditions. Zong Mi's (宗密 780-841 A.D.) Inquiry into the Origin of Humanity (yuanrenlun 原人論) is a typical example of this. And, of course, we regard T'ang's own application of this practice in the construction of his system as a modern version of panjiao.

C. T'ang's System of Panjiao

T'ang's doctrinal classification included mainly three of the major world religions: Christianity, Buddhism, and Confucianism. He also mentioned other traditions, such as Taoism, but only in passing.

T'ang believed that Christianity, Buddhism and Confucianism aim ultimately for the same end: the Absolute. Now, in T'ang's scheme of the 'Nine Horizons of the Mind-Heart', the Absolute belongs to the trans-subjective-objective category — that is, the three traditions represent the trans-subjective-objective horizon. However, within this trans-subjective-objective category, T'ang's

---


2 See Chapter Two.
Confucianism ranks the highest, Buddhism second, and Christianity last. Why? This is the question that we must now address.

T'ang considered four main areas in ranking the three traditions the way he did: (1) nature of life and existence; (2) attitude to the world; (3) the notion of human nature and salvation; and, (4) the nature of the Absolute.

1. The Nature of Life and Existence

As mentioned earlier, T'ang affirmed the meaning and value of life and existence in this world. He also did not deny the existence of all beings. In this, he has taken a position very much close to realism in the sense that, what is perceived exists independently of the perceiver.

T'ang particularly argued against those views which deny the existence of beings in this world, which T'ang regarded as given. He believed that Christianity has overemphasized the role of God to the point where God's existence becomes a necessity which, therefore, renders the existence of human and other beings' existence contingent on God — that is, existence depends on the will of God.3 In the Old Testament, God tried to destroy the world which he created out of love. Thus, in T'ang's understanding, the existence of this world is totally at the mercy of an arbitrary God. For T'ang, this idea is unacceptable. If the world is simply contingent, then one can be indifferent to it, devalue it, or even reject it. For T'ang, this kind of attitude is arrogant and leads to

indifference to other beings in this world, for one would be led to reason that, after all, this world and everything in it will pass away; therefore, one need only to direct his/her attention to the true world of the afterlife that is to come. In this regard, T’ang saw Buddhism as superior to Christianity. For the Buddhists, the pain and suffering that result from attaching oneself to the illusory world are very real indeed. The Buddhist cannot be indifferent to suffering; this is the basis and meaning of compassion.

However, in T’ang’s mind, Buddhism is still not comparable to Confucianism. To put his order of ranking in a rather simplistic characterization: Christianity can be indifferent to this world; Buddhism cannot be indifferent to this world (the suffering beings in it); Confucianism not only cannot be indifferent to world, it needs to make something meaningful out of it.

2. Attitude to This World.

All three traditions admit the imperfection of the existential situation. As shown in chapter one above, T’ang affirmed the necessity to transcend this existential life. However, this view can lead to an escapist attitude whereby one puts all his/her hopes in the world beyond (e.g., heaven or paradise) at the expense of actively transforming one’s existential situation or predicament. T’ang strongly rejected this kind of attitude. This is one reason why T’ang was not satisfied with Christianity. In Christianity, T’ang argued, there is always the danger of directing one’s life to an other-worldly existence in an unearthly Kingdom of God.
In this aspect, T'ang believed that Mahayana Buddhism is better than Theravada Buddhism because of the former's emphasis on the universality of salvation. The Mahayana doctrine of universal salvation is represented by the ideal of the Bodhisattva, a being who postpones attainment of Buddhahood in order to share spiritual achievements to as many beings and thus save as many suffering beings as possible. The Bodhisattva differs from the arhats precisely on this point: arhats are only concerned with their own liberation. Buddhism, in the Mahayana form, shows genuine concern for this world and this, for T'ang, makes it superior to Christianity.

As far as attitude to this world is concerned, Confucianism's approach is the one most favored by T'ang. For Confucianism, the paramount concern is the moral quality of human existence in this world. It teaches, first of all, to accept this life as real and to live it through with dignity and meaning. The essence of this teaching lies in living the life of a "true human being" (renren仁人) here and now and not as a preparation for the life to come. Therefore, the perfection of one's inner life, the betterment of interpersonal relations (e.g. Five Relations), and the ordering of the state are put on the top of the Confucian agenda. For T'ang, such fundamental this-worldliness places Confucianism in a higher plane. According to Tu Wei-ming:

Confucius's existential decision to retrieve the deep meaning of human civilization as a way of rethinking the human project made it impossible for the Confucians to detach themselves totally from the

---

4 Tu Wei-ming's Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation (Albany: SUNY, 1993), which has been re-printed seven times since its first printing in 1985, was dedicated to the memory of T'ang Chun-i.
world. They had to work through the world because their faith in the perfectibility of human nature through self-effort demanded that they do so.\(^5\)

To be sure, all three traditions -- Christianity, Buddhism and Confucianism, show concern for this world. All have solutions to the problem of salvation from existential predicament. However, the real question is: What is the best path to salvation, enlightenment, or sagehood? We now move to the subject of human self-transcendence which is the foundation of T'ang's philosophical anthropology.

3. The Notion of Human Nature and Salvation

As T'ang understood it, Christianity emphasizes the absolute transcendence and holiness of God in contrast to the sinfulness of the human creature. The Christian idea of sinfulness includes the notion of absolute helplessness which imply that human beings are incapable of saving themselves. Salvation or the horizon of trans-subjectivity-objectivity is a grace -- a total gift -- from God. In other words, the human role in salvation is insignificant. He/she cannot transcend the existential world without help from God (e.g., through forgiveness of sins).\(^6\)


\(^6\) Ng, Y., Rujiazhexue, p. 268. Professor Ng Yu-kwan (吳汝鉉) has, I think, misinterpreted T'ang when he writes that he (T'ang) "overlooked the aspect of (salvation) from above to below." From what has just been discussed, the opposite is true.
T'ang liked to think in spatial terms and he emphasized what he calls the "vertical perspective" of Christianity, meaning the mind-heart's movement of transcendence from below (humanity) to above (divinity). Professor Ng has rightly pointed this out. However, T'ang did not overlook the above-to-below aspect (grace) of Christian spiritual cultivation. T'ang was aware that God is the ultimate source of salvation. In this context, he implied that the below-to-above aspect (human effort) is a precondition for the coming of grace. Not that grace is the necessary consequence of human effort or the reward for merit. In principle, grace is totally a divine gift and not determined by any human input. T'ang pointed out that in the Old Testament, Jehovah's punishments are sometimes heavy and sometimes light and do not completely follow human reason. T'ang was also aware of the incarnation as God's way of redeeming humankind in the New Testament. For T'ang, therefore, the Christian God is a combination of love and anger -- love for the human creature and anger for their sins. For T'ang, this nonrational and dogmatic aspect of Christianity is not very convincing intellectually and very problematic in the context of his notion of self-cultivation.

To recapitulate, T'ang's "vertical perspective" includes both the self-transcendence from below to above and the salvation from above to below. Though I would agree that the latter is less emphasized in T'ang's presentation, I would not say that T'ang was unaware of the latter. In fact, it is precisely the latter element -- implying the inability of human being to attain self-

---

transcendence — that T'ang saw in Christianity which explains his low estimation of Christianity as compared to Buddhism and Confucianism.

Compared with Christianity, the notion of Buddha nature enabled the Buddhists to claim their potential to achieve enlightenment. In T'ang's exposition of Buddhism he emphasized our innate ability to transcend: Buddha nature. He regarded it as the dynamic by which one can "break" (po破) away from our attachments to the sources of sufferings, and thus realize Buddahood. One of the important steps in eliminating suffering is to break our attachment to our "selves." This refers not only to the detachment from our physical self and thus freeing ourselves from sensual attachments, but also to the breaking of self-centeredness. Such "existential breakthrough," made possible by the innate Buddha nature, enables us to attain enlightenment but also generate compassion for others' suffering. By becoming detached from one's physical self and ego, one is enabled to show genuine love and compassion towards others and thus penetrate the core of the existence of other beings: suffering. Such a "radical penetration" into other beings' existence constitutes an outward movement that reaches and permeates all beings, which is what compassion is all about. Again if we think in spatial terms, this is the "horizontal perspective" that we have mentioned earlier.

The contrast between the "vertical perspective" (which includes both the below-to-above and above-to-below aspects of the source of transcendence) and "horizontal perspective" (the outward flow of compassion from the self to the whole universe) constitutes the main difference in the direction of spirituality
between Christianity and Buddhism. More important to our discussion here is to point out that the ideal of compassion and the Huayen notion of innate "goodness" of Buddha nature reflect the age-old Confucian-Mencian teaching about innate goodness of human nature and the ideal society of ren (仁) (which emphasizes interpersonal relationship (i.e. the Five Relations) sustained by love and compassion). I think this is one important reason why T'ang ranked Buddhism higher than Christianity.

While certain prominent schools of Buddhism (e.g., Huayen and Chan) emphasize the Buddha nature as the foundation for self-transcendence, in Confucianism, it is the Mencian doctrine about the innate goodness of human nature that forms the basis for transcendence. I agree with Professor Tu Wei-ming that "a defining characteristic of East Asian thought is the widely accepted proposition that human beings are perfectible through self-effort in ordinary daily existence." This doctrine of the innate goodness of humanity is the condition of possibility for self-perfection. In fact, the acknowledgment of the inner dynamic of self-transformation and the perfectibility of human nature on self-effort is another factor in that put Confucianism in the highest position in T'ang's system.

4. The Nature of the Absolute

---


11 Tu, Wei-ming, "The Moral Universal from the Perspectives of East Asian Thought" in his Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation, p. 19.
The last point I would like to make here concerns the nature of the Absolute (e.g. Christian God, Buddhahood, Confucian Sagehood). As mentioned in Chapter Three, T'ang criticized the Christian God as merciless (*mamuburen* 糾木不仁). This, I think, is based on his peculiar understanding of Christianity. We can summarize his thinking on this matter as follows: Creation is a way of honoring God himself. The world was created for the ultimate purpose of glorifying God as Creator and Master of the universe. As Gilson puts it, "all that exists by God and for God."\(^{12}\) T'ang reasoned that since this world is full of suffering, to say that God creates this world of suffering to honor God suggests that such a God is indifferent to the suffering of beings in this world. In short, the Christian God is a merciless God. If God is concerned about nothing but God's own glorification, then this God is selfish (*zisi* 自私).\(^{13}\)

Compared with the merciless and selfish God, the Buddha is more deserving of honor and praise because of his real concern for all suffering beings. He feels the pain and is always willing to relieve the pain and suffering of the world. That is why the Buddha is also known as the Great Medical King (*dayiwang* 大醫王), always prescribing "medicine" to cure and heal the world. For T'ang, the Buddhist teaching on compassion constitutes the main element that makes Buddhism a better religion than Christianity.


\(^{13}\) T'ang, *Life, Existence, and the Horizon of Mind-Heart*, vol. 2, pp. 82-84.
The Buddhist ideal, universal "salvation" in the sense that all beings can be liberated from suffering and attain nirvana, is based on the Great Compassion. T'ang understood this as the most important insight of Buddhism. However, T'ang did have an argument with Buddhism. Following the traditional Confucian anti-Buddhist stand, he disagreed with the notion of universal love behind the Buddhist notion of universal salvation. T'ang knew that Christianity teaches people to love their neighbor, and Buddhism teaches the ideal of universal salvation -- both based upon a kind of universal love. By universal, we mean that all human beings (even inanimate beings for some Buddhist schools), are loved. Here, the emphasis is on the all-encompassing nature of love. T'ang believed that we should practice this kind of love which, by the way, is also taught by Confucianism. As Professor Wing-tsit Chan, a translator of many Chinese philosophical texts and a specialist in Confucianism, had pointed out: "although Confucianism teaches love with distinctions, it also teaches love for all."

However, T'ang insisted that there were different kinds and degrees of love. That is to say, we love different people differently depending on the nature of our relationship with them. Another thing that T'ang wanted to point out is that universal love is impossible without reciprocity. Love involves at least two parties; therefore, so-called self-love is not real love. Love is sustained by mutual giving and receiving. The implication here is that love can die. Another implication of this notion of love is that love is always conditional. The notion of unconditional love (e.g., loving one's enemy) is, in T'ang's view, unrealistic and un-human.

---


T'ang's comments on the three traditions on this issue can be seen as a modern version of Mencius's criticism of Yang Zhu (楊朱 c. 440-360 B.C.) and Mo Zi (墨子 c. 470- c. 391 B.C.). Yang Zhu advocates a philosophy of self-preservation based on self-love. Legend says that he was unwilling to give up one single hair even if this can benefit the whole universe. On the other extreme, Mo Zi taught that we should love all equally without discrimination. Mencius thinks that both are wrong. For many Confucianists, Yang Zhu's philosophy represents selfishness while Mo Zi's philosophy represents a utopian vision of love that is unrealizable -- it disregards the inherent gradations in the different types of relationship. T'ang's critique of Christianity and Buddhism are similar to this. He faulted the Christian God as selfish and Buddhism as ignoring the reciprocal nature of human relationships.

D. Reflections

T'ang's criteria for doctrinal classification very much reflect his Confucian background. He was, after all, not only a scholar of Confucianism but also a self-confessed Confucian gentleman. It is, therefore, not surprising that he would emphasize such aspects as this-worldliness, human relationships, belief in the perfectibility of human nature, loving compassion (ren 仁), and so on, in constructing his system.

However, what is important about T'ang's panjiao system is that he did not intend it to be an exclusive scheme designed to resolve once and for all the truthfulness of the different world religious systems. T'ang never said that non-
Confucian religions are all false. For him, Buddhism and Christianity are as true as Confucianism. They all address real existential problems. They provide human beings different ways of transcending their existential situations. One way suits a particular kind of people; another way, another kind of people. Therefore, for T'ang, all the other teachings should be preserved alongside with Confucianism. And this is precisely what T'ang does in his "Nine Horizons of the Mind-Heart" (xinling jiujing 心靈九境) — subsume other religions and philosophies under one system.

T'ang allowed for doctrinal or faith diversity to enable human beings to adapt creatively to the ever-changing challenges in the existential world. However, this all-embracing system is made possible only by the doctrine of two levels of truth — the conventional (relative) truth and the ultimate truth. In this context, Tang recognized that other religions and philosophies contain aspects of the truth in them. However, in his view, Confucianism alone provides the complete truth, what he called "the perfect/highest teaching". This points to the most important aspect of his philosophy: its orientative stance. The main motivation behind his work is not so much to construct a rigorous philosophical system but to provide some guidance in the pursuit of self-perfection. We shall address this issue in more detail later in the conclusion.

What is more important for our purpose here, is to point out what T'ang perceived as three different types of transcendence typified by the three traditions he compared. The three types of transcendence corresponds to the three different directions of the mind-heart. In chapter two, we discussed T'ang's distinction about the three perspectives: the vertical, the horizontal, and the
sequential. These three different perspectives represent the three different moral-ethical-religious orientations found in Christianity, Buddhism, and Confucianism respectively.

Christianity emphasizes the radical contrast between God and the human. God is supremely good; humanity and this world are worthless. In terms of human transcendence, T'ang saw here a movement in a vertical direction whereby the human being abandons his/her state of wretchedness and attains salvation with the necessary help of God's grace. This vertical, below-to-above orientation may be illustrated by the following diagram:

On the other hand, in Buddhism, the emphasis is on the relief of sufferings in this world through the great compassion of the Enlightened one towards beings. This is an infinite process of spreading compassion and the fruits of enlightenment. In spatial terms, the orientation here is horizontal (see diagram below) in the sense that the compassionate mind-heart reaches out to all fellow beings instead of ascending to the realm of God.
The third perspective, represented by Confucianism, is called the "sequential" perspective. It combines both the vertical and horizontal perspectives. However, the emphasis here is on following the order or sequence of human life and existence. T'ang was not clear what he meant by this order or sequence. But I think he referred to the gradual, stage-by-stage unfolding of the moral self or realization of self-transcendence. According to this order or sequence of life and existence, we begin with the affirmation of our existence and moral nature or destiny. This moral element—that is, the moral in us or, simply, the moral self—is the dynamic that moves us out of ourselves into relationships with fellow human beings, with society, with the world and, eventually, in unity with Heaven. In this way, we achieve the unity of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. This is precisely what full realization of humanity means: to unfold the true self through human relationships and reverence to Heaven.
Chapter Six
Conclusion

A. Introduction

In the preceding chapters, we have examined the three highest horizons in T'ang's comprehensive system. I now conclude this dissertation by evaluating T'ang's dual argument, the nature of T'ang's system in particular, and, finally, the nature of T'ang's thought in general.

B. Evaluation of T'ang's Argument

1. The Ontological Argument

T'ang's ontological argument begins with the assumption about the human awareness of the finiteness of being in the experiential world. With this awareness, human beings can contemplate a condition or state of being that is not characterized by any imperfection. In other words, with the awareness of being's existential finiteness, we can imagine the necessity of an absolute state of being -- the Absolute. As to the moral argument, T'ang argued that from human moral/religious needs and aspirations, we can infer a transcendent benevolent heart that satisfies such human needs and aspirations.

I shall discuss the difficulties of T'ang's arguments now. The first difficulty lies in T'ang's attempt to establish being from mere concepts.1 T'ang was aware of

---

Anselm's argument and Kant's rebuttal, which are well-known in the history of philosophy. The problem is that Tang believed that by arguing from the direct experience of all things, he had something better than the three traditional Western arguments for the existence of God. Tang also believed that his new version of the ontological argument could pass the Kantian test.

Actually, the presentation of Tang's ontological argument is not clear. To clarify the problem, let us first consider the following simple argument.

If a finite being exists, then an infinite, absolute being exists.

A finite being exists.

Ergo, an infinite, absolute being exists.

Formally, this is an effective argument. However, it is not a reliable and conclusive argument. The problem is not in the minor premise and the conclusion. The problem lies rather in how to establish the connection between the two items in the major premise. This is the point that I want to discuss and evaluate here.

Basically, Tang's argument can be restated as follows:

1. The imperfect being exists.
2. If humans can grasp the imperfection of the imperfect being, then humans can, by supplying what is lacking in imperfect being, eliminate its imperfection.

3. Humans are aware of the imperfection of the imperfect being.

4. Humans are able to eliminate the imperfection of the imperfect being. [Combining 2 and 3]

5. The imperfect being without its imperfection is the perfect being.

6. The perfect being must exist. [Combining 1, 4 and 5]

But even if the first five statements are all true, it still does not follow that the sixth is true. The ability to do a certain thing does not imply that one will necessarily do such a thing. There are several factors involved including the emotions and other factors which will not be elaborated here. In other words, ability does not necessarily include the will. Therefore, we can change proposition 6 to read instead: The perfect being can exist. If we accept this premise, then the question whether the perfect being exists or not becomes a matter for human intention to decide. If this is the case, then we make the perfect, absolute being totally dependent on human. Now, how can one maintain such a kind of perfect being?

T'ang was aware of the inevitable suspicion that God's existence is somehow dependent on that of a person. However, he did not think that this would cause any difficulties:

In fact, all those who hold these ideas do not understand what we call the existence of the perfect being itself. [However, besides affirming the existence of the perfect being itself], we need to affirm also the existence of the thought about the existence of the perfect being in the human mind. If one tries to prove the existence of the perfect being from the fact that human beings have a concept of a perfect being, then one is only talking the perfect
being in one's thought. How one thinks subjectively can, of course, be viewed as a contingent matter. However, it is necessary that one must have such a subjective thought before one can have the manifestation (chengxian 呈現) of such a being in our subjective mind that corresponds to something that exists.2

I think this is how T'ang thought. When we argue, naturally there manifests in our mind the existence of what we argue about. This is the inevitable first step in conducting an argument. However, from this we cannot conclude that such a being depends on the human.

Actually, T'ang's explanations are not that clear. In particular, the terms 'dependence' and 'manifestation' need to be clarified. First, what did T'ang mean by 'dependence'? When we say that the perfect being (Absolute) is not self-sufficient and must depend on the human, we deal here with the perfect being's condition of possibility. That is, human subjective thought makes it possible for the perfect being to exist. If there is no thinking human being, then there would or could be no perfect being. In this context, 'nonself-sufficiency' means that the perfect being is unable to leave human consciousness and exist independently in the objective world. As T'ang himself said, this being/existence "manifests in this subjective thought." Here, he was speaking purely in subjective terms. He was not talking about a perfect being that can exist independently of human thought.

---

Now, while we can allow ourselves to accept this notion of perfect being, T'ang was not, in the final analysis, successful in establishing a self-subsistent perfect being outside of human subjectivity.³

Let us discuss the term 'manifestation' (chengxian). Analytically, we can distinguish two types of manifestation: direct manifestation and indirect manifestation. I suggest that direct manifestation is an impossibility. How can one imagine such a kind of situation: a self-subsistent perfect being entering and manifesting itself totally in the mind of a finite thinking subject? Is it possible for the finite human mind to contain such an infinitely comprehensive perfect being? I think not. Indeed, I suggest that T'ang was not talking about this type of manifestation. Rather, he was referring to an indirect, representational manifestation by which the perfect being itself remains outside human thought but is somehow apprehended by the thinking mind in the form of representations (e.g., concepts). The problem with this proposition is that it begs the question: It assumes that a) the perfect being subsists independently of human thought and b) that representations of this perfect being are present in the mind. Then it proposes that the perfect being exists because the mind has concepts about it.

³ The word “subjectivity” can mean different things to different people. I am using this term to refer to what Norton Nelkin calls “essential subjectivity.” This notion of subjectivity signifies one’s concept of oneself as a subject of experience, distinguished from both the objects of experience and other experiencing subjects. More importantly, in identifying our self, there witnesses a sense of “in-control.” “To be in-control is to have one’s plans (intentions) for the future result as one planned (or intended) - that one had planned (or intended) these results, and so on.” Thus, essential subjectivity refers to the kind of subject that can reflect, determine and will. For a fuller discussion of subjectivity in Norton Nelkin’s work, see “Subjectivity” in A Companion to the Philosophy of mind (Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell Publishers, 1994), Samuel Guttenplan, pp. 568-575.
The question is, where do such representations of the perfect being come from? The only answer is that the perfect being originates them and, therefore, it preexists the representations. Obviously, the conclusion which T'ang wanted to prove is already included in the premise.

It is possible, however, that what T'ang means should be "it is necessary that one must have such a subjective thought before one can have the manifestation of such a being in our subjective mind." If this means that through thought, one can form concepts and make these concepts materialize in the objective world, then a gold mountain, a flying horse, and so on, should be able to materialize in the same way in the objective world. Unfortunately, things do not work in such a way. For example, I just thought of a flying horse, a horse with wings. If what we just said is true, then the winged horse should be able to materialize in front of me. But it does not. I think this is not what T'ang means. However, we need not doubt the fact that through our mind we can allow certain concepts to appear in the subjective consciousness. For example, I know that horses exist. I also know that horses are limited in what they can do. For one thing, they cannot fly. Thus, in this sense, a winged horse that can fly is closer to perfection because it does not have one of the limitations from which normal horses suffer: i.e. they cannot fly. When I imagine such a winged horse, I am contemplating a kind of "perfect" horse, one that can fly. Still, this idea of a perfect horse remains to be no more than an imaginary construct; it does not prove that such a horse really exists in the objective world. If this is what T'ang means, then T'ang does not really succeed in establishing objective existence. Consequently, there is no point in talking about the formal reality of a trans-subjective-objective Absolute.
T'ang did not point to mystical consciousness here. As mentioned in Chapter Four, T'ang in fact did not think that Confucianism teaches mysticism at all. Moreover, according to his sequential perspective, if one starts with his understanding of the reality of the world by first contemplating the transcendence, the result is nothing but illusion.

Let us now turn to the other problem in T'ang's argument. According to (2), human beings can perceive the imperfection of certain beings; accordingly, they can eliminate this imperfection. However, actually, this statement confuses two kinds of abilities. The former refers to the ability of knowing or understanding certain states of being; the latter to the ability of transforming such states. These two conditions are not same, and the former does not logically entail the latter. If we assert the causal relation between one's ability to perceive the imperfection of certain beings and one's ability to make up for what imperfect beings lacks; then we are asserting the belief that if we possess the first set of conditions then we also possess the other set of conditions. However, I see no reasonable justification for this assertion. For instance, one can well see the problem of his financial difficulty (e.g., bankruptcy) but one may not be able to change it (e.g., there is no job).

A more fundamental question is: What, ultimately, has T'ang managed to establish? Here, we must examine the problem of the ontological status of the perfect being or Absolute. We recall T'ang's view about the formal reality of the
Ultimate Concern, in the various world religions, as a trans-subjective-objective reality. 4 Naturally, his argument proceeds to establish the existence of this reality.

The English word 'reality', from the Latin 'realitas', originated from the Latin root word 'res' (thing). It is generally understood, in philosophy, as something that objectively exists in the world of experience. Indeed, in the scholastic philosophical tradition, 'reality', 'actuality', and 'essence' are interchangeable concepts. Also, at times 'reality' and 'being' are used to refer to 'subsistence' and 'existence'. However, in recent philosophical writings, 'reality' has come to represent that which lies behind the actual existence of all phenomena or, that which underlies all actual phenomenal existence.

Actually, it is difficult to say exactly whether T'ang's ontological argument ever intended a notion of a perfect being or Absolute that exists in the objective world, or simply one that exists in the subjective mind. This ambiguity is due largely to T'ang's writing style but, ultimately I think, to his failure to establish the nature of what he called the 'trans-subjective-objective' Absolute. For instance, he said:

If this idea holds, we can make up for all the imperfections that we can think of and imagine that there is nothing that cannot be made up. Such an idea can lead directly to the formation of a nonimperfect perfect being outside of our mind. 5

4 See Chapter 2.

According to this passage, the perfect being/Absolute exists outside thought and is not of the mind. That is, the Absolute exists independently of the mind; it is an objective reality. In another passage, T'ang said: "We live for this. It directs our minds towards infinite perfection... enabling the mind-heart to encounter this infinite perfection/Absolute." Likewise, in his critique of A. N. Whitehead (1861-1947), T'ang stated: "[Whitehead's philosophy] is a philosophy of dharmadhatu, [that is a philosophy of particular phenomena] and is not a philosophy aimed at satisfying our understanding of the real existence of God. It...also cannot elevate ourselves to that state in which we can have a direct encounter with God thereby proving the existence of God." In all these instances, T'ang talked about the mutual encounter between human and God. Here, 'God' the Absolute as an objectively existent being is very clear. If so, then T'ang had broken the cardinal principle which says that from concepts, one cannot infer or determine real existence. At most, the fact that humans can form concepts about the Absolute establishes only that such concepts can exist in the mind. It does not prove that the Absolute really exists objectively in the experiential world. Equating subjective concepts with objective reality is a common error associated with traditional ontological arguments. Considering the fact that T'ang was so knowledgeable in Western philosophy, it is unlikely, I think, that T'ang would have committed the same mistake.

---


7 T'ang, Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart, vol. 2, p. 20. «（懷德海）乃一事法界哲學，而非以成吾人對上帝真實存在之認識為本之哲學。其……亦不足使此人格，升進於與上帝親面相遇之境，以證上帝之存在。»
The only way to explain this inconsistency in T'ang's part is to argue that T'ang never really intended to establish the objective reality of the Absolute. Indeed, T'ang had often mentioned establishing the notion of a perfect being or Absolute rather than establishing the reality itself of the Absolute. However, if we accept the suggestion that T'ang's discussion of the perfect being or Absolute is only about notions, not about objective reality, then we would not be able to explain such statements from T'ang as "encountering God to prove the existence of God."

2. The Moral Argument.

T'ang discussed the rationality of faith in God in the context of the interrelationship between morality and happiness. This corresponds to what we generally understand of Kant. However, we differ with what T'ang said about not criticizing Kant on this point. In fact, T'ang did criticize Kant on this point. T'ang viewed Kant's interpretation of the connection between morality and happiness as being "unable to avoid the utilitarian notion of moral life [or: morality] as the way that leads to the attainment of the rewards promised by religion." In The Spiritual Value of Chinese Culture, he stated even more clearly:

The Confucian practice of ren and yi is completely directed to fulfilling the mind-heart and nature — that is, it is an inevitable inclination of the mind-heart. If so, then whether the practice is successful or not, we can still remain contented. The joy in virtue lies

---

precisely in the fulfillment of our mind-heart and nature, which is perfection and contentment. Happiness and virtue were originally one [and the same thing]. In contrast, Kant viewed the two as separate. For him, one cannot attain both in this life; also, one has to depend on the power of God to unite the two after one's death. For the Confucian, this is not necessary.\(^9\)

Whether T'ang's idea of happiness is the same as Kant's remains a question.\(^{10}\) However, for deontological ethics, the concept of God that rewards and punishes is unnecessary. After all, morality is concerned with good/right and evil/wrong intentions, not reward and punishment and it is not necessary to have a God to guarantee the rewards. For this reason, I think that when T'ang says "we can directly invoke faith to shoulder [the burden of the question of] the existence of this universe and God, and thus avoid the above mentioned problem. People should not use this to challenge Kant."\(^{11}\) He was clarifying, on behalf of Kant, possible misunderstandings. So, perhaps, we should not accuse T'ang of misunderstanding Kant. I believe that T'ang would not subscribe to Kant's notion of God.

---

\(^9\) T'ang, *The Spiritual Vaules of Chinese Culture*, p. 442. "儒者之行正義，皆所以盡心盡懈，足德性乃樂之在當下已。夫然，而無論常欲與否，皆有可以自懲而自足。德性之樂，乃在當下之盡生盡性之所能，即委已有足者。幸福與德性原為一致，不如康德之視此二者，為此生之不能必須，則賴上帝之力，以得二者之綜合於死後，在儒家即可視為不必須。


More fundamentally, we have to understand that the postulate of God is a rational construct, not an objective reality. Even with the use of a rational postulate, we still cannot establish T'ang's subjective/objective Absolute Reality. It is because the use of a rational postulate has not yet established any objective reality that would provide us with a basis by which one can formally establish T'ang's trans-subjective-objective Absolute. Establishing the existence of a universal objective consciousness through intersubjective sentiments is possible. However, such intersubjective reality — or, perhaps, social reality — still does not lead us to conclude that an absolute reality really exists independently of us in the objective world. Although the universality of this universal consciousness may be perceived as objective, in the sense of being distinct from individual consciousness (e.g., as 'collective consciousness', 'social will'), its 'objectivity' remains to be linked to human subjectivity and cannot really be taken to demonstrate the existence of a totally objective reality. For me, therefore, the idea that collective representations of human intersubjectivity may be equated with the Absolute Reality, or God, is unconvincing and therefore unacceptable.\(^{12}\)

---

\(^{12}\) In 1954, T'ang discussed the issues with Professor Lao Sze-kwang through correspondence. T'ang holds the difference between Sage and God lies only in the fact that the realm of Sage is the realm that is reached by one individual sage while the realm of God is that which is reached by various sages. Lao points out that there seems to be no good reason to say that the realm reached by various sages should be named as the realm of God. Lao further argues that 'Sage' and 'God' differ because they belong to different horizons and the central issue is that the horizon of God is one that separates from the horizon of man but the horizon of Sage can be part of the horizon of humanity. See Lao, *Siguang shaozuoji* (Collection of Works Written when Lao Sze-kwang is Young恩光少作集), Sun Shanhoa孫善豪 ed. vol. 7, (Taipei: Shibao wenhua gongsi, 1987). pp. 254-269. Quotations on p. 256 and 257 respectively.
Perhaps, T'ang's notion of trans-subjective-objective reality is not meant to be understood as independent of human thought but in terms of intersubjectivity. By intersubjectivity, I refer to the collective aspects formed by different subjects (e.g., community). I am inclined to explain T'ang's transcendent and universal consciousness in these terms because it corresponds to his humanism which need not involve a religious kind of transcendence. However, since his early years, T'ang felt that he should include the idea of an externally real transcendent God within his system. He even said: "Religious life is better than metaphysics in the sense that it admits and affirms the existence of such metaphysical realities as God, Buddha, and the human spirit [i.e., spirit of ancestors and sages], and demands a communion between human beings and metaphysical realities."13 From his works, we can see that even in his later years he maintained this position. This was the reason for such expressions as 'encountering God', and so on. Therefore, I think it is reasonable to say that T'ang discussed the 'transcendent substance' in intersubjective terms, but he might not be very clear about the ultimate consequence of this approach — that it would not lead him to his desired conclusion of establishing a 'God' in the sense of a deity independent from human mind. But if T'ang was aware of the impossibility of establishing the independent reality of the realm of transcendence, then he should also know that his 'Nine Horizons' scheme may not be able to embrace all religions, particularly those based on theistic frameworks of transcendence. By this, I mean T'ang's system cannot accommodate a God (e.g.

Christian God) if He is understood as personal and can exist independent of human being.\textsuperscript{14} We know, of course, that T'ang meant his 'Nine Horizons' to include all of the world's religious and moral systems. Also, although T'ang may have referred to transcendence in the context of intersubjectivity, we suggest that he could not have intended the realm of transcendence to be understood in terms of intersubjectivity. For T'ang, the 'realm of transcendence' is above all the realm that transcends all distinctions between subject and object (hence the term 'trans-subjectivity/objectivity'). In other words, the 'realm of transcendence' refers to something much greater and more profound than 'intersubjectivity'. But, again, what could T'ang actually accomplish with his humanist/subjectivist approach? In terms of individual subjectivity, he could establish morality and/or religious consciousness of the transcendence. In terms of intersubjectivity, he could establish collective consciousness or social will. However, since one could not establish objective reality from pure subjectivity, T'ang was unable to prove the objective independent existence of his trans-subjective-objective Absolute. In the final analysis, therefore, we can only conclude that T'ang's so-called trans-subjective-objective realm of transcendence remains subjective in nature.

One may object to the above critique as missing T'ang's point. After all, T'ang was talking about trans-subjectivity/objectivity while the critique was made entirely within the perspective of the subject-object dichotomy. This is, of course,

\textsuperscript{14} Let me mention a word here of the Christian notion of God, a very complex subject. One of the important understandings of the Christian God is to assert that God has a personal character, even if, in the expressions of certain mystics and theologians, a "transpersonal" description is not excluded. In the twentieth century, where Karl Barth (1886-1968) insists on the otherness of this personal God, Paul Tillich (1886-1965) speaks rather of the ground of being, the Ultimate.
an important objection. My response is, Tang's idea of transcendence is based on the notion that subject and object are inseparable and should not be attached to the realm of relativity. Having said that, we would like to point out that, Tang's argument is not sufficient to establish the trans-subjective-objective horizon which he called 'horizon of returning to monotheism'. Contrasting Christianity and Buddhism, T'ang says:

For those religions which conclude in the belief in one God (monotheism), the most important thing in guiding people towards the trans-subjective-objective realm lies in elevating [human consciousness from] the lower horizons wherein the subjective and the objective dimensions are separate, to the horizon of God in which the two are unified. This [process] depends upon the self-elevation of one's consciousness to form a vertical perspective which proceeds from below to above thereby affirming the existence of God, trust in God, and contemplation, prayers, and so on, so as to attain a higher level of enlightenment or awareness. In Buddhist thought, the most important thing is to eliminate in human consciousness all kinds of attachments to this subjective-objective world. The goal is to expand the limits of consciousness and form a horizontal perspective of all dharmas in the dharma world, thus attaining an all-embracing consciousness. Further, [such consciousness] proceeds from above to below and penetrates the very core of all sentient beings in the dharma world. Since sentient beings have pain and suffering resulting from their attachments, such consciousness also has a feeling of sympathy that leads to compassion. Furthermore, through wisdom, such consciousness sheds light on the emptiness of the attachments that lie at the heart of all sentient life. In other words, wisdom eliminates pain and suffering and leads sentient beings to salvation.
This is entirely different from the preferred approach and teachings of monotheistic religions in general.\textsuperscript{15}

In T'ang's understanding, the trans-subjective-objective 'horizon of monotheism' first affirms and then transcends its subjectivity and objectivity. But as we have already pointed out above, T'ang's argument failed to establish objective reality and, consequently, he also failed to objectively establish that realm of reality which transcends both subjectivity and objectivity. So, how should we understand that level of trans-subjectivity-objectivity T'ang called the 'horizon of monotheism'? For T'ang, monotheism is not about a 'totally other' Absolute Spirit that excludes (as part of itself) the less perfect beings in the universe. "The return to monotheism" [gueixiang yishen歸向一神] refers, I think, to an authentic monotheism that includes everything and excludes nothing. Actually, the 'monotheos' alluded to by T'ang in his Nine Horizons scheme is a kind of 'pantheos', an impersonal or transpersonal 'God-head' figure that underlies all of the universe. Such a being is, strictly speaking, beyond the level of discourse founded on the subject-object distinction — in other words, a trans-subjective-objective Absolute Being. It is not surprising, therefore, that T'ang was unable, or perhaps simply did not bother, to establish the existence of this trans-subjective-objective Absolute. In this sense, it was unfair to expect and demand of him any kind of proof on this matter. However, to base an entire philosophical system on

\textsuperscript{15} T'ang, \textit{Life, Existence, and Horizons of Mind-Heart}, vol. 2, p. 76. 「一般世間宗教之歸向一神者，其引人於超主觀客觀之境，要在由下界之主客相對之境，升至統主客之神境。此乃依於心靈之自提升，以成其自下而上之縱觀，及於神之存在之肯定，對神之信心、及默想、祈禱等，以日進於高明。佛家思想，則要在由破除吾人之心靈對主觀客觀世界之種種執障，以開拓此心靈之量，而成其對法界之一切法之橫觀，以使此心靈日進於廣大；更自上而下，以澈入於法界中一切有情生命之核心，由其有所執而生之苦痛煩惱，更與之有一同情共感，而起慈心悲憫；再以智慧照此有情生命之核心所執者之本性空，而即以此智慧拔除其苦痛煩惱，以成此有情生命之救度。此則與世間一般歸向一神之宗教心靈所嚮往之方向，截然不同，而其敘亦截然不同者。」
implicit faith rather than something that can be proven or denied cannot be acceptable to all, especially in our post-Kantian world.

C. The Nature of T'ang's System

We now proceed to the evaluation of T'ang's philosophy. We begin in this section with an examination of the nature of T'ang's philosophical system in particular and in the next section we shall deal with the philosophical significance of T'ang's thought in general.

The notion of an organic universe is the basis for the idea of cosmic harmony, which is one of the defining characteristics of Chinese thought. What is especially relevant to our study here, is the notion that cosmic harmony is founded on the harmony between the human being and the universe. In the first chapter, we mentioned that there are two aspects of consciousness -- the epistemological and the axiological -- and that both are structured according to the subject-object dichotomy. The intentional structure of our consciousness always directs our minds towards something. We cannot think without an object, and therefore, many philosophers conclude that the subject-object dichotomy is a kind of separation that cannot be eliminated. However, in T'ang, this is not necessarily true. In his idea of harmony, which pervades his entire philosophy, the subject-object dichotomy can be bridged at certain levels of consciousness. In our consciousness, there is that primordial stage, a pre-reflective stage, where differentiation does not exist. The subject-object dichotomy arises only during reflection. Thus, unity or wholeness is the pre-condition of dichotomy. Since such a primordial stage is pre-reflective or pre-cognitive, this wholeness can never be an object of our mind. Once we seek to "know" it or reflect upon it, it becomes an
object of knowing and thus is separated from the knowing subject. It is this
unavoidable separation of subject and object that makes any knowledge of the
totality impossible. In T'ang's system, this primordial unity is represented by the
last three horizons, which is collectively known as the "trans-subjective-objective"
horizon.

In fact, T'ang wanted to build a system which could embrace all kinds of
worldviews and experiences and provide the observer a kind of perspective or
explanatory device by which such a varied collection of human thought and
experience could be adequately observed and fairly evaluated. T'ang respected
philosophies or ways of looking at reality that differed from his own. Indeed, T'ang
was a kind of eclectic grand-theory thinker who wanted to include everything into a
unified and comprehensive system.

As suggested in previous discussions above, T'ang was very keen at
employing different philosophies and religious ideas to explain, interpret, and
reconstruct Confucian philosophy. One of the most important features of his
philosophical system is its comprehensiveness. I suggest this is a result of his use
of such great philosophical systems as the Hegelian and the Huayan Buddhist
philosophies.

1. T'ang and Western philosophy.
There is no doubt that T'ang's philosophy was heavily influenced by Hegel.\footnote{It is almost a consensus among scholars that T'ang was heavily influenced by Hegelian philosophy. Lauren Pfister's "T'ang Chun-i and his Confucian image as understood from his articles in the English language" is very good at comparing the similarities and differences between T'ang and German idealism. Pfister's article is in Hou Taohui ed. \textit{Tang junyi sixiang guoji huiyi lunwenji}, vol. 2, pp. 154-176.} This is most evident in the systematic way T'ang laid out his philosophy. Moreover, as Lauren Pfister rightly remarks, "both historical and religious themes are couched in phrases more reminiscent of Hegel: dialectic is a methodological tool discovered quite often in the philosophical developments T'ang reviews."\footnote{Lauren Pfister, "T'ang Chun-i and his Confucian image as understood from his articles in the English language", p. 163.} However, it would be inaccurate to say that T'ang's philosophy is a Chinese version of Hegelian thought, or that T'ang's interpretation of Chinese philosophy is merely a Chinese reformulation of Hegelian idealism. Instead, I would argue that Huayan Buddhism played a significant role as well in the formation of his systematic philosophy.

This emphasis on comprehensiveness in T'ang's philosophy certainly has some similarities with Karl Jasper (1883-1969) existentialism as well. T'ang's concern with the existential conditions of humanity resembles existentialism in general as well. However, it would be wrong to identify his philosophy with existentialism. In general, existentialism holds the impossibility as well as the undesirability of establishing universal well-being. Also, for the existentialists, life is nothing but anguish. T'ang disagreed with both of these two beliefs.
Unlike the existentialists, T'ang believed that fulfillment and happiness are important. And he did not think that the human being is doomed to unhappiness. For most existentialists, consciousness is inevitably unhappy consciousness. For example, Satre states that, "human reality...... is by nature an unhappy consciousness with no possibility of surpassing its unhappy life." T'ang did not deny the existence of unhappy consciousness, but he believed that the human being is capable of surpassing it by cultivating one's mind-heart. In this sense, we can say that morality (being moral and truly human) is the basis of happiness. Unlike pleasure, happiness is something than comes from within.

2. T'ang and Buddhism: Huayan and Tiantai.

Certainly, I am not the first to notice the possible connection between Huayan Buddhism and T'ang's philosophy. Professors Lao Sze-kwang and Chan Wing-cheuk (pinyin: Chen Rongzhuo陳榮灼)\(^\text{18}\) noted the similarities between them while Professor Jing Haifeng (景海峰) suggested the possible influences of Huayan Buddhism on T'ang. Professor Yu-kwan Ng also indicated the influences of Tiantai and Huayan Buddhism on T'ang.\(^\text{19}\) However, they did not articulate clearly what exactly are these influences. I will venture to fill this gap here.

---

18 Lao and T'ang were friends and colleagues for more than thirty years. Chen was one of T'ang's and Mou Tsung-san's close disciples. Lao and Chen have alerted the author of this dissertation to the considerable Ruayan influence on T'ang's philosophy. However, they did not specify what these influences are.

19 Jing pointed out three reasons why T'ang like Huayan Buddhism and he also noted the possible influences of Huayan Buddhism on T'ang's philosophy. Apart from his brief mention of the notion of the “Four Dharma-world” in one single sentence, Jing likewise failed to specify which elements of Huayan Buddhism influenced T'ang. See his “Tang Junyi xiansheng dui huayan sixiang zhi chanshi” (Tang Junyi's interpretation of Huayan Thought唐君毅先生對華嚴思想之闡釋), in Hou Taohui ed., *Tang Junyi sixiang guoji huiyi*.
One of the most important features of Huayan Buddhism is its doctrine of the Four Dharmadhatus (四法界) which includes, the Dharmadhatu of Shi (phenomenal realm事法界), the Dharmadhatu of Li (noumenal realm理法界), the Dharmadhatu of Non-Obstruction of Li against Shi (理事無礙法界), and the Dharmadhatu of Non-Obstruction of Shi against Shi (事事無礙法界). Simply put, li refers to the reality or the dharma while shi refers to the phenomena or appearance.\textsuperscript{20} The word "dhatu" means world, vision, or horizon. Thus, "dharmadhatu" is usually translated as the dharma-world (Chinese: fajie 法界). Among these four dharma-worlds, the last one is unique to Huayan Buddhism. The idea of the Dharmadhatu of Non-Obstruction of Shi against Shi is not present in the other schools of Buddhism.\textsuperscript{21} It is in this unique notion of the dharma-world that we find similarities between Tang's philosophy and Huayan Buddhism.

\textsuperscript{20} Chan, Wing-tsit, A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy, Ch. 25. See also Julia Ching, Chinese Religions (N.Y.: Orbis, 1994), pp. 76-77.

\textsuperscript{21} The shifajie refers to the world of phenomena which is a world of non-permanence while the lifajie refers to the world of the common "essence" or similarity among various phenomena, that is the reality of conditioned co-arising. This points mainly to the idea of viewing reality as emptiness which is a basic doctrine shared by all Buddhist schools. The Dharmadhatu of Non-Obstruction of Li against Shi refers to the harmonic relationship between the reality and the appearance. This kind of idea can also be found in other Buddhist schools like the Boruo 般若 sect. My understanding of the Four Dharma-world here benefits from Ng Yu-kwan's Zhongguo Fuxue de Xiandai Quanshi [The Modern Interpretations of Chinese Buddhism中國佛學的現代詮釋] (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1995), pp. 120-123.
Before we proceed any further, it is important to be clear about the meaning of the Dharma-world. The view of the non-obstruction of shi and shi is a result of profound contemplation. According to the Huayan tradition, the cosmic Buddha or Vairocana (Chinese: piluzhenafo毗盧遮那佛) experienced the sagara-mudra-samadhi (Chinese: Haiinsanmei海印三昧), a profound stage of concentrated meditation. In this stage, Vairocana is capable of seeing the world from an ideal perspective, that is a perspective which was enhanced by the spiritual fruits of deep meditations. In such a perspective, things not only do not obstruct each other, they depend on and penetrate each other and thus form a harmonic world of non-obstruction. Fa Zang's Huayan yiuxin fajieji (華嚴遊心法界記) says,

It is like the reflection of the four divisions [of a great army] on a vast ocean. Although the reflected images differ in kind, they appear simultaneously on [the surface of] the ocean in their proper order. Even though the appearance of the images is manifold, the water [that reflects them] remains undisturbed. The images are indistinguishable from the water, and yet [the water] is calm and clear; the water is indistinguishable from the images, and yet [the images] are multifarious....It is also described as "oceanic" (hai) because its various reflections multiply endlessly and their limit is impossible to fathom. To investigate one of them thoroughly is to pursue the infinite, for, in any one of them, all the rest vividly appear at the same time. For this reason, it is said to be "oceanic." It is called "reflection" (in) because all the images appear

---

22 Vairocana literally means "He who is like the Sun" or "He who belongs to or comes from the Sun" and is generally regarded as real Buddha-body (e.g. Godhead). In Japan, he is regarded as a Sun-Buddha.

simultaneously within it without distinction of past and present. The myriad diverse kinds [of images] penetrate each other without obstruction. The one and the many are reflected in one another without opposing each other.... [It is called] "samadhi" because, although [the images within it] are many and diverse, it remains one and does not change. Even though myriads of images arise in profusion, it remains empty and unperturbed.

Professor Peter Gregory clearly pointed out that the "concentrated meditation of oceanic reflection" (Chinese: Haiin 海印), "expressed the totalistic vision in which the harmonious and dynamic interrelation of all phenomena in all phenomena is simultaneously perceived just as if the entire universe were reflected on the surface of the ocean". In Huayan mythology, after Vairocana enters the Haiinsanmei, a light is emitted from a point between Vairocana's two eye-brows. This light illuminates everywhere just as the light of the sun shines in all directions. The vision of the world as shishiwuai fajie is like the vision of the world under such an illuminating light. Under such a perspective, not only are all things included, but they are also mutually dependent. This view allows us to see the true nature of things which, in Huayan Buddhism, is interpenetration. This view of the world is based on the Huayan belief that the whole universe is nothing but the body of Vairocana Buddha. Of course, parts of the body are distinct and different from each other; however, they still belong to the same body constituting a totality that functions together in interdependent harmony.

This relates to the logic of mutual determination (xiangji 相即) and mutual penetration (xiangru 相入) in the Huayan tradition. In a sense, every phenomenon is devoid of self-nature. Thus, every phenomenon is nothing but a single element of an organic whole. The whole determines the parts; however, the opposite is also true: the parts determine the whole. As Peter Gregory put it, the whole is nothing but the interrelation of its parts, each phenomenon can therefore be regarded as determining the character of all other phenomena as well as having its own character determined by all other phenomena.

Put simply, this kind of determination which goes in both directions (whole to part and part to whole) is the essence of xiangji. Xiangru, on the other hand, 

25 Professor Yu-kwan Ng, an author of various books on Buddhist religion and philosophy including, T'ien-tai Buddhism and Early Madhyamika, Fojiao sixiang dacidian (佛教思想大辞典), Indu foxue yanjiu (印度佛學研究), Fojiao di gainian yu fangfa (佛教的概念與方法), yuuxi sanmei (遊戲三昧), Indu foxue di xian dai quanshi (印度佛學的現代詮釋) has explained clearly this pair of concept. My understanding of them benefits from his insightful works. See esp. his Zhongguo fo xue di xian dai quanshi, pp. 104-113.

26 However, this kind of determination is more complicated than it appears to be. The notion ji (即) has to be understood through two different interrelated notions, kung (空) and you (有). Here, these two common Buddhist terms assume special meanings which differ from their meanings in other context. Here, they refer to the status of the elements which constitute a being. Kung refers to the element(s) which is in an active position while you refers to the element(s) which is in a passive position in the process of forming a being. Put differently, the kung elements are those auxiliary elements while the you elements are those which pay a leading role in forming a being. The concept of ji refers to the situation that the kung elements follow the lead of the you elements. That is to say, the you elements (e.g. A, B) play an active role while the kung elements (e.g. P, Q) play an auxiliary role in forming a being. In such a situation, we say that the kung elements ji the you elements (e.g. P, Q ji A, B). See Ng Yun-kwan, Zhongguo fo xue di xian dai quanshi, pp. 105-108. To be sure, Ng's interpretation is just one of the possible understanding of this pair of concept. Professor W.C. Chan pointed out that the notion of ji is extremely complicate and can

198
refers to the fact that phenomena thus formed not only mutually dependent but also mutually penetrating. Fa Zang's (法藏 643-712 A.D.) once used the following illustration to explain this vision of the universe: He surrounded a Buddha image with ten mirrors. In this way, each mirror reflected the Buddha image or the Buddha image reflected himself on each mirror. The important thing here is, the image reflected in each mirror became reflected as well in the other mirrors. The result was an infinite series of mutual reflections producing an infinite number of Buddha images. Phenomena in this world are like the infinite images of the Buddha as reflected in the infinite series of mirror reflections. The point here is that, as the infinite mirror images exist because of the mutual reflection of the mirrors, so also do the phenomena in the world because of their interdependence and mutual penetration. Such an image of the universe is similar to T'ang philosophy of horizon. First, T'ang saw the whole universe as an organic whole. Then, he included everything in his system. After that, T'ang regarded every phenomenon and being as mutually dependent and inter-penetrating.

There are also differences between T'ang's thought and Huayan Buddhism. For the present discussion, I would mention just one. According to the Huayan doctrinal classification system, the highest doctrine is the so-called "round-

mean different things in different traditions. Put simply, it means "identity." In the Huayan tradition, xiangji means identity while xiangru refers to the notion that the opposites "mutually go to each other." See Chan, W.C., "jizhifenxi" (An analysis of ji 即之分析), in Guoji faxue yanjiu, Taipei, 1991, pp. 1-20.

27 Another popular metaphor is that of Indra's net (因陀羅網). According to this metaphor, the universe is a vast net while the phenomena are jewels hanging on the intersections. Each jewel thus reflects every other jewel while at the same time being reflected by all the other. This process of mutual reflection multiplies infinitely in all directions, chuengchueng wujin (重重無盡).
The word "round" signifies perfection; thus, "round-teaching" can be translated as the "perfect teaching" or the "highest teaching". However, there are two types of "round teachings", according to Tiantai Buddhism: the tungjiaoyicheng (同教一乘) and the biejiaoyicheng (別教一乗). Before discussing this notion of "perfect teaching" any further, it is necessary to clarify one aspect of Buddhist cosmology.

According to one interpretation, there exists a total of ten realms of existence which are organized in a hierarchy with the realm of the Buddha on top and the nine other forms of existence below. Tungjiaoyicheng refers to a category of teaching which believes that the Buddha in the tenth realm shares his spiritual fruits (e.g. wisdom and merits) with the other existence in the nine other realms. This doctrine is taught by important Chinese Buddhist schools like the Tiantai. Since the major concern here is to share, the doctrine focuses on the outward process of embracing all forms of existence in an ever-expanding circle of Buddha's merits. In this context, the word "round" refers to the Buddha's "circle of perfection". Therefore, "round teaching" may be translated as "perfect teaching".

Biejiaoyicheng, on the other hand, refers to another category of teaching which aims at preserving the reverence for the highest realm of existence in Buddhism, the realm of Buddha. Such teachings insist that there is an almost unbridgeable gap between the realm of Buddha and those of the other forms of existence. This gap can only be bridged through enlightenment in the form of self-enlightenment or the Buddha's grace. For the biejiaoyicheng, the realm of Buddha is incomprehensible to other beings in all the other realms. The "round" in this sense means the "highest" or the "most sublime". In this sense, then, "round teaching" translates as "highest teaching" or "most sublime teaching". In other
words, the main difference between *tungjiaoyicheng* and the *biejiaoyicheng* lies in their different understanding of the accessibility, to the lower nine realms, of the wisdom and merits in the Buddha realm. This is the basis for the Tiantai critique of Huayan called *yuanliduanjiu* (緣理斷九) which literally means, "focusing merely on the *li* (the Buddha realm) by cutting-off the nine".

This critique is really about the relationship between the Buddha realm and the nine lower realms. For the Huayan, only in the Buddha realm (or, to the Buddha alone) can the illusoriness of phenomena be completely understood. In other worlds, true reality is incomprehensible in the nine realms. It is incomprehensible because the beings in the nine realms are deluded and, therefore, cannot comprehend the Buddha realm. So, one can comprehend true reality only by cutting oneself off from the illusory nine realms. The consequence of this, as seen by Tiantai Buddhists, is the complete denial and devaluation of the nine realms or the world of phenomena. In short, the Tiantai would say that this is not a very compassionate view of the world. Now according to the Tiantai, each realm contains both illusion and reality, relative truth and ultimate truth. For the Tiantai, the world of phenomena (the nine realms of existence) has some reality in it and, therefore, should not be completely rejected. One can see the true reality (attain enlightenment) in the midst of illusion. There is, therefore, no need, as the Huayan suggests, to *duanjiiu* (斷九), "cut-off the nine realms" or deny and leave the world to attain Buddhahood.

As an all-embracing system, T'ang's scheme of "Nine Horizons" is designed to include all levels of human experience, from the very mundane to the most lofty realm of the spiritual. T'ang found all forms of exclusivity unacceptable. For T'ang, therefore, it is immoral to deny anyone the chance to attain salvation or perfection.
On the issue of comprehensiveness, which is the topic of this section, I would like to suggest that while T'ang's philosophy deeply resembles the Huayen approach, remains closer to Tiantai than to Huayan on account of his unwillingness to focus upon transcendence alone, since he kept his eyes on all beings in this world.

D. The Nature of T'ang's Philosophy

We now proceed to our discussion of the philosophical significance of T'ang's thought — which he himself termed as humanism. Humanism in the twentieth century has attracted lot of attention, especially in the philosophical world. Since Jean-Paul Sartre identified his existential philosophy as humanism, the view of seeing humanism as atheism became popular. However, there are also different kinds of humanism that do not oppose to the belief in transcendence (e.g. Christian humanism). This thesis is an investigation into the nature of T'ang's humanism — whether it is purely secular or not. We have tried to accomplish this by examining T'ang's notion of transcendence. Although the difficulties inherent in T'ang's argument have already been discussed above, we are certain that the notion of transcendence is important in T'ang's philosophy. We now conclude by discussing the 'religious' character of T'ang's humanistic philosophy.

Our analysis above, proceeding from T'ang's affirmation of the existence of the experiential world, shows his position as realism. However, in his advocacy of a perfect being/Absolute that includes everything that exists in the universe, T'ang's position is pantheistic. However, T'ang did not see things in world as different manifestations of divine thought. Rather, T'ang recognized that individual things possess a certain autonomy which does not require a transcendent God for
support. In this regard, T'ang praised Leibniz (1646-1716) and criticized Hegel. In this respect, T'ang's pantheism may also be seen as realistic pantheism rather than idealistic pantheism. All these make abundantly clear the nature of T'ang's pantheism. This, I suggest, constitutes an important religious dimension in T'ang's philosophy.

However, I also mentioned that T'ang's thought also reflects panentheistic characteristics, an issue I must address now. In fact, T'ang himself had said that "panentheism (fanyoushenlun 泛有神論) most closely resembles what we mean." T'ang mentioned Charles Hartshorne in particular when he talked about panentheism. However, he did not offer an explicit definition of the term. Panentheism, however, is quite a complex concept. So, what did T'ang really mean by it?

First, T'ang used terms like 'Great Strength' or 'Great Power' to refer to God. His god does not appears to be personal. On the nature of the being of the Absolute and of all other beings, God and creation are the same. Therefore, God


and creation are not a duality of two qualitatively different beings or natures; rather, God and creation are two poles of the same being or nature, two ends of the same continuum.

On the relationship between God and empirical beings, T'ang's notion of God is not totally immanentistic in the sense of God being totally submerged or immersed in world. He also did not believe that one has to "strip off the veil of the flesh" in order to approach the transcendence. He did not believe that the soul alone (devoid of the physical body) is enough to transcend. Rather, to achieve transcendence, T'ang focused very much on moral and ethical actions for which the physical self is necessary for performing. We may suggest that T'ang's cosmos is an organic whole in which every being participate in the development of the Divine. Every being is a part of the one wholeness. In this sense, T'ang echoes the so-called "all in one" teaching in the Neo-Confucian tradition which can be found in philosophers like Wang Yang-ming. Such a panentheistic position, I suggest, is another religious dimension of T'ang thought.

Moreover, the role or the nature of the Confucian Heaven perceived by T'ang is especially relevant to the present study. Heaven is not a personal God in the

30 Brugger, Walter, Philosophical Dictionary, p. 298.

31 For a discussion of Wang's philosophy, see Julia Ching, To Acquire Wisdom: The Way of Wang Yang-ming, esp. pp. 126-128. Professor Lee Ming-hui (Li Minghui李明輝) has advanced an inspiring new idea, the immanent-transcendent interpretation. See his "Rujia sixiang zhong di neizaixing yu chaoyuexing" (The immanent and transcendent characteristics in Confucian thought儒家思想中的内在性與超越性), in his The Self-transformation of Contemporary Confucianism, pp. 128-148. Lee's idea, based Mou Tsungs-san's interpretation of Confucianism, differs mainly from past interpretation in emphasizing the continuing process from immanence to transcendence.
first place. It is also not a god of historical intervention nor a god of rewards and punishments. What, then, is T'ang's Heaven?

There is no doubt that T'ang emphasized upon human moral achievements from which we discern the prevalence of the Heavenly Virtue. The full realization of Humanity is the Human Ultimate (renji). In a way the renji is the Confucian Heaven for the Heaven not only represents the source of life and values, it also reflects the ideal of human morality. This is why we should show reverence to Heaven, for it represents the ultimate source and the highest ideal of morality. Such a Heaven (Human Ultimate) is not a mere summation of one's individual moral achievements. Rather, it is an ideal world of moral virtues, so deeply rooted in our human nature and yet so distant from our existential life. It is a kind of transcendence. This is the most important ethical-religious aspect in T'ang's system.

As mentioned in Chapter Four, T'ang's wisdom is ultimately based on a profound insight into humanity and experience of compassion and love — which is difficult and sometimes impossible to communicate, let alone to prove. Rather it is grounded in a deep faith in and true commitment to the innate goodness of human nature. In fact, for T'ang and the Confucians, hope in human perfectibility (attaining sagehood) is founded on faith in human nature. In this aspect, faith and commitment instead of reason is the foundation of T'ang's thought. This is another aspect of the religious dimension of T'ang's thought.

Let us now look into the ontological status of the ultimate reality in T'ang's argument. From the above discussions, we already know that T'ang's ontological argument can only establish the notion of a perfect being/Absolute, not its
objective reality; likewise, his moral argument can only establish the fact of man's demands/aspirations for transcendent fulfillment, not the objective reality of that transcendent fulfillment. What T'ang succeeded in establishing was a notion of metaphysical reality that relies on and is determined by human consciousness—that is, a product of human subjectivity. In this respect, we can only talk about its anthropological status, not its religious meaning. Indeed, T'ang's philosophy is basically an anthropology of the human spirit or, as indicated above, a humanism which is deeply rooted in moral consciousness or spirit. What, then, is the foundation of such a humanism?

Looking into T'ang's major writings, it is not hard to find certain themes that pervades his works. For example, there is always this underlying profound moral feeling or emotion, (qing情), which T'ang called "sym-pathy" and "com-passion", running through his works. I am inclined to think this is the main thread that connects together all of T'ang's philosophical works.

This qing is rooted in the innate moral nature of our humanity. Such qing manifests itself in love and compassion. We love ourselves and, at the same time, we want to be better persons. We extend this love and compassion to our families, the society, and all other beings until the whole universe is permeated with love and compassion. This love is expressed in two major forms: concern and duty. On the one hand, we feel concern for others, and thus we cannot help but be

32 In fact, when Mou Tsung-san and Hsu Fu-Kuan reflected upon T'ang Chun-i's and their own scholarship, they admitted that they are permeated with the spirit of moral humanism. See Hsu, Rujia zhengzhi xixiang yu minzhu zhiyou renquan (Confucian Political Thought and Democracy, Freedom and Human Rights儒家政治思想與民主自由人權). (Taipei: xuesheng shuju, 1988), Revised and enlarged edition, pp. 319-326, esp. 320.
compassionate in their suffering. This is one of the most important bases for T'ang to rank Buddhism higher than Christianity. On the other hand, this love and compassion is a responsibility that we carry for ourselves and others. We should not only be compassionate; we should also be responsible for the existence of others: that is, we should not deny others' existence. For T'ang, the kind of idea, which sees beings as contingent, and thus can be denied or excluded, is unacceptable. To deny others, for T'ang, is to deny ourselves. It is our nature to be connected to other beings. As mentioned earlier, this connection is achieved through the process of gantong. In gangtong, we connect ourselves to other beings through love and compassion in such a way ultimate this love and compassion permeates the whole universe. Thus, all beings are bridged together to form a "oneness" which excludes any possibility of subject-object dichotomy. The union of humanity and the transcendent or Heaven actually expresses this idea. Therefore, we can say that qing of humanity is the element that holds together T'ang's system of nine horizons and, indeed, his entire philosophy.

In T'ang's philosophical system, human is never an isolated existence/being. What really devalues humanity is when human beings abandon their mind-hearts. That is, when human beings cut themselves off from the very foundation of their being human -- 'ren仁' -- then they lose their true humanity, their original nature. Human being must strive to recover, realize, and manifest this original human nature. If for a Christian, not letting God be God (Lord or sovereign) constitutes the greatest sin, for T'ang, it is not letting the human being be human that constitute the greatest human failure. Only by realizing this original nature will human being be able to transcend his/her actual self and attain the realm of transcendence. This constitutes an important religious dimension (self-transcendence) in the midst of T'ang's humanism.
To let a human being be human is to let the human innate moral nature or essence be realized. Indeed, when T'ang investigated the being of human, he was alarmed by the meaninglessness of modern life. T'ang wanted to restore philosophy to its fundamental concern with the meaning of human existence. That is why he spent so much effort on moral philosophy. T'ang believed that human beings are free to choose their own ways of existence, free in the sense that they can have more than one alternative. Our freedom in existence reflects our human essence and which, with proper cultivation, grows and constitutes in time. Time is therefore not viewed as a geometrical concept which is uniform and abstract. Rather, it is the existential platform that humanity (moral nature) unfolds and actualizes. In this sense, humanity is a process.

One who has fully realized his or her moral nature is a sage. As T'ang mentioned, sagehood represents the essence or nature of cosmic harmony. Naturally, this presupposes that sagehood is possible. In fact, as T'ang clearly pointed out, Confucianism teaches not only that the sage and Heaven and Earth are one, but also that everyone can become a sage. Of course, T'ang was not naive to the fact that not every human being can succeed in attaining sagehood.

---

33 The nature of morality, according to T'ang, has three major intrinsic characteristics. namely, the nature of autonomy, the nature of freedom, and that of transcendence. First, the nature of autonomy does not refer to the heteronomous in the sense of being other-directed excessively. Autonomy is an act of self-regulating, self-governing, self-determining, and self-directing. It is the ability to follow one's own volition. By freedom, we mean there are other possible alternatives for one to choose and one could well have chosen otherwise. It is only when freedom is available then one can be held responsible for his own choice. Third, we can act morally because we can transcend our existential attachments. All these elements are crucial to T'ang's philosophy and his moral universe. They are the fundamental assumptions of his moral philosophy.
But still, belief in the innate human moral nature provides the hope for human perfectibility and forms the basis for the pursuit of sagehood.

The process character of hoping for sagehood is important. When a person is hoping for sagehood, s/he is engaged in a dynamic process of transformation. In such a transformation, humanity is fighting a battle against itself. It is a combat for self-perfection and against natural desires. That is, it is a struggle to let our conscience be the master, and free ourselves from the control of natural desires. In such a battle, one cannot carry on without hoping that ultimate success is possible, even though it may be a very hard battle to win. Otherwise, there is no sense in struggling, and despair and even psychological breakdown will likely result. Thus, some sense of optimism, some assurance of success is necessary in the lifelong and painstaking pursuit of sagehood. In this regard, the belief in transcendence plays a very significant role.

For Tang, and perhaps for most of Confucian scholars, one gains hope because he has confidence that human essence is good. This is the cornerstone of Tang's philosophy, which he, of course, inherited from traditional Confucianism. This faith in the perfectibility of the human being lies at very foundation of his idea of the transcendence. Since the essence of being human is the same as that of transcendence, one is able to ascend the realm of transcendence through spiritual cultivation, in the sense of Wang Yang-ming's interpretation of chih-liang-chih, which means "extending" one's basic human essence as being good. This is a kind of continuous immanent - to - transcendent model, common in Chinese philosophy, which is certainly different from K. Barth's idea of a Wholly Other transcendence.
For T'ang Chun-i, indeed for most Confucians, this doctrine of human perfectibility reflects the traditional Mencian teaching that all can become like the two Chinese sage-kings, Yao and Shun. In other words, the door to the realm of transcendence is always open to every individual. As such, the road to sagehood is forever accompanied by hope and consolation. Such hope is originated not by some expectation of forthcoming salvation but by the natural moral disposition or tendency of human conscience. This notion recalls Wang Yangming's 'extension of conscience' [zhiliangzhi 致良知] and continues the 'transcendent-immanent' model found in traditional Chinese philosophy.

T'ang's vision of the ideal world is one that is founded not only on humanism but on a moral humanism. As he said in "The Scientific World and the Humanistic World": "The ideal world that I envision is not [to be called] a 'United Nations world', a 'socialist world', or a 'communist world', but a world that holds moral virtue as central and one with a fully developed humanism."  

While the prospect for attaining sagehood may instill hopes and expectations, it also gives rise to fear (or anxiety). It is not the kind of fear that a lowly finite being has toward an absolute and infinite being. Rather, it is a fear (or anxiety) that results from moral responsibility -- for having to rely solely on one's own and determine everything by oneself. This kind of fear can be defined in terms of vigilance. Hope, in this context, would mean a kind of guarded optimism rather than an exaggerated self-confidence. The Confucian pursuit of sagehood is,  

---

34 T'ang, Reconstruction of Humanistic Spirits, p. 45. 「我理想的世界，我不名之為聯合國的世界，我不名之為社會主義的世界，共產主義的世界，而名之為以德性為中心而人文全幅發展的世界。」
in one sense about being confident in one's conscience and ability; in another sense, it is about practical vigilance against the pitfalls of moral laxity and degeneration. As a result, Confucian practice puts great emphasis on constant training and reflection. In his study of the Confucian concept of 'highest freedom', Lao Sze-kwang (pinyin: Lao Siguang 努思光) pointed out that while freedom can mean free from limitation, it also suggests that there is no guarantee of success. This is exactly the reason why moral autonomy is so much emphasized in the pursuit of sagehood.35 For T'ang, God is unnecessary for pursuing moral fulfillment. Indeed, his thought may be characterized as a humanism based on human moral autonomy.

Now that we have examined both the humanistic (i.e., moral) and the religious dimensions of T'ang's philosophical system, we have to ask the next question: which of the two constitutes its most essential characteristic? In other words, is T'ang's philosophy a 'religious humanism' or a 'humanistic religion'? By 'religious humanism', I mean it is more humanism than religion, but has religious characteristics. By 'humanistic religion', I mean it is more religion than humanism but has humanistic aspects. The difference is whether the foundation of T'ang thought is religion or humanism. Obviously, before we make any judgment on this question, we must first define what T'ang meant by the terms 'humanism' and 'religion'. On this issue, the following remarks from T'ang deserves attention:

What we call the humanistic way of thinking refers to the total affirmation of and respect for the value of human nature, principles of relationships, personality, culture and history, without neglecting or distorting them in such a way that human beings are seen as no different from nonhumans or even below level of other things in the nature.

The difference between humanistic and nonhumanistic or superhumanistic ways of thinking is that humanistic thinking originates in human and its object is human or anything that belongs to the human. In nonhumanistic or superhumanistic thinking, however, the object is nonhuman or superhuman (in the sense of Nietzsche's superman). The human and the nonhuman or the superhuman can exist at the same time. Consequently, humanistic thinking and nonhumanistic or superhumanistic thinking can also co-exist. Logically, the two are compatible/mutually inclusive.36

The above passage demonstrates the comprehensiveness of T'ang's idea of humanism. Worth noting, in particular, is the way T'ang contrasted humanistic thinking and nonhumanistic or thinking: In terms of their objects, the former is directed to the human realm and the latter to something that transcends the

36 「我們所謂人文的思想，即指對於人性、人倫、人道、人格、人之文化及其歷史之存在與其價值，願意全幅加以肯定尊重，不有意加以忽略，更决不加以抹殺曲解，以免人同於人以外、人以下之自然物等的思想。

What is significant about this passage is not what it explicitly states but the implicit conclusion that it suggests: Irregardless of their distinct objects, both ways of thinking begin in human beings. T'ang holds a sequential perspective which teaches one should start with humanity but not with Heaven. This is to say we have to begin with human wisdom instead of contemplation on God. After all, Heaven is a kind of moral destination — the full realization of humanity. In T'ang's humanistic scheme, even 'God' originates in human beings; God belongs to human beings. Indeed, in T'ang's system, God does not occupy a central place. In fact, he thought that religion does not need the figure of God to be a religion. As he said:

Religion does not have to be founded on [the notion of] God. It needs only to be founded on the quest for fulfillment and generation of value of the transcendent and eternal Perfection. In our understanding, the reason why Confucianism is not a religion, in the usual commonsense understanding of the word, is because of its extremely mundane character. Religions usually have mythologies or mysteries as their most important constitutive elements. If we talk about the value of religion in terms of the spirit of religion, one cannot overemphasize [the importance of] these mystical/supernatural elements.37

Clearly, T'ang did not necessarily regard God as most important. Rather, for him, what is important is the consciousness which enables human beings to

---

37「......宗教並不必以神為本，而唯以求價值之實現生發之超越的完滿悠久為本。照我們之意，是儒家之非一般之宗教之故，仍在于極平凡之一點上。即一般宗教皆有神話或神怪之成份，為其宗教中重要成份。自宗教精神論宗教價值，亦自不能太重視此神怪之成份。」 "Zongjiao xinyang yu xiandai zhongguo wenhua" in his The Developments of Chinese Humanistic Spirits. Quotation in p. 371.
transcend himself or herself and attain the heights of human possibilities. T'ang
called this consciousness the 'religious spirit'. Religion, as T'ang pointed out,
occupies the Yin (陰) position, not the Yang (陽) position. Within the Yin-Yang
context, the relation between humanity and religion is presented as a main-
 auxiliary relationship: humanity (morality/culture) is the main dynamics; religion is
the auxiliary force. As T'ang said: "Chinese culture is not without religion;
however, it is a religion that is subsumed under culture" [rather than the other way
around].

Further, in "The Religious Spirit and Modern Man", he more explicitly
stated: "Our new humanism... is one that includes religion within the concept of
human culture. It rejects [the idea of] religion that controls culture." There is no
doubt, therefore, that what T'ang advocated was a religious humanism.

Contemporary Neo-Confucianism, in this case exemplified by T'ang's
philosophy, is not any kind of secular humanism that discards the importance of

---

38 「……中國文化非無宗教，而是宗教之融攝於人文。」T'ang, The Spiritual Values of
Chinese Culture, p. 7.

39 「我們的新人文主義⋯⋯仍是以人文之概念涵攝宗教，而不贊成以宗教統制人文。」T'ang, The
Reconstruction of Humanistic Spirits, p. 29.

40 One may also call it secular religion. Claudia F. Card has once remarked that, "we
believe that the scope of religious commitment is much broader than that of the issues
encompassed by the varieties of Judaic-Christianity; or, for that matter, the varieties
of Eastern mysticism or any other body of tradition. Contemporary radical theology, to
cite but one source, has shown that the important questions concerning religious
commitment and its relationship to individual and social life can be raised and
discussed with little or no reference to God conceived as a personal Being, or to any
form of supernaturalism. The idea of 'secular religion' no longer strikes one as a
Commitment and Salvation (Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1974), pp. vii-
viii.
the transcendence. Rather, it is a religious humanism that values the importance of the transcendence. It is my assertion that T'ang Chun-i's thought is a religious humanism which is deeply grounded in humanity and in its openness to the transcendence. It is precisely in this sense that we can say that Confucianism, exemplifies by T'ang's thought, has a religious dimension. I think any serious discussion of the nature of Confucianism cannot avoid this aspect.

To recapitulate, T'ang's argument cannot support the notion of God (Absolute) that he wanted to establish. And perhaps T'ang did not care. From the beginning, T'ang believed that the realm of transcendence was something ultimately beyond human discourse and therefore impossible to establish philosophically. For this reason, T'ang suggested that we really need not read his magnum opus Life, Existence and the Horizons of the Mind-Heart or any philosophical treatise in the world for that matter. As he put it: "[One] can read them all or not read them all; one can have them or not have them".

---

41 This is a common notion shared by many Neo-Confucian scholars. Dr. Feng Yaoming has contributed a very important critique on this regard. See his "dangdai xinrujia di zhexue gainien" (The concept of philosophy in contemporary Neo-Confucianists). See his "dangdai xinrujia di zhexue gainien" (The concept of philosophy in contemporary Neo-Confucianists), in Mou Tsung-san 林宗三 et. al. Dandái xinrujia lunwenji: Conglunpian 當代新儒家論文集（總論篇）（Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe文津出版社, 1991), pp. 349-396, esp. 373-383.

42 This is not to say philosophy is of no use. Rather, it signifies the functions and limitations of philosophy. Since T'ang thought that philosophy addresses problems, if one does not have problem, naturally, one does not need to study philosophy. However, we still need philosophical reflection to understand the limitation of philosophy. Quotation in T'ang. Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart, vol. 1. Preface, p. 7. 「世間一切哲學論辯之著，亦皆可讀可不讀，可有亦可無也。」
In studying T’ang’s thought, we cannot deny his desire to propagate Confucianism and save the world. For T’ang, there could be nothing more important than promoting Chinese culture and awakening people’s moral spirit. Under these considerations, the most important function of philosophical investigation is to lead people to the way [of the sage], or, to use T’ang’s word, to "replant the spiritual root" (linggen zaizhi). If that is the case, and such a transcendent level of the learning of the mind-heart is beyond knowledge and language, then strictly speaking, it should be outside the scope of philosophical speculation — that is, it is not completely the object of rational knowledge. That is why T’ang’s thought has religious aspects. Perhaps, we should call it the religion of mind-heart and nature (xin sheng shi jiao). Therefore, in terms of its foundation, T’ang’s religious humanism is moral humanism. But on account of its transcendent dimension, we can clearly see a profound religious spirit running through it.

One of the main topics in the study of Confucianism is, of course, whether Confucianism is a religion or not. T’ang did not directly address this issue in his Life, Existence and the Horizons of Mind-heart. For him, the more important and fundamental issue concerns the fate of Confucianism in today’s world. He regarded it as his mission to promote and revitalize Confucianism. Whether or not Confucianism is a religion is still being debated. Professor Lao Sze-kwang recently proposed to distinguish Chinese philosophy from Western philosophy in
terms of their main functions: the orientative function and the cognitive function. Cognitive philosophy aims at establishing knowledge while orientative philosophy aims mainly at transforming individuals to become better human beings. The former deals mainly with the realm of the intellect while the latter mainly with the domain of the will and emotions. On the basis of this distinction, I think Tang's philosophy can best be characterized as orientative.

To be sure, T'ang was aware of philosophy's function to seek and attain knowledge and wisdom. However, for him, philosophy has not only this function but also a mission: "To realize the authentic being of my life is to enable my unique Self to relate to the Eternal and Omnipresent and become infinite. [Thus], life becomes infinite life and the ultimacy of humanity is established." In other words, T'ang advocated a kind of philosophizing that contributes to overall human moral upliftment. T'ang used philosophical methods to study Confucian thought, clarify its meaning and construct a system. Simply put, T'ang reconstructed Confucian thought as a systematic philosophical system. He did this, however, not merely to achieve intellectual knowledge but to arrive at the truth. For him, knowledge is not an end in itself but a means to wisdom -- to the truth. Recalling the Buddhist metaphor about the finger that points to the moon, philosophy, for

---

43 For Lao's distinction, see his "Congpupianxing yu jyutixing tanjiu rujia daode zhexue zhi yaozhi" 論道家之要旨, in Liu Shu-hsien (pinxin: Liu Shuxian劉述先) et. al, Rejia lunliyantaohui lunwenji 儒家倫理研討會論文集 (Singapore 新加坡: Dongya zhexueyaniushuo東亞哲學研究所, 1987). pp. 16-28.

44 T'ang, Life, Existence, and the Horizons of Mind-Heart, vol. 1, p. 27. "成就吾人生命之真實存在，使唯一之吾，由通于一永恆、悠久、普遍而無不在，而無限；生命亦成爲無限生命，而立人極。「
T'ang, is not about the finger that points to the moon but about the moon pointed to by the finger.
Appendixes and Selected Bibliography
Appendix A: On the Interpretation of Certain Technical Terms:

The following discussions of some highly selected terms are brief and geared to the special need of understanding Tang Chun-i's thought in particular and thus may not apply to Chinese philosophy in general. They are in no way mean to capture the full complexity of these terms in Chinese intellectual history though brief notes of the history of the terms are sometimes included. Unlike the main text, the structure of this table does not permit a detail reference of the sources consulted. I can only name the works especially consulted in preparing this table here:


Cheng 诚
a. "Cheng" means "sincerity", a psychological attitude which bears moral value in the Confucian tradition.
b. In the Doctrine of the Mean, it also refers to the ultimate metaphysical principle, the Way of Heaven.

Dharma法
a. Dharma (Skt.). literally means carrying and holding.
b. In Buddhism, it can refer to the teaching of Buddha, or the highest truth.
c. It also can mean phenomenon.

Jingquan 經權
a. "Jing" literally means horizontal lines as opposed to "wei" (繊), meaning a vertical lines.
b. "Jing" also means the Classics, or scriptures.
c. "Jing" can also mean the ultimate principle or the ultimate truth while quan means skilful means or relative truth. Thus, jing refers to the principle or the teaching that should not be changed while quan is an alternative judgment resulted from an assessment of a particular situation.
**Jing** 敬

a. "Jing" usually means reverence, or seriousness. It refers mainly to a proper attitude towards the elders, and the spirits.
b. In the Neo-Confucianism, *Jing* also refers to a stage of a meditative mind-heart.

**Jing**境

a. It can mean stages, visions, or horizon.
b. In traditional spiritual cultivation, it refers to the stage of one's cultivation or the horizon from a transformed mind-heart with a new perspective.

**Li**理

a. Literally, it means reason, principle, or pattern.
b. In Huayan Buddhism, *li* refers to noumena as opposed to *shi*, phenomena.
c. In Neo-Confucianism, *li* refers mainly to the ultimate principle. Sometimes, it refers more to a cosmic order. It is also used to refer to the moral laws.

**Liangzhi** 良知

a. Literally, it means good knowledge.
b. In Mencius, *liangzhi* refers mainly to an innate faculty to distinguish right and wrong.
c. It became the central notion of the School of Lu-Wang, or the School of Mind, meaning mainly the innate capacity to transform oneself to become a morally perfect individual.

**Qing** 情

a. "Qing" literally means emotion, and feeling.
b. Seven different kinds of *qing* are usually mentioned in the Confucian texts as the representation of the human emotion: delight, anger, sadness, joy, love, hate, and desires.
c. In Neo-Confucianism, *qing* is usually taken as an important inner force that should be cultivated and regulated.

**Tian** (Heaven)天

a. "Tian" literally means "Heaven" or "sky," but is usually used to refer to the universe or the Supreme Being in Confucianism.
b. For T'ang, "Tian" refers mainly the origin of life which we should show reverence by performing moral duties.
**Tianli** (Heavenly Principle) 天理
a. Literally, heavenly principle.
b. It refers to the ultimate ethical-religious principle in Neo-Confucianism.
c. It is often used to contrast with renyu (人欲), human desires.

**Xīn** (mind-heart) 心
a. Literally, it means "mind", "heart", and "feeling".
b. Depending on the context, it means the knowing faculty, the consciousness, or innate moral faculty.

**Zhi** 志
a. "Zhi" is often translation as "will" or "inspiration". It usually refers to the goals in life.
b. "Lizhī" (立志) is usually taken as the first stage of Confucian cultivation towards Sagehood.
Appendix B: Glossary of Transliteration

1. Names

Chan Wing-cheuk (Chen Rongzhuo)  陳榮灼
Chan Wing-tsit (Chen Rongzhe)  陳榮捷
Chang Carsun (Zhang Qunmai)  張君勲
Chang Hao (Zhang Hao)  張顥
Cheng Hao  程顥
Cheng Yi
Ch'ien Mu (Qian Mu)  錢穆
Ching Chia-i (Qin Jiayi)  秦家懿
Dai Lianzhang  戴鍾醇
Dong Zhongshu  董仲舒
Feng Yaoming (Bing-quan)  馮耀明 (炳權)
Feng Youlan  馮友蘭
Han Yu  韓愈
Hsu Fu-kwang (Xu Fuguan)  徐復觀
Huang Chun-che (Huang Junjie)  黃俊傑
Kimura Taiken  木川泰賢
Lao Sze-kwang (Lao Siguang)  劉思光
Lee Ming-hui (Li Minghui)  李明輝
Leung In-Sing (Liang Yincheng)  梁燕城
Lu Jiu-yuan (Xiang-shan)  陸九淵 (象山)
Lwo Kwang (Luo Guang)  羅光
Mou Chung-san (Mou Zongsan)  年宗三
Ng Yu-kwan (Wu Rujun)  吳汝鈞
Ou-Yang Jing-wu  欧陽竟無
Shen Qing-song
T'ang Chun-i (Tang Junyi)  唐君毅
Tu, Wei-ming (Du, Weiming)  杜維明
Wang Yang-ming (shou-ren)  王陽明 (守仁)
Xung Shili
Yan Hui  顏回
Zi Si  子思
Zhu Xi  朱熹
2. Philosophical Terms

Biejiaoyicheng 別教一乘
Chan 梵
Cheng 誠
Dong/jing 動靜
Dongyiyingwuchengwu 動以應務成物
Fazhi 法執
Guanxingmingjie 觀性命界
Guixiangyishenjing 歸向一神境
Huayan 華嚴
Jianai 兼愛
Jinxinglimingjing 竭性立命境
Jing 經
Jing 靜
Jing 境
Jing 敬
Jingyizixuechengji 靜以自學成己
Karma 業
Li 理
Liyue 禮樂
Liangzhi 良知
Ming 命
Mingling 命令
Pokungerchu 破空而出
Puduzhongshengjing 普渡眾生境
Qing 情
Quanshi 權實
Ren 仁
Renji 人極
Shenling 神靈
Shi 事
Taiji 太極
Tiandeliuxingjing 天德流行境
Tianli 天理
Tianming 天命
Tiantai 天臺
Tongjiaoyicheng 同教一乘
Wo 我
Wofaerkung 我法二空
Wozhi 我執
The following glossary consists of major technical terms, Chinese and Sanskrit, used in this dissertation, and is intended to furnish the Chinese character equivalent for each term.

Buddha-nature 佛性
Consciousness-only 唯识
Dependent nature 依他性
Dharma-body 法身
Discriminated nature 分别性
Emptiness 空
Essential manifestation 性相
Existence 存在
Five Relationships 五倫
Form 色
Four Indications 四端
Heavenly Principle 天理
Human nature 人性
Life 生命
Principle 理
Round Teaching 圆教
Seeds (in Yogacara Buddhism) 種子
Sentient beings 有情
Universal Salvation (in Buddhism) 普渡眾生
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. Primary Sources and Other Older Works


Chu, Hsi. See Zhu, Xi.


Hsuan-tsang. See Xuanzang.


Tsung-mi. See Zong Mi.


B. Other References

1. Western Sources


Miller, Oscar W. *The Kartian Thing-in-Itself or the Creative mind.* N.Y.: Philosophical Library, 1956.


2. Chinese Works


Jiang, Yihua姜義華, Wu, Gniliang吳根梁, and Ma, Xuexin馬學新 ed., Guangtai ji haiwai xuezhe lun quantong wenhua yu xiandaihua (Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Overseas Scholars on Traditional Culture and Modernization港臺及海外學者論傳統文化與現代化). Chongqing重慶: Chongqing chubanshe重慶出版社, 1988.


Renmin zhongguo zongjiao wenti (The Problems in Religions of the People's Republic of China) n.d.


C. Other General Resources


