

THE CANADIAN THEOSOPHIST

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GLEANINGS FROM NEOCONFUCIANISM

BY ALBERTA JEAN ROWELL

The philosophy of Neoconfucianism is a vast topic. I have not the background knowledge to tell the story of its complete development, nor argue on the merits and demerits of the various schools which contributed their quota of enlightenment to the movement as a whole. I have only scratched a rich surface. But I am glad to share with my fellow-students of Eastern wisdom some of the results of my superficial scratchings. My objective will be, in this paper, merely to highlight a few of the outstanding Neoconfucian concepts—concepts with which most of us are familiar in other guises and contexts.

I have always believed in the importance of human relationships and the science of ethics which is the outgrowth of social organization. Nor do I regard the objective world, or matter, a deceptive phantasy and nothing more, superimposed upon the soul's clear vision by some super ironist. I find myself responding to the conviction of Lu Yen, the Taoist master referred to in the mystical treatise *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, that we must discover

the "fixed pole" that confers immortal life *within*, not outside, the whirligig of kaleidoscopic change. Neither does Neoconfucianism belittle the material world though it holds man's highest achievement, as man, to be sageliness. Its balanced emphasis appeals to me.

In China to-day, as everyone knows, a new set of values is being rapidly forged out of the ferment of revolution. The humanistic ideals of ancient Confucianism are being scornfully discarded. To the young up-and-coming intelligentsia, converted to the Marxist interpretation of history, the revered classics are just part and parcel of a decadent conservatism which has impeded China's progress for centuries. But certain modern Chinese thinkers, like Dr. Fung Lü-Yan, though yielding to Marxist logic, are not willing to go as far as this. In the opinion of this Chinese philosopher certainly Confucian ideals which simply bolster up an agrarian society, and the highly complex family organization which goes with it, will have outgrown their usefulness, their *raison d'être*, in a modern industrialized

China. Nevertheless, in his reasoned judgment, those perennial truths, peculiar to Confucianism and divorced from relative economic conditions, will and ought to survive the destruction of the old. And these everlasting truths that probably will defy oblivion are: man's unity with the universe and the ethical law of "human-heartedness" which should govern the relations of human beings within the social framework.¹

This twentieth-century Neoconfucianism which has now come to grips with Western philosophy budded into full flower in the twelfth century. It arose as a reaction against the other-worldly emphasis of the indigenous Taoist mystical philosophy and the recently imported Buddhism from India. The endeavour to resuscitate Confucianism in its unalloyed purity, however, did not meet with complete success. Certain metaphysical ideas of Taoism and Buddhism were inevitably grafted on to the Confucian text.

This was so because the revival of Taoism and the infiltration of Indian Buddhism had aroused an interest in metaphysical theories. People were asking to have "nature" explained and the problem of human destiny clarified. An entirely different approach was required, a new interpretation of the traditional classics demanded, to cope with the changed conditions of the times. In the twelfth century Neoconfucianism met that need. In its eclectic content are discernible three strands of thought —(1) Confucianism proper (*The Analects*, the *Mencius*, the *Greater Learning*, and *Doctrine of the Mean*); (2) Buddhism in its aspect of Zen with a strong admixture of Taoism; (3) the Taoist religion with its theory of the dual forms of yang and yin.²

As far back as the eighth and ninth centuries the tendency to dream the hours away in solitary meditation took hold of the practically-minded Chinese people, after the spread of Indian Buddhism. This anti-social attitude was strengthened by the mystical character of native Taoism. Chinese intellectuals vehemently attacked the fanaticisms and neglect of social duty encouraged by the mystical faiths, for thousands of Chinese abandoned home and family to enter monasteries. Han Wen-Kung (768-824 A.D.) was perhaps the most articulate voice among the intellectuals raised in opposition to Buddhism with its doctrine of purity contingent on a withdrawal from a world of sense. Sternly, in his forcible polemics, he reminded his fellowcountrymen of the sayings of the ancient sages: "He who would manifest his good instincts to all mankind must first duly order the State. But previous to this he must duly order his Family. And previous to that his own Self. And previous to that his Heart. And previous to that his Thoughts."³

This robust defender of Chinese humanism was banished in 819 A.D. for his fulminations against Buddhism, at that time in high favour at the Chinese court. Later, his position was vindicated. We find the emperor Wu Tsung (838-846 A.D.) issuing a proclamation against the new religion. He specifically scored its discouragement of economic productivity. "A man who does not work", the proclamation reads, "suffers bitter consequences in cold and

¹ See Dr. Fung Lü-Yan's *History of Chinese Philosophy* (New York, 1948).

² Neoconfucianism had its rationalistic as well as its semi-mystical phase. See Dr. Chan Wing-Tsit's essay "Neo-Confucianism" in *China*, edited by Harley Farnsworth (Chicago, 1946).

³ Herbert A. Giles, *Gems of Chinese Prose* (Shanghai, 1923) ps. 118-9.

hunger. But these priests and priestesses of Buddha, they consume food and raiment without contributing to the production of either."⁴ There were many persecutions of the order officially inspired.

But as I have already pointed out, the Confucianism that was lifted on high again by the scholars of the twelfth century was the ethics of Confucius with *the superaddition of Buddhist and Taoist elements*. The valiant standpatter, Han Wen-Yung, did not have it all his own way. According to Dr. Fung Yu-Lan, however, the native truth contained a transcendent quality as well as practical rules for ethical guidance. In his *History of Chinese Philosophy* he describes Neoconfucianism as "the continuation of the idealistic wing of ancient Confucianism, and especially of the mystic tendency of Mencius."

Let us consider some of the important thought elements in Confucianism proper. For these we shall look to the *Analects* of Confucius, the *Mencius* and the writings of Hsun Tzu, a third century heterodox Confucianist.⁵

Confucius in his *Analects* stressed the principle of "human heartedness"⁶

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ See Fung's *History*; also *The Works of Hsun Tzu* translated from the Chinese by Homer H. Dubs (London, 1928) and Bruce Percy *Hsun Tzu, The Moulder of Ancient Confucianism* (London, 1927).

⁶ This is Dr. Fung Lü-Yan's own translation of the Chinese word *jen* which I think is a particularly happy rendering. It is a very elastic term to judge by its many connotations. Arthur Waley in his introduction to the *Analects* states that *jen* in that same text is identified with "good" in a general sense. But he adds that there

called *jen* (and pronounced *ren* in Chinese). With it was associated the ideal of righteousness or duty. *Jen* consists in loving others. Though having its roots in self-love it may be extended so as to embrace the whole universe. Righteousness on the other hand lay in the unselfish performance of duty for duty's sake and forgetfulness of profit. But righteousness and "human heartedness or love" overlap in the Confucian ethic.⁷ Concretely expressed, a teacher or a parent performs his duty toward the adolescent boy or girl not only from a sense of obligation but from a feeling of love as well. Refraining from doing to another what you would not have done to yourself (*Analects* Book XII, Chapter 11) is just a practical application of this same "human heartedness."

We might remind ourselves in this connection that the *Gita*, which breathes such a spirit of universal tolerance, likewise teaches the higher efficacy of disinterested action. But in that same devotional book we do not find this linking up of duty with natural feeling. Nor do we find it in ancient Stoicism which presents such obvious parallels with *Gita* teachings. As Edwyn Bevin in *Stoics and Sceptics* remarks à propos this conspicuous absence of fellow feeling in an otherwise noble philosophy: "The wise man was not to *concern* himself with his brethren—that is the point—he was only to serve them. Benevolence he was to have, as much of it as you can conceive; but there was one thing he must not have, and that was love." (p. 67).

The golden rule, basic to both Christian and Confucian teaching, in its negative aspect is merely the practice of

is also attached to this word a high moral and mystical significance analogous to the *Tao* of the Quietists.

⁷ See Dr. Fung's *History of Chinese Philosophy*.

non-injury or harmlessness. But Confucius stressed also its positive social aspect. In the *Analects* he preached the doctrine of enlightened selfishness thus: "Now the man of perfect virtue,⁸ wishing to establish himself, seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others" (Book 6, Chapter 28, Legge translation).

As Krishna, in the *Gita*, advises Arjuna to leave the results of his actions to the Lord, so Confucius sought to inculcate an identical attitude. According to statements imputed to him in the *Analects* the wise man, after fulfilling his mission to the best of his ability, does not concern himself with the subsequent results of his actions. In the *Analects* it is recorded: "If my principles are to advance it is so ordered. If they are to fall to the ground, it is so ordered." (Book 14, Chapter 38, Legge's translation). Complete surrender to the "will of Heaven", what Vedantists and Buddhists would call *karma*, was evidently an important guiding principle of Confucius' life. Later on, according to Fung, belief in the "will of Heaven" was superseded in Neoconfucian metaphysics by the doctrine of universal forces, interrelated in a vast causal pattern and conditioning the effect of any particular individual act. Such a deterministic belief,⁹ it would appear, is

in line with the Stoic theory of necessity and as far removed from mechanical determinism which banishes design and seeks to explain all events in terms of a limited number of known physical laws.¹⁰

These two salient features of Confucianism—kindness to one's fellow-man and the courageous and dignified acceptance of one's destiny—have long been familiar to most of us. And I must confess that before I delved into the Chinese classics for myself and thumbed the pages of Fung's monumental *History* my impression of the venerable sage did not go much beyond this conventional pattern. True, the fact that he occupied an honoured place in pedagogic tradition as the king of schoolmasters added a certain colour and lustre to his name. But had not his formulated code of behaviour degenerated into vapid ceremonial and *politesse*? Was he not to a considerable degree, just a "stuffed-shirt", as we say in our picturesque colloquial speech, out to perpetuate the *status quo*? Yet Fung hints at a Confucius who experienced a mystical climacteric; who, through practice of righteousness embraced in his heart, at the twilight of life, the simple all-pervasive Tao.

In the *Analects* we are not told that Confucius achieved the avowed objective of the Buddhists and eliminated his desires. But we are assured that he had only right desires when he arrived at the age of seventy. He did the right thing naturally, without taking thought, without consciously conforming to any ethical standard, because he had arrived at the peak of sagehood. And have we not here a picture of the mahatma who has

⁸ This is Dr. Legge's translation of the Chinese word *yen*.

⁹ Because one accepts determinism—namely, that every event is preceded by antecedent causes, one does not necessarily adopt the lazy apathy of the proverbial frog who sunned himself on the river's bank vainly expecting food to fall into his mouth. Struggling to better one's condition is as much a causal factor as surrendering to effortless living like the fictional Micawber.

¹⁰ The phenomena of parapsychology has surely disproved the claim of the materialist that all cause is blind and mechanical.

attained the spontaneity of divine freedom, extolled in the text of the *Gita*?

Mencius sought to carry to a higher development the wisdom of Confucius. He insisted, like eighteenth century Rousseau, that human nature was essentially good; for man is endowed at birth with the four beginnings—sympathy, shame, modesty and a sense of right and wrong. If not interfered with, said Mencius, these beginnings will burgeon into all the virtues. In a much quoted passage in the *Mencius* the quality of *yen* or natural fellow-feeling is elaborated upon by illustration. The text reads: "All men have a mind which cannot bear (to see the sufferings of) others . . . When I say that all men have a mind which cannot bear (to see the sufferings of) others, my meaning may be illustrated thus:—even nowadays, if men suddenly see a child about to fall into a well, they will without exception experience a feeling of alarm and distress. (They will feel so), not as a ground on which they may gain the favour of the child's parents, nor as a ground on which they may seek the praise of their neighbours and friends, nor from a dislike to the reputation of (having been unmoved by) such a thing. From this case we may perceive that the feeling of commiseration is essential to man . . ." (Book 2, Chapter 6, Legge's translation). And has not Mencius described the basic feeling that attends the law of brotherhood? In the *Shu King* (*Book of Historical Documents*) this natural feeling of sympathy is attributed to Heaven for in that ancient chronicle is to be found this sentence: "Heaven compassionates the people" (Legge's translation).

Mencius, the mystic, taught also that only by the practice of virtue can our souls seize upon the all-pervasive Truth. He warns, as do all practitioners of yoga, whether of the East or of the West, that the process toward enlight-

enment must be effortless and without strain. Its emergence cannot be forced. We must definitely not help it to grow. Like the tiny seed which expands in the silence and the darkness of mother earth it must bestir of itself. We just prepare the ground.

Hsun Tzu who continued the Confucian tradition flagrantly disagreed with Mencius on the subject of the innateness of virtue. He claimed, contrariwise, that man is born with the predisposition to act crudely and to do evil. Man, he expounded is naturally acquisitive and naturally sensual. His unromantic attitude toward the raw stuff of human nature was at opposite poles to the cult of the "noble savage" which obsessed the fancy of eighteenth century sentimentalists like Chateaubriand or modern romantics like the poet D. H. Lawrence. Hsun Tzu aligns himself rather with the English rationalist John Stuart Mill who stated unequivocally that it is not natural for a man to be unselfish. Or the philosopher Hobbes who considered moral standards the artificial product of our cultural environment. According to old records this Chinese realist asserted: "Only under the restraint of law and lofty moral influences does man eventually become fit to be a member of regularly organized society."¹¹

Just how did the violent resistance to Buddhism and Taoism produce that intellectual movement known as Neoconfucianism which began in the twelfth century and has continued up to the twentieth? In the first place it induced a more critical evaluation of the ancient texts. And in the second place it effected an assimilation of certain metaphysical and Cosmological ideas from Buddhism and Taoism with the current faith. Referring to this intellectual

¹¹ Giles, p. 53.

feat of harmonious fusion, on the part of Chinese scholars, Derk Bodde, the distinguished American savant, said: "The result is a syncretization and systematization of several originally disparate conceptions which represents perhaps the supreme triumph of the ever eclectic tendency of Chinese thought."¹²

Passing over the re-examination of the old classics in the spirit of modern criticism, which was all a part of the Chinese renaissance of the twelfth century, what particular Buddhist tenets were most vigorously denounced? Well the Buddhists had declared that the phenomenal world was illusory. Confucianists reacted to this in the same manner that certain people in the West react to the dogma of Christian Science that there is no matter, while acknowledging the pure gold of Truth embedded in its fallacies. If everything is the Void, the Confucianists demanded, why do Buddhists clothe themselves, eat and drink like ordinary mortals? Moreover if the external world is "nothing" why do the Buddhists behave as though it were "something" by escaping to caves and monasteries? Do we run away from that from which we are emotionally detached? When the sight of an object no longer excites disturbing thoughts it is immaterial to us whether it is present to consciousness or not. The Confucianist, therefore, objected strenuously to this other-worldly attitude which ignored this-worldly activities. He urged that man could only realize his highest potentialities as a *functional member of a social organism*.

The Neoconfucianists, then, took as the foundation-stone of their system the saying of the Buddhist school of Inner Light: "The chopping of wood and the drawing of water are of the nature of

the mysterious Tao".¹³ They endeavoured to apply it in a practical way by pointing out that devotion to one's family and one's government all pertain to Tao. In short, lowly and humdrum activities like ploughing the ground, sweeping the floor, preparing food, even bodily functions, which the Indian law-given Manu did not deem too trivial for comment, are all permeated with the magic of the Tao. Through faithful performance of the daily task, observance of the golden rule and constant recollection of the Tao, one can pass over the rainbow bridge to the Great Ultimate. Living righteously as a social being, said the Neoconfucianist, one would ultimately arrive at the point where one knew oneself to be identical with the universe. Then every event would become acceptable since all was contained in the soul. And this realization that *one is the Whole* results in an unspeakable joy.

The Neoconfucianist sage, in his ordinary behaviour, is not to be distinguished from other men who also follow the way of Tao but *unknowingly*. Only his awareness has deepened. For him there is a glamour upon the common weed as upon the rose because he has universalized the Supreme, no longer localizing "That" which ever abides, to some chosen fane or inspired personality. Unnameable is it, beyond all form, shape or feature. In the *Way and Its Power* (Arthur Waley's translation) it is negatively described—

There was something formless yet complete,

¹³ This quotation is taken from Dr. Fung Yu-Lan's book *The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy*, E. R. Hughes, translator. He endeavours to show how the Neoconfucianists pushed this Buddhist statement to its ultimate application.

(Continued on Page 92)

¹² See his prefatory remarks to "The Philosophy of Chu Hsi," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 7 (1942-3.)

THE ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Theosophical Society in Canada was held at 52 Isabella Street, Toronto on Sunday, July 8th, 1951, with the following members in attendance:—Miss M. Hindsley, Mr. Charles Hale, Mr. G. I. Kinman and Colonel Thomson, the General Secretary. In his opening address Colonel Thomson expressed pleasure in welcoming the new member, Mr. Hale, to the Executive, and added that he was always happy to see out-of-town members present on these occasions, but quite realized that owing to long distances this was rarely possible, this however he intimated did not deter these from sending in ideas and suggestions which are always welcome. He emphasized that the Executive met periodically which was very necessary from the point of view of carrying out ordinary routine, but that this must not overshadow the fact that these meetings were the focal point of carrying out altruistic ideals brought forward by its members for the good of the Cause. He therefore urged every member to assiduously turn over in his mind ideas and suggestions that might be brought forward and acted upon, the Executive being the directive centre of the Society in Canada whose bounden duty it was to do everything in its power to further the ideals it stood for.

The Financial Statement for the year ending June 30 was studied and passed. It showed, as will be seen by the printed report elsewhere in this issue, a balance of \$756.77 in the bank with no outstanding debts of any kind. The Standing of the Lodges shows a total of 371 paid up members as against 372 last year. There are 27 members shown as Inactive, and these it is hoped will soon put themselves into Good-Standing, and thus bring the total up to the 400 mark. It is regretted that six-members died

during the year; there were thirteen new members during the same period. Several of the smaller lodges show an increase in membership and the Hamilton Lodge has become decidedly active whilst Toronto Lodge the largest is as usual a very vital centre. The question of the readmittance of members who have resigned was brought forward and after discussion it was arranged that such who wished to rejoin should first obtain the permission of the lodge to which they belonged. The remainder of the business dealt with was of a routine character and calls for no special comment beyond that a grant of \$25 be made to the Toronto Lodge "Kershaw Fund" for the widow of the caretaker of the premises at 52 Isabella Street. The next meeting is to take place on Sunday, October 7th.

General Secretary.

THE THREE TRUTHS

These truths, which are as great as is life itself, are as simple as the simplest mind of man. Feed the hungry with them.—Idyll of the White Lotus.

The soul of man is immortal, and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendour have no limit.

The principle which gives life dwells in us, and without us, is undying and eternally beneficent, is not heard or seen, or smelt, but is perceived by the man who desires perception.

Each man is his own absolute law-giver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself; the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment.

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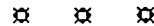
OFFICE NOTES

Isolated students and those unable to have access to Theosophical literature should avail themselves of the Travelling Library conducted by the Toronto Theosophical Society. There are no charges except for postage on the volumes loaned. For particulars write to the Travelling Librarian, 52 Isabella Street, Toronto, Ont.

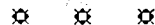


One of our members wishes to sell his copy of Manly Hall's, "An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Quabbalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolic Philosophy". Only one edition was published of this large volume, illustrated

with many full size colour and black and white plates. It is now out of print and it is unlikely that it will be re-printed. This particular volume is autographed by Manly Hall and is numbered 180 of the limited edition. It was purchased at the London T. S. in 1945 at a price of \$100.00. This book rarely appears in second hand catalogues and is now a collector's item. Will those interested please write direct to Mr. Eric Aldwinckle, Spillway, R. R. 1, Richmond Hill, Ont.



It is reported that the beautiful grounds and buildings at Point Loma, which were the headquarters of the Theosophical Society headed by Mrs. Tingley, have been sold to Balboa University of San Diego. Two million dollars will be spent to restore the existing buildings, bring back the beauty of the grounds and to erect new buildings. The Greek theatre which holds 2500 persons will be restored, some of the smaller buildings will be demolished, but the former home of A. G. Spalding will be preserved as the residence of the President of the University. This note will bring back to the older members, memories of the early days of this century when Point Loma was the centre of the grandiose dreams, hopes, ambitions and ideals of more than 500 members who lived in and about Point Loma.



Dr. F. A. Kuttner, who is writing a historical study of Chinese music, recently visited the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto to examine the unique collection of Chinese instruments. Dr. Kuttner used an electric stroboscopic frequency meter which can measure to one-hundredth of a semi-tone, to determine the exact pitch of the chimes and bells. He stated that clarity and purity of tone were so valued by the ancient Chinese that the playing of certain instruments was proscribed for persons in 'unsuitable condition'. The gu-ching was not to be played by a courtesan, a vulgar person, after inebriation, after sexual

intercourse, when covered with perspiration, before washing, or in loud or noisy surroundings. How far away we have gone from these ancient traditions and attitudes.

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That 'the whole world seems to be tired' is the conclusion recently expressed by James W. Barton, M. D. of Toronto in an article commenting on *Annals of Allergy* by Dr. M. G. Mayer. Allergy to certain foods, tenseness of nerves or nervous imbalance are two of the factors in producing fatigue. But it would also seem that there is a psychic fatigue arising out of the speed, economic uncertainty, and insecurity of this cycle. Mental disease is increasing rapidly; we have not as yet unfolded the inner resources to cope with the pace we have set in recent years.

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Just as we were going to press a booklet was received entitled 'Summaries of Eight Lecture-Lessons on The Secret

Doctrine of H. P. Blavatsky as given in New York City, Spring 1951' by Professor Ernest Wood. The Lecture-Lessons cover the Poem and the first seven Stanzas. A review will follow later. Copies are available from Professor Wood c/o Burton Bigelow, 274 Madison Ave., New York 16. Price \$1.25.

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Apropos of the article by Mrs. Alberta Jean Rowell in this issue, *Gleanings From Neoconfucianism*, it has just been announced over the radio that the Communist regime of China has banned the books of Confucius. Whether this ban applies also to the whole body of Confucist literature was not stated. China has undergone more than one 'burning of the books' but each time the essential spirit of Chinese philosophy has risen again.

STATEMENT OF FUNDS YEAR ENDING JUNE 30th, 1951

RECEIPTS

Balance from last year:		
General A/C,	\$862.22	
Lodge Dues and Fees:		
1951	836.25	
1952	100.00	
	936.25	
Magazine Subscriptions	260.26	
Magazine Donations	142.72	
General Donations	133.50	
Sales	32.90	
General Account	8.00	
Premium46	
Interest	18.85	
Total	\$2395.16	

New Members 13

EXPENDITURES

Adyar, per Capita	\$	99.35
Magazine Cost:		
Printing	\$1179.00	
Postage	54.70	
Zines	33.80	
Envelopes	89.64	
	\$ 1357.14	
General Fund:		
Postage	\$ 15.62	
Extras	67.00	
Office	13.40	
Stationery	19.98	
	\$ 116.00	
Adyar Fund	12.00	
Kuhn Lecture Tour	53.90	
In Bank	756.77	
Total	\$2395.16	

New Subscribers 13

E. L. THOMPSON,
General Secretary.

THEOSOPHIC STUDY

BY ROY MITCHELL

REVALUATIONS — I.

I suppose, generally speaking, our Theosophical Society derives all its recruits in very much the same way. They awaken, by reason of the breaking of a karmic shell, to a conviction of the validity of the theosophic attitude to life, and, driven by unanswered questions, the fruit of their whole lives, they begin to read theosophical literature. They are voracious at first, and because their disturbance has been largely emotional they prefer our softer and more emotional books. Presently in a month, a few months, a year or so their questionings come to an end, and they are filled to saturation. Saturation always comes when questioning ceases. There is no further lodgment for truth in a self-sufficient mind.

When the recruit has reached such a point he may do any of four things. He may quit altogether. Which is well enough. He has come, we have served him and he has gone, happily with, unhappily without, our blessing. Or instead of quitting decently and carrying theosophical truth into his new enthusiasm he may bring into our midst his orphan, alien growth that he is not capable of making live except as a parasite, and so distort our life. He has had his fill of theosophy but he stays to father his special enthusiasms on us. Or lacking an aptitude for more than casual study but still possessing a great devotion to the Theosophical Society and its work he may apply himself to its welfare, much as one would support a church, or fraternity, drawing spiritual aid and brotherly contacts from it, and holding executive posts in it. This is excellent and without it the Society could not live.

There remains a fourth class, and in it I have a special interest. It is made up of those who having reached their first saturation point in desultory reading, see no definite path before them. They stay with the Society, perhaps lecture a little, even write occasionally, and read a great deal in a wide but ill-ordered manner. They are bound to the Society by a realization that it is our only existing vehicle for the spread of the great truths of the modern renewal, that it represents the fruit of sacrifice of vital and vivid persons, and that there are still great potencies locked up within it. They are discouraged by its sentimentalities, its personality worship and its devious politics.

These are our most active as well as our most courageous minds and the present tragedy of the Theosophical Society is that we are losing them faster than we can replace them. Perhaps we should lose them. Perhaps these recruits have not stamina enough to stay at the work. Perhaps they have not yet learned that bringing greater talent they are required to have more vision and to bear more. Perhaps greater moral endurance with a less practised mind will serve the Society better in the long run.

I do not know. But this I do know: that we have no right to resign ourselves to the loss of any such member until we have used every means to provide him with work within the broad, original terms of our Theosophical Society—work that will dignify and energize both him and us.

How shall we employ him? Give him a primer and a little desk, pat him on the head and promise him that if he apply himself he will some day know as

much as we? That is no star to hitch a wagon to. Shall we encourage him to tell us what we knew before, thereby boring us and shaming him, or shall we set him to something where he can instruct us and feel that the task is worthy of him? Shall we set him to bringing in new things or parroting old ones? If he agree with us on familiar things his telling must seem inept to us and he will know it. If he disagrees with us on familiar things we are all too likely to take refuge in our seniority and assure him he will soon be wiser. If he give us new bearings he will be encouraged, be he so ever inept.

When I meet a student who has confined himself to our standard primers and handbooks I get little or nothing from him, because I know the books as well as he does. He has nothing to tell me. But a man who has made a special study of Paracelsus can tell me many things, or a man who knows the theosophy of his Bible, or a student of Buddhism, or a Taoist. He is a rich, new mind, and he can cast new pencils of lights into my own. But how rarely do we find him? We walk a treadmill and our eager worshippers of conformity would make uniforms for us. We are the Siamese twins who have never had a holiday from each other; we are a buying and selling fair to which everybody has brought cabbages, and we sit on our sacks, with nothing to trade but criticism.

We have been charged with a great project of revaluation, and when we get into trouble it is because we are not doing our work. We think our books are a wisdom when they are only a key to a wisdom. We pass the key from hand to hand or prostrate ourselves and worship it instead of using it to unlock the wealth of Hermes, Plato, Pythagoras, Lao Tszé, Kapila, Nanak, Sankara, Patanjali, Jesus, Plotinos, Paracelsus, Basilides, Vyasa, Zoroaster,

Homer, Buddha, Manu, Dante, Whitman, Tson-ka-pa, Rumi, Heraclitus. When all these and a thousand more have left theosophical books, why should a good man stay with slipshod simplifications and attenuations of Theosophy?

And the answer is that he will not and does not. After trying in vain for a while to fit his need to ours he leaves us and we are both poorer.

I suggest that we will do well, therefore, to disperse now into some of the many fields the Secret Doctrine opens up for us and do some of the work for which our Society was created. We have trodden on one another's toes long enough in the ever-narrowing field to which we have been reduced these last few years. Doing our duty thus we shall find out by a direct method without having to worry about authority whether or not the Masters speak the truth when They say Theosophy has always been the clue to the truth about the soul. This should not be a matter of belief on our part but a matter of demonstrated truth; and of all the ways of satisfying oneself of its verity the quickest is to find that with the Secret Doctrine one can solve the problems our learned moderns have failed to solve. It is a heartening thing to unriddle Plato where the erudite Dr. Jowett failed, and a student has new zest when Theosophy offers a simple clue to Egyptian problems that are insoluble to Thiele and Budge. We might get courage to do and say things—we might even get exponents in the public print—if we tested modern learning a little more by means of our key.

Such a process will not mean that our students will leave the study of Theosophy. On the contrary it will mean that they, having asked a new set of questions, will require a new set of answers. I have said that when questioning ends, study ends. Our business always is to

create new questions. The questing mood creates wisdom. Our students will find rather that they have never needed Theosophy so much before as when they set themselves to a specific enquiry.

They will study differently. A book will not be something to gorge, as a boar constrictor gorges his food, but something to pick over for the need of the moment. When one studies so, he acquires a new vigilance over the word and the intent of the writer. He will return again and again to the fruitful book. The sentimental book, the poor book, the rhetorical book, the who-was-I-in-my-last-incarnation book, he will throw away.

This series of articles then is for the student who will set himself to special study knowing that he will thereby enrich himself and the Society; knowing most of all that the effort to apply Theosophy to any problem is the fertile means of learning the Divine Tradition.

The articles will deal with the theory of comparative study and with the detail of work. Any student who cares to assume such a task I shall be glad to help personally or to find him a correspondent and helper from among those of our members already engaged in this method of study.

(Next month—Projection.)

“Theosophic Study” is the last of the series of articles by the late Roy Mitchell on his Theosophical researches which is available for publication. He had planned several longer series, and his brief notes and chapter plans indicate that these would also have been very valuable contributions to Theosophical literature—however, with his sudden death in 1944 all such plans were laid aside for this incarnation. “Theosophic Study” was not completed but nine articles of this series were written and will be reprinted here, together with a few separate articles on various subjects which have been collected from his papers and from other magazines. Editor.

GLEANINGS FROM NEOCONFUCIANISM

(Continued from Page 86)

That existed before heaven and earth;
Without sound without substance,
Dependent on nothing, unchanging,
All pervading, unailing.

One may think of it as the mother of
all things under heaven.

Its true name we do not know;

Way is the by-name that we give it.

In the Chung Yung or Doctrine of the Mean (said by some to be the esoteric work of Confucius) it is written that harmony is achieved by a man when his desires are satisfied to a right degree. We encounter the same doctrine in the art and philosophy of the Greeks who stressed beauty of proportion and shunned the excessive and extravagant in all things. We also find it in that little devotional book the *Gita* wherein the wise man is depicted as one who is thought-controlled and sense-restrained, one “whose desires enter his heart, as waters run into the unswelling passive ocean, which, though ever full, yet does not quit its bed” (W. Q. Judge translation).

In the Appendices (3) to the *Book of Changes* we find another perennial seed-idea—namely, that if you wish to preserve anything you must retain a little of its opposite. In other words, a democracy to last must contain certain authoritarian elements. What a world of truth there is in this apothegm. For instance, in this democracy of ours we have freedom of speech but at the same time we have stringent laws against slanderous and obscene speech. We have freedom of religion, too, but we have laws against the practice of polygamy by any Christian sect in imitation of the semi-barbarous Jewish patriarchs.

Both in the Appendices and Lao Tze we have references to the law of periodi-

city exemplified in that recurrent phenomenon—the waxing and waning of the moon. In other words, any thing, any emotion, any ideology which reaches an extreme of development reverts inevitably to its opposite. Hence the superior man of China sought to steer a middle course like the sage extolled in the Gita—eating not too much or too little, sleeping not too much or too little. Modesty, therefore, had its roots in a scientific psychology and fundamentally was an exercise of prudence. For the man of excessive pride was bound to be humbled as surely as the dawn followed upon the darkest hour of night. And the greedy man who overreached himself was fated to suffer losses. Yes, men as well as natural phenomena were under the jurisdiction of this law of reversal. As the wheel of life revolves the humble are exalted and the mighty fall, for every dog has his day as Shakespeare said. Han Wen-Kung, stalwart defender of social obligations, made this thought the key to his reflections on a wounded falcon in the following poem (Giles translation)—

O bird, methinks thy life of late
 Hath amply justified this fate!
 Thy sole delight to kill and steal,
 And then exultingly to wheel,
 Now sailing in the clear blue sky,
 Now on the wild gale sweeping by,
 Scorning thy kind of less degree
 As all unfit to mate with thee.
 But mark how fortune's wheel goes
 round;
 A pellet lays thee on the ground . . .

These ideas, and many more, were incorporated into a comprehensive system by Chu Hsi (1130-1200 A.D.), perhaps the greatest of Neoconfucian thinkers. He believed that everything had come into existence as a result of a mutually interdependent and complementary pair Ch'i and the Great Ultimate. Ch'i was

a generic term which included the whole range of matter from the gross to the ethereal. The Great Ultimate, on the other hand, embraced all the possible laws or ideas called Li in Chinese. Like the Platonic ideas this Li is real and eternal and gives to concrete things their actuality and function. The bridge between idea and matter is the positive and negative force—the yang and the yin. Have we not a parallel here to the Indian trilogy of mulapra-kriti, mahat and fohat?

It is only when our mind completely understands reason or Li that our destiny can be said to be accomplished, maintained the Neoconfucianist. To cultivate spirituality we must seek for Li in concrete things. For the one Great Ultimate is embodied in every object great or small just as the one moon is reflected in countless pools, lakes and rivers. Thus the "many" discovers to us the One.

The Neoconfucianists based their doctrine of brotherhood on the fact that all things have been evolved from the primordial substance Ch'i. When we love our fellow-man in the thought that he is derived from the same source as ourselves we are paying respect to our universal parents, Heaven and Earth. Ch'eng Hao, younger of the two famous Ch'eng brothers, pointed out that if this unity of human beings were not already a fact men would not be endowed with pity, which forbids our regarding the pain of another with equanimity.

There was a time in the history of Neoconfucianism when Zen Buddhism exerted a powerful influence. The idealistic tendency to focus the attention with sincerity and seriousness on *mind*, rather than on things, as Ch'eng Hao and Chu Hsi taught, came into vogue. Intellectuals were Confucianists as far as outward observance went but inwardly they had become subjective—in-different to everyday events. So in the

CORRESPONDENCE

Toronto, Ont.,
June 29th, 1951.

Editor,
The Canadian Theosophist,
Toronto, Ont.

Dear Sir:—

seventeenth century there took place another intellectual revolt, another Neo-confucian renaissance.¹⁴ Scholars like Tai Chen urged that mind or reason had been unduly accentuated. He defended feelings and desires on the ground that they are inborn and indissolubly attached to reason. We have an act of reason, he said, when desire is expressed neither too much nor too little. Moreover he showed how contrary it was to the spirit of common sense to talk of getting away from desire when no one could ignore the daily affair of eating and drinking.

Neoconfucianism, the spiritual philosophy of China's enlightened minority—her scholars, artists and journalists—is now threatened with extinction after 800 years. There has been a sympathetic turning towards Marxism. In the opinion of some of China's most advanced thinkers a long historical evolution in social thought has prepared her for this radical choice. The pragmatism of John Dewey, not inimical to Chinese practical humanism, still receives respectful attention. But the Vitalism of Bergson and Driesch is all but forgotten. And it had provided such a wholesome antidote to that fulsome worship of mechanism which swept the country in 1917 and came to a head in 1922. Will the better features of Neoconfucianism survive or will it be swamped by Western materialism? And by the latter I mean both materialistic, metaphysics and the economic interpretation of history. One would be sorry to see the doctrine of "human heartedness" and its attendant mystical ideal summarily rejected. Perhaps, as certain Chinese thinkers have suggested, China may absorb the positive method of logical analysis in which the West has specialized without sacrificing what is vital in her heritage.

¹⁴ See Dr. Chan Wing-Tsit's essay on Neoconfucianism.

It was somewhat pathetic to read in your May issue the notes of the General Secretary of our Canadian Section indicating lack of effective co-operation from the few Lodges that remain in Canada at the time of the recent elections. It would appear that a general decline has taken place in the cause's welfare.

Possibly the reason for this can be found in a candid inspection of other features in the June issue now to hand. The front page article "OUR RESPONSIBILITY" by Mrs. Shelley Newcombe of Montreal is a lofty inspiration. More and more of this is needed. Mrs. Newcombe catches the essential pith of things. Our Society is at its best when acting as an instrument for service to humanity. And truly our understanding and co-operation with India is a key issue.

But the letter from Mrs. Emily Brunton of Edmonton, Alta., carries us downwards towards the pit of despair. Surely it cannot be assumed that the Roman Catholic Church has agents working amongst Theosophists seeking our destruction? My guess is that this very large and powerful church does not bother very much about us.

Small wonder. There seems to be plenty of agnostically minded members of the Society ready to cast aspersions on others who while Theosophists also go to church. The Liberal Catholic Church, to which I do not belong, is open for inspection. It has no basically evil purpose. It is only a smaller group of Theosophists who seek spiritual comfort in church worship.

All of this poses the question, Canadian Theosophy, Whither Bound? Frankly I think it is not bound anywhere. All that is now taking place is the loyal co-operation of a few sturdy souls, in only a few centres, trying to hold together something that is falling apart. The policies of Adyar are supported by 95% of World Theosophists. The policy of disassociation is now 30 years old. It does not mean what Mrs. Brunton has thought at all. Her lack of understanding of its real meaning is the fault of the "Canadian Theosophist", and the present Executive. The true meaning of the policy should have been made clear long since. To understand it properly one should read a short article by the General Secretary of the Theosophical Society in England. This can be obtained from the London Offices of our Society. The writer, Groves, merely explained in the clearest possible language that members of our society, as individuals should identify themselves with all other social-religious movements as known Theosophists, but that the Society itself should remain aloof from organizational affiliations.

Naturally if Canadian Theosophists are not told this, some confusion will arise when the words of our very able President, Mr. Jinarajadasa, are read. More articles like that of Mrs. Shelley Newcombe are wanted. Less trouble-making letters from Theosophical Agnostics.

Yours sincerely,
Frederick E. Tyler, F.T.S.

Fortunately it will not be necessary for our readers to write to London for a copy of the article on disassociation by Mrs. Groves, General Secretary of the Theosophical Society in England; this was published in the C. T. for February 1951 but doubtless escaped Mr. Tyler's notice. In the same issue there also appeared a statement from Mr. Jinarajadasa together with the text of a further explanatory resolution which was

passed by the General Council on Dec. 25th, 1950. A long article on the subject by Mr. Jinarajadasa was published in May 1950, and there were several other articles—in fact, our giving of so much space to this matter was criticized. The Canadian Executive did not authorize the publication of the extensive correspondence respecting the difference of opinion between the President and Rukmini Devi over this subject, as this related mainly to the occupancy of certain lands and buildings at Adyar, a matter which in the opinion of the Executive, lay within the discretion of the officials at Headquarters. The Canadian Executive strongly supported the President on the principle of disassociation.

T.S. members are free to join the Liberal Catholic Church or any other church. The disassociation policy affirms this right, but the Society cannot be associated with the Church. Mr. Jinarajadasa as an individual is at liberty to believe in the Apostolic Succession of the Church Bishops, but when, as President, he defends this claim, the spirit of disassociation is threatened.

Our correspondent's statement that 'The policies of Adyar are supported by 95% of World Theosophists' is open to serious question. The Theosophical Movement is world-wide and includes other Societies than Adyar. The United Lodge of Theosophists, The Theosophical Society at Pasadena, various smaller independent Societies and a goodly sprinkling of members of the Adyar Society itself, do not support the 'policies' of Adyar, if by 'policies' our correspondent includes the teachings which have supplanted the teachings of H. P. B. and the Masters.

Mr. Tyler's conclusion that 'Canadian Theosophy' is not bound anywhere, will astonish our many correspondents in other lands who respect the Canadian Society for its impartiality and its independence of thought, and who regard our group, small in number though it be, as an important factor in World Theosophy.

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

The Theosophical Society was formed at New York in 1875. It has three objects:

1. *To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.*
2. *To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science.*
3. *To investigate the unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.*

The Society affords a meeting place for students who have three aims in common, *first*, the ideal of Universal Brotherhood; *second*, the search for Truth, and *third*, a desire to associate and work with other men and women having similar aims and ideals. The acceptance of the First Object is required of all those who desire to become members; whether or not a member engages actively in the work contemplated in the Second and Third Objects is left to his or her discretion.

The nature and purposes of the Society preclude it from having creeds or dogmas, and freedom of thought and expression among its members is encouraged. An official statement on this point; “. . . there is no opinion, by whomsoever taught or held, that is in any way binding on any member of the Society, none of which a member is not free to accept or reject.” The statement calls upon the members “to maintain, defend, and act upon this fundamental principle . . . and fearlessly to exercise his own right of liberty of thought and of expression thereof within the limits of courtesy and consideration for others.”

Theosophy or ‘Divine Wisdom’ is that body of ancient truths relating to the spiritual nature of man and the universe which has found expression down through the ages in religions, philosophies, sciences, the arts, mysticism, occultism and other systems of thought. Theosophy is not the exclusive possession of any one organization. In the modern Theosophical Movement, these ancient truths have been re-stated and an extensive literature on the subject has come into being. The teachings are not put forward for blind belief; they are to be accepted only if the truth that is in them finds an echo in the heart. Each student should by ‘self-induced and self-devised’ methods establish his own Theosophy, his own philosophy of life. The Movement encourages all students of Theosophy to become self-reliant, independent in thought, mature in mind and emotions and, about all other things, to work for the welfare of mankind to the end that humanity as a whole may become aware of its diviner powers and capabilities.