

# THE RAPE of MOTHER EARTH

.... "The Rise and Fall of Western Dominance"

Lecture series headed by  
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## Part I - Introduction

Last week, *Maricela Yip* gave us a very interesting insight of the *Wisdom of the Elders*, a deep reflection of the "Way of Thinking" of indigenous people and the respect that these people deserve (certainly something that the colonial past and presence of our dominant Christian society disgracefully ignored).

This week I will try to tackle the environmental crisis from a different, more religious point of view, and would like to invite you to follow me into the Ways of Thinking of Eastern People - in particular of ancient China.

Even though Asian people more and more turn away from their traditional values and identify themselves largely with the Western concepts of life, Chinese did not completely cut their ties with the past, on the contrary, there might be a back-swing on top of the hill.

In the summer term of 2000 I was given the opportunity to attend classes on "Chinese Culture and Country" at the 中国中心 (*ZhōngGuó ZhōngXīn*, China Center) of the University of Salzburg. My teacher 韩瑞祥 (*Hán Rui Xiáng*), introduced me to the sheer endless richness of Chinese traditions and stimulated my spirits to a great deal. Then, a year later, on my visit to China, this stimulus received another big boost. I had the chance to talk to two very fascinating personalities, 丁往道 (*Dīng WǎngDào*, professor of history), and 张耘 (*Zhāng Yún*, professor of English Literature) at 北京外国语大学 (*BěiJīng WàiGuóYǔ DàXué* - BeiJing Foreign Language Institute). In hour-long discussions did we reflect about current trends, events and the fate we might face in the not too distant future.

In the final remarks of *Maricela's* presentation she talked about the pressing environmental crisis that modern Asian countries had to cope with .... (here a brief transcript of the final passages of *David Suzuki's* speech that he gave in front of the Australian Science Museum Society in early 1992):

.... *Kate Lucky, a Wintu-Indian, now Californian territory, speaking about the difference of white people and Indians (recording of 1935).... and I must say that this could just as easily have been the difference between Asian people and Indians; because certainly in the last two decades, Asian people (Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese, Koreans) have been some of the most destructive people on this planet.*

*When the Indians all die, then God will let the water come down from the north, everyone will drown; that is because the white people never cared for the land or deer or bear. When we Indians kill meat, we eat it all up. When we dig roots, we make little holes. When we "burn" the grass for grasshoppers, we don't ruin things, we shake down trees; we don't chop down the tree; we only use dead wood. But the white people plough? up the ground, pull out the trees, kill everything.*

.... *American Indians don't hurt anything but the white people destroy all, they blast rocks and scutter them on the ground; the rock says don't, you are hurting me, but the white people pay no attention. When the Indians use rocks, they take little round ones for their cookings, the white people dig deep long tunnels, they make roads, they dig as much as they wish, they don't care how much the ground cries out. How can the spirit of the land like the white man? That is why god will destroy or upset the world; because it is soar all over. Everywhere, where the white man has touched, it is soar, aboriginal people have lived on their land for 10s of thousands of years..... we desperately need to learn those lessons from them if we are to come of some kind of balance with the world, to leave something for future generations.*

Before dipping deeper into the *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples*, let me briefly characterize the current state of the Eco-crises that we, as members of the "Dominant Western Society" imposed onto this planet.

Ours is a period when the human community is in search of new and sustaining relationships to the earth amidst environmental problems that threatens the very existence of all life-forms on our planet. Writer *Thomas Berry* (1998) observed that that the magnitude of destruction in industrial processes is so great that we must initiate a radical rethinking of the myth of progress and of humanity's role in the evolutionary process. Indeed, we should ask ourselves: **are we as human a viable species on our endangered planet?**

The ecological crisis of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century displays a profound alienation from nature and indeed from matter itself. Because nature had become largely identified as matter which can be manipulated. Nature is seen as a "resource" to be used rather than a "source" of life to be respected. Our planet is struggling against unprecedented assaults that include environmental pollution, destruction of entire ecosystems, the aesthetic degradation of nature, human overpopulation, resource depletion, industrial growth, technological manipulation, military proliferation, and, now emerging as the most pressing and desperate of all problems, abrupt massive species extinction - and in cases of recently discovered ones, often before they are given names.

We are "*Killing our World*" wrote botanist *Peter H. Raven* (1993). Our feeling of alienation in the modern period has extended beyond the human community and its patterns of material exchanges to our interaction with nature itself. Especially in technologically sophisticated urban societies, we have become removed from that recognition of our dependence on nature - **we no longer see the earth as sacred.**

Instead, we spend so much of our lives **courting death**. We are fomenting wars, watching with sickening horror, movies in which maniacs slice and dice their victims, or hurrying to our own deaths in fast cars, through cigarette smoking, or by committing suicide. Death obsesses us - our responses are so strange that we not only kill for food, we kill each other along with the natural forces that nourish life on this planet (*P.O. Ingram, 1997*).

Yes, we need to be concerned about this crisis, its consequences, and about us. In particular, we need to be concerned about the pollution of the environment by toxic chemicals or nuclear materials that are present in solid, liquid or gaseous phases and bring about the genetic mutations caused by such pollutants, as they jeopardize the cycle of life and the continuity of production and reproduction.

Job partitioning, has done its part as well, nowadays there are only specialists in any fields. The "universalist", the handcrafts people that used to cover a wide range of activities (clearing your clogged toilet, fixing your broken stove, sealing leaking pipes, and maybe sharing a social drink with you after the job is done) are no longer there. Every task is executed by highly skilled people that just do that and nothing else. But this does not stop at you plumber, this trend, by now, is established in any profession; among farmers, lawyers, technicians, engineers, medical staff, scientists, etc. Although, they are just doing their job, they do it with an ever-increasing precision. In doing just that, they don't ask if that what they do is sustainable or not. Take the food sector for example, the manufacture and consumption of artificial goods by humans - we have produced goods by choosing values set by ourselves, that actualize a good that is seen as better than the naturally existing produce.

It is clear that environmental issues are not simply problems of the environment of our external surroundings, but rather, they are conflicts of values with regards to the correlation between humans and their environment.

Our daily happiness in this modern society consists in "**having fun**". To have fun, and all that what goes along with it - we consume and buy foods, drinks, cigarettes, books, films, people, children, etc. - all and everything is consumed, swallowed, and tasted to the very excess. The world to us became a large object that stimulates our appetites, like a big apple, a big bottle, huge cars, large breasts; we are the consumers, always in expectations, considering ourselves as the hopeful ones .... to become ultimately the eternally disappointed ones.

The modern, technological human has stepped into this trap. Our efforts to catch up the absolute control of nature (from which we consider ourselves separated) and all the habits of the human society made us slaves. Every control demands an ulterior control, until that the very "same controller" becomes embedded in the vicious loop of control (*Erich Fromm, 1986*).

The realization of the human desire to become the measure and master of all things is still the most influential moral discourse in the political culture of the modern age. In the context of modern Western hegemonic discourse, progress may entail inequality, reason, self-interest, and individual greed; evidently seen in the dream of owning a car and a house, earning a fair wage, and enjoying freedom of privacy, expression, religion, and travel. While "reasonable" to the sense of western minds of what ordinary life demands, it is lamentably unexportable as a modern necessity at a global perspective.

And still, the unshakable faith in infinite growth and unlimited expansion brought us to the global village, generated industrial conglomerates that are more powerful than single states, capable of modifying laws at their will, corrupting local governments, downgrading individuals to mere numbers, an object and thus part of the machinery that can be used and laid off accordingly. Such concentration of power made certain economies quite rich, while others unable to withstand such fierce competition (usually those in less developed countries) are driven out of existence. Likewise, our super-specialized modern world favors those who are skilled and trained, while the poor keep falling deeper into the abyss of ignorance.

In our information age, this global village is both a **virtual reality** and an imaginary community that disintegrates and restructures human togetherness at all levels, from family to nation. At this stage in human development in which only advanced capitalism - characterized by multinational corporations, information super-highways, technology-driven sciences, mass communication, and conspicuous consumption - dominates, we must be critically aware of the globalizing forces which, through a variety of networks, literally transform the earth into a wired discourse community. As a result, distance, no matter how great, does not at all inhibit electronic communication and, ironically, territorial proximity does not necessarily guarantee actual contact. We can be frequent conversation partners with associates 1000s of kilometers apart, yet we are often strangers to our neighbors, colleagues, and relatives.

Globalization not only means homogenization, modernization, intensified competition; it includes also an increase in political, social, cultural, and religious conflicts in both an inter- and intranational context. What we witness(ed) in Bosnia, across the African continent, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Iraq, between Palestine and Israel, between India and Pakistan is not simply fragmentation as opposed to global integration - the roots go far deeper. We are not actually aware of the explosive potential of ethnicity, language, culture, and religious fundamentalism in all three major monotheistic religions, we must learn to appreciate that the quest for roots is a worldwide phenomenon (*Tu WeiMing, 1998*).

## Part II - The Roots

Despite improvements in agricultural technology, hunger has emerged as a persistent and pervasive worldwide problem. The capital-intensive green revolution, with its dependence on chemical fertilizers and pesticides, has produced more systemic, long-term problems than it has solved, and biotechnology may raise even more questions about the consequences of genetic engineering. Modern agriculture - a keyword and example, which is currently facing new radical changes causing emotions to run wild. The word cultivation itself implies a movement away from natural processes. It is a matter of arresting succession, not allowing the manifold variety of nature to flourish. For the sake of maximization in yield and thus profit, we aim at monoculture. The very same goal is also aimed at in other areas; in passed centuries it was enthusiastically pushed ahead with the efforts of colonization of newly "discovered" territories by the Europeans, and kept on going with the contemporary trend of globalization, creating a homogenized world map, where ethnic minorities along with their cultural, linguistical heritage, and knowledge about their environment are pushed off the table and lost for ever.

### Well, what pushed as that far? What forced us to do al that?

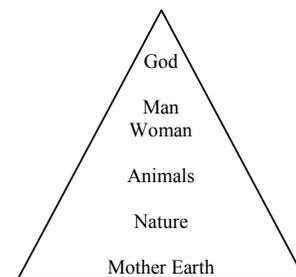
Turning back the pages of western culture, to get the broader picture, we can find a trigger, a continuously driving force that kept pushing us in that direction. This force is embedded in our monotheistic roots.

### Has the material world of nature been devalued by Abrahamic traditions?

I would say YES. If we apply this concept on the spiritual plane, this means austerities, obedience to religious authority, and an overriding image of a centralized divinity - something that was most evident during the Spanish conquest of the Americas and followed by British imperialism (among others of course). In this aspect, religions have been the sources of enormous manipulation of power, in fostering wars, in ignoring racial and social justice, and in promoting unequal gender relations, to name only a few abuses. Medieval historian *Lynn White* (1967) suggested that the emphasis in **Abrahamic religions** (Islam, Judaism, and Christianity) on the transcendence of God above nature and the dominion of human over nature has led to a devaluation of the natural world and a subsequent destruction of its resources for utilitarian ends. For the most part, the worldviews associated with the **Abrahamic traditions have created a dominantly human-focused morality**. These religions have traditionally been concerned with the path of personal salvation, which frequently emphasizes otherworldly goals and rejected this world as corrupting. The concept of humans as vice-regents of Allah, Jehovah, (you name it) on earth suggests that humans have particular privileges, responsibilities, and obligations to creation.

Let me briefly capture some aspects of "mainstream" Abrahamic traditions (*J.B. Callicott, R.T. Ames, 1989*):

1. God transcends nature;
2. Nature is a creation, an artifact, of a divine craftsman-like male creator;
3. Human beings are exclusively segregated from the rest of nature;
4. Human beings are given dominion by God over nature;
5. God commands humanity to subdue nature and multiply the human species;
6. Nature is viewed politically and hierarchically - God over humanity, humanity over nature, male over female - which establishes an exploitive ethical-political **pecking order** and power structure;
7. The image of god-in-humanity is the ground of humanity's intrinsic value, but non-human entities lack the divine image and are religiously and ethically disenfranchised and possess merely instrumental value for god and human beings;
8. The biblical view of nature's instrumental value is compounded in mainline Christian theology by an *Aristotelian-Thomistic* teleology that represents nature as a support system for rational human beings.



Abrahamic "pecking order" (refer also to Hierarchy of Oppression - part IV, p14)

Thus, if one wants theological license to increase radioactive, biohazard, or chemical pollution without constraints, or to encourage unbridled harvest of old-growth forest, is to consent to a bulldozer mentality of developers. Historically there has been no better scriptural source than *Genesis*, chapter 1, 2, and 3 (*La Bibbia '92*). The mythological injunctions to conquer nature, the enemy of God and humanity, are listed there. If God had been the almighty powerful, he would have aimed at something more perfect, avoiding the temptation of Eve and Adam to the forbidden fruits. And why should all living organisms have to die just because of the errors committed by them (which ultimately can be assigned as Gods flaw)? Furthermore, the biblical dominion of *Adam* over *Eve* represents a failure of prevailing Western worldview and along with the "exile of humans from the paradise" as punishment for human sin, resulted in separation between harmony and the separation from pother life-forms. Western ideas and attitudes along with the male-oriented culture conceives reality only from a how human perspective, and thus established a hierarchic structure in which humanity is positioned at its apex.

- i) Abrahamic tradition understands and explains the universe in terms of a divine plan with respect to its creation and final end.
- i) Our Hellenistic philosophical heritage together with mainstream Abrahamic teaching have taught us that nature is a world of limited, external, and special relationships. We have family relationships, marital relationships, relationships with a limited number of animal species, and occasional relationships with inanimate objects, most of which are external. In short, our religious-philosophical traditions find it easier to think of isolated beings and limited entities minds, rather than of one reality that is ontologically interconnected to all things and events.
- i) The mainstream Abrahamic view of existence is one of rigid hierarchy, in which a male creator-god occupies the top link in the chain of being; human beings follow, and nature - animals, plants, rocks - are at the bottom.

It seems unlikely that mainstream Abrahamic traditions, married as it is in the West to the traditions of Greco-Roman philosophy (*Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes*, to name just a few), is capable of resolving this ecological crisis. One finds by looking around into the world that every single bit of progress in human feeling, every improvement in the criminal law, every step towards diminution of war, every step towards better treatment of the colored people or women in general, or every mitigation of salary, every moral progress that has been in the world, has been consistently opposed by these Churches of the world. Religion is based primarily and mainly upon fear (**battle, pestilence, and shipwreck all tend to make people religious**). Take the plague of the middle ages for example - with a little bit of curiosity, it is not too difficult to demystify this episode. Harsh climatic conditions with strong winters that resulted in a poor nutritional diet, poor hygienic standards, and the ignorance of how the disease is spread by fleas (individuals wearing furs wrapped around their necks literally cultivated them), lead to the disastrous effects known to us as "the sentence of God". It is partly the terror of the unknown, and partly the wish to feel that one has a kind of elder brother who will stand by you in all your troubles and disputes that tend people to hold on to it (*Bertrand Russel*, 1989).

Yet, there is more evidence that religious thought made us think the way we do. Churches, the sites of religious contemplation. The geographical concentration and isolation along with the transformation of the "divine" in the shape of a manmade church, mosque, synagogue, or temple (whichever one likes to call it), further separated us from nature. We go there to worship the holy ideals, and at the same time we use it to "**dump**" - so to speak - **our sins**, as if we are dealing here with a (spilling) trash-can. Once back out, in "good old nature" (or that what's left of it), rather than contemplating the very roots of our existence in a natural setting, we flip-flop back into this familiar habit of oppression, knowing that **God will fix it anyway!**

Conservation is getting nowhere because it is incompatible with our Abrahamic concept of land, water, and air. We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. If we would see it as a community to which we belong, we would begin to use it with love and respect.

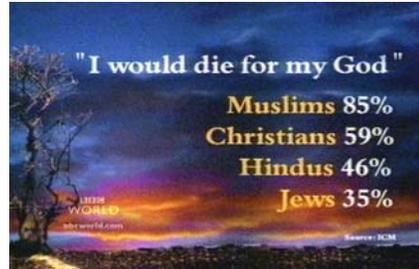
Indeed, a fellow student of mine from the University of Amman (Jordan) once informed me about the ambitions of her fellow students to become engineers, medical doctors, or lawyers, but hardly someone dedicates one's career to life sciences. On the contrary, most students who are forced to escape to "step-child" disciplines like classical zoology, botany, etc. run their curriculum on an entirely theoretical basis, not even attending the most basic lab-classes to enter the fascinating world of living nature. It goes that far, that my Jordan colleague spends most time on her won in the huge zoological terrarium there .... Quoting her words: local zoology students seem extremely disgusted by the creeping, crawling, and sneaking creatures! Well, one can feel consolidated, as attitudes here in the so-called "West" aren't anything different.

Likewise, the organization, habits, and lifestyles of industrialized societies are wipe out species, erode soil, exhaust and pollute water, render the air that we breath unbreathable, and the very light of the sun now becomes something we must avoid due to dwindling ozone concentrations in the upper atmosphere.

The idea of living for the future, considers history of being cumulative and thus leading to some promised fulfillment. An attitude deeply embedded in covenantal, messianic conceptions that lie at the heart, as well as the roots, of the Judeo-Christian traditions .... with their idealizations of the heroic values of migrant people (*Ulysses* and *Aeneas*), exploration and expansion (Greek colonialism and Roman imperialism) contributed to the ambitions and optimism of the enlightenment and in the passed centuries to the outburst of European expansion into Africa, North-, Central-, and South America, Australia, and Indochina (the Spaniards in Mexico and Peru used to baptize Indian infants, and then immediately dash their brains out; by this means they secured that these infants went straight to Heaven; *Bertrand Russel* 1989). Somehow, modern Islamic fundamentalism is catching up – though with different means. Of course, the modern Christian is less robust, but that is not thanks to Christianity; but rather the endless effort of generations of Freethinkers, who, from the Renaissance to the present day, have made Christians ashamed of many of their traditional beliefs. And it is still not yet over; economical, cultural and religious colonialism is still alive. With the current pontificate of John Paul II and his fearless "executing arm" (*Opus Dei*- a revival of the "good old times"?) the catholic church holds this flag up high into the sky. In that sense, all Abrahamic traditions (Islam, Judaism, and Christianity) share the same goal, the aim to homogenize the pluralistic religious landscapes.

Bertrand Russel once said, that either one has the option to join and fight with them, or to be against them and face the full strength of their power - with such means it was possible to subdue the peoples and limit their free-thinking criticism. Such a tradition does not acknowledge a flowing principle (*panta rhei*, expressed by the ancient Greek philosopher *Heraklit*) that everything is in constant motion, moves, is alive, contrasting many of the static, stiff, and immobile (dead) attitudes of Abrahamic traditions. If we as practitioners of such traditions do not radically rethink our concepts, then we are doomed for failure, awaiting the harsh response from nature.

The permanent reference to a rescuer who will ultimately save the earth from "drowning", liberating us from any bad things gives us (humanity of the dominant society) the excuse to continue as we did to poison the environment, to subdue other cultures, to act like commanders and landlords. Hamas, Jihad, the Talibans, etc. are manifestations of constant suppression by our sheer unlimited dominance, both in the social and technical field. By hoping to become a holy martyr, more and more radicals feel themselves pushed ahead in their conviction to liberate humanity from the seemingly unbearable burden of the dominance of modernity. Such disagreement is even expressed by the nostalgic fellows of *Opus Dei*, *Shas* (Shepard), *World Church of the Creator*, *White Supremacists*, *IRA*, *Unionists of Shin Fein*, etc.



The aggressive nature of some reflex-driven ideologies is best seen in the recent survey made by the BBC involving 10000 individuals in 10 different countries.

If we want to avoid incidents like those of 11<sup>th</sup> of Sept. 2001 in NY City and Washington D.C. then we have to listen. Already a single life lost in combat or in suicide attacks - apart from the human suffering that comes along with - should be the cause of sorrow, as these acts are basically nothing else than an effort to try to kill an idea that a person or group of people (victims and attackers alike) stands for. I don't want to give the impression that religion is bad, it just has, as everything else two faces - one just can't stick to the shiny side of the coin, one has also to look at the reverse side of it. In the advent of global destruction, we have to deeply rethink certain patterns within the Abrahamic traditions and open ourselves to others usually excluded by our religious traditions (especially those of indigenous people); it does not make sense to impose our (western) understanding of things, onto them. We also have to acknowledge the infinite potentials, inspirations, and rich pool of cultural knowledge offered by those other cultures.



When oppression becomes violent - one of the twin towers of the ex-WTC in N.Y. City

It would be as if we try to teach a fish that the water it is swimming in is chemically composed of two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen stuck together at an angle of aperture of 104.5°, and due to the lone-pair electrons of the oxygen, takes on a tetrahedral geometry.... the fish would probably burst out of laughter and swim off!

Because our religions aided in the shaping of our attitudes toward nature in both conscious and unconscious ways, we need to reexamine our religious traditions and values in light of the current environmental crisis. What people do think about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to the things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about nature, destiny, and still by religion.

In 1974, French feminist Francoise d'Eaubonne, in suggesting that women have the potential for solving today's ecological crises, coined the term "ecofeminism". Ecofeminists generally believe that the traditional sex / gender- role system has had a significant impact on today's ecological problems (refer to "When God was a Women" by *Merlin Stone*).

For this purpose, I have brought with me a short sequence from the movie "*Mindwalk*" (directed and made by the *Capra* brothers, and based on the book, "The Turning Point" by *Fritjof Capra*).

In this widely acclaimed film, set on the impressive island-abbey of *Mont Saint Michel* in France (a monastery situated on a rock high above the flood plains off the northern French coast), an artist, a poet, and a politician portray very dissimilar vacationers caught up in a spontaneous and life-affirming sweep of self-expression and new ideas. Through the film, the cineaste comes to an understanding that questions about life transcend most boundaries and that conversation is a pathway towards understanding those questions.

The section I would like to introduce, unveils the profound ambiguity of our western ideology from the liberating thoughts of *Descartes* onwards till today.

The three protagonists, Sam the poet, Jack the politician, and Sonia the scientist, already deeply involved in reflections about the triggers of the environmental degradation and the current crises of conception. As they stroll across *Mont Saint Michel*, they enter the chamber of torture:

Jack: No they don't even realize where they are. They think of themselves as watching a movie. This room is absolutely appropriate. Everyone nowadays has its own torture chamber, but people are not aware of it. You may respond that this is part of their perception crisis?

SAM: Yes, perhaps we are all somehow attracted by death, like wolves preying on the weak. Or perhaps humans are simply jerks?

Jack: I am sure you are referring to *Descartes*. I'm more than happy to blame someone for it. This is part of human history.

Sonia: Well, I am not sure about *Descartes*, but I'm aware that *Francis Bacon* was chairman of the witch processes under king *James I.*, at a time where millions of women were tortured or burned because they knew how to deal with herbal remedies, or because they worship pre-Christian goddesses, or simply because they were unusual. I probably would likewise have died at the stake. I don't believe that this was a metaphor when *F. Bacon* wrote that humanity must chase nature into slavery – in all its aspects. He even said, scientists should use all their new mechanical appliances, to torture HER (nature) in order to reveal all its secrets. In fact did you realize how he was using the term "HER" when referring to mother nature? As if she was nothing more than a witch? Yes, based at the scope of this room, it is more than appropriate to speak of a crisis in perception.

Jack: But this kind of rooms existed long before *Descartes* and *Bacon*. Violence probably will persist forever, no matter how mankind looks upon this world? Including exploitation of its resources. Of course we tend to think that things would be different if we look at them in different ways.

Sonia: But does modern science, technology, business, not exactly do that what *Francis Bacon* preached? Tortured our planet? Didn't we exactly execute this old patriarchal ideal? These principals of male dominance? As rulers over this world?

Jack: I'm not sure Sonia - let me be part of the devil's advocate. To what extent did we tyrannize and oppress this planet? One could reply that this was nothing compared to that what has occurred during the earth's ice ages? And who says that we harm nature at all? We all have deadly fears about the disappearance of the ozone layer, but we have just started some 10 years ago to seriously study it. Perhaps those so-called holes in the upper atmosphere have always been there, emerged to disappear later on – and this since the beginning time. Wouldn't that be possible? Maybe nature possesses some sort of self-healing mechanism, of which we are not aware of, perhaps it is this kind of hysteria about ultraviolet radiations, nothing further than that, just hysteria.

Sonia: Till a few years ago, the same has been said about the forests in Germany. Look in what state they are now. Over half of the Black Forest's tree inventory is death. We simply cannot any longer talk it away; we can't afford to handle such risks. Here, around this island the tides slow down. Maybe because of the mud as a result of waste dumping into the bay, or because too much artificial fertilizer runs off into the sea. Lakes can die, entire oceans can be contaminated, top soil, forests, water, poisoned to death. Things can change so rapidly. In the hands of men (males) nature slips out of equilibrium. Rain will turn into acid....

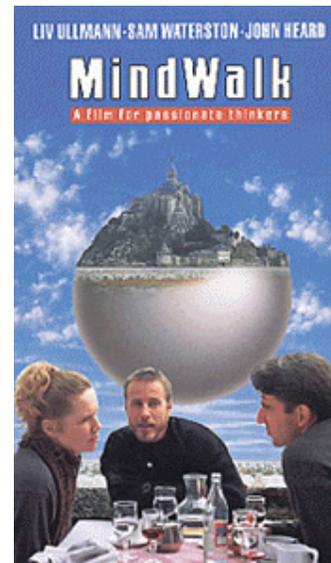
SAM: I totally agree with everything, but why this patriarchal fixation, mh? The *Witches of Salem* have been betrayed by other women.... A woman once wrote: God's best gift to mankind is the atom bomb. Those are women! why can't you say that the patriarchal principles are the sources of evil, both in men and in women alike and leave it as such – there's enough of it in both sexes. Unless you think that "man" has brainwashed these women, like Patty ....

....

Sonia: Why do you talk so depreciatively? Look, there are two large principles, which act within the whole living world. The male principle - you chose the adjectives - like the attractive, dominating, whatever, and the female, the receiving, caring, kind-hearted, whatever. I just would like to claim that these two principles were once in near-equilibrium. But the males, YES I'm convinced that the males are to blame – they have the mental and material capabilities - they have the tools, created weapons – both spiritually and materially; they have completely destroyed the equilibrium between these principles. They handed over these mechanistic tools to power-obsessed patriarchal human beings. I assert that you, the males ran out of control. And me, you, we, everyone, .... we are the victims. Therefore, what do we risk, what speaks against the idea of giving the female principle a chance?

Sam: I propose we leave this room; it seems to have a tormenting effect on our conversation....

Thus, the torturing effect of our past .... rooted in Judeo-Christianity is the most anthropocentric tradition as it "not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insists that it is God's will that man exploits nature for his proper ends." Well, let me ask you again the question about the viability of the human species in a different way: **Has the time come to find inspirations beyond the Abrahamic traditions in order to prevent the unavoidable?**



## Part III - Ecology

More than a century ago, and due to the increasing need to understand the complex nature of life, a new discipline emerged among the many disciplines of modern science – *Ecology*. It is the scientific study of how organisms interact with each other and with their environment. The word "ecology" was coined by *Ernst Haeckel* (1866) from the Greek roots *Oikos* "house" and *logia* "discourse"; ecology thus stands for the science of the household (the closely related word "economy" comes from *oikos* "house" and *nemein* "to manage"). Ecology has a double meaning: *logos of oikos* (the logical system of the universe) and *oikos of logos* (the house that embraces human logic, or the intellectual system). The former assumes a human rational and logical imposition on the universe, while the latter suggests human acceptance of the universe as the way it operates. Since the term ecology holds within this misleading concept, it may be worthwhile to look for a better word to express the approach that reflects a receptive attitude toward nature and the universe. The term **ecosophy** could be, according to *Raimon Panikkar*, a better substitute, as it includes also sociological and psychological aspects (for more details see references - part VI).

Only very recently has the word "ecology" begun to appear in our discussions, reflecting the arising of a remarkable new consciousness of how all things live in interdependence. The ecological approach views "existence" as a vast web of interdependencies, in which if one strand is disturbed, the whole web is shaken. *Arne Naess*, a Norwegian environmental philosopher described it accordingly: "ecology suggests a relational total field image in which organisms are knots in the biospherical net of intrinsic relations."

In either case, a key word in the definition of ecology is interaction. Organisms interact with other living things, and collectively, they constitute the **biotic** (living) environment.

Living things also interact with the nonliving physical surroundings that take up the **abiotic** (nonliving) environment. *Alfred N. Whitehead* (1938) noted that there are no distinct boundaries in the continuum of nature, and thus no distinct boundaries between biota and inorganic entities. Prions, and Viruses are particularly good examples of entities possessing the properties of life and non-life. Other examples are cellular organelles, which reproduce but are incapable of life independent of the host cell in which these are embedded.

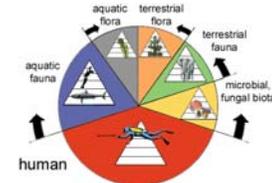
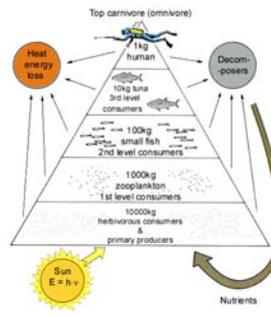
So numerous are each organism's interaction with other living things and the physical environment that biologists organize their study of ecology into a hierarchy of four levels: population (group of interacting individuals), communities (populations of different species within a given geographical area), ecosystems (interaction of living organisms with the environment), and the biosphere (the portion of the earth that contains life).

*Gary Snyder* (a green spiritual thinker) commented about the marvelous processes of life: "The universe is a vast web of many-sided and highly polished jewels, each one acting as a multiple mirror. In one sense each jewel is a single entity. But when we look at one jewel, we see nothing but the reflections of other jewels, and so on in an endless system of mirroring. Thus in each jewel is the image of the entire net - the whole can be known through parts". Undoubtedly, the essence of nature itself – just as with DNA itself - each cell of an organism encodes the entire genome of the whole organism.

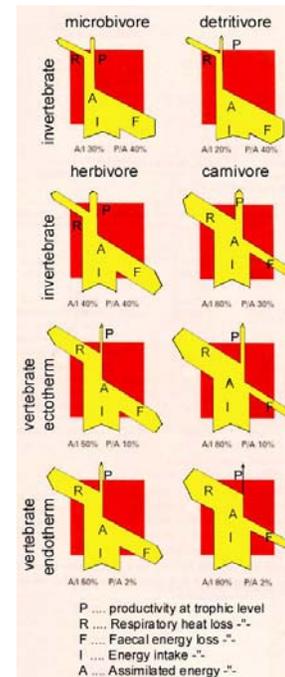
One principal aspect of his view of community involves the basic cycles of nature, in particular the food web and the cycle of production by plants, consumption by animals, and decomposition by fungi and other organisms. In this aspect, the food web is a community that consists of **"a gift-exchange relation-ship, no life that is not somebody's death."**

Accordingly, we should ask ourselves, **"just where are we in the food chain?"** The answer points to our essential place in the community of life - to **our niche**. With the help of technology, we expand our radius of action beyond the "fundamental niche", as well as ignoring the "realized niche" that has been originally assigned to us by nature; i.e. herbivores (vegetarians) or predators (omnivores).

We egoistically pulled, and still keep doing so, resource partitioning towards us (a process by which resources



Left: Model of biomass transfer in the sea. Top: Human biomass increase results in net decrease of other trophic "wild-life" relations (scheme not all inclusive); ultimately reducing the energy flow through other trophic relations (starvation, ecosystem loss, and species extinction).



The patterns of energy flow through a trophic compartment; vertebrate endotherms (incl. omnivor. humans) display high R-losses and at low P's (despite overpopulation); this inefficiency and the population bomb stresses the limited energetic budget of the biosphere - thus increasing entropy.

are divided among organisms), leaving less and less for other forms of biota. In a broader sense, we can apply ecological thinking also to social aspects. Family leads into community, and neighborhood community ties to ecological community. Neighborhood values are ecosystem values, because they include all beings. I know, we in our dominant society have difficulties to understand that, as our family-structures are gradually disintegrating. But we should keep in mind that a healthy community is in harmony with the cycles of nature .... **honest, can we say this when we critically look at us?**

Our technical progress in the last 100 years has been enormous - just look at your grandparents, they were shocked when they first saw these steel monsters running on steel tracks, or these steaming and puffing boxes on wheels that were given the name "car".

Scientist *Brian Swimme* (1997) has commented that we are currently making macro-phase changes to the life system of the planet with micro-phase wisdom. In fact we prospered in the scientific disciplines, but we step on the spot on an ecological-economical point of view (even more so since the fall of the so-called "Iron Curtain"). We must not step into the trap of seeing nature as the poor and oppressed and ourselves (or God) as the powerful rescuer of the "faithful". Nature, with its unmatched power released in natural disasters, its microbes, its fierce rays, which pierce through damaged ozone, is awesome. Regarding the microbes, just allow me to add this - short lived R-strategists (R like reproductive), they pack generations into few days and can use this strategy to mutate around our drugs (like antibiotics) in a matter of months or years. Take insects (although a bit more complex) do the same with our pesticides. Thus, contemporary medical and agricultural practices as successful they might be, are in the long run counterproductive as they ultimately harm us humans as we are no longer living with, but against them. Unfortunately, their fast life cycles and thus evolution is working for them. As mentioned before, the boundaries of the distinctive pattern called "life" are virtually impossible to fix clearly; in somewhat circular fashion, we recognize life when we see things somehow "making a living". That is, things begin in an active way to maintain an existence in terms of something else: amino acids have no need for protozoa, but protozoa require amino acids. A qualitatively new level of relatedness thus, distinguishes life. However, upon emergence of this system, the single-celled creatures by their very structure "expect" certain nutrients, which in that aspects are present even when physically absent; i.e. synthesized internally from external ingredients. On a geological timescale it is not a big step from the single-celled autotrophic cyanobacterial strains of the last ice-age (according to the "snowball theory", some  $550 \cdot E^6$  years ago, snowball theory - part VI) to the manifold diversity of life known today - **indeed a clear proof that we are all related.**

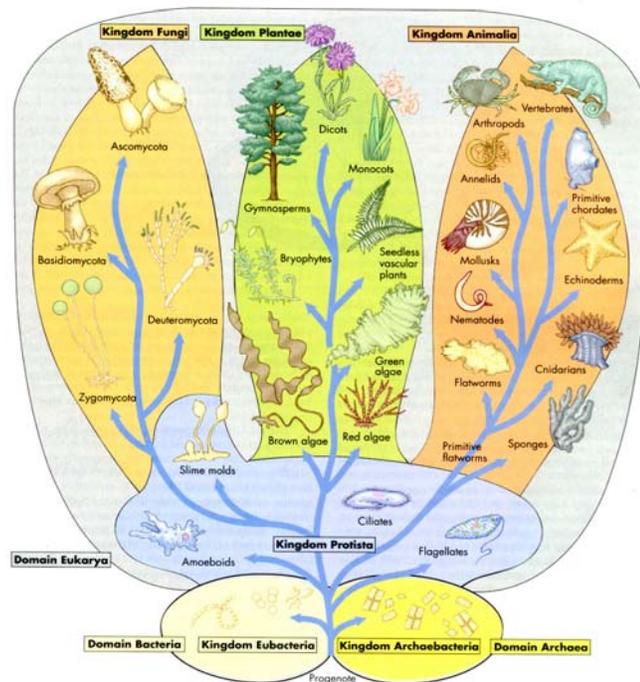
### Evolution

Evolution is a process of developing complex adaptive strategies, each with its own rhythm but controlled by the necessity of meshing with the rhythms of the physical world and interdependent with other life forms.

Evolution by random genetic mutation is a very slow process indeed. The much more rapid strategy of gene pooling and mixing (after the emergence of the eukaryotic cells really took off only about  $500 \cdot E^6$  years ago) is through sexual reproduction; that process has been incredibly rapid and productive, filling that half-billion years with an estimated  $4 \cdot E^9$  species, of which  $5 \cdot E^6$  remain - including us.

We have become the fastest growing creature living on earth, producing more than the earth can absorb or sustain, changing entire ecosystems and environments faster than life-forms can adjust, and straining our own capacity to deal with our ever more dense, eventful, experience-packed lives in which the dominant feeling is that we never have enough time.

No informed observer thinks what we are doing is sustainable, **but masses choose to be uninformed rather than face problems and a future they do not understand.** Nevertheless, as inhabitants of this planet, from the common people to the members of the academic community, we all need to develop a profound respect for life.



The six kingdoms of life: Eubacteria, Archeobacteria, Protista, Fungi, Plantae, and Animalia. It's the animal kingdom (Vertebrates) to which humanity belongs to.

Not only are we and the rest of the organismic world inseparably intertwined, not only do we share significant constituents; we have the same fundamental nature (humans share 99% of the DNA with those of the great apes - *D.Suzuki*, 1992). We must let everyone - scientists and non-scientists alike - learn the importance of living organisms; it is essential to realize the importance of one's own life as well as the lives of others (including other species). In short, one can live only by living in the company of others.

Regarding the recent history of humanity, during the last 25 hundred years, two types of humans can be distinguished: an "**exclusive humanism**", which exalts the human species, placing it in a position of mastery

of and domination over the universe; and an "**inclusive humanism**", which stresses the coordinating powers of humanity as the very reason for its existence. *Descartes* dualism of matter and mind or body and soul in fact further developed a logical basis for the domination of mind over matter and soul over body.

In the process of evolution, modern rational man (unlike the artistic Renaissance person), as a free spirit liberated himself from the shackles of the Dark Ages, able to taste the sweet fruits of power, and relish the sense of domination by displaying his intelligence through invention and employing his cunning in industry. To use *Nietzsche's* metaphor, modern man behaves like a young liberated lion, devoid of any experience but heading out to create havoc. Today's tool of modern science and modern capitalism (the young lion's claws), provide modern man with weapons for both play and prey. These two were linked through the *Cartesian* vision of knowledge as power and dominion. In fact, the fascination with power lead to the *Faustian* trade-off of knowledge and power (pleasure and self-glorification) for value and truth, a trade-off which brings us closer towards the final destruction of the meaning of the human self and human freedom.

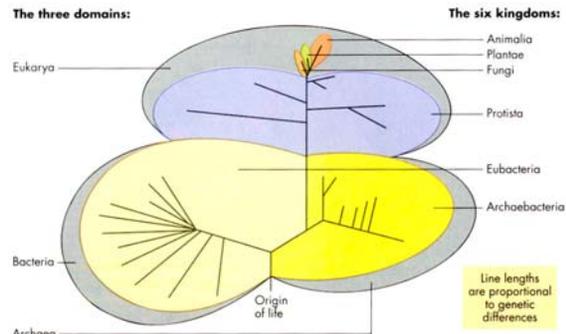
This enlightenment mentality, **fuelled by the Faustian drive to explore, to know, to conquer and to subdue**, persisted as the reigning ideology of the modern West, is now fully embraced as the unquestioned rational for development in East Asia (*Wm. Theodore de Bary*, 1998). Our science and technology have grown out of Abrahamic attitudes toward man's relation to nature, and are now almost universally held as the one and only valid doctrine. *YongChan Ro* (1998) is right when he claims that: "**Despite Copernicus, in our minds all the cosmos still rotates around our little globe. Despite Darwin, in our hearts we are still not part of the natural process.**" We consider ourselves being superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our slightest whim.

### Evolution of exclusive Humanism:

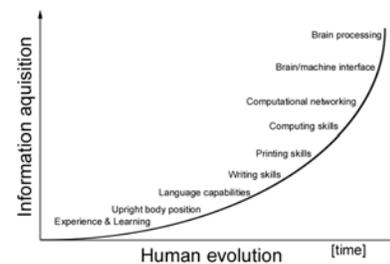
Furthermore, our ever-increasing dependence on computing power will increase the gap between reality and virtuality, and thus detaches us even further from nature. We humans have not only developed the biological capacity to accumulate personal experience, we also perfectionized language, a means by which experience is shared and accumulated in community over many generations rather than being quantized in single life units. Writing was another major step, allowing a qualitatively new level of complexity and continuity in the transmission of accumulated information from generation to generation. Now the globe is electronically linked and computer memory banks put this whole process of information and learning accumulation into yet another mode.

This is so much more powerful and rapid than anything before, that we do not yet begin to understand its potentials and implications. With the development of such technology, experience has been transformed into a process of cumulative learning and opened new spaces for artifacts: the world of humanly wrought culture comes to overly the world of nature. Human activity is no longer directly shaped by the natural system - although it must ultimately harmonize with it. And if there is to be such harmony, it must be achieved deliberately through human knowledge, discipline, and self-cultivation - otherwise it will be nature herself, systematically correcting for adaptive misfits through natural disasters.

Our current way of living does not really enforce attitudes of awareness, but future generations will have to deal with our toxic heritage. In fact, we all have show honesty and accept our responsibilities - it's of no help to blame the politicians, the military, the multinationals, etc., such an attitude would not change anything. Such thinking are products of our western techno- and power oriented thinking. Just let me pick up one of the most crucial problems that emerged out of that enlightenment: the issue of radioactive waste.



Based on the sequences of rRNA genes, living things fall into three domains (Bacteria, Archaea, and Eukarya). The fungi, plants, and animals in this scan are just tiny branches underlying its reciprocal relatedness even more.



The "obese" human dominance; the exponential growth of human evolution.

**Radioactive Waste:**

In fact, the ore that is dug out from uranium mines fuel numerous nuclear power plants and "sharpens" countless inter-continental nuclear missiles around the globe. Not only that military applications of nuclear technology rests upon us like the "sword of *Damocles*" (or literally as a simple "press on a button") but also the peaceful application leaves behind the most difficult kind of garbage that humanity has to deal with - nuclear waste. It does not need 400 years to make a flower; it needs  $250 \cdot E^3$  years (or about  $100 \cdot E^3$  generations). Because we may soon make this Earth into an impossible place for our children to live, it is very important to become mindful in our daily lives. The storage and clean-up expense has become a great debt we are leaving behind to our children. More urgently, we are not informed about the extent of the problem - where the waste sites are and how dangerous they can be. It is appropriate here to mention the *Dalai Lama's* five-point peace plan for Tibet, first announced in 1987, which has an explicit antinuclear plank. Such sites might also have a "religious" dimension, serving as places for "pilgrimage, meditation, or rituals associated with stewardship". Personally, the visit at *Jabiluka* Uranium Mine in *Kakadu* National Park (Northern Territory - AUS) raised deep emotions and high respect for the aboriginal people who considered this site as a sacred place and thus a no go area before the Europeans unearthed the weakly radioactive ore (for further details refer to references - part VI).

By gaining an ever increasing share of control over this planet - through our sciences and our technologies over the past two centuries - **we have assumed responsibilities beyond anything we are capable of carrying out with any assured success**. Now that we have inserted ourselves so extensively into the functioning of the ecosystems of the Earth (we already have past the point of "no return"), we cannot simply withdraw and leave the planet and all its life systems to themselves (or to God) in coping with the poisoning and the devastation that we have brought. And still, we behave as if there is someone who will cover for our wrongdoing, repair the damages done by us. Most of us still reject responsibility and hide behind a karma-like attitude; i.e. "it's their karma to be poor - why should I try to help him?" We have to take responsibility for our past and our present; anything else is criminal not only in regards to us and to future generations, but for the entire ecosystem earth. *老子 (Lào Zi)* commented the concept of salvation by God as, "**Praying is pointless**", while Einstein may have (inadvertently) enunciated the 1<sup>st</sup> law of Eco-karma when he said, "**Humanity will get the fate it deserves.**"

*Aldo Leopold* a wildlife biologist of the 1930's and 40's, proclaimed "**a land ethic**" that should change the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. His land ethic redefines conservation from maximizing the utility of natural resources to "a state of harmony between humanity and the land." *A. Leopold*, along with the geomantic philosophy of East Asia, can be seen as providing theoretical support for what is known in environmental philosophy as the **GAIA** theory. Extending this concept by including aspects of Deep Ecology, Land Ethics, and Social Ecology should give some guidelines:

- i) The original **GAIA** hypothesis was put forth in the late 1960's by the British atmospheric chemist James *E. Lovelock*. Gaia is the name of an ancient Greek earth goddess who was the mother of Titans. *Lovelock's* original view concerned his observation that phenomena like mean global temperature and the salinity or alkalinity of the oceans are not fixed but rather move around a roving set point. That is, these phenomena are regulated over certain ranges by the combined interactions of the earth's air, water, surface soil, and living things (biota). This resembles the kind of self-regulation we see in other organisms and that many regard as a central feature of any living organism. According to this view, all of the various constituents of the biota are part of a larger comprehensive system, which operates more like living organisms than any mechanical system. Because he accepts the fact that life on earth is continually evolving. This single organism, Gaia, keeps changing. No species, no particular part of Gaia is, in principle indispensable to health.
- i) Supporters of the **Deep Ecology** theory tend to regard ecosystems as single bodies with sub-entities whose mutual influences generate the greater dynamic of the natural world; this implies that each organism is of equal value and hence, should be protected and preserved as it is.
- i) Biologists such as *Aldo Leopold*, who formulated the **Land Ethic** Theory, are dedicated to conserve nature. Their guiding principle is balance or harmony of the natural realm. Moreover, he recognizes that human beings play a prominent role as both users and caretakers of nature:
  1. That land is a community .... the basic concept of ecology;
  2. The land is to be loved and respected .... an extension of ethics;
  3. The land yields a cultural as well as an esthetic harvest;
- i) **Social Ecology** explains our ecological myopia in terms of the distorting and deforming influences of socially constructed categories such as gender, race, and class. Ecofeminists argue that the deep cause of ecological degradation is the socially constructed nature of a patriarchal society. Patriarchy instills and reinforces a set of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that objectifies all that and exploits it for personal satisfaction. Patriarchal society regards nature in the same way as men within such a society regard women: as things to be used for selfish, private ends. As a result, men within such a society are encouraged to "rape" and exploit nature in the same way as they are encouraged to rape and exploit women. Another example of this type of theory sees a disturbing similarity b/w false beliefs concerning racial superiority and its purported natural privileges and views about "higher" forms of life and their "natural right" to make use of "lower" life-forms.

## Part IV - Asian Values

In our current state of the world, trends are going into just one tradition, favoring the Abrahamic (here especially the Christian-Western values); in a pluralistic society all the religious traditions should flourish in reciprocal respect in order to be mutually inspiring; any trend of uniformity, suffocates dialog and ultimately brings it to a halt. Religious fundamentalism, whether Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or Hindu, may be interpreted as a retreat from confusions and threats of the modern world to the truths and values of an earlier age.

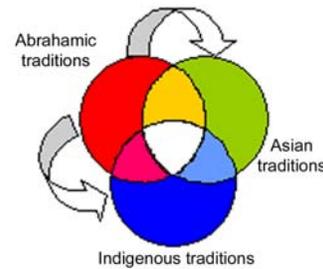
Some 50-60 years ago, we imposed our Western way of thinking and acting onto countries of south-east Asia (China, Japan, Korea, Thailand, etc.). Countries anchored in Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist traditions, greatly abandoned their faith - one must recall that China until not so long ago was an entirely agricultural country. Then, 毛泽东 (*Máo ZéDōng*), 邓小平 (*Dèng XiǎoPíng*), and the current ruling class have inflicted on China the same industrialization and exploitation of nature as we did and still do in the West. Since the beginning of the industrial revolution, these countries gradually saw their Buddhist ideals substituted by western thinking and acting.

It should be mentioned though, that there is a major difference in perception between Indian and Chinese Buddhism. In the Ganges Valley of India, Buddhism reported the perception that the forest was a source of pain, danger and struggle. When it moved into the *Han* cultural area (中国 *ZhōngGuó*, the middle = mainland China), a quite different perception of nature was held by that society. While India of the time of Buddha was composed of urban islands amidst a sea of forests, by the time of arrival of Buddhism in China and the interaction with Confucianism and Daoism, nature was beginning to be seen to consist of islands of mountains within a sea of cultivated fields. Thus, Buddhism was able to move into a cultural sphere quite different from that of its origins and able to supply a doctrine of great value to the new region. Buddhism has the potential to penetrate deeply to the very roots of the problems and to find lasting solutions rather than merely treat superficially symptoms and single issues. Japanese Buddhism on the other hand, carefully picked out aspects of Chinese traditions (Buddhism and Confucianism alike) as was convenient for, or inconsistent with their nationalism (*Nakamura et al*, 1971). One such aspect is evident in the criticism of Chinese Zen Buddhism by their Japanese counterparts in pointing out at the abstract guiding principles in Chinese interpretations. Japanese Zen Buddhists on the other hand embodied these principles into a person of flesh and blood whom they followed with absolute devotion. Japanese blindly copied and applied the successful concept of Chinese civilization but simplified it to a degree of total obedience and absolutism. Being an island, Japan for centuries practiced these principles and perfectionized them without critically setting them in relation to the original principles. Somewhat like a boat devoid of proper navigational tools, drifting in the open ocean and ultimately not knowing where it is heading to. As a result Buddhist and Confucian values in Japan were widely based on misconceptions and modifications for the sole purpose to support the hierarchical status quo (*Nakamura et al*, 1971). As a result Buddhist aspects originating from Japan have to be viewed at critically and are considered here only sporadically.

The reason why eastern countries adapted almost exclusively Western ideas might be found in the persistent embarrassment in traditional cosmologies of Asian values. And as such, representing an erosion of tradition in favor of current scientific thinking. This caused one of the most altered and degraded environments to be found on this planet. Thailand for example, has increasingly become an environmental disaster, largely as a result of the nearly wholesale acceptance of Westernization, including industrialism, urbanism, materialism, and consumerism. Prior to WWII up to 75% of Thailand was still forested, whereas today less than 15% remains forested. This has subscribed themselves to a "theory of moral collapse" as the cause of the growing ecological disequilibria in Thailand through Westernization of mind, culture and the environment (refer to transcript of *D. Suzuki* at the beginning of this paper).

### Buddhism:

Despite the many holocausts that this region suffered - humiliation by militant, highly mechanized Western empires - especially aimed against China - it did not entirely give up its ties with their rich philosophical heritage accumulated over the past millennia. Although, the fall of the last dynasty in 1911 and the founding of a modernist regime further cut ties with the cosmic principles by removing the emperor 天子 (*Tiān Zǐ*, son of heaven) and his role in maintaining the cosmic balance. Nevertheless, ancient traditions and conceptions are still alive within many people across Asia, and are experiencing a revival - just like a pendulum swinging back after the dark periods of the cultural revolution and the opening of China to the world. Especially East Asian traditions of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism remain, in certain ways, some of the most **life affirming in the spectrum of world "religions"** (I prefer to call these "religious traditions" rather philosophies as almost all of the inspirations they acquired originated from nature itself). In fact the Chinese character for crisis is written



Like the overlapping beam of colored light generates a neutral situation - i.e. white light; the bent arrows indicate dominance of Abrahamic traditions upon others (Hinduism n/ included).

as a composite of two characters 危机 (*Weī Ji*, harmonizing two extremes: “danger and chance”).

Even though our conception of Buddhism is centered on an ascetic lifestyle that withdraws from materialism, it is not like the Abrahamic traditions which focus on live after death, but rather is concerned to reform individuals in the present life to help them to leave society, in an attempt to interrupt the continuous cycle of rebirth. (*Buddha* was indeed radical in that he recognized that all beings - not just humans - have access to the liberation he proclaimed). Buddhist transformation starts from within, whereas, Abrahamic traditions with their extrovert orientation were busy to spread their concepts and ideas, to reform the world. Something that we in the dominant society somehow successfully achieved - **but for what price?**

Despite a strong ethical prohibitions of the monotheistic traditions regarding homicide and restraints concerning genocide and suicide, ours did not decidedly do so in regards to biocide or genocide, giving our traditions not at all the "all inclusive" and life affirming aspect as many claim.

Allow me to make a short footnote: According to Buddhism, one way to know that things are getting worse, is when the realm of animal rebirth becomes crowded, for the overpopulation of the animals indicates just how much beings have sunk to a lower level of birth (mass outbreaks of grasshoppers, starfish, rabbit, cockroaches, etc.) - which somehow accidentally (?) fit into the current picture.

In Buddhist traditions, the entire cosmos is a cooperative. The sun, the moon, and the stars live together as a cooperative. The same is true for humans and animals, trees and the earth. Our bodily parts function as a cooperative. When we realize that the world is a mutual, interdependent, cooperative enterprise, that human beings are all mutual friends in the process of birth, old age, suffering, and death, then we can build a noble, even a "heavenly" environment. If our lives are not based on this truth then we'll all perish.

Such ideas are no longer wishful thinking - by now they have been proclaimed via the United Nations and implemented as the **Earth Charter** (although it has not really gone beyond anything further than the paper it has been written on; see appendix - www- references).

*Kukai* a Japanese Buddhist of the 9<sup>th</sup> century once said: "Differences exist between matter and mind, but in their essential nature they remain the same. Matter is no other than mind; mind no other than matter." *Kukai*'s universe is a universe of nondual-identity-in-difference, in which there is total interdependence: "What a/effects one item, in the cosmos a/effects every item, whether it is death, ignorance, enlightenment, or sin. *Kukai*'s universe, however, posts no hierarchy, nor does it have a center - or if it does, it is everywhere. For him, the universe has neither beginning nor end; this is in stark contrast to the Abrahamic way of thinking which regards the universe as part of a divine plan with respect to creation and final end. Buddhism and its philosophy is a reflection of the moment; the ability to live completely in the present, deeply aware and appreciative of life. A classical Buddhist attitude is reflected by *Thich Nhat Hanh*, a Thai Buddhist activist; before the end of the Vietnam War, he was asked whether he would rather have peace under the communist regime, which would mean the end of Buddhism, or rather the victory of democratic Vietnam with the possibility of Buddhist revival. His answer was straightforward and to the point: "to have peace at any price" .... which outlines the peaceful character of Buddhism.

In regard to the present, we can attribute environmental destruction to a Western worldview flawed by three erroneous beliefs (*Phra Prayudh*, 1993)

- i) that humankind is separated from nature,
- i) that human beings are masters of nature, and
- i) that happiness results from the acquisition of material goods.

*Prayudh* considers Buddhist teaching as human happiness that is dependent on our natural surroundings by:

- i) simply living within a natural setting as it engenders a greater sense of happiness and well-being; and
- i) nature acting as a teacher for both the mind and the spirit.

<p><b>Buddhist</b> Worldview                  Ecocentrism (humans are part of nature)                  Nonviolence, mental control, need and being, spiritual development, ego extinction</p> <p style="text-align: center;">⇓</p> <p><b>Biodiversity</b></p>	<p><b>Western</b> Worldview (Islam, Christianity, Judaism)                  Anthropocentrism (humans are apart from nature)                  Economic development ("growth mania"), greed and possessing (consumerism), technological control, violence, species extinction</p> <p style="text-align: center;">⇓</p> <p><b>Biopoverty</b></p>
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The monastic community of Thailand came up with a more refined model of how the Thai-society can tackle the current ecological problems - they proposed the green society, and by doing so acquire a model-like character:

1. Population: small and controlled population.
2. Communality: egalitarian communal life based on mutual respect and cooperation.
3. Resources: sufficiency and sustainability by limiting resource consumption to satisfy basic needs and by self-restraint in wants and desires.
4. Economy: cooperative rather than competitive economy based on reciprocity and redistribution.
5. Environment: limit environmental impact and practice stewardship with nature.

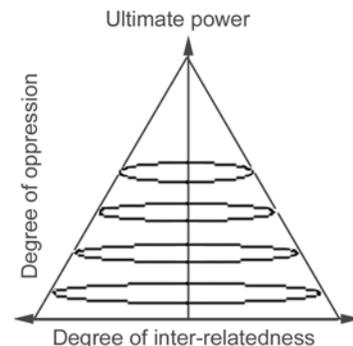
6. Philosophy: holistic (system), organic (ecology), and monistic (unity of humans and nature) worldview based on enhancing quality of life rather accumulating quantity of material things (being rather than having) - see also (1986) "L'Arte di Amare.
7. Values: reverence (inherent worth), compassion or loving-kindness, and non-violence toward all life to promote harmony within society and between society and nature.
8. Self: "deep self" including self-examination, self-realization, self-fulfillment, and self-spirituality through meditation and eventually extinction of self.

As indicated before, attitudes within our dominant society are mirroring itself in many phenomena, e.g. individualism, wealth associated with greed, money can buy everything, and a sheer unlimited pool of distraction (at least the latter makes us a little bit less guilty as we have less time to reproduce).

In fact, our perception of bankers, money exchangers, merchants, etc. is one of assigning them a greedy and uncaring attitude that is a source of much woe - the chargers of usurious interest. Therefore, no small part of our ecological discourse deals with reflections against mercantile. Many of the brightest and best of our society are involved in corporate life; a rejection of this group may do a great disservice to our search for solutions (*Lewis Lancaster*, 1997). On the other hand, Buddhism has been the religion of merchants from its earliest days, and the mercantile community has accomplished the spread of Buddhism. Buddhist, depending on the merchants and holding them in high esteem, directed much of their teaching toward this lay group. In order to visualize the hierarchical structure of our contemporary modern and globalized society, it is best to confront it with an Asian approach (based on the analysis highlighted by *Alan Sponberg*, (1998).

#### **Hierarchy of Oppression** (Western approach):

As we move up the vertical axis, each horizontal section of the cone corresponds to the present vertical location and is represented by a circle of inter-relatedness (in which all beings share a communality of interests). The nature of a hierarchy of oppression is such that as one advances vertically, one's circle of inter-relatedness becomes increasingly smaller. In other words, progress in a hierarchy of oppression requires that one actively deny and suppresses any recognition of relatedness to those that one seeks to dominate. As one claws its way up to the top of the pyramid, submissively accepting subjugation from those above in return for the privilege and right to dominate those below, the extent of one's expressed inter-relatedness decreases, as plotted on the abscissa. In the hierarchy of oppression, one moves upward only by gaining power over others, and to safeguard one's power and security, one must seek ultimately to control all of existence. Reaching the apex of the cone would thus represent, the ultimate success to which one could rise, but that ultimate success would of course be a state of total alienation - not just from others but also from oneself.



#### **Hierarchy of Compassion** (Buddhist approach):

As one ascends the vertical, developmental axis, the inverse to the previous happens. The upward movement augments one's inter-relatedness with the environment. The vertical movement is not a simple, linear upward assertion of control over gradually more and more of the rest of existence; here the hierarchy of compassion, vertical progress is a matter of "reaching out", actively and consciously, to affirm an ever widening circle of expressed inter-relatedness. Such an ever-broadening circle plotted as a developmental line becomes the spiral path as illustrated. Unlike in the previous case, progress along this spiral path confers no increasing privilege over those who are below on the path. Quite the contrary, it entails an ever-increasing sense of responsibility. This profoundly ethical sense of responsibility for an ever-greater circle of realized relatedness is what is expressed by the Buddhist term *karuna* (wisdom in action).



The first model offers the power to control all, while the second cultivates the empowerment to transform oneself in order to truly benefit all life (including oneself). Buddhism is saying that we cannot expect to act in an environmentally more ethical manner until we cultivate a much broader ability to act with compassion and wisdom. Simply attempting to change specific environmentally detrimental behaviors will not work; only a holistic approach based on Buddhist principles, brings the desired change.

Our Canadian zoologist that we encountered already at the beginning, *David Suzuki*, wrote: "Zen meditation proposes to respect Nature, to love Nature, to live its own life; Zen recognized that our Nature is one with objective Nature .... in the sense that Nature lives in us and we in Nature. For this reason, Zen asceticism advocates simplicity, frugality, straightforwardness, virility, making no attempt to utilize Nature for selfish purposes."

*Bhikkhu Buddhadasa* (1985) commented our current state of the world as this: "The greedy and selfish are destroying nature .... our whole environment has been poisoned - prisons everywhere, hospitals filled with the physically ill, and we can't build enough facilities to take care of all the mentally ill. This is the consequence of utter selfishness .... and in the face of all this, our greed and selfishness continues to increase. **Is there no end to this madness?**"

People of tribal cultures (I would like to avoid the expression "primitive" as it is a disgraceful expression in regards to these people) appreciate animals as other people on various trips. Traditional Native American belief states that an animal offers itself to the worthy hunter, expecting gratitude and conscientiousness in return. "The world is not only watching, it is listening too .... Other beings do not mind being killed and eaten as food, but they expect us to say please, and thank you, and they hate to see themselves wasted."

*Gary Snyder* (our green spiritual thinker of chapter III) suggests 3 aspects that are at the center of a reinhabitory ecological ethic:

1. Feeling gratitude: it generates humility and a sense of awareness of the wider self.
2. Taking responsibility for your own acts: minimizing destructive human impact on the land and allowing room for the flourishing of non-human others.
3. Keep contacts with the sources of energy: mindful food preparation, through walking meditation, and / or gardening work practice.

And he continues to write: "human intelligence is considered "simply one form of awareness among many others."

释迦牟尼 *Shì Jià Móu Ní* (Sakyamuni), the founder of Buddhism, followed and advocated the ascetic solution. It is necessary to adopt something like a "new asceticism" for our times, an asceticism that involves using less of the resources and that most certainly means control of population growth. As all this talk seems in theory fine (or maybe too controversial) let me demonstrate how Buddhist principles are applied in a practical field. Let us focus about the pressing problem of human overpopulation - but in a wider sense, this is more or less applicable to any issue of concern; e.g. economy, individualism, technization, etc.



A Nepalese Mandala has many a small figures as well as central figures, and each of them has a key role in the picture: they're all essential .... Every creature, even the little worms and insects, has value. Everything is valuable - that is the measure of the system

### **The Population Bomb:**

It is by now a well-known generalization that one of the most effective ways to cut population growth is to improve people's economic lives, that people who have some material wealth can see the cogency of limiting their fertility, whereas people who are already in deeply degraded circumstances do not (*Rita M. Gross*, 1997). Overpopulation does not just happen; it is the result of causes, one of which seems to be connected to poverty - not being able to walk the Middle Way between too much and too little. We cannot increase the size of the earth with productivity being extendable only to a limited amount. But we, as a species, can control population (something the Pope certainly does not want to hear of). Buddhism does not require its members to reproduce as a religious duty. Therefore, fertility control through contraception as well as abstinence is completely acceptable. Recently, at a lecture in Berkeley, the *Dalai Lama* spoke about the population dilemma. One solution, he suggested that we all should become nuns and monks. With a twinkle in his eye, he mused that probably most of us would not want to do that. He then said, "many people consider abortion to be an act of violence, contraception counterproductive, but the practice of birth control must be used. Because of the unique ways in which Buddhism values human life, only children who can be well cared for, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, should be conceived - without exhausting the emotional, material, and spiritual resources of their parents, their community, and this planet – the classical "quality versus quantity" approach.

This is in total contrast to pronatalists, who always regard a birth as a positive occasion, under any circumstances, even the most extreme (birth control in their eyes is based at involuntary means, like diseases, starvation, and violence that will impose restrictions in form of massive die off's).

My suspicions are deepened even further when people endure extreme expense and go to extreme measures to conceive their biological child (that by the way should be a "carbon copy" of themselves) instead of adopting one of the many needy children already present around the world.

Regarding sexual experiences among Abrahamic traditions (as forbidden fruits) in no way fosters mindful and responsible sexuality. Like pronatalists, they strongly discourage non-reproductive sexual activities, such as masturbation, homoerotic activity, or heterosexual practices that could not result in pregnancy – scaring people and cultivating negative feelings versus their own sexuality. Till to this day, the Vatican condemns the use of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV. Indeed, this is shameful as sexuality properly understood and

experienced, is one of the most powerful methods of human communication. Reproduction is, in fact, far less crucial and far less frequently the outcome of sexual activity.

Speaking about communication; our lack to properly communicate with (listen to) others, the willingness to understand and comprehend what others try to say is probably the most difficult self-discipline of our western fast-moving society. We are not talking here of business language, military jargon, etc., but about the unconditional and free exchange of ideas without ulterior motives. The ability to listen, whether human or not (as imperfect as it may be), can by true learning; and thus, the will to understand, can evolve towards a true interrelationship in which the integrity of each is maintained. In doing so, communication will be effectively harmonizing, and a first step towards mutual respect among all confessions and a new world ethic.



The communication model in which interlocutor A uses a set of vocabulary that is only partly understood by interlocutor B.

In this regard, it is very helpful, even necessary, for us, for our body to be placed in a proper environment, with proper nurturing - physically, emotionally, and spiritually. This is a fundamental reason why its ecologically far better to be limited in number where a sustainable way of living can be maintained, than too many that are struggling to survive. Among Buddhists, rebirth as a human being is valued by far the most fortunate and favorable, because human beings, more than any other sentient beings, have the capacity for spiritual development that eventually results in the fulfillment and perfection of enlightenment.

### Confucianism and Daoism (Taoism)

According to Daoism, the Abrahamic approach has mostly been "repentant", "redemptive", and "reconstructive". Daoism, on the other hand, has been termed "instructive" and "indicative". The Confucian approach must neither be "repentant" nor "reconstructive" but "explorative" - expounding an ecological implication of Neo-Confucian cosmology. Since Confucian and Abrahamic traditions are so far apart and best described by their principles:

孔子 (*KōngZǐ's* = Confucius) as well as his scholars like 孟子 (*MèngZǐ*) and believers in the **goodness of human nature**, were inherently optimistic; whereas, Abrahamic tradition are as pessimistic about human nature and preoccupied with the sinfulness of its followers. Confucianism is not as far away from Buddhism as it may seem, in that the universe has neither a beginning nor an end, no creator, and no purpose. Confucianism focuses less on hypothetical facts but on the practical aspects of life. Western thinkers have commonly framed the question of ethics as a matter of our use of freedom in choosing between good and evil, while Confucians have thought in terms of responding appropriately to a given situation. Unlike the story in Genesis, in primordial Confucian myth, the world is not created *ex nihilo*, nor are human beings given "dominion" over it (many Chinese would feel uncomfortable with the idea of a willful God who created the world out of nothing). Rather, human beings find themselves as things among things, buffeted about in a dangerous and unruly world until the civilization work of a series of sagely heroes (not to be confused with God) brings order into this chaos. Confucians are traditionally less concerned with the theories of origin or with concepts of a personal God than with what they perceive to be the ongoing reality of the self-generating, interrelated universe (continuity of being). Traditional Chinese thinkers used different conceptual apparatuses to convey their thought. To them, the appropriate metaphor for understanding the universe was found in biology rather than in physics (*Tu WeiMing*, 1998).

In the contemporary world of technologically empowered desire, the enlarged task of self-cultivation is to harmonize the naturally immediate or relatively short temporal frame of reference, which is the original sphere of desires .... the need to adjust desires to the rhythms of other life-forms and earth processes is different in scope, but not in kind - the kind of thing that Confucians have taken as a central task for 1000s of years.

### Concepts of Confucianism:

Confucians seem to have deliberately rejected simplistic reductionist models. They define human beings in terms of five integrated visions (*Tu WeiMing*, 1998):

1. Human beings are sentient beings, capable of internal resonance not only between and among themselves but also with other animals, plants, mountains, etc. indeed with nature as a whole.
2. Human beings are social beings. As isolated individuals, humans are weak.
3. Human beings are political beings, in the sense that human relatedness is differentiated in terms of hierarchy, status, and authority.
4. Human beings are also historical beings sharing collective and cultural memories, traditions, ritual, and "habits of the heart".
5. Human beings are metaphysical beings characterized by the ultimate concern to be constantly inspired by and continuously responsive to the mandate of heaven (not the same heaven as in Christian believes - thus better translated as cosmos).

We can actually envision the Confucian perception of human flourishing, based upon the dignity of the person (not hierarchy), in terms of a series of concentric circles: self, family, community, society, nation, world, and

cosmos. In fact, on top of all Confucian virtues does not stand justice but the human generosity.

Supporters of Confucianism accept that both good and the bad features reside within each of us, but they become highly suspicious in regards to those people who do not admit their own weaknesses. **Confucianism is a way of learning, learning to be human.**

The root of the practice of humanness is, first, loving parents and brothers and sisters. Next, we should love relatives,

retainers and friends, and all other people. Then we should love and not want to kill birds, beasts, insects, and fish. Finally, we should love and not recklessly cut down grass and trees. If we damage them recklessly, we should realize that it is a lack of filiality toward nature.

*Kaibara Ekken*, a Japanese thinker who lived from 1630-1714 commented: "The sages taught in 书经 (*shū jīng*, the Book of History) that heaven and earth are the parents of all things and that human beings are the spirit of the universe. This means that 天 (*tiān*, cosmos or heaven) and 地 (*dì*, earth), being the source which gives birth to all things, they are the great parents" (for more details about *KongZi's* thinking, see appendix - part VII).



### Concepts of Daoism (Alan Watts, 1977):

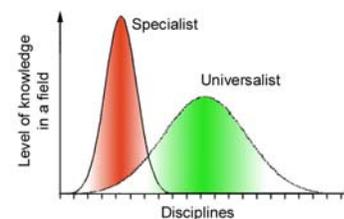
老子 (*LǎoZi*), the founder of Daoism regarded technology as a "weapon of harm" in the sense that it could be applied to further war and destruction (something the Chinese had to cope with already before the Opium War, 1840-42). The Daoist perspective on technology is that it does more harm than good, because it destroys the purity and innocence of the human self, leading to a vicious cycle of the pursuit of desires following upon the pursuit of knowledge (it would have never been the aim of an ancient Chinese scientist to search for the fountain of youth – or in modern terms, hunting for the gene responsible for aging). Accordingly Daoist may pose this question: technological progress is not perhaps a symptomatic disease rooted in the inability to concentrate and enjoy the present? Daoists see the universe as the constituted harmony or symbiosis of models that cannot exist one without the other.

The point is that technology is destructive in the hands of those that do not realize that they are part of the very same cosmic process. Our "super specialization", in our awareness and our way of linear thinking has left us in the abandonment, in total ignorance, of the polarity of this fundamental principles and rhythms. Everyone of us is so specialized that we no longer see the broader picture. For example: watching the nucleus, and surrounding electrons of an atom, we change their behavior (the act of measuring interacts with and changes the system to be studied - compare *Heisenberg's* Uncertainty principle). However when scientists come to examine part for part of it, they find themselves in conflict. Lets hear again *David Suzuki's* remarks:

*.... and I came to understand that what makes science unique and special, the great strength of science, is also its tragic flaw or weakness. You see the very essence of science is that experts must focus on a part of nature. We try to bring it into the laboratory and isolate it from everything else. But in the process from separating it from the context that made it of interest in the first place, we loose all sense of where it fits and why it matters. And the essence of the scientific ideal is that we must objectify that what we are observing. We must remain distant from it, we must look at it through a microscope, we give it numbers so we can fed it into a computer, we don't feel emotional or passionate about it because that may color the way that we interpret our data. What you see the very act of distancing ourselves from that object of nature means that we no longer care.*

By desperately trying to squeeze a representative and simplified model into our brains, somehow shows that we do not possess a more refined instrument than our brains.

The biological world is a society in which everything feeds mutually on each other - every species is a prey of an other one. Moreover, if there is some sort of species, that is not the prey of an other, it would grow and multiply until to the point of self-strangulation – this could be us. Through our own ability in destroying the biological order via "over population", we ultimately might destroy ourselves. For this reason everyone that is proposed to govern the world (be it the dominance of the US-administration, or extremists of another kind), puts all, and especially her-/himself in danger.



Specialist vs. universalist: high specialization easily detaches the specialist from the holistic concept – just as described by the hierarchy of oppression

The fundamental premises of Chinese philosophy, whether Daoism or Confucianism (to a certain extent even Maoism) assumes the fact that if you do not have confidence in nature and the other persons, you cannot have confidence in yourself. If you do not have self-confidence, you cannot not have confidence in your own distrust - in that, without this basic confidence in all the systems of nature, one is simply paralyzed. *LaoZi* commented this with a simple poem:

<i>Io non agisco e il popolo viene modificato.</i>	<i>I do not act and people become modified.</i>
<i>Io godo della pace e il popolo diviene onesto.</i>	<i>I enjoy the peace and people become honest.</i>
<i>Io non uso la forza e il popolo diviene ricco.</i>	<i>I do not use force and people become rich.</i>
<i>Io non ho ambizioni ed il popolo ritorna al bene ed alla vita semplice.</i>	<i>I do not have ambitions and people return to the good and to the simple life.</i>

That's the reason why in our industrialized society, the plethora of laws made for our personal safeguard transforms earth in a kindergarten, and a paid policeman - who should protect us - becomes a true controller (this sounds like *Big Brother* to me). Again, here some words of *LaoZi*:

*"Ah, Freedom; how many crimes have been committed in its name!"*

The idealism of the French, American and Russian revolution, sooner or later, always came along with an excess of violence which became justified in the name of liberation and of the health of the people whom had to endure it - an observation definitely appropriate for our contemporary modern world, in particular for a few leaders of our time (located all in the western hemisphere). Hence, *LaoZi's* continuous and states:

*The best soldiers are not militant.  
The best combatant is not a ferocious one.*

The best way to govern a great state, according to *LaoZi* consisted in not making anything and to leave the people in peace. One should "govern" the people like the way you treat a fish (regularly feed it and from time to time change the water). *Kropotkin* interpreted *LaoZi's* inactivity regarding governmental policy as such: the theory that if the people are left on themselves in order that they can do what they like, to follow their own nature, to discover what really appeals them, will generate itself a social order. Individuality is inseparable from the community. In other words, the order of nature is not a forced order but an interaction of that same self-regulating network; it is not the result of laws and commandments whose existence confine us to obey through external violence. According to Daoism, there is nothing such as a strictly external world.

*Alan Watts* (1977) ironically remarked: The Confucians, together with Hebrews, Muslims, Catholic scholars, and some fundamentalist Protestants, are like tourists who study guidebooks and maps like operation manuals, rather than stroll around in freedom and admire the panorama (for more details about *LaoZi*, see appendix - part VII).

I think it is time to penetrate deeper into these concepts in order to find the harmony of the 中庸 (*zhōng yōng*, the middle way). This pattern running through and governing all things was traditionally referred to as the 道 (*dào*, the way).

The pictogram *Dao* displays motion enclosed in a head-like structure; perhaps we should interpret it as "going and stopping", in which going represents 阳 (*yáng*, bright) and periods of stops 阴 (*yīn*, shady). Combining both head and motion one could inspire us to see it as an intelligent rhythm. Various translators have named it "Way", "Reason", "Providence", "Destiny", "Logos", and some even referred to it as "God".

It is time again to hear how *LaoZi* circumscribed it:

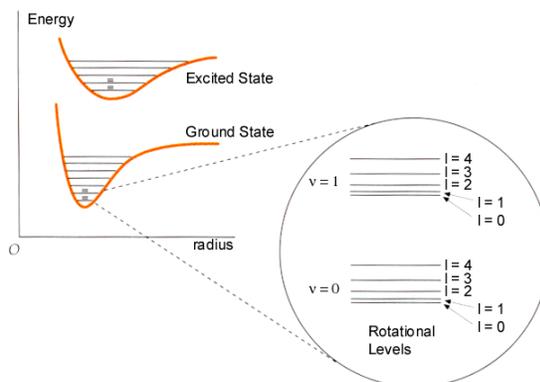
*The great Dao is everywhere, at left and at right,  
All the things depend on it in order to exist, and as such, it does not abandon them.  
By accomplishing its fulfillment, it does not ask for anything.  
It loves and feeds everything, but it does not behave as the master of things.*

Thus, *Dao* cannot be conceptualized by words and it is neither an idea nor a concept. Outside of the human world, the order of the nature goes ahead without consulting books. How about human fear is this *Dao*? According to *LaoZi* it is indescribable and thus as an order cannot be put in books – in modern terms it is maybe best described as chaos. *Dao* is the order itself and represents the course of nature; in synthesis, the order of *Dao* is not law. An other reason for which *Dao* and its models escape our conception, is the fact that it is "us" and we are:

*Like a blade that cuts but cannot cut itself;  
Like an eye that sees but cannot see itself.*

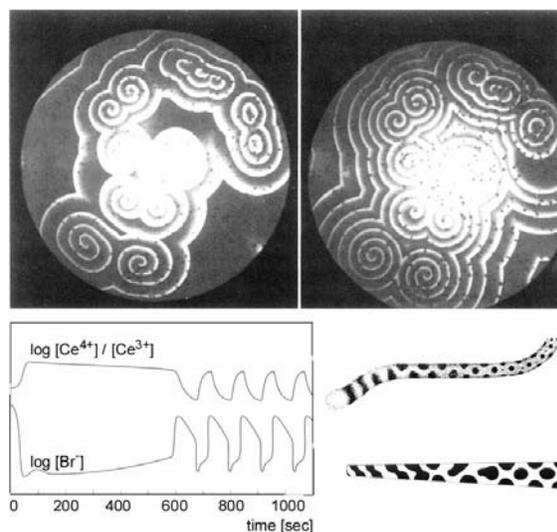
*Dao* captures the entire process of 气 (*qì*, air) and 理 (*lǐ*, texture). The Western counterpart for the East Asian concept of *Qi* would be the term *spiritus* (L.) or *pneuma* (Gk.). Both *pneuma* and *spiritus* originally had to do with wind, hence air, breathe, the breath of life, the force of vitality, and the power of feelings .... in effect, much of what went into "spirit" in the West went into the "physical" in East Asia (*Michael C.Kaltin*, 1998). The emergence and evolution of life is an energetic *Qi* thrust toward systemic complexity *Li*.

气 (*qi*): according to Neo-Confucian tradition (who recognized that already some 500 years ago), it is the stuff of the universe. It is therefore impossible to think of it in a serious contemporary way and ignore Planck's and Einstein's  $E = h \cdot \nu = m \cdot c^2$ , the equation of energy and mass. A major problem in the Western tradition is that ideas of energy have a materialistic, mechanistic background. In contrast, the Confucian tradition conceives *Qi* as vitalistic, naturally fit to be not only the stuff but also the life-force of both body and mind. *Qi* is regarded as "vital force" or "vital power". Energy becomes complex in atoms and molecules, and more so in organic, living systems (refer to Kissler's lecture of "Organic Chemistry"); these organic units in turn associate and develop in complex ecosystems, and finally human societies emerge as the most complex of all. The continuous presence of *Qi* in all modalities of being makes everything flow together as the unfolding of a single process. Nothing, not even an almighty creator (if there is one), is external to this process!



*Qi* in action: electronic, vibrational, and rotational energy levels of a diatomic molecule. The rotational levels are shown in an enlargement of the  $v=0$  and  $v=1$  vibrational levels of the electronic ground state.

理 (*li*): Things must not only exist, they must be and act some way. *Li* encircles the ruling force or pattern of the process (see below, *Li* at work in evolution). *Li* reveals the necessity of tuning the rhythm of our desires to fit appropriately in a life-supporting way with the patterned processes of society, biosphere, and the earth. It is the pattern amidst flux, which provides a means of establishing harmony. Chaos theory and complexity theory have discovered and investigated unsuspected ways in which systems organize themselves, i.e. the Daoist concept of "**self-organization**", emergent, ramifying, and interwoven systematic pattern. Contemporary thought points toward an understanding of the cosmos, physical systems, biosystems, ecosystems, and social systems as patterned energy of many levels and modes (not just patterns and not just energy; just not multiple and not just one). In fact, arguments in this area and difficulties in explaining causality from pattern/system downward seem amusingly similar to the interminable arguments of traditional Neo-Confucians about *Li* and *Qi*.



*Li* in action: periodicity is the result of an initially chaotic reaction. The spatial wave pattern (*Zhabotinski*) in a Petri dish as a result of a chaotic initial reaction (initial resting phase). The sort of reactions often found in nature.

The concept of interaction between *Li* and *Qi* is often associated with "well-known" paradigm of the butterfly that can trigger storm activity. *Chuang Zu* commented that we listen with our minds rather than with our ears - with *Qi* rather than with our minds.

The popular equation of natural selection as the "**survival of the fittest**" interpreted it as an amoral interplay of pure power relationships, almost the antithesis of the kind of content Neo-Confucians might hope for. In contemporary understanding, survival of the fittest is not much so a matter of the strongest and meanest surviving in brutal competition, but more a matter of truly and successfully fitting in with everything else in the system. Strategies of fitting in are numerous, and "**fit**" is a more fundamental criterion than power or strength.

"Symbiosis", even among predator and prey, is essential, and life-taking must ultimately be life-giving or it cancels itself out (seen from a cosmic rather than a human point of view it turns out that the most successful parasite benefit their host rather than destroy it (which does not really speak for us!).

Such pattern of interdependence is not only limited to the systemic evolution of life forms; it also frames their daily manifestation in both human-made systems called "culture" and "society". All forms of evolution are an all-mighty process capable of elaborating a more and more complex interwoven system to give and maintain life. This evolutionary pattern would be the meaning of *Li*.

The interdependent systemic process of evolving life insures both differentiation and that each thing develops its own distinctive specialization precisely in terms of everything else: one ever-changing and developing pattern encompasses all, and each has its own particular pattern in terms of the whole.

Chinese thinkers discovered that *Li*'s enduring pattern is union rather than disunion, integration rather than disintegration, and synthesis rather than separation. The great harmony among *Li* and *Qi* gives rise to the cosmic path of the 道 (*dào*, the way). The idea that 天 (*tiān*, heaven) and 地 (*dì*, earth) complete the transformation with no mind of their own (just time) clearly indicates that the harmonious state of the organismic process is not achieved by ordering divergent wills. Harmony will be attained through spontaneity.

*Qi* moves and flows in all directions and in all manners. Its two elements 阴 and 阳 (*yīn* and *yáng*), unite and give rise to the concrete. In their ceaseless succession, the two elements of *Yin* and *Yang* constitute the great principles of the universe. The original meanings of *Yin* and *Yang* referred to the sunny and the shaded side of a hill and expressed an uneven distribution of heat.

This pattern is reflected in the regularity in which peach trees flower - they display the four aspects of life; spring is the generation of the will to live, summer is the growth of the will, autumn is the completion of the will, and winter is the storage of the will. The *Yang* is the visible, bright, changing, or moving cosmological process, whereas the *Yin* is the invisible, hidden, and constant ontological reality. The interdependence and interpenetration of both give rise to the phenomenal reality of nature. Therefore, we can regard *Yin* and *Yang* as two inseparable and mutually transformable momenta of the great ultimate reality 太极 (*taijī*).

It is understandable, that this interplay and interchange between discrete species feature prominently in Chinese literature (see concluding poem - part V), Chinese paintings, Chinese medicine, Chinese astrology 易经 (*yī jīng*, the book of mutations), was and sometimes it still is evident in everyday life of Chinese people.

The highest Confucian ideal is the "unity of man and Heaven 天 (*tiān*)", which defines humanity not only in anthropological terms but also in cosmological terms. Confucians are concerned in harmonizing with nature and accepting the appropriate limits and boundaries of nature, in which humanity along with *Tian* (heaven) and *Di* (earth) forms a "trinity" - see also below - *TaiJiQuan*). The reemergence of an ever-present sense of being is the transformation from an exclusive humanism to an inclusive humanism (as talked about in chapter III). It does not make the human the center of the world but instead makes the between-ness, or among-ness, of the human; and things in the world the center of the world - hence, the transformation of the will for power into a spirit of friendly love and support.

Exclusive humanness, by contrast, would be a human striving for domination of the land and possession of territorial rights out of a sense of alienation from an objectified world, perhaps best described as a nomadic tribe engaged in a perpetual hunt. Selfish desires are forms of self-centeredness that belittle the authentic human capacity to take part in the transformative process of heaven and earth. To regard nature as an external object situated out there is to create an artificial barrier, which obstructs our true vision and undermines our human capacity to experience nature from within.



A contemporary painting of Lu YuanZhong that encloses the two elements of *Yin* and *Yang*

太极图 (*tài jí tú*, diagram of the greatest ultimate) tries to trace the two features *Yin* and *Yang* of *Qi* to its very origin, called 太极 (*taijī*, the great ultimate) in which the description of movements - motion and tranquility - appears. The loss of equilibrium causes motions resulting in so-called phase transitions, which is a physical or chemical explanation of *Qi*. *TaiJi* resides in the very transmutation of *Yin* and *Yang*. They are the symbol of the *TaiJi*. In fact, the dots in each domain symbolize the idea that each time one of the two forces reaches its extreme, it contains in itself already the seed of its opposite. In other words, the house of *TaiJi* is *Yin* and *Yang*. *TaiJi* cannot exist by itself without *Yin* and *Yang*.

The concept of *TaiJi* is both the starting and the ending point of all things and it will always sustains connections among all things rooted in it as the origin. *TaiJi* can be seen as the state of equilibrium, harmony, which means that all things mutually support and complement one another.

Through movements, the Great Ultimate *TaiJi* generates *Yang*. When its activity reaches its limit, it becomes tranquil. Through tranquility, the Great Ultimate generates *Yin*. When tranquility reaches its limit, activity begins again. Every natural cycle follows periodic ups and down with an alternating pattern of influences (*Yin* and *Yang*).

The manifestation of these principles can be seen in action almost anywhere; the pattern is visible in brainwaves, sleeping cycle, breathing cycle, menstruation cycle, even in walking, precipitation charts, seasons, tides, lunar

cycle, solar cycle, solar spot activity, and so forth, and so on. However, this Chinese worldview, it is neither "cyclic" nor "spiral"; it is transformational (evolving). Chinese cosmogony is an open system. As there is no temporal beginning to specify, no closure is ever contemplated. The cosmos expands forever; the great transformation is unceasing.

When *Qi* becomes active it is *Yang*, when passive, *Yin*; thus *Yin* and *Yang* are not two different elements but rather two different appearances or phenomena of *Qi*. While *Qi* is the source of *Yin* and *Yang* - that is, the stuff that becomes either *yin* or *yang* - the law that governs its mutation is *Li*. The human mind and the mind of heaven (cosmos) are the same. When the human mind is right, the mind of heaven is also right. When the *Qi* of human is in order, the *Qi* of heaven and earth is also in order.

In general *Yin* and *Yang* refer to the two opposed and complementary forces that pervade the cosmos and give rise to the myriad bipolar oppositions in the world: soft and hard, dark and bright, male and female, and so on. In the technical vocabulary of cosmic resonance theory, *yin* and *yang* represent two states or polarities of *Qi*, one passive and yielding (*Yin*, -), the other one active and dynamic (*Yang*, +). Thus, the "good" and the "bad" (if we want to stress these expressions) are intrinsically connected. We can't separate them but we can find the middle, 中 (*zhōng*, the center).

According to 孟子 (*MèngZi*) evil arises because of imbalances in our physical nature due to the mingling of our physical nature with *Qi*. It is possible, however, to recover one's mind to embrace nature through moral cultivation and by enlarging one's mind to embrace all things through intensive study. *Chang Cai* (1020-1073) noted, "the great benefit of learning is to enable oneself to transform his own physical nature."

It is in the roots of thinking and feeling of Chinese people that the principle of this polarity is manifested (a principle that should not be confused with the conflict or opposition of ideas). In the metaphors of other cultures, the light is in war with the darkness, life with death, the good with the evil, and positive with negative. In fact, it is this separation that the greater part of the world developed an ideal, which **cultivates the pleasant while oppressing the unpleasant** and ultimately gave rise to the contemporary *Hyper-Yang* of destructive Abrahamic rationalism. For the traditional way of Chinese thought, this is contradictive and does not at all establish great harmony. In analogy to the electrical current, the opposing polarities "+" and "-" can't exclude each other; just as north and south, light and darkness, strong and weak, rising and falling, male and female, etc. are different aspects of a same system, and the disappearance of one of the two would mean disappearing of the same system.

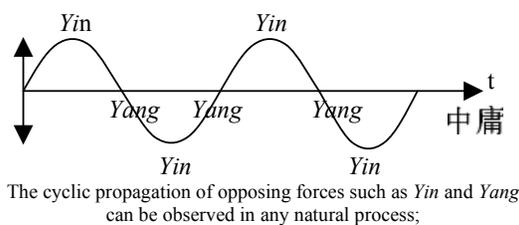


The *Hyper-Yang* of Abrahamic traditions

The principle *Yin-Yang* it is not, what we usually would call a duality, but rather an explicit dualism that expresses one implied unit. Together, *Yin* and *Yang* is said to be 道 (*daò* the way). The passionate union of *Yin* and *Yang*, like the copulation between female and male, therefore constitutes the eternal model of the universe.

The sexual polarization has led to unification of opposite genders. However, it does not stop here; this polarization is manifested in both sexes, even within both females and males. Indeed, it goes even as far as, the female body produces male hormones - likewise does the male body produce female hormones, which assigns us a bisexual psychology. Across the animal kingdom, scientists have coined the term "brain lateralization", a concept that assigns the left and right side of the brain different functions. The left brain processes complex tasks, like collecting food. It's the side of the brain that gets animals out to explore and doing things. The right brain deals with threats, like predators. It's the defensive, anxious side. This task separation is also evident in humans. The left brain hemisphere is known to be more up-beat - it's the go getter, the one looking at the big picture. Whereas the right hemisphere is more down-beat - it's cautious, on the lookout for details. Left or right brained individuals clearly have different behavioral styles.

In fact, this polarization is the source of our creativity. The very same polarity is evident elsewhere in nature; obviously not only in animals and plants, but also in the fundamental nature of this planet - among the polarities of rain and sunshine, of river and ocean, of day and night, of light and dark, of spirit and matter, of young and old, of life and death, - as said before, one without the other would not make any sense. A brief remark about life and death: death is within every one of us; it occurs at a continuous rate, every second millions of cells undergo apoptosis (programmed cell death) and are substituted by new ones. Continuously on this planet people die while newborns follow. It is a natural process, it is a basic law. If the sky and the earth had not been stirred up together, from where every thing could have received life? For us it is not quite easy to seize the fact that cosmic emptiness is creative; that "being" arises from "not being", just as sound is distinguished from silence and light from the darkness of space.



**TaiJiQuan:** It is difficult to think of a western equivalent to 太极拳 (*TàiJiQuán*, shadow "boxing"). It is in part dance, in part physical exercise, and in part slow-motion combat. In fact, it is nothing of that, it is *TaiJi* (the great harmony) which exemplifies the tiniest principle of Daoism, known as 无为 (*Wú*, nothing; *Wéi*, to act; together it stands for inactivity) to act without force - to move as the "watercourse way", the course of nature. It is probably better understood by the observation of the dynamics of flowing water. The principle of *WuWei* is best illustrated by the paradigm of the pine and the willow-tree under the snow. The branch of the pine, being rigid, break apart under the weight, but the branches of the willow-tree bend under the weight causing the snow to slip off (*Alan Watts, 1977*). *WuWei* consists in "rotation of the experiences and the feelings as they come and go", like a ball thrown into a mountain creek that dances down the slope. All that which is said "slides along with the moment"... the *Dao*, which flows ..., to resist would simply make one "seasick".

A drunken person falling from a wagon hardly inflicts himself deadly injuries. The bones of such a person are like those of any other, but a drunken fellow faces such an incident in a different way. The person's spirit is embedded in a feeling of safety.

Such a person is neither aware to drive the wagon, nor aware of the fact of falling from it. The ideas of life, death, and fear cannot penetrate; and therefore such a person does not suffer. And if such a feeling of safety is due to the wine, how much more then due to spontaneity!

*Chang Cai*, a Chinese philosopher (1020-1073) once wrote: "Heaven is my father and earth is my mother; and even such a small creature as I find an intimate place in their midst. Therefore, that which extends throughout the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions". The 论语 (*lún yǔ*<sup>3</sup>, Analects), containing a summary of *KongZi's* saying took special delight in watching the unceasing movement of a flowing stream, seeing it perhaps as a symbol of the unceasing operation of the 道 (*dào*), or the steady and uninterrupted effort needed to master the way.



*Tai ji tu*, diagram - the trinity of heaven, earth and men (taken from Pierre's **TaiJiQuan**-video)

In order to complete the picture - "to lighten up the reverse side of the coin" if you want, I should mention a serious aspect about Confucianism in regard to gender relations. The feminization of nature and the accompanying devaluation of nature are not cross-culturally the same phenomena. Specifically, nature as a whole has not been associated with "women" in Chinese society; therefore, does not implement a subordinate status. It should be said, though, that Confucianism did not offer women the same chances as for man.

The three great rules, 三纲五常 (*sān gāng wǔ chāng*) which outline the principles of a political stability within a state, proclaimed that:

*The emperor rules over his people, the father over his son, the husband over his wife ....*

The third book (out of the *Five Classics* of ancient China), 礼记 (*Lǐ Jì* the Book of Rites) goes even further and clearly indicated Chinese women a subordinate status:

"The women follows and obeys the man: in her youth, she follows her father and elder brother; when married she follows her husband; when widow, she follows her son"

(for more details, see appendix - part VII).

Even though *KongZi's* approach to find the middle path seemed to be undermined by the subordinate status of women. For his defense it should be said that he was a child of his time. Thus, he incorporated existing standards of that time into his worldview. In other words, our attempts to identify and further demystify the conceptual roots of today's ecological problems cannot overlook the fact that the successful transplantation of gender imagery can be attributed to biological sex differences and male cultural hegemony. Something that has been recognized and gradually modified since the rise of Neo-Confucian ideology by *LoChinShun* (1528).

Said all this, lets proceed a step further to discuss the *Cosmic Resonance Theory*, still widely practiced within as well outside of 中国 (*Zhōng Guó*, China).

**Cosmic Resonance Theory in Chinese cosmology:** Chinese geomancy or 风水 (*fēng shuǐ*, wind and water) is the art of aligning houses and graves to harmonize the flow of *Qi* between humans and environment, thus to reap benefits for the living through the working of cosmic resonance. The cosmic resonance posits that events taking place at the same time, but separated in space, may exert a subtle effect on one another. For example, a chess game going on in a house and a softball game being played at the same time in the street just outside might be portrayed as influencing one another's outcome, even though none of the respective participants had any knowledge of or contact with one another (every action has consequences surpassing its visible, linear effects in the here and now - remember the butterfly that is able to trigger a storm).

"When the lute-tuner strikes the *kung* note on one instrument, the *kung* note of a nearby instrument responds; when he plucks the *chiao* note on one instrument, the *chiao* note on the other instrument vibrates as well. Musical resonance of this type was the prototypical example of cosmic resonance because its medium was the

vital essence, the same quintessential *Qi* which constituted our spirit and thoughts, cosmic resonance was assumed to transpire at the speed of thought. Human consciousness is thus implicit in and susceptible to the same processes of cosmic resonance that affects trees, iron, magnets, lute strings, and so forth. Accordingly, many Asians think that a well-planned house or grave can bring health, long life, and prosperity to the family that dwells in or commissions it. Surprise, this theory is seriously practiced in Singapore and does shape public life even today.

This theory is maybe an explanation that the death of a loved one, even far away, produces cosmic resonance that can be felt by many people - I would just like to mention the Inuits that hang the boots of their loved ones in such a way that they swing as long as they are out for a hunt ... sorry no further no comment on that.

In this way, the ecological worldview of *A. Leopold*, along with the geomantic philosophy of East Asia based on Taoism and Buddhism, can be seen as a source of theoretical support for what is known in environmental philosophy and the GAIA theory (mentioned in part II).

Thus, the cosmic resonance theory embraces our "beloved" planet and resonates with the vast biotic community through a complex grid-network of energy currents or lines of force - which constitute nature as a synergistic ecosystem of symbiotic relationships in an interconnected web of life. It is precisely such an East-West Gaia theory of living nature, which might point a way in healing our plundered planet, overcoming today's environmental crisis, and establishing a harmony between humanity, the land, the sea and the air.

**Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM):** TCM as a preventive medical discipline analyzed humans by dividing them into five "orbs", or systems, each one centered on a specific organ that was in turn associated with one of the five phases of *Qi*. The spleen is the focal organ of the orb correlated with wood; thus, in the first month the spleen is the first organ from a sacrificial victim.

This is, by the way a serious thing, because blue-green is one of the 5 colors associated with wood. The emperor wore blue-green clothing and used blue-green equipment. By following this rule of resonant affinity between objects, the ruler brings about harmony within his kingdom by sending resonant vibrations out into the cosmos. This brought peace, wealth among, and solidified the health of his people.

Chinese medicine, after all, is also an application of cosmic resonance theory, which seeks to manipulate the flow of *Qi* in the body through acupuncture and to balance it with external *Qi* through diet. According to TCM any disease, is conceptualized as dis-equilibrium within the sick person. As in the case of paralysis of the four limbs, the vital force *Qi* no longer penetrates them, and therefore they are no longer parts of the self. In TCM, living in harmony with the principles of *Yin - Yang*, the 五行 (*wǔ xīng*, the five elements), and the theory of the effect of nature upon health, which is the key to good health and longevity.

The principles of *Yin* and *Yang* (that often are wrongly interpreted by assigning women only *Yin* and man only *Yang* character) are further subdivided among the various regions of the body - so that while the front of the body is *Yin* relative to the back, which is *Yang*, the abdomen is *Yin* relative to the chest, which is *Yang*. The 5 element theory associates constitutes of the natural world - wood, fire, earth, metal and water - with other fundamentals such as seasons, emotions, and parts of the body. Each element gives rise to the next in a perpetual fashion. For this reason, the system might be more accurately described as the 5 phases, representing the process of continual movement in life. The 5 elements have a central role in Chinese herbal medicine, especially in the grouping of tastes of herbs and parts of the body. Instead of looking for causes of illness, Chinese practitioners seek patterns of disharmony, which are expressions of imbalance between *Yin* and *Yang*. Particular attention is given to reading the pulse and tongue, both of which are very important for an accurate diagnosis. Ill health results from a deficiency or excess of either *Yin* or *Yang*.

A cold, for example, is not just the result of a virus, (though this clearly is the cause), but a sign that the body is not adapting to external factors such as "wind-heat", "wind-cold", or "summer-heat".

A high temperature denotes too much *Yang* and shivering is the result of an excess of *Yin*. The art of Chinese herbal practitioner is to restore harmony between *Yin* and *Yang* both within the patient's body and between the patient and the world at large (Chevallier, 1996).

The ancient five elements theory is used by the Chinese when writing prescriptions. It associates herbs with the natural world, including elements, seasons, and parts of the body. In the circular movement, each element gives rise to the next (for example, winter gives rise to spring). The 5 angled movement is a controlling one, in which each element restrains another.



## Part V - Conclusion

### **Abrahamic traditions, ....**

The enlightenment project created the modern world, which has become slowly aware that its technology has let the genie of ecological disaster out of the bottle of modernity. Mediated by our Abrahamic traditions and later on what began as a search for liberty, equality, and fraternity has led to unrestrained industrialization and unsustainable urban sprawl. Western philosophy has so frequently focused primarily upon the act of thinking or thinking about the act, but not the act itself.

Western dominance, and the worldwide application of "our way of thinking" has resulted in great instability even in modern countries such as Japan and recently China (PRC) alike - have been cited for their poor conservation record - including widespread temperate and tropical deforestation, excessive exploitation of wildlife products, indiscriminate and damaging fishing practices, and widespread pollution. The Japanese attitude toward nature is essentially possessive. According to predominant Japanese thinking, nature by itself is not natural .... until the hand of man has properly shaped it. Japanese seem to be in love with a "seminature", or somewhat domesticated and tame nature.

Singapore on the other hand as an island of industrialized South East Asia, but under the influence of Confucian culture, has already developed a less adversarial, less individualistic, and less self-interested modern civilization. Already neo-Confucian attitudes in Singapore influenced the PRC's claim for the role of Confucianism in its economic success, and hopefully will do so in the future to lessen the effects of western thinking.

### **.... Gender issues, ....**

If we stop men's continuous independence from the female and nature in general, then the patriarchal culture which prescribed the wife's submissive and inferior role, will be broken up, facilitating the emergence of a balanced establishment. Men's inability to bear children induced them to contrive a male deity who creates human beings and transcends finite bodily existence. The advancement of our current technology without restructuring will further "transform men's" psychologically intolerable dependence upon a seemingly powerful and capricious "Mother Nature". According to *Ruether* (1995), this hierarchical social structure is rooted in a dualistic ideology, a detachment between sexes, classes, and human and non-human beings. In these binary oppositions, man/upper-class/white/human beings are considered superior to women/lower-class/people of color/nature.

### **.... the concomitant effects onto our World, ....**

Already in the 20<sup>th</sup> century we had to realize that our efforts to reinforce, with the help technology to strip nature of its resources has brought us the most destructive results so far. What the global village exhibits is sharp difference, severe differentiation, drastic demarcation, thunderous dissonance, and outright discrimination. The world, compressed into an interconnected ecological, financial, commercial, trading, and electronic system, has never been so divided in wealth, influence, and power. Never in world history has the contrast between the rich and the poor, the dominant and marginalized, the articulate and the silenced, the included and the excluded, the informed and the uninformed, and the connected and the isolated, been so markedly drawn.

Till today, in almost any branch of modern science with its objectivism, cold, calculating, detaching attitude, has regarded natural phenomena (the human body included) as mechanistic concepts. Although, our planet already suffers signs of distress, we as members of the dominant society, feel the urge to exploit it till to the last.

Only in recent years has it been commonly understood that the destruction of the Brazilian rain forest or the ocean dumping of toxic waste affects the entire world's ecosystem. Or in more immediate and personal terms, whatever I personally conserve more water, electricity, gasoline, and so on, affects not only my utility bills but the health of the entire cosmos and in stark contrast to the common misconception that an individual's contribution is insignificant. To care for nature, therefore, stems from the realization that we do not and cannot exist independently of our total environment. We are not "an island unto ourselves, we do not and cannot exist unto ourselves".

### **... the Values of Eastern Thinking, ....**

In this regard we have to tie ourselves again with the cosmic principle, in order to be able to feel like *Wang YangMing* (1472-1529) a neo-Confucian thinker who remarked:

*Therefore, when he sees a child about to fall into a well, he cannot help a feeling of alarm and commiseration. This shows that his humanity forms one body with the child .... Again, when he observes the pitiful cries and frightened appearance of birds and animals about to be slaughtered, he cannot help feeling an "inability to bear" their suffering. This shows that his humanity forms one body with birds and animals .... When he sees plants broken and destroyed, he cannot help .... feeling .... pity. This shows that his humanity forms one body with plants.*

An observation well in line with the genetic relationships unveiled by recent gene mapping programs. And still,

the contemporary modern human behaves more like a three year old child rather than a responsible being, which cries aloud when in need of the mother or of the father, but is completely self-sufficient when involved in some kind of play (*E.Fromm*, 1986).

**.... and the possible solutions, ....**

Fortunately, some important people realized that what we are doing here is *Self-Mutilation*. We no longer can view ourselves as detached from an ecosystem that was and still is our mother, father, provider. We have to become active and help nature to help ourselves - no superior force will do that for us. If someone in South America is poisoning the forest floors and rivers in the search for gold, does not mean that we are not responsible. We are responsible for everything what has happened so far. In this aspect we share the same responsibility as if we are the ones clubbing an infant seal or burning a hectare of tropical forest.

A 9<sup>th</sup> century Zen text reads as follows:

**"When others are in the wrong, I am partly too responsible.  
When I am in the wrong, I alone am to blame."**

It is time to revitalize and implement values of the far East in order to modify the desperately disastrous trend that humanity has chosen to follow. Ecology without cosmology is incomplete. The source of the ecological crises is a "scientific" and "humanistic" worldview, powered by Western thinking rooted in words *Protagoras*: "man is the measure of all things".

Being part of this ecosystem, having evolved with that system, originating from it - indeed we are (part of) the cosmic principle, so often expressed by the Chinese in the form of the 道 (*Dao*). The union between the two opposing poles 阴 (*Yin*) and 阳 (*Yang*) as the mother of all things is found everywhere in nature, even among us, between female and male. It is the driving force for creativity, evolution, and survival. By having detached ourselves from nature, we have been indeed chased away from paradise, we lost harmony and a balanced view.

We all should stand up and plea said *David Suzuki* to keep the bio-, ethnic, religious, cultural diversity in order to maintain the rich pool of information which we may need in the future to deal with the effects of our contemporary eco-crisis. And yes, there will be no survival without a world ethic - no world peace without religious peace - no religious peace without religious dialogue.

The first step in creating a new world order (according to *Tu WeiMing*, a Confucian philosopher, 1998) is to articulate a universal intent for the formation of a global community. This requires, at a minimum, the replacement of the principle of self-interest, no matter how broadly defined, with a new golden rule: "Do not do unto others what you would not want others to do unto you." .... "In order to establish myself, I must help others to establish themselves." But doing so requires a conscious mind, especially from western people (Europeans, Australian, Japanese, and in particular the US) and to step aside, leaving space for those who have been suppressed.

In analogy to the emergence of *Human Rights* after WWII, we have to nourish this respect for each other, and our environment. This has been exemplified by formulation of the *Earth Charter*; it successfully has and still does provide ethical and practical guidance to individuals, schools, businesses, governments, religious congregations, NGOs, and international assemblies.

*Anwar Ibrahim* (Ex-Prime Minister of Malaysia and now political detainee) said: "In shifting the center of one's empathic concern from oneself to one's family one transcends selfishness. The move from family to community transcends nepotism. The move from community to nation transcends parochialism and the move to all humanity counters chauvinistic nationalism".

**.... to the Hopes:**

Being detached from nature for so long, obscures an (easy) way back - we definitely have been, so to speak, kicked out of paradise; or in other words, we lost our harmonious relationship with nature. And having declared ourselves as the self-made commanders of this wonderful planet that keeps drifting through the endless depths of time and space, we have it in our hands to change it for the better. At this stage, humanity can only proceed according to *KongZi*, by develop its intellect in order to find a new balance, a new harmony that substitutes the previous one that irreversibly went lost (*Erich Fromm*; 1986).

One can only hope that the influences of Asian values may have a beneficial effect on the fate of humanity, to keeps us, "we as the personified *Titanic*", from sinking again.

Let me conclude by reciting a classical poem of the 唐 *Táng Dynasty* of ancient China (701-761 A.D.) written by *WangWei*, reflecting about the beauty of nature.

## 清溪

qīng xī

## Clear River

言入黄花川，每逐清溪水。  
yān rù huā huā chuān, měi zhuī qīng xī shuǐ

When I go to visit the *HuangHua* (yellow flower) river,  
With joy, I walk along the banks of the clear greenish  
water.

随山将万转，趣途无百里。  
suí shān jiāng wàn zhuǎn, qù tú wú bǎi lǐ

By following the countours, the river winds itself a  
1000-fold, and still, it is no longer than 100 *Li* (50km).

声喧乱石中，色静深松里。  
shēng xuān luàn shí zhōng, sè jìng shēn sōng lǐ

The sound of the water echoes between the rocks,  
The mountain's shade, enveloped by a dense pine  
forest, emits immense quietness.

漾漾泛菱荇，登登映葭苇。  
yàng yàng fàn líng xíng, dēng dēng yìng jiā wěi

Greenish water-plants float gently on the surface,  
while the silhouette of the beautiful weeds' sparkle on  
the transparent water.

我心素已闲，清川澹如此。  
wǒ xīn sù yǐ xián, qīng chuān dàn rú cǐ

I am relaxed, have no concerns, I am just as transparent  
as the pure river water.

清留盘石上，垂钓将已矣。  
qīng liú pán shí shàng, chuí diào jiāng yǐ yǐ

I hope I could rest on a rock and finish the rest of my  
days in relaxed with fishing.

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## Part VII - Appendix

孔子 (*KōngZǐ*) .... KongFuZi = Confucius (551-479 B.C.) officially died with 72 (73 according to Chinese traditions as they also count the period of pregnancy). His father died when he was 3.

*KongZi* lived in the capital ChenDong, city of the province ChuFu; He founded a private school which included only males but of all walks of life - altogether some 3000 pupils, out of which 72 became official lectures of his philosophy (generally lectures were given at an individual basis.). His students collected *KongZi*'s sayings and published them as the *Analects* containing roughly 12000 Chinese characters, all of which are listed as the 500 sayings (proverbs) of *KongZi*.

Key points of his philosophy included:

- i) moral qualities are more important than life (see Confucius sayings);
- i) political principles (rulership) that included guidelines for the people in charge;
- i) educational and teaching principles;
- i) poetry, literature, history, and reflections about important people;

*KongZi* taught most of his time, he became an official as soon as the members of the governing class realized his potentials; but soon after his nomination left his position due to disagreements with the implementation of his ideals and went on to neighbouring states where he tried unsuccessfully to convince authorities of his philosophical approach. Only by the time one of his scholars became an official himself, *KongZi* joined him to assist in the application of his principles.

Since the Han-period (206 A.D.), his ideals were accepted as the state ideology.

### Some Confucian sayings:

1. A humane person is one who helps others to be established when he wishes to be established himself, and helps others to understand things when he wishes to understand things himself.
2. Do not impose on others what you do not desire yourself.
3. *FanChi* (a scholar of *KongZi*) asked; *KongZi* about humanity answered: "To love other humans" Then he asked about wisdom. The master answered: "To understand other humans".
4. "Wealth and high position are desired by all people, but if they are not gained in the right way, they should not be accepted. Poverty and low position are hated by all, but if they cannot get rid of it in the right way, they should not be given up."
5. "A man with lofty ideals never gives up humanity to save his life, but may sacrifice his life to achieve humanity."
6. "Neglect of moral cultivation, neglect of learning and practicing what has been learned, failure to follow what is right, and failure to correct what is wrong - these are my worries."
7. *ZengZi* (a scholar of *KongZi*) said: "I examine myself three times daily; Have I been faithful in doing things for others? Have I been trustworthy in contacts with friends? Have I reviewed and practiced what my teacher has taught me?"
8. "A fault that is not amended is a real fault."
9. "*Hui* is indeed a virtuous man! He lives in a poor hut with a basket of rice and a gourd of water. Other men would not be able to endure his worries, but he does not let them affect his happiness. *Hui* is indeed a virtuous man!"
10. "Only in cold winter does one know that the pine and the cypress are the last to shed their leaves." (in danger one finds out who will stick to moral principles).
11. "The gentleman knows what is right; the small man knows what is profitable."
12. "The gentleman aims at harmony, and not at uniformity. The small man aims at uniformity, and not at harmony." (just as an orchestra is composed of different instruments and not of instruments of a single type).
13. *KongZi* about government: "The prince should be like a prince, the minister like a minister, the father like a father, the son a son." (all should behave according to their position).
14. *KongZi* about government: "To govern means to be upright. Who would dare not to be upright if you took the lead in being upright?" (a moral leader influences his people).
15. *KongZi* arrived in *Wei* and *RanYou* was driving for him. *KongZi* said: "What a dense population!" *RanYou* said: "What should be done when the population grew so much?" "Make them rich." What should be done when they are rich?" "Educate them". (contemporary China).
16. "There should be education for everyone without distinction."
17. "By nature humans are similar to one another, but learning and practice make them different."
18. "He who learns without thinking will be bewildered; he who thinks without learning will be in danger."
19. *ZiGong* (a scholar of *KongZi*) asked, "Who is more virtuous, *Shi* or *Shang*?" *KongZi* replied, "*Shi* often goes too far (radical), and *Shang* often falls short (conservative)." "Does that mean *Shi* is better?" *KongZi* said: "Going too far is the same as falling too short."
20. "Tutti si nutrano, ma pochi sanno distinguere i sapori."
21. "It is better to study than meditate when confronted with a problem that needs solving".

## 老子

(*LǎoZi*) .... LaoZi = Laotse (old master, nickname of LiEr) lived more or less at the same period as KongZi (400 BC); he became an official quite early and was in charge of the archives, but left his position as the political circumstances deteriorated.

Before quitting his job he was asked by one of his admirers (a gatekeeper) to dedicate him a 5000 word long book with his inspirations and idea. This book later on became broadly knownd as the *DaoDe* (the way and its functions). According to his ideas, everything in the universe has its origin in an idea and not in god; thus, just relative and not absolute in nature - similar to the well known effect of a couple's simultaneous death; i.e. the death of one parent is followed soon by the death of the other parent.

### Key points of his teachings:

- i) Reversal and swinging back from extremes is regarded as "dao" (refer to water and stone). According to the dao, it is best to be strong but not to be aggressive - when doing something wrong, or bad, just stop and go back - insisting to proceed is not usefull and ultimately destroys the achievements so far made.
- i) Governments should not guide people, people know how to look after themselves – governments should act on the principle: least is the best (government of NO action). He considered laws as a tool that make people less obedient.
- i) *LaoZi* considered education for everyone (common people) as a source for future troubles.

### Some quotations from *LaoZi*:

1. Being (existence) and non-being grow out of each other, the difficult and the easy complete each other, the long and the short test each other, the high and the low determine each other, the sound and the echo harmonize with each other, the front and the back give sequence to each other.... everything is relative!
2. Fill a vessel to the brim, and you will wish you had stopped in time. Temper a sword-edge to its very sharpest, and you will find it soon grows dull. When gold and jade fill your hall, they can no longer be guarded. Wealth and position breed insolence, and that brings ruin. When your work is done, then withdraw! Such is Heaven's way.
3. Banish wisdom, discard knowledge, and the people will be benefited a hundredfold. Banish human kindness, discard morality, and the people will be dutiful and filial. Banish skill, discard profit, and thieves and robbers will disappear.... Banish learning, and there will be no more grieving.
4. To remain whole, bear hardship and injustice. To become straight, be bent. To become full, be hollow. Be tattered, that you may be renewed. Those that have little may get more. Those that have much are puzzled.
5. He does not show himself, therefore he is seen everywhere. He does not consider himself right, therefore he is known. He does not boast of his achievements, therefore he succeeds. He is not proud of his work therefore he endures. He does not contend, and for that very reason no one under heaven can contend (fight) with him.
6. Whatever is in the end to be shrunk must first be stretched; whatever is to be weakened must begin by being made strong; what is to be overthrown must begin by being set up. He who would be a taker must begin as a giver.
7. Reversal is the movement of the *Dao* (the way). Weakness, and softness are the application of *Dao*.
8. What is most perfect seems to have something missing; set its use is inexhaustible. What is most full seems empty, yet its use will never fail. What is most straight seems crooked (a straight and strong tree will wither be cut by people or broken by the wind). He who is most eloquent seems unable to speak (a wise man looks like a poor fellow).
9. The more prohibitions there are, the poorer the people will be. The more clever things there are, the more confused the country will be. The more skills and crafts there are, the more evil things will be. The more laws are made, the more thieves and robbers there will be. Therefore a sage has said: "so long as I do nothing, the people will of themselves be transformed. So long as I love quietude, the people will of themselves become upright. So long as I maintain inactivity, the people will of themselves become prosperous. So long as I have no desires, the people will of themselves value simplicity.".... Government of no action.
10. It is upon bad fortune that good fortune leans, upon good fortune that bad fortune rests (loosing something may result in fortune later on.... refer to the story with the horse and his son).
11. True words are not nice; fine words are not true. A good man does not argue cleverly, and he who argues cleverly is not good. True wisdom is different from extensive learning and extensive learning does not mean true wisdom. The sage does not hoard (many things). The more he gives to others, the more he has.
12. When he is born, man is soft and weak. In death he becomes stiff and hard. Grass and plants are supple and soft when they are alive, and they become brittle and dry when they are dead. So what is stiff and hard is the companion of death, and what is soft and weak is the companion of life. A strong army will be defeated, and a hard tree will be broken. The hard and strong are inferior to the soft and weak.

The static versus dynamic principle – *LaoZi* versus *KongZi*

*LaoZi*'s attitude is also evident in the paintings of that time. They show landscapes devoid of humans; and if there are pictured some fellows they are placed into the setting as very small elements of the entire composition in order not to disturb the Yin/Yang principles of the painting (this is in sharp contrast to western paintings that often display and highlight important personalities of their time).

Conversely, ancient Chinese architecture displays a well-balanced, solemn, stable - a so to speak *KongZi*'s character, whereas, parks with sneaking little creeks, stones, trees, etc typically reflect *LaoZi*'s attitude. It was *KongZi*'s main goal to promote a philanthropic culture and a civilization of moral values, whereas *LaoZi*'s concern was rooted in the long-term consequences that such an approach might have on nature itself. Interestingly, a typical Chinese in her/his best years can be characterised by an attitude rooted in *KongZi*'s philosophy, while in later years such, and especially upon retirement they rather adapt the attitude promoted by *LaoZi*.

## 释迦牟尼

.... Shi Jià Móu Ní (*Sakyamuni*), was the founder of Buddhism in China. He lived during the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and was a member of the aristocratic *Sakya*-Clan, a resident of now Nepalese territory. The young prince, supposed to be the later king of that land.

At the age of 19 he married and became father. With the age of 29 he made a swift change away from worldly affairs and occupied himself with philosophical fundamentals and the scope of human beings. Among that he started to analyse the question of: "Do all things destroy each other?" Not able to find a suitable answer to this and other questions, he decided to withdraw from public life and to practice asceticism as a monk. After six years of meditation he ultimately experienced enlightenment.... he became a Buddha. From that time on he preached for almost 50 years. *Sakyamuni* taught the four noble truths:

- i) sorrow: life is full of unhappiness, and worries;
- i) cause: desire and greed are the causes for sorrow;
- i) cessation: the aim of sorrow;
- i) way: how enlightenment is obtain;

Upon attaining *Nirvana* (Sanskrit for "death") his remains were divided into 8 parts and spread over the then Indian states; parts of his remains made its way even to China (are kept near BeiJing).

According to Buddhist tradition, Karma rules the status of the reincarnation cycle (rebirth after death). For Buddhists, it is important to interrupt this cycle. In order to do so, it is essential to follow the four noble truths and to conduct a life that is as good-as-possible.

According to Buddhism, nothing has a beginning nor an end, everything is part of an endless chain. Things evolve, develop, and change; i.e. transient (subject to permanent changes). Nothing is static; if people behave statically, they are, according to Buddhism, ignorant. And still, both good and bad elements are found in one person. In this aspect, Buddhism is rather a profound philosophy than a religion. Good things will be rewarded with good things and vice versa. Serious Buddhists do not destroy living things (animals), they are all vegetarians - some even strict vegetarians (avoiding eggs and milk).

The Zen school of Buddhism is more influential than other sects of Buddhism. *Sakyamuni*'s interpretation of Buddhism differed from the traditional Indian point of view in that the Chinese interpretation got mixed with elements of *KongZi* and *LaoZi*.

### The role of Chinese Women in Society:

It seems that the final test of a civilization is what type of husband, wife, man, women, fathers, mothers, etc. it is going to produce said professor *Zhang*. Translation of Chinese texts into Indo-European languages predominantly use the word "man" when talking about the Chinese 人 (*Rén*, human), thus assigning the translated text predominantly a male aspect (allow me to make one remark: in Chinese *Ren* does not differentiate among genders; therefore, it's better to translate this term as "human" rather than "man"). As such, in the eyes of the West, Chinese acquired an even more patriarchal attitude - which does not necessarily paint a proper picture. It is true, China used to be a feudal society for 100s of years, governed almost entirely by males, with the women's ranking in a lowered position.

What makes a good woman in ancient China? .... to follow the 3 obediences and 4 virtues:

- Obedience: i) upon birth obey your father;  
 i) upon marriage obey your husband;  
 i) upon your husband's death obey your son;
- virtues (die together with your husband):  
 i) morality (do not betray);  
 i) use a proper language (soft voice, titling your husband as 您 (*nín* = Sir!);  
 i) show modest manners (she must know her place; never use 我 (*wǒ* = I);  
 i) be a diligent worker;

Ancestors were and still are greatly worshipped; but having no son for the hereditary lineage could mean the loss of the family tradition as the girls were regarded as lower in their stand. And even today, in remote areas, men blame their wives for giving birth to a baby girl.

Popular sayings include "Women have long hair but short wisdom" or another goes like this:

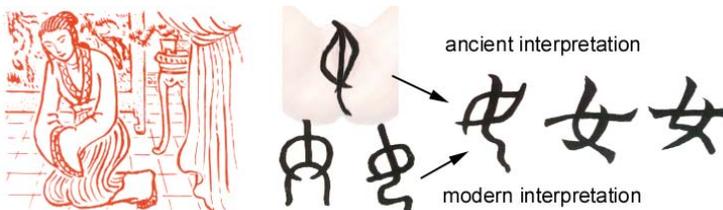
"if you marry a chicken, you follow a chicken,  
 if you marry a dog, you follow a dog."

i.e. don't follow your wife, the wife has to follow her husband.

This patriarchal attitude maintained over generations is also reflected in the concentration of just about a few typical family names (like *Wang, Li, Zhao, Chen, Zhang*); *Mao* once commented: "Women hold up half of the sky!"

Many Chinese characters still reflect the inferior position of the female gender:

At least officially the woman did not have an important role in society, even if in reality her position was fundamental and enjoyed a great deal of prestige. Modern interpretation of the character *nǚ* (see scan) outlines a female in frontal view and in a submitted position. The hands hidden in the sleeves with her back and the head slanted. Later for practical reasons, and speed of



Mutation of the character *nǚ* (the women) over time  
 (left antique, right modern character)

writing, the character changed to the woman's profile, but it still depicts her in a humble position: on knees. The "traditional" meaning on the other hand was considered to be the visualization of the birth-giving posture.

But things were not that serious as we may think. A classical proverb goes like this: "the man is the head of the family", but people ironically added the following ".... and the woman is the neck that moves his head like and when she wants".

The idea of the good, of one who is loved comes in combination with the character of the son (*zǐ*). If you put the *nǚ* under a roof you will get the character for peace (*ān*), the tranquillity, the serenity. Writing the character *nǚ* over the radical, we have the word for marriage (*nú*). Displaying *nǚ* with the broom gives the character for wife (*fù*).

安 ān .... the peace  
 好 hǎo .... good  
 奴 nǚ .... the slave  
 怒 nù .... anger, bitterness  
 妒 dù .... jealous

妖 yāo .... the monster  
 奸 jiān .... the traitor  
 妄 wàng .... absurd, false  
 妾 qiè .... the concubine

男 nán .... the man  
 (composed of tián = the land and lì = power)  
 妇 fù .... married women  
 (composed of nǚ and sǎo = broom)