

CHARLES STRONG (AUSTRALIAN CHURCH)  
MEMORIAL TRUST

**MAN**

**DETERMINED**

**OR FREE?**

A Study of  
Liu Shao's Treatise On Man

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*In order to further and encourage the study of comparative religion in Australia, the Charles Strong Trust decided in 1974 to ask the co-operation of the Australian New Zealand Society for Theological Studies in providing an annual Charles Strong lecture to be given in connection with the A.N.Z.S.T.S. yearly conference.*

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The Charles Strong Lecture for 1975

MAN, DETERMINED OR FREE?

With special reference to the *Treatise on Man* by Liu Shao 190?-250?AD

Douglas Lancashire

In an article(1) which seeks, in part, to explain why Confucianism did not develop a concept of "revelation" analogous to that found in Christianity, Mou Tsung-san asserts that, whereas the early Confucian interest in human nature might have led to such a development, Liu Shao's *Treatise on Man* (third century A.D.) resulted in a shift of emphasis, the consequence of which was an increasing concern with the nature of human "talent" and the investigation of man's natural endowments.

Whether Mou's statement is entirely justified or not, it is certainly intriguing, if only because this first essay into the field of anthropology in China has been largely ignored by scholars in later times. Indeed, Fung Yu-lan,(2) and Chan Wing-tsit,(3) make no mention whatsoever of Liu Shao's *Treatise*. Perhaps because of its rationalistic and scientific temper and its interest in psychology Western scholars have in recent years paid it rather more attention. J.K. Shryock published a translation of it in 1937,(4) describing it in his introduction as a work concerned with "applied psychology of character" in which most of the author's judgements are of permanent value.(5) Joseph Needham(6) accepts the high value placed on the *Treatise* by Shryock and echoes his sentiments when he states that it is "the most important book on the psychology of character in old Chinese literature".(7) Alfred Forke(8) gives the impression of being less enamoured of the work, but describes it as "the first attempt at an anthropology or characterology ... principally descriptive and ethical."(9)

Now, whatever the value of the *Treatise* as an exposition of human psychology or as a landmark in the history of anthropology in China, when viewed as part of the whole tapestry of Chinese thought, it poses a number of philosophical problems with which it may not at first appear to be concerned. These problems include the question of the nature of man - a topic which has always been central to Chinese thought and which is "debated" even today in Chinese society - and the question of free will. In this lecture, I shall be chiefly concerned with the implications of Liu Shao's *Treatise*, and the teachings of other thinkers, for the freedom or otherwise of the human will; and since the mainstream of Chinese thought focuses on man's moral life in society, I shall be talking about freedom on the ethical level: the freedom to choose what is good.

But as many writers dealing with this subject have shown, ideas and beliefs concerning determinism and the freedom of the will cannot be divorced from man's understanding of himself and of the moral and religious goals available to him; and this, in turn, has always been affected by man's view of the nature of the universe and of his place within it. Therefore, before examining Liu Shao's *Treatise*, and before attempting to see what are the implications of its teaching for the exercise of free will, we must summarize what Chinese thinkers had come to understand with regard to the

nature of the universe, and, as a corollary, what they had come to think concerning human nature.

### Early Chinese Cosmology

To judge from the teachings of Confucius (551-429 B.C.) and Mencius (372-289 B.C.) as these are recorded in the *Confucian Analects* and in the *Mencius*, these two men evinced little if any interest in the speculations which undoubtedly already existed in their day as to the nature of the universe and the way it had come into existence. Concerned primarily with society and the moral principles which should govern it, Confucius and Mencius appear to have been content simply to accept the explanations found in early literature, and, in particular, in the *Book of Odes*, as to the way in which man had appeared on earth. The ode which was of greatest importance to them in this connection and which they felt to be a sufficient statement of their view of the origin of man is the one which asserts that "Heaven, in producing mankind, gave them their various faculties and relations with their specific laws; these are the invariable rules of nature for all to hold, and all love this admirable virtue."(10) Quoting this ode, Mencius remarked: "Confucius said, 'The maker of this ode knew indeed the principle of our nature!'"(11)

There continues to be disagreement among scholars as to the degree of personality which can be attributed to Heaven in the minds of Confucius and Mencius; but it is clear that the Heaven-bestowed laws which are an attribute of every man's nature are the moral laws of "humanity" or "love" and "righteousness" which, when expressed concretely in society, are "filial piety", "loyalty", "reciprocity" or "consideration for others", and "propriety".

But whereas Confucius and Mencius were not given to speculation on the nature of the universe, other thinkers were.

The three most obvious groups of speculative thinkers in early China were the Taoists, the exponents of the dualistic ideas of *yin and yang*, and those who sought to relate all things to the Five Forces or Elements, namely, wood, fire, earth, metal and water. The doctrines of all three of these schools developed at about the same time, that is to say, in the fourth and third centuries B.C.

The Taoists, as they are represented in the *Tao-te ching* and the *Chuangtzu*, were clearly looking for the unconditioned reality within and beyond the universe of change. Heaven, which might still be a high god in the teachings of Confucius and Mencius, is replaced by *Tao* or the Way which defies any kind of description. It is that from which "Heaven and Earth sprang",(12) but it is nameless. Unlike Heaven, which had served as the touchstone of morality, the *Tao* is seen as transcending morality. Standards of beauty and ugliness, of right and wrong and, indeed, all dualities are conceived of as arising out of man's conditioned existence. The concept of "rightness" can only exist where there is a concept of "wrongness", and "ugliness" can only exist where there is a general concept of "beauty". The *Tao*, however, transcends all such dualities, or is the absolute in which all dualities are resolved. The *Tao*, says the *Tao-te ching*, "is like an empty vessel that yet may be drawn from, without ever needing to be filled. It is bottomless, the very progenitor of all things in the world. In it all sharpness is blunted, all tangles untied, all glare tempered, all dust smoothed. It is like a deep pool that never dries."(13)

Here, then, we have a "mystery" or something "darker than any mystery"(14) which

transcends "being and not-being"(15) and all the dualities which result from material existence. Its relationship to the world of things can be described only in a poetical way: it is the "progenitor of all things,"(16) "the doorway whence issued all secret essences."(17)

Dualism, as this is represented in the terms *yin and yang*, does not find expression in early Chinese literature. Confucian texts such as the *Confucian Analects*, the *Mencius*, the *Doctrine of the Mean* and the *Great Learning* make no mention of *yin* and *yang*. The earliest systematic treatment of *yin-yang* dualism appeared in the writings of Tsou Yen, who lived towards the end of the fourth century B.C., but his works are no longer extant, and our knowledge of Tsou Yen and his teachings is largely derived from the *Historical Records of Ssu-ma Ch'ien* completed in the first century B.C. (18) It is probable that the terms *yin* and *yang* were at first related to divination practices, and that only very much later did they come to acquire a significance for cosmology. The terms *yin*, signifying all that is feminine, weak, cold and negative, and *yang*, connoting masculinity, strength, warmth and positiveness, were associated with the moon and the sun, summer and winter, but were regarded as complementing each other rather than as standing over against each other.

The doctrine of the Five Forces or Elements also seems to have arisen about the fourth century B.C., and although probably representative of an independent school of thought at the outset, quickly came to be associated with *yin-yang* dualism and finally to be incorporated into the increasingly elaborate cosmologies which reached full flower in the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.). Summing up the doctrine of the Five Elements, Fung Yu-lan says: the Five Elements or Powers are five natural forces, each of which has its period of rise and decay. Both natural and human events are under the control of that element which happens to be in the ascendancy, but when its cycle is finished and it declines, it is followed by the next force in the series that can overcome it, and which, in its turn, flourishes and has its cycle. Wood can overcome earth; metal can overcome wood; fire, metal; water, fire; and earth, water again; so that there is an endless cycle of elements. Changes in human history are but manifestations of these natural forces, each dynasty being represented by one 'Power' and the colour and institutions which it assumes being determined by this Power. According to such a theory, the courses of nature and of human events are interlocking . . ."(19)

We turn now to the major features of Chinese cosmological thought as they are found in the "Appendices" of the divination manual, the *Book of Changes*, and in the writings of the *Huai-nan-tzu* and of Tung Chung-shu, the greatest of the Confucian synthesizers of the Han dynasty.

In the "Appendices" to the *Changes* no mention is made of the Five Elemental Forces which had been employed to interpret "the structure of the universe".(20) The two principles of *yin* and *yang*, however, have the important function of explaining "the origin of the world."(21) Thus, *yin and yang* are seen as two cosmic principles the interaction of which leads ultimately to "the development of society, morality, and civilization". *Yin* and *yang*, however, are not final reality. This, according to the *Changes*, is the *T'ai-chi* or Grand Ultimate from which *yin* and *yang* emerge, and which represents the primal unity. The Grand Ultimate, like the *Tao* of the *Tao-te ching*, transcends all dualities, and is therefore the foundation of the cosmos.

Although the *Huai-nan-tzu* represents the collective views of a number of thinkers of the first and second centuries B.C.,(23) and is lacking in philosophical unity, it contains the fullest accounts of the nature of the cosmos up till that time. Broadly speaking we may say that for the philosophers of the *Huai-nan-tzu* Heaven and Earth are preceded by a "state of amorphous formlessness"(24) which they termed the "Great Beginning".(25) "This Great Beginning", we are told in chapter three, "produced an empty extensiveness, and this empty extensiveness produced the cosmos."(26) A term which was to play a significant role in later Chinese thought is now given a place of some importance. This term, *ch'i*, has been variously translated "fluid", "ether", "material. energy". Immediately after the statement that "empty extensiveness produced the cosmos", we read, "The cosmos produced the primal fluid (*yuan-ch'i*), which had its limits. That which was clear and light collected to form Heaven. That which was heavy and turbid congealed to form Earth."(27) Relating *yin* and *yang* to Heaven and Earth and "materializing" these two principles in the process, the passage goes on to say: "The essences of Heaven and Earth formed the *yin* and the *yang*, and the concentrated essences of the *yin* and *yang* formed the four seasons. The scattered essences of the four seasons formed the myriad things."(28) The actualization of the "myriad things" was brought about through the hardness and softness of *yin* and *yang* "mutually completing each other," the "murky fluid" forming reptiles, and the "Finer essence" forming man.(29)

There is little doubt that the political unification of China under the Ch'in and Han administrations served as a powerful impetus to the synthesizing of the various strands of early Chinese thought into a coherent philosophy of life embracing both the cosmos and the new political reality. The trends in philosophy and political ideology eventually found their focus in the thought of Tung Chung-shu (179-104 B.C.) who created a synthesis which embraced both the metaphysical and the physical worlds. He provided a political and social philosophy which allowed for the creation of a stable society as well as a metaphysics which offered a firm ground and foundation for the social system.

Tung Chung-shu, the greatest Confucian of his time and the man who did more than any other to have Confucianism accepted as the ideology of the state, is sometimes said by Chinese scholars to have stood within the Mencian tradition. Be that as it may, he happily incorporated most of the non-Confucian speculative thought I have just outlined into his philosophy. He brought together the doctrines of *yin-yang* dualism, ideas concerning the Five Elements, notions of heaven and earth as these were found in the non-Confucian thinkers, numerology, reflections on the seasonal cycle, the concept of *ch'i* ("fluid", "ether", "matter", "material force") and combined these with the teachings of Confucius, Mencius, and Mencius' younger contemporary, Hsun Tzu. By so doing he injected a moral dimension into his cosmology which was generally lacking in the cosmologies of the non-Confucian thinkers.

Tung's philosophy is a system of interrelationships in which everything in the cosmos - the elements, the seasons, the directions of the compass, colours, numbers and the musical notes of the pitch-pipes - is correlated and has its proper place.

Rather than employ the term *Tao* or Way of the Taoists for the ground of the universe, Tung introduced the word *Yuan*, which means "origin". This *Yuan*, said

Tung, is "the great beginning", that is to say, that from which all things derive their being. "This *Yuan*," he said, "is like a source ... It permeates heaven and earth from beginning to end, therefore *Yuan* is the root of all things, and in it lies man's own origin."(30) It exists prior to the physical heaven and earth.

Now although Tung spoke frequently of "heaven" in its physical sense, he also used the term in a way reminiscent of Confucius and Mencius, that is to say, as a conscious, controlling force which, despite Fung Yu-lan's assertion that it was not an anthropological deity,(31) is nevertheless said to possess "mind" and "feelings" analogous to those of man. Unfortunately, as Fung points out,(32) Tung fails to say whether his cognitive and conscious Heaven also owes its being to *Yuan*. Although one may be tempted to argue from this silence that Tung regarded this conscious Heaven as the active and creation-directed aspect of *Yuan* (i.e. *Yuan* viewed from the standpoint of its energies), this would suggest a degree of precision from which I suspect Tung himself would have turned aside.

For Tung, the material universe is composed of *ch'i* (material force) which, undivided, constitutes a unity, but which, divided, becomes *yin* and *yang*; quartered, the four seasons and, further subdivided, the Five Elemental Forces. The four seasons and the Five Elemental Forces produce seasonal cycles. The whole process is, of course, regarded as subject to "the waxing and waning movements of the *yin* and *yang*."(33)

But all this activity and motion is not something which is merely mechanical. The process is moral in character since *yang* is regarded as "Heaven's beneficent power" and *yin* as "Heaven's chastising power".(34) Heaven responds to evil behaviour in man, and especially in the ruler, by means of "untoward and portentous occurrences" in the world about him.

## Human Nature

We now turn to the question of human nature as this was understood in the light of the various cosmologies. As anyone who has recently visited China will be aware, part of the current campaign against Confucius in that country has been directed against a work known as the *San-tzu-ching* (The Three Characters Classic). This little catechism, which was probably composed in the thirteenth century and which was usually the first book placed in the hands of school children well into the republican era, affirms in its first two lines the Mencian doctrine that all men are born with a nature which is essentially good. At one school I visited, where detailed attacks on this classic had been carefully written up on class-room blackboards, a young lad of about ten was placed in front of his class and, in a manner reminiscent of children of earlier generations, recited a new catechism which began with the words "Human nature is neither good nor bad . . ."

I doubt very much whether that little boy or his classmates understood the full significance of what he was saying, but the fact that he had to say it, and the fact that such teaching is being inculcated in every child today, show that the problem of human nature is as live an issue in Communist China as it was for the Chinese philosophers in the fourth and third centuries B.C.

The categorical assertion that human nature is essentially good was first made by Mencius, although it can be argued that the inference is already there in a number of the oldest extant Chinese writings. Already in the ode quoted above, Heaven was

regarded as having produced mankind, and as having provided him with moral laws. It can be deduced from this that man was believed to have the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong; moreover the ode injects a more positive note by asserting that people hold on to the norms because they "love this admirable virtue."

Confucius no doubt had this same ode in mind when he asserted, "Heaven produced the virtue that is in me", (35) and although he did not say in so many words that man's nature is essentially good, his teaching concerning Jen (Goodness or Humanity) and his claim that "Virtue (humanity) is at hand." (36) suggest that whatever the moral failures of man, Confucius regarded him as possessed of an innate moral compass which, if he would only steer by it, would guide him to human perfection or, to use Confucius' own terminology, sagehood.

In Book VI Part 1 of the *Book of Mencius*, Mencius employed short allegories to illustrate his teaching that man's nature is essentially good. In one of these he likened man's deviation from his good nature to a mountain which, though once covered with beautiful trees, lost its beauty because people came with axes and choppers and cut down the trees. The inference here was that the goodness of human nature is "rubbed away by the rough contacts of daily life" (37) as much as by any carelessness or indolence on the part of the individual himself. That a man's good nature with which he is endowed at birth is never altogether lost was affirmed, however, in the illustration of the child who falls into a well. In it Mencius said:

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, that the feeling of modesty and complaisance is essential to man, and that the feeling of approving and disapproving is essential to man. The feeling of commiseration is the principle of benevolence (or humanity). The feeling of shame and dislike is the principle of righteousness. The feeling of modesty and complaisance is the principle of propriety. The feeling of approving and disapproving is the principle of knowledge. Men have these four principles, just as they have their four limbs. When men, having these four principles, yet say of themselves that they cannot develop them, they play the thief with themselves ... Since all men have these four principles in themselves, let them know to give them all their development and completion ... Let them have their complete development, and they will suffice to love and protect all within the four seas. Let them be denied that development, and they will not suffice for a man to serve his parents with. (38)

Two points emerge from this passage; first, that man is endowed at birth with a sense of right and wrong, and second, that whatever adverse effects society may

have on man's moral disposition in his post-natal state, he has a Pelagian capacity for "self-improvement", a self-improvement which, in the Confucian tradition, had to be brought about through appropriate education. So strong already was the Confucian belief in the moral perfectibility of man that even Hsun Tzu (298-238 B.C.), the younger contemporary of Mencius who adopted a considerably more pessimistic view of man, found it necessary to assert it. Some would say he was here illogical, since he expressly rejected the notion of a moral and purposive Heaven, in favour of a Heaven which approximated to the Taoist concept of the Way, and which is better translated "Nature".

Like the Taoists, Hsun Tzu's cosmos was naturalistic. The sage, in Hsun Tzu's scheme of things, was not so much the man who was aware of his Heaven-endowed principle of "humanity" and who allowed it full play in society, but rather the man who fully understood the processes of nature and made use of them. Man's nature was derived from Heaven, but since Heaven lacked any ethical content, so also did human nature. Morality was man made and was necessary in order to curb man's natural tendencies. It was acquired and not innate. Morality for Hsun Tzu was synonymous with order, and the practice of morality was a habit which resulted from the teaching a man received concerning the "mechanistic" orderliness of the universe and the drilling he was given in the rules of proper conduct. And if we ask whence man obtained his capacity for orderly living, Hsun Tzu's answer was that he obtained it from his faculty of intelligence.(39)

Now although, Hsun Tzu's naturalistic interpretation of the cosmos owed much to Taoist influence, it is clear that his concern with the moral life places him firmly within the Confucian orbit. This is not to say that the Taoists were opposed to morality, but it is a fact that they were more concerned with naturalness and spontaneity. For them, the action of the Tao or Way was spontaneous, and since man was a product of the Tao's spontaneous action, it was natural that his nature too should be viewed in terms of spontaneity. All moral codes drawn up by and imposed on man were regarded by the Taoists as artificial, and it is therefore not surprising that Confucianism should come in for severe criticism at their hands. Confucians wanted people to be transformed through education, whereas Chuang Tzu, for example, wanted to leave any transformation to the things themselves.(40)

Hsun Tzu's naturalistic interpretation of the cosmos, his pessimistic view of man, and his tendency to equate morality with orderliness were taken over by his disciple, Han Fei Tzu (died, 233 B.C.) and transformed into a philosophical system known as Legalism, a philosophy which, under the first empire (221-206 B.C.), was adopted as the official ideology of the state. Carrying Hsun Tzu's views to their logical conclusion, Han Fei and his fellow Legalists rejected Confucian moral standards and the concept of moral perfectibility and advocated instead a rigorous system of law, the keeping of which was to be encouraged by generous rewards and severe punishments. In Han Fei's thought, Heaven was not so much a final reality as a manifestation of the Tao or Way which, he said, "is that by which all things become what they are."(41) In an important chapter in which he discussed the nature of the *Tao* Han Fei asserted that it "is that with which all principles are commensurable." "Principles," he said, "are patterns (wen) according to which all things come into being, and *Tao* is the cause of their being. Therefore it is said that *Tao* puts things in

order. Things have their respective principles and cannot interfere with each other." Since this is so principles are controlling factors in things. Everything has its own principle different from that of others, and Tao is commensurable with all of them"(42)

HsUn Tzu had asserted that man was evil in the sense that he tended to allow his emotions and desires to take control, and Han Fei, likewise, believed that man's actions were motivated primarily by greed and selfishness. It is obvious, too, from his comments on the *Tao*, that Han Fei was also influenced by the Taoists. Despite the debt he owed to Confucianism and Taoism, however, his conclusions as to how men were to be dealt with were totally at variance with those reached by Hsun Tzu and the Taoists. Whereas Hsun Tzu taught that it was possible to lead men to goodness through moral education, Han Fei asserted that because of the laziness and waywardness of most people, no amount of consideration for them was likely to help them; and whereas the Taoists believed in the importance of every individual acting spontaneously according to his nature, Han Fei maintained that to allow this would be to invite anarchy.(43) He would have agreed with Hsun Tzu who said of the Taoists that they were "blinded by Nature and did not know man."(44) Human nature being what it was "men (had to be) led by governmental organization and kept in their place by punishments, if the world (was) to be properly ordered."(45)

It is interesting to note that as part of the current anti-Confucius campaign, the works of Han Fei Tzu and other Legalists have been reprinted, and people are being urged to study them.

Now you will remember that Tung Chung-shu employed not only the concept of a conscious and moral Heaven reminiscent of an older, theistic tradition, but that he also introduced the notion of *yuan* or "origin" which he described as "the great beginning of all things". You will also remember that Tung failed, perhaps deliberately, to indicate the precise relationship between *yuan* and Heaven. Having asserted the existence of *yuan*, he said little more about it, concentrating his attention instead on the nature of Heaven. His reason for doing so was no doubt because he intended his philosophy to be practical rather than speculative. Like Mencius, Tung regarded Heaven as the producer of man. Heaven, he said, was "man's supreme ancestor" and provided him with his physical body but also, through the "transforming influence of Heaven's will", with a vigour directed towards humanity and love, and, through "the transforming influence of Heaven's orderly principle", (46) with the capacity to act righteously.

But the question arises as to what form these moral concepts took in Heaven itself. When he related Heaven to the rest of creation Tung spoke of the *yin* and *yang* ethers (which interacted to produce the Five Elements, the seasons and so on) as pertaining to Heaven, and, likewise, when linking Heaven to man in his moral endeavours, Tung again referred to these ethers, asserting that *yang* was "Heaven's beneficent power" and *yin* "Heaven's chastizing power". What Tung regarded as morality in man was to be viewed as *yn* and *yang* in Heaven. For Tung, man was a creature endowed with a nature (*hsing*) and feelings (*ch'ing*), his nature being derived from Heaven's *yang* and his feelings from its *yin*. When his nature asserted itself man acted in accordance with the principle of humanity or love, whereas when his feelings

asserted themselves he tended to act covetously. Thus Tung stated: "Truly, there exist in man both love and covetousness, each of which lies within his body. What is thus called the body is received from Heaven. Heaven has its dual manifestations of *yin* and *yang*, and the body likewise has the dual qualities of covetousness and love."(47)

Like Heaven's *yin* and *yang* man's nature and feelings represented potentialities; potentialities which, if they were to find proper expression, had to be developed under some kind of control. "Heaven," said Tung, "has its restraints over the *yin* and *yang*, and the individual has his confiner of the feelings and desires; in this way he is at one with the course of Heaven. Thus the *yin* in its movements is not permitted to concern itself with spring and summer, and the moon when it is new is always obscured by the sun's light ... Such is the way in which Heaven restrains the *yin*."(48) Man, similarly, was capable of controlling his nature and feelings - his *yang* and *yin*. For man, mind was the confiner.

This reference to mind brings us to the third quality (the other two being "humanity" and "righteousness") which Tung regarded as essential to the whole man - the quality of "wisdom". To possess wisdom was to possess foresight. Wisdom permitted a man to see the implications of his actions; to be able to judge an end from a beginning. Like other Confucians before him, Tung emphasized the importance of education, a process whereby man was taught to model his activities on those of Heaven.

Two final points need to be made before we leave Tung Chung-shu. The first point is that although he said that Heaven was able to exercise a restraint on the activities of *yin* and *yang*, these two material forces appear to have been so much a part of Heaven that Heaven must be regarded as sharing in matter itself and as being an integral part of the cosmos rather than as standing over against it. The second point is that by endowing Heaven with feelings of pleasure and displeasure and by regarding it as a dispenser of rewards and punishments, Tung Chung-shu contributed to the growth of a religious outlook among the Confucian scholars of the early Han Dynasty, a religious outlook which disposed some of them to pay honour to Confucius with religious devotion.

The decline of the Han dynasty makes sorry reading. Etienne Balazs, in his article "La crise sociale et la philosophie politique a la fin des Han"(49) has graphically described how, in the second half of the second century, new families which had risen to power undermined the stability of the state through their dedication to self-interest, and how the eunuchs at court exploited their position to secure favours for their relatives and for merchants and manufacturers with whom they had established a lucrative relationship.

In 166 A.D. the eunuchs embarked on the violent repression of the *literati* who, to defend their hard-won right to public office had increasingly denounced these newly powerful groups at Court for their corruption and extravagance. The complicated infighting between the various rival groups which were determined to preserve their power and wealth led to economic chaos in which the losers were the peasantry. Increasingly desperate as drought and famine added to the hardships they were already experiencing as a consequence of the rivalries among the ruling classes, the peasantry was moved to rebellion by the leaders of popular or religious Taoism. Establishing autonomous governments of their own, these leaders sought to alleviate

the sufferings of their followers by providing them with the essentials of life. So successful were they, that they soon posed a threat to the legitimate government, launching the Yellow Turban rebellions in 184 and 189.

The rebellions forced the warring factions in the ruling circles into a temporary alliance and a united effort was made to crush the uprisings. Millions of lives were lost and the country was laid waste, but the momentary victory for the Han forces was assured, factional warfare broke out once again and the government disintegrated. Men who had built up private armies during the war against the Yellow Turbans seized power within their own regions. Despite the efforts of various strong men to unite the country in the years which followed, the period of disunion continued until the founding of the Sui dynasty in 589 A. D.

The decline of Han government both morally and politically led to a breakup of the Confucian synthesis which, in its political ramifications, had made the ruler the prime link between Heaven and man and therefore the linchpin of human society. As circumstances grew worse, thoughtful men increasingly questioned the moral and political assumptions so painstakingly built up during the height of Han power. Although unwilling to set aside all hierarchy and order, they rejected the strongly religious element in early Han Confucianism and turned more and more to a naturalistic interpretation of man and the universe, seeking to discover how man might best fulfil himself in a world which appeared to lack any absolute moral foundation. They could no longer accept a Heaven which was no more than man writ large. In these circumstances, it should not surprise us that in the long run it was Taoism and Buddhism which were to benefit the most from this loss of faith.

As the situation steadily grew worse, and men began to think more of escaping the upheavals rather than of repairing society, Taoism proved increasingly attractive for it provided a philosophical basis for the criticism of Confucianism as well as justification for an escapist attitude. Neo-Taoism, as this movement is often called, flourished between the years 240 and 260, but its vitality soon declined and "its mode of discourse - *ch'ing-t'an* - ceased to be a speculative instrument (and became, instead) a plaything of vacuous and cynical aristocrats who watched idly as China slid further into chaos."(50)

Having thus briefly sketched the social and political circumstances of the final years of the Han dynasty and the early years of the period of disunion, we must now turn to Liu Shao and his *Treatise on Man*. The Yellow Turban rebellions of 184 and 189 and the highwater mark of Neo-Taoism in the years 240-260 serve as the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem* of his life, for he appears to have been alive between the years 190 and 250.(51)

Liu's *Treatise* contains twelve *p'ien* or sections which are grouped together in the following manner: first, four sections with the titles 1. Nine Characteristics, 2. Types of Personality, 3. Men Classified according to Occupation, 4. Principles of Talents. Second, five sections with the titles 5. Capacities, 6. Advantages and defects, 7. How to know other men, 8. Heroes 9. Eight Modes of Observation. Third, three sections with the titles 10. Seven Errors of Judgement, 11. Difficulties in Assessing the Effectiveness of Men, and 12. The Elimination of Strife.(52)

These three groups may be said to fall into the following categories (i) the theoretical, (ii) the practical, and (iii) the pitfalls to be avoided in the assessment and utilization of individuals.

Let us begin by examining what Liu had to say on the theoretical level. He commenced by asserting that "That which is essential to men (i.e. that which makes man man) is the nature with which he is born. The principle of that nature is subtle and mysterious (*yuan*), and no one can probe it to its depths unless he be a sage. All living beings harbour the primitive material force (*yuan-i*) which forms their characters. They are endowed with *yin* and *yang* by means of which their nature is established, and they incorporate the Five Elemental Forces by means of which their bodies are formed."(53)

It is clear from this passage that Liu accepted the basic theory of the origin of man and the universe propounded by many of the thinkers of the Han dynasty. Like them he conceived of a primal unity of material force from which emerged the principles of *yin* and *yang* and the Five Elements. What is missing, however, is any reference to Heaven as a guardian of moral values and as a judge of human behaviour. Throughout Liu's *Treatise* such references as there are to moral qualities in man are traced directly to his physical endowments.

In a manner reminiscent of the Huai-nan-tzu and Tung Chung-shu the Five Elemental Forces are incorporated in man in such a way that wood is related to the bones, metal to the tendons, fire to breath or the life force, earth to flesh, and water to blood. Men's qualities and characters are regarded as commensurate with the qualities of these material endowments. Liu therefore asserted that when the bones are firm yet flexible a man is resolute yet benevolent; that strong muscles or tendons denote courage and justice; that clear breath or life force implies culture, and so on. All these characteristics, said Liu, are imprinted in men's features, reflected in men's eyes and can be deduced from their deportment. Benevolence, for example, is characterized by features which are gentle and soft, whereas courage is expressed in proud and energetic features, and the intelligent have transparent and open features. The look in the eyes of the benevolent is sincere and direct; in that of the courageous it is bright and strong.(54)

Liu stated, however, that of all the characteristics found in man, that which merited the highest value was moderation. "The character of moderation," he said, "is marked by mildness and flavourlessness." This was because the man of moderation was "able to blend the Five Elemental Forces and regulate their transformations. Therefore," he continued, "when one observes a man and investigates his character one must begin by investigating the degree of moderation in him, and only then proceed to find out how intelligent he is." When a man has the capacity for moderation he is unlikely to be partial or prejudiced in his relations with others.

Like all the other characteristics enumerated by Liu, moderation was also referred to man's material endowments; but the man whose material endowments issued in moderation was likely to be a sage.

At this point it is important to notice a fundamental difference between Liu Shao's concept of a sage and that of Confucius and Mencius. For Confucius and Mencius to be a sage was to realize fully in society the moral principles of Humanity and Right-

eousness bestowed by Heaven. For Liu, on the other hand, to be a sage was to hold in perfect harmony perfect physical endowments.

Second only to moderation was intelligence. Intelligence, for Liu, had its origin in the dual essences of *yin* and *yang*; he said: "When *yin* and *yang* are serene and harmonious a man is illuminated within and intelligent without. The sage is unalloyed and radiant and unites both these virtues within himself. He knows the lowliest beginnings and understands their complete unfolding. He who is not a sage cannot succeed in uniting these two virtues. Thus, a clever thinker may comprehend the workings of evolution but not the primary idea, whilst another to whom the primary idea is entrusted knows the motionless source, but is confused by the flood of the evolutionary process. These two types of men are like the fire and the sun which illumine, but the interiors of which elude observation, and metal and water which are bright within, but which cannot give off light."(56)

Liu's Treatise was clearly an attempt to provide a guide for rulers and men in authoritative positions who had to select suitable individuals for various occupations within the state.(57) Having therefore given an account of the factors which go to forming the individual character of a man, and having analyzed the characteristics of various types of men from the sage downwards, Liu proceeded to enumerate twelve occupations or pursuits and to relate people to them on the basis of their characters. These occupations included those of the government official, the learned advisor, great officers, artists, writers, scholars, dialecticians, heroes, the virtuous and so on. Liu then drew on outstanding men of the past to illustrate his thesis that certain types of men are naturally suited to certain types of occupation or activity. For example, Kuan Chung, a distinguished minister who served under Huan, a ruler of the feudal state of Ch'i in the seventh century B.C., and Shan Yang, a minister in the state of Ch'in in the fourth century B.C., were held up as examples of the vocation of learned advisor; Yen Ling of the Warring States period and Yen Ying, a great officer of the state of Ch'i in the sixth century B.C., were referred to as models of the incorrupt official; Ssu-ma Ch'ien and Pan Ku, the two greatest historians of the Han dynasty were cited as examples of the writer's occupation and so on. Each occupation was shown to require certain talents and characteristics in combination, and the more perfect, complete and balanced they were in man, the more suited was he to bear the burden of high office.(58)

Neither Confucius nor Mencius received honourable mention in Liu Shao's list of exemplars.(59) The Confucian virtues of Humanity, Righteousness, Propriety, Trustworthiness and Wisdom do nevertheless find a place in the *Treatise*, with Humanity being given pride of place. Thus Liu said: "Humanity is the foundation of virtue; righteousness is the controlled expression of virtue as duty; the practice of propriety is the ornamentation of virtue; trustworthiness is its cement and wisdom its teacher."(60) These moral virtues, however, were not rooted in a transcendent Heaven or moral principle, but were differing expressions of a spirit grounded in matter.(61)

Although Liu was confident that a man's qualities could be discerned from his physical appearance, he did not hold for one moment that the reading of his features, eyes and deportment was an easy matter. If one were to form an accurate judgement of a man one had first to observe his appearance, notice his conduct, examine whom

he resembled, inquire into how he began a task and brought it to its completion, pay attention to his speech, his actions, his shortcomings, his errors, and even his casual utterances; but so complicated was this procedure that it was all too easy to come to an incorrect conclusion. "At times," said Liu, "trifling virtues strongly emerge and one considers them to be extraordinary; or else, deep insight is concealed, and one concludes that the man is vacant and lacking in substance."(62)

It would be tedious to go through all the deficiencies, imperfections and shortcomings found in men and enumerated by Liu in his *Treatise*. Instead, we must now turn our attention to the implications of Liu's teaching for the doctrine of free will. If men owe their natures, spirits and characters to the material with which they are endowed does it not follow that they must lead a wholly determined existence? Must not the timorous and the courageous, the wise and the ignorant, the loving and the cruel all remain forever what they are? In Liu Shao's anthropology the answer lies in the concept of *ch'i* or matter which he shared with most Chinese thinkers. *Ch'i*, as is attested by the various translations of the term, is not to be thought of as inert matter. Rather is it to be regarded as dynamic and ever in motion. Thus the Five Elements of wood, fire, water, metal and earth are really five elemental forces which, associated with the seasons, result in the ever-changing seasonal cycle and which, related to man, produce the various transformations he is subject to. But having made due allowance for the dynamic character of matter, it has to be admitted that in Liu's scheme of things the quality of a man's material endowments - and each man differs in what he receives - does inhibit his range of perfectibility.

The man who is born with a perfect blend of the finest of the material energy at work in the cosmos is very rare. The majority of people, as Liu saw it, combine perfections with imperfections. The question, then, is how the best in each person can be brought to the fore and the worst mitigated. Clearly, any attempt to bring about perfection in a person poorly endowed would require a transformation of his endowments. Liu's position was that if a person is to realize his potential he must receive tuition, and this applies as much to a potential sage as to the most poorly endowed. He was not sanguine, however, as to the results of such tuition. Thus he stated: "Learning is the means whereby man's endowments are brought to completion. Reciprocity is the means by which one gauges the feelings of others. The nature which is formed from an imbalance of endowments, however, cannot be changed. Although a man may receive tuition, when the endowments he has received are perfected he will act in accordance with them in error. Although he may be schooled in the practice of reciprocity (i.e. consideration for others), when he has gauged the feelings of others he will merely do what his own mind dictates. The trustworthy will assume the trustworthiness of everyone else, whereas the deceitful will impute deceitfulness to all others. Thus their learning does not penetrate to the Way, and their reciprocity fails to encompass all things. These are the benefits and defects of those with distorted endowments."(63)

No matter how important Liu considered education to be for the fulfilment of human potential, he also regarded it as self-defeating in cases where a man's endowments are such as to make him prone to anti-social behaviour. What, he seemed to ask, is the point of teaching a man to value the virtue of reciprocity when

his feelings run naturally in the direction of craftiness, dishonesty, hate and the like?

What are the implications of the teachings we have surveyed for the notions of determinism and free will? We began by examining the teachings of Confucius and Mencius on the relationship between Heaven and man; we then saw how the elaboration of the process whereby the cosmos and man were thought to have come into existence led to the grand synthesis of Tung Chung-shu in which *yin-yang* dualism, the doctrine of the Five elements and the teachings of other schools were made to serve Confucianism. Finally we saw how Liu Shao, living in a more sceptical age, shed the religious element in Tung's system and, in his *Treatise*, presented a rationalistic and totally materialistic interpretation of man. Mencius and Liu Shao clearly stood at opposite extremes in their views of man and in their estimates of man's capacity for self-perfection. If we seek to trace the idea of perfectibility in Chinese thought from Mencius to Liu Shao we discover that the more materialistic and mechanistic the universe is conceived to be, the more limited is the range of perfections open to man.

In the *Mencius* Heaven is regarded as the metaphysical source of the moral principles in man, and for Mencius, perfection means coming to know Heaven so that one may be described as a "citizen of Heaven".(64) The process whereby one comes to know Heaven is summarized in the words, "He who has exhausted all his mental constitution knows his nature. Knowing his nature, he knows Heaven."(65) Mencius was not only a thinker and moral philosopher but a mystic, so that for him, the perfect man was meant not merely to live in moral harmony with a moral Heaven, but to become identified with Heaven and the universe. Thus he could say: "All things are complete within us. There is no greater delight than to realize this through self-cultivation."(66)

Tung Chung-shu, on the other hand, by seeming to subordinate Heaven to *yuan* (origin) and to make Heaven a part of the cosmos, turned Heaven into a creature, a being who is simply man writ large, with whom man forges a relationship which is social.(67) Thus, to be perfect in Tung's scheme of things is to enjoy a morally harmonious relationship with Heaven, "man's grandfather".

In Liu Shao's thought perfectibility is barely capable of being viewed in moral terms since, for him, man's capacity for moral action, as well as all his other capacities, is rooted in matter. Liu Shao is a thoroughgoing materialist for whom the universe is mechanistic and man's life is determined. The best that man can do is to make the most, through education, of the talents with which he has been endowed.

In their respective understandings of the function and value of education the differences between Mencius and Liu Shao become most marked. For Mencius, education is interiorized, and is directed towards the recovery of man's moral mind. For Liu Shao, on the other hand, education, even if successful in perfecting a man's natural endowments, is regarded as primarily of value in preparing a man for an occupation in society.

Now you may regard the gradual lowering of man's sights from Mencius' target of moral and metaphysical perfection to Liu Shao's target of occupying a place in society commensurate with one's natural gifts as laudable and realistic; but in Sung times (960-1279) the creators of Neo-Confucianism, which was to remain the

standard of orthodoxy until the early years of this century, came down on the side of Mencius. Although Neo-Confucians were reluctant to speak of Heaven as if it were a deity, they felt the need, nevertheless, to provide a transcendent basis for the moral life and to think of man's relationship to this moral foundation in such a way as to allow room for his moral advancement at the very least. Generally speaking, the Neo-Confucians believed that the perfection of virtue and the transformation of natural endowments could not be brought about merely through teaching and instruction. One should become conscious, in oneself, of the transcendent reality which made learning possible - namely, moral and rational truth. No amount of teaching concerning the virtue of reciprocity, for example, could serve as a substitute for the discovery in oneself of the transcendent foundation of that which makes reciprocity possible. The transcendent foundation of reciprocity, they taught, is the eternal principle or mind of benevolence and humanity. Man is free to perfect himself morally, but the only way to do so is by denying the tendencies of one's physical nature and by awakening to the transcendent basis of moral perfection. As Wang Yang-ming(68) the great Confucian philosopher of the early sixteenth century put it: "Our nature is the substance of the mind and Heaven is the source of our nature. To exert one's mind to the utmost is the same as fully developing one's nature. Only those who are absolutely sincere can fully develop their nature and know the transforming and nourishing process of Heaven and Earth." "Knowing Heaven ... is a matter within one's own function, and it means that one in his moral character has already become one with Heaven."(69)

#### NOTES

1. "Tsuo-wei tsung-chiao-te ju-chiao" in *Chung-kuo che-hsiieh-te t'e-chih*, Hong Kong, 1963.
2. *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, by Fung Yu-lan (tr. Derk Bodde), Princeton, 1953.
3. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, by Wing-tsit Chan, Princeton, 1963
4. *The Study of Human Abilities*, by J.K. Shryock, American Oriental Society, New Haven, 1937.
5. op. cit., p. 33.
6. *Science and Civilization in China*, by Joseph Needham, vol. II.
7. op.cit., p.386
8. *Geschichte der mittelalterlichen chinesischen Philosophie*, by Alfred Forke, vol. II, Hamburg, 1964.
9. op. cit., p. 197.
10. *The Works of Mencius in The Chinese Classics* (tr. James Legge), vol. 11, Hong Kong, Copyright reissue, 1960; p.403.
11. ibid.
12. *The Way and Its Power*, (tr. Arthur Waley), London, 1934; p. 141.
13. op.cit., p. 146.
14. op.cit., p. 14 1.
15. op.cit., p. 143.
16. op.cit., p. 146.
17. op. cit., p. 141.
18. *Shih-chi*, chuan 74, pp, 2-4 (Ssu-pu pei-yao edition).
19. Fung Yu-lan, op.cit., vol. 1, pp. 162-3.
20. Fung Yu-lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, New York, 1948, p. 1 38.
21. ibid.
22. Chan Wing-tsit, op.cit., p.263.
23. Fung Yu-lan, op.cit., vol. I, p.395.
24. op.cit., p.396.
25. ibid.
26. ibid.
27. ibid.
28. ibid.
29. op.cit., p.398.

30. op.cit., vol. II, p.20.
31. op.cit., p. 19.
32. op.cit., p.20.
33. op.cit., p.29.
34. ibid.
35. *Confucian Analects* in *The Chinese Classics*, (tr. James Legge), vol. 1. Hong Kong, Copyright reissue, 1960; p.202.
36. op.cit., p.204.
37. Arthur Waley, *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, London, Second Impression 1946, p. 116.
38. *Mencius*, op.cit., pp.202-4.
39. Fung Yu-lan, op.cit., vol. 1, p.288.
40. op.cit., p.334.
41. Chan Wing-tsit, op.cit., p.260.
42. ibid.
43. Fung Yu-lan, op.cit., vol. I, p.334.
44. ibid.
45. op.cit., vol. 1, p.329.
46. op.cit., vol. II, p.32.
47. op.cit., p.33.
48. op.cit., p.35.
49. *T'oung-pao*, XXIX (1949), pp. 83-131 and summarized in Arthur F. Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History*, Oxford, 1959, pp. 22ff.
50. Wright, op.cit., pp.30-1
51. Forke, op.cit., p. 197.
52. I have not followed Shryock's translations in all instances.
53. *Jen-wu chih*, *chüan* (a), p. 1 A (Ssu-pu pei-yao edition).
54. op.cit., pp. 1B-3 B.
55. op.cit., pp. 1 A-1 B.
56. ibid.
57. Liu Shao was actually commanded during the Ching-ch'u reign period (237-9) "to draw up regulations for the examination of metropolitan officials". See Shryock, op.cit., p. 23.
58. See especially sections 3-5, op.cit., pp. 68-122.
59. In his preface to the *Jen-wu-chih*, however, Liu Shao states explicitly that he is following in the footsteps of Confucius since Confucius examined man in order to understand the factors underlying his behaviour. To judge from this preface, Liu Shao considered himself a Confucian. See Shryock, op.cit., pp. 2-4.
60. *Jen-wu chih*, *chuan* (b), p. 13A.
61. Discussing the nature of the human spirit and human rationality Liu Shao said: "The matter from which man is formed is exceedingly fine. Out of this finest of matter arises his spirit and his rationality." op.cit., *chuan* (c), p.6A.
62. op.cit., *chuan* (c), p.6B.
63. op.cit., *chuan* (a), p.6A.
64. Fung Yu-lan, *A short History of Chinese Philosophy*, p.77.
65. *Mencius*, op.cit., p.448.
66. Fung Yu-lan, op.cit., p.77.
67. Fung Yu-lan, *The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy* (tr. E.R. Hughes), London, 1947, p. 125.
68. 1472-1529. See various works by Fung Yu-lan and Wang Yang-ming, *Instructions for Practical Living*. (tr. Wing-tsit Chan), New York, 1963.
69. Wang Yang-ming, op. cit., p. 13.