

Interiors and Exteriors

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Foreword

This book is a combination of pictures I have taken of places that I love, and texts I have either collected from other sources or produced myself from readings I have done. The texts reflect thoughts I am interested in, and which may give you pleasure to read. The main purpose of the book has been to assemble these pictures and these texts for my own pleasure. If these pictures and texts also give you pleasure, that will be excellent.

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“...these afternoons were more filled with dramatic events than a whole life often is. They were the events that came up in the book I was reading; it is true that the persons subjected to them were not “real”, as Françoise said. However, all the feelings that we experience through the joy or the misfortune of a real person come to us only through our imagination of this joy or misfortune; the genius of the first novelist consisted in understanding that in producing our emotions, the image being the only essential element, the simplification which would consist in purely and simply eliminating the real persons would be a decisive perfection.”

(Marcel Proust: Swann, I)

What is real? Is there a reality outside of that produced by our own senses and imagination? And what would that reality be? These are eternal questions that philosophers have dealt with for thousands of years.

If we think our lives are experienced through what our senses and our imagination tell us, then it is the type and magnitude of our sensual experiences that make up the quality of our lives. Does it make any difference whether these experiences come through a novel or through other direct or indirect impulses to our senses? Are the sensations produced by a novel or a picture less “real” than the sensations produced by other experiences? Are the emotions we experience in front of a work of art less “real” than the emotions we experience in direct contact with another human being? Is the strength of the emotions more relevant than where the emotions come from?

Proust says that you may, during the short time it takes to read a novel, become much better acquainted with the persons in the novel than you may become with any “real” person through an entire life.

You may acquire much richer ideas of other people's lives and your own life than those you will obtain if you only stick to people you meet yourself in "real" life. Through the work of a good author you may learn more about a person's inner life than you will ever learn in direct contact with other persons. It is very rare that a person reveals his inner secrets in dialogue with other people. There is always a social game going on, where people seek to convey impressions and influence what you think about them. People want to be liked or admired or supported by you. They put on a show to achieve this. Very few escape the need to influence what other people think about them. Social interaction is in varying degrees a game, where authenticity or total honesty are to a larger or smaller degree put aside.



The archetypal symbol of a bubble exists in the psyche beyond time and space. It constitutes an invisible reality imaged by mystics throughout the ages, a round nothingness that is paradoxically the primordial source of all. The unseen forces within the archetypal bubble symbolize the oneness, which can be likened to the Tao as described in the Tao Te Ching (ch.25):

“There is something formless yet complete
That existed before heaven and earth
How still! How empty!
Dependent on nothing, unchanging.
All pervading, Unfailing.
One may think of it as the
mother of all things under heaven.”

(See “The Book of Symbols, Water, p.52, Taschen.)



«Emerson had that gracious and clever cheerfulness which discourages all seriousness; he simply does not know how old he is already and how young he is still going to be; he could say of himself, quoting Lope de Vega: “I am my own heir.” His spirit always finds reasons for being satisfied and even grateful; and at times he touches on the cheerful transcendence of the worthy gentleman who returned from an amorous rendezvous, “as if he had accomplished his mission.” “Though the power is lacking,” he said gratefully, “the lust nevertheless is praiseworthy.”

Friedrich Nietzsche: Götzen-Dammerung, section 13

(See Harold Bloom: Genius, p.195, Warner Books, 2002)



Erasmus of Rotterdam, who lived in the period 1466 – 1536, was critical of how hypocrisy and utilitarianism had come to dominate people’s minds, both within the ranks of the church and among people in general. He wrote “The Praise of Folly”. In this text, Folly speaks its mind directly, as shown by the following examples:

It is sufficient that I show up, and joy spreads among gods and humans

You are right to give compliments to yourself if nobody else does

Everybody cultivates me or profits from my good actions, but nobody compliments me.

There is no room for cosmetics on me, I am not simulating on my face what I do not feel in my heart.

What lack of gratitude among those people, by Herkules, who are my greatest fans, but are so ashamed of my name in public that they throw it in the face of others like a great insult!

If I use complicated words, those who understand them are even more satisfied with themselves and those who do not understand them are more impressed the less they understand them.

I am son of Plutus (god of riches). One sign from him alone, yesterday as today, shakes up the sacred and the unsacred, puts everything upside down.

To him who rouses Plutus' anger, not even Pallas (wisdom) will be of help; however, he who has his favor can send packing Jupiter and his lightning.

I have been nourished by the breasts of two gracious nymphs, Drunkenness and Ignorance. My friends and followers are Self-Esteem, Flattery, Forgetfulness, Lazyness, Voluptuousness, Dementia, Softness, Feast and Deeepsleep. Thanks to the loyalty of these helpers, I ensure my authority on all things and emperors are held under my empire.



Another wise man, the Roman philosopher Seneca, gives us this advice to help us face good or bad Fortune:

The wise man does not have to walk nervously or cautiously, for he has such self-confidence that he does not hesitate to make a stand against Fortune and will never give ground to her.

He has no reason to fear her, since he regards as held on loan not only his goods and possessions and status, but even his body, his eyes and hand, and all that makes life more dear, and his very self.

He lives as though he were lent to himself and bound to return the loan on demand without complaint.

Nor is he thereby cheap in his own eyes, because he knows he is not his own, but he will act in all things as carefully and meticulously as a devout and holy

man guards anything entrusted to him.

And whenever he is ordered to repay his debt he will not complain to Fortune, but he will say:

**“I thank you for what I have possessed and held.
I have looked after your property to my great benefit,
but at your command I give and yield it with gratitude and good will.
If you want me still to have anything of yours, I shall keep it safe.
If you wish otherwise, I give back and restore to you my silver,
both coined and plate, my house and my household.”**

Should Nature demand back what she previously entrusted to us, we shall say to her too:

“Take back my spirit in better shape than when you gave it. I do not quibble or hang back. I am willing for you to have straightaway what you gave me before I was conscious – take it.”

What is the harm in returning to the point whence you came? He will live badly who does not know how to die well.

(Seneca: On Tranquillity of Mind)



Michel de Montaigne, a French wise man who lived from 1533 to 1592, has written a work named “The Essays”. This is a thorough work of reflections on his life’s experiences, and it is not possible to do this work justice by a few references to it. However, I will offer a few short points that give you a taste of what it is all about:

How often are our desires and wishes at the expense of others?

When you try to surpass yourself and move beyond your limits, your former self dies

Habit is a dangerous master. She gradually takes control of us and, imperceptibly, establishes her authority.

The pedants have learned to speak to others, but not to themselves. (A thought Montaigne has borrowed from Cicero)

**The authority of those who teach, often harms those who wish to learn.
(Cicero)**

**It is good to let the pupil go in front, to judge his pace and to see how much
the teacher needs to adjust his level of teaching.**

**Once the things have entered the mind, the words come by themselves.
(Seneca)**

**Like the weight we place on it will necessarily make the balance lean,
evidence will move the spirit (Cicero). The more empty and without
counterweight the spirit is, the more easily it will lean towards the weight of
the first persuasion.**

**You can love virtue too much, and be too excessive in a just action. Don't be
wiser than you need.**

**It is easier to talk about the nature of gods than the nature of men, because
the ignorance of the subject opens up for a nice and long career and freedom
of dealing with the subject as you please.**

We believe nothing as strongly as that of which we know the least.

**I do not make the common error of judging others by who I am. I can easily
believe things different from me. I receive more easily the differences than
the similarities.**

**My weaknesses do not change the opinions that I should have about the
strength and vigor of those who deserve it**

**There are those who praise only that which they are certain to be able to
imitate (Cicero).**

**It means a lot to me to have a clear judgment, and to keep at least this
important part of me free from corruption.**

**Ambition, stinginess, indecisiveness, fear and lust do not abandon us for a
change of place. They follow us even into monasteries and schools of
philosophy.**



Happiness may be as simple as prioritizing experiences over possessions, relationships over achievements, and time over money.

(Oliver Burkeman, Guardian Weekly, 18.03.16)

There is a minimum of possessions and money that gives you the freedom you need to make the fundamental choices of how you wish to live your life.

What that minimum is, is a matter of individual taste and inclination.

Your attitude regarding achievements is of course closely linked to how you define your ambitions for your life. When your achievements exceed your ambitions, you feel satisfaction and joy. When your achievements fall short of your ambitions, you feel frustration and sadness. Watch out for how you calibrate your ambitions, and make sure you have the necessary means to calibrate your achievements accordingly.

When I look back at my long life, I see very clearly that it is the experiences and the relationships that make up my fondest memories. I also see that it is

when I have actively liberated the time necessary to have these experiences and to cultivate these relationships, both in professional life and in private life, that this result is obtained.



Eleven categories of feelings

(These categories were developed by professor Jon Monsen of the University of Oslo. See Morgenbladet No.14, 15-21-april 2016)

1

Interest/Eagerness

The feeling that gives you the wish to do something motivated, focused, to be absorbed into something. A feeling where you seek possibilities.

2

Satisfaction/Joy

The feeling when something is good, be it biologically, physiologically, or psychologically. Joy signals that things are under control. Joy is linked to interest: we seek, and when we get, and it is rewarding, we feel joy.

3

Anxiety/Fear

Signals threat. For instance, potential damage on body or psyche. Fear is a fundamental signal of risk. Identify properly what the risk or threat is, and the fear gets under control. You can do something about it, or you can decide to live with it if you cannot do anything about it.

4

Irritation/Anger

A reaction to obstacles. When there is something we wish strongly, and something is in the way of that, we get irritated or angry.

5

Timidity/Shame/Humiliation

A response that derives from adaptation to requirements from the group. Adjusting to norms and rules in force, keeping your place in the social hierarchy.

6

Contempt/Scorn

A feeling of enmity implying taking your distance from something or somebody. Shame and contempt are closely related. What we look at with contempt on others, we feel ashamed of in ourselves. When we look at others with contempt, we expect them to be ashamed of themselves.

7

Sadness/Despair

A reaction when something important in our lives, external or internal, has been lost or damaged in some way. Sadness makes us adaptable: we have an embodied tendency to wish to help when someone shows hurt or is sad. That is why children cry.

8

Guiltfeeling/Bad conscience

Guilt is more about our actions than about shame. Having done something bad or avoided doing something we should have done. Guilt supports social responsibility: we take responsibility for our acts and try to make it good again.

9

Envy

A complex feeling. It contains an element of anger towards someone else who has something we don't have, an element of shame because we don't have it, and feeling of guilt because we don't think the other person should have it.

10

Jealousy

The half-brother of envy. If your partner is more occupied with someone else than you, it may hurt you or make you sad, humiliated or insulted. It may cause anger towards your partner, but also anxiety that your partner will leave you. Jealousy is the feeling most people with normal functionality have difficulties dealing with.

11

Tenderness/Closeness

Tenderness is about helping those who are defenceless and those in need. If you cannot feel tenderness or closeness, you become quite cold. If you cannot accept it when someone gives it to you, you become lonely. A good capacity to internalize this feeling is what is linked most strongly to good psychic health.



The quality of human existence within a community or in society at large depends on the quality of three fundamental balances: the social balance, the environmental balance and the economic balance.

A good social balance means a balance where a society's social groups resolve their differences through peaceful dialogue, without use of force or violence. The underlying assumption behind such a balance is that the society practices freedom of expression, equality of fundamental legal rights, and legal rights for social groups to organize themselves and express their views through peaceful actions.

A good environmental balance means a balance where human use and extraction of resources from nature is such that it does not affect nature's biological reproductive capacity. By the use of nature is meant both cultivation, transformations produced by urbanization and infrastructure, and

other uses (including use for purposes of disposing of different types of refuse and emissions from human activity). By extraction is meant mining, petroleum extraction, fisheries and all other activities that extract resources from their natural environment.

A good economic balance mean a balance where the availability of goods and services (through domestic production and imports) and the use of goods and services (for investments, consumption or exports) is balanced in such a way that unemployment is low, prices are stable, and the society's international balance of payments is under good control.

It is harder to achieve these balances than might immediately appear. Let us expand a little on these points.



Any country which wishes to have a successful and peaceful development,

must strive towards the simultaneous achievement of these three balances.

They need to co-exist.

If the economic balance gets out of hand, it will soon affect the social balance through the mechanisms of income distribution and distribution of welfare between social groups. Both unemployment and inflation have strong adverse effects on the social balance through these distributive mechanisms.

If the social balance gets out of hand, it will quickly spill over into a disturbance of the economic balance, through the actions or reactions of those groups who have been hit by an imbalance. These actions will normally affect economic production quite quickly. An environmental imbalance is probably the most serious of all, because it takes a long time to develop, a long time to discover statistically and an even longer time to “repair” - assuming politicians agree on how to repair it. In the meantime, it will have strong effects on both of the other balances, because of the type of measures it may require for “healing”.

Historically, the polarized ideologies of capitalism or communism have shown themselves incapable of achieving good balances for the three balances simultaneously. A free market system without the proper checks and balances has not been capable of securing a good social balance. A communist system has, through its need to control both the production and the distribution of resources, not been capable of generating a good economic balance. In addition, none of these systems have produced good solutions for the environment.

Let us look a little closer at each of these balances.

A good social balance is obtained when a society’s social groups resolve their differences through peaceful dialogue, without use of force or violence. The necessary context for this is as mentioned that the society practices freedom of expression, and that social groups have the legal right to organize themselves and express their views through peaceful actions (including strikes). If this were not the case, it would not be possible to assess whether the lack of conflict was due to oppression or to harmony.

When academic commentators wish to compare between countries the levels

of conflict between the social partners, they generally use the number of days that countries experience strikes or lock outs (corrected for the size of the conflicts involved). There will never be harmony in the sense of total absence of conflicts. However, a nation's capacity to solve its problems through dialogue, without use of threats of violence or other forms of oppression, is crucial for the possibility to obtain a genuinely good social balance.

The quality of the dialogue will depend on how representative the partners in the dialogue are. They need not only to represent a majority of the groups they are supposed to represent, but they also need to be in touch with their base in such a way that their representation is genuine and accepted by their constituents. The availability of properly represented social partners in the dialogue is thus crucial for the success of the social dialogue. If the representation of the relevant social partners is fragmented, the complexity of the dialogue will increase correspondingly. The more consolidated a social group manages to make its representation, the more strongly will it be able to make its views understood.

In some countries, authorities or businesses are under the illusion that if they can make the labor organizations more fragmented – or make them disappear altogether – they will achieve better results. This is at best a view that will be valid only in the short term. In the long run it is a recipe for social unrest and major disruptions in production.

Experience shows that countries where the social dialogue functions well, are better able to take difficult decisions that involve all social partners. They are also better assured that such decisions will be respected and followed up. These decisions will take longer to prepare and to make, because good dialogue takes time, but they will stick better once they are made. Furthermore, the time lost in preparing for the decision, will be recuperated by time gained in handling reduced levels of conflict after the decision is made. Confrontation and polarization does not work well as a long term political strategy for running a democratic country.



As mentioned above, a good environmental balance is a balance where human use and extraction of resources from nature is such that it does not affect nature's reproductive capacity. By the use of nature is meant both cultivation, transformations produced by urbanization and infrastructure, and other uses (including use for purposes of disposing of different types of waste and emissions from human activity). By extraction is meant mining, petroleum extraction, forestry, fisheries and all other activities that extract resources from their natural environment.

Some kinds of extraction may come from renewable resources such as forestry and fisheries, and for these the amounts of extraction have to be balanced against the reproductive capacity of the whole ecosystem involved. The ecosystems involved in different types of extractions contain extensive interdependencies between plants, animals and human activities. Any type of intervention will most often destabilize a temporary equilibrium that has

been reached between the life and activities of the species involved in that ecosystem. Some time will pass before a new equilibrium may be reached (if any), and this new equilibrium will have new characteristics. If the stock of one particular species has been depleted, the animals depending on this species will have to adapt to the new situation. Awareness of the mechanisms and repercussions involved in dealing with extractions is necessary in connection with policy making and monitoring.

Similarly, the effects of transformations generated by urbanisation, road building and other forms of infrastructure developments need to be monitored with respect to how they affect environmental balance. The balance is always affected, but the degree to which the effects are acceptable will depend on the results of monitoring and research – and of the political tolerance for changes in the balance.

The most difficult environmental problems and challenges stem from disposal and emissions of toxic substances into air, water and land. These disposals and emissions are hard to monitor, their effects are hard to assess (even when monitoring is successful), and the agents who actually cause the disposals or the emissions are not always easy to identify. Toxic disposals and emissions are the main threat to long term environmental balance and human survival, because they influence the quality of air and water as well as the capacity of land to produce non-toxic food. This comes in addition to the on-going discussion on climate change, caused by those same factors.

Economic growth, caused by expanding activity per capita as well as increased global population, is at the heart of this discussion. Only technological innovations and radical changes in structures of incentives that may induce change in patterns of behavior can realistically change the relation between economic growth and environmental development. The present relation between economic growth and environmental development is not sustainable in the light of those growth patterns and demographic developments we see now. In the absence of appropriate global decision making capacities, the prospects for long term survival of the human species on the planet are dim.

The national political systems in most countries are such that action on a problem is only initiated when the problem has reached proportions where most people (including media) consider it to be a crisis. We must of course distinguish between crises that are generated by media with little foundation in reality, and real crises that actually take place and are perceived as such by people in the areas involved. However, a crisis taking place in one country does not affect the perceptions in other countries, except very indirectly and slowly (if the crisis persists and becomes very visible). Therefore, for the global political community to act on a problem, the problem would have to be operating simultaneously in a majority of the major countries – like when we had the global financial crisis in 2008 or the corona pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

In environmental matters, the evolution does not take the same form in every country, and the problem is therefore not perceived in the same way by all major countries. This also applies to problems that are of transnational character, where the effects that may have the same cause take different shapes in each country because of different local ecosystems and their respective types of resistance to impacts of the same order. Hence, no agreement is reached on the measures to be taken. As long as the problem is perceived differently in different countries, the stalemate on significant global action will persist.



As regards the economic balance, the supply of resources comes from a country's own production and from imports. The demand for a country's resources comes from domestic consumption, domestic investment, and foreign demand (exports). If the demand is lower than the supply, we will see a pressure to reduce prices and imports, so as to achieve a new balance at a lower level of activity – with increased unemployment. If demand is higher than supply, we will see a pressure for increased prices and imports, so as to achieve a new balance at a higher level of activity – with reduced unemployment.

Imbalances which lead to high long term unemployment are a waste of manpower resources and they create social hardship on those who unwillingly become unemployed. They are therefore politically undesirable in most countries. So are imbalances due to excess demand for resources that lead to long term inflation and deficits in the balance of international trade.

The major danger arising from inflation is that it creates increased differences in income between the country's citizens and undermines the country's long term capacity to import goods that are necessary for its development.

Such imbalances being undesired, it is necessary to strike a balance between demand and supply of resources. Unemployment should be mostly of a short term nature, linked to the natural movement of employees from firms that reduce their activity to firms that increase their activity. This balance must be achieved in combination with a price development which is not out of line with that of the country's major trading partners, so as not to upset the trade balance.

This is a complicated balancing act, because it implies achieving an aggregate demand in the economy which is at roughly the same level as the production capacity of the country, taking account of the level of imports that goes along with this. The country's government must therefore have a policy that is capable of influencing domestic consumption, domestic investment, and exports.



No economic system has shown itself capable of steering aggregate demand in a precise way, but by governing in a steady, predictable fashion this balancing act is feasible in a rough manner. Policy instruments in a market based economy can only act indirectly, by way of incentives and links between factors that influence the final result. Those systems that have tried to govern demand and supply directly by central planning have not proved to be feasible in practice, because they do not manage to handle the enormous amount of information and logistics required to match detailed, individual demand and supply. In addition, these systems have shown themselves to be particularly open to corruption.

So far, these balancing acts have not been taking account of how the Earth's natural environment has reacted to the increasing production and consumption of an increasing population. In the early 1970s it became clear to everybody who had the slightest interest in these questions, that the Earth was suffering in many ways from the methods of production, the disposal of

waste from production and consumption, and the expansion resulting from the population growth.

The global economy was made up of independent countries taking their own independent decisions, even though they were linked by many factual interdependencies. Many large countries were not interested in discussing environmental issues in the 1970s. They were acting as if the problems did not exist. In this way they avoided taking unpleasant decisions that might irritate producers and consumers, who were also voters if the system was democratic. This could easily persist, because no supra-national authority had the powers to put pressure on those countries which did not care about the environment. It was furthermore difficult for other countries to implement costly environmental measures, when their large competitors in the international markets did not.

This is where we stand today as well. Some global funds are directed towards preserving forests, and a system for trading emission permits is in existence. It remains to be seen whether these measures will have an impact in the real world. It is not yet clear whether the funds involved will end in the wrong pockets, with no real impact on the ground. Only measures that contain significant incentives for the operative choices made by producers and consumers will have any effect. There is yet not, after more than 40 years of beating around the bush, any systematic thinking on a global basis about the right use of incentives for the improvement of the environment. Some countries are applying incentives in selected areas, but these are limited to those countries and to those areas – with no global significance.

China has realized that its future development will be choked by a dying environment and a dying population if it does not implement measures with significant effects on the ground. It will rely heavily on technological innovations to achieve the necessary improvements. When a major country like this leans on technological innovation, it is likely to have effects on the research efforts being carried out. It is in technological innovations that the hope for the environment lies. Examples are hybrid automobiles and electric automobiles. If environmentally neutral products are presented to consumers

and investors alike, they will choose them if they are affordable – but not otherwise.

These questions are what I would call macro-existential questions which affect all people on the planet, seen as a whole. I would also like to go into some micro-existential questions, which affect individuals in a selective way.

Before doing that, I wish to go into the notion of time – as it has been developed by the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard. I also wish to look at how the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has described the relations between people within in a society.



Gaston Bachelard is a French philosopher who is well known for his books on the psychoanalysis of the elements (air, water, fire, and earth). He has also written interesting reflections on time (past - present - future), in his book "L'Intuition de L'Instant" (The Intuition of the Instant). The latter is my

subject in this context.

The notion of time is divided in past, future and present. The past and the future are not real. They are ideas and images lodged in our consciousness and in our unconscious. Only the present is real, tangible.

The past is made up of all the ghosts that inhabit our imagination. Some ghosts are good-natured, representing our selective memories of moments in our life which have left positive imprints in our unconscious and in our consciousness. Some ghosts are ill-natured, representing various sorts of negative imprints left by earlier events of our life in our unconscious and in our consciousness. The ghosts of the past can appear as regrets, satisfactions, sources of pride, sources of shame, nightmares, lessons to remember, and so on. These ghosts live their own life in our unconscious, and may indeed have effects on our behavior in the present, but they are ghosts of the past. They may be transformed over time - embellished, rendered more ugly, more threatening, blown up in size or diminished - depending on our internal psychological mechanisms of selection, repression or images of the self. Sometimes, these ghosts may grow so big - either in our consciousness or in our unconscious - that they take completely control of our behaviour or well-being in the present. Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung have, of course, much to say about this.

The future is made up of all the illusions, in the form of fears, desires and hopes produced by our imagination. These illusions are greatly influenced by your personality and by the ghosts of the past. Your attitudes towards risk, your evaluation of what is possible and what is not possible, your sense of initiative and capacity to take action to influence your own situation, your will-power, fighting spirit or lack of such are among the important factors that will color your illusions in dark or bright colors. They will nevertheless be illusions, until confronted with the facts, circumstances and forces (including your own actions) that produce the present moment.

The present is the moment when the ghosts of the past and the illusions of the future are confronted with actual events, your actions, and your

interaction with other beings. It is an instant that, depending on the nature of your actions, senses and perceptions, produces a multitude of events and feelings that in turn will be processed by your selective memories. The present is the only part of our life which is real in a tangible sense, and it lasts only for a moment. An interesting view on the present is illustrated by the discussion on the notion of mindfulness. In essence, according to Jon Kabat-Zim of the University of Massachusetts Medical School, this is about attention, awareness, relations and caring in the present time. Mindfulness, in this serious version of the notion, deals with our experience of: a) the present moment; b) our own bodies; c) our own thoughts and emotions; d) our tacit and constraining assumptions; e) our highly conditioned habits of mind and behavior.

The great literary critic, Harold Bloom, has in his book "The Western Canon" reproduced a passage in Shakespeare's play "Measure for Measure" (the Duke's speech in act 3, scene 1), and a comment on this by Dr. Samuel Johnson:

Thou hast nor youth, nor age
But as it were an after-dinner's sleep
Dreaming on both

Dr. Johnson's comment, as reproduced by Bloom, goes as follows:

"This is exquisitely imagined. When we are young we busy ourselves in forming schemes for succeeding time, and miss the gratifications that are before us; when we are old we amuse the languor of age with the recollection of youthful pleasures or performances; so that our life, of which no part is filled with the business of present time, resembles our dreams after dinner, when the events of the morning are mingled with the designs of the evening."

The capacity to concentrate on what is happening in the present, while at the same time mastering the ghosts of the past and harnessing the illusions of the future, together make up the quality of our life.



Pierre Bourdieu's sociological work is dominated by an analysis of how the ruling social classes maintain their strength relative to the social classes lower down in the social hierarchy. His focus on the mechanisms of reproduction of the social hierarchies is a point of departure for the development of a series of very interesting and useful notions about how social forces interact with the individual, as well as how individuals interact with each other in this context.

Bourdieu emphasizes the importance of cultural and symbolic factors in this maintenance of social dominance. Those who are in a position to define the prevailing social rules of human behavior and achievement are also in a position to make sure that their own preferences and their own qualifications will prevail as measures of social success. This power to define is, once it is used actively for the attainment of social and political power, called symbolic violence by Bourdieu. He defines symbolic violence as the capacity to ascribe relative social value to symbolic behavior and to legitimize certain types of

behavior as opposed to other types of behavior.

The social world is in his analysis divided into fields (French: champs), like the fields of art, fashion, media, sports, academia or politics. These fields have their own respective social rules of behavior and their own criteria for success or failure. They have their own hierarchies and their own dynamics, and the persons who are within these fields or who try to enter them are in a constant state of social competition – with the aim of improving their relative position in the field’s ranking system.



The participants in each field possess a certain capital which they can make use of to further their aims in the field. In this context, we can (following Bourdieu's reasoning) distinguish between economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. The economic capital consists of all forms of economic capital, whether in the form of financial assets, real estate or other forms of assets. Cultural capital consists of all cultural resources, either in the form of

internalized resources (know-how, competence, manner of speech, manner of clothing and behavior, and so on), objects (cultural objects, for instance like those contained in museums) or institutionalized resources (diplomas, titles, etc.). Social capital designates all types of resources that are linked to possession of networks, the quality of those networks, and the degree to which the individual is accepted and respected in these networks. An additional notion of capital is symbolic capital, which designates those parts of the other three forms of capital that are particularly recognized as having a high status in society (for instance the distinction between “old” money and “new” money as regards economic capital, or the status of the school you have graduated from as regards cultural capital).

Each person, or agent (as he is most often referred to by Bourdieu in this context), is characterized by what he calls a habitus. The habitus is the collection of dispositions, perceptions and modes of action that the individual has acquired through his social experience, and it forms the basic platform from which the individual’s actions flow. Important elements in forming an individual's habitus are gender, race, social class, parental education, temperament, tastes, preferences and attitudes towards challenges posed by the individual's surroundings.

Through more than thirty books and hundreds of articles Bourdieu’s work contain vast empirical work. This work is centered round these major concepts and directions, in the following way:

- The habitus is seen as a driving force and capacity (or lack of such) behind the individual’s behavior. It consists of all the qualities that are embodied in this particular individual.
- The social world consists of fields with their own internal power structures, rules and criteria for success. Whenever an individual goes into interaction with other people, he or she enters such a field. Some fields are more demanding than others, and the size and complexity of each field will vary.

- The participants in each of the fields possess economic capital, cultural capital and social capital, which they may use to further their aims in the fields they choose to operate in. The participants may have different motivations and ambitions when operating in a given field. Some may wish to impose themselves in different ways, others may passively just want to be part as a member in the given social context.
- The social world contains latent symbolic violence, i.e. the capacity of dominating groups or persons to impose their criteria for success without being challenged by the victims of these criteria. The degree of symbolic violence applied in each field will vary according to the dispositions of those who have power in the respective fields, and according to how easily rules can be challenged and changed there.
- The direction of Bourdieu's work tends to show: 1) how hierarchies are formed between the social groups; 2) how cultural practice plays an important role in the conflicts between these groups; 3) how the school system plays a decisive role in reproducing and legitimizing these social hierarchies.



Like every scientist, Bourdieu has been inspired in his work by others. From Max Weber he has retained the importance of the symbolic dimension as a legitimizing force in social domination. Weber's idea of social orders has in Bourdieu's work become fields. From Karl Marx he has retained the notion of capital, generalized by Bourdieu for all social activities, not only the economic activities. From Émile Durkheim he has taken up the notion of determinism, and – in a way – Claude Lévi-Strauss' structuralism.

Structuralism, which states the submission of the individual to rules of conduct imposed by the social structures, is conceptually opposed to constructivism, which considers the social world as the result of freely chosen actions by the individuals operating in that world. Claude Lévi-Strauss was the major proponent of structuralism, whereas Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism was an important proponent of constructivism – in the sense that the individual's complete freedom of choice was at the center of his preoccupations.

Bourdieu's theories were developed with the idea that the individual has freedom of action, but that this freedom is limited by the structures or rules of the fields within which he wishes to act. He was thus operating on the basis of a synthesis of the two concepts. This is why he preferred to talk about agents, rather than individuals, because this notion in a better way covers the idea that the individual acts on the basis of several conscious and unconscious premises that he represents when he acts.



Bachelard's ideas about time and how time operates in our minds, and Bourdieu's ideas about how we operate socially are interesting backgrounds when we wish to consider our personal state of mind. When we enter this kind of micro-existential sphere, we meet other systems of thought than we find in the macro-existential sphere discussed above. Aside from pure religion like we find in Christianity or in Islam, there are those systems of thought that

try to help you in the search for peace of mind and mental equilibrium. Among these, Taoism and Buddhism are the most prominent. Confucianism is different, but yet part of this Eastern way of thinking.

In Taoism it is emphasized that there are four desires which do not allow people to have peace of mind. Those who resist these desires and manage to liberate themselves from them, live in harmony with themselves and regulate their lives according to internal things. These four desires are:



The desire for long life – gives fear of ghosts.

The fear of death – or its mirror image – the desire for a long life, is the source of all types of fear and anguish. If you do not fear death, then there is no reason to fear any other things, since death is the end of consciousness as we know it.

To rid yourself of the fear of death, you need to face the thought of what death is likely to be. Death is a transition from consciousness as we know it, to another type of consciousness – or lack of consciousness - which we do not know the nature of. This transition may be very short and abrupt – with little suffering – or it may be drawn out, with more suffering. For those who feel that this suffering is intolerable, there is always the option of making it end voluntarily. Most people do not choose this option, which may be taken to mean that the suffering is more tolerable than the idea of disappearing from the face of the earth. The suffering which leads people to the brink of death, may take the form of boredom, a feeling of emptiness, physical or mental suffering or incurable illnesses. You may choose to fight this suffering or you may accept it passively. It is not going to hurt you much if you are not afraid of death itself.

Once you are rid of the fear of death, you can start living in full. You can relax and enjoy the present – with the past being past. The past is populated by ghosts of all sorts, good or bad. The past is something you can forget about if you so wish, or you may have learned some lessons you wish to retain for future reference. In addition, the past may remind you of thoughts that haunt you or give you pleasure, thoughts which may pop up from time to time. You are free to discard these ghosts if you so wish. The future is something you can plan for (with the planning process being itself an enjoyable undertaking, since this is something you control). The future contains all the illusions you may be having about what your life is going to be. These illusions may be of a nice sort or a bad sort. Only the present is reality.

The desire for reputation – gives fear of men.

Worrying about what other people think of you, makes you do a lot of things you would not otherwise do. It makes you into an actor, playing the role of what you wish others to see when they look at you. Your acts and your dress are directed towards an image that you wish to project. The further that image is away from the person you really are, the harder it becomes to play that role. The harder that role is to play, and the longer you act it out, the greater will be your fear of being unmasked. The probability of actually being

unmasked naturally increases with the strain you feel of playing the role.

If you do not care about the image you reflect or project on others, you will do and say what you feel like doing and saying, and you will dress in the way your purse and your taste leads you. You will not act out any role, and there will thus not be any tension between what you are and what you project.



The desire for rank – gives fear of power.

Ambition can be healthy, and it can be unhealthy. Healthy ambition has to do with setting targets on how to improve conditions in your life or other peoples' lives. Unhealthy ambition has to do with climbing on other peoples' backs or tearing other people down in the search for higher social or organizational position. If such climbing becomes an aim in itself, relations with superiors who can influence your climb and competitors who can

threaten your climb become the focus of your behavior. That takes the focus away from your genuine professional or human achievements. Your professional life and your social life become entangled in tactical considerations – where doing and saying "the right things" take precedence. In the process you lose your integrity, and you lose touch with the basic values in life.

The desire for riches – gives fear of punishment.

A desire for material wealth, beyond what you may call basic needs, will – if unchecked – lead you into reasonings and actions which will never give you peace of mind. This type of desire is often based on comparisons with what other people possess. Some people also tend to measure your value as a person in direct relation to your wealth. Rankings of this kind abound in the media. If you, consciously or unconsciously, allow yourself to be caught in that game, it is safe to say that you will never be happy. There will always be people who possess more than you. Chasing after them is sure to make you permanently frustrated. Being rich is in itself not a problem, as long as your goals in life are not linked to these riches. It becomes a problem when you start defining an increase in wealth as a goal in itself.

Attaching a big importance to your wealth, even if you do not compare yourself to others, will in itself be a source of anguish. The fear of losing it will spread into a fear of everything that can lead to a loss of your wealth, or a fear of everyone who has direct control over factors that influence your wealth.

So, if you manage to control these four desires without great mental efforts, you will find peace of mind and have the possibility to enjoy what life has to offer you. Buddhist thought has much in common with this Taoist thinking, but there is an important difference.



Buddhist thinking aims to liberate you from the suffering produced by the human conditions in life. Its main aim is for you to distance yourself from all things that make people suffer. Its effect is to encourage you to withdraw from life as you know it, and lead a different life based on compassion and altruism. Ethical conduct, mental self-discipline and wisdom (produced by reflection and understanding) are important aims in this context. The Taoist notion of the four desires, as outlined above, does not end up by telling you how to live and what to do. That is for you to decide. The Taoist merely tells you how to watch out for the demons that might rob you of your peace of mind.

Confucianism is primarily concerned with the importance of social order. Confucius lived in a time of political chaos, military violence produced by this chaos, and unleashed human ambition with its disastrous consequences. Confucius was preoccupied with the functioning of hierarchies within the context of family and all parts of society. Respect for social hierarchies and

the people within these, would produce social order – a necessary condition for human development. Respect would not mean blind obedience, but it would produce good conditions for dialogue and development.



Mutual respect between people of different social classes became a major subject of attention during the period of Enlightenment in the 18th century in France and Great Britain. The notions of freedom and equality were given a legal basis, first in the US Declaration of Independence, then in the French Declaration of Human Rights under the French Revolution, and finally in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations in 1948. The notions of freedom and equality merit a closer look in this context:

Freedom – blowing out the constraints of life?

Freedom is the absence of constraints of any kind. In communities where

human beings live together, absolute individual freedom cannot exist. The larger the community, the more limitations in their personal freedom each individual has to accept - if the community is to function. Rules of conduct of different kinds (legal, social, cultural), and economic limitations (both collective and individual) make up the framework within which social life takes place.

The possibility for an individual to break legal rules depends on the community's capacity to respond with convincing sanctions. It may be easy to break social or cultural rules, but the sanctions will come in the form of social exclusion from the groups that hold these rules most dear. Whether you consider that to be a problem or not, depends on your attachment to these groups. In communities with strong social or cultural cohesion, the prospect of social exclusion has a much stronger preventive effect than sanctions applied to breaches of legal rules.

When legal rules become unduly constraining, their social acceptance diminish – with the subsequent effect that people will circumvent them with impunity (with the tacit acceptance of the community). Attempts by leaders to impose sanctions that are not accepted by the community at large, will in the long run undermine the authority of the leaders.

Many leaders act as if the rules of society do not apply to them. They seem to consider that they are above that, as if they were in some way Olympian gods. The power elite of many countries navigate in this mental state, at the detriment of the population and at the detriment of their own dignity. They give themselves freedoms which they know would be harmful for the people in the community at large to have. Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative has certainly not crossed their minds.

The tension between an individual's desire for freedom and the same individual's desire for orderly conduct by the other persons within a community is an everlasting tension which will swing as a pendulum in response to relevant events in the community.



There is a major difference between freedom as a right and freedom as a possibility.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 establishes freedom as a human right. Amnesty International shows us in numerous ways how this right is violated on a daily basis around the world. This right is like all other rights. It has no value unless those who have power do not protect it against all types of assaults that are made against it.

The notion of freedom as a possibility is seen in connection with all those limitations we meet in daily life, and which restrict our freedom of action and of speech in so many ways. As already mentioned, economic and legal limitations are the most obvious – whereas social and cultural limitations are more indirect in nature.

The idea of free competition in a market economy is an interesting example

of the intricacies of the notion of freedom. The good functioning of a free market requires many laws and rules. It also requires enforcement agencies, firstly to protect consumers against abusive market behavior on the part of producers (like monopolistic cartel formations or marketing of toxic products), secondly to protect workers against exploitation in the labor market (like illegal immigrants accepting to work under slave conditions for fear of being sent back to their country of origin), thirdly to protect investors against misleading information on the part of companies seeking capital (stock market regulations), or – fourthly - to protect firms from unfair market practices on the part of competing firms (like use of inside information to obtain contracts in bidding processes). Thus, ensuring free competition requires many measures on the part of government agencies, measures which intuitively run counter to freedom seen from the point of view of an anarchist.

Another interesting example of the complexities of the notion of freedom, is seen in the case of psychological barriers experienced by one individual which from the point of view of another person would not seem to exist. A paralyzing fear of speaking to an audience could for one person represent an absolute barrier, whereas this would not be a problem at all for another person. Thus, freedom of speech gives power to those who speak well and have few inhibitions about expressing themselves in private or in public.

Freedom being the absence of constraints, constraints are found in countless kinds ranging from the obvious physical constraints represented by a wall, laws like those we meet in the traffic every day, social rules like those you meet within different social classes, cultural rules like those you would meet in a bridge club, to the completely intangible barriers (self-made or inherited) existing in the mind of any given individual. What freedom is, who possesses it, and what different types of freedom lead to when other types of freedom are limited, are interesting subjects in this context.



Equality as a Human right; now, or later, or not at all?

As in the case for freedom, the notion of equality can be seen from different angles. We can speak of equality as a right or equality as a possibility.

In its most extreme interpretation, *equality as a right* would mean equality in all material living conditions. This is a vision that is hard to envisage, given the enormous differences that already exist in geographic terms, both climatically and biologically. You don't need the same kind of housing and clothing in all parts of the world, to take a simple example. Another important factor is that most public policy measures aimed at creating equality will be met by countervailing measures on the part of the population, thus making it difficult to attain strict equality. Inheritance of different kinds also tends to maintain differences.

That does not mean that it is meaningless to try to achieve greater equality than what we find in a given situation or a given country. It only means that

certain methods don't work. Communism has been attempted, and this system did not manage to handle all the information necessary to make it work. The planning tools were not sufficiently advanced to handle the mass of necessary information, incentives and decision-making involved in matching the needs of individuals with the production capacity of the goods and services producers. Furthermore, the practice of communism has shown us that people's commitment to self-interest is stronger than their commitment to the general interest. Corruption on a massive scale developed in all those countries where this system was set in place. Only a small minority of people will act for the general interest at the expense of their self-interest. So the system, being incompatible with human nature, collapsed.

The market system is capable of handling all the information needed to make the system work, but it does not achieve equality in any way. The United States has for a number of years developed its market system in a direction which favors the rich and powerful in the markets, on the reasoning that they are the engines of the market economy. They have also weakened the rights of employees, on the grounds that such rights are an impediment to job creation. This evolution has produced an increasingly polarized economy, where the rich have accumulated enormous fortunes, while the incomes of ordinary employees have stagnated for a long time. The US economy is now showing signs of stagnation due to this polarization, because the purchasing power of the great mass of the people is eroding rapidly. The fortunes amassed by the rich people are not plowed back into the consumer markets; they are thereby to some extent withdrawn from the goods markets and placed in financial and real estate markets. This produces a negative spiral where all sorts of financial agents try to siphon off as much profits as they can from these enormous funds that are placed for dividends.

The most successful system so far, is a system based on the market mechanism but with a constant attention directed at correcting the deficiencies of the market system. This system will never be able to achieve full equality in material living conditions, however. The incentives that govern this system imply that there will be clear limitations regarding how far one

can get in achieving equality. The best one can hope for in such a system, is to reduce social polarization, enlarge the middle class and lift the material conditions of the most destitute in such a way that they will have the possibility to live in a decent way.

Any workable system, whatever it is called, will need to develop incentives towards equality in such a way that the self-interest and the general interest work in the same direction.



Equality as a possibility is an entirely different starting point. It is easier to conceive in a theoretical way, and will in formal terms be achieved in a democratic state where human rights are solidly entrenched and developed properly into fundamental areas as education, health and equal rights in face of the law. Even with such a starting point, it is difficult to envisage equal

possibilities in practice. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has shown us the limitations of this starting point. His analyses of the notions of social and cultural capital show that equality as a possibility may be just as utopian as equality as a right.

Criteria for access to different social and cultural arenas, and systems of remuneration follow patterns that discriminate between people with different cultural and social capital. This is in spite of equality of rights according to a set of “objective” criteria. Children with parents that have higher education will be favored in their school work by the parents’ motivation and capacity to give practical help. Children with rich parents will have better access to expensive schools and universities.

Equality is a moving target which requires constant attention and adaptation of adequate policies. The operational definitions of equality will need to be brought out in each case of attempt at policy making. In the absence of proper operational definitions, a quest for equality along one dimension may lead to absurd results when considered in the context of other dimensions.

Brotherhood – solidarity or fraternities and sororities?

Even after the 19th century, when the term brotherhood (or fraternity) was introduced in the political language, brotherhood has been understood more as something representing closed circles and communities where members cultivated internal solidarity and bestowing of favors, than of fraternity in the broader societal context preached by political movements of that century.

Some (very few) countries have managed to develop societies where collective solidarity exists in a more fundamental sense. These are still fragile political constructions, but their basic ideas have strong following by the population at large in those countries. Most countries have weak collective systems and rely mostly on the family as a social security network, supplemented by scattered public measures of varying importance from country to country. An obstacle of major importance to the achievement of brotherhood in the broad social sense, is the increasing tendency for media to be owned and managed by people who do not wish to develop society in such a direction.



Enlightenment is very different from modernity. What is modernity? In academic circles, the notions of freedom, progress and rationality stand at the center of this theme. Let us look a bit closer at it.

Freedom – enslaved by the imperatives of Originality, Renewal and Visibility.

In the earlier debates on freedom, dating from the Enlightenment, the focus was on the political aspects of the notion. As the modern western society has evolved, the notion has increasingly been focused on moral and behavioral freedom – where the idea of releasing the “individual's potential” and exploring the limits of “the self”, and the limits of “moral boundaries”, have had the center stage. This evolution has been greatly pushed ahead by modern media’s extreme appetite for exposing the private life of known persons. When the stock of known persons (“celebrities”) gets used up by the media’s frenetic use of them, the media have been seen to generate methods of producing their own celebrities (out of complete non-entities) through “reality-shows” and the like – for subsequent immediate consumption in

celebrity-journalism.

Modern media demand that people should do something remarkable, in order to have something “new” to report. By “remarkable” or “new” is meant something that has not been said before, done before, or shown before. People who want exposure in the media, for whatever reason, have to play by the rules of journalists. Since very few people are truly original, most of the celebrity seekers seek attention through some sort of “shock-effect”. The easiest way to get attention from the modern media is by crossing moral boundaries, which normally is obtained by sex or violence – or both in combination. This evolution is particularly notable in Hollywood’s film production, which keeps adding doses of sex and violence to compensate for the lack of imagination.

Substance, truth or genuine human character is not important in the modern logic of media. Journalists will invent the necessary stories they need, to make the points they wish to make. Whether the story has any relation to truth, is immaterial. Ethical considerations are not part of the editorial criteria modern media are run by. The only criterion is whether a story will sell. Following this logic, persons seeking the attention of the media will develop their own stories about a subject or about themselves, and sell that to interested media. And media will develop the stories with their own logic of fiction, linking up with the truth only when they fear the public is becoming aware of the extent to which they produce fiction.

This fiction will generally have little relation to reality, in the way it is perceived by those who know the subject matter from the inside – since media will choose their way to tell the story from an entirely different angle (or logic) than the search of the truth.

This setting - where people frenetically crave for media’s attention (some people believe that they only exist in proportion with the exposure that media gives them), combined with the media’s frantic search for “news”, has produced a civilization where originality, visibility and change have become the mantras of modern life. Never mind if the originality is totally superficial,

the visibility is based on a masquerade, and the change is made for the sake of change (with no other purpose than creating illusions).



Progress – a linear idea faced with the non-linearity of reality.

The notion of progress in western civilization is a linear concept placed together with time (as time goes, progress takes place in a steady way), with no defined limits. Limits of demographic and environmental nature are increasingly debated, but very little in terms of substantive action has so far been taken as a consequence of this debate, except - notably - in the area of technology. This notion of linearity is opposed to the oriental notion of circular development over time, like a wheel that turns around and around. The western idea of progress places technological innovation at the center of the engine of progress. This is the single most important driver of

transformation of global civilization. New technology introduces new paradigms for how society is organized and how production takes place. Such changes of paradigm have come about with increasing frequency since the industrial revolution came about at the end of the eighteenth century.

These changes of paradigm have driven growth in the developed economies. Interrupted by shocks, reactions and cyclical deviations, this growth has navigated between linear and exponential patterns. However, the growth has generated demographic and environmental processes that undermine the linear vision of development. This growth has taken place in parallel with a situation in parts of the world where political organization and legitimacy has been so deficient that development has been virtually impossible, in particular due to corruption and gross mismanagement. The nature of corruption is such that any surplus that is produced by an economic initiative, is siphoned off by those in power, and sent overseas to tax havens – where it produces no feed-back effect for the country where the production took place.

What remains as the major element of modernity in the context of progress, is its association with technological innovation. This is a cultural phenomenon which is easily observed in daily life. Being modern means staying on top of the steady stream of technological innovations, both in terms of the mastery of high tech objects in the work place, in private life and in being an integral part of the most recent communication fads on the internet. Counter cultures aiming at a quiet life free from the time pressure of instant, continuous availability, and communication fads, do exist, but they are not very noticeable in magnitude.

Rationality – logic cornered by mysticism.

Modern emphasis has long been on rationality, starting with the era of Enlightenment and gradually enhanced by the movement towards secularity that it started. Scientific attitudes to all phenomena have been the order of the day. Rationality has gradually pushed feelings and senses into the darker, more mystic rooms of society. These darker rooms have become more

crowded over time, as an increasing number of people have felt alienated by the eviction of all mystery and poetry from their daily lives. Different types of mysticism have found a fertile breeding ground, even if the culture of the great majority has been solidly secular and based on the rationality of scientific progress.



Alongside with a very advanced scientific environment, the USA (for instance) has a strong movement of so-called “creationists” (even among politicians capable of reaching the White House) who do not allow themselves to be disturbed by scientific facts. For many people, belief is more important than rationality. In the Middle Ages, the Church and its interpretations of the Holy Scriptures governed scientific and metaphysic thinking. Scientific rationality was kept closely in check by the Pope and his Bishops. It was not before the 17th century that scientific thinking acquired the power to prevail on its own terms. Thanks to the social media, we have now returned to a stage where

beliefs are being upheld and spread as truths, and people with little education are ready to believe what they want to be the truth – regardless of whether the facts tell them otherwise. This has opened up an entirely new possibility for demagogues who use social media to propagate illusions that have no relation with any form of truth. They get elected to public office based on stories they tell – stories that appeal to intuitions and feelings, with no link to facts.



Cyberspace offers unlimited possibilities. Only your own imagination sets the limits to what you can say and what you can achieve. In cyberspace you encounter few of the restrictions that may frustrate your physical life. When you enter cyberspace, you open the door to complete immersion in your mental life – leaving your physical life behind (allowing it to disturb your mental life only in times of organic physical needs like food and digestion processes).

Life in cyberspace recreates life in physical space. However, it does so by removing all the obstacles you encounter in physical life. Cybergames enact wars with hitherto unseen weapons, with human capacities surpassing anything seen in physical life. Cybercommunities are created on the basis of known elements and building blocks, but they give you a point of departure where none of the injustices of physical life are built in. Your physical appearance, your family heritage, education and social position are all neutral in comparison with the others you meet in those communities.

Cybercommunities have numerous forms, and they are created at a pace nobody can keep track of. You can search for, and find, those communities that deal with subjects you are interested in, and you are in total ignorance of those communities engaged in subjects you ignore.

The mistakes you make in cyberspace are generally not irreversible. You will always get the chance of a fresh start. The universe of video-games is a case in point. However, some of the mistakes you make in cyberspace may come back to haunt you in physical space. There are links between cyberspace and physical space that you need to be aware of. If you ignore them, it will be at the risk of being caught up by the forces of the physical world and taken away from your cyberworld. Any intimate details of your private life that you are clumsy enough to leave in cyberspace will be used against you, even years later, if you wish to embark on something where public opinion is important for your success. Political parties, for instance, have specialized dirt diggers who will find everything you may have done or said that can be held against you.

The attraction of cyberspace is its open door to imaginary worlds and to information about any subject you feel the need to explore. It does not have the inconvenience of forcing you to confront other human beings, with all the psychological complications this entails. You are free to build up an imaginary life style and cast yourself into roles and possessions according to your dreams.

This dream-life is real in the sense that you live it through your mental awareness and for many people this mental life is reality itself. Many forms of life are meta-lifestyles, in the sense that you live your life through a medium. Just as an author lives through his or her books, a musician through his music, an artist through the creation of his artworks, the cyberperson lives his life through the world he creates in cyberspace.



A cyberperson will experience nature through pictures or films of nature found or created by himself in cyberspace. In a few minutes he will be capable of experiencing nature scenes from all over the world, in the most different natural contexts. A museum visitor will experience nature through the eyes and perceptions of the artists that are exposed in that museum. A person walking in a forest will experience nature as it can be seen in the part of the forest where he is walking. The latter person is the only one having

what one might call a direct experience of nature. However, nobody can say which of those experiences are the most real or the strongest, in the sense of having the strongest mental impact. Virtual reality is no less real than physical reality, it is only a different reality. The least real of all are possibly the reality shows on TV.



Breaking free from the chains, or limitations, that tie you up in your daily life is a multi-faceted undertaking. Embarking on such a venture, you need to focus sharply on what your real limitations are – whether actual or imaginary. A number of varied limitations are floating around in your unconscious, shaping your daily actions and social relations. We have already touched upon freedom as an absence of limitations. Let us dwell a little more on this important notion and its implications.

Among these important limitations are:

social and cultural rules of behavior;

physical limitations encountered when moving around in the geography;

economic limitations posed by your revenue, fortune (or lack of such), or credit lines;

legal limitations imposed by the rule of law (be it penal law or civil law) and the degree of enforcement imposed by society;

or **ethical limitations** imposed by your own ethical standards or the collective ethical standards of your society.

If you try to break free from all those limitations at once, you will either end up behind bars or you will face a fairly quick nervous breakdown. So, you will need to find out what limitations weigh the heaviest on your mind. If you have the inclinations of a Franciscan monk, you will obviously not care about the economic limitations, since you will have made a vow of poverty and decided that material wealth does not matter to you. Your preoccupations may then be directed to spiritual ends, be it spiritual freedom or pursuit of some form of spiritual salvation. A Wall Street stockbroker may not have many economic limitations in his daily life; yet he is so obsessed by increasing his own and his clients' fortune that he is completely tied up in the pursuit of more money.

Your aims in life tend to define the limitations that matter to you, as well as those that don't matter to you. If you have no specific aims in life, you encounter all the limitations with indifference and end up moving aimlessly within the circles formed by these limitations. If you have aims in life, you will need to fight those limitations that stand in your way as you move to achieve your aims.

Social and cultural rules of behavior are encountered in family circles, religious circles, social classes, and other cultural arenas such as sports, entertainment, media, arts, ethnic groups, and so on. In social sciences this theme is developed extensively into analyses of **social rule systems**, as seen

already above through the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu



Physical limitations may be internal (related to your own bodily functions) or external (to be found in the physical landscape you navigate in).

Internal physical limitations are most often clearly defined when they concern explicit bodily impairments. Ways of overcoming them are under constant development by scientific research and technological progress, as can be seen when observing how professor Stephen Hawking of Cambridge University manages to keep up his scientific activity. Physical limitations may also derive from psychological disturbances which affect a person's way of relating to other people and to different social or physical settings. The social science of psychology helps people to deal with such limitations, but they are often much harder to define and sometimes much harder to overcome.

External physical limitations are much more straightforward to define, such

as a road that imposes a certain trajectory for your car or a railway's trajectory imposed by the rails. A society's infrastructure plays a crucial role in defining and changing the limitations we are faced with on a daily basis. The configuration of nature and its climatic conditions are obviously crucial as well.

Economic limitations are defined by the resources at our disposal as a country or as individuals. Freedom of action may nominally be the same for a rich person and a poor person, but the opportunities this freedom opens up for are significantly different for the two persons.

Legal limitations are imposed on us as a result of our desire to live in social communities. From the moment two or more people wish to live together, they have to establish rules of behavior between themselves - in order to live in harmony. Mythological beliefs, ethical norms, value judgments, practical rules for cooperation and exchange are all among the necessities that even the smallest communities need for their harmonious existence. As a community expands in number of persons, it needs to move from the anarchy that very small groups can live with to other forms of government. As the distance between the rulers and the subjects grows, earlier informal rules of behavior increasingly become formal laws and regulations decided by the governing bodies.

It is not necessarily true that individual freedom is greater in the small, informal community – as compared to the large, more formally regulated society. Common norms, entrenched habits and obligations may be more numerous and more constraining in a small community than in a larger society where each individual may be invisible to the mechanisms of control of the larger community. A small community may be dominated by one or a few strong, tyrannical persons with very restrictive views on how behavior should be. A large community may also have the features of a dictatorship, but there are no ways to say if one type of community is more liberal than another, without specifying the features of the communities you wish to compare.



Ethical limitations are most often something we impose on ourselves from our individual beliefs of what we consider to be proper conduct beyond those collective ethical norms that are already embodied in the laws and regulations. There may of course also be ethical considerations of a collective nature that are not embodied in the legal system, but the extent to which these will act as limitations in our daily lives rests on our individual attitudes and the strength of our collective consciousness regarding these ethical norms.

In earlier times, when we lived in caves, our primary preoccupations were concerned with finding food, shelter and clothing. There was no room for

ethical considerations. The struggle to fulfill the bare necessities as best we could took all our time and attention.

Take, for instance, the drive for food.



As the income level has risen, we have seen the development of a paradox in food consumption. Two consumption patterns coexist. One movement, for those who have the income, is towards higher quality food. Within this movement we find variations around healthy, low fat diets and more wholesome diets where nutritional health considerations do not enter and all the focus is on sensual refinement. The proliferation of modern cook books illustrates the extent of this trend. The other movement is towards so-called fast food, where the basic element is speed of preparation and speed of consumption. Many people wish to minimize the time spent on making food and eating it – regardless of their level of income. People with a so-called fast life style, where the focus is on carrying out a maximum of tasks in a day,

consider food on the same level as gasoline for a car – without any consideration for all the other important functions of meals (social contact with friends, meditation, communication with own children and spouse, business transactions).

The consumption of fast food is also often associated with low-income groups, because they less often seek the information needed to distinguish harmful food from healthy food. Only when you compare to eating in other restaurants do fast food chains appear to be cheaper. Fast food bought at a food store is not cheaper when you compare to food prepared at home with natural ingredients. However, as mentioned, higher income groups with little time to spare often seem to go for fast food as well. The total effect of this pattern is an endemic increase in overweight and diabetes, not only among low-income groups.

There are two life-style patterns that favor the proliferation of fast-food. The first, then, is the time pressure that many people are in, partly because of pressures on the job and partly because of pressures stemming from ambitious agendas in their private lives. The second is of a very different nature. It is connected with physical inactivity. A number of people are physically inactive (for numerous different reasons). An increasing number of people develop life styles where any kind of physical activity feels burdensome, including the act of making food. They often spend much of their lives in front of an electronic screen, and they wish to take the food out of the fridge and straight into the micro-wave oven, in order to lose as little time as possible in the process.

People involved in those two life-style patterns do not seem to consider that more rewarding things in life – which are well within their reach – may be passing them by as time passes. Social contact, friends, affection and love - major forces in shaping a happy life - seem to be outside their field of interest. Vastly “successful” people who have pursued one-dimensional objectives throughout their lives, at the cost of loss of social contact, love, affection and friends, come to realize - when their lives are close to ending - that they pursued objectives that were not really worth pursuing. Leaving

families and friends to themselves, they come to think, was not a smart choice – and they often express regret at having made that choice. At the heart of social contact and family life stands a well-prepared meal, and ample time for consuming it while exchanging thoughts and feelings.

The proliferation of cook books of all kinds indicates that an increasing number of people have come to realize the importance of a well-prepared meal, and the social contact that goes with it, for their general quality of life. This does not necessarily entail spending great amounts of money on food.

The same social effects can be obtained with a simple meal as with an expensive meal. It is the gathering and the time spent together that counts. Rich people of course put more into it than poorer people, but the quality of the gathering does not depend on that. It is the effort put into it, and the amount of time spent together, that is appreciated. The great film Babette's feast gives us this feeling of what life can offer when the meal is given careful attention.



The evolution of clothing is of a comparable nature.

The original function of clothes, protection from inclement weather, was already showing signs of becoming obsolete in pre-historic times. This original function of clothes co-existed with an increasing number of other functions – with signs of rank and function in the tribe as the predominant ornamental clothing, followed by various symbols of mythological nature and signs indicating a projection of personality and sense of identity. Over time, the use of symbols and signs of different types has developed into a great variety – combined with informal directives of “proper clothing” by self-appointed fashion judges and creators. Distinction of rank, aside from the obvious use of such distinctions in official functions such as army and police, came in many ways, through choice of colors, shape and, in particular, through choice of the quality of the material used for making clothes.

As clothing varies according to changes in climate, the notions of proper clothing have also been made to vary according to variations in seasons and differences in climate in different parts of the world, thus giving producers of clothes ample opportunities for marketing of new products.

The use and meaning of clothes is different for different people. Some people do not attach any importance to clothes, except in the original way clothes were introduced, as some form of protection against weather and climatic conditions. Others, at the other end of the scale, invest their entire sense of identity in their choice of clothes. Their choice of clothes will then become dependent on what sense of identity they have, and what kind of clothes that match this sense of identity. A person who wishes to project an image of wildlife and toughness in the face of natural forces, will wear rough clothes fitting that lifestyle, even when living city life. A person who wishes to project an image of war hero, will wear camouflage types of clothing, even when living a normal city life. The more extreme cases of people obsessed with fashion are those who blindly follow “the fashion”, regardless of how it fits them. They fully leave it to someone else to decide what they will wear.

What does a sense of identity contain? You can identify yourself with another person (idol, like all those Elvis impersonators), with a profession (fisherman, farmer, ..), an activity (hunter, polar explorer, sportsman,artist,..), a sociological status (nobleman, bourgeois, working class hero, hippie, an ascetic, an exhibitionist,...). Or, you can “be yourself”. Being yourself implies being at ease with your nature, not wishing to be someone else, to have other characteristics than those you actually have, or to be told what to like and what to wear. That may in the end imply that you resemble many other people or that you dress and look very “ordinary”, but – being yourself – you don’t care.



Movement from shelter to housing.

From the pre-historic caves, shelters have evolved in conjunction with life

styles and material wealth. The major historic change was brought about by the gradual move from nomadic to sedentary life style. Whereas the nomadic style of hunter-gatherers dominated before the development of agriculture around ten thousand years ago, the sedentary style gradually took over as agriculture increasingly became the dominant way of sustaining life.

The nomadic life style imposed mobile shelters. Shelters needed to be easily assembled and disassembled, as well as easy to transport. This made for use of furs as cover, placed over rudimentary wooden structures. Or it meant finding temporary shelters in nature, such as grottos. Sedentary life styles led to building of shelters that were made to stay at a fixed place, which implied the possibility to use more robust, heavy materials that gave better protection from and isolation against variations in weather. Stationary shelters – houses - also opened up for variations in the amount of resources put into building a house.

As the case is for clothes, houses became more and more sophisticated with time, and – characteristically – an opportunity for demonstration of rank and power. In this area it was even easier to find material expression for rank, power, and prosperity than it has been in the case of clothes. The size of a building would by itself convey an important message. In addition, multitudes of ways to decorate the building, both with symbols and with quality of materials have been at the disposal of architects and builders. A very telling example of how crudely such notions of prestige and power would influence building customs, can be found in San Gimignano in Tuscany – where the most prominent families in Medieval times would compete with each other by building higher and higher towers. Although the towers had defensive functions, these functions became secondary to the status-seeking motives behind the aim for the highest tower in town. With the advent of more powerful military means, which rendered the military functions of the towers obsolete, height gave way to volume as a general symbol of status for buildings. However, height is still an important symbol of prestige in building customs. Today it signals financial power, technological prowess, and – because it has become a way for some nations to compete - it attempts in general terms to signal that your country is advanced. There is an ongoing

national competition on a global scale, with ever taller buildings as a result.

On top of such considerations as these, you may also wish to add the aesthetic dimensions to architecture that have been developed through different periods. The development of aesthetic considerations in buildings has more to do with art, and is of a different nature, even though ornaments and design of buildings have not been entirely free of competitive motives through the history of architecture.



It is not easy to know when the human being started to develop self-consciousness. It is even more difficult to say when aesthetic considerations entered its mind. When life among hunters and gatherers was organized around tribal customs, there was little room for the individual and his or her personal aspirations, let alone their ideas about themselves as beings. Maybe they could see reflections of themselves in still water, but that may be as far

as it went. Complete submission to the needs of the tribe and the decisions of the tribal leader was the order of the day.

As tribal, nomadic life ceded the ground to sedentary agricultural life, the culture of team work gradually evolved into a culture where the individual was left to himself – in an increasingly hierarchical society. As this hierarchical society was developed, mythology and military power were consolidated as institutions with increasing power – partly in competition with each other and partly in collusion with each other (depending on the personalities in leading positions in both camps). For a long time, religious and military power ruled the minds of people, and individual freedom was very limited. Depending on the individual's place in the social hierarchy, his or her role in life was defined by this place. This did not stop vanity and narcissism from developing. However, narcissistic tendencies were mostly concentrated in those classes of society which were left with time and resources to spend on themselves and their personal desires. This was the case for a small number of people in the priesthood and in the military establishment (which was most often led by a king or other types of dynastic rulers).

With the Enlightenment in the 17th and 18th century in Europe came a revolution of the mind set – as God's place in the Universe was questioned, in the same way as the Earth's place in the Universe relative to the Sun was redefined by scientific minds who had the courage to defy dominating ways of thought. The power of the Church and the power of the Military (Monarchic) rulers came under pressure from a population less and less inclined to accept the dogmatic rule of the few.

Attempts at democratic rule multiplied, and gradually democratic rule became normal practice in certain parts of the world. In these parts of the world, the individual came increasingly in focus and acquired formal, legal rights. Earlier, during the Renaissance period in the 15th and the 16th century (inspired by Greek and Roman antiquity) in the republic of Florence and the other city-states of Tuscany as well as in the self-indulging clergy in Rome, the individual had come more in focus in the artistic and literary world – but there was still a long way to go before the individual found his role in real democratic terms. With the advent of this increased focus on the individual,

individualism and narcissism has evolved steadily.

As the democratic countries have developed and their populations have become wealthy, with lots of leisure time, it has become legitimate for the individual to look at himself and try to find his own true potential in life. This introspection has - combined with the need to be seen as a winner in competition with others - led to an obsession of the self. Individual interests have increasingly turned towards physical appearance and attractiveness.

This tendency has, greatly assisted by media, evolved into a permanent beauty and celebrity contest. The ensuing egocentricity has been conducive to all sorts of self-indulgence where gratification of the senses has become the ultimate goal of life for an increasing number of people. This has led to the development of mental illnesses of all sorts – accompanied by a large spectrum of pharmaceutical remedies, ranging from mild anti-depressants to dangerous addictive drugs. The spreading of drug abuse is an integral part of this evolution.



Narcissism, combined with the focus on gratification of the senses, leads people to lose all sense of meaningful purpose. This in turn produces a steady degeneration of a culture where this kind of attitude and behavior is shared by many.



The science fiction scenario in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World is now in the process of becoming reality. The human genome is identified, and genetic engineering is feasible at the stage of conception of the baby. Not surprisingly, parents want bright and beautiful children – with the necessary fighting spirit to survive in a brutal world (as well as the desire for lots of other characteristics of a tailor-made nature). Science will soon be able to give parents what they want. Those countries that resist this evolution for ethical reasons will be outflanked by countries where money takes precedence over ethical considerations. Parents will seek the necessary medical treatment in those countries, at whatever cost.

Will it be more expensive to buy a bright and beautiful baby, than having a more ordinary baby? What kinds of social stratifications will that imply? Will diversity disappear because ideals of beauty and intelligence are of the same kind everywhere (just like diversity has been strongly reduced in agriculture –

both as regards plants and animals)? Is there any reason to expect a different evolution in genetic engineering for humans than for animals or plants?



The introduction of organ transplants started an entirely new development regarding what is meant by “your body”. You could now in principle renew any part of your body (as far as medical science would permit) to replace wear and tear, and end up with an entirely new body by the time you retire from work. Whose body would that be? Legally speaking, it would be yours – but biologically speaking it would be like a shareholding company.

The new body would partly come from people who had died violent deaths, or from people who voluntarily had given or sold one of their organs (either for reasons of poverty, reasons of family links, or other reasons), or from people who had been forced to part with selected organs or been murdered to give criminals the benefit of selling their organs. The only process that may

block such a development, will be when the process of research and development leads to production of more and more refined artificial organs. Trade in biological organs has become big business, and keeping this trade “clean” is a major challenge. Traceability of organs is crucial. Considering the ethical level of organized crime, the prospects depend entirely on the profitability of such business.

With medical science advancing the frontiers of possible transplants and body repair, the availability of organs is the crucial bottleneck. Traceability of the origin of organs becomes an ethical necessity for bona fide medical treatment (which of course opens great opportunities for gray area clinics in shady parts of the world).

Availability being the major bottleneck, the increased production of synthetic organs may help to reduce the potential for organized crime in this field of human life. Were this to become entirely successful, the human being would get spare parts as easily as your car or airplane mechanic would get theirs (hopefully with a minimum of cheating with fake, counterfeit parts – as can be found in the airline industry).

With spare parts dealing with the interior part of your body, you can now change every exterior aspect of your body through cosmetics and plastic surgery. Money being the only limitation, having a beautiful body is now one of the major status symbols of the wealthy.

There is only one inconvenience: fashion changes. The notions and norms of beauty are in flux. Cosmetics can deal easily with that, but not plastic surgery. Changing the shape of your nose every six months is not an attractive option – neither for reasons of convenience nor for medical reasons.

Nevertheless, the industry of superficial beauty is running full speed, and it is pushing its products on the public with great aggressiveness. The cosmetics industry is advertising “models of beauty” to show you what you can become if you use their products sufficiently often. Since these advertisements make use of manipulated pictures, the models of beauty go far beyond normal

human shapes and give you very false expectations. The plastic surgeons show you with well-chosen pictures what they can make you look like if you decide to do something about your imperfect body.



Less drastic than change of spare parts or plastic surgery, is the activity linked with “keeping fit”. People with education learn how to stay fit without too much effort, but many develop this tendency in extreme ways, as we can see with anorexy and other eating disorders. Training is also taking different paths for different people, with excesses and moderation living side by side.

Training fans have developed their own set of status symbols. Running marathon or taking part in triathlon are examples of status symbols among those who build vanity around their exterior signs of strength and endurance.

Vanity is not the only drive behind excessive fitness movements. Corporations have embarked on the fitness train, and activities that promote

fitness are increasingly integrated in their human resource policies. When the competitive culture of corporations is introduced in fitness programs, there will be a movement towards excessive fitness pressure and stigmatization of those who do not adhere to this culture. The attitude of the leaders will be essential.

Eating in a proper way is fast becoming another dividing factor among the educated and the non-educated. Eating the right kind of food, or the wrong kind of food, is becoming a clear sign of your level of education – and consequently health. Financial means are not crucial in this respect. Right kind of food is not necessarily more expensive. Eating the wrong kind of food brings numerous health hazards, whereas the right kind of food makes you healthier. And health hazards cost you money, a lot of money – in doctors' bills, loss of work capability and many other ways. As many of the uneducated have poor health coverage, they also get less favorable treatment when illnesses strike.

Having a successful or fashionable appearance is a moving target which gives this pursuit the character of a Sisyphus-labor. By the time you have acquired the “correct” clothes, the proper “attitudes”, the “right” colors for your hair and skin, and the “signal accessories”, the criteria assigned to the successful appearance will have moved – often in surprising, contrarian directions. You will never quite be "there".

Fashion gurus speculate in the need to surprise and “shock”, which leads them to change the success criteria at short intervals. The producers, the sales stores, the fashion magazines and all the other players in this industry are built around this constant need for change. In theory, a change of clothes would only be necessary when the old ones are worn out or if their size no longer fits (in the latter case the clothes could be given to a center for exchange of clothes, and a replacement obtained in exchange). However, this way of seeing things is outright subversive in the present economic and social paradigm.



Only those who choose “classic” appearances have a reasonable chance of having a stable set of criteria to go by. However, they will pay the price of being considered boring or “out” by the “in” crowd, a price some can handle without problems, while others suffer greatly from it.

Being “in” is an exhausting activity which requires constant attention to movements in trends, a solid budget to meet the exaggerated pricing of fashion items, and a good stamina to make appearances at the “right” places, at the “right” time. There is no point in being a hot fashion icon if you don’t give other people a chance to see it. Only a small minority of stigmatized persons, like transvestites or the like, actually dress up for an audience that includes only themselves.

A good network of “in” people, with connections to the doorkeepers of the “in” places, is a must for those who run after the successful appearance. “In” people and “in” places have a common interest in promoting each other. When a celebrity goes to a restaurant or a night club, this place gets publicity.

Persons who are in the process of becoming celebrities need to be seen at such places, and they in turn get special admission and special invitations to inaugurations because their presence promotes these places. In turn, places and people get “worn out” in the media, and the media then turn their attention to new people and new places.

All these elements taken together show clearly that having a successful appearance is a full time job which would normally imply that you have sources of income that sustain your lifestyle without the need to stay in a job. If you are not in that position, you already have a handicap. The more you need to work, the more of a handicap you have if you want to stay on top of the “in” crowd.

The Escape from the “in-crowd” and the move into Cyberspace.

Cyberspace is as real to many as the physical space is to others. Many people spend more time living and acting in cyberspace than in physical space. Cyberspace offers inroads to imaginary worlds where your own imagination can shape the conditions in which you live. It is in this context only in the biological sphere (with the imperatives of your bodily functions) that you encounter physical necessities which you cannot escape by imaginary life in cyberspace.

Although you cannot physically enter into Cyberspace, there are already many who live their whole mental life in it, and physical life is even replicated through meta-villages where you live as if you lived in a physically tangible village. Many create their own world, through participation in games, or through the making of imaginary worlds where they create all the elements from scratch.

Social interaction seems to be more intense in Cyberspace than in the physical world. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and other social media offer social interactions and drama which often reach much higher emotional temperatures than what you find in physical life (see "Keeping the Dragon at arms length (social interaction in cyberspace)") below..



Facing the Dragon of Social Interaction in Physical Space.

Social interaction in material, social arenas is complicated. Written and unwritten rules of conduct, social stratifications, codes of communication that blur the content of messages sent or received, psychological filters which guide your behavior and other people’s behavior towards you. These elements, and numerous others, contribute to make social interaction a constant source of anguish to many. To some, this anguish is such that they prefer to retreat to solitude or to cyberspace – where these sources of anguish have a lesser grip on them.

In the physical world of social interaction you cannot press the “escape” button when you encounter unpleasant situations, except by way of suicide or total removal from social life as done by buddhist hermits. Neither can you restart from scratch when you have made monumental errors, as you may do in many games and imaginary worlds in cyberspace. Your actions are noted

by others and will be kept in the collective and individual memories, thus influencing the perception of and thereby the effects of your future actions.

Cyberspace contains a stronger danger in this respect, however. It records everything you do in minute detail and it makes it available to everybody, not only those who have met you directly. In cyberspace, your past actions come back to haunt you in a much more dramatic way than in the social interaction outside of cyberspace. So, even though you can press the escape button in cyberspace and restart your life there when you are in a game, your actions there on homepages or social networks are noted by people in the real world and the traces of your actions in cyberspace are kept on record in cyberspace forever – available to people in the real world whenever they feel like accessing them.

Keeping the Dragon at Arms Length (Social Interaction in Cyberspace).

The fearsome dragon of physical social interaction leads many people to prefer the social contact they can get through cyberspace. They can in this way get the advantages of social life without its inconveniences. A multitude of arenas for social interaction are created in cyberspace, where physical contact is avoided if so wished. This often creates a more open communication than the one you get face to face (where all the above mentioned barriers are at work). People are less afraid of exposing themselves in cyberspace, often with intimate details they would never reveal face to face. It seems that they imagine that the information they divulge in cyberspace is given in a closed space with no relation to their “outside” life. However, when their private bits of information filter from cyberspace to the arenas of the outside physical space, they often cause dramatic situations for those involved. They may lose their jobs, get stigmatized in their social network or in other ways face unforeseen consequences.



In his book “L’Âme du monde” (The Global Soul), the French philosopher Frédéric Lenoir tries to find the common elements among the world’s different cultures regarding the question of how to achieve a good life. He identifies seven common questions raised in all the major cultures that together form the key to find this wisdom. These seven questions are:

- 1. The meaning of your life.**
- 2. The relation between body and soul.**
- 3. True freedom.**
- 4. Love.**
- 5. What to cultivate and what to reject.**
- 6. The art of living.**
- 7. Accepting what is.**

The Meaning of your life.

Most of our troubles come from living unconsciously in response to our immediate material and emotional impulses, without asking ourselves the question of what the significance of our life is. Our life runs through the flow of existence, like logs in a river, without mastering the situations that arise. Living only in response to our immediate needs, we do not allow the needs of our soul to come forward.

Why are we here? Do we have anything we wish to achieve? Are the events we are faced with of random nature or do they have significance? Do we have a destiny to accomplish? Are we the fruit of our instincts and our education or can we acquire real freedom? If so, how can we best use this freedom? On what will we base our life? Can real and lasting happiness be found? How can body and soul be nourished?

By trying to answer these questions according to your own reasoning and your own preferences, you will be able to live consciously - with open eyes. The choices you make will be conscious, and you will increase your chances to live according to your nature – and be yourself.

The Relation between Body and Soul.

We have been given a physical and a psychical constitution, which together form our body. These two parts of our constitution have to be mastered by our soul. During our life, we will need to learn how to attain a proper balance between these, and to master this balancing act as we go along.

You need to know the physical capacities and limits of your body, and cultivate its capacities without straining your body beyond its limits – and giving it the necessary rest. If you mistreat your body, your soul will suffer in consequence. Illnesses and depressions will follow from exhaustion. Correspondingly, our psychical capacities and limits – as seen through our sensibilities, our feelings, and our spirit – need to be

attended to. Just as we actively attend to our body's physical needs, attention to our psychical needs are crucial. We need to listen to the signals our body sends us when we are depressed or when we are ill in other ways. Many people neglect these signals, and the consequences often show up in the form of total exhaustion or other forms of mental breakdown, which may take years to heal.



True Freedom.

Absolute freedom, in the form of absence of restrictions of any kind (economic, legal, cultural, emotional, social, or other forms), is unattainable if you wish to live in community with other people. We have already reflected on this above. In our search for freedom, we need to start with our own inner life. We have fears, desires, habits, and addictions that often force us to act in certain ways or stop us from doing certain things.

Is it freedom when you get nervous, irritated or aggressive because it has been too long since you last got a cigarette, a drink or some other drug? Is it freedom to spend most of your money on lotteries? Is it freedom when you spend most of your leisure time in front of a computer or TV-screen? Is it freedom when you don't express yourself publicly because you are afraid of speaking in public?

The process of attainment of true freedom needs to start with introspection. You need to get to know your own character. How do we act in our lives? What are the causes behind our different actions? What is the result of fears, addictions, uncontrolled desires and habits? Are our actions governed by our own conscious priorities? Are they results of circumstances we do not control? How can we influence the causes behind our actions in such a way as to gain a better control of our lives?



Love.

Love is a strong energy. It takes many different forms and it often affects our lives profoundly. If we wish to experience love in its true forms, we need to combat the way our own egos stand in the way. If we allow the immediate needs of our own egos to govern our actions, we are not likely to experience true love. Love starts by thinking of the people around you, the people you meet. If you guide your attention to them and their needs, you will get a form of contact and interaction which is the basis for love.

What to cultivate and what to reject.

If we have made progress in getting to know ourselves, we will have a better knowledge of what is good for us and what is bad for us. From philosophy and religion we know that life is a constant struggle between forces that act for the good and forces that are of evil nature. The same struggle goes on inside ourselves. If we manage to see clearly what types of actions in our lives produce results that we judge to be desirable and what types of actions produce negative results, we have a fundamental starting point for improving our lives. By raising our consciousness in this respect, we can better identify what we should do more of and we should do less of.

The Art of Living.

A good life is achieved when you obtain inner calm. Inner calm is obtained when you manage to balance the conflicting forces that struggle within you. You need to look for a proper balance between attachment and detachment. Extreme attachment to certain needs and desires will always come at the expense of other needs and desires.

If you have a family and an interesting job, you have an excellent point of departure for a good life - emotionally and professionally. However, if you allow your professional ambitions to take control of the most part of your time and attention, your family will suffer and so – in the end – will you. You need to strike a balance between the two. A good way to find this balance can be achieved by constant dialogue with the persons at home and at the work place. Don't underestimate the need for communication.

Aristotle, and many others before and after him, have underlined the importance of finding the middle way if you are looking for the good life.

Accepting what is.

Everybody faces difficulties, challenges and problems of all sorts in their daily lives. In so doing, it is crucial to recognize the facts you are faced with and accept to face them properly. Many people, when faced with something they dislike, will start by looking away from the problems and try to behave as if the problems actually were not there. Denial is the biggest enemy of problem-solving, as any family member of an alcoholic will be able to testify.

Many facts of life are extremely hard to deal with, but they need to be faced. Hiding from problems does not solve them, and it creates other problems in addition.



The first philosophers in Ancient Greece were more concerned with the nature of the world than with the preoccupations of human beings. The sophists were the first to direct their attention to the humans and their role in society.

In the passages on Western philosophy that follow below, I rely heavily on the excellent book of professor Trond Berg Eriksen of the University of Oslo: "Undringens labyrinter" (in English, the title would presumably be: "The Labyrinths of Wondering"; 1998)

The sophists were more concerned with human life, such as language, customs, right or wrong. Questions of value and legitimacy took precedence over questions on the origins of the world. Protagoras (about 480 B.C. – 410 B.C.) and Gorgias (died about 380 B.C.) were the two most notable sophists. "Man is the measure of all things", said Protagoras. The sophists were the carriers of the Athenian Enlightenment, the moral and political teachers of democracy. They gave courses in logic, rhetoric, and policymaking.

The sophists were seen as a menace by the nobility, because they enabled ordinary citizens to participate in political life – at the expense of the nobility's political hegemony. The reaction of the nobility (voiced through Socrates in Plato's dialogues) was criticism against the sophists along several lines: 1) They were teaching for pay, 2) They said they could teach *arête* (excellence, virtue), but the nobility contended that this was an innate quality which was not accessible to ordinary people; 3) Sophists were only occupied with utility; 4) Sophists did not accept that there was a given truth; everything was relative. Nothing was absolute. There was according to them no fixed yardstick against which things could be measured. Protagoras said that man is the measure of all things.

We know Socrates (469 BC – 399 BC) mainly from the texts of Plato. Some contemporaries, the playwright Aristophanes and the historian Xenophon, did not give flattering portraits of Socrates. Plato, however, gave Socrates the main role in the many dialogues he wrote. It seems fair to think that Plato saw something that Aristophanes and Xenophon did not see. The major message left by Socrates, aside from all the important points that appear in the dialogues and which we cannot clearly separate from Plato's own ideas, is

that dialogue is the principal vehicle leading to truth. Ethics and the search for truth through the use of reason was his basic concern, through which he is seen as one of the founders of Western philosophy.



Plato (424 BC – 348 BC) was a student of Socrates, and founder of the Academy in Athens – the first institution of higher learning in the Western world. Most of his writings were in the form of dialogues where Socrates played a prominent part. Since Socrates himself did not write anything, it is not possible to say which parts of the dialogues come from Socrates' ideas and which parts are Plato's own ideas. Plato's dialogues introduced a new way of expressing ideas, opening up for an exploration – through the meeting of opposing ideas – of the way leading to truth.

Plato's cosmologic thoughts, expressed in the dialogue *Timaios*, saw the world as existing at two levels, one level being a divine, permanent, timeless,

harmonious world governed by reason, and the other level being the world as our senses see it, characterized by change and random disturbances. This brought together the views of Parmenides and of the Pythagoreans.

Plato's world of ideas, as drawn from the vision of perfection governing the divine level of the world, contains beings and elements in their true form and in a harmonious relation to each other. The famous allegory of the grotto gives a striking example of this thought. Plato's dialogues represent an effort to get closer to this ideal world. Goodness, justice and beauty are notions that exist in themselves, and not solely as subjective objects of man's own senses (as the sophists contended), and the purpose of the dialogues was to bring our knowledge closer to the truth of these and other notions.

Aristotle (384 BC – 322 BC), Plato's most famous pupil, had his attention more directed towards the nature of the world as it could be observed in practice. Empirical observation of the world as it appeared was more important for Aristotle than for Plato, who was more concerned with theoretical questions of normative character. Plato was a rationalist, less inclined to rely on the observations of the senses. Whereas Plato's ideal world exists in its own right, alongside with the material world we observe, the world of Aristotle links ideas and matter through observation and the notion of change is part of this interdependence. The world is for Aristotle not static, as it is for Plato.

However, Aristotle has taken his fundamental categories of thought from Plato. The originality of Aristotle stems from his development of new methods to tackle the problems faced. He broadens his scientific outlook from mathematics (which was Plato's scientific platform) to include also physics and metaphysics (questions of being and non-being). Politics, ethics, rhetoric, aesthetics and poetry were also among his subjects of interest. His writings were the first to create a comprehensive system of Western philosophy. Studies of nature (physical science) are his prime interest, and in his work he develops major classifications based on his observations. Every object consists of form and matter, and it has a potential for development that it will strive to attain (telos).

The Epicureans placed human life more at the center of their attention. Epicurus (341 B.C. – 271 B.C.) was born at Samos, but lived in Athens. He created a school of philosophy which gathered at “Epicurus’s Garden” in Athens. It was open to all, including women and slaves. The human senses and the states of mind were at the center of his preoccupations, and all sensations have the same authority. Man possesses a free will, and we have the power to choose our destiny. To lead a happy life, man needs to fight the false impressions that govern his life. By living in the Epicurean community, the pupil of the school learns to discharge himself of all the false impressions and conventions his culture has equipped him with. Dialogue with his teacher is the vehicle of change. The aim of life is to prevent pain and achieve joy or pleasure (hedone). From this came the term hedonist. The way to attain pleasure is to live modestly and gain knowledge of the world and the limits of one’s own desires, thus reaching a state of tranquility (ataraxia) and freedom from fear, as well as absence from bodily pain (aponia). This teaching is far from what we today associate with the terms Epicureans and hedonists.



The Stoics had a different way of approaching the subjects that Epicurus raised.

The Stoic (Hellenistic) school of thought was antiauthoritarian, as opposed to the Epicurean school where much was centered on the almost divine authority of Epicurus. Pupils were encouraged to develop their own thoughts and to create a room for reflection around their situation. Their impulses and thoughts should be tested by use of reason. There were many likenesses between Epicurean and Stoic thinking. Central to both was the importance of a free will, dialogue, the criticism of customs and conventions, openness to all (men, women, and slaves), and the emphasis on moral philosophy and attainment of reason (logos). The Stoics emphasize that nothing separates men and women as regards the capacity of their reason. Differences between humans are random; what is permanent their likeness in reason, a likeness they share with the gods. The greatest enemy of reason is passion, the strong feelings. They have to be resisted. This is an interesting contrast to what we

see today, where the attainment of great passion is seen as something important to aim for.

The earliest Stoics were Zeno (332 B.C. – 260 B.C.), Cleanthes (330 B.C. – 230 B.C.), and Chrysippus (280 B.C. - 208 B.C.). Zeno taught philosophy at the *Stoa Poikile* (“the painted porch”), from which the philosophy got its name. The intermediate period of Stoicism was linked to Posidonius (about 135 B.C. – 51 B.C.). Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 B.C. – 43 B.C.) was also an important person in this context. The later period was marked by Seneca (4 B.C. – 65 A.D.), Epictetus (A.D. 50 – 120) and the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 121 – 180).

There was also a movement of thinking which was called the Sceptics. In the Hellenistic philosophies of the Epicureans, the Stoics and the Neo-Platonics (see below) we find integrated systems of thought leading to views on how to live. The Sceptics were against constructing any system. Classical philosophical skepticism derives from the “Skeptikoi”, a school who “asserted nothing”. Pyrrho (about 360 B.C. – 270 B.C.), Carneades (about 213 B.C. – 129 B.C.) and Sextus Empiricus (A.D. 200 – 250) were among the best known Sceptics. The Sceptics emphasized doubt as the main attitude to life. They also fought false ideas and impressions, but they did not wish to introduce any new ideas to replace the old ones (which according to them might have the same types of weaknesses). Systematic doubt liberates the mind. Absence of anguish, peace of the soul (ataraxia) was the goal.

Neo-Platonism designates the dominating philosophy of antiquity in the period from A.D. 200 to A.D. 500. Plotinus (205 A.D. – 270 A.D.) was its earliest and major philosopher. This philosophy, taking its point of departure from Plato’s world of ideas, had a great influence on the early development of Christian thought. According to this, the world is divided into a spiritual and a material world. The world of ideas is a truer world where things are as they are meant to be. This world is unchanged and characterized by stability. The spiritual world is divided in three parts: the Soul, the Intellect and “The One” (representing the harmonious whole).



The first major Christian thinker following the Neo-Platonists was Augustin (354 – 430 AD).

Augustin went through a spiritual development from non-believer to becoming the most influential thinker of the Western Christian church in his time. He lived in a period of transition in philosophy where the influence of Plato and Aristotle was great, combined with a strong growth in the popular adherence to the Christian church. Augustin was well acquainted with the thinking of Plato and Aristotle, and he integrated their thinking into the development of Christian thought. Augustin’s work was developed on a broad range of questions, in such a way that he could match the greatest thinkers of Antiquity.

In his work “Confessions”, Augustin created a language for introspection. In this work, he covered a large range of questions. At the center was the question of where God can be found and how God best can be sought. His

answer was “in myself”. The will to know is clouded by desire. In his work “God’s city” (Civitas Dei), Augustin describes two parallel worlds he saw developing: God’s city (Civitas Dei) and the city of the world (Civitas Terrena). This model of thought was a development of Platonic and Neo-Platonic thinking, and integrated itself well with that of the Christian church.

As scientific thinking started to emerge in the Christian World, the need to reconcile the results of scientific observations with the teachings of the Bible made itself increasingly felt. Any contradiction of scientific thinking with the teachings of the Bible was seen as a great menace by the Pope and his Bishops. It could gradually undermine the authority of the Church as well as the political power that went with it. Another of the great Christian thinkers was Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274 AD). He was a Dominican monk who spent most of his time finding ways to reconcile emerging scientific knowledge with the teachings of the Bible. This was termed Scholastic thinking.

The Scholastic period in Western philosophy, in the 12th and 13th centuries A.D., witnessed the challenges posed against religious belief by the development of natural science and philosophy. Thomas Aquinas was the quintessential Scholastic thinker, through his major efforts of uniting rational thinking and religious belief. He asked whether the question of God’s existence only was a matter of faith, or whether it could also be approached by reasoning.



Aquinas says that our knowledge starts with the impressions conveyed by our senses. These senses, however, must be followed up by reflection. To find an answer, Aquinas starts with Aristotle's reasoning about change and movement. In all change there is a cause, and all that is moved is moved by something. By moving along in the chain of causes, we will find an original cause – and that cause is God. Even if there are many coincidences in the world, everything that happens cannot be the result of coincidences. Some things exist by necessity. These things are God. What we can know about God is that he exists and that he is at the origin of creation. We know no more.

What is the relation between body and soul? The dualistic view, found with Platonic and Neo-Platonic thinkers, that the soul and the body are separate, did not appeal to Aquinas. He thought that humans are intelligent animals, where reason and desire coexist, and – like Aristotle – he aims at a balance between body and soul. The ideal is the paradisaical mix of innocence, sensuous joy and reason – as it existed before the downfall. There has to be a

fundamental aim in life, and this fundamental aim is God (which is very close to Plato's view that man in his life must aim for the divine). Our use of thought and reason is the way. The distinction between reason and faith, and their relative roles, was a major preoccupation.

By use of reason we create our laws, and these laws originate from the eternal, natural laws that govern the life of all humans – regardless of religion or ethnicity. This natural law says that we have the right to live, that we shall not hurt others, and that those who sin against others shall be punished.

Human laws are an interpretation of the natural law. By this thinking, Aquinas brought Antiquity's ideas of a natural law into the Middle Ages, greatly inspired by Aristotle and by the Stoics' idea of "the true law".

This idea moved into the Renaissance, and subsequently inspired the Enlightenment's thinking about Human rights.



In the 16th century the Renaissance came into full flower. The word “Renaissance”, from French, means rebirth, and this term was chosen to reflect a movement back to the emphasis on the individual in the thinking found in Antiquity – combined with the liberation of thought from the normative dogmas of the Church in the Middle Ages. Nature, science, arts and individual achievement came to the forefront of public attention. This development did not imply a break with the role of the Church, but – although the Church retained much of its political power – it opened the door for increased freedom of thought, expression and action. Leonardo da Vinci (1452 - 1519) and Pico della Mirandola (1463 - 1494) were important figures in this context in the Renaissance in Italy, where the movement picked up its first major momentum in the 1400s.

Among the developments in philosophical thinking in this period, the major ones took place in cosmological thinking. Nicolaus Copernicus (1473 – 1543) established the heliocentric view of the movements of planets, at the expense of the old geocentric view held by the Church. His views were supported and expanded upon by Giordano Bruno (1548 – 1600), who was burned at the Campo dei Fiori in Roma by the Inquisition for his scientific opinions (thus showing that there still was some way to go before freedom of speech was established). Later, Johannes Kepler (1571 - 1630), developed more precise theories of the elliptic movements of the planets – which he could confirm by using the observations made by Tycho Brahe (1546 – 1601), made available to Kepler after Brahe’s death.

In other fields of work, important philosophical thinkers in this period were Niccolo Machiavelli (1469 – 1527) and Francis Bacon (1561 – 1626). They both emphasized the importance of empirical observation as the basis for the search for truth. Ideas alone could not lead to truth, unless supported by empirical facts. Machiavelli’s empirical attitude has often been labeled cynicism, because his field of study was the behavior to be adopted by political leaders seeking power (what today would be a branch of political science). Francis Bacon’s attention was directed to natural science, and his views preceded those of the so-called empiricists of the 18th century.



Galileo Galilei (1564 – 1642) was a scientist who developed a telescope that permitted the study of the movements of the planets and the stars, as well as the microscope that improved medical studies. His studies supported the heliocentric findings of Copernicus, thus bringing Galilei into great trouble with ecclesiastical authorities. He escaped Giordano Bruno’s fate by moderating his public views, but kept his beliefs privately. Thomas Aquinas had said that when reason collided with the revelation of faith, revelation had precedence. Galilei said that where reason and revelation collided, revelation was not understood correctly. Galilei’s contribution was particularly important as regards the development of scientific method and the role of empirical observations, notably in his studies of gravity. Through his studies he raised many questions that would occupy scientists for centuries to come.

Francis Bacon developed a program for scientific development governed by reason and empirical observations, with the aim of attaining truth and

increased mastery of nature. His influence was great, not because of particular findings or particular ideas, but because of the long term perspectives he outlined for scientific research, scientific method and the role of empirical observations in this context. He placed utility of science for mankind in the face of natural forces, in focus for scientific research. The attainment of truth is necessary for developing utility. He was not talking about the truth as preached by the Bible.

Bacon pointed to four errors of thought (*idola mentis*) that would prevent development of truth: 1) Idols of the tribe; errors that humans fall into because of their senses. 2) Idols of the cave; individual errors due to private prejudices. 3) Idols of the market place; errors due to understanding of language and common notions. 4) Idols of the theatre; errors due to traditional statements and repeated “truths”.



René Descartes (1596 – 1650) is considered to be the first of the modern philosophers; he made a sharp distinction between matters of reason and matters of faith. He was careful not to challenge the church openly, in order to be left in peace to pursue his philosophical research as he wanted to. He sought basic truths from which other truths could be deduced, and from this starting point he had to discard all knowledge developed before. This was, as a starting point, the same attitude as the Sceptics had taken in Antiquity.

Mathematics and geometry are for Descartes the starting point for the use of intuition and deduction. For him, logical deduction is science, not the movement from observation to the formulation of laws. Simplification was at the heart of his method. A problem needed to be decomposed into smaller component parts, in order to permit construction of logical relations between the components. He created analytic geometry, the translation of geometric problems into an algebraic language.

For Descartes, truth is not established through an ontology like in Augustin's thoughts on God's creation. Truth is produced by science, based on self-evident insights. His introduction to philosophy is linked to the experience that everything can be doubted. Where is the basis of thought to be found? What we consider as truths may be dreams and hallucinations. The methodical doubt is the way to certainty and clarity. Augustin preceded Descartes in saying that a doubter cannot doubt his own existence, because the more he doubts the more he confirms his own existence. Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum* – I think, therefore I am – is an axiom of rationalism. If thinking and being are identical, then the clear must be truer and more real than the unclear.

In Descartes' thinking, we must distinguish between *ordo essendi* (the world as it appears, which for Descartes is largely mechanistic) and *ordo cognoscendi* (the world of rationality). He established a clear distinction between soul and body, where the soul would be at the center of the process of thought. With Descartes as with Augustin, the two worlds are brought together by the notion of God, which links the human conscience with the outer world. We are imperfect beings, and yet we have a notion of something

perfect and eternal. If we did not have such a notion, we would not consider ourselves as imperfect and temporal. Where can this idea come from? There must be a perfect being who has given us this notion. Only God can be *causa sufficiens* – sufficient cause – for this notion.



Baruch Spinoza (1632 – 1677) was excommunicated from his Jewish congregation at the age of 24 because of his theological views. He meant that philosophy spoke the language of reason, and that the Scripture spoke the language of images. They cannot contradict each other. He would let philosophy decide what in the Scriptures might be true. In 1670 he published *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, a work that immediately created an outcry from Jewish and Christian congregations of both faiths, as well as from followers of Descartes. He contended that universities were bound by opinions that were in fashion, in the same way as the Church was bound by its dogmas. Thoughts that contain clear and visible ideas and definitions, are

not wrong. False knowledge stems from unclear and clouded ideas. Definitions and methods were as important for him as for the other rationalists. Spinoza's philosophy does not abstract generalized truths from sensorial observations. It derives statements from intuitive truths, definitions, postulates and axioms.

Spinoza thinks about God in terms of immanence. God and nature are one. He thought that this world is the only one, and that it is useless to seek salvation or freedom somewhere else. Body and soul, thinking and space, matter and spirit, are all aspects of one coherent reality. Descartes' dualism is erased and replaced by an extreme and consequent monism. Man does not stand outside nature. Even his philosophy is part of the great system. Everything rests in God and follows an eternal order. God is not the creator of, the fundament of, or the guarantor of this order. He is himself this totality. Everything that happens must be explainable from the unchangeable nature of God.

Spinoza was opposed to the notion of free will. He thought that is an illusion due to lack of insight into the interdependence of thoughts and things. The will cannot cross the imperative that lies in clear and visible thoughts. Spinoza shared Socrates' view that knowledge is virtue. Knowledge is about finding out why things are as they are, and – like the stoics – find your place in nature's workings without trying to be something else. To be free is to exist within the necessity of one's own nature. Freedom of thought is the only real freedom.

Everything has a drive aiming at self-promotion and survival of the self. Spinoza calls this drive *conatus*. Everything that is alive tries to keep its power and extend its activities. Love and hate, convenience and inconvenience, good and bad, are in his system derived from this drive. There is nothing good or bad in itself; our system of affectations and passions experience some things as useful and pleasing, and other things as disturbing and sad. Things that support our drive are considered as "good", and things that stand in its way are seen as "evil".



From the shoulders of Descartes and Spinoza philosophical thinking moved into the period of Enlightenment.

John Locke (1632 – 1704) was a central person of the period of Enlightenment, and his thoughts inspired subsequent thinkers both in England and in France. Although, somewhat like Francis Bacon, he was quite involved in current matters of society and politics, his major work *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* is what he is most known for. He is in opposition to the rationalists' thoughts that certain ideas exist in the minds of all people as something common and in-born. He also doubts the existence of any common, abstract principles. He thought that the soul, at birth, was a *tabula rasa*, a blank that acquired content from experience. Ideas are something the reason produces from the impressions the mind gets.

The senses passively register the impressions of the world. The reflections produce an active consciousness regarding activities and situations.

Descartes' distinction between *res extensa* and *res cogitans* here shows up again with Locke's distinction between inner and outer experience. Senses and reflection are independent forms of experience, but it is the outer matter registered by the senses that sets reflection in motion. Without the senses, consciousness would have nothing to work with.

Experience cannot offer truth, only degrees of probability. This is what our choices in daily life have to base themselves on. As a teacher, Locke emphasizes the individual's right to a free and natural development, an idea that Rousseau later would develop further.



David Hume (1711 – 1776) was an empirist, as opposed to a rationalist. He was the major philosopher of empirism. He uses the term *perceptions* to describe the content of consciousness. The perceptions are of two kinds, *impressions* and *ideas*. We see here that perceptions are the primary

aspect of consciousness, and ideas are derived from perceptions. This is in contrast to the rationalists, where ideas are a primary aspect of consciousness. According to Hume, illusions and misunderstandings arise when perceptions are changed and combined into ideas. The relation between impressions and ideas corresponds to John Locke's emphasis on the relation between senses and thought.

The only sources of truth are the impressions, the empirical observations made by the senses. Reason builds on these impressions. Ideas have to reflect these observations. They are derived from them. Impressions are always more vivid than ideas. Perceptions may be simple or composed of several elements. Reason may produce ideas from other ideas and in that way create new impressions; the latter is called impressions of reflection, as distinct from impressions of senses. In Hume's thinking, Descartes' *res extensa* and *res cognitans* disintegrates, because in his view there is no reality beyond that produced by perception. The same goes for the notion of cause. The relation between cause and effect is a product of observations that are linked together by ideas, and they do not reflect any reality as such. The only realities are the impressions (observations made by the senses).

In life we have to accept this point of departure in order to arrive at truth in itself. Our decisions will be based on the perceptions and the uncertainty they entail. Experience gives rise to expectations, but does not provide certainty. Morals and politics have their basis on the utility and advantages they produce, and the practical rules they produce.

For Rousseau, emotions and feelings were more important than rationality. Simplicity and innocence brings happiness. A person who thinks is already on the road to destruction. Simple and modest people in the countryside were more to his liking than those with the manners and conversation of the capital. He contended that modern progress in philosophy, science and the arts had not had a favorable effect on the morality of people. The values of the modern civilization undermined ethics, faith and patriotism and destroyed the unspoiled natural being.

Education should focus on developing the natural personality of the child, in

conformity with its needs. The aim is to remove obstacles, thus enabling the autonomous development of the child in accordance with the child's own personal experiences. Reason and knowledge must come last. Rousseau treats the subjects of family life, marriage, intensity, love of nature and respect for nature, all these being subjects that the representatives of Enlightenment questioned. He thought that man should develop his own will in such a way that his will would be in harmony with the common will. In this way he would achieve true freedom.



Throughout his life, Edmund Burke (1729 – 1794) defended the practical endeavors against utopian fantasies. David Hume's empirical philosophy of skepticism paradoxically paved the way for the Romantic period's emphasis on feelings, which developed as a new form of mysticism. Empiricism is in its nature conservative, because it only recognizes empirical observations and does not recognize alternative thoughts because of their theoretical nature.

The emphasis on habits, feelings and traditions, at the expense of reason, placed social and historical values in focus. Edmund Burke transformed Hume's skepticism into arguments for humility and faith in traditions. While reason contained a tendency towards utopian thoughts, political empiricism with Burke developed into programmatic anti-utopy. According to him, policy cannot be constructed as a theoretical exercise – it grows out of experience.

Rationalists are wrong because they do not take account of the role of illusions and prejudices in society and politics. The role of politics is to secure the enduring and prevent the unenduring.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646 – 1716) was one of the last philosophers to work on a broad scale of sciences. After his time, science became more specialized, and it was increasingly difficult for one person to go in depth in more than one branch of science. In spite of his achievements on a very broad scale, Leibniz produced two works, *Théodicée* (1710) and *Monadologie* (1714), that are among the most read and commented works in the history of philosophy. For Leibniz, mathematics gives the ideal image of knowledge and method. He is by many considered to be the inventor of symbolic logic. He did not only wish to use mathematical methods to prove the validity of contentions, he also wanted to use it to find new combinations of ideas. He thus formulated the program of a philosophical school of thought that is still very much alive. He hoped to find the axiomatic basis of all metaphysical deductions, and through this deduct the possible combinations of thought that could be derived from this basis.

In spite of his strong rationalism, Leibniz did not spurn experience as a source of knowledge. He sought in general to conciliate opposites. There are several types of truths; some derive from reason and others derive from experience. The first truths are to be found in mathematics and logic. They are analytical and derive from the definitions of the notions involved. The others are contingent in the sense that their contradictions (negations) may also be true. Logic truths rest on definitions, while empirical truths rest on empirical observations.

Like Spinoza, Leibniz attempts to eliminate the difference between materialism and spiritualism. It remains unclear whether their metaphysics is

materialism dressed as theology, or theology dressed as materialism. Descartes assumed that there were two types of substances, thinking and spatial substances. Spinoza contended that there was only one, God or Nature. Leibniz says that there are countless substances, which he calls “monads” (to be interpreted along the lines of Democritus’ atoms). With Leibniz there is a continuous transition from the conscious to the unconscious. His interest in, and some say invention of, infinitesimal calculus derives from this thinking.



In Immanuel Kant’s time (1724 – 1804), philosophy – still the queen of sciences – was increasingly surrounded by scientific discovery that invaded philosophy’s discussions of what exists and what does not exist (ontology) and the question of what we can know about existence (epistemology). Kant recognizes that the contribution of science in this discussion has established itself in a permanent way, but maintains the grip of philosophy as the home

of wisdom. In relation to wisdom, science is only a tool. Philosophy offers unity and purpose to all sciences.

The whole field of philosophy is covered by these questions: What can I know? What should I do? What can I hope for? What is man? Metaphysics answers the first question, moral teachings answer the second, philosophy of religion answers the third, and anthropology the fourth. Kant says that all questions relate to the fourth and that the solutions to all important questions are to be found in man himself. Being said in his time and day, this was a radical opinion. Kant emphasizes the authority each man has through his own reason. He should not listen to someone just because that person is considered to be an authority; the important thing is not *who* says something, but *what* he says. Many people follow other people, rather than following their own reason.

Kant thought that the choice between utopian rationalism and empiricism's non-knowledge was a false choice. Kant was well acquainted with Newton's physics, but it was important for him to limit the validity of the mechanistic laws in order to avoid that these laws would be applied to human life as well. He wanted to find a way out of the mechanistic consequences of Newton's physics. He explored the place for free will and responsibility. The borderlines between freedom and necessity were a major concern for him, because – in his time – necessity (determinism) was the dominant idea, and this idea only offered faith as the way to freedom.

Kant redefined the relation between inner and outer reality. Mechanic laws could be valid for the outer reality the way we perceive it, but this would not preclude the idea of man's inner freedom. Kant also introduced a distinction between "assumption" and "deduction" in logic reasoning, on the one hand, and "cause" and "effect" in a mechanistic reality on the other. He thought it was important to subject ideas to empirical criticism, and he contended that the rationalistic thinking in Germany in his time was not much better than the religious fantasies on heaven and earth produced by Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688 – 1772). Reality has no other form than the form produced by observation and reason. Things present themselves to us in time and space;

the things in themselves – *Das Ding an sich* – will never be known.

How can the senses and the thinking work together? Truth can only be ascertained by a contention's compatibility with other contentions. The senses deliver the multitude of impressions, and the reason establishes relations between the impressions by making judgments. Kant has written three critiques, on the subjects of pure reason (truth), practical reason (what is good) and judgment (on beauty), respectively. He thus keeps the same division as Plato, between truth, goodness, and beauty. Only the will can unconditionally be called good. Goodness rests in the will, not in the aim that is intended, and not in the effects of an action. Kant's *categorical imperative* states that the will behind your actions should be guided by the principle that you would be ready to accept this will as a law that would be applied to everybody, including yourself.



Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770 – 1831) is convinced of the interrelationship between thoughts and the interrelationship between events, between things. Hegel does not believe that reason and understanding are timeless and independent of their place in history. The spirit is something that is developing over time. In and through man nature is seeing itself. History has brought a consciousness that is capable of grasping its own historical conditions. The spirit is guaranteeing the order and direction of history, and the spirit is discovering itself through natural philosophy and philosophy of history.

Hegel showed that the roles of the subject and the object in the process of understanding were not static entities, as considered by most thinkers from Descartes to Kant. Objects are not lying still, waiting to be discovered and examined by an active but fully developed subject. In the ongoing process, the subject and the object are mutually influenced by each other. The subject's tools and consciousness are under constant development. Hegel rejects Kant's teachings on the subject and the notion of "Das ding an sich" (the thing in itself).

The experience of the senses is the point of departure for understanding, but this experience needs notions. When the experience of the senses recognizes its need for notions, it is no longer a pure experience of the senses, but something that has developed beyond that. In the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* this process is developed until all forms of consciousness have shown their strengths and weaknesses. The experiences of the senses need notions, notions need self-consciousness, self-consciousness needs reason, reason discovers that it needs more than its individual reason, and it also discovers that it needs the Spirit as a pre-condition for embarking on this journey. The Spirit represents an order that all humans and objects of study are part of. At every completion of such a process, a change of the whole situation takes place and produces a new context. The Spirit is the whole and the absolute.

This process of development formed by Hegel is called *the dialectic method*. Hegel's Spirit is a notion of his own, resembling Spinoza's Immanent Spirit, but it is different in that it develops itself genetically – which Spinoza's

spirit does not. Hegel's philosophy of development was, as seen by him, at the heart of the development of world history. The inner contradictions in a given situation are the sources of development. They give rise to a synthesis where these contradictions have found their place in the new situation. This new situation gives rise to new contradictions, which then drive the process onwards.



Both Hume and Kant distinguished between cause-effect on the one hand and assumption-deduction on the other hand, because they made a distinction between the inner reality of thought and the outer reality of things. Cause and effect belonged to the world of things, while assumption and deduction was a relation between entities of thought. With Hegel, like with Leibniz, inner and outer realities are merged. The dialectic process concerns both, in the same way. Neither Hegel nor Goethe embraced the

individualism and subjectivism of the Romantics. They saw the individuals as determined by their species, and by the group it belongs to. Hegel divides the Spirit in three: 1) the *subjective* spirit, which shows itself in anthropology, phenomenology and psychology; 2) the *objective* spirit, which shows itself in law, morals, and virtue; and 3) the *absolute* spirit, which shows itself in art, religion, and philosophy.

“Know yourself” is the imperative of both Socrates and of the Existentialists.

Søren Kierkegaard (1813 – 1855) used his own personal experiences as examples of the human condition in general. The main thought of his work is that truth has to do with the choices of the individual, and that the subject has to invest itself in every valid truth. He does not reject science or objectivity, but like Leibniz he contends that objective knowledge belongs to God alone. He thinks that the degree of sincerity and intensity contributes to the recognition of the validity of truth. He says that “truth is objective uncertainty held in the most passionate intensity of acquisition”. Truth is to be found in faith.

Kierkegaard wanted to help the individual to find truth in faith, like Socrates wanted to help people to find truth in a more general way. He did not, like Hegel in his time or Plato in Socrates’ time, think that it would help people to deal with their existential problems by presenting a great package of thoughts firmly bound together. Religious or moral truths are something entirely different from views on how things are (in an ontological sense). In connection with objective truths there is a distinction between knowledge and being. With existential truths this distinction disappears. Objective truths may be transferred from those who have them to those who do not have them. Truths that are linked to a person’s attitude to life cannot be transferred in the same way. They can only open up for existential possibilities, which in turn only can be realized by the recipient’s own choices.

Kierkegaard is not interested in science. He says we know enough. What we lack is a new attitude to life, not knowledge. He seeks to remove people’s illusions and draw their attention to their responsibility for their own lives. “You do not reflect your way into Christianity, but you reflect your way out of everything else and become an ever truer Christian.” His existential

philosophy is linked to Christianity as the choice for him. For others, the choice might be different. The important thing is what happens inside and with the person. He therefore puts pressure on people to enter into this process of search for intensity in inner truth.



Kierkegaard presents a philosophy of the stages in life. Each stage is a complete form of consciousness and may represent the context of an entire life. For certain persons, however, the stages may represent stages of an evolution. These stages are: 1) the aesthetic; 2) the ethic; 3) the religious. The aesthetic lives for his entertainment, and his main focus is to fight boredom. The ethic is in all ways different from the aesthetic. The ethic chooses a life of responsibility, where the aim is to be useful and fulfill a calling. He is the everyday hero. However, feelings of guilt and anguish are destabilizing factors in this life. The religious chooses a more daring life, a life that confronts the anguish and the guilt. This life enters the serious and intense realm, and it forces the individual out of all normal human

community. He has to drop everything when he hears the call of God.

Kierkegaard's analysis of anguish has been a model for similar analyses of passions and affectations found in later existentialist thinking in the 20th century, as regards philosophy, psychiatry, and theology. Anguish is, according to him, a human trait linked to freedom. It follows freedom as a shadow. It is a form of dizziness faced with the abyss of void that surrounds freedom on all sides. Death forces the individual to think his existence through, and makes him responsible for his choices. For many people, the flight from freedom, responsibility and decisions becomes a major concern.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900) did his best to distance himself from Christianity, humanism and metaphysics. He wanted to be out of his time and against the mainstream of thought. He wanted to be a spokesman for nature's own forces. The darkness and drama contained in his thought drew from early on inspiration from Schopenhauer, Greek Drama and Wagner's music. Greek tragedy was an expression of the highest truth; through this the Greek pessimism had reconciled itself with life. Nietzsche says that existence can only be justified as an aesthetic phenomenon. In his work *"The Birth of Tragedies"*, he depicts Dionysus as the symbol of blind will to live, and the existence as chaos and suffering.

How is man to form his life when Christianity and idealistic metaphysics no longer can give an answer, when "God is dead"? To start with, this gives man a new freedom and a new responsibility. Man must himself create new values. Nietzsche is primarily concerned with the individual and the realization of the self. The aim is to realize the inherent possibilities to be found in the individual, as described in the thoughts of the *"Übermensch"* in Zarathustra. This is a whole being which does not suppress its passions and thereby split itself in two, one acceptable part and one that is rejected. The *"Übermensch"* is undivided, because it has succeeded in organizing its chaos of urges and passions without losing or perverting those forces that these are an expression for. Nietzsche takes his model in Greek gods, because with them norm and existence merges into one whole.

Nietzsche is a strong opponent of the moralism contained in Rousseau's and Kant's thinking. He embraces the French Enlightenment's notions of freedom embodied by Voltaire, and places it in opposition to German philosophy's moralism. His epistemological thinking (thinking on the nature and scope of knowledge) is centered around the idea that the world is a system of illusions. Aesthetics thereby becomes the basis for morality, policy and science. The body is the main reference for Nietzsche's anthropology and philosophy of art. He rejects the celebration of reason and the corresponding belief in permanent values in society, morality and history. The body in its reactions reflects the illusions and sentiments that govern man's life. Music, dance and language are of primary importance to him.



Sigmund Freud's (1856 – 1939) main line of thinking was that the life of the soul is not identical to the life of the consciousness. Through his teachings on

neurosis, repressions and dreams he showed that the soul was far more multifaceted, dualistic and dramatic than rationalism had given the impression of. He showed that urges and instincts of biological character, as well as sublimation of these, governed much more of people's behavior than thought earlier. In order to better understand these "hidden forces", he developed psychoanalysis.

Through the study of patients with hysteria he discovered a few guiding principles. Firstly, all symptoms were explainable. Secondly, the causes were to be found in the unconscious – in the soul, not the body. Thirdly, the symptoms were caused by uncomfortable memories that the patient had repressed. Fourthly, all the symptoms could be brought out by suggestive techniques. By allowing patients to talk in an uncensored way, the tensions could be relieved. This method, through use of "free associations", was called "cathartic" – from Greek *katharsis* (cleansing). Freud found that experiences in childhood were of fundamental importance.

Freud assumed that there was a form of censorship at work between the unconscious and the conscious. By this censorship the repressed thoughts and urges could be held in check, but they would show up in dreams, unconscious actions, physical symptoms and slips of the tongue. It would all come out from the unconscious to the conscious if tensions became strong enough. Freud's work on interpretation of dreams became just as important for psychology as Darwin's work on evolution had been for biology. Freud used the dreams to uncover a past that the individual would not willingly recognize. Dreams are not easily interpreted, because the images at work in dreams are not straightforward, but veiled or coded.

The human urges are energies that do not take account of factual realities. The *Ego* handles the urges in relation to the actual conditions for their fulfillment. The *Ego* is a civilizing force. The force behind the urges is *Id*. The *Ego* attempts to make sure that the *Id* is balanced out in relation to acceptable forms of behavior in society. The *Ego* is under double pressure from the *Id* and the *Super-Ego*. The *Super-Ego* is the conscience, symbolized by the parental authority. In explaining this force, Freud develops

the theory of the *Oedipus-complex*, whereby the individual (in childhood) wishes to own that parent which is of the opposite sex, and take the place of the parent who is of the same sex. The father-image, for the boy, represents both a model and a threat. This produces the image of the Super-Ego with its aggressiveness and urge to control. The Super-Ego is of an unconscious nature.



Communication and language are the main themes of Ludwig Wittgenstein's (1889 – 1951) thinking. Language is not something independent, it changes through its use. When somebody expresses something, they have an intention. Language is an instrument that is adapted to our interests. When our interests, or our form of life, changes, while the words are kept, the content of the words change. One should not allow the history of a word to make an impression, it is its present use, and why it is used, that should be analyzed.

The relation between language, images, thought and reality is, according to Wittgenstein, the basis for philosophy. The confusion between these elements gives philosophy its reason to be. If philosophy is well executed, it will make itself superfluous. Wittgenstein does not believe that the traditional challenges of philosophy, linked to God, what is right or wrong, the purpose of life, etc., can be formulated as meaningful questions by use of language. These challenges belong to what he calls “the mysterious”. He contended in his earlier work that philosophy was a cure or a treatment one had to go through and put behind. It had no other function than to make itself superfluous.

In his later work, he modified this view in the sense that he concentrated on the use of language as closely linked to the purposes and functions present in the mind of the person who used the words. The question of the meaning of the words used, had to be linked to an understanding of the motives behind the use. Philosophy is then, in his view, nothing else than fictitious answers to fictitious problems through an incorrect understanding of language. When words are not names for material objects, we conclude that they must be names for immaterial objects. In this way is created the menagerie of notions that the philosophers behave as masters of. Expressions like “language”, “experience”, “world”, and “consciousness” have no deeper meaning than the words “table” or “chair”. Anything that cannot be expressed in daily language is meaningless. Philosophy is “therapy of language”, and perfect clarity will make philosophical problems disappear.

For Martin Heidegger (1889 – 1976), as for Nietzsche, metaphysics or philosophy in itself are signs of illness – because they assume clear and explicit distinctions between being and consciousness. For Heidegger, as for Wittgenstein, philosophy is mainly critique of philosophy. Thinking implies going back to memories of what existed before consciousness and reflection fell into philosophy, before the subject placed itself outside reality and the wish to take hold of reality as something distant. The metaphysical subject transforms being into something that can be manipulated and controlled. For

Heidegger, things can be acquired and possessed, but being is something that just is. Both Nietzsche and Heidegger talk about *nihilism*. This is seen as what happened after the guiding values of time after Christianity had lost their normative power. The pre-Christian cultivation of life had been replaced by the Christian cultivation of suffering, and the result was a rejection of human life and all the values that had their basis in life on earth. Nihilism was about forgetting the state of being, and for both Nietzsche and Heidegger it was a main task to beat back nihilism. Philosophy has in Heidegger's view distorted the question of "the meaning of being" into "the nature of being".



Jean-Paul Sartre (1905 – 1980) was inspired by Husserl's phenomenology, studying phenomena as they appear and avoiding reductionism (simplifications and rationalizations). What man is, shows in those situations and activities where he finds itself. For Heidegger and Sartre (as for Karl Jaspers who inspired them), Freud's psychoanalysis was pseudoscience,

because Freud seeks to explain the obvious by reducing it to appearances of a hidden nature. The existential philosophers are concerned with many of the same phenomena as Freud. However, they distinguish in a much sharper way between the human as an object and as a consciousness. While Freud reduced phenomena of consciousness to physical processes, and explained physical processes as caused by states of consciousness, phenomenologists made a sharper distinction here. They leave the analysis of man as an object to the relevant sciences, while concentrating their attention on understanding those relationships that show up in human consciousness.

The existential philosophers, of whom Sartre was the most prominent, analyzed states of consciousness or affectations in the context of human condition, the objective conditions of life. This type of analysis is of a different nature, and requires different notions, than the traditional philosophical thinking and the notions used there. It requires more empathy and recognition than the traditional thinking. This effort was already present in Kierkegaard's and Nietzsche's work, but took on a more systematic character with Sartre and his followers. For Sartre, human revolt in the face of conventions was a central feature of his work. Revolt was seen as a manifestation of freedom to choose and to transgress limits.

A point of departure for Sartre, as for Descartes, was the distinction between consciousness and things. Sartre, however, sees this in a different way than Descartes does in his distinction between subject and object, *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. For Sartre, consciousness is a void – a vacuum – which aspires things and fills itself up with them. He calls this phenomenon the “intentionality” of consciousness. In traditional metaphysics the soul was eternal and free from the vicissitudes of life, which is why it could be considered as something apart – as Descartes did. In Sartre's world, consciousness is exposed to external conditions in a radical way – far beyond what was thought in traditional metaphysics. Sartre believes, like Heidegger, that subjective experiences can be analyzed and that it is possible to find, categorize and retain general truths. He sees anguish as linked with freedom and the fear of the void; it is not death that creates anguish, it is freedom, life, and the necessity to make choices in all situations in life. Anguish arises

from all the possibilities that freedom offer, and the choices we have to make. To abstain from choosing is also a choice, and it also has consequences. One cannot escape the fact of having to choose.



In response to this state of anguish, I would like to restate the Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca's words on the subject of tranquility of mind:

The wise man does not have to walk nervously or cautiously, for he has such self-confidence the he does not hesitate to make a stand against Fortune and will never give ground to her. He has no reason to fear her, since he regards as held on loan not only his goods and possessions and status, but even his body, his eyes and hand, and all that makes life more dear, and his vey self. He lives as though he were lent to himself and bound to return the loan on demand without complaint. Nor is he thereby cheap in his own eyes, because he knows he is not his own, but he will act in all things as carefully and

meticulously as a devout and holy man guards anything entrusted to him.
And whenever he is ordered to repay his debt he will not complain to
Fortune, but he will say:

“I thank you for what I have possessed and held.

I have looked after your property to my great benefit,

But at your command I give and yield it with gratitude and good will.

If you want me still to have anything of yours, I shall keep it safe.

If you wish otherwise, I give back and restore to you my silver,

both coined and plate, my house and my household.”

Should Nature demand back what she previously entrusted to us, we shall say
to her too:

**“Take back my spirit in better shape than when you gave it. I do not quibble
or hang back. I am willing for you to have straightaway what you gave me
before I was conscious – take it.”**

What is the harm in returning to the point whence you came? He will live
badly who does not know how to die well.

Seneca was, being Roman, what we might term an occidental thinker.
However, his thoughts on tranquility of mind lead us well into the realm of
oriental thinking. Let us follow professor Joseph Campbell, the great historian
of mythology, into this world of thinking.

The ultimate background of both the Oriental and the Occidental storied
heavens and pits of hell, with the world mountain between, is the
Mesopotamian concept of the architecture of the universe. As we can see in
Dante’s *Divina Commedia*, there are widespread cross-cultural influences in
the different religious descriptions of heaven and hell. A differentiating
process over time has transformed and separated the visions in the Occident
and the Orient, from the common Mesopotamian source. In the West, in
conformity with the west’s stress on the individual life, for each soul one
birth, one death, one destiny, one maturation of the personality – whether in
heaven, purgatory, or hell, the visiting visionary readily recognizes the

deceased. In the Orient, there is no such continuity of the personality. The focus of concern is not the individual, but the monad, the reincarnating jiva, to which no individuality whatsoever pertains, but which passes on, like a ship through waves, from one personality to the next: now a meal-worm, now a god, demon, king or tailor.



Whereas the typical Occidental hero is a personality, and therefore necessarily tragic, doomed to be implicated seriously in the agony and mystery of temporality, the Oriental hero is the monad, an impersonal entity: in essence without character but an image of eternity, untouched by, or else casting off successfully, the delusory involvements of the mortal sphere. In the history of the parting of the two worlds, the figure of the Persian Zoroaster seems important. The doctrine of Zoroaster contains elements that sets it distinctly apart from Oriental thought. Firstly, for the first time in the history of mythology, the Zoroastrian version of the world course is a progressive, not deteriorating world cycle. There is a cosmic battle going on

between the forces of the light (Ahura Mazda) and the forces of the darkness (Angra Mainyu). This battle is not envisaged to go on forever. It will terminate in a total victory of the light, upon which the process will lead to the Kingdom of Righteousness on Earth. Secondly, it places a responsibility upon the individual to choose, of his own free will, whether and how he shall stand for the Light, in thought, word and deed. Thirdly, it embodies the principle of engagement, not disengagement, as the way to the ultimate goal.

Zoroaster's dates are unknown, and it is unclear whether he was a man converted into a god or a god converted into a man. We know, however, that Darius I (reigned 521 – 486 B.C.) proclaimed himself as a dedicated Zoroastrian, when he wrote: "By the grace of Ahura Mazda I am king." Darius was the contemporary of Mahavira (died about 485 B.C.), Buddha (563 – 483 B.C.), Aeschylus (525 – 456 B.C.) and Confucius (551 – 478 B.C.).

At this time the Persian empire reached from the Greek Ionian isles (Satrapy I) to the Punjab and the Indus (Satrapy XX). All the ancient worlds of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Phoenicia, the Asiatic Greeks, and the Indus Valley, had been absorbed into one progressively and aggressively inspired, international nation: the first of its kind in the history of the world. The Persian answer to sorrow - contemporary with the tragic of Aeschylus, ascetic of Mahavira, and prudent of Confucius – was the building of a soundly governed, progressive world empire under God. Viable roads and a lively commerce ran from India to Greece. A general policy of tolerance fostered the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, which the Chaldeans had destroyed. The gods of many broken peoples were restored. The arts flourished. New cities and courts arose throughout the realm. And for a time it looked as though the Universal Monarch had, in the Persian King of Kings, indeed come into being.

The Aryan warrior herdsmen whose covered wagons rumbled into India during the second millennium B.C. were matched in Greece by the numerous and various hunting and herding warrior groups devastating the Aegean in the long period from 1900 B.C. to 1100 B.C. Whereas the invaders of the Aegean were entering a world of still powerful archaic empires, those of India – having passed and left behind the two crumbling citadels (Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro) of an already worn out colonial establishment of some kind –

saw before them only comparatively rude jungle planters, hunters, and collectors.



The old world of the hieratic city states now was a memory, and for the most part very dim. Though many cities had fallen, many also remained in the West. In India, on the other hand, there were none. Hence, the Greeks soon were rebuilding on the ruins of the past - building in brick, plaster, and stone – while the Vedic Aryans of the Punjab and Gangetic plain were building in no material permanent enough to have left to us any physical remains. Their period, to about 800 B.C., is an archeological blank. From the Iliad and the Odyssey we can draw an image of the Greek heroic age, supported also by archeological evidence. From the Indian epics of the Vedic age, we have little except visions and images. For the period immediately following the Vedic Aryan, however, archeological finds have been made in the upper Ganges area. These earliest finds are from the period of about 1000 B.C. and leading

up to the period from the Buddha to the Emperor Ashoka (reigned about 268 – 232 B.C.). The rise of cities in the Ganges area came towards the latter half of that period.

Across the whole domain from Athens to Bengal, literally hundreds of tiny sovereign powers gradually rose and flowered. At a certain time, wandering teaching sages appeared in the villages and cities that arose in this period. Each of them had their followers, and each supposed to have solved – once and for all – the mystery of sorrow: Kapila (about 600 B.C.), Gosala (flourished about 535 B.C.), Mahavira (died about 485 B.C.), Buddha (563 – 483 B.C.), Pythagoras (about 582 – 500 B.C.), Xenophanes (about 570 – 475 B.C.), Parmenides (flourished about 500 B.C.), and Empedocles (about 500 – 430 B.C.).

In the teachings of these sages, in both India and Greece, a number of characteristic themes appear that were unknown to the myths of the early Aryans. Examples are: the idea of the wheel of rebirth, which is fundamental to Orphism as well as to India; the idea of the soul in bondage to the body (“the body a tomb”, said the Orphics) and deliverance through asceticism; sin leading to the punishment of hells, virtue to ecstasy and then to absolute knowledge and release. Heracleitus (flourished 500 B.C.) spoke of life as an ever-living fire, as did the Buddha in his Fire Sermon. The doctrine of elements is common to the two traditions: fire, air, water, earth among the Greeks; ether, air, fire, water and earth in the Indian context. A turbulent millennium had intervened. The old, largely rural Bronze Age situation had given place, over a broad domain of maturing civilization, to a galaxy of cities governed by secular, not divine kings.

A broad zone of readiness had therefore been established for the reception of a new approach to the problem of man’s highest good. Dislodged from the soil as well as from the old necessities of the hunt, a rather sophisticated urban population had appeared. Now, the chief concern was no longer magical (the weather, crops, abundance of goods, and long years), but psychological (the détente and harmonization of the psyche) and sociological (the integration of the individual with a new society based on a secular

instead of hieratic tradition). In such a zone of readiness, ideas and practices may appear spontaneously in more than one place at a time and spread as quickly as a flash fire. In both India and Greece, as well as in Persia between, the basic motifs of an early dualistic mythological philosophy abruptly appeared in new forms, about simultaneously, and immediately spread.



It is difficult for an Occidental mind to realize how deep the impersonality of the Oriental lies. The earliest significant meeting of East and West on the level of an attempt at philosophical exchange occurred when that first and most vivid Westerner of all arrived: the young Alexander the Great. Having smashed the whole Persian empire with a single mighty blow, he came crashing through and appeared in the Indus Valley 327 B.C., to engage immediately in philosophical as well as political, economic, and geographical observations. We are told that in Taxila, the first Indian capital that he entered, Alexander and his officers learned of a set of philosophers sitting in

session outside the city. Imagining counterparts of their own teachers and models (Alexander's tutor, Aristotle, or Plato and Socrates), they sent an embassy to invite the learned circle to Alexander's table. What they found were fifteen stark-naked persons sitting motionless on a sun-baked stretch of rock so hot that no one could step in without shoes.

The captain Alexander had sent, Onesicritus, told them through a series of interpreters that he and his king wished to be taught something of their wisdom. The reply was that no one arriving in the bravery of top boots, a broadbrimmed hat, and flashing cavalry coat, such as the Macedonian was wearing, could be taught philosophy. The candidate – did he come from God himself – should first be naked and have learned to sit peacefully on broiling rock. Two of the company, an elder and a younger, were finally persuaded by the raja of Taxila to Alexander's board, but as they left the rock they were followed by the round abuse of their fellows and, when they returned, retired to a place apart.

This Greek report is the earliest known tangible evidence of the practice of yoga in Aryan India. There is not a single piece either of writing or of chiseled stone to mark the whole stretch of time from the ruin of the Indus cities to the year of Alexander's coming. This demonstrates nevertheless that by 327 B.C., at the latest, the fundamental Indian notion of the goal of human life was already developed that inspires to this day all typically Indian thought and is the inspiration of the distinction between the Indian being "spiritual" and the Westerner "materialistic".

However, in the earliest Buddhist monuments of stone, namely those of the first great layman of the faith, King Ashoka, who reigned about 268 – 232 B.C. (two centuries earlier than the Pali canon of 80 B.C.), it appears that a contrary ideal and mythology were already beginning to develop around the figure of the man living in the world as the Buddha lived for innumerable lifetimes – and is living now in each one of us – gaining nirvana not by the cessation, but by the performance, of acts. In the course of the following centuries, culminating in the period of the reign of King Kanishka (about 78 – 123 A.D.), this secular theme was developed to such a point that the earlier,

monastic, world-negating view was fundamentally challenged as an archaic misinterpretation of the Middle Way.



The epoch from the century of the Buddha to the middle of the Gupta period (about 500 B.C. – 500 A.D.) may be termed the age of the Great Classics, not for India alone but for the civilized world as a whole. In Europe, between the time of Aeschylus (525 – 456 B.C.) and that of Boethius (about 480 – 524 A.D.), the Greco-Roman heritage was shaped and terminated. In the Levant, between the reigns of Darius I (reigned 521 – 486 B.C.) and Justinian (527 – 565 A.D.), the Zoroastrian, Hebrew, Christian, various Gnostic and Manichean canons were defined. In the Far East, between the lifetime of Confucius (551 – 478 B.C.) and the legendary date of the coming to China of the Indian Buddhist sage Bodhidharma (520 A.D.), the basic texts and principles of Confucian, Taoist, and Chinese Buddhist thought were established. And in fact, even the civilizations of pre-Columbian America came to flower in this

millennium of their so-called Classic Horizon: about 500 B.C. – 500 A.D.

Both overland and by sea, the ways between Rome, Persia, India, and China were opened in this period to an ever-increasing commerce, and to such a degree that nowhere in the hemisphere was there any longer the possibility of a local mythological development in isolation. Local forces shaped the thoughts as they were imported: in Europe the force of the rational, innovating individual; in the Levant, the idea of the one true community realizing God's aim; in China the old Bronze Age thought of an accord between heaven, earth, and man; and throughout the history of later India, the sense of an immanent ground into which all things dissolve and out of which, simultaneously, they continually pour.



During the course of this millennium, there flowed from the west into India four increasingly massive tides:

- a) from Achaemenian Persia after 600 B.C.;
- b) Hellenistic, following Alexander's raid of 327 B.C., supported by a powerful Greek community in the northwestern province of Bactria, which for a time regained control of the entire Indus Valley (about 200 – 25 B.C.);
- c) Rome, flowing to India largely by way of sea trade developing in the first centuries A.D. along the west coast of India down past the Cape and up along the eastern coast of India;
- d) following the victory of the Christian cult in Rome and the subsequent closing of the universities and extirpation of pagans throughout the empire, there turned up in India, about 400 A.D., a tide of learned refugees, bearing a rich treasure of late Roman, Greek, and Syro-egyptian civilization – inspiring many aspects of the subsequent Indian golden age.

A sudden blossoming of elegant stone monuments brought the glory of India out of the dark into the full dress of a documented civilization, in the period of the following Maurya Dynasty (about 322 – 185 B.C.) – founded by Chandragupta Maurya.

Three Buddhist Kings.

Ashoka Maurya, Chandragupta's grandson, reigned 268 – 232 B.C. Seeing the havoc of sorrow, misery, and death that was brought about by wars he joined the Buddhist Order as a lay disciple and became the first Buddhist king. He built monasteries and shrines in great numbers. With the fall of the Persian empire and the burning of the palace city of Persepolis, the accumulated artistry of Persia was out of work, and, moving eastward to the nearest successor empire, had reached Chandragupta's India. In the Buddhist art of Ashoka's time, a colonial flowering of the Achaemenid style produced the first stone monuments of what presently became one of the greatest sculptural traditions in the history of the world. As the forms of Indian art progress from this date, the evidences increase of an organic interplay between traits of the deepest Indian past and arrivals from the West.

In this largely Buddhist world a combination of Egypto-Assyro-Persian, Indo-

Aryan, Dravidian, and Greek elements can be readily discerned. The whole superintended by a monarch – the greatest in the world in his day - of a tolerance and gentleness seldom matched in the history of states, protecting the myriads of lion-roaring monks of the numerous life-renouncing nirvana cults of his time, yet equally fostering and developing, with the wisdom of a great patriarch, the well-being, both on earth and in heaven, of his children of the world. It actually seemed that something like the golden age of the lion lying with the lamb was about to be realized.



However, the laws of history – which in the view of his grandfather had been defined as the “law of fishes” (the big ones eat the little ones, and the little ones have to be fast) – had not been undone in this period. The empire disintegrated some fifty years after Ashoka’s death, when the last of his successors, Brihadratha, was murdered by his own commander-in-chief.

In Hellenistic Bactria a Greek tyrant, Euthydemus, had in 212 B.C. established

a Greek military state independent of the Seleucids, and his son Demetrius reconquered the entire Indus Valley for the Greeks in 197 B.C. In this area, Hindu and Buddhist, as well as Classical mythologies and beliefs, were in play.

The Greeks themselves identified Indra with Zeus, Shiva with Dionysus, Krishna with Herakles, and the goddess Lakshmi with Artemis. One of the greatest of the Greeks kings, Menander (about 125 – 95 B.C.), appears to have been, if not himself a Buddhist, then at least a lavish patron of the faith. The Buddhist Wheel of the Law appears on his coins. Plutarch states that the cities of his realm contended for the honor of his ashes and agreed on a division among themselves in order that the memory of his reign should not be lost.



The days of the Greeks on this threshold of nirvana were numbered by the approach of a somewhat enigmatic horde of nomads from the vicinity of the Chinese Wall. By the Indians they were called the Kushanas, classified by some as Mongols, by others as Turkomen of a sort, and by still others as some

kind of Scythian-like Aryan folk. They had been dislodged and set in motion by a group of Huns ranging the country between the southern reaches of the Wall and the mountains of Nan Shan. Their migration across the wastes of Kuku Nor and Sinkiang lasted about forty years (about 165 – 125 B.C.), causing major displacements of population in the areas traversed, and therewith new pressures on the borders of Bactria. The Greek defences broke. First Scythians, then Kushanas, poured through and crossed the mountains into India, taking possession of the greater part of the Gangetic plain.

Kanishka, whose dates are variously reckoned as 78 – 123 or 120 – 162 A.D., was the greatest of the Kushana kings. Like Ashoka and Menander, Kanishka was a convert to Buddhism and, as such, a lavish patron both of monks and of the arts of the lay community. The cultivation of Sanskrit as an elite literary tongue, and of the classic Kavya (“poetic”) style, commenced, apparently, in the Kushana courts. Numerous immense reliquary mounds were built in his day; those from Ashoka’s time were enlarged – great silent mounds symbolic of nirvana. In earlier times, monuments never showed the Buddha in human form. However, in the period and reign of Kanishka a new development took place. The Buddha himself was now represented – everywhere – and in two contrasting styles: the Greco-Roman of Gandhara, where he is shown as a kind of semi-divine Greek teacher, and a powerful native style developed by the stone craftsmen of the city of Mathura, where he is rendered, vigorously and realistically, as an archetypal Indian sage.

The most prominent single figure in the ornamentation of all the early Buddhist monuments, is the lotus-goddess, Shri Lakshmi. In the course of the following centuries, whether in Buddhist, Hindu or Jain art and literature, this accent on the female, and specifically as an erotic object, steadily increases, until by the twelfth and thirteen centuries it seems very dominant. This happened in spite of the religious attitudes and admonitions of restraint towards women.

We are told that Han Ming Ti of China dreamed of a golden man in the west. Although he knew that only demons and barbarians dwelt beyond the celestial bounds of his empire, he nevertheless sent forth an embassy. This

passed into the wilderness along the Old Silk Road, which had been opened between Rome and the Far East about 100 B.C. And there, indeed, they met two Buddhist monks coming eastward conducting a white horse that bore an image of the Buddha on its back, together with a packet of Mahayana texts. In the capital Lo Yang a monastery was built to receive them, and it was named White Horse Monastery. It was here that the long task of rendering Sanskrit into Chinese began.

The Far Eastern Buddhas are of purely visionary apparitions, without attempt at historical reference whatsoever. Of these, the most popular and important is Amitabha, the Buddha of “immeasurable (a-mita) light (abha)” – known also as Amitayus, the Buddha of “immeasurable (a-mita) life duration (ayus) – who is a product of purely Buddhist thought, yet bears the mark of derivation from Iran. Amida, as this solar Buddha is termed in the Far East, was known in China by the middle of the second century A.D. and is today in Japan the focus of devotion of the Jobo and Shinsu sects.



The “Buddha Realm” is an invention of the Mahayana. It shows many points of resemblance to the Western idea of paradise, yet it is not conceived to be the ultimate goal of the spiritual life. It is the penultimate – a port of departure for nirvana. As numerous ports are to be found along the shoreline of a great sea, so likewise along that of the ocean of the Buddhist void there may be many Buddha Realms. We hear of those of Maitreya, Vairochana, and Gautama, as well as that of Amida. Conceivably, Buddha Realms may in the eyes of the Mahayana mission exist in any religious field, which makes it possible for them to enter any faith and not destroy, but augment and supplement the local forms. The Buddha Realm of Amitabha came into being by virtue of the vow that he made when he was still a Bodhisattva : he would refuse enlightenment for himself unless by his Buddhahood he might bring to nirvana anyone who appealed to his name.

The use of visions to lead the mind and sentiments beyond themselves, over thresholds to new realms of realization, has been developed in the Orient over centuries. A first point to be noted is the break away from actuality, professed by the Jains. The individual is psychologically dissociated from the field of life normal to his kind. External stimuli are cut off. Next, with the normal system of sign stimuli (the reality system) cut off, a supernormal order is developed (the mythic system) to which the sentiments are adressed.

From this, two alternatives arise: the negative method of the Jains, Sankhya, and Hinayana required the extinction of the system of supernormal stimuli and a realization thereby of trance rapture – with or without a sense of unqualified being. The positive method of the Buddha Realm, on the other hand, retains the supernormal image and develops it in two directions:

- 1. Toward the void of non-being (the Buddha Realm is a mere vision of the mind), and**
- 2. Toward actuality (the world of normal life is itself a Buddha Realm).**

There seem to be five central components in the Indian Mythic Complex:

The first was laid down in the Indus Valley system; a vegetal-lunar mythology of wonder and submission before destiny, in two aspects: a) the proto-Australoid, of a burgeoning tropical plant world, and b) the High-Bronze Age, hieratic derived from the Near East, of a cosmic order manifest in the planetary cycles.

The second was the leonine Aryan power system of the Vedas, which is also in two aspects: a) an earlier, in which deities were the final terms of reference, and b) a later, in which the power of the Brahminic liturgy itself was the final term. In the course of time in India the Vedic freely willing gods lost command, and the earlier Bronze Age principle of order (maat, me, rta, dharma) returned ineluctably – under priestly command.

The third component of the Indian mythic complex was yoga, defined as a technique for achieving mythic identification. A number of its disciplines appear to have been derived from shamanism, but in the Indus Valley context we have seen figures in classic yoga posture resembling, on the one hand, Shiva as lord of Beasts and, on the other, Gautama Buddha in the Deer Park of Benares and the Lord Parshva between serpents.



The fourth essential component of the Indian mythic complex, the mood of absolute world loathing of the Great Reversal, appears to have been known to the kings of the Upanishads; they refer to an illustration of the solar way, the Way of Flame, to those who have quit the world for the forest. We know that in both Egypt and Mesopotamia a lamentation literature had developed as early as about 1750 B.C. It can be supposed that in the Indus Valley as well, a mood of world-negation and life-negation overcame many of the native non-Aryan population in their period of collapse, when the Vedic warrior folk arrived, about 1500 – 1200 B.C. Whereas in neither Egypt nor Mesopotamia does anyone seem to have found a practical answer to the problem of escape from sorrow, in India yoga supplied the means. Instead of striving for mythic identity with any being or principle of the object world – the meditating world-deniers now began perhaps already about 1000 B.C. – the great and unique Indian adventure of the negative way: “not that, not that (neti, neti). Three stages of this path of exit from the field are seen: a) the Jains, who strove for the physical separation of jiva from non-jiva through progressive vows of life-renunciation; b) the Sankhya philosophy

of Kapila and the yoga system of Patanjali, where the subject of knowledge was conceived to rest forever apart from the object world of matter – with “the energy of intellect grounded in itself”; c) with the advent of the Buddha, even that subject was erased, and the sole term became the void.

At this juncture, a fifth and final factor entered the field of Indian thought. Canceling identification both with object and with subject, there came a return to life without commitment to anything at all, but with compassion equally for all. For all things are void.



Those whose being (sattva) illuminated (bodhi), Bodhisattvas, the Future Buddhas, after knowing the flavor of the world, have always, following the birth of a son, departed to the forest. In his search for the pass beyond

sorrow Buddha had already marked out the Middle Way between devotion to pleasure (kama), and to pain (mara), and now, as the first fruit of his passage between the clashing rocks of those two extremes, he was experiencing a further reach of the Middle Way; namely, on the one hand, a realization that all beings are without a self (anatman), and yet, simultaneously, a compassion for all beings (karuna). This may be termed the fundamental posture of the Buddhist mind. The serious commitment of the Occidental mind to the concerns and value of the living person is fundamentally dismissed, as it is in Jainism as well, and in the Sankhya too. However, the usual Oriental concern for monad also is dismissed. There is no reincarnating hero-monad, to be saved, released, or found. All life is sorrowful, and yet, there is no self, no being, no entity, in sorrow. There is no reason, consequently, to feel loathing, shock, or nausea, before the spectacle of the world; but on the contrary, the only appropriate feeling is compassion.



Towards the end of the reign of Chandragupta II (reigned 378 – 414 A.D.), the chief creative force was no longer Buddhism, but a resurgent, highly sophisticated Brahminism. It had been developed by a generation of Brahmins who knew perfectly well how to synthesize native and alien, high and primitive traditions, to create what can be termed without qualification the richest, most subtle and comprehensive mythological system – or rather, galaxy of systems – known to man. This developed together with a teeming enrichment of the whole range of Indian life, art, literature, science, and religion.

However, a great many of its antecedents lay not in India, but in Rome. There is vast evidence of extensive exchanges between India and Rome, among other the numerous Roman coins of the Madras Museum collection, bearing the seals of Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero (42 B.C. – 68 A.D.); less numerous, Vespasian and Titus (69 – 81 A.D.); and again, abundantly, Domitian, Nerva, Trajan, and Hadrian (81 – 138 A.D.). In the north, where the Old Silk Road, Rome to China, had been opened about 100 B.C., the Kushanas were cultivating associations both in trade and in diplomacy. An age had dawned of a systematically developed world trade, both by caravan and by ship.

In Rome, under Theodosius I, the old cults were systematically wiped out (379 – 395 A.D.). The temples were systematically closed or destroyed, and priests expelled or killed. This persecution generated refugee flows, and tolerant India (which at this time was ruled by Chandragupta II) received numerous refugees from the Roman Empire. From this sprang a flowering of architectural, sculptural, literary, social, religious and philosophical forms – unknown to India before – which bore hundreds of points of relationships to ancient Roman culture. However, all these Roman influences were in time broken up, translated into Indian concepts, and reconstructed on Indian principles. In this process, the Brahmins played a crucial mythological role. The real past was obliterated and a mythic past projected, by which the present then was to be validated, against all heresy, all criticism, and all truth. The Gupta revolution, a hectic cultural development, succeeded on the

slogan that it was bringing back the “good old times” of the ancient rishis, heroes, and gods.

The chief mythological document of the Indian Golden age is the epic Mahabharata, much of the material of which is indefinitely old, perhaps before 400 B.C., but of which the final style and tone are rather of 400 A.D. and thereafter. It is a moraine of all sorts of mythic, ritual, moral, and genealogical lore, eight times as long as the Iliad and Odyssey combined. Its supposed author, the great rishi Vyasa, has been termed the Homer of India, but he is far more than that. He is what Homer would have been had he, besides singing of the Trojan War, also sired all its characters on both sides. The epic war in the Mahabharata is in essence a conflict between the Sons of Darkness and the Sons of Light.

Through this epic, the Brahmins have developed a highly complex and sophisticated symbolic work. Both powers derive from a single superior source, which is Vyasa. Although an ethical judgment is applied for and against, respectively, the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness, the verdict is by no means absolute. The two sides are equally of a secondary, dualistic order, functions of a certain circumstance. The play of light and darkness in the field of human history thus appears to have been a function of human weakness; both the virtue and the vice to which they refer belong to a secondary sphere. They are complementary.



The ever-running river of life is throughout the literature of the Orient symbolic of the pouring of divine grace into the field of phenomenality. On the one hand (one shore), there is the field of all joy and pain, virtue and vice, knowledge and delusion; but on the other hand (the other shore), traversed or read the other way, it leads beyond these complementary principles to an absolute that is beyond principles. And in the isle between, the isle of the great Vyasa's birth, is the world and source of myth – the Mahabharata – which in itself is both true and false, both revelatory and obscuring, and to be read, like life itself, according to one's talent, either way. In this mythology, those who die with little sin go first to hell to be cleansed, and then to heaven, whereas those of little virtue ascend first to heaven for a brief enjoyment of their merit, and then are cast for a long and terrible term into hell.

Buddhism was in origin a doctrine of renunciation, typically represented by the monk who had retired to a monastery in quest of the yonder shore. The

resurgent Brahminism of the Gupta restoration, on the other hand, was directed not to monastic ends alone, but equally to the maintenance of a secular society. In this context, the term dharma did not refer primarily, as in Buddhism, to a doctrine of disengagement, but to the cosmic system of laws and processes by which the universe exists. Therefore, whereas in Buddhist mythology we hear nothing of the holy fashioning and maintenance of the world order, but only of the adventure of the biography of the Savior, from which the way to release from the sorrows of phenomenality is to be learned, in the mythologies of Brahminism a dual lesson is always served, both of dharma and of yoga, engagement and disengagement – both at once.

In the orthodox Vedic-Brahminic-Hindu reading, all is the manifestation of a self-giving power (Brahman) that is transcendent and yet immanent in all things. The generative power of that presence is what is to be recognized and experienced in all beings – as opposed to the void of the Mahayana wisdom. There is in Hinduism an essential affirmation of the cosmic order as divine. As the order of nature is eternal, so also is this of the orthodox society. There is no tolerance for human freedom or invention in the social field. As the sun, moon, plants, and animals follow laws inherent in their natures, so therefore must the individual follow the nature of his birth, whether as Brahmin (priestly caste; head), Kshatriya (governing caste; the arms), Vaishya (financial caste; the belly and torso), Shudra (workers; legs and feet), or Pariah (outcasts; of another natural order and perform only inhuman, beastly chores). Each is conceived to be a species. As a mouse cannot become a lion, or even desire to be a lion, no Shudra can be a Brahmin, and desiring to be one would be insane. In this context, the word dharma (virtue, duty, law) has a very deep reach. “Better one’s own duty ill performed, than that of another to perfection.” The Greek or Renaissance idea of the great individual simply does not exist within this system of thought.

The first severe blow to the integrity of this system fell in the Gupta period itself, in the year 510 A.D., when the Huns entered and ravaged the northwest and made the Guptas tributary. They reigned a brief period until 528 A.D., when they were defeated by a confederacy of princes, but the

consequences of this period was decisive. What followed was a period of almost a century of internal discord and warfare between different factions of the Guptas, followed by further unrest and strifes – leading to a new order of society where numerous clans established local dominance. A multiplication of alien influences, including Muslim influence on the Indian west coast as a result of the increasing Muslim domination of the Near East, lead to an increasingly feudal-clerical situation: efforts to protect a mythical cultural heritage against an increasing barbarization.

Very broadly viewed, the epoch 500 – 1500 A.D. is distinguished everywhere – not only in India – by a burgeoning of devotional religious art. This combination of strong religious devotion, political and military unrest was also a dominant feature of Medieval Europe where the advent of cathedrals is a striking element. The mosques of Islam, all the chief Brahminical monuments of India, and the Buddhist temples of the Far East also came in this period where the ways of thoughts were rather more scholastic than creative, leaning back on the paragons of an apotheosized past: little doubting, vehemently believing. There was now but peasant piety, applied art, priestly routine, and a world of warring half-barbaric courts.



Meanwhile, in China, a very different evolution had taken place. This evolution took place within the context of the following periods:

Shang (Basic Chinese High Bronze Age), 1523 – 1027 B.C.

Early Chou (period of developed feudalism), 1027 – 772 B.C.

Middle Chou (period of disintegrating feudalism), 772 – 480 B.C.

Confucius, 551 – 478 B.C.

Late Chou (period of the warring states), 480 – 221 B.C.

Ch'in (Burning of the Books, Great Wall), 221 – 206 B.C.

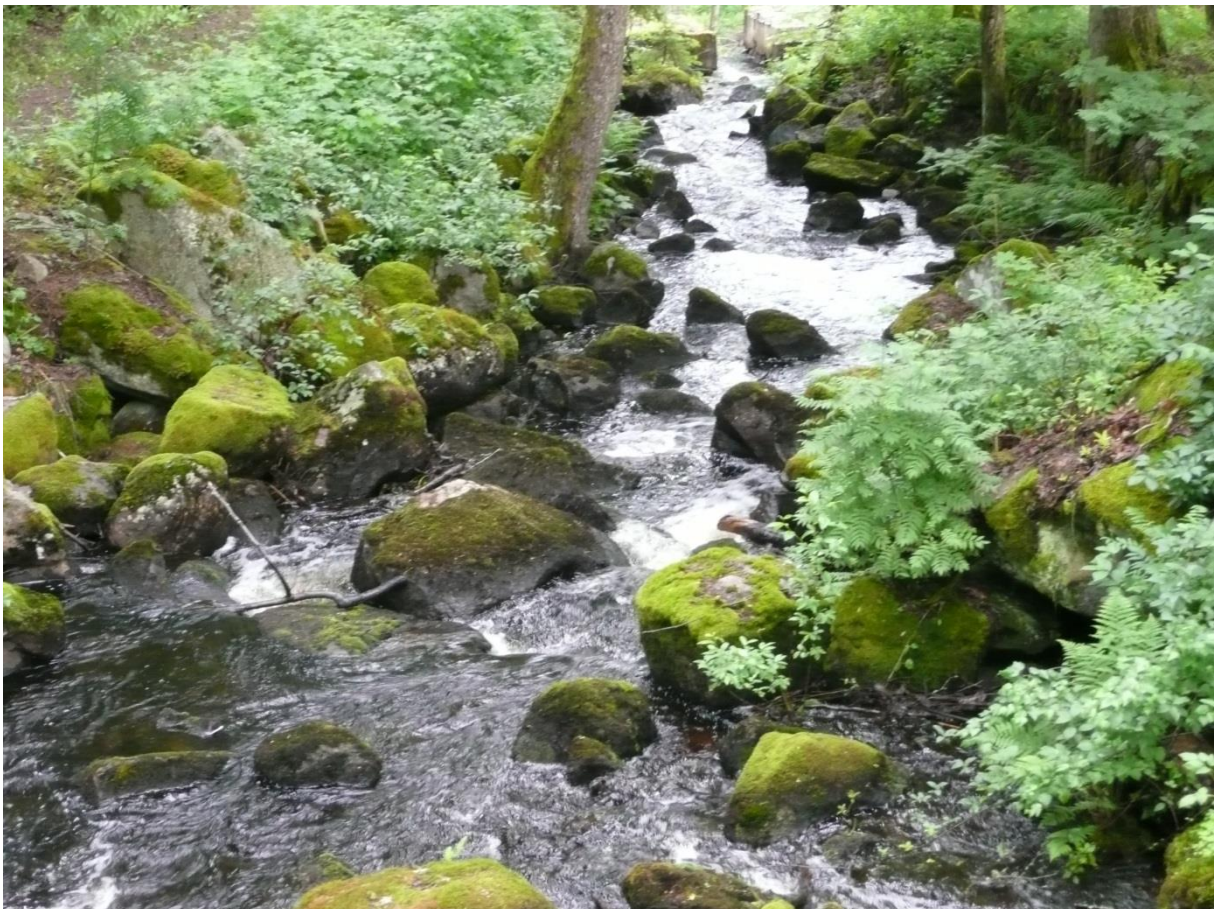
Han (Confucian bureaucracy established), 206 B.C. – 220 A.D.

Six Dynasties (disunity: Buddhism established), 220 – 589 A.D.

Bodhidharma, 520 A.D. (Most likely a legendary character and a legendary date)

Sui (reunification of empire: Great Canal), 590 – 617 A.D.
T'ang (culmination of ancient Chinese civilization), 618 - 906 A.D.
Sung (Neo-Confucianism: apogee of painting), 960 – 1279 A.D.
Yüan (Mongol dynasty: Gengis Khan), 1280 – 1367 A.D.
Ming (Neo-Confucian restoration), 1368 – 1643 A.D.
Ch'ing (Manchu dynasty: disintegration), 1644 – 1911 A.D.

It has been said that in Confucius' time there were no less than 770 contending princely states. However, Chinese thought, instead of giving up the fight and retreating to the forest when the world began to fall apart, put itself to the problem of repair. So, instead of a history of the ways of disengagement, Chinese philosophy is characterized by contending systems of orientation to the world in being.



It is surprising how little we know of the writings of the Chinese before the period of Confucius. Equally surprising is the amount of texts produced and doctored from this time onwards, to the extent that it is even difficult to reconstruct even the work of Confucius himself. Consequently, all of the myths (or, rather, as we now have them, moralizing anecdotes) of the Chinese golden age have to be recognized as the productions rather of a Confucian forest of pencils than of any “forest primeval”. If gems or jades are to be found among them from the actual mythologies of Yangshao, Lungshan, Shang, or even Chou (anything earlier than Shih Huang Ti’s burning of the books in 213 B.C.) we have to realize that they have been lifted from their primitive setting and remounted in a new setting like an old Egyptian scarab mounted as a ring for a fine lady’s hand.

In the traces of the early myths, there is no cosmogony, no world beginning. The world is already solidly under foot, and the work about to begin is the building of China. The writings, as presented by professor Joseph Campbell, distinguish between several periods.

The period of the earliest men.

The lords of the birds’ nests: people in those days lived in birds’ nests made in trees, to avoid the dangers threatening them on the ground. The Fire drillers: eating raw food, the people were ruining their stomachs. Some sages invented the fire drill and taught them how to cook. The deluge of Kung Kung: after the time of the fire drillers, when Kung Kung was king, the waters occupied seven tenths of the earth and dry land three tenths of the earth. He availed himself of the natural conditions and in the constrained space ruled the empire.

From these short statements we can observe that we already have an empire, and we also have a deluge. And a basic Chinese theme is announced in the final sentence, where it is said that Kung Kung “availed himself of the natural conditions”. Virtue consists in respecting those conditions; competence, in making use of them. In the later Historic Classic (Shu Ching), which is one of the fundamental texts of classical Chinese thought, this period of the earliest men is completely disregarded, and all good things commence with the

golden age of Yao and Shun – while Kung Kung is deliberately transferred to that time and turned into an incompetent dignitary who was banished.



Period of the highest virtue.

The name of this period suggests that it must have been of considerable importance in the old mythology. Nothing remains of it in extant texts, however, but the names of a dozen or so of its kings. One of whom, Jung Ch'eng, is termed the creator of the calendar, and another, Chu Jung, bears the name of the god of fire. The information we have today of this shadowy period tells us little, but it indicates that in Chou-time China there must have existed a number of myths concerning primeval heroes.

Period of the Great Ten, culminating with Yao, Shuh and the great Yü.

To this important age, which terminates in a Deluge, ten emperors were assigned in the early Chou-time mythology. Hence it appears that what we are viewing here may be a local transformation of the series of the old Sumerian king list. There are indications that this could have a Mesopotamian source, even though it has its strong Chinese characteristics. These ten mythical monarchs, with a few items from their legends, are as follows.

1.Fu Hsi; 2.Shen Nung. In the legends of the Chou period these two emperors played modest parts. Both acquired great importance, however, in the later “Book of Changes” (I Ching), where Fu Hsi is credited with the invention of the symbols on which that work is based, as well as with having taught the people how to use nets for hunting and fishing. Shen Nung, it is said, ruled the world for seventeen generations, and is supposed to have devised the plow and instituted markets.

3.Yen Ti. 4.Huang Ti. Following the long reign of Shen Nung, there came the short reign of Yen Ti, who was overcome by his glorious brother Huang Ti. This important mythic figure, the so-called Yellow Emperor, is supposed to have had twenty-five sons, from whom no less than twelve feudal families of the Chou period claimed descent. Huang Ti invented the fire drill (already invented by the Fire Drillers), burned the forests on the hills, cleared the bush, burned the marshes, and drove out the wild beasts. Thus he made cattle breeding possible. When he rode to assemble the spirits on the holy mount T'ai-shan, he drove in an ivory chariot drawn by six dragons. The wind-god ran ahead and swept; the rain-god sprinkled the road; tigers and wolves galloped before, spirits spirited behind, serpents streaked along the ground, and phoenixes flew above.

5.Shao Hao. Little more is told of this monarch than that he reigned for only seven years.

6.Chuan Hsü; also known as Kao Yang. He had eight talented sons, one of whom, Kun (“the Great Fish”), was the father of the Great Yü and his unsuccessful predecessor in dealing with the Deluge.

7.K'u. This monarch had two wives, Chiang Yüan and Chien Ti, both of whom conceived miraculously. The first became pregnant when she trod on the big toe of God's footprint. The second pregnancy occurred when the two young ladies were in their pleasure tower of nine stories, enjoying wine, sweetmeats, and music. God sent them a swallow that sang, and the two contested in catching it. They covered it with a basket, which, after a time, they lifted. The bird flew off, leaving two eggs. Each swallowed one. Chien Ti conceived, and the child she bore became the father, centuries later, of the founder of the dynasty of Shang.



8.Yao. Ti Yao, divine Yao,, the most celebrated monarch of the Chinese Golden Age, is the model sagely man of all time. The great History Classic (Shu Ching) opens with a celebration of his character and reign: "Examining into antiquity", it states, "we find Divine Yao, who, naturally and without effort, was referential, intelligent, accomplished, thoughtful, sincerely courteous,

and obliging. Moreover, the bright influence of these qualities was felt through the four quarters and reached both above and beneath. He distinguished the able and the virtuous, thence proceeding to a loving consideration of all in the nine classes of his kindred, who thereby became harmonious. He regulated and clarified the people, who all became luminously intelligent. He united and harmonized the many states. And the black-haired people thus were transformed. The result was universal accord.”

During the reign of Yao there were many crises, due to inundations. In the search for a successor to Yao, no competent person was found in the entourage of the emperor, and they recruited the son of a poor man, Shun. Thus, the point was made that descent and worth are not genealogical, but moral – a point that is eminently Confucian. There is nothing comparable in the mythologies of India, where the emphasis is ever on birth. Shun was tested and tried by various means – amid violent wind, thunder, and rain. This was not a test of disengagement, but of competence in constructive engagement – thus showing clearly the contrast with the Indian forest sages.

9. Shun. As the vice-regent of Yao, Shun had already performed all of the great sacrifices for twenty-eight years. However, the chief problem was still the flood. Kun, the father of Yü, had been assigned the task of dealing with it, and had miserably failed. He had made the mistake of violating nature in his work, by damming up the inundating waters and thereby throwing into disorder the arrangement of the five elements. The Lord of Heaven was roused to anger and did not give him the Great Plan with its nine divisions. Kun was made prisoner, and his son Yü rose up and assumed his task.

10. Yü. “To the Great Yü,” the text goes on to say, “Heaven gave the Great Plan with its nine divisions, wherein the unchanging principles of its method were in due order set forth.” His whole life was in his work, which he performed in accord with the natural conditions. He gained control of the floods by finding passages and leading the flooding waters on to the sea. “Were it not for Yü,” said a prince of Liu in the year 541 B.C., “should we not all be fishes?”

From this we have before us three very different versions of the nature and meaning of the Deluge confronted by the tenth monarch of a mythic age. The first is of the ancient Sumerian cycle of the cosmic eon, mathematically inevitable, which ends in cosmic dissolution. The second is of the cosmic catastrophe brought about by a freely willing God, reflecting an essentially Semitic attitude of dissociation from, and guilt vis-à-vis, divinity. (Contrasted with this was the Aryan formula of the Vedic drought caused by a demon, where the gods were on the side of man.) Finally, in this Chinese version we see the catastrophe reduced from a cosmic to a local geographical event, with neither guilt nor mathematics invoked to rationalize the occurrence. Here it is a hero legend, and in the spirit of the basic Chinese view of proper action, the virtue of the hero lies in his accord with the order of nature, as a consequence of which he is supported in his task by the mandate and revealed Great Plan of heaven itself.



Period of the legendary Hsia Dynasty.

As Noah survived the Flood and therefore represents both the end of the old and beginning of the new eon, so also does the Great Yü. And as the age following the Flood approached gradually the plane of history, both in the Bible and in the old Sumerian king lists, so also does the chronicle of China, following the period of Yü. He is supposed to have been the founder of the legendary Hsia Dynasty, for which a number of serious scholars still believe some serious evidence still may be found. However, since none has yet appeared, we shall have to regard it as legendary still.

The date of its founding is supposed to have been about 2205 B.C. and the date of the death of Yü about 2197 B.C. A line of seventeen kings is supposed to have reigned for either 471 years or 600 years (depending on differing estimates). Following its fall, there rose the archaeologically well-validated dynasty of Shang. As Yao, Shun, and Yü have stood in Chinese literature as

models of the character of the good king, so the last legendary monarch, Chieh, of the Hsia Dynasty has been the model of the bad.

Chieh, we are told, was a paragon of vice. In the winter he built no bridges, in the summer he made no rafts, just to watch the people freeze and drown. He let female tigers loose in the market, just to watch people run. He had thirty thousand female musicians who shouted and made music all night, so that it was heard through all the streets, and all were dressed in embroidered silk. Women, in particular, were his weakness. The myths tell how the gods united with the people, under the leadership of T'ang – founder of the dynasty of Shang – to overturn Chieh and depose him.



Shang Dynasty: 1523 – 1027 B.C.

The royal tombs of the actual first dynasty of China, at the old capital at

Anyang, tell a story of funeral rites very much like the tombs at Abydos of the first dynasty of Egypt fifteen centuries before. It may be thought that even at the times of Confucius the archaic customs documented in these tombs still existed in some form. As late as 420 B.C. the moralist Mo Tzu was complaining of the funeral rites of the royalty of his day, where – in the case of an Emperor – sometimes several hundred servants were slain to follow him in the grave, together with animals and objects of art and household in great quantities.

In the royal-tomb art of the Shang period, an interplay is to be recognized between a cultural tide stemming from the West - rooted in the bronze age and carried by an early wave of neolithic potters (Yangshao, Lungshan) and by a later, chariot driving warrior folk with Homeric-Aryan affinities – and a second, “shamanistic”, circumpolar tide flowing in waves from the north. Shamanism is an extremely prominent feature of both the Buddhism and the Shinto of Japan as well as of Chinese and Tibetan religious life. A sign of its force already in the Shang period may be seen in the demonic animal-mask motif, termed t’ao-t’ieh – which appears prominently on the bronzes.

Both in certain Shang bronzes and in the arts of Yucatàn in Mexico, there appears the shamanistic motif of a human (priestly or warrior) head capped by that of a beast. However, the Greek goddess Athene also wears a mask-like helmet high on her head, while on her shield there is the gorgon-mask of Medusa. Thus we are reminded that although shamanism was developed to a special pitch in the Mongoloid circumpolar sphere, it has actually had a long, broadly flung history from Paleolithic times. The art of divination, through use of oracle bones, was also developed, as can be seen through a considerable Shang-series of oracle-bone inscriptions. This art was also developed in Mesopotamia, where there was a strong interest in divination. Just as in the patterns of myths, so in the divination of the will of heaven by auspices, it was specifically with Sumer that the early Chinese connections appear to have been particularly close.



Early and Middle Chou: about 1027 – 480 B.C.

The legends of the fall of the Shang dynasty and rise of Chou repeat the motifs already familiar from the fall of Hsia and rise of Shang.

In the classic Book of Odes (Shih Ching) 305 pieces are preserved from the ritual lore and poetry of the feudal age. Many of these are Chinese counterparts, both in time and sense, of the Vedas. In contrast to the Vedas, they deal with agriculture, not herding; a worship directed to ancestors and not the powers or gods of the natural world; and the leadership of kings, not priests, in the conduct of rites: kings who were themselves descendants of the ancestors addressed.

Oswald Spengler has in “The Decline of the West” written of the contrast between “time thinking” in terms of developing destiny, and “space thinking”, in terms of timeless natural laws. The former is represented pre-

eminently by the person of political tact, with a sense for the possible, who would himself become a destiny; the latter by a person of priestly or scientific knowledge, who would control effects through an application of eternally valid laws.



Applied to the contrast between China and India in the main statement of their modes of thought and action, it was in China the statesman and in India the priest who set his seal on the civilization. On the one hand a great stress placed on oracles investigating a changing destiny, tao, with a view to political achievement, and, on the other, a system of unchanging laws, dharma, epitomized in formulae of knowledge that are conceived to be of eternal truth. A sense of history, on the one hand, none whatsoever on the other; ancestor worship (direction in time) predominant in China; the gods of earth, air, and sky (the field of space) predominant in India. A sense, on the one hand, of significant engagement, and, on the other, of disengagement as the greatest human aim.

And yet, these two culture worlds develop through comparable periods of change almost simultaneously, from the period of the entry of the Aryans into India and of the Shang charioteers into China. The feudal Vedic Age concludes in a period of rising princely states, roughly in the neighborhood of the eighth century B.C., and in China, too, at about that time, we enter upon a period of deep change of essentially the same kind. The great Ch'in classic of the art of politics, The Book of Lord Shang (Shang Tzu), is for disillusioned ruthlessness equaled and surpassed only by its Indian counterpart, the Arthashastra. The latter (to quote the Indian statesman and philosopher K.M. Pannikar) goes "far beyond the limited imagination of Machiavelli".

An example from the Chinese book will show the nature of the thinking: "If a country is strong and does not make war, there will be villainy within." It goes on to list the things that will destroy the fighting spirit of the people: rites and music; poetry and history; the cultivation of goodness, filial piety and respect for elders; sincerity and truth; purity and integrity; kindness and morality; detraction of warfare and shame in taking part in it. It goes on to say that the ruler will become impoverished and his territory diminished. A country where the wicked govern the virtuous will be orderly, so that it will become strong.

If things are done that the enemy would be ashamed to do, there is an advantage.



Late Chou: 480 – 221 B.C.(Period of the warring states)

The highest concern of classical Chinese thought, in contrast to the Indian of social and cosmic disengagement, was political reform. All Chinese philosophy is essentially the study of how men can best be helped to live together in harmony and good order. Every Chinese philosophy is formulated not as an abstract theory but as an art of ruling. And the model for this order, which every one of the schools accepted and interpreted as fact, was the mythic golden age of Yao, Shun, and the Great Yü.

The question was viewed under two aspects. 1.A macrocosmic order of time: the nature of the seasons, demands and possibilities of the hour, to be determined by auspices and omens; and 2.The microcosmic order of man: the recognition and use of the most effective power within the competence of the individual, for the harmonization of life on earth.

The Book of Changes (I Ching) is the central document in this context.

On its practical side this is an encyclopedia of oracles, based on a mythic view of the universe that is fundamental to all Chinese thought. The legend of its origin is that its basic elements were discovered by the first of the legendary Ten Emperors, Fu His.

These elements are two: an unbroken line associated with the masculine yang principle, which is heavenly (light, dry, warm, active), and a broken line associated with the feminine yin, which is earthy (dark, moist, cold, passive).

Primarily the terms yang and yin refer to the sunny and shady sides of a stream, mountain or street. In all things, at all times, both yin and yang are operative, though in differing degrees; and the purpose of the Book of Changes was to provide an encyclopedia of the ways in which they may be related. In the holocaust of the Burning of the Books in the year 213 B.C. this particular book was spared as a practical work, so that it does, indeed, span the gamut of the schools of thought. By its practical methods for divination it tells of the readiness of time and the art of moving with its tides, rocking with the waves, and is the most important statement remaining to us of that aspect of ancient Chinese thought which relates the individual to the order of the outer world.

Underlying it all is the elementary principle of a dialectic of two forces, yang and yin – which in a way is analogous to the Indian of the lingam and yoni.

However, whereas in India the sexual suggestions of the duad are emphasized, the tendency in China has been toward an abstract mathematical (geometrical) style of symbolization. These contrasting tendencies have colored every bit of the two mythologies: the Indian, lush, voluptuous, or in reaction, fiercely ascetic; the Chinese, either dryly practical or humorously symbolic, never extreme.



Let us now turn to the microscopic order of man.

On the question of the most effective force within the competence of the individual for the harmonization of life on earth, three points of view are to be noted – that of Confucius, that of Mo Tzu, and that of the Taoists.

The reach of time between the dates of the actual life of Confucius (551 – 478 B.C.) and his earliest known biography (86 B.C.) is the same as that of the Buddha (563 – 483 B.C.) and the earliest reports of his teaching in the Pali Canon (80 B.C.). Confucianism regards benevolence (yen) as the most effective power for the harmonization of life on earth. A main connotation is that of relationship: benevolent, sincere, mutually respectful relationships between persons. In the Confucian texts five such relationships are announced: those between prince and minister, between father and son, between husband and wife, between elder and younger brother, and between friends. Benevolence being the first major point, the second major

point of the Confucian system is what has been termed the rectification of names: "The Master said: What is needed is to rectify names....If names are not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried on to success." Every name contains certain implications which constitute the essence of that class of things to which the name applies. Such things, therefore, should agree with this ideal essence.

In the Confucian classic known as The Doctrine of the Mean (Chung Yung) it says: "What Heaven confers (ming) is called the inborn nature (hsing). The following of this nature is called the Way (tao). The cultivation of this Way is called instruction." And further: "Sincerity is the Way of Heaven. The attainment of sincerity is the Way of men." Four cardinal points, then, are essential to this character-building Chinese system of thought: benevolence; regards for the order of relationships; the rectification of names, so that the relationship may be recognized; and sincerity, as a perfect to the inner nature, which has become known through the rectification. (The chief difference between India and China in this view, lies in the local identifications of the duties to which the virtuous give heed. In India, the regulations of caste; for Confucius, the proprieties of the five relationships. The metaphysics of the two systems are the same.)

Three important corollaries follow: 1. The superior man does what is proper to the station in which he is; he does not desire to go beyond this. 2. It is by poetry that the mind is aroused. It is by the rules of propriety (rituals, ceremonies, rules of proper conduct) that the character is established. It is from music that the finish is received. 3. The superior man comprehends righteousness (oughtness); the small man comprehends gain (profit).



Mo Tzu (about 480 – 400 B.C.) represents the first serious philosophical challenge to the system of Confucius. He wrote: “Even those of long life cannot exhaust the learning required for Confucian studies. Even people with the vigor of youth cannot perform all the ceremonial duties. And even those who have amassed wealth cannot afford music. The Confucianists enhance the beauty of the wicked arts and lead their sovereign astray. Their doctrine cannot meet the needs of the age, nor can their learning educate the people.” Mo Tzu represents utilitarianism, as exemplified by his attitude to music – which is considered to be of no practical value. Men’s numerous emotions are not only of no practical value, but moreover of no significance. Hence they should be eliminated, so as not to be impediments to human conduct. The Mohist school laid exclusive emphasis on “profitableness” (li) and “accomplishment” (kung).

The question of the order of society and the force by which it is to be

structured, still is the question (as it was for Confucius), but faith in the power of decorum, arts, and the rites to activate and develop the inborn nature has been lost. Moreover, all faith in the inborn nature itself has been lost. For the Confucians the inborn nature had been conferred and sealed within each by heaven. Awakened by the influence of poetry, music, the rites, decorum, it flowered naturally, in harmony with the tao.



For Mo Tzu, however, there was no such hope. With the faith gone in the inner nature, the sole resort, then, was despotism, sentimentalized as the mandate of heaven; and the agency of enforcement was not music but espionage, fear of punishment and desire for reward. Where, in the midst of all this, do we find the principle of universal love, for which Mo Tzu is celebrated? He says that all calamities stem from hate of others, and that those who hate are called discriminating. Mutual discrimination is the cause of all calamities, and he says: “Substitute for discrimination all-

embracingness.” However, he defends wars as a means of correcting the wrongs. The Mohists considered themselves a strictly disciplined organization capable of military action.

Taoism grew out from about 400 B.C. of this turbulent period of unrest and wars which caused even Confucius to give up. The epoch resembles, or at least suggests, that of the forest philosophers of India three or four centuries before, when the earlier feudal order there also was collapsing.

A philosopher of the so-called Legalist school, being very provoked by these forest philosophers, states: “A ruler should not listen to those who believe in people having opinions of their own and in the importance of the individual. Such teachings cause people to withdraw to quiet places and hide away in caves or on mountains, there to rail at the prevailing government, sneer at those in authority, belittle the importance of rank and emoluments, and despise all who hold official posts.” In their seclusion, practicing to various degrees disciplines of inward realization, these mavericks had hit upon something within that seemed to them to be a greater power for the benefit of mankind than either the food, clothing, and shelter which the Mohists thought were the fundament of virtue but which the mountain recluses themselves had to a degree renounced, or the main force of military and police might by which such material goods were to be assured to all; namely the power and experience in deeply wonderful realization of the Tao. According to their experience, Tao is the actual fundament of all things, all being, and of true humanity of man.

Tao tê means the latent power (tê) of the Way (tao), the order, of the universe. In the Chinese philosophy of the Tao, the classic statement is the Tao Te Ching (“the Book (ching) of the Power (tê) of the Way (tao)”). It is here maintained that contemplation of the Tao gives as the Indians say “siddhi”, as the Chinese say “tê”, a power over the outside world undreamt of by those who pit themselves against matter while still in its thralls. It can be said that Confucius and the Taoists agreed in centering the seat of the world-shaping power in man himself; they differed, however, as to its depth and the manner by which it might be awakened. The Taoist honored introverted

meditation as the method, “sitting with blank mind”, “returning to the state of the uncarved block” – “non-assertion, not forcing”. Confucius had taught the extraverted way of sincere, respectful attention to the arts of music, poetry, ritual lore, and decorum as the awakeners of that sentiment of kindness, gentleness, or goodness which was acquired through – and endowed with grace – man’s intercourse with men. Both of these stood diametrically apart from both Mo Tzu and the so-called Legalists or Realists, for whom the only effective power was main force, and the goods to be desired were food, shelter, and world rule.



Ch'in Dynasty: 221 – 207 B.C.

The state of Ch'in, a barbaric state still practicing human sacrifice, had by 318 B.C. started its annexation of neighboring states. King Ching assumed the Ch'in throne in 246 B.C. and in the following years took military control of most of the Chinese states. In 221 B.C. he assumed the title Ch'in Shih Huang Ti, as the first emperor of China. He immediately started the building of the Great Wall, to protect the Empire from further inroads of barbarians such as himself, and in 213 B.C. issued his edict for the Burning of the Books. In 210 B.C. Shih Huang Ti died, however, and the dynasty collapsed in 207 B.C.

Han Dynasty: 202 B.C. – 220 A.D.

The Old Silk Road to Hellenistic Bactria, Buddhist India, Zoroastrian Parthia, and Rome was opened by the year 100 B.C. From this time onwards the flow back and forth of currents of ideas between the four domains of Europe, the Levant, India, and the Far East continued increasing in force and led to a shared vocabulary of myth – applied locally according to local cultural traditions.

The point of origin of the mythological notion of the five elements is not known. The earliest known Greek system dates back to Anaximander (about 611 – 547 B.C.), in India it appears in the Taittiriya Upanishad (about 600 B.C.), and the Chinese corresponding system first appears under the Han dynasty. The five Chinese elements are water, fire, wood, metal and earth. The philosophers of the Han period made a great deal of this root system of five elements, building upon it a sort of pagoda of ideas, all associated by analogies of five. It is clear at this point that the creative period of Chinese mythic thought was past, and that the work now being done was neither of poets nor priests, but of systematizing scholars setting fragments of the past into patterns drawn by rule.

The empire, until now shaped by violence, was now to be shaped by learning and ordered in such a way that all its lineaments should be atuned to the order of the Tao. Of old, the principles of this order had been found; now, by formula, they would be applied. The rich military empire would bring to form a civilization which, in spite of reigns of force and cold brutality of incredible inhumanity, should stand as the pivot of the universe - the Middle Kingdom –

for all time. The system of feudal kingdoms had broken down, and the communication between the various culture centers was opened up – both politically and economically; thus, the conditions for such an ambition were put in place. This opening up also led to a less homogeneous mythological lore in the Han era, as compared with the Chou era.



The Six Dynasties: 190/221 – 589 A.D.

Buddhism entered China in the Han period, perhaps around 67 A.D. However, its influence on mythic thought and civilization of the empire became great only in the period of disorder that followed the fall of the imperial house of Han. For nearly four hundred years, war and devastation returned the land to the condition that has been for the greater part of its long history the Chinese reality of realities. Every one of the ten Chinese Buddhist sects was founded in this period. In the world of Taoist thought as well, there was a powerful enlivenment at this time. The hold of Confucianism on the minds of the

literati had relaxed with the fall to ruin of the bureaucratic system of the ordered state.

A Taoist work of this age (the Lieh Tzu, third century A.D.) states that there are four things that do not allow people to have peace: the first is long life, the second is reputation, the third is rank, and the fourth is riches. Those who have these things fear ghosts, fear men, fear power, and fear punishment.

They are called fugitives. Their lives are controlled by external things. But those who follow their destiny do not desire long life. Those who are not fond of honor do not desire reputation. Those who do not want power desire no rank. And those who are not avaricious have no desire for riches. This sort of men live in accordance with their nature. They regulate their lives by internal things.



Another Taoist text regards spontaneity and the natural in the following way: “What the ear likes to hear is music, and prohibition of the hearing of music is

called obstruction to the ear. What the eye likes to see is beauty, and prohibition of the seeing of beauty is called obstruction to sight. What the nose likes to smell is perfume, and prohibition of the smelling of perfume is called obstruction to smell. What the mouth likes to talk about is right or wrong, and prohibition of the talking about right or wrong is called obstruction to understanding. What the body likes to enjoy is rich food and fine clothing, and prohibition of the enjoying of these is called obstruction of the sensations of the body. What the mind likes to be is free, and prohibition of this freedom is called obstruction to the nature. All these obstructions are the main causes of the vexations of life. Cultivating life is to get rid of these vexations.”

At this time a system of organized religious Taoism was developing, literally a church with a patriarch, the Heavenly Teacher. The initiator of this movement was a person of the second century A.D., Chang Ling, who collected from his followers tithes of five bushels of rice, so that his teaching was called the Tao of Five Bushels of Rice. Others sought to synthesize Taoist thought. Taoism has developed one of the most thickly populated pantheons in the world, with deities representing natural objects, historical persons, professions, ideas, and even the whole and parts of the human body. It has a host of immortals and spirits, and a rich reservoir of superstitions, and systems for searching for longevity. However, its concentration on a good life on earth, its respect for both bodily and spiritual health, its doctrine of harmony with nature, its emphasis on simplicity, naturalness, peace of mind, and freedom of the spirit have continued to inspire Chinese art and enlighten Chinese thought and conduct.

K'ou Ch'ien-chih (died 432 A.D.) regulated the codes and ceremonies of the cult, fixed the names of its duties, and formulated its theology. Taoism, through his influence, was made the state religion in 440 A.D., and Buddhism was for a time suppressed. However, over time, the teaching of the Buddha, the Middle Way, was integrated into this universe of thought and subsequently understood to be precisely Tao.



A systematic survey of the proliferation of schools within the Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian folds is a monumental task which will not be attempted here. A few words can be said about the question of the impact of sentiments and ideas carried from one domain to another. This period (about 300 – 500 A.D.) was one of terrible stress. No less than seventeen “dynasties” contended with each other in the north – of these four were Hunnish, four Turkic, six Mongol, and only three ruled by houses of Chinese stock. Throughout this time the “barbarians” were Sinified much more than the northern Chinese were barbarized. And in the same way, the alien religion of the Buddha, which had now been established on Chinese soil for about five centuries, brought forth two native growths. Firstly, the Taoist development which can be seen as a folk aspect of the Buddhist system. Secondly, the Far Eastern Buddhist sect known as Ch’an or Ch’an-an (Japanese: Zen), where Taoist thought and feeling were translated into imported Buddhist terms.



Sui Dynasty: 581 – 618 A.D.

The long period of Chinese political disunity was terminated by the brief but fearfully effective Sui Dynasty, whose second and last emperor, Yang Ti, is celebrated for his completion of a canal uniting the Yellow River and Yantgtze. Some 5 500 000 persons, guarded by 50 000 police carried through the work under the most cruel conditions. His iron grip on the country left a legacy of imperial power to the succeeding dynasty (when Yang Ti was captured in battle with a Turkic force). Just as the Ch'in Dynasty had been followed by the Han, so was Sui followed by T'ang. The period of the T'ang Dynasty has been regarded by most historians as China's Golden Age.

T'ang Dynasty: 618 – 906 A.D.

The first part of this richly cosmopolitan period saw the flowering, but the second part the shattering, of the Buddhist Order in China. In the years 841 –

845 a Confucian-Taoist reaction brought about the leveling of more than 4600 monasteries, secularization of more than 260 000 monks and nuns, abolition of some 40 000 temples and shrines, confiscation of 1 000 000 acres of fertile Buddhist lands, and manumission of 150 000 monastery and temple slaves.

It had been in the peaceful mountain monastery of the Yellow Plum that the greatest of the Ch'an Buddhist teachers, Hui-neng, who became the sixth and last patriarch of his sect, had achieved the realization that represents to this day the culminating synthesis of Indian spirituality and Chinese. The line of Far Eastern patriarchs, through his time, is supposed to have been as follows:

- 1. Bodhidharma (520 A.D.), 2. Hui K'e (486 – 593), 3. Seng-ts'an (died 606),**
- 4. Tao-hsin (580 – 651), 5. Hung-jen (601 – 674), 6. Hui-neng (638 – 713).**

The sixth patriarch said: "Look within. Find your own true face that was antecedent to the world. The only secret is inside yourself." The Taoists said: "Return to the state of the uncarved block." By the eighth century Taoist thought had coalesced with the gospel of nirvana. A killing of all "thou shalt's"; a killing of the dragon of the golden scales; and therewith a release of the child, the wheel rolling of itself, the Buddha-nature, tathagatha (just-so-ness). Likewise, in the teaching of the Tao, we have heard that when the arbitrary "obstructions" imposed by desirous thought are removed, the self-so (tzu-jan) becomes manifest. And these two – tathagatha and tzu-jan – now were known as one.

In the year 840 A.D., when the imperial throne of China became vacant on the death of the Emperor Wen-tsung, the deceased monarch's brother, Wu-tsung, set about eliminating all those who had been favored in the time of the preceding emperor. The following year he began to show himself inclined to support the Taoist clergy against the Buddhist, which he considered alien.

In 842 his enterprise to extinguish this alien light started.



The failure of the Great Orient to evolve any order, either of social institutions or of expressly human ethical values, by which the divine nature of a despot could be controlled – or even judged and criticized – is cruelly manifest in such a time as that of the reign of the maniac Wu-tsung. The magical notion that benevolence and compassion work of themselves upon the universe left the entire East about where Egypt stood in the period of the Narmer palette (about 2850 B.C.).

Sung Dynasty: 960 – 1279 A.D.

Buddhism in China never recovered from the blows of 841 – 845. It survived along with popular Taoism largely on the level of a crude folk religion, no longer developing. In contrast to the peasantry of India and much of Europe, the Chinese were not in the deep past people of the soil. They were nomads. In their cults we find a combination of Neolithic fertility elements and reverence for ancestors, with an emphatically shamanistic factor. In Chinese thought the idea of the ancestor is on the one hand linked to the

noble terms Ti, Shang Ti, and ti'en, which have been generally translated "God", but on the other hand to such terms as shen ("spirits") and kuei ("ghosts"). The sphere of the shaman is properly the latter. The sphere of the pater familias centers about the family cult of his own ancestral line. And the sphere of the imperial cult is a development of the familial, with accretions from the shamanistic: the ancestral line of the emperor (the son of heaven) having been identified, practically, with "the deified being (ti) above (shang)",
Shang Ti.

In relation to the cult of birth and death, two soul-like principles are recognized: the first, p'o (written with the character for "white" and that for "daemon", "white ghost"), is produced at the time of conception; the second, hun (written with the character for "clouds" and that for "daemon", "cloud daemon"), is joined to the p'o at the moment of birth, when the light-world is entered from the dark. The p'o in later thought was identified with the yin, the hun with the yang. At death the p'o remains with the corpse for three years and then descends to the Yellow Springs; or, if not set at rest it may return as a kuei, a ghost. On the other hand, the hun, which partakes of the principle of light, ascends to heaven, becoming a shen, a spirit.

It is believed that the two terms Shang Ti (Lord Above) and Ti'en (Heaven) derive from the periods, respectively, of the Shang and the Chou dynasties. The former term suggests a personality. The latter tends to the impersonal. Both imply a will, the will of heaven. However, this will is conceived, in accordance with the formula of the hieratic city state, in the way of a mathematically structured cosmic order (maat, me, rta, dharma, tao). And as everthing in the history of Chinese thought and civilization shows, the realization of this order has been the chief concern of the Middle Kingdom, from the ages of its appearance. Fundamentally, the idea is that the individual (microcosm), society (mesocosm), and the universe of heaven and earth (macrocosm), form an indissoluble unit, and that the well-being of all depends upon their mutual harmonization. As in India, so in China, there is no notion of an absolute creation of the world. In contrast to India, however, where an accent is given to the dissolution-recreation motif, the main thought in China is of the present aspect of the world (in which one wants to

realize Tao). And again in contrast to India, where a theoretically static system of caste represents the social aspect of the cosmic order and the individual is oriented to his duties by way of his broad caste alignment, in China the family and immediate kinship alignment dominates.

The T'ang Dynasty collapsed 906 A.D., and after five decades of war lords (the so-called Five Dynasties), the politically weak but culturally wonderful Sung Dynasty arose. Its founder sponsored the first printed edition of the Chinese Buddhist scriptures and its second monarch built a huge Buddhist stupa in the capital. Ch'an Buddhism was the chief Buddhist influence among the literati, and as a kind of synthesis of the Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian vocabularies, Neo-Confucianism came into being.



When the eyes turn to Japan, still following professor Joseph Campbell's impressive overview, four facts are immediately apparent.

The first is that the period of arrival of Buddhism, and with Buddhism the arts of a developed civilization, corresponds approximately to that of the Christianization of Germanic Europe. Compared to both India and China, Japan is young, still dreaming.

Second, because of this youth there was never in traditional Japan any such fundamental experience either of social or of cosmic disillusionment as we have noted for Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, and China. Consequently, when Buddhism arrived, its first noble truth “All life is sorrowful” may have met the ear but never reached the heart. Japan heard something quite different in the Gospel of the Buddha.

Thirdly, as a comparatively primitive people, the Japanese at the time of their entry upon the stage of history were still endowed with that primary sense of the numinous in all things.

Fourthly, Japan, like England, is an island world wherein a self-understood rapport exists by nature, from top to bottom of the social order. Whereas on the mainland clashes of race, cultures, and mutually inconsiderate classes represent practically the norm of the social history, in Japan the empire functioned mainly as an organic unit – even in the days of the most brutal disorder.



The archeology of Japan falls into five blocks.

The first, largely hypothetical, is of Paleolithic hunters of the period of Sinanthropus and Pithecanthropus, about 400 000 B.C., when the islands appear to have been connected with the continent. In mythological terms there is little to be said about this period.

The second prehistoric block, also largely hypothetical, is of Mesolithic hunters – possibly after 3000 B.C. The archaeological finds give no clues regarding mythology.

The third block is, on the other hand, of considerable importance. The period is known as Jomon (“cord-marked”) and, as the name indicates, is characterized by ceramic fabrics of a crude, hand-shaped, cord-marked type. The dating is from about 2500 to 300 B.C. It is presumed that the earliest carriers of the culture were Caucasoid. Their probable descendants, the

Ainus, are confined today to the northern island, Hokkaido, but they at one time possessed all or most of Honshu as well. The absence of agriculture characterize the first phases of this period. Then, ceramic figurines and well-conceived, rhythmically organized pottery designs appear – reflecting Bronze Age influence from the continent. In the final phase settled villages are established and an agriculture is developed, together with a barnyard of cattle and horses.

The fourth block, the Yayoi period, is dated about 300 B.C. – 300 A.D., and represents the foundation of a culture properly Japanese. The sites, confined to Kyushu and southern Honshu, show that the arrivals were by way of Korea. The culture assemblage suggests pre-Shang China (Lungshan: black ware, about 1800 B.C.), but the Japanese dates correspond to Chinese Ch'in and Han. Distinctive marks of this culture complex are rice cultivation in flooded terraces, ceramics turned on potter's wheel, pedestal vessels, and an early Chinese method of rice-steaming in a system of double jars. The culture was basically of a high Neolithic style, and yet the dates were of imperial Han (China) and Rome.

The fifth block, the Yamato period, which opens 300 A.D. represents a new penetration of Central Asians from Korea, via Kyushu into Honshu. Earth-covered, mound-type tombs, circular, square, and keyhole-shaped, placed either in hills or amid rice fields, have earned the title “mound-burial complex” for this culture. By 400 A.D. the tombs reached immense size.



In the early era of the Ainu, shamanism, bear, fire and mountain cults, burial and purification rites had an important role. Culturally, the blend from these to the more primitive aspects of Japanese Shinto is very smooth. The source land of both peoples was Northeast and North-Central Asia – a zone from which numerous entries into North America also were launched. And since continuous contributions from the same North Asiatic circumpolar sphere likewise flowed into Northern Europe, affinities turn up throughout the native lore of Japan, touching fields of myth as widely separated as Ireland, Kamchatka, and the Canadian Northeast.

The chief linkage of the primitive lore of Japan is thus with the north. However, the mythology includes many elements suggesting Polynesia and coastal fishing folk as well. North Asiatic hunters, oceanic fishing folk, marginal Neolithic agriculturalists and late waves of Bronze Age and finally Iron Age warrior folk, supply the ingredients of Japanese mythology. Tribal wars and gradual pressing back of the Ainu brought the Yamato clans into dominance by about 400 A.D. in the areas across from Korea. And it

was through these that the boons of Chinese civilization arrived in force in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D.

The Mythic Past.

The Yamato rulers, in response to the Chinese inspiration, invented a past of their own, composed of local myths arranged as a world chronicle. Their model was a legendary Chinese chronicle of the sort first composed in Sumer, telling the origin of the universe and ages of the gods, the ages, then, of superhuman kings, and the ages, finally, of heroic men approximately of our own length of years. These locally fashioned tales are more folkloristic and fairytale-like than their inspirational sources are.

The first important Chinese influences were Confucian. These arrived possibly in the fourth, certainly by the fifth century A.D. The epochal date, however, is in the sixth century (552 A.D.), when a Korean king presented the Emperor Kimmei with a packet of sutras and a golden image of the Buddha. The arts of civilization thereafter poured into the country, and for the next three hundred years there was an avid assimilation in progress, which culminated in the Nara Period, 710 – 794 A.D. Two symbolic events took place. On the Buddhist side, the dedication of a colossal Buddha image in bronze. On the side of the native Shinto heritage, the appearance by royal decree of two compilations of the genealogical lore of the royal house. These were the Kojiki (“Record of Ancient Matters”, 712 A.D.), and the Nihongi (“Chronicles of Japan”, 720 A.D.). As their names indicate, they are recordings of native lore that formerly had been handed down only orally. Tales of ancient spirits and their role in the creation of the world are important elements of these works.



The Way of Spirits.

Shinto, at root, is a religion not of sermons but of awe: which is a sentiment that may or may not produce words, but in either case goes beyond them. A Shinto rite can be defined as an occasion for the recognition and evocation of an awe that inspires gratitude to the source and nature of being. And, as such, it is addressed as art (music, gardening, architecture, dance, etc) to the sensibilities – not to the faculties of definition. So that living Shinto is not the following of some set-down moral code, but a living in gratitude and awe amid the mystery of things. And to retain this sense, the faculties remain open, clean, and pure. That is the meaning of ritual purity.

It is incorrect to say that Shinto lacks moral ideas, however. The basic moral idea is that the processes of nature cannot be evil. To this there is the corollary that the pure heart follows the processes of nature. Man – a natural thing – is not evil inherently, but is in his pure heart, in his natural being,

divine. The fundamental terms are “bright heart” (akaki kokoro), “pure heart” (kiyoki kokoro), “correct heart” (tadashiki kokoro), and “straight heart” (naoki kokoro). The first denotes the quality of a heart shining brightly as the sun; the second, a heart clear as a white jewel; the third, a heart inclined to justice; and the last, a heart lovely and without misleading inclinations. All four unite as seimei shin: purity and cheerfulness of spirit.

In the inner sanctuaries of the chief Shinto shrines there have been preserved from of old – from far beyond the time of record – three symbolic talismans, borne to earth it is said, by the august grandchild Heaven Plenty, Earth Plenty, Heaven’s Sun Height, Prince Ruddy Rice-Ear Plenty, when kingship descended to Japan. And these are, namely, a mirror (purity); divine sword (courage); and jewel necklace (benevolence).

Shinto in old Japan was operative in four spheres: 1.Domestic, centering in its gratitude upon the kami of the well, gate, family, garden plot, etc. 2.The local community cult, in gratitude to both the natural phenomena of the scene in which one lives and the honored local dead. 3.The craft cults, honoring gratefully the very processes of work, the mysteries and powers of the tools, materials, etc. 4.The national cult, in gratitude to the emperor and his palace, the House of Awe, and to his world-preserving ancestors, the Great Kami of the Kojiki, of whom the greatest – born as the light of the universe from the left eye of the Male Who Invites, following his victory over impurity.

The Ways of the Buddha.

The golden Buddha that came from Korea in 552 A.D. was not immediately a harbinger of peace. Different clans opposed each other in views on whether this was beneficent or not. For thirty years a feud went on, and only after the most powerful clan had eliminated the others, and a good ruler, Prince Shotoku (573 – 621 A.D.), reigned and favored Buddhism, did the faith take hold in Japan. Prince Shotoku fostered letters and the arts, prepared the first history of Japan (now lost), promulgated a system of laws, and even before his death was honored by many as a Bodhisattva. In his reign, Buddhism, which in Japan had been the religion mainly of one clan, became a religion of the empire. The branch of Buddhism that was favored, was the Mahayana –

as in China. We shall look briefly at the periods that succeeded Prince Shotoku.



Nara period: 710 – 794 A.D.

Buddhism had as yet produced no truly native thought. The situation was one simply of eclectic juxtaposition. The Shinto spirits (kami) were faced with a cosmopolitan pantheon of alien derivation. In the court, the new faith was the carrier mainly of a continental civilization that gave to life there a new fashionable tone, while among the folk it was a vehicle of solace. In eighth-century Japan, the Bodhisattvas joined in mutual accord with the rustic spirits of the country, in strong contrast to fanatical movements such as the Islamization of the Levant, North-Africa and Spain and the Christianization of Europe which went on with considerable violence at the same time.

The Accord between Shinto and Buddhism was achieved in Four Stages.

1. At Nara: period of the first Buddhist capital city of Japan, 710-794 A.D.

This was a stage when Chinese Buddhist art and thought were arriving in force. The chief symbolic event was the building of the great Todaiji Temple and consecration within it, in 752 A.D., of a colossal bronze seated Buddha on a lotus of bronze 68 feet in circumference, and the figure itself 53 ½ feet high, having a weight of 452 tons.

2 and 3. At the second Buddhist capital, Heian (now Kyoto), 794 - 1185 A.D.

First, 794 – 894, a period of continuing Chinese influence, but with a new turn; for in the teachings of two Japanese monks, Dengyo Daishi (767 – 822) and Kobo Daishi (774 – 835), the kami of Japan were recognized as local Bodhisattvas. Next, 894 – 1185, continuing at Heian: diplomatic and cultural intercourse with T'ang China was discontinued, and in the elegant Fujiwara court described by Lady Murasaki (978 – 1015) in her novel Genji Monogatari, an erotic flowery game of sensibility was played, much like that of the twelfth-century troubadours in Europe. Cut off from the continent, the Japanese now were developing a Buddhism of their own, which in the following period of the Kamakura Shogunate, achieved maturity.

4. Kamakura Period: 1185 – 1392.

An intense swing away from the delicate sensibility and aesthetic eroticism of the Fujiwara ladies and their nobles. Four vigorous, specifically Japanese Buddhist schools were founded: Jodo, founded by Honen (1133 – 1212), and Shinshu, founded by his disciple Shinran (1173 – 1262), both of which were Amida sects; Zen, from the Chinese Ch'an school of Hui-neng but applied to new aims (chief founder, Eisai: 1141 – 1215); and lastly the intensely personal, chauvinistic sect of the fisherman's son Nichiren (122 – 1282).



The doctrine of the Flower Garland is central to all Buddhist sects of Japan.

The teaching of the Flower Wreath Sutra, known in Japan as Kegon, contains “Ten Profound Theories”, of which the following four may illustrate the main content:

1. The Profound Theory of Correlation, according to which all things coexist, simultaneously, arising. They coexist not only in relation to space, but also in relation to time; for past, present, and future include each other.

2. The Profound Theory of Perfect Freedom, according to which all beings, great and small, commune with one another without obstruction; so that the power of each partakes of that of all and so is limitless. One act, however small, includes all acts.

3. The fifth theory, The Profound Theory of Complementarity, according to which both the hidden and the manifest constitute the whole by mutual

reinforcement. By complementarity they constitute a unit.

4. The tenth theory, The Profound Theory of the Completion of the Common Virtue, according to which a leader and his following, the chief and his retinue, work together harmoniously and brightly; for, “according to the one-in-all and all-in-one principle, they really form one complete whole” – permeating each other by inter-reflection.

To work towards this, two things are needed: firstly, the vow of Bodhisattvahood (pranidhana), which is to work without cease to bring all beings – oneself included – to the realization of Buddhahood; and, secondly, compassion (karuna).



Further remarks on the Heian Period: 794 – 1185 A.D.

The second major step toward an essentially Japanese Buddhist realization was taken when Dengo Daishi and Kobo Daishi set sail for China in 804 A.D. The priestly order founded by the former on his return is called Tendai (Chinese, T'ien-t'ai), after the mountain monastery in South China founded by Chih-kai (531 – 597 A.D.). The basic doctrine of Tendai is that the Buddha is in all things. What makes this doctrine special, however, is the statement that "The Lotus of the True Law" is itself the Buddha. Something considerably more complex arrived with the return of the second voyager, Kobo Daishi, who in China had studied the Indian Tantric mystery known as the "True Word" (Sanskrit: mantra; Chinese: Chen Yen; Japanese: Shingon).

In the latter context, the sphere of divinity, the Buddha sphere, is assumed to be within the celebrant himself. The celebrant is to assume the posture of the Buddha-principle invoked by the priest. He is thereby placed in accord with that principle at once in thought (dhyana), word (mantra), and body posture (mudra). Thus this very body of the celebrant becomes the Buddha. In line with the Hindu-Buddhist notion of numerous degrees, orders, or forms of divine manifestation, numerous symbolic images have become associated with this development, offering models for the posture system associated with the mantras. These are classified in two large categories: 1. Those of the circle of the diamond or thunderbolt body (vajra), representing aspects of the realm of the indestructible, true, or diamond state; the pivotal figure of this group being the great Solar Buddha (Vairochana) surrounded by his emanations. 2. Those of the circle of the womb (garbha), symbolizing the order of the changing world, in Indian Buddhist art represented by the goddess-lotus of the world.

Kobo Daishi assigned the kami of his native land to membership in the womb circle; so that whereas formerly the Buddhas had been viewed as kami (Shinto spirits), now the kami could be viewed as Buddha-things. A two-way interplay was thereby achieved. In addition, the Indian Tantric magic became combined with the Japanese shamanistic tradition, and again, a two-way

interplay was achieved. This powerful, popular as well as elite, dual order was known as Ryobu Shinto (“Two Aspect Shinto”). The Tendai sect joined the movement, terming its own approach Ichi-jitsu Shinto (“One Reality Shinto”). So, even before the intercourse with China was discontinued, Japan had begun to make Buddhism its own.

It was only in the second phase of the Heian period, however, that Japan began to exhibit its own style. By the tenth and eleventh centuries the Japanese were producing long horizontal scrolls of such narrative as the world had never seen. While the Chinese of those decades, and later, gave you moods of landscape and of weather charged with all they can imply for human beings who are sensitive to nature, the Japanese showed peopled narratives beyond compare. The main difference being that the Chinese were largely interested in matters of philosophy, while the Japanese emphasized Man and what happened in the material world at that particular time. Professor Hajime Nakamura of Tokyo University at a speech in 1955 made the point that the concept of freedom is rendered by the same two ideograms in China and Japan. In China, he said, freedom meant liberation from the human nexus, while in Japan it meant compliance with the human nexus (through devotion to secular activities). The remainder of the history of Buddhism in Japan is, by and large, the reflex of the differing human nexuses to which the doctrine has been applied.

The Indian Buddhist was disillusioned in the universe, the Chinese in society, the Japanese – not at all. So that, whereas the Indian retreat was to the Void and the Chinese either to the Family (Confucius) or to Nature (Lao Tzu), the Japanese did not retreat but stood exactly where he was, simply magnified his kami into Buddha-things, and saw this world itself, with all its joy as well as oddities and sorrow, as the Golden Lotus World, right here and now. And one of the first of the various human nexuses in Japan to take on the radiance of the Golden Lotus was the palace-world of the Heian court.



Further remarks on the Kamakura Period: 1185 – 1333 A.D.

The extinction in 1184 of the Taira (Heike) clan by the Minamoto (Genji) marked the opening of four and a quarter centuries of feudal strife. Buddhism in the Kamakura Period (1185 – 1333) – the moment of its maturation in Japan was of two trends: jiriki (“own strength, self-reliance”) and tariki (“other’s strength, salvation by intercession”). The latter was represented principally by the cult of Amida; the former by Zen. The social spheres in which the latter flourished were largely the chambers of the gentlewoman and villages of the poor, while those of the former were the manly warrior camps.

The cult of Amida implied awakening of faith through gratitude to the world, living life and listening to the teaching in an attitude of gratitude, cultivating faith in the mystery symbolized in the figure of the Solar Buddha Amida. In Zen, the Buddhism of the Samurai, an essentially non-theological view is

taken of the problem of illuminated life. Buddhahood is within. Look within, the Buddha will be found. In Zen, the aim is to let the mind stuff proceed spontaneously, as when the eyes see by themselves, the ears hear by themselves, and the mouth opens by itself – without having to be forced apart by the fingers. When the heart is troubled by no more thought of I and You, of the opponent and his sword, of one's own sword and how to wield it – no more thought even of life and death. All is emptiness, even the thought of emptiness is no longer there. From that emptiness comes the unfoldment of doing.



The Way of Heroes

The basic principle in old customs was that of full and solemn identification of the individual with his socially assigned role. Life in civilization was conceived as a grandiose, noble play, enacted on the world stage. The function of each

was to render his part without blockage through any fault of the personality. Those lords who dishonored themselves by playing their roles improperly, had – according to custom – to commit suicide. And their retinue had to follow them in the act, much like in the burial ceremonies of the early hieratic city states. In the period of the great feudal wars, this custom was played out in force. For centuries thereafter, even against the firm rulings of the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603 – 1868), heroic players of the old school insisted on playing on. Bushido, "the Way (do; Chinese: tao) of the Warrior (bushi)", was an inheritance of the hieratic ideal of the mighty play.

The Way of Tea.

In the course of four grim centuries of feudal disintegration, there was produced a hard civilization wherein the qualities of the entire religious inheritance of the Far East had become transmuted to secular ends. The lessons drawn from their remarkably composite, yet firmly synthesized mythological inheritance are numerous:

The world feeling of Shinto, that the processes of nature cannot be evil, together with its zeal for purity, and the clean house as well as heart.

The recognition of ineffable wonder in little things.

The Buddhist lesson of the Flower Wreath that all is one and one is all.

The Taoist feeling for the order of nature and Confucian for the Tao in human relationships.

The Buddhist recognition of sorrow united with compassion.

The lesson that the way for Japan was not asceticism but the normal layman's life lived properly in gratitude.

The stress in Zen upon tenacity in discipline with a view to pristine spontaneity in action,

Through all of these elements the basic hero virtues of the gallant Warrior Way are fostered, of loyalty with courage, veracity, self-control, benevolence, together with a willingness to play one's given role in the masquerade of life.

From the fourteenth century inward, these produced an array of mutually

enriching secular, folk as well as elite, arts. Gardens were devised that brought nature itself into the manifoldly symbolic play, not merely as theater, but as an active participant. A central discipline of all this urbane spirituality was tea. The act of drinking tea is a normal, secular, common day affair; so also is sitting in a room with friends. And yet, when you resolve to pay full attention to every single aspect of the act of drinking tea while sitting in a room with friends, selecting first your best, most appropriate bowls, setting these down in the prettiest way, using an interesting pot, providing pretty things for your friends to look at, a few flowers perfectly composed, the situation will shine with its own beauty. If, in preparing, serving and drinking, every phase of the action is rendered in such a graceful functional manner that all present may take joy in it, this common affair might well be said to have been elevated to the status of a poem. The mastery of tea is the mastery of the principle of freedom (self-motivation) within the nexus of a highly complex, glass-hard, rule-bound civilization, for every one of whose contingencies only gratitude is to be felt, if one is to live as a man.



