

THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF K'ANG YU-WEI
A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF RELIGIOUS
SYNCRETISM

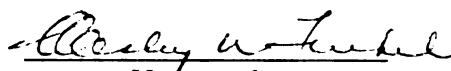
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ABSTRACT

THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF K'ANG YU-WEI: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM

by Winston P.^a Fan

This is a case study of political philosophy in connection with religious syncretism and sociology of knowledge.

Based upon the late sociologist Florian Znaniecki's The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge (1940), the study develops a theoretical framework to analyze and predict how a religious scholar responds to the impact of new knowledge by means of rediscovering the traditional holy writs. It proceeds to analyze the social and political application of the discovery by a religious scholar in connection with Karl Mannheim's Ideology and Utopia (1953). Generally speaking, when a religious scholar orients himself to the maintenance of the existing order by means of rediscovering the holy truth, such a rediscovery is regarded as ideological syncretism. On the contrary, if the rediscovery is used as a means for bursting the bonds of the existing order, it is regarded as utopian syncretism.

The main theme in K'ang Yu-wei's political writings is that Confucianism is essentially an all-embracing unity in which all substantive knowledge is contained. Therefore, all

the world cultures, particularly the validated truths of the various essential aspects of Western culture, were already contained in their Confucianist counterparts. Due to historical incidents many of the substantial elements were lost, or left undeveloped, in the process of transmittal. It was his mission, he contended, to rediscover these authentic elements by eliciting the contents and connections of the Confucian holy writs, polish them, develop them further and present them to his fellow religious scholars. It would be their duty to adopt the rediscovered system of knowledge to save the Chinese Empire and eventually the whole world.

K'ang's political philosophy is actually a strange mixture of both ideological and utopian syncretisms. His proposal for a universal constitution was an outright ideological syncretism, because he kept it secret and never intended for its realization. Later to counteract the rising republicanism he used it as a means to defend the collapsed Manchu ruling house. As for his reform proposal for the Chinese nation, it was originally a genuine utopian syncretism but later was rendered completely obsolete due to the change of events. The obsolescence of the reform program further rendered the universal constitution more ideological in articulation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Objective of the Study

K'ang Yu-wei (1858-1927), one of the greatest Confucianist thinkers in the last century and the mastermind of the unsuccessful 1898 Reform in China, presented the Chinese nation, as well as all mankind, his version of Confucianism which included a universal constitution. The significance of K'ang's universal constitution and his interpretation of Confucianism lies first in that he syncretized into the Confucianist scheme numerous foreign elements in the name of Confucius on a scale of grand synthesis. Further, K'ang's grand synthesis was proposed to revitalize the centuries old sacred system of knowledge and adapt it to the new international scene--the multi-state rivalry. In my opinion, K'ang's political philosophy illustrates the paradox of religious or quasi-religious truth: the absoluteness and self-sufficiency of the sacred truth on the one hand, the attempt to incorporate the newly discovered, or encountered knowledge on the other. Consequently, it also illustrates the conflict between the imported knowledge and the indigenous social situation: the absolute unbreakability of the sacred social situation on the

one hand, the attempt to break it up and transform it into a new pattern on the other. Both in Chinese and English there has been much literature dealing with K'ang's political philosophy, his ideological influence, and the 1898 Reform. But few studies have centered upon the paradoxical phenomena involved in the characteristics of K'ang's political philosophy. Therefore, a more thorough investigation of his theories may serve to promote a greater understanding of the type of political philosophy derived from religious or semi-religious premises. Consequently, it will help to illuminate the inter-relationship between political philosophy and the social and political order, a main concern of the sociology of knowledge.

The Historical Setting in the Nineteenth Century

K'ang's political philosophy was essentially a product of cultural encounter: the meeting of Chinese and Western cultures in the last century. Historically the meeting between these two cultures had taken place long before the nineteenth century, but its implications had not deeply affected the Chinese nation and its culture until the 1840's when the Chinese Empire was defeated by England in the Opium War. After that the long-isolated Chinese Empire, together with her social and political institutions, began to undergo a series of drastic changes. Several of these changes are closely related to this study and are worthy of note.

The first was the transformation of the Chinese Empire from a quasi "world-state" into a member of the contemporary multi-state system. As a result of the treaty of Nanking in 1842 the Chinese finally came to the realization that the Western "maritime states" had absolute equality with China. The traditional tribute system which had characterized the relations with the West was replaced by the "unequal" foreign treaties. Thus 1842 began a new era, characterized by the treaty ports and the opium traffic, extraterritoriality, the treaty tariff, and the most-favored nation clause.¹ However, it was not until 1864 that China began applying international law in settling disputes with foreign countries;² legations abroad as permanent institutions had not been established until 1875.³ Then, following a series of international incidents and warfare, China lost her tribute states: Liuch'iu in 1879; Viet Nam in 1885; Burma in 1886; finally Korea in 1895. She was slowly and reluctantly drawn from a self-centered empire into a sovereign state with a semi-colonial status among the contemporary family of nations.

¹John K. Fairbank, Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports 1842-1854 (Harvard Historical Studies, Vols. LXIII; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), LXII, 3.

²For the story of applying international law see Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, China's Entrance into the Family of Nations: The Diplomatic Phase, 1858-1880 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), Chapter ix, especially p. 133.

³Ibid., Chapter xii.

The effect of the breakdown of the status of the world-empire also had direct bearing on the centuries-old ethnocentric, geographic myth. For centuries the Chinese had regarded their country as the Middle Kingdom (Chung Kuo) located in the center of the earth, with numerous barbarian tribes residing on the four outer fringes, which were further surrounded by the four seas. The glory of being Middle Kingdom symbolized the glory of political and cultural leadership. Without being seriously questioned, the myth was sustained for centuries. However, the defeat in the Opium War dramatically altered this belief. Realizing the necessity of understanding the Western powers after the Opium War, the scholar-officials availed themselves of the current studies of world geography. Ten years after the war there were three geographic studies dealing with world geography published in China. They were Commissioner Lin's Ssu-chou chi (Gazeteer of the Four Continents), 1841; Wei Yuan's Hai-kuo t'u-chih (Maritime Countries), 1844; and Hsü Chi-yü's Yin-huan chih-lueh (A Brief Description of the Ocean Circuit), 1850. Drawing information from Western source books the Chinese compilers became aware of the existence of other continents. Although the knowledge propagated in these three works was slowly felt and understood among the Confucian intellectuals, their publications marked the breakdown of the traditional myth. The last two works had direct influence on the thoughts of K'ang. Thus, after the introduction of modern geographic knowledge into China, the traditional concepts, "Middle" and "All-under-heaven"

(T'ien-hsia) were replaced by cognizance of the continents and the world.

The introduction of the Western geography marked the beginning of a new trend: the emergence (or re-emergence⁴) of the so-called Western learning. Realizing the increasing danger of foreign aggression, but deeply impressed by the Westerners' "strong ships and effective guns," some farsighted scholar-officials began, in the 1860's, adopting a policy of "Western methods imitation."⁵ The manufacture of modern weapons and the study of foreign languages were begun. Concomitantly a number of Western books were translated into Chinese by the newly established Kiangnan Arsenal and the Interpreter's College. Western missionaries, in addition to propagating evangelistic publications, also produced a number of translations of non-religious literature. As of the eve of the 1898 Reform, the translated books totaled approximately three hundred. These books, according to Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's classification, fell into three different categories: (1) science, covering the entire fields of natural science; (2) politics, covering social sciences; and (3) Christian

⁴During the preceding Ming period and early in Ch'ing period some scholar-officials in cooperation with the Jesuits had already translated a number of European works on astronomy and mathematics. Western learning to some extent had influence on early Ch'ing learning.

⁵For the imitation of Western methods see Li Chien-nung. The Political History of China, 1840-1928, trans. and ed. Ssu-yü Teng and Jeremy Ingalls (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1956), Chapter iii, especially pp. 101-05; see also my analysis of the utilitarian approach in the next chapter.

religion.⁶ Although the number of translations in politics was relatively small, the newly imported Western learning which had been presented to the Confucian scholar-officials covered a variety of subjects. They included the knowledge of comprehending the physical universe, the knowledge of manipulating varied forms of governments, and the knowledge of the power of salvation.

It is important to note that the importation of Western learning by the scholar-officials of the Western-methods-imitation school was not met without strong opposition from the ultra-conservatives. Alarmed by the possible impact of new knowledge on Confucianism the conservatives were violently opposed to the study of Western books. For instance, Wo-jen, a devotee of Neo-Confucianism, in opposition to the teaching of mathematics and astronomy, memorialized the Emperor of the danger of Western learning. He maintained:

But according to the viewpoint of your slave, astronomy and mathematics are of very little use. If these subjects are going to be taught by Westerners as regular studies, the damage will be great....Your slave has learned that the way to establish a nation is to lay emphasis on propriety and righteousness, not on power and plotting.... even if the teachers sincerely teach and the students faithfully study them, all that can be accomplished is the training of mathematicians. From ancient down to modern times, your slave has never heard of anyone who could use mathematics to raise the nation from a state of decline or to strengthen it in time of weakness....If astronomy and mathematics have to be taught, an extensive search should find someone who has mastered the technique. Why

⁶Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Bibliography of Western Learning, in Chinese Historiography Society (ed.), The 1898 Reform (4 vols., Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 1956), I, 447-54, especially 448 and 452-53.

is it limited to barbarians, and why is it necessary to learn from the barbarians?...Since the conclusion of the peace [treaty in 1860], Christianity has been prevalent and half of our ignorant people have been fooled by it. The only thing we can rely on is that our scholars should clearly explain to the people the Confucian tenets, which may be able to sustain the minds of the ignorant populace.⁷

The memorial reflected fully the ultra-conservatives' deeply entrenched fear of the encroachment of Western learning. First, it indicated that they comprehended the sharp conflict between the newly imported secular knowledge and the Confucian theory of government by moral principles. Secondly, it suggested why the scholar-officials were anxious about the presence of Westerners; for the very presence of the bearers of new knowledge would threaten the position and prestige of the scholar-officials. Thirdly, it indicated their clear awareness of the influence of Christianity on the allegiance of the Confucian followers. Paradoxically, the propagation of the Christian sacred knowledge was being carried out by ardent missionaries who avowed the conversion of the heathenish Chinese Empire but whose fate depended upon the power represented in the treaty ports and in the foreign legation in Peking.

The importation of Western learning was not halted by the conservatives, though they did create an environment unfavorable toward the reading of Western books among the scholar-officials. Later events, such as the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, indicated that the imitation of Western methods had actually failed. However, the introduction of Western

⁷See Ssu-yü Teng and John K. Fairbank, China's Response to the West (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961, pp. 76-77.

learning did exert considerable influence upon some future-oriented intellectuals. "Since then," as Liang Ch'i-ch'ao recalled, "[a few of] the Chinese (intellectuals) began to realize that the Westerners had learning hidden behind 'the strong ships and effective guns;' their conception of Western learning gradually changed."⁸

Thus the increasingly deepening political crisis, the creeping penetration of the scientific and social knowledge and the provocative challenge of the Christian sacred knowledge, all constituted a tremendous impact upon the Confucian sacred system of knowledge, its social and political institutions as well as its cultural bearers--the scholar official class. Some of them began a painstaking search for the nature of the Western impact: the knowledge behind the West's military power, the relationship between knowledge and social and political institutions, and the historical development of such knowledge and institutions. It was an attempt to determine whether the Chinese nation should adopt the knowledge and institutions of the West; it was also concerned with what portions of the West's knowledge and institutions that the Chinese nation should adopt. This search for the West's secrets, so to speak, was essentially an attempt to answer the conservatives' charge that the West was barbaric; it was also

⁸Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, An Academic History of China During the Last Three Hundred Years (4th edition; Shanghai: Ming Chi Book Store, 1929), p. 43. This was referring to the influence of books of science and politics; the influence of religious books was not mentioned.

an attempt to answer the question as to whether the Confucian system of knowledge and institutions remained valid and self-sufficient. Among the intellectuals there was one who was endowed with deep conviction, well versed with the Confucian classics, who actively responded to the challenge of his time, by offering a considerably elaborate theory, and vigorously tried to put his ideas into practice. This was the scholar K'ang Yu-wei. He was born in Nanhai of Kwangtung Province, which was close to the British colony of Hong Kong. His family had been known for thirteen generations for its Confucian scholarship and he distinguished himself early in his boyhood with ambitions to be a sage. His answer to the challenging issue was absorption and incorporation; in other words, it was a religious syncretism in character.

Major Parts of the Dissertation

The analysis of K'ang's religious syncretism is divided into the following three parts.

Part One (Chapter II) analyzes various forms of religious syncretism and its possible relationship with the social situation. This is also, in part, a brief review of literature in the field of the sociology of knowledge. It is the intention of this study to develop a general model, the "sacred school," for analyzing K'ang's political philosophy as well as for further research.

Following the sacred school approach, Part II (Chapters III and IV) analyzes K'ang's effort to rediscover the authentic version of Confucianism in his attempt to syncretize the Western culture. Special attention is paid to K'ang's description of how China had become stagnant and backward.

Part Three (Chapters V and VI) presents K'ang's version of the lost but rediscovered Tao of Confucius. In addition to the analysis of K'ang's universal constitution, attention is especially paid to K'ang's attitudes towards and efforts to apply this religious syncretism. This part of the study will shed light upon the ideological and utopian nature of K'ang's version of Confucianism.

CHAPTER II

THE SACRED SCHOOL AND ITS RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS

Religious syncretism results from the interplay between the strong impact of a newly encountered knowledge on the one hand, and the vigorous resistance of the existing absolute sacred system of knowledge on the other. To analyze this interplay, this study first places its major emphasis on the paradox of the presumably self-sufficient character of the absolute knowledge and the various methods used to incorporate the new knowledge under circumstances of compulsion. Then it unveils the function of the incorporation, indicating whether it tends to burst or to maintain the status quo of the existing social and political orders.

The sociological concept of the sacred school was first employed by the late sociologist, Professor Florian Znaniecki. In one of his remarkable works, The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge,¹ Znaniecki used the concept to denote the special patterns of development of the religious or semi-religious truths. According to his observation, the men of knowledge in different religions tend to respond toward new knowledge in the

¹(New York: Columbia University Press, 1940).

same patterns of thinking by virtue of the similarities of their religious premises. This idea is of utmost importance to the understanding of K'ang Yu-wei's political philosophy.

However, the concept of the sacred school was not fully developed by Znaniecki. In his book he observed that he knew of no general study of sacred schools. He used primarily second-hand information contained in historical works on particular religions and in synthetic studies of particular civilizations.² Although more than two decades have elapsed since the first publication of his book in 1940, there has been no major socio-historical research into this concept, nor any further development of it. The sociological study of the religious truths still is, on the whole, an uncultivated and incredibly rich land.

The present study intends to develop further this concept in connection with other social theories and to apply it to the analysis of K'ang Yu-wei's political writings. Following Znaniecki's concept I shall develop a sacred school model by drawing evidence from the historical developments of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism; occasional reference will be made to other religions. Then following the sacred school model I shall proceed to analyze the social and political application of the religious truths; in other words, the inter-relationship between the religious truths and their social existence.

²Ibid., p. 93, n.1.

The Absolute Knowledge

The religious or semi-religious truth is termed by Professor Znaniecki to be the absolute or holy knowledge. According to Znaniecki, the absolute knowledge is of gods and things divine, or the sacred order of the universe. It is derived from divine sources and regarded by its followers as power. Its very possession means participation in the sacred forces that rule the world. In sharp contrast with technological knowledge with practical test as its criterion, social knowledge with popular acceptance as its requirement and secular knowledge with rational evidence as its necessity, the sacred knowledge stands with no need of these fulcrums for it is based on divine revelation which cannot be questioned.³

Further, according to Znaniecki's social theory, each system of knowledge has its men of knowledge as its cultural bearers. The man of knowledge plays his role in co-operation with a smaller or larger set of people, i.e., his social circle, which in turn, grants him social status. The men of knowledge who bear the holy knowledge are called by Znaniecki the "religious scholars"; the grouping of such men is designated the

³Professor Znaniecki classifies all human knowledge into four basic forms: technical knowledge, social knowledge, absolute knowledge and secular knowledge, with "new knowledge" as a residue category. Since the present study is basically a further development of the concept of the sacred school, there is no need to criticize and evaluate the correctness of the classificatory scheme, which appears to be very important in the field of sociology of knowledge. I would like to point out that each of the historical sacred schools contains a great deal of other categories of knowledge by virtue of its being a sacred school. Hence, the classification is to some extent over-lapping.

sacred school. Znaniecki maintains that if we survey the cultural history of societies that have grown beyond the tribal stage--such as Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Chinese, Indians, Persians, the Jews since the seventeenth century before Christ, the Greeks, the Etruscans, the Romans, the Gauls, the Mayas, the Aztecs, the Incas, the Arabs under Islam, European nations during the Middle Ages, we shall find nearly everywhere the sacred school and the religious scholars.⁴

What is the major role of the religious scholars? To Znaniecki, "The scholar's role within the school is strictly determined by the task of the school--the perception of the sacred lore."⁵ The perpetuation of the sacred lore, according to Znaniecki's observation, is a process of imparting, transmitting, or interpreting the holy knowledge. In other words, it is basically educational. Here I beg profoundly to differ. Since in theory sacred knowledge is presumed to be absolute in nature and to direct human lives, as Professor Znaniecki has pointed out, it follows logically that both the sacred school and the religious scholars are confronted not only with the

⁴It is obvious that Znaniecki regards Confucianism as a religion because he groups Confucianism into other religions. (See pp. 93-95.) In my opinion Confucianism is not a religion; its life orientation only represents an innerworldly morality for laymen. Hence, I choose the term "the semi-religious truth." However, as the present study is to develop further the concept, the sacred school, it is needless to argue whether Confucianism is a sacred school. As this is also one of the major concerns in K'ang Yu-wei's writings, I shall have more things to say on this point in the following section.

⁵Znaniecki, op. cit., p. 100.

imparting and maintenance of the holy knowledge but also with the application of this knowledge to the practical, social and political world. As a matter of fact, all of the major religions of the world have considerably developed systems of ideas and values concerning the social and political order. The uniqueness of Confucianism lies in the fact that it is mainly composed of social and political knowledge which is intended to direct the social and political order. For various reasons a sacred school or a religious scholar may not face the challenge or may not have the opportunity to be in a position of secular leadership; but it is always the highest ideal of the sacred schools that the two different status-functions should be connected in one way or another so that the holy knowledge may direct human lives in conformity with the sacred order of the universe. Thus, a religious scholar may always perform the "lay" function in addition to the sacred one; the lay function is considered by him as an essential part of the sacred work. For instance, the Indian Brahmins and the Jewish prophets, in addition to capacities as priests, also advised their rulers on lay matters. In case of the religious scholars in Confucianism, intervention in social and political affairs is probably their main objective; for the Confucian intellectuals are a stratum of officials and aspirants to office who claim that the emperor could rule only by using orthodox Confucian officials.⁶ This shows

⁶Max Weber, The Religion of China, translated and edited by Hans H. Gerth, (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1951), p. 122 and p. 144.

clearly the close relationship between the holy knowledge and the social and political order, between the lay function of a religious scholar and his sacred one.

It is to the relationship between holy knowledge and its application to social and political order that half of the present study is fundamentally oriented. I shall proceed first to examine the ways and methods used by the religious scholars to incorporate new knowledge, and then investigate whether this incorporation is ideological or utopian in character.

Methods of Incorporating New Knowledge

Znaniecki points out that the function of a religious scholar is to perpetuate the absolute, superindividual, sacred truths, "an exact and faithful reproduction of the symbolic expression of those truths is essential;"⁷ it is impossible for a religious scholar "to introduce any modifications into this knowledge."⁸ Neither can he "discover personally any new and valid truth that was not known from the very beginning to the first masters, gods, or heroes who revealed the sacred knowledge to their successors for perpetuation in the school."⁹ However, it is a fact that the knowledge of the sacred school actually grows in the course of generations. This is because, according to Znaniecki, the growth of the sacred knowledge is

⁷Znaniecki, op. cit., p. 103.

⁸Ibid., p. 104.

⁹Ibid., p. 105.

mainly a response to demands made by the wider society. The sacred school and the religious scholars, in perpetuating the sacred lore, have to deal or to cope with the appearance of the new problems of natural technology, reflections about the cultural order roused by social conflicts, new factual observations of curious people, strange doctrines imported from abroad, occasionally innovations by rebels, etc.¹⁰ It is my opinion that the impact of these novelties first poses the question as to how to dismiss the new knowledge which appears to be in contradiction with the traditional sacred lore. Thus, to combat heretics becomes an essential duty for a religious scholar in the process of transmitting the traditional sacred lore.¹¹ Throughout all the world religious scholars respond to heretics by using the same guiding principle: whatever is in contradiction to the authoritative system must be false. The responses may range from silence to active denunciation and suppression depending upon the degree of impact by the new knowledge and the particular social order. It is only after the resistance proves ineffective that the religious scholars tend to incorporate the new knowledge into the traditional sacred system. As Znaniecki points out:

...yet it is better for the prestige and influence of the school if it can solve efficiently and authoritatively most of the problems which bother the lay society and can

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹He seems to have ignored the combating function of the religious scholars, though he notes that "some of these novelties may be dismissed as irrelevant or blasphemous," by the religious scholars. See p. 105.

subordinate most of the new profane knowledge which seems to be gaining acceptance in its wider milieu to its own supreme, holy knowledge.¹²

Thus another auxiliary function is added to a religious scholar: to enrich the sacred knowledge by recognizing or even introducing innovations.

How can these two different functions be reconciled? According to Znaniecki, religious scholars throughout the world have applied the same principle: "Whatever in the domain of knowledge is verily true cannot be new; whatever new must be false."¹³ To both the sacred school and the religious scholars, the total truth, including the partial truths ever to be known, were already known to the spiritual ancestor of the school-god, demigod, or divinely inspired supermen.¹⁴

Furthermore, according to Znaniecki, as the development of the knowledge of sacred schools reveals, their growth is essentially an accumulation of commentaries, in which superior scholars interpret for the benefit of their contemporaries and successors either the original holy texts or the writings of early commentators. "Interpretation consists either in expounding the content of sacred truths or in

¹²Znaniecki, op. cit., p. 105.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid. It might be advisable to point out that the present study is limited to the religious and semi-religious truths only. The kind of absolute knowledge, such as Marxism-Leninism, which is not generally regarded as derived from divine sources and revealed by divinely inspired superman, is hereby excluded from our study. After the completion of the thesis, I plan to make a systematic survey of philosophical syncretism with reference to Communism, and other absolute "isms."

eliciting their systematic connection or both."¹⁵ Znaniecki points out that by the first method of interpretation a religious scholar can show that the sacred truth already contains truths which lay scientists or importers of foreign ideas erroneously believe to be newly discovered or will explain facts which have only recently been observed.¹⁶ Thus, for instance:

medieval scholars found the essential truths of Greek science included in the Bible; some modern scholars interpret the record of creation formulated in the first chapters of Genesis as including the theory of general evolution. Recent historical processes are seen to have been generally anticipated, if not specifically predicted, in ancient holy writs; and sacred ethics, if properly understood, though preached centuries ago, gives absolutely valid guidance for dealing with modern social problems.¹⁷

For convenience, this way of interpreting new knowledge is termed the theory of containment, the first method of interpreting the rival knowledge.

In the course of China's contact with the West during the Ch'ing period, particularly during the last century, many Confucian intellectuals not only claimed that their old holy writs contained the knowledge imported from the West but also strongly contended that they originated in China as a result of the westward spreading of Chinese culture. The Westerners, they claimed, were returning the Chinese culture to the Chinese. For illustrative purpose, this will be termed the theory

¹⁵Ibid., p. 107.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 107-08.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 108.

of origination.¹⁸ This sort of interpretation was not an innovation of the Confucian scholars. It was originated by the Taoists. When Buddhism was first introduced into China, the popular legend among some Chinese intellectuals was that Buddha was a disciple of the alleged Taoist sage Lao-tzu.¹⁹

The basic characteristic of the theory of origination, as compared with that of containment, is that the former, besides being based on the apparent resemblance of the traditional knowledge with the imported counterpart, further derives its claim for legitimacy from a certain legendary account handed down from time immemorial. In the case of Lao-tzu's preaching or incarnation in India, the claim was derived from the legend that the alleged founder of Taoist religion was recorded as having traveled to the Western territories on a black ox.²⁰

According to Znaniecki, the eliciting of the systematic connection of the sacred commentaries permits the religious scholar:

¹⁸ See Ch'uan Han-shen's article in Source Books in History of Modern China, ed. Wu Hsiang-hsiang et al. (10 vols.; first edition; first series; Formosa: Cheng Chung Book Store, 1956), V, 216-58. I have found the article especially useful, but it fails to distinguish the theory of containment from that of origination. The former is indicative of a parallel development while the latter indicates cultural diffusion only.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 216.

²⁰ It was discovered by historians that Lao-tzu hua-hu Ching (The Story of Lao-tzu's Incarnation in India), the official claim advanced by the Taoist scholars, was written by Wang Fu of the Western Tsin period (A. D. 265-317). This may be considered a forgery, another way of incorporating new ideas. I shall deal with it shortly.

...to rediscover certain holy truths which his immediate predecessors for some reason have failed to transmit or even truths which the spiritual ancestors of the school, knowing that mankind was not yet prepared for them but foreseeing that their disclosure would come in the proper time, intentionally failed to reveal at the beginning. A scholar of superior learning and ability, or even an intellectually simple but saintly man, enlightened by divine inspiration, may find such a truth and communicate to the school, thus helping it to complete its traditional knowledge.²¹

The rediscovery of certain holy truths which were lost either by accident or by intention through eliciting the holy writs will be termed the eliciting revelation. It is best represented by the emergence of Neo-Confucianism. Students of Chinese philosophy generally agree that the Neo-Confucianists incorporated into the Confucianist philosophical system many metaphysical elements from Buddhism and Taoism. However, in defending their philosophies, the Neo-Confucian scholars invariably claimed that their theories were based upon or deduced from the Confucian sacred truths, and that they only rediscovered the Tao which their predecessors had failed to transmit.²²

²¹Znaniecki, op. cit., p. 108.

²²For instance, Han Yü (768-824), the first real protagonist of later Neo-Confucianism, made the following remark on the lost transmittal of Tao. "Yao transmitted it to Shun; Shun transmitted it to Yü; Yü transmitted it to T'ang; T'ang transmitted it to (Kings) Wen and Wu and the Duke of Chou; Wen and Wu and the Duke of Chou transmitted it to Confucius; Confucius transmitted it to Mencius. After Mencius died, it was no longer transmitted." See Fung Yu-lan, History of Chinese Philosophy, trans. Derk Bodde (2 vols.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), II, 410. I was unable to find out the Neo-Confucian scholars' account as to how and why the transmittal of Tao was lost. Probably such a study will shed new light on the nature of Neo-Confucianism.

Furthermore, the analysis of eliciting revelation poses the question of direct revelation. Besides eliciting revelation a religious scholar may declare that truth was

Similar in appearance but different in character is the fourth form of presenting new ideas--the method of apocrypha. It was frequently discovered by historians or text researchers that some holy writs were actually added to or corrupted by pseudo-authors in the name of an ancient prophet or a renowned religious scholar. It is due to the problem of apocryphy that textual research is a necessity for the sacred schools.²³ Quite often religious scholars in the same sacred school accuse each other of falsification and forgery in order for each to justify his own interpretation.

directly revealed to him by a demigod, a sage, or the spiritual ancestor of the school. He bases his claim for legitimacy upon the holy sanction of a spiritual being. For instance, Chang Ling, founder of the Taoist religion, contended that he had received revelation in person by Lao-tzu. Nagajuna, the well-known founder of the Real Word school in Buddhism, claimed that he had been directly inspired by Dharmakaya Buddha and the Vajra Sattva in meditation. As Allan W. Watts in his The Way of Zen put it, "The traditional Mohayanaist account of its own origin is that its teachings were delivered by the Buddha to his intimate disciples but their public revelation withheld until the world was ready for them." See Allan W. Watts, op. cit., (New York: The New American Library, 1957), p. 67. These indicate that direct revelation is similar to eliciting revelation in that both claim that the lost transmittal resulted from accident and/or deliberate withholding by the spiritual ancestor. In a word, the growth of sacred knowledge is essentially a process of permanent revelation. To determine whether it is a form of religious syncretism, further research in connection with its rival school of thought is essential.

²³It should be noted that many "forged" books were not necessarily ill-intentioned. In ancient China many philosophers did not write books: if they did they would not author their books in their own names. It is because of this that textual research is a very complicated undertaking. For a complete survey of the forged works see Chang-Hsin-cheng, A Comprehensive Survey of Forged Books (Two vols.; Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1939). The survey covers more than a thousand controversial works in all fields of Chinese studies.

The fifth way of interpreting new ideas is termed the integralist approach. A religious scholar can argue that both the holy truth and the imported new knowledge are different levels of the same truth; that nowhere do they conflict with each other and that the new knowledge should be subject to the control of the higher level of the sacred truth. This integralist approach is best represented by Thomas Aquinas' "Christianization" of the philosophy of Aristotle. The essence of his universal synthesis is the attempt to reconcile the different levels of truth with the Christian theology as the consummation of the whole system.²⁴ Very similar to Aquinas' universal synthesis is the theory of integral knowledge propounded by thinkers of the Eastern Orthodox Church. In responding to the Western impact, the church thinkers, starting from F. V. Kireyevsky (1806-1856), A. S. Khomiakov (1804-1860), down to V. S. Soloviev (1853-1900?), N. A. Berdyav (1874-1948) and others, stressed the ambition of embracing the European civilization in its fullness by the "highest principles" of the Orthodox Church, according to which knowledge is an organic all-embracing unity:

. . . but it can only be attained if the subrational aspect of the world (sense qualities), its rational (or ideal) aspect, and the superrational principles are all given together in experience which combine sensuous, intellectual, and mystical intuition.²⁵

²⁴George A. Sabine, A History of Political Theory (revised edition; New York: Henry Holt, 1959), p. 248.

²⁵N. O. Lossky, History of Russian Philosophy (New York: International Universities Press, 1951), p. 404.

This Christian all-embracing synthesis can be compared with the typical Buddhist synthesis of the scholars of early Sung period. The general opinion among learned scholars was: "Confucius is my teacher; Lao-tzu the teacher of Confucius; the Buddha the teacher of Lao-tzu."²⁶ Obviously the three architects of religion were considered as three representatives of three different levels of the same truth with Buddhism occupying the highest level.

Finally, a religious scholar may approach the question from a utilitarian point of view. For instance, during the late Ch'ing period, K'ang Yu-wei's predecessors, such as Feng Kuei-fen, Tseng Kuo-fan and Li Hung-chang, tried to syncretize Western natural science and technology, particularly arms and ships, with the Confucianist social and political institutions. They argued that if China could imitate the West's ways in producing ships and guns, the Manchu Empire, whose ethical, civil and military systems were far more superior than those of the West, could be strengthened and saved.²⁷ This utilitarian approach differs from the integralist approach in that the latter penetrates into the depths of epistemology, while the former believes the newly encountered knowledge only practically useful. The former regards its traditional system of knowledge as

²⁶Fan Ch'i, A General Survey of History of Chinese Philosophy (4th edition; Shanghai: Kai Ming Book Store), 1948, p. 392.

²⁷See Ssu-yü Teng and John K. Fairbank, China's Response to the West (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), Chapters v, vi, and vii.

the foundation for new knowledge, while the latter considers it the consummation of all levels of truths.

So far the study has identified six basic forms of religious syncretism. Regardless of the differences in their outer appearance, they all share the same characteristics: traditional knowledge is absolute, adequate and immutable. They enable us to understand that the pattern of response of religious or semi-religious truths is essentially a permanent process of rediscovering the authentic meaning of the holy truths. In other words, it is a continuing emancipation through the revival of the ancient customs. The pattern is this: the stronger is the coming impact, the farther back in time the revival will be; the more distant is the revival, the stronger the charge against paganism, forging, or falsification will be.

Furthermore, it should be pointed out that the analysis of the six forms of religious syncretism is essentially analytical. Due to the complicated nature of cultural encounter, a religious scholar may combine more than one form in his incorporation of the new knowledge. For analyzing K'ang Yu-wei's political philosophy and the counter-ideas of his opponents we are obliged to employ all of them.

The Sacred Complex

The above analysis of the various forms of religious syncretism clearly shows that both the sacred school and its religious scholars are permeated almost without exception

with a deep reverence for the ancient authorities--the sacred complex. This complex was best described by the late Confucian philosopher Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, a leading disciple and critic of K'ang Yu-wei. He said:

If a man harbored even the slightest intention of doubting or criticizing a single word or sentence in a classical text, he felt instantly as if he had fallen into a position of "vilifying the saints and disregarding the law;" he would be uneasy and conscience-stricken, not only in dread of legal prosecution and irresponsible criticism.²⁸

Another Confucian philosopher Han Yü once remarked during the T'ang period: "That which has passed through the hands of the sages is beyond the reach of discussion and criticism."²⁹ Although both men's remarks referred to the Confucian intellectuals' respect for the ancient sages, nevertheless, they can be considered as typical expressions of the degree to which the sacred complex was deeply entrenched in the followers' minds of the various sacred schools. Probably it is due to the deep entrenchment of this complex that sometimes a religious scholar is obliged to adopt new things in disguise lest it offend the popular respect for the sacred school.

Furthermore, it is understandable that both the Taoists and the Neo-Confucianists, after having absorbed the imported new knowledge, tenaciously kept to the dichotomy of

²⁸ Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Period, trans. Immanuel C. Y. Hsu (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 33.

²⁹ Ibid.

barbarism-civilization, trying to get rid of the impact of foreign theories. Since the main purpose of incorporation was to "kill," or to subjugate the new knowledge in order to "uproot" its impact, it was very logical that incorporation and denunciation must be found together.³⁰

Lastly, to make both ends meet, in many instances, a religious scholar is obliged not only to stretch the traditional framework to make room for the incoming new knowledge, but also to dilute the form and content of the incoming new knowledge thus to make it more palatable to the traditional system. In this way, a religious scholar's interpretation tends to be radically different from the traditionally accepted systems. More important, it tends, intentionally or unintentionally, to differ profoundly from the understanding generally held by the rival schools of thought.³¹ Presumably the more the new knowledge is to be introduced, the more radical the difference will appear to be.

³⁰The late Professor Cheng Yin-ko, in his second comment on Fung Yu-lan's History of Chinese Philosophy, contends that this is the true spirit of the Taoist religion, the old path of Neo-Confucianism, the revelation by cultural contact between China and other peoples. His contention indicates that he was also a religious scholar. See Fung, op. cit. (reprint; Hong Kong: The Pacific Book Store, 1961), appendix 3. Vol. I of the Chinese text was first published in 1931 in Shanghai. It was reissued in 1934, together with Vol. II, by the Commercial Press, Shanghai.

³¹Carson Chang, in his account of the emergence of Neo-Confucianism, offers a succinct analysis as to how the Neo-Confucianists "misunderstood" the Buddhist metaphysical concepts. See Chang, The Development of Neo-Confucianism (New York: Bookman Associates, 1957), pp. 131-32.

The Grand Synthesis

Religious syncretism often occurred in cultural contact within the sacred school or between different schools of thought. In the present contact between East and West, due especially to the development of science and technology, all types of knowledge, or all categories of men of knowledge, should have the opportunity to meet with one another. This can be regarded as the "great encounter," which had never previously occurred in the history of mankind. Great encounter, I assume, would result in "grand synthesis." Thus it may be safely be conjectured that there must have been, or there will be, a variety of religious scholars in various sacred schools who have tried to incorporate, transcend or reconcile the different kinds of validated knowledge under the highest principles of each of their faiths. K'ang Yu-wei was one of them. How do these sacred men of knowledge evaluate the newly encountered knowledge in terms of their sacred truths? In what forms do they syncretize them, and what are their social effects? The answers to these questions should form a very interesting body of subject-matter for students of political philosophy as well as for students of the sociology of knowledge.

The Question of Truth

A religious scholar, during and after his incorporation of the new knowledge, is obliged to put new knowledge to test. The question arises: who will test the contributions made by a religious scholar? According to Znaniecki, "the scholar's

contribution must pass through the criticism of the school, which decides whether they can be incorporated into the total body of scholarly tradition."³² Then the next question is: who constitutes the sacred school? Insofar as Confucianism is concerned, it seems that the "school" does not consist of a stratum of office-seekers, i.e., literati, alone; (see footnote 5) it also includes the "son of heaven" who is supposed to look to the literati for administration and advice. Therefore, a Confucian scholar's attempt to incorporate any new, vital knowledge must pass through not only the literati class, but also the emperor, who is the center of the power structure. It is because of this that the formulation of political philosophy in the Confucian sacred system must by nature be an arduous political fight, even if it may not be a difficult struggle in the academic sense. Seeking the sanction by the emperor an active Confucian scholar must try to climb the bureaucratic ladder in one way or another to make his contribution acceptable. It is the Confucian scholar's deep conviction that his contribution should soon, or will eventually win the recognition by the "son of heaven," who will declare to make it the official learning.

The test of truth gives rise to another important question: is the claim made by an individual religious scholar or by a group of scholars real "truth"? Therefore, it must be especially noted here that the exposition on the six methods

³²Znaniecki, op. cit., p. 109.

of religious synthesis does not necessarily lead to an extreme skepticism as Professor Znaniecki seems to have conveyed in his analysis. Probably this is one of the major differences between Znaniecki's approach to religious truth and that of this writer. I submit that the analysis of religious truths does not exclude the possibility of the inner connection between the seemingly new knowledge and the old traditional framework. From a socio-historical point of view the question of whether the sacred system of knowledge does contain some portion of the new knowledge, or whether the new knowledge was originated from the old, or whether the transmittal failed, or whether a sacred book or passage was written by a pseudo-author, or whether new knowledge can serve some purpose, can be investigated and verified. A centuries-old major culture whose system of knowledge continuously grows does not exclude such a possibility.³³ The difficulties lie rather in the verification of the integralist approach (as well as of the direct revelation). This will require ontological as well as epistemological inquiries beyond the field of sociology of knowledge and political philosophy. Thus, for the same reason, even if

³³Liang Ch'i-ch'ao was correct in saying that some young scholars in modern China in refuting the old claim for containment went so far as to negate everything, thus to make the Chinese nation equal to the uncivilized tribes. He repudiated both the traditional sacred complex and the tendency to despise one's own country. "Their ridicules are exactly the same. Fundamentally speaking, the error is stemmed from their ignorance." See Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, An Academic History of China During the Last Three Hundred Years (2nd edition; Chungking: Chung Hwa Book Store, 1944), pp. 346-47.

one accepts the six forms of incorporation, it will not necessarily lead to the conclusion that absolute truth does not exist. Rather it shows that by the inner logic of the religious truth the religious scholars, when they encounter new knowledge, are obliged to resort to incorporation in one way or another.

Religious Syncretism:
Ideology or Utopia?

The fact that the incorporation of new knowledge is to perpetuate and enrich the traditional holy truths has been analyzed above. Now I shall proceed to analyze the social and political application of such an incorporation, i.e., to study the close relationship between new knowledge and its social existence. From a sociological point of view, the incorporation of new knowledge by a religious scholar may function either as ideological or utopian. Ideology refers to the attempt, either consciously or unconsciously, to support the existing social order; while utopia pertains to the attempt to break up the bonds of the existing order. A religious scholar may incorporate foreign knowledge as much as he can but still orients himself to the maintenance of the existing social order. "Such an incongruent orientation became utopian only when in addition it tended to burst the bonds of the existing order."³⁴ (*Italics mine.*)

³⁴Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1953), p. 173. Here it may be fruitful to point out that

Probably the most salient characteristic of religious syncretism as an ideology or utopia rests in the fact that the composition of its ideas is essentially a strange "mixture" of two or more different sources. It is derived from the emergence of new ideas, or counter-ideas. It is a resultant of the intellectual response toward outside impact in a historical setting of cultural contact. When a religious scholar tries to defend or justify the maintenance of the existing order of things by means of rediscovery of the holy writs, the result of such a mixture can be termed ideological syncretism. On the contrary, if such a rediscovery is used as a means for social and political reform, which tends to break up the status quo, this strange mixture is regarded as utopian syncretism.

It is important to point out the inherent danger of religious syncretism. It may imply that its social consequences are to some extent unforeseeable. As pointed out

the concept of "incongruent orientation" was borrowed from Mannheim's sociology of knowledge but was essentially different from his. Taken from the European historical setting the varied perspectives mentioned in Ideology and Utopia were treated by Mannheim in such a way that their "departure from reality" was "spontaneous," occurring within an insulated great community. The inadequacy of this approach rests in the fact that it failed to pinpoint the responsive pattern of thinking in the Christian church in relation to the rival schools of thought. As a consequence, when the concepts of ideology and utopia are applied to the study of the intellectual response of varied sacred cultures in the non-West, the concept of "incongruent orientation" has to be enlarged to include the imported knowledge, which functions as a stimulant to the "departure from reality" of the religious scholars.

by Znaniecki, there is a tendency that the introduction of new knowledge, particularly "the secular criteria of truth, gradually, perhaps, almost imperceptibly, pushes the criteria of holy tradition into the shade."³⁵ The reason is that the incorporation of new knowledge, no matter how successful it may be, does not guarantee the "revealing" or "leak-out" of the new knowledge to the lay society. As a consequence, it tends to help throw doubt upon the absoluteness and the degree of self-adequacy of the holy truth. The lay society may demand more importation of the foreign knowledge which may not be congruent with the sacred framework, or by the inspiration of foreign knowledge lay members may take a different approach, contrary to the expectation of the religious scholar. For this reason, any attempt to incorporate new knowledge is always viewed with deep suspicion by the ultra-conservatives. Despite the plea for legitimacy, a religious scholar, especially a scholar of utopian syncretism, is likely to be accused of wittingly or unwittingly weakening the sacred social order by committing heresy. (Incidentally, the ultra-conservatives may justify their accusation by invoking a historical, religious syncretism.)

More important is the fact that utopian syncretism is in part ideological. The ideological character of utopian syncretism is deeply rooted in religious syncretism per se. As mentioned above, the very purpose of religious syncretism

³⁵Znaniecki, op. cit., p. 115.

is to preserve the absoluteness and self-adequacy of the sacred framework by means of rediscovering the holy truth. It follows that the social and political application of such a discovery is always limited to the extent that the basic aspects of the sacred framework, which a religious scholar deems absolute, are unalterable. A religious scholar may unwittingly destroy the basic framework by introducing undesirable elements, but it is always his duty to see that the basic framework is exactly preserved.³⁶ In this sense, a utopian-bent scholar is obliged by nature to be a conservative no matter how radical he may be accused of being. The difference, therefore, between the two types of religious scholars lies only in the degree to which the sacred social order may be preserved or reformed.

Furthermore, the ideological character of utopian syncretism is also closely related to the scope and variety of foreign knowledge which a religious scholar tries to incorporate. This is because the abundance of ideas and

³⁶This by no means excludes the possibility that a religious scholar is motivated other than by his strong adherence to the sacred trust which he has pledged. But it is difficult to identify the extra-functional motivations, particularly of the utopian-bent religious scholars, because of the fact that their syncretic philosophies are generally couched in terms of sacred language. It is reasonably safe to conjecture that the utopian-bent scholar is more strongly motivated by adherence to the sacred truth than the ideological-bent scholar. This is because the ideological-oriented scholars are generally tied to the existing social and political situations, whereas the utopian-oriented scholars are devoid of immediate interests.

counter-ideas syncretized in the perspective of a religious scholar tend to make them stand in sharp contrast with one another, consequently rendering them impotent in actual practice, or otherwise distorted in political embodiments. Therefore, the wide range of incorporation of new knowledge suggests the idea that part of the incorporation is implicitly or explicitly intended to be a lip-service, the actual embodiment of which is likely to be postponed to the remote future. Probably the broader the scope of a religious syncretism, the more lip-service; thus the more ideological elements a religious scholar's perspective tends to have. because of this that a utopian syncretism will never entirely succeed de facto in the realization of its projected contents. Probably a religious scholar of the utopian type in applying his doctrine is always compelled by his own logic to fall short of his nobler motives.

Lastly, it is of interest to note that the ideological or utopian function of a religious scholar's syncretic philosophy may not necessarily be permanent; it fluctuates in accordance with the changing conflict between or among the rival schools of thought. Therefore, it is not uncommon to find a utopian religious scholar of yesterday gradually shifting to an extremely opposite position as a result of the changing situation, or of the emergence of a more utopian-like school of thought. When a utopian religious scholar insists upon clinging to the old ideas, or fails to incorporate the newly encountered school of thought, he will soon find the

social and political application of his syncretic philosophy gradually becoming obsolete, thus, more conservative, or more ideological. He may continue to lay claims on the rival schools of thought in a high-sounding utopian manner; in actual practice, however, he tends to orient himself to the maintenance, even the restoration, of the status quo. Religious syncretism as such is entirely ideological.

The Socio-Ontological Implications
of the Sacred School Study

In his evaluation of the contributions made by the religious scholars, Znaniecki maintains that the religious scholars have actually eliminated the sacred lore's naive superficialities, overcome its most striking inconsistencies, and then constructed a more coherent body of doctrine and given it a philosophic depth undreamed of by its initiators.³⁷ In many cases this may hold true. But if one agrees that the incorporation of new knowledge may be indicative of a possible crisis within the sacred school, he will have to admit that the more dissimilar and/or the more utopian the new knowledge appears, the more severe the possible crisis will be,³⁸ for there is the great possibility

³⁷Znaniecki, op. cit., p. 110.

³⁸Wirth's analysis of Japan's strong resistance to "dangerous thoughts" from the West actually touched the problem of religious syncretism, particularly the political and ontological aspects of the sacred school in relation to outside impact. Unfortunately his analysis was not carried far enough to its logical conclusion. See Mannheim, op. cit., preface, pp. xvi-xvii.

of altering the basic assumptions of the sacred systems of knowledge. This alteration is termed the breakdown of the sacred school. For convenience, it can be divided into two kinds: the breakdown from within and the breakdown from without.

In theory, a system's adaptability is predetermined in the sense that its essential parts cannot be severely altered or destroyed, otherwise it will cease to be a system qua system. Thus, if the incorporation of new knowledge should result in the negation of the essential elements of the sacred system of truth, this system can be considered as having been destroyed, despite the fact that the religious scholar and the sacred school have persistently made the claim that they have imported nothing that was not already contained in the sacred lore. This is the breakdown from within.

Contrary to this is the breakdown from without. A breakdown from without usually results from the failure of the religious scholar and the sacred school in upholding the absoluteness and the full-adequacy of the holy truth. As a result, men of knowledge gradually stop hanging their creations, discoveries, or imports on pegs of the traditional sacred system; meanwhile they formulate or import their own frames of reference. When new schools of thought are gaining importance and recognition, the old sacred truths start to decline, losing their traditional appeal.

If a sacred school fails in re-incorporating the rival school of thought, it may eventually result in a complete breakdown from without.

The crucial question arising from the sacred school study is, therefore, this: to what extent is each sacred school obliged to retreat in the present Age of Great Encounter? Insofar as Confucianism is concerned, it shares the absolute and divine character of all major religions, but its metaphysical and life-orientation mainly belongs to this world. As a sacred system of knowledge, it is fundamentally devoid of any elaborate penetration into the sacred proper concerning gods, or the characteristics of other-worldliness. Therefore, its points of retreat may be less certain than those of other religions. A comparative study will shed light on the nature of intellectual developments characterized by religious truth as well as on the future of each of the sacred cultures.

CHAPTER III

THE REDISCOVERY OF AUTHENTIC CONFUSIANISM

In Search of True Teachings

The principal theme in K'ang Yu-wei's academic and political writings is that Confucianism is essentially an all-embracing unity in which all substantive knowledge is contained. Therefore, the basis for all the world cultures, particularly the validated truths of the various essential aspects of Western culture, were already contained in their Confucianist counterparts. Due to historical accidents many of the substantial elements were lost, or left undeveloped, in the process of transmittal. It was in his mission, he contended, to rediscover these authentic elements by eliciting the contents and connections of the Confucian holy writs, to polish them, and to further develop them and present them to his fellow religious scholars. It would be their duty to adopt the rediscovered system of knowledge, to save the Chinese Empire from the Western invasion, and eventually to save the whole world.

The story of K'ang's rediscovering the authentic version of Confucianism dates back to his youth, when he was exposed to the influence of Oriental mysticism and Western learning. In 1878 and 1879, against his teacher's

prohibition, K'ang secretly practiced meditation and studied the Taoist and Buddhist holy writs. According to his own account, one day while sitting in meditation he had suddenly seen that heaven, earth and all the ten thousand creatures and he were of the same body with a great light shining.¹ Subsequently, he continued the practice and study and gained many unusual and mysterious experiences, which encouraged his belief in the possible value of religious mysticism. Later, he read books on Western history and geography and visited Hong Kong where, upon seeing the huge mansions, clean streets and well-organized police force, he began to realize that the Western countries had law and order, therefore they should not be regarded as occupying the same level as the ancient barbarian tribes. Whereupon he re-read Wei Yuan's Maritime Countries and Hsü Chi-yü's A Brief Description of the Ocean Circuit, purchased world maps and collected books on Western learning. In 1882, after having failed in the triennial examination, he traveled through Shanghai on the return journey. Upon seeing the prosperity of the Western settlements there, he was further convinced that the Western governments must have underlying principles. After that time, he declared that he had dissolved all of the traditional prejudices and become a serious student of Western learning.

¹K'ang, "Autobiography," in Chinese Historiography Society (ed.), The 1898 Reform, IV, 114. For my comment on K'ang's mysticism, see the section "Confucianism as a religion."

His continuing interest in studying Oriental religions and Western learning in addition to Confucian classics greatly expanded his sphere of knowledge and enhanced his level of understanding. He began to contemplate such great concepts as the nature of the universe, the development of history, and the future of the world. As his thoughts deepened, he was increasingly led to believe that he was the incarnation of a demigod whose mission it was to bring salvation to all sentient beings. Driven by this conviction and an expanded scope of knowledge, he began drafting a constitution for all mankind, proposing to reform the nation and collecting disciples to propagate his theory. Most important of all, his study on the non-Confucian literature led him to cast serious doubts on the nature and legitimacy of the traditional Confucian commentaries which were then prevailing in the Empire as orthodox interpretations of Confucian teachings. Searching for the true version of Confucius' teachings, he underwent a number of stages in his re-examination of Confucian literature. As he stated in Li Yün Chu (Commentary on the Evolution of Rites):

I have studied the teaching of Confucius comprehensively and reverently. At first, I followed the beaten track of the Sung scholars, where I eagerly thought that I had found it; then, however, I realized that Confucius could not have been so bigoted and narrow as that. So I pressed further along the path of the Han scholars, at every moment thinking that I was treading on it; but then I realized that it could not be so fragmentary and confused as that. For if it stopped only there, Confucius would be a sage but not a divine being. Thereupon I resigned from the

complexity of the Classics, and sought for it from the historical records Thereupon I rejected the Old Text forgeries entirely, and sought for it in the New Text scholarship, In this way I came to understand the transformation of the Yin and Yang [as portrayed] in the Spring and Autumn Annals. [At this point] I said that the Way of Confucius, though so great that it cannot be wholly seen, may at least be spied in its outlines. Alas, however, the Great Way is so deep and boundless that it cannot be summed up in a few words only. After this I completely discarded the commentaries and sought for it in the texts of the Classics themselves. When I came to read the Evolution of Rites, I was greatly moved and exclaimed: "Herein are to be found the successive changes of the Three Ages of Confucius, and the real truth of his Great Way, . . ." This text represents the esoteric words and true teaching of Confucius. It is a precious record without superior in any country, and a divine recipe for resurrecting all sentient beings throughout the world.²

Although the exact date of the book was repudiated by some historians of the intellectual history of modern China,³ nevertheless central thoughts in Commentary

²K'ang, op. cit., in K'ang, The Compassion Magazine (8 vols.; Shanghai; [By the author], 1913), V, 23b-24a; or K'ang, Collection of Essays of K'ang Yu-wei (12 vols.; Shanghai: Kung Ho Book Store, 1914), VIII, 1a-b. Quoted with a slight modification from Fung Yu-lan, History of Chinese Philosophy, II, 678-79.

³K'ang dated the Commentary back to 1884 but it is generally agreed among commentators that it was written and completed much later. Hsiao Kung-ch'üan in "K'ang Yu-wei and Confucianism" (Monumenta Serica, 18 [1959], p. 144.) indicates that the Commentary was actually done in 1901-2. T'ang Chi-chun's study indicates that the book was possibly written between 1896 and 1897. He further points out that the forged dateline was probably motivated by an attempt to indicate the author's independent thinking, thus eradicating the traces of influence from other schools of thought. See Essays on the 1898 Reform (Wuhan: Hupei People's Press, 1957), pp. 151-52. To illustrate the nature of forgery in K'ang's political thinking the present study is instead concentrated on the anatomy of his mysticism--the core of K'ang's religious syncretism. See the section "Confucianism as a religion."

illustrated the extent to which K'ang pressed forward in his pursuing the truth and greatness of Confucius' teachings. Beginning with the examination of Neo-Confucianism, the then "state cult" of the Chinese nation, he continuously pressed forward and brushed aside Sung Learning, Han Learning, the Classical Commentaries until he came to the sayings of Confucius. The process of rediscovering the holy truth, as experienced by K'ang, was so deep and penetrating that finally he came into direct contact with the spiritual ancestor of the Confucian sacred school to which he belonged. This lengthy, academic recourse is indicative of K'ang's deep reverence for Confucius on the one hand, and on the other, it showed the degree of anxiety and apprehension on K'ang's part in his re-examining the holy writs of Confucianism. From K'ang's point of view, if there had been no "esoteric words and true teachings," the Confucian sacred school of thought, or generally speaking, the Chinese culture, would have been inadequate: too narrow as the Sung Learning (Neo-Confucianism) was, or too fragmentary, as the Han Learning was, or too deep as the Classical Commentaries were. Therefore, there would have been no precious record and divine prescription that would meet the demand of the new age. In other words, Confucianism would lose its rationale for existence, give way to other cultural values and become extinct. As a consequence, the Chinese nation would lose her entire cultural independence to other states.

Confucianism: An All-Inclusive
System of Knowledge

K'ang's rediscovery of the Evolution of Rites as a divine recipe is only a part, though the most important part, of his findings. I shall deal with it in a following chapter. The first thing to be noted is that he tried to prove that the holy writs of the Confucian sacred school had contained many, as a matter of fact, all, of the validated knowledge that the world had ever known. At least, he argued, Confucius and the Confucian scholars and statesmen of the subsequent ages had paid a considerable amount of attention to some of them, or had had some crude ideas of them. Therefore, the introduction of Western learning into China would either help illuminate the inherent value of the Confucian system of knowledge, or would serve as a means to recover what the Chinese nation had unfortunately lost many centuries earlier.

K'ang's claim for all-containment is best shown in his Jih-Pen shu-mu chih⁴ (Bibliography of Japanese Books) which was compiled and printed during the interim of the Sino-Japanese War and the 1898 Reform. The main purpose of the book was to persuade the Court and the literati to translate the Japanese books into Chinese, thus to understand further the characteristics and secrets of the Western culture through the media of the Japanese language. In

⁴(Shanghai: Ta T'ung Book Store, 1897.)

other words, it was to be used as a guide to promote Western learning in China by way of the Japanese short cut.⁵ (At that time the Japanese written language was not far different from the Chinese counterpart.)

In introducing the Japanese books K'ang severely attacked the "foreign matter" school, i.e., the then prevalent utilitarian approach (which I have already discussed). He contended that China's defeat by Japan was mainly due to the fact that the scholar-officials had paid excessive attention to the purchase of weapons and the imitation of military techniques from the West, and had ignored the development of the knowledge of the Chinese people, which was supposed to be the foundation of all undertakings.⁶ In other words, China was desperately in need of a clear and over-all understanding of the Western learning with its

⁵Tracing K'ang's failure to found a new school of learning, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao maintained that it was partly due to the insufficiency of the translation of Western works. "This [possibility] was already precluded by that time, since not only was the indigenous traditional thinking too inveterate and deep-rooted, but the new foreign thought had too shallow and meager a source, which dried up easily once tapped and, quite expectedly, died of exhaustion." (Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Period, p. 113.) This is partly correct. But he failed to take the Japanese books into account. In addition to the twenty to thirty scientific works translated by the Kiangnan Arsenal and a number of translations contributed by the foreign missions, K'ang heavily relied upon the Japanese books for understanding the West. One cannot ascertain, therefore, that the sources were too shallow and meager.

⁶K'ang, op. cit., Preface, p. iiii.

various compartments of knowledge, something which the Japanese had already achieved. As a religious scholar K'ang offered a theoretical justification based upon his understanding of the classical literature and his annotations of the Japanese books.

It is important to note that K'ang strongly emphasized the broad scope of modern learning against the traditional Chinese learning based upon geographic isolation. According to him, the main factor that made the significant difference was the effect of the revolution in transportation and communication which had made isolation impossible. In olden times due to the backwardness of communication and transportation, historians were familiar with the Middle Kingdom only. Historical records attached little significance to the individual tribes residing on the four outer fringes of the Chinese empire. He went on to say:

Nowadays when communication and transportation have been extended all over the globe, the world has become one, learned scholars [literally, students of great oceans] are obliged to regard [other countries] as if their households, and [the study of foreign countries] as if the counting of rice and salt.⁷

As a result of the breakdown of geographic isolation, the sphere of scholarly interests tended to transcend the traditional scope of learning. To K'ang, a learned Confucian scholar was not simply required to possess an abundant knowledge of the past in connection with that of present;

⁷Ibid., II, Chüan III, 18b; remark on world history.

he was further required to know all foreign countries in addition to his own. This all-out function assigned to the Confucian religious scholars by K'ang clearly indicated his awareness of the wide scope of modern scholarship, especially of the theoretical impact on the Confucian system of knowledge. It was his belief that the traditional Confucian system of knowledge with its narrow scope of study, if not properly enlarged to incorporate the various kinds of newly encountered knowledge, would no longer survive in a world in which modern communication had brought varied types of knowledge together.

The several thousand volumes of Japanese books, maps and atlases, which he had collected were classified into fifteen categories, ranging from physiology and physics to novels and military science. Each category was further sub-classified into a number of headings. From the point of view of modern scholarship K'ang's fifteen-fold classificatory scheme may appear rudimentary and questionable, but it clearly indicated the extent to which K'ang had tried to relate the Chinese learning to its Western counterpart.

It is amazing to see how K'ang remarked on the contents of Western learning.

In regard to philosophy he said, "The concepts of Yin and Yang have included everything [in philosophy] without exception."⁸

⁸ Ibid., I, Chüan II, 18b.

In regard to psychology he contended that psychology was the traditional science in Confucianism. According to him, the Ming scholars' penetration into the study of mind is comparable or identical to the Buddhist Lakavatara Sutra,⁹ which is far superior to the psychological science in the Occident. He deplored the fact that scholars since the Ch'ien-lung and Chia-ch'ing periods had attacked the study of the mind. He critically questioned these scholars by saying: "How can one write books and do things with a ripped mind!"¹⁰

In regard to economics he said, "All the Six Classics are literature in economics."¹¹

In regard to law he claimed that the laws contained in the Spring and Autumn Annals were created for all peoples and all nations. Compared with the international law in the Occident, both are in eight or nine instances out of ten identical with each other.¹²

⁹Ibid., I, Chüan II, 20b. For English translation of the Buddhist scripture see Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, The Lavkavatara Sutra, (Reprinting; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1956).

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹K'ang, op. cit., III, Chüan V, 18b. One of his pupils, Chen Huan-chang, wrote a doctoral dissertation, The Economic Principles of Confucius and His School, (2 volumes; New York: Columbia University Press, 1911), claiming that all classical economic theories were contained in the Six Classics.

¹²Ibid., III, Chüan VI, 20a. However, in his annotating the Annals K'ang only mentioned a few comparisons, thus failing to make it explicit how many were identical to modern international law.

In regard to the theory of state, he maintained that among political theories none was comparable with the perfection of the Confucian Six Classics. "I have studied," he declared, "and found out that the secret of the Occidental's strength rests in that [his political institutions] are secretly in accord with our Classical principles."¹³

In regard to agricultural chemistry he said, "The use of chemistry in farming was originally a science of our Middle Kingdom. Unfortunately its transmittal was lost."¹⁴

In regard to soil science he said, "After having read the 'Essay on Soil Science' translated in Japanese I realized that it was secretly identical to the ideas contained in Kwang tzu."¹⁵

In regard to the calendar he said, "None of the calendars in the world has gone beyond the Three Beginnings. It is indeed that the institutions set by Confucius [are] so vast in scope!"¹⁶

In regard to modern industry he quoted a historical figure to indicate the importance of industry in China's history. He said, "The History of the Three Kingdoms records: When Chu Ko was in governance of Sze-Ch'uan,

¹³Ibid., III, Chüan V, 2a.

¹⁴Ibid., IV, Chüan VII, 6a.

¹⁵Ibid., IV, Chüan VII, 8a.

¹⁶Ibid., I, Chüan II, 8a.

industry, craft, and technology were fully developed. Nowadays the Occident has got the idea."¹⁷

These are merely a few of his comments but they indicate the scope of knowledge he credited to Chinese learning.

Thus he maintained:

It is sufficient for us to observe the Classical principles in governing the Middle Kingdom. We are not borrowing anything from the Occident. If we are, we are only trying to consult the Western books to understand why the Occident is so orderly and powerful thus to further illuminate the [wide] applicability of our Classical principles. Nowadays scholar-officials are so accustomed to our national records that they have forgotten the Classical principles. They took the recent historical records as the learning of the Middle Kingdom condemning the foreigners [as barbarians]. They have failed to note that our historical records . . . are no longer the same Classical principles laid down by our ancient sages. As it says, seek the lost rites from the barbarian territories. [We should take notice of the fact that] foreign countries are practicing the very essence of our Classical principles.¹⁸

Thus the dialectic conflict between Confucianism and "barbarism," or the conflict between the Chinese and the Western learnings was solved by K'ang's recognition that the Western learning was the very essence of the system of knowledge contained in the holy writs of the Confucian sacred school. He was not adopting any imported knowledge, he asserted on the contrary, he was rediscovering the very essence of the Confucian holy writs that had been lost in the past centuries.

¹⁷Ibid., IV, Chüan VIII, 1b.

¹⁸Ibid., III, Chüan V, 2b-3a; remark on the theory of state.

Confucianism as a Religion

In his universal claim for containment K'ang laid heavy emphasis upon the religious elements contained in Confucianism, particularly the godly nature of Confucius. His purpose was to demonstrate that Confucianism was also a religion, and that Confucius was also a divine being with a Messianic mission.

He claimed when introducing books on world religions that the theory of soul, the foundation for all world religions, had originally been a part of Confucius' teachings which was lost due to ignorance of the Confucian or non-Confucian scholars. He said:

It was because of Lao-tzu's propounding the atheistic doctrine, Yuan Shan's fabricating the non-existence of ghosts, the Sung scholars' further misinterpreting [the existence of soul] as the original potentiality of the two vital forces, i.e., Yin and Yang, that made the teaching of Confucius on ghosts and gods contained in the Six Classics and six Weis [literally, the woof of a fabric] darkened. As a result, the Tao of Confucius became invisible. They have failed to realize that [as the Book of Changes says] the union of essence and [matter] . . . forms things and the wandering away of the soul produced the change of their constitution, and that the Wei for the Book of Poems regards soul as the very foundation of matter. Thus the theory of soul was originally a part of Confucius' teachings, which should not be monopolized by other religions. Alas! The Sung scholars' ignorance resulted in ceding territories to other religions.¹⁹

Parallel to the claim for soul was his claim for the knowledge about God (or gods). In his analysis of the nature of the physical universe he maintained that

¹⁹Ibid., II, Chüan III, 5b-6a; remark on religious books. Wei literally means the "woof" of a fabric. The six Weis were considered by historians as apocrypha.

"[The belief] that there is God living in heaven is commonly held by world religions. The term T'ien in Chinese language generally means control. The one who is in control is God."²⁰ Thus by quoting the Book of Poems as saying "Serve your God; God is near you; be not double-minded," K'ang joined the world religions claiming possession of the knowledge about the existence of God.

Not only had Confucius the clear knowledge of the existence of God, argued K'ang, but he himself was the son of God Black Emperor. Following the traditional legendary account of Confucius' mysterious birth advanced by the New Text scholars in Han periods, K'ang tried vigorously to apotheosize Confucius. As the legend contained in the apocrypha goes:

Confucius's mother, Cheng-tsai, once while taking a walk happened upon the mound of a large tomb, where she fell asleep and dreamed that she received an invitation from a Black Emperor. She went to him and in her dream had intercourse with him. He spoke to her, saying: "Your confinement will take place within a hollow mulberry tree." When she awoke she seemed to feel [pregnant] and [later] gave birth to Confucius within a hollow mulberry. This is why he is called the Black Sage²¹

²⁰K'ang, All Heavens, (2 vols; Privately printed by K'ang's disciples, possible in 1930), II, Chüan XI, 3a. The book is a strange mixture of astrology, theology and astronomy. Its drafting dates back approximately to the same period when K'ang began writing the Ta T'ung Shu.

²¹A detailed account of Confucius' mystical birth and Messianic mission is given in Ch'un-Ch'iu-wei yen-K'ung-t'u (Apocryphal Treatise on the Spring and Autumn Annals: Expository Chart on Confucius). Quoted from Fung Yu-lan, op. cit., II, 129.

Basing his formulation upon this "Christianity-like" myth K'ang declared that he had discovered that Confucius was the son of the Black Emperor with a Messianic mission.

Heaven having pity for the many afflictions suffered by men who live on the great earth, [caused] the Black Emperor to send down his semen so as to create a being who would rescue the people from their troubles --a being of divine intelligence, who would be a sage-king, a teacher for his age, a bulwark for all men, and a religious leader for the whole world.²²

K'ang may be excused from propounding a pseudo-mysticism by invoking an apocrypha to advance his claim on the grounds that the legendary account of the mysterious birth of Confucius was handed down many centuries ago, thus it could be regarded as part of the spiritual heritage of the Confucian sacred school. The difficulty with K'ang's religious claim lies rather in his attempt to apotheosize himself. Reference has already been made as to how his study of the Oriental religious writs had changed his academic orientation. One may wonder whether his subsequent claims for the "mysticistic" achievements and a Messianic mission are correct and legitimate, for the question is of paramount importance in the study of K'ang's syncretism. In my opinion, his declaration of being the incarnation of a divinely-inspired maha-buddhisatva or a demigod with a mission to save all mankind are utterly untenable and false.

²²K'ang, Confucius as a Reformer, (Peking: Chung Hwa Book Store, 1958), Preface, p. vii. Quoted from Fung Yu-lan, op. cit., II, 675.

The falsehood of K'ang's claim can be seen in that he wrongly interpreted his emotional disturbance after he first saw a great light shining. According to his own account, the fact that he suddenly laughed with joy and cried with melancholy resulted from the flying devil entering his heart, as it was stated in the Buddhist scripture Len Yen.²³ "It frequently happens," he maintained, "to a man who is earnestly in pursuance of Tao, but who has not taken refuge of [the Buddha]." ²⁴ After consulting the said scripture, I discovered that this emotional abnormality was either due to the over-suppression of one's feelings in the process of meditation, or due to the disappearance of the influence of the physical body. According to this esoteric teaching, both crying and laughing are the necessary by-products that a practitioner must be clearly aware of. It is only after one has erroneously assumed that one has already become a holy man, as indeed K'ang had, that the flying devil will enter one's heart. Whether there is a flying devil or not is not our main concern here. The significant thing is that K'ang's claim for holiness and been flatly rejected beforehand by the spiritual sources upon which he primarily relied.

²³For the scripture see Tripitaka In Chinese (55 vols.; Tokyo: Taishō Issai-Kyo Kanko Kwai, 1924-28), XIX, 105-55.

²⁴K'ang, Autobiography, in op. cit., IV, 114.

Secondly, the falsity is exemplified in his mispresenting the divine experience he had achieved. He claimed:

. . . in heavens, on earth, in the pure lands as well as in the hells I manifested myself and tested them all. . . . In practicing the Five Superior Ways I saw my [spiritual] self beside my [physical] body, then I made myself enter into my physical body.²⁵

One is not obliged to be an expert on Buddhism to see the error in K'ang's statement, for it is clearly illogical. By the very characteristics of the statement it indicates that a practitioner had to first separate his spiritual body from his physical counterpart, to enable him to travel to other parts of the universe. However, K'ang reversed the order of occurrence.

Other evidence indicating K'ang's untenable claim lies in his "misunderstanding" of the Buddhist concept of Wheel Transmission. After having subscribed to the theory of endless circle of birth-death-birth, he thus declared:

My incarnation into this world was for the sole purpose of saving the living beings. Therefore, I declined to stay in the heavens, and deliberately entered the hells; I did not cast myself to the pure lands, instead, I came to the dirty world; I did not choose to be a prince, on the contrary, I chose to be a [Confucian] scholar . . . in order to get close to the living beings.²⁶

The fact that the endless process of birth-death-birth does not lead to the said conclusion is obvious. For according to the doctrine all sentient beings live and die in the same eternal process without any exception, not just

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., p. 118.

K'ang himself.²⁷ Therefore, it is illegitimate to deduce from the theory a conclusion that one has deliberately entered the world with a Messianic mission, particularly with a political one.

Therefore, I maintain that K'ang's religious story was a ta-wang-yü (a big lie); that his claim for a Messianic mission was unwarranted; and that his apotheosis of himself was consequently a pseudo-mysticism.

K'ang's attempt to apotheosize Confucius was in response to the impact of world religions, particularly of the organized churches in the West. Fearing the possible extinction of Confucianism from the earth he tried to counteract the influence of Christianity and further to spread the teachings of Confucius over all the globe.²⁸ He endeavored to demonstrate that because of Confucius' being the incarnation of a divine being, he was in a position to create laws and institutions for all ages and all peoples.

²⁷I am unable to locate any authoritative study in English or translated work on the doctrine of Wheel Transmission. There are many of them in Chinese. For example, the above-quoted scripture Leng Yen is a distinguished one.

²⁸K'ang frankly confessed in his reply to Chu Yün-sheng in 1891 (?) that his rediscovery of the esoteric teachings of Confucius was designed to counteract the spread of Christianity but denied that it had any necessary connection with institutional reform. As will be shown later, the denial was also false. See K'ang, "Rejoinder to Chu Yün-sheng" in The Posthumous Writings of K'ang Yu-wei, a mimeographed manuscript edited by K'ang T'ung-pi, K'ang Yu-wei's daughter. (4 vols.; Peking; By K'ang T'ung-pi, 1960), Chüan IV, pp. 23-28, especially pp. 26b-27a.

If Confucius were not a god, he could not have possibly laid down institutions for the Chinese nation for so many centuries. Above all, his teachings could not have contained so many truths that would meet the challenge of the Occident and eventually spread around the world.

Incidentally, K'ang's attempt to apotheosize himself can be understood from his apotheosis of Confucius. Were he not a divinely inspired demigod, he could not have discovered the godly nature of Confucius, especially the long-buried truths set down by Confucius. Above all, were he not the incarnation of a maha-buddhisatva he would have no charismatic "right" to collect disciples and followers to reform the Chinese nation. Thus K'ang's pseudo-mysticism may be interpreted as a conscious or unconscious attempt to create a personal myth for advancing the social and political application of his discovery. The ironic point about K'ang is that as a leading Confucian religious scholar he used a different sacred system of knowledge to legitimize his claim.

Confucius as an Omnipotent Law-maker:
the Grand Depository

In support of the assertion that Confucius had created laws and institutions for all ages and peoples, K'ang first explained why Confucianism had become a state religion in China. He maintained that this was because the other contemporary schools of thought suffered from the defect of one-sidedness, just as the ears, eyes, mouth and nose are unable to communicate with one another, whereas

the teachings of Confucius collected the excellence of all other philosophies of his time. Confucius stood out among his contemporary philosophers, the world rallied around him and his doctrine eventually became the religion of the state.²⁹

Then he went on to contend that the Six Classics which had been revered in the nation for many centuries were actually written by Confucius, and that they were not merely historical documents edited and revised by Confucius as the traditional belief had maintained. "How do we know Confucius was the founder of Confucianism, the god, and the sage-king?" K'ang asked. "The evidence lies in the Six Classics, which were written by Confucius. All the theories prior to the Han period said that."³⁰ He cited lengthy quotations including the apocryphas to support the claim.

K'ang's emphasis upon the "creation" of the Six Classics by Confucius was first intended to illustrate the fact that all the institutions adopted in China during the subsequent ages were created by Confucius. He maintained:

All the principles and institutions of the Middle Kingdom were created by Confucius. Confucius' disciples received the Tao from him and spread his teachings all over the empire in place of the archaic customs. Among the most notable creations were cap and clothes, three years' mourning for parents, receiving the bride by the bridegroom in person, well-field system, schools, and elections.³¹

²⁹K'ang, Confucius as a Reformer, p. 9.

³⁰Ibid., p. 244.

³¹Ibid., p. 214.

Even the abolition of the feudal state system by the Ch'in dynasty, according to K'ang, was based upon the teachings of Confucius.³²

Confucius had not only created a number of institutions for the subsequent ages, he had also repositied many esoteric dicta in his Classics. For instance, the Book of Odes begins with a chapter about King Wen, the Book of History begins with a chapter of Emperors Yao and Shun, and the Spring and Autumn Annals begins with the record of King Wen and concludes with that of the Emperors Yao and Shun. K'ang maintained that the beginnings and endings were not without a purpose. He contended, as stated in the Book of Changes, that speech is not the full expression of ideas, therefore the beginnings and endings had to be interpreted through their implications. To K'ang, King Wen was the symbol of Confucius' ideal of benevolent monarchism, and Emperors Yao and Shun were the symbols of Confucius' ideal of democracy. Confucius, an omnipotent law-maker, repositied his philosophy of benevolent monarchism in the name of King Wen, his philosophy of democracy in the names of Yao and Shun.³³ It follows that Confucius was not only a law-giver who had in mind the benevolent monarchical form of government, he also was a law-giver who had cherished the highest ideal of government; i.e., Western democracy.

³²Ibid., p. 236.

³³Ibid., p. 284.

Therefore, democracy, the newly encountered form of government, was not unknown to Confucius; in fact, it was the very essence of Confucius' teachings.

Western democracy was part of Confucius' repository scheme concealed in the Spring and Autumn Annals. This concerns the Theory of Three Ages which was traditionally propounded by the Kung Yang scholars of the New Text school. K'ang claimed that other than the written records as shown in the Six Classics, he had discovered this repository scheme, which was handed down secretly in the form of oral instruction.

According to K'ang's study, among the three Commentaries of the Spring and Autumn Annals, the Tso Commentary was a forgery (see the last section of next chapter); the Ku Liang Commentary failed to transmit the Tao of Confucius sufficiently; only the Kung Yang Commentary offered an account of the principles of institutional change proposed by the Uncrowned Prince. Furthermore, among the Kung Yang scholars only Tung Chung-shu (179-104 B.C.) transmitted Confucius' oral teachings in the most complete manner. In fact, the Wei for the Spring and Autumn Annals had recorded as saying "The one who was going to edit my Annals would be Tung Chung-shu." Therefore, Tung Chung-shu was the man to whom one should turn to discover the lost Tao.³⁴

³⁴K'ang, Tung Chung-shu's Study of the Spring and Autumn Annals (6 vols.; Canton: By the author, 1896), Preface, pp. 1a-11a.

According to Tung Chung-shu, when Confucius was editing the history of Kingdom Lu, he divided the two hundred forty one years, or the twelve generations, which he planned to cover into three periods: the age of which he had heard through transmitted records, the age of which he had heard through oral testimony, and the age which he personally had witnessed. To each different age Confucius attached a different set of rules with regard to editing and criticism. He said:

Regarding what he [personally] witnessed, he uses concealing phraseology; regarding what he heard of [through oral testimony], he expresses sorrow for calamities; regarding what he heard of through transmitted records, he sets his compassion aside [and writes dispassionately]. This is in accordance with the feelings [appropriate to each situation].³⁵

Later it was further developed by a Kung Yang scholar, Ho Hsiu (A.D. 129-182), to a three-fold classification of history: the Age of Disorder, the Age of Approaching Peace, and the Age of Universal Peace. Much philosophical flavor was added into them. According to Ho Hsiu:

In the age of which he [had] heard through transmitted records, [Confucius] made visible [through his records] that there was an order arising amidst decay and disorder, and so directed his mind primarily toward the general [scheme of things]. Therefore he considered his own state [of Lu] as the center and treated the rest of the Chinese hegemony as something outside [his scheme]. He gave his first detailed treatment to what was close at hand, and only then paid attention to what was further away. He made a careful record of major [events], but only passing reference to lesser ones. And he recorded lesser

³⁵Quoted from Fung Yu-lan, op. cit., II, 81. For Tung's philosophy see Fung Yu-lan, op. cit., II, chapter 11.

villainies within [his own state], but not those that were outside. Thus great officials, when belonging to large states, [would be recorded as such,] but in the case of one of a small state, he would merely use the less precise term, "person." [Likewise] in the case of an assembly that failed to reach any agreement, were it one within [his own state] he would record it, but if it were outside, he would not do so.

In the age of which he [had] heard [through oral testimony], he made visible that there was an order arising of Approaching Peace. Therefore he considered the Chinese hegemony as the center and treated the outlying barbarian tribes as something outside [his scheme]. Thus he recorded even those assemblies outside [his own state] which failed to reach any agreement, and the great officials of even small states.

Coming to the age which he [personally had] witnessed, he made evident that there was an order arising of Universal Peace. Thus [at this time as reported by the Ch'un Ch'iu], the barbarian tribes became part of the feudal hierarchy, and the whole world, far and near, large and small, was like one. Hence he applied his mind still more profoundly to make a detailed record [of events of the age], and therefore exalted [acts of] love and righteousness, while criticizing [the use of] double personal name. . . .³⁶

In annotating Tung Chung-shu's concept of Three Ages, K'ang maintained:

[The teaching of] Three Ages was the most unusual, and great principle of Confucius. To illustrate it [Confucius] repositied it in the Ch'un Ch'iu. The age of which he [had] heard through transmitted records stood for the Age of Disorder; the age of which he [had] heard through oral testimony stood for the Age of Approaching Peace, and the age he personally [had] witnessed stood for the Age of Universal Peace. The Age of Disorder is an age in which civilization has not been clearly developed. In the Age of Approaching Peace, i.e., in the Age of Small Tranquility, civilization is gradually developed. The Age of Universal Peace is the Age of Ta T'ung [Great Unity] when the world, both far and near, large and small, are like one; civilization is fully developed. Most of the great principles are of the Age of Small Tranquility,

³⁶Quoted from Fung Yu-lan, op. cit., II, 83, with slight modification.

while the esoteric dicta are mostly of Universal Peace. Therefore to rightly understand the teachings of Confucius one has to divide them into two categories....³⁷

The co-relation of the Theory of Three Ages with the two-fold classification of society and political systems will be analyzed in the next chapter. It is important to note here that the Theory of Three Ages, the backbone of K'ang's political philosophy, was employed by K'ang to indicate the divine foresightedness of Confucius. As a divine, omnipotent law-maker, Confucius had designed two different sets of socio-political systems in full anticipation of the possible progress of mankind. As shown by the oral instructions handed down by the Kung Yang scholars, Confucius had clearly anticipated that human history would evolve to a stage when all the peoples and all the cultures in the world encounter one another and merge into oneness. Basing his analysis upon the evolutionary Theory of Three Ages, K'ang wrote a universal constitution for all mankind.

Upon discovering the esoteric dicta handed down through Tung Chung-shu and the subsequent Kung Yang scholars, K'ang strongly attacked Han Yu, a forerunner for Neo-Confucianism, for his ignorance of the oral transmission. He said:

However, Han Yu was ignorant about [the oral transmission]. He ascertained arbitrarily that the Tao of Confucius had no longer been transmitted after Mencius died. Alas, how ridiculous he was!³⁸

³⁷K'ang, op. cit., II, Chüan II, 3b-4a.

³⁸Ibid., VI, Chüan VII, 1b.

His continuing search for the esoteric dicta re-
 posited by Confucius in the Annals led him to discover the
 various editions of the Annals. According to his study,
 there were four different editions of the Annals.³⁹ The
 first edition was the original text of the history of King-
 dom Lu, which Confucius had used as a blueprint. This
 edition had been seen by Mencius and Kung Yang. The second
 edition of the Annals was the one edited by Confucius,
 which embodied 16,446 characters. The third edition con-
 sisted of the great principles taught by Confucius in the
 oral form and transmitted by both Kung Yang and Ku Liang
 Commentaries. As for the fourth edition, it contained
 merely the esoteric dicta of Confucius' oral transmission,
 which were transmitted only by Tung Chung-shu and Ho Hsiu
 of the Kung Yang school. Thus following the Kung Yang and
 Ku Liang Commentaries in a detailed verbatim annotation
 K'ang declared that he had not only restored the original
 text of the history of Kingdom Lu but also unveiled many of
 Confucius' oral instructions. Commenting on the historical
 significance of the Theory of Three Ages in connection with
 oral transmission K'ang once said:

Fortunately the transmission of the Theory of Three
 Ages by Tung Chung-shu and Ho Hsiu by means of the
 word of mouth was rediscovered. . . . nowadays when

³⁹K'ang, Study of the Editions, Great Principles,
 and Esoteric Dicta of the Spring and Autumn Annals, (10
 vols.; Peking: By the author, 1916), Introduction, p. 7b.

[the socio-political systems] of the world have evolved into the Ages of Approaching Peace and Universal Peace, the Tao of Confucius is still able to contain them. Had there been no oral instructions the Tao of Confucius might not be applicable to the new era because the Classics consist mostly of the principles for the Age of Disorder.⁴⁰

⁴⁰Ibid., Introduction, p. 4a.

CHAPTER IV

THE REDISCOVERY OF AUTHENTIC CONFUCIANISM (Continued)

Ta T'ung v. Small Tranquility: Two-fold Confucianism

K'ang's co-relation of the Theory of Three Ages with a two-fold classificatory scheme, i.e., Ta T'ung v. Small Tranquility, was based upon the Chapter of the Evolution of Rites of Li Ki.

Replying to Tzu-yu, one of his disciples, Confucius expressed regret because he could not witness the practice of the Grand Tao, nor see the eminent men of the three dynasties; i.e., the founders of Hsia, Shang and Chou and their great ministers. To Confucius, the pre-Hsia period when Emperors Yao and Shun were reigning was a time when the Grand Tao was in practice; but its aftermath, covering three entire dynasties, was a time when the Grand Tao fell into disuse. These two periods generally represented two different kinds of government, society, and esprit de corps; the first was the ideal.

According to Confucius' own account, the highest ideal of government and society as represented by Yao and Shun was:

When the Grand Tao was pursued, a public and common spirit ruled all under the sky; they chose men of talents, virtue, and ability; their words were sincere, and what they cultivated was harmony. Thus men did not love their parents only, nor treat as children only their own sons. A competent provision was secured for the aged till their death, employment for the able-bodied, and the means of growing up to the young. They showed kindness and compassion to widows, orphans, childless men, and those who were disabled by disease, so that they were all sufficiently maintained. Males had their proper work, and females had their homes. [They accumulated] articles [of value] disliking that they should be thrown away upon the ground, but not wishing to keep them for their own gratification. [They laboured] with their strength, disliking that it should not be exerted, but not exerting it [only] with a view to their own disadvantage. In this way [selfish] schemings were repressed and found no development. Robbers, filchers, and rebellious traitors did not show themselves, and hence the outer doors remained open, and were not shut. This was [the period of] what we call the Grand Unity [Ta T'ung]."¹

Contrary to the public and common spirit of the preceding period, the "world" became a family inheritance during the subsequent three dynasties. The social and political systems were characterized by the principles of propriety (or rites) and constant selfish schemes. Concerning these Confucius had the following to say:

Every one loves [above all others] his own parents and cherishes [as] children [only] his own sons. People accumulate articles and exert their strength for their own advantage. Great men imagine it is the rule that their states should descend in their own families. Their object is to make the walls of their cities and suburbs strong and their ditches and moats secure. The rules of propriety and of what is right are regarded as the threads by which they seek to maintain in its correctness the relationships between ruler and minister; in its generous regard that between father

¹James Legge, The Sacred Books of China, Vol. XXVII of The Sacred Books of the East, ed. F. Max Müller (49 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon press, 1879-1927), pp. 364-66. Quoted with a slight modification.

and son; in its harmony that between elder brother and younger; and in a community of sentiment that between husband and wife; and in accordance with them they frame buildings and measures; lay out the fields and hamlets [for the dwellings of the husbandmen]; adjudge the superiority to men of valour and knowledge; and regulate their achievements with a view to their own advantage. Thus it is that [selfish] schemes and enterprises are constantly taking their rise, and recourse is had to arms; and thus it was [also] Yü, T'ang, Wan and Wu, King Khang, and the Duke of Kau obtained their distinction. . . . This is the period of what we call Small Tranquility.²

The dichotomy of social and political systems, particularly the critical remarks on family inheritance of power and the suggestion of a love without distinction, was traditionally repudiated as heretical by many prominent scholars, including some leading Neo-Confucianists of the Sung period. They were regarded as foreign elements close to Lao Tzu, or Mo Tzu, smuggled into the Confucian holy writs. If they were the teachings of Confucius, the Tao of the Sage should have had two!³

In annotating the Evolutions of Rites K'ang declared that he had discovered Confucius' esoteric teaching which had been buried for twenty-five hundred years. According to his account, the Evolution of Rites was a constitution set by Confucius for the Age of Disorder. He said:

²Ibid., pp. 366-67.

³See Liang Shu-ming, Civilizations and Philosophies of the Orient and the Occident (4th edition; Shanghai: The Commercial press, 1933), pp 135-37; Hsiao Kung-Ch'uan, History of Chinese Political Philosophy (6 vols.; 3rd edition; Formosa: Chung Hua Wen Hua, 1961), I, 67-68.

It is my opinion that the Tao of Confucius includes the Three Ages, Three Sequences, and the Evolutions of the Five Virtues. Benevolence, [Rites], Wisdom, Justice and Sincerity evolve according to the proper time. The Evolution of Benevolence is the Tao for Ta T'ung, the evolution of Rites the Tao for Small Tranquility. It is the function of Rites to set the Age of Disorder [in order], therefore, [the Tao for Small Tranquility] can be included in [the evolution of] Rites. Rites are equivalent to the "constitution" in Greece; but the former are much broader because they include the way of god. This essay illustrates the foundation of Confucius' government by rites in which many great principles and esoteric dicta are contained. Scholars should be thoughtful!⁴

K'ang did not specify how Wisdom, Justice and Sincerity were co-related to the Theory of Three Ages. In annotating the practice of the Grand Tao, K'ang only co-related Ta T'ung with the Age of Universal Peace and Small Tranquility with the Age of Approaching Peace.⁵ Thus he divided all of the Confucian teachings into two different categories: the great principles concerning the Age of Small Tranquility and the esoteric dicta relating the Age of Ta T'ung, the latter representing the highest form, and the authentic version of Confucianism. He later developed the esoteric part into a "constitution" for the whole world claiming that it would be a divine recipe for resurrecting all the sentient beings. I shall discuss this facet thoroughly in the next chapter.

⁴K'ang, Commentary on the Evolution of Rites, in The Compassion Magazine, V, 25a.

⁵Ibid., V, 25b.

The Great Learning Re-interpreted

Between 1901 and 1902 when living in exile in Singapore and India, K'ang extended the process of rediscovering the holy truths by means of containment and eliciting revelation to other Classics. Unfortunately among the annotations of the Six Classics only The Spring and Autumn Annals and the Evolutions of Rites of Li Ki, were printed; the remaining ones were unpublished or even unfinished manuscripts, and therefore, not available to this writer.⁶ Among the annotations of the Four Books, the Great Learning Annotated is not available in print; only the preface provides a clue for the understanding of its contents. It may be taken as an example indicating the extent to which K'ang attempted to re-assess the value of the Great Learning in terms of its richness in containment and revelation.

⁶For a list of K'ang's published and unpublished manuscripts see "A List of K'ang Yu-wei's Works," edited by Chang Pochen, in The 1898 Reform, IV, 38-42.

According to Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, K'ang had intended to write a book entitled Ta-I wei-yen (The Esoteric Dicta of the Great Book of Changes) which is probably Chin-wen I-hsüeh (Book of Changes in the New Text) included in the above-quoted list. The purpose of this book was to develop Confucius' theory of soul and foster a spirit of martyrdom. See Laing, K'ang Yu-wei (3rd printing; Shanghai: Kuang Chi Book Store, 1908), pp. 18-19. Liang's account conveyed the impression that K'ang's theory of soul was essentially an incorporation of Buddhist philosophy. Moreover, according to an article written in 1923, during K'ang's remaining years, K'ang repudiated both the Taoist metaphysics and the forged elements of the Old Text school in Chu Hsi's annotation of the Book of Changes. He gave due credit to Master Chu Hsi only because the latter's annotation was appropriate to "human affairs." See K'ang, "I-Ching ts'ung-Chu-shu" in K'ang T'ung-pi (ed.), The Posthumous Writings of K'ang Yu-wei,

In his preface to the Great Learning K'ang claimed that it contained Confucius' oral teachings, through which Confucius' esoteric dicta and great principles had been transmitted. It was a book propounding the Tao for Inner-Sage and Outer-King, which ranged from the theory of soul to the ultimate grand union of all mankind. Thus among the books transmitting the oral teachings none was comparable with the Great Learning.⁷ However, K'ang contended that Master Chu Hsi, one of the leading Neo-Confucianists, compiler and annotator of the Four Books, had failed to understand Confucius' Theory of Three Ages, thus was unable to unveil the true meanings of it. He said:

The Tao of Universal Peace [contained in the Great Learning] had thus been covered up for two thousand years. Nowadays as communications have extended

Chüan II, p. 4a. Probably K'ang's annotation of the Book of Changes is a manuscript consisting of the attack on forgery, the theory of soul which he professed to have recovered from Buddhism and other religions, as well as the social and political application of the theory.

Furthermore, in response to his opponent's charge that the "Western barbarians" lacked the Three Bonds and Five Relationships, K'ang maintained that the Westerners had nations and families just as the Chinese did. "The only difference between their [way of life] and our Tao lies in that the relationship between man and woman [in the Occident] is that there is no obligation to wait for the match-makers." See K'ang T'ung-pi, (ed.), op. cit., Chüan IV, pp. 25a-26a. In my estimation K'ang's annotation of the Book of Odes may consist of a strong emphasis on freedom between both sexes. There is a variety of folk songs about love in the Book of Odes.

⁷K'ang, "Preface to the Great Learning Annotated" in K'ang, Collection of Essays of K'ang Yu-wei, V, 9a.

throughout all corners of the world, it is no longer appropriate to propound the [outmoded] theory that was designed for the Age of Disorder.⁸

Doctrine of the Mean Re-interpreted

As with his re-assessment of the Great Learning, K'ang was dissatisfied with Master Chu Hsi for his failure to discover the great principles and esoteric dicta transmitted by Tzu Ssu, Confucius' grandson, in The Doctrine of the Mean. Thus K'ang undertook the task of re-annotating it.⁹

For the purpose of illustration, I shall single out a few passages of K'ang's annotation together with their correspondent passages in the original text. These passages are significant because they are indicators of K'ang's conception of time with regard to the evolutionary Theory of Three Ages. Or properly speaking, they indicate in theory K'ang's social and political application of his "discovery." In his view, the social and political systems should progress in accordance with their proper times. Change should not be retarded; nor could it be accelerated. It was the duty of a sage, he maintained, to understand and grasp this inevitable law of history and act accordingly. Otherwise disaster would result.

⁸Ibid.

⁹K'ang, Doctrine of the Mean Annotated (Shanghai: By the author? 1912), Introduction, p. 1a.

For instance, The Doctrine of the Mean has a passage concerning "Timely Mean" which reads as follows:

The superior man's embodying the course of the Mean is because he is a superior man, and so always maintains the Mean. The mean man's acting contrary to the course of the Mean is because he is a mean man, and has no caution.¹⁰

In annotating the above-quoted passage K'ang stressed the need for institutional changes with the times. He maintained:

The Tao of Confucius comprises the doctrines of the Three Systems and the Three Ages. It changes with the times. The superior man should therefore consider making appropriate changes to accommodate the time in which he lives, so that his laws and institutions may operate usefully. . . . Whatever he does that fits the requirements of the time constitute the mean for that particular time. Hence it is referred to [as] "the timely mean."¹¹

If institutional changes were needed to accommodate the time, it follows that new institutions such as liberty and constitutionalism, etc., would have to be introduced in the Age of Approaching Peace. The Doctrine of the Mean contains a passage which reads:

He who attains to the sovereignty of the kingdom, having those three important things [san chung], shall be able to effect that there shall be few errors under his government.¹²

¹⁰James Legge, The Chinese Classics (3rd edition; 5 vols; Hong Kong: Hong Kong University press, 1960), I, 386.

¹¹K'ang, op. cit., p. 3b. Quoted from Hsiao's article in Monumenta Serica 18, p. 148.

¹²James Legge, op. cit., I, 425.

San chung was interpreted as three important things by Chu Hsi with chung pronounced in the 4th tone. K'ang ignored the interpretation and took chung as recurrence or rotation; chung was pronounced as 2nd tone. According to him, the three recurrences referred to the sequence of the Three Ages, the succession of which would be infinite and inevitable. Thus he declared:

The three recurrences are the three systems in the Three Ages. They are the Age of Disorder, the Age of Approaching Peace, and the Age of Universal Peace. . . . Therefore the Three Ages are recurred into nine ages which are multiplied by three and become eighty-one ages. The number can be further multiplied into infinity. The [spirit of the] regulations of Confucius is that they must be employed according to the proper period. If in the Age of dark Disorder, before the influences of civilization had spread themselves, one were to practice the institutions of Universal Peace, this would certainly result in great harm. But if, in the Age of Approaching Peace, one were to continue to cling to [the institutions of the Age of] Disorder, this too would result in great harm. The present time, for example, is the Age of Approaching Peace. It is therefore necessary to promulgate the doctrines of self-rule and independence, and the actualities of parliamentary and constitutional rule. For if the laws are not reformed great disorder would result.¹³

The sequence of the three ages of history cannot be delayed. Within each age there are also developmental distinctions which are inevitable. These are manifested in different peoples of the world. The Doctrine of the Mean says, "All things are nourished together without injuring one another. The Taos are pursued without any collision

¹³K'ang, op. cit., p. 36a-b. Quoted partly from Fung Yu-lan, op. cit., II, 683.

among them. . . ."¹⁴ K'ang commenting on this passage maintained that the minority peoples in China, the Malaysians in the South Pacific, the black men in Africa, and the American Indians, were in the period of Disorder of the Age of Disorder. India, Turkey, and Persia, whose proprieties and governments were considerably developed, could be categorized in the period of Approaching Peace of the Age of Disorder. In regard to the United States, where everyone enjoyed the right of self-independence, K'ang held that its people were in the period of Universal Peace of the Age of Disorder. Furthermore, he maintained that the progress of the backward peoples could not be bypassed. For the peoples still living in the first period it would be sufficient to institute tribal heads, separate males from females, teach them how to read, make general regulations, put restrictions on mutual strife and killings, and guide them to propriety. If American institutions were suddenly introduced, contrary to natural order, numerous tribal wars would become inevitable. American-styled institutions should only be introduced after the tribes had evidenced progress in the forms peculiar to the period of Approaching Peace, such as in India and Persia. Viewing this as a historical necessity K'ang pointed out that the majority of peoples in China were nourished together with the Chinese; each was governed respectively by the Tao of Disorder and the Tao of Approaching

¹⁴James Legge, op. cit., I, 427. Quoted with a modification.

Peace, without collision. The same was true of the American Indians and the African black men who were ruled by white peoples.¹⁵

One may dismiss the validity of K'ang's observation on the grounds that there is ample evidence in history concerning the "injuries" and "collisions" that have occurred between the backward and advanced peoples in the progress of mankind. It is important to take note of K'ang's notion of progress. In pointing out the sharp contrast between the contemporary social and political institutions in the world, particularly the colonial rules in Africa, K'ang tried to demonstrate that the progress of national cultures was uneven. For progress to occur each must pass through the appropriate institutional stage. Therefore, the introduction of institutional change must be done in accordance with the stage of progress of each national culture. It is obvious that to K'ang the United States, or generally speaking, the West, represented the most advanced institutions in the world. Among the non-Western peoples only a few nations, such as India, Turkey, Persia, and China, had achieved the appropriate institutional level to progress into the most advanced stage.

If Confucius' Tao had consisted of all the truths, or had it been a progressive system of manifold infinite the unfolding of which would be historically inevitable,

¹⁵K'ang, op. cit., pp. 41a-42a.

then one could question why Confucius, the divinely inspired sage-king, had developed few institutions for the coming Age of Universal Peace. Or why had he not specified his creations clearly in the Six Classics instead of resorting to repository and concealment? K'ang's answer to the questions was candid. He held that the progress of history could not be transgressed and that Confucius had acted in accordance with the propriety of his time. It was more important that Confucius, as a divine sage-king, had fore-ordained K'ang to propound the doctrine for the new age. In The Doctrine of the Mean Confucius says, "He is prepared to wait for the rise of a sage a hundred ages after and has no misgivings."¹⁶ Regarding this passage K'ang had the following to say:

Confucius had developed many institutions for [the Age of] Disorder and Small Tranquility, but few for that of Universal Peace and Great Unity. This is because the process of emerging from Disorder is a complex one which must proceed in accordance with the times. In the age of Confucius the world was still young and immature. It was like a child which in its course of upbringing cannot be abruptly made into an adult simply by suddenly stripping it of its swaddling clothes. As to the institutions suitable for Disorder, therefore, Confucius had no alternative [but to make them himself]. But as to the regulations for Universal Peace, and the principles of Great Unity, though he certainly intended to make them brilliantly evident, he was unable to achieve his purpose because he was not born at the proper time.

The process of evolution follows an inevitable course which cannot be transgressed. When the proper time arrives, the changes suited to it take place of themselves. That is the reason for the individual differences among the regulations for the Three Ages and the principle for the Three Sequences [Systems]. It

¹⁶James Legge, op. cit., II, 426.

is quite evident that [Confucius'] sole intention was to save the [people of each] age. He knew that three thousand years after him another sage would arise, who would proclaim the teachings of the Great Unity. Such a one would surely not transgress the track leading from Approaching Peace, nor would he consider the track leading from Disorder to Small Tranquility as wrong.¹⁷

It was obvious that the sage whom Confucius had fore-ordained three thousand years [sic] ago was K'ang himself. He was the man who, being born at the proper time, had promptly rediscovered Confucius' esoteric teachings and developed them into the doctrine of Great Unity or Universal Peace.

The Analects Re-interpreted

K'ang's re-assessment of the Analects was drastic. According to his study, the Analects was recorded and edited by the disciples and followers of Tseng-Tzu, thus it only represented the philosophy of the Tseng-Tzu school. K'ang maintained that Tseng-Tzu was a man whose philosophy was exclusively a devotion to observing restraints,¹⁸ and therefore he could not have heard the great Tao of Confucius. Because the philosophy of Tseng-Tzu was such, the academic

¹⁷K'ang, op. cit., p. 39a. Quoted from Fung Yulan, op. cit., II, 684.

¹⁸This refers to Tseng-Tzu's daily self-examination. As the Analects records, the philosopher Tseng said, "I daily examine myself on three points: --whether, in transacting business for others, I may have been not faithful;--whether in intercourse with friends, I may not have been sincere; --whether I may not have mastered and practised the instructions of my teacher." See James Legge, op. cit., I, 139.

orientation of his disciples could not have been one of excellent caliber. The Sung scholars in their rediscovery of the great principles and esoteric dicta from the remnant Classics could find no other works than the Analects as a source showing the sayings and activities of Confucius. They wrongly mistook it as covering the entirety of Confucianism, and it was elevated to a position even higher than that of the Six Classics, and officially recognized by the court in examinations. As a result, the Analects took over the orthodox position from the Six Classics, and Tseng-Tzu's learning of observing restraints became extremely popular.¹⁹

However, K'ang's low esteem for the Analects did not prevent him from sifting out a few passages into which Confucius' resourceful dicta were repositied. The first outstanding example of such discoveries concerned Confucius' divine foresight. In annotating Confucius' saying that the affairs within a hundred ages could be known, K'ang maintained that the Analects contained the Theory of Three Ages. He said:

Tzu Chang [i.e., the inquirer] had received the principle. Therefore he inquired further whether ten ages could be foreseen. He would like to know what the world would be after the Age of Universal Peace. . . . Confucius himself was born in the Age of Disorder. But at the present time communications have extended throughout the great earth, and Europe and America, through their vast changes, have entered into the Age of Approaching Peace. There will be a day when everything throughout the earth, large or small, far or near,

¹⁹K'ang, Analects Annotated, (Peking: Wan Mu Ts'ao T'ang, 1917), Preface, pp. ib-iiib.

will be like one. There will no longer be any nation, no racial distinctions, and customs will be everywhere the same. With this uniformity will come [the Age of] Universal Peace. Confucius understood all this beforehand. . . . A hundred ages comprise of three thousand years, now it is close to the three thousandth year. Therefore, Confucius said, "He is prepared to wait for the rise of a sage a hundred ages after, and has no misgivings." . . . This is Confucius' esoteric dictum. It should be viewed in connection with the esoteric dicta, i.e., the Theory of Three Ages in the Spring and Autumn Annals and the idea of Great Unity in the Evolution of Rites, thus to see the holiness [of Confucius] and the extent to which the world was projected by him.²⁰

By annotating a simple passage K'ang indicated the scope of Confucius' divine foresightedness. If translated into plain language, K'ang meant to say that Confucius had actually foreseen the progress of modern technology, the coming of the Western impact, and above all, their inevitable global results.

To demonstrate that freedom was a "contained" concept in the original Confucian teachings, K'ang managed to prove that Tzu-kung, one of the leading disciples of Confucius, had already proposed the concept long before the introduction of the idea in the West. As the Analects records, once Tzu-kung mentioned to Confucius that "What I do not wish man to do to me, I also wish not to do to man." In K'ang's view, this was Confucius' teaching of freedom. He maintained.

[The principle of freedom] is one of the most profound theories in Confucianism. . . . Nowadays because the world is so close to the Age of Approaching Peace, the

²⁰Ibid., I, Chüan II, 10b-11a.

principle of freedom is gradually illuminated. In actuality, it was Tzu-kung who had first fathered the idea that was but one limb of the entire body of Confucius' teachings.²¹

K'ang's high respect for Tzu-kung was not limited to the fact that Tzu-kung had transmitted freedom, an esoteric dictum, from Confucius. He had further transmitted the theory of human nature and the way of heaven to Chuang Tzu, a leading Taoist philosopher of the pre-Ch'in period. According to his study, Tzu-kung transmitted Confucius' Tao to his disciple Tien Tzu-fong, who further transmitted it to the Taoist philosopher Chuang Tzu. Thus Chuang Tzu was in the direct line of transmittal in the Confucianist school of thought. His discovery that Chuang Tzu was an academic follower of Confucius led him to the conclusion that the Six Classics did not cover the entire way of Confucius' teachings.²² What he tried to indicate was that a big portion of Confucianism was wrongly given away to the Taoists.

K'ang justified his inclusion of a Taoist philosopher into the Confucianist sacred school by noting that the latter had highly praised Confucius. To indicate the greatness of Confucius' teachings K'ang frequently quoted the Taoist philosopher as having said that Confucius' Tao was all-inclusive when compared with other schools of thought

²¹Ibid., II, Chüan V, 6b.

²²Ibid., II, Chüan V, 6b-8a, particularly 8a.

of Confucius' time.²³ Therefore, Confucius' teachings had not only contained the newly encountered knowledge of modern time, they had also contained the truths of the various schools of thought during his time. Confucius' teachings as a system of holy truth are all-inclusive and all-pervading.

The wide scope of Confucius' divine teachings had not only included the knowledge of the coming Western impact, it had already possessed a correct understanding of the world geography. The Analects had a passage which says:

The Master said, "My doctrines make no way. I will get upon a raft, and float about on the sea. He that will accompany me will be Yu, I dare to say."²⁴

Commenting on this passage K'ang contended:

At that time the concept of Great Ocean had already been popular. The knowledge about the nine continents had already been known. Confucius indicated to Tseng Tzu that the earth was round. Therefore, in his estimation, beyond the oceans there must have been human species of the highest excellence that would practice his principles of Great Unity and Universal Peace.²⁵

²³For Chuang Tzu's praise of Confucius see F. Max Müller (ed.), The Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XL, pp. 215-17. It is too extensive to be quoted here.

²⁴See James Legge, op. cit., I, 174.

²⁵K'ang, op. cit., II, Chüan V, 3a-b. K'ang assertion that Confucius already had knowledge of the nine continents was clearly based upon Tsou Yen's famous discourse on nature. Tsou Yen, a member of the school of the Yin and the Yang, who came after Mencius, claimed that there were nine large continents in the world. "He had first to examine small objects, and extended this to large ones until he reached what was without limit. . . . He maintained that what scholars call the Middle Kingdom [i.e., China] holds a place in the whole world of but one part in eighty-one. China, he named the Spiritual Continent of the Red Region [ch'ih hsien shen chou], within which are nine provinces [chou], which are the Nine Provinces which Yü [the legendary

Probably the most interesting point in K'ang's annotating the Analects was the discovery of constitutional monarchism through textual criticism. The Analects contains a passage which reads: "When right principles prevail in the world, government will not be in the hands of the Great officers."²⁶ Commenting on the negative assertion "not," K'ang maintained that the expression was extraneous. "The present edition" he asserted, "has the character pu which is a gloss. I have deleted [it] according to the old edition."²⁷ Then he went on to maintain:

Emperor who after nine years conquered China's great flood] had laid out. But these cannot be numbered among the real continents. Besides China [there are other continents] similar to the Spiritual Continent of the Red Region, making [with China] a total of nine continents, which are the real so-called Nine Continents. Around each of these is a small encircling sea, so that men and beasts cannot pass from one to another, and these [nine continents] form one division and make up one large continent. There are nine [large continents] like this, and around their outer edge is a vast ocean which encompasses them at the point where heaven and earth meet." Quoted from Fung Yu-lan, op. cit., I, 160. In his suggestion to abolish national boundaries, K'ang stated that, ". . . when we look at that which was called 'The Central Nation' (i.e., China) and the four barbarian [territories], [we see that they] are then just one corner of Asia and only one-eightieth part of the world." The connection is very clear. However, K'ang failed to validate Tsou Yen's statement that around the nine provinces of China was a small encircling sea. See K'ang, Ta T'ung Shu, trans. Laurence G. Thompson (London: Allen and Unwin, 1958), p. 80. For a complete survey of K'ang's Ta T'ung Shu see chapter V.

²⁶See James Legge, op. cit., I, 310. With a slight modification.

²⁷K'ang, op. cit., V, Chüan XVI, 4a.

The government which is in the hands of the Great officers is constitutional monarchism. Right principles are referred to the Age of Approaching Peace. The sovereign shoulders no responsibility, therefore, the Great officers take charge of the government.²⁸

Following the above-quoted passage the Analects contains another statement which reads: "When the right principles prevail in the world, there will be no discussions among the common people."²⁹

Concerning the negative statement K'ang said repeatedly, "The present edition has the character pu, which is a gloss. It was deleted according to the old edition."³⁰ Then he went on to maintain:

[In the Age of] Ta T'ung when a public and common spirit rules all under the sky, politics is publicly discussed or determined by the people. This is an institution for the Age of Universal Peace, the highest expression of the right principles. This chapter illustrates the Theory of Three Ages, and is identical with the Spring and Autumn Annals. . . . If the common people were not allowed to discuss as asserted in the present edition, the tyrant, Emperor Li, who had tried to shut the people's mouths, would have achieved the right principles. This would contradict the Classical principles. Hence, I know it was a superfluous error, otherwise it must have been wrongly inserted in the text by the successors.³¹

An alert reader need not question the validity of K'ang's interpretation of Confucius' sayings, granting that the statements with pu are a contradiction of the Classical principles. The most important question remains--whether

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ James Legge, op. cit., I, 310. With a slight modification.

³⁰ K'ang, op. cit., V, Chüan XVI, 4a.

³¹ Ibid.

K'ang's claim for discovery of the "old edition" of the Analects is tenable. Had he discovered or possessed the old edition of the Analects, he should have shown or proved this to his fellow religious scholars. There is no indication whatsoever to substantiate his claim, and I, therefore, maintain that the claim was a forgery.

The Works of Mencius Re-interpreted

K'ang's two-fold classification of Confucianism, Ta T'ung v. Small Tranquility, was extended to include the teachings of Hsun Tzu and Mencius, two leading schools of thought in early day Confucianism. According to him, philosopher Hsun Tzu, who contended that human nature was essentially evil, had transmitted propriety, which was part of Confucius' teachings for the Age of Small Tranquility and the Age of Disorder. Therefore, it was a branch of Confucius' Tao, not the foundation of it. On the contrary, philosopher Mencius, who claimed that man's nature was innately good, had transmitted the basic and esoteric teachings of Confucius, i.e., the philosophy and prospectus of Ta T'ung. According to K'ang's study, Mencius was the immediate disciple of Confucius' grandson, Tzu-ssu. Tzu-ssu transmitted the Tao of Ta T'ung from Tzu-yu, one of the leading disciples of Confucius. Thus Mencius was directly in the line of transmittal of the esoteric dicta of Confucius.³²

³²K'ang, The Esoteric Meanings of Mencius, (2 vols.; Shanghai: By the author, 1916), Preface, p. iib. K'ang's high respect for Mencius seems in clear contradiction with

In regard to the sayings of Mencius, the most notable discovery by K'ang was Mencius' dichotomy of ages. While commenting on the difference in conduct between Emperor Yü, his prime minister Ch'i, and Confucius' disciple Yen Yuan, Mencius once said:

Yü and Ch'i in an age of peace, [italics mine] thrice passed their doors without entering them. Confucius praised them. The disciple Yen, in an age of disorder, [italics mine] dwelt in a mean narrow lane, having his single bamboo-cup of rice, and his single grand-dish of water; other men could not have endured the distress, but he did not allow his job to be affected by it. Confucius praised him.³³

According to K'ang's interpretation, the passage is a strong evidence that Mencius had indeed transmitted the learning of the Kung Yang school, thus had had discussion on the principles of the Age of Peace and Disorder, and had understood the difference between the ways of conduct of

his early view that only Tung Chung-shu had transmitted the esoteric doctrine in the most complete manner and that even Mencius did not afford the esoteric doctrines as contained in Tung's Cu'un-Ch'iu fa-lu. See K'ang, Tung Chung-shu's Study of the Spring and Autumn Annals, Preface, pp. 1b-11a. Hsiao Kung-ch'uan was correct in saying in his article "K'ang Yu-wei and Confucianism" (op. cit.) pp. 119-20, that "This is a good example of his change of mind and his intellectual development from one stage to another." But it should be noted that the change occurred only in the process of rediscovering the holy truth. Insofar as the Confucian sacred framework is concerned, K'ang never altered his views. Therefore K'ang was correct when he contended that "My knowledge was complete by the time I was thirty; from that point on I made no more progress, as indeed there was no need to advance." See Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Period, p. 106.

³³James Legge, op. cit., II, 335. With a slight modification.

the Age of Peace and the Age of Disorder. He maintained that what Mencius had called the Age of Peace was actually the Age of Great Unity, while the Age of Disorder was the Age of Small Tranquility.³⁴

In addition to the transmittal of the Theory of Three Ages K'ang manifested a high admiration for Mencius and his transmittal of the theory of the goodness of human nature. The importance of the theory, according to K'ang, was that it was a philosophy projected for the Age of Peace. Commenting on Mencius' view of the good nature of man, and his laudatory reference to Emperors Yao and Shun,³⁵ K'ang maintained that Mencius had made laudatory reference to Yao and Shun because he had transmitted the Tao of Confucius and had been especially committed to the Age of Peace. "Every man has the same good nature," he contended, "[therefore,] every one is similar to Yao and Shun, and every one can practice the Tao of Universal Peace and Great Unity."³⁶ What K'ang meant was that because Yao and Shun were symbols of democracy, every man has the same nature as Yao and Shun; therefore every man is entitled to democratic institutions. In annotating Mencius' saying that "All men have a mind which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others,"³⁷ K'ang contended:

³⁴K'ang, op. cit., I, Chüan I, 14a.

³⁵James Legge, op. cit., II, 234.

³⁶K'ang, op. cit., I, Chüan I, 8.

³⁷James Legge, op. cit., II, 201.

The benevolence of humanity, the civilizations of humanity, together with the progress of humanity towards Universal Peace and Great Unity are all derived from this [commiserating mind]. . . . The evil-nature theory [was intended] to govern the Age of Disorder when government was obliged to go along with the desires of human beings. Therefore, most of the regulations were restrictive and oppressive in character. This is the theory of Hsun Tzu. The good-nature theory [was intended] to govern the Age of Peace, thus to make every man equal and independent of one another. Therefore, most of the regulations were progressive and upward in character. This is the theory of Mencius.³⁸

To K'ang, Mencius had not only transmitted the evolutionary Theory of Three Ages, he had also transmitted the philosophy of democratic institutions for the coming new age. Furthermore, as a transmitter of the great Tao of Confucius, Mencius was, in reality, an earlier proponent of democracy. Commenting on Mencius' statement that "The people are the most important element in a nation,"³⁹ K'ang said:

This is Mencius' proposal for democratic institution, a system for the Age of Universal Peace. . . . One who has the confidence of the people is elected the ruler of the people, such as the president of the United States or France. . . . Nowadays the United States, France, Switzerland and South American nations all have adopted this institution. [This] is close to the public and common spirit and the election of men of talents, virtue, and ability, for the Age of Great Unity [as stated in the Evolution of Rites].⁴⁰

Thus, according to K'ang, the popular election of the head of a state had been proposed by Mencius long before the beginning of modern democracy.

³⁸K'ang, op. cit., I, Chüan I, 3.

³⁹James Legge, op. cit., II, 483.

⁴⁰K'ang, op. cit., I, Chüan I, 10b.

The Lost Transmittal
and China's Stagnation

K'ang's rediscovery of the authentic version of Confucius' teachings led him to the claim that he had discovered the real cause of China's centuries-old backwardness and stagnation, as compared with the Western countries. He contended that his fellow religious scholars had lost or abandoned the most important holy truth which their spiritual ancestors, Confucius and others, had handed down many centuries ago. The lost truth consisted of the philosophy of Ta T'ung and the Theory of Three Ages.

According to K'ang's study, the transmittal of Confucius' esoteric teachings was lost due to an academic forgery. As early as 1891 in his first book Hsin-hsüeh wei-ching k'ao (Study of the Classics Forged During the Hsin Period) K'ang tried to introduce his rediscovery of the lost Tao by first presenting his textual research on the so-called "forged classics." The latter were the Rites of Chou, the Dispersed Rituals, the Tso Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals, and the Mao Commentary on the Book of Odes, works for which Liu Hsin (ca. 46 B.C.-23 A.D.) had tried hard to appoint Erudites at the end of the Former Han (206 B.C.-46 A.D.). The essential points in the book were best summarized by Liang Ch'i-ch'ao as follows:

- (1) The classical learning of the Former Han had never had anything called the Ancient Texts and all the Ancient Texts had been forged by Liu Hsin. (2) The book-burning by the Ch'in [in 213 B.C.] had not impaired the Six Classics, and the ones transmitted by the

Fourteen Erudites of the Han were all complete texts of the Confucian school, with nothing missing or omitted. (3) The written character used at the time of Confucius was the "seal character" of the Ch'in and Han, and moreover, as regards the "texts," there had never been the classifications of "Ancient" or "Modern." (4) Liu Hsin had tried to cover up the traces of his forgery by adding glosses and creating confusion among all the ancient works, while he was collating books in the imperial library. (5) The reason Liu Hsin had undertaken forgery of the Classics was that he wished to help Wang Mang usurp the Han [throne] by conspiring in advance to distort and submerge Confucius' great principles hidden in esoteric language.⁴¹

If the introduction of the so-called Old Texts (i.e., Ancient Texts) into Confucianism was a forgery, and therefore illegitimate, the later acceptance of these spurious Classics should also be considered as illegitimate. Commenting on the historical conflict between the Han Learning and the Sung Learning, K'ang maintained:

In later times the adherents of the Han and Sung [schools] of learning have wrangled with one another [over the Classics] as if they were water and fire. Thus regarded, what all later generations have pointed to as the Han Learning, including all the work of

⁴¹Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Period, p. 92. K'ang claimed that the discovery of the forged Classics had been independently derived from his study of the history of the Classics. However, according to Liang Chi-chao's account, K'ang's ideas were actually derived from Liao P'ing (1852-1932), a contemporary of K'ang. During his early life K'ang had been very much interested in the Rites of Chou, one of the forged Classics, and wrote a book to discuss its principles. Later when he saw Liao's writings on the forged Classics, he gave up his old ideas entirely. Thus, ". . . it is undeniable that he [Liao P'ing] influenced the thinking of K'ang Yu-wei." (Liang, op. cit., pp. 91-92). For Liao's philosophy see Fung Yu-lan, op. cit., II, 705-19. For the academic controversy between Liao and K'ang see Ch'ien Mu, History of Chinese Learning During the Last Three-Hundred Years (Chungking: The Commercial Press, 1945), pp. 498-507.

Chia, Ma, Hsü, and Cheng, is Hsin and not Han Learning; the Classics honored and expounded by the Sung scholars are for the most part forged and not those of Confucius.⁴²

It was because of the historical incident that the esoteric teachings of Confucius, i.e., the Theory of Three Ages and the Tao of Great Unity, were lost in the process of transmittal. It was because of the failure in transmittal that the rulers and scholars had not held the authentic version on Confucius' philosophy but only the less important, rudimentary ideas and institutions. In his annotation of the Evolutions of Rites he formally declared:

In the two thousand years of our China, all the dynasties, including Han, T'ang, Sung, and Ming, irrespective of the circumstances--whether order or chaos prevailed, whether a regime was rising or declining--constituted together the Age of Minor Peace [Small Tranquility]; in the two thousand years of China, all the utterances of Confucian scholars, including the sayings of Hsün Ch'ing, Liu Hsin, and Chu Hsi, irrespective of their quality--whether these were true or false, refined or crude, good or bad,--constituted all together the way of Minor Peace [Small Tranquility].⁴³

Therefore he strongly attacked the Confucian scholars for clinging to the ideas and institutions of Small Tranquility that had resulted in China's stagnation and backwardness. On the other hand, he declared, if from Han times onward, every family had practiced the highest ideals of Confucius, by Sui and T'ang times, China could have

⁴²K'ang, op. cit., (8 vols.; Canton: By the author, 1891), I Chüan I, 3b. Quoted from Fung Yu-lan, op. cit., II, 677.

⁴³K'ang, Collection of Essays of K'ang Yu-wei, VIII, Introduction, p. 1a. Quoted from Hsiao's article in op. cit., pp. 144-45.

evolved to the Age of Approaching Peace. "That was a thousand years before the present time when China should be the first on earth to achieve Universal Peace."⁴⁴ In other words, K'ang believed that had the esoteric dicta not been lost by the forgery, China could have been the culturally most advanced country in the world long before the Western invasion of China had ever occurred. It would probably have been the Chinese nation to which the countries all over the world would have looked for leadership.

⁴⁴K'ang, Study of the Editions, Great Principles and Esoteric Dicta of the Spring and Autumn Annals, Preface, p. 11 a-b.

CHAPTER V

THE WORLD OF TA'TUNG

Multi-State Rivalry

The rediscovered and further developed Grand Tao of Confucius' consisted of two parts: the constitution for all mankind and the reform program for the Chinese nation. The former was the prospectus and the latter was the path leading toward its realization.¹ Both were parts of the evolutionary Theory of Three Ages (see above). Both rested upon K'ang's analysis of the Western state system.

Although the contemporary state system which covers the planet is, in most of its essentials, European in origin, practices, and motivations,² for many Confucian intellectuals of the nineteenth century this was simply an historical repetition of the pre-Ch'in period in China. They used the traditional term lieh kuo (multi-states) to describe the present

¹Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, K'ang Yu-wei, pp. 41-42.

²Frederick L. Schuman, International Politics: The Western State System and the World Community (6th edition; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958), pp. 55-56. In my opinion, if K'ang were called upon to examine Schuman's theory of the Western state system, he would probably agree with all of Schuman's points except that World Government is unlikely in the years to come (p. 679). K'ang later came to the belief that complete political union would be achieved within one hundred years.

state system in which the big powers would be comparable to those of the Ch'un Ch'iu period (722-481 B.C.) or the period of Warring States (403-221 B.C.).³ K'ang's observation of the Western state system, or the state system into which the Chinese Empire had entered after 1840, was similar to that of his predecessors and contemporaries. To him the present-day relations among states were essentially identical to those during Confucius' time and thereafter.⁴ Thus it was possible to rediscover the esoteric dicta repositied by Confucius, and further, to predict the future development of the Western state system through the Confucian holy writs which contained knowledge about this system.

It should be noted that K'ang's analysis of the present state system ran along two different lines. On the one hand, he maintained that the sharp contrast and

³For instance, Feng Kuei-feng considered that the Western states corresponded to the lieh kuo of the Ch'un Ch'iu period; see Ksiao Kung-Ch'üan, History of Chinese Political Philosophy, VI, 782. A foreword to the Chinese translation of Wheaton's Elements of International Law (1864) compares modern Europe to the China of the pre-Ch'in period; see Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, China's Entrance into the Family of Nations, p. 135. Wang T'ao compares the world powers to the lieh kuo of the Ch'un Ch'iu period; see Wang T'ao, Supplement to T'ao-yüan Wen-lu (5 vols.; Shanghai: 1897), I, Chuan II, 9a; and II, Chuan IV, 24b-26a. Peng Yü-lin in his preface to Cheng Kuan-Yin, Warnings in Time of Peace (8 vols.; rev.; n.p.: Tai Ho Tsai, 1900), compares the world situation with that of the Warring States period. For a general description of the multi-state system of ancient China see Richard L. Walker, The Multi-State System of Ancient China (Hamden, Conn.: Shoe String Press, 1953). Walker's study covers mainly the Ch'un Ch'iu period.

⁴K'ang, "Fourth Memorial" in The 1898 Reform, IV, 177. See also K'ang, Study of the Editions, Great Principles and Esoteric Dicta of the Spring and Autumn Annals, I, Chuan I, p. 7.

competition among states would result in elimination and coalescence of individual states. Therefore, he proposed institutional reforms which would help strengthen the Chinese nation in its competition for survival among the world powers. (I shall analyze this in the following chapter.) On the other hand, he contended that the state system covering the world would eventually lead to the final coalescence of all nations, which would not necessarily be disastrous. In fact, it should be encouraged and would be morally justifiable. Supporting the second theme, he maintained first that from an historical point of view, the process of coalescence had already taken place in China and in all nations. He said:

The process [of coalescing and forming fewer, larger units] has all taken place among the ten thousand countries over [a period of] several thousand years. The progression from dispersion to union among men, and the principle [whereby] the world is [generally] progressing from being partitioned off to being opened up, is a spontaneous [working] of the Way of Heaven [or Nature] and human affairs.⁵

⁵K'ang, Ta T'ung Shu, trans. Laurence G. Thompson, p. 79. Hereafter I shall refer to it as the English edition. I find Thompson's translation to be a very competent rendering of the Chinese text. But unfortunately many of K'ang's interesting discussions were summarily cut out of the English translation, thus Western readers were deprived from fully knowing the great Confucian thinker's image of the future world order. Occasionally the English text also makes serious mistakes, such as rendering two important Buddhist concepts, wu-t'ung (the Five Supernatural Powers) and san-ming (Three Insights) into Confucian Five Elements (metal, wood, water, fire and earth) and Three Briliants (sun, moon and star). See op. cit., p. 277, footnotes 15 and 16. For the meanings of the two Buddhist terms see William Edward Soothill and Lewis Hodous (compilers), A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1937),

Secondly, he contended that the coalescing into large states was accompanied by a grinding down of the people. He pointed out that in a single war the dead had numbered in the thousands and ten thousands. Even righteous men always considered fighting for territories and killing other people to be an important duty. His moral argument was that the present state boundaries must be abolished in order to save mankind from becoming savage beasts and bandits.⁶

The unification of contemporary sovereign states, following K'ang's prediction, would have to pass through the stage of voluntary association by a few powerful "imperialist-democracies," most of which presumably would be the Western nations. For this there were two reasons. First, present world politics was essentially dominated by the European and American powers and they had been responsible for the partition of Africa, Asia, and the rest of the world. As a consequence, after a process of partition and coalescence

p. 123 and p. 66. The confusion may exist because K'ang departed from the traditional usage and changed wu-t'ung into wu-sheng; the latter literally means Five Superiors. (It should be noted that the Chinese pronunciation of Five Superiors are wu-sheng, while those of Five Elements are wu-hsing.) In memory of K'ang, Chang Po-cheng in his Biography of the Gentleman from Nanhai (Peking: 1930), p. 3b, continued the same usage but apparently without a clear understanding of its meaning. If he had had a clear knowledge of its meaning, he could have cast serious doubt on his master's pseudo-mysticism. The difficulty in understanding K'ang's writings indicates that the study of religious syncretism, particularly one of grand synthesis, is essentially a group endeavor.

⁶K'ang, Ta T'ung Shu, English edition, pp. 81-82.

there would be only a handful of major powers remaining on the world scene.⁷ Secondly, because of the change in the pattern of leadership, these few powerful survivors would tend to unite themselves into a world state rather than resorting to conquest by sheer force. The rise of "democracies" in place of the traditional autocracies had changed the minds of people with regard to the uniting of states.

K'ang contended:

Now when states are autocracies, it is natural that they are self-centered, and it is difficult to unite them [with other states]. But if they are democracies, then federation is easy. This is because people only seek profit and benefit for themselves, and so when Good men advocate the pleasure and profits of Ta T'ung it naturally accords with men's minds.⁸

Students of international relations may criticize K'ang's prediction as to which states would survive. It had appeared very likely at the end of the nineteenth century that a handful of European and American powers might gain domination over the whole world. But after the turn of the century, particularly after the Second World War, this

⁷In Ta T'ung Shu K'ang was ambiguous in his predictions about which states would survive the multi-state rivalry. In 1902, refuting his revolutionary opponents, K'ang stated that in the coming one hundred years or more the states that would surely survive would be England, the United States, Russia, Germany, France, and China. Concerning smaller states, K'ang maintained that their destiny would remain to be seen. For K'ang's article see Hsin-Ming Chung-Pao no. 16 (1902); or Chang Nan and Wang Jen-chi (eds.), A Selection of Essays During the Ten Years Period Before the 1911 Revolution, (2 vols.; Peking: San Lien Book Store, 1960), I, 212-13.

⁸K'ang, Ta T'ung Shu, English edition, p. 86. Quoted with a slight modification.

tendency was checked or offset by the rising tide of nationalism throughout Asia and Africa. There has been a sudden emergence of many former colonies, protectorates, and dependent territories in this area as independent states coexisting with the dominant European and American powers. There is no strong indication that the present trend will be reversed to the extent that the European and American powers will restore their authority over their former colonies. Thus a great change has occurred and the number of states has increased rather than decreased. For the present the complete dominance by a few European and American states as imperialist powers has given way to the coexistence of a multitude of sovereign states. Therefore, unification into a world-wide community will depend upon more than the consensus of a few dominant powers. A universal consensus must include members of most sovereign states: large and small, strong and weak, autocratic and democratic, Western and non-Western. K'ang's failure to anticipate the rise of anti-colonialism in Asia and Africa and the role it has played in shaping the destiny of mankind weakened his claim for the inevitability of historical progress, and his seemingly realistic planning for the future of the whole world. It also belied his status as a man of knowledge in the Confucian sacred school. As a matter of fact, many of his predictions and plans can be dismissed as erroneous and wishful thinking.

Long-Range Evolutionary Design:
the Stateless, Classless, and
Racially-Mixed World Community

K'ang's observation of the multi-state rivalry led him to believe that national boundaries, which politically divide mankind, would have to be eliminated, in the preparations for world-wide government. One may question what would become of the social and political institutions in the few surviving states, as well as to those in the vanquished ones. The answer K'ang provides is simple and straightforward. For mankind to achieve universal equality he proposed the abolition of all the boundaries or barriers that had divided mankind. These would include not only nation, but also class, race, sex, family, occupation, disorder, kind and finally suffering itself. To attain all these, he urged every nation in the world to prepare itself for a long-range evolution that would bring mankind from the Age of Disorder through the Age of Approaching Peace, and eventually to the Age of Universal Peace.⁹ In support of

⁹Reference has already been made as to K'ang's discovery of Confucius' teachings, i.e., the Theory of Three Ages as evolutionary. It may be interesting to note K'ang's reaction toward Darwinism. There is no question that the Chinese translation of T. H. Huxley's Evolution and Ethics by Yen Fu, a contemporary of K'ang, had been seen by K'ang before it went to press, as some historians have recently discovered. See T'ang Chi-chun, Collection of Essays on the 1898 Reform, pp. 112-13. But the important fact is that upon reading the manuscript K'ang told his disciples that it was not a new theory and that Westerners had studied science of biological evolution for many years. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao reported that he had previously heard of part of the evolutionary theory from K'ang. See Liang's

the over-all abolition, K'ang strongly claimed that Confucius had taken thought of the universal suffering of all mankind and set up laws and institutions for the subsequent ages. However, because K'ang regarded Europe and America as nearing the Age of Approaching Peace,¹⁰ the institutions and ideas he proposed were in fact modeled after or taken from those existing in the West, but were supplemented by Oriental religious values. In general, he urged the non-Western world to mix with the West both culturally and ethnically, and the Western nations to continue toward a higher stage of development, Universal Peace.

According to K'ang's proposal, the abolition of the first barrier and the uniting of states would occur in three stages: the alliance of old states in which each individual state would still retain its sovereignty; then the creation of a new "public state" with the individual states retaining limited sovereignty; and finally, the abolition of all states following the emergence of a world government.

letter to Yen Fū, in Liang, Collection of Essays of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao (80 vols.; Shanghai: Chung Hwa Book Store, 1926), IV, Ch'uan IV, 29a. I have found that the Bibliography of Japanese Books lists under the heading of biology eight works, six of which bear the title of evolution. It is possible that the concept of evolution had already come to his attention in his study of the Western learning through the Japanese books; but the Chinese translation of Huxley's work served as a stimulant later. He used the concept of the survival of the fittest, but he strongly opposed Darwin's concept of evolution as ridiculous and worse than flooding waters, good only for the Age of Disorder. See Ta T'ung Shu, English edition, p. 258.

¹⁰K'ang, Ta T'ung Shu, English edition, p. 72.

The first stage, when the foundation of Ta T'ung would be laid, K'ang called the Age of Disorder. The second stage, the Age of Approaching Peace, occurred when Ta T'ung would be generally developed. At the time when Ta T'ung would be achieved on earth, there would exist the Age of Universal Peace. K'ang discussed many details of this evolutionary process, trying to anticipate and facilitate the step by step transition toward Ta T'ung. Underlining this grand, detailed design was his strong contention that the lofty ideals that had long been dreamt of by philosophers of the East and West would become realities after the abolition of state boundaries.¹¹

As far as social class is concerned, K'ang maintained that America was most tranquil, strong, prosperous, and happy, resulting from the extreme equality of her ordinary citizens. Even though Negroes were still not treated equally with the whites after the emancipation, the United States was still the harbinger of the Age of Approaching Peace. But K'ang quickly turned to Chinese history claiming that Confucius was the first one to propose an end to slavery, and had done so two thousand years before its abolition in Europe. Furthermore, the Emperor Kwang Wu of the later Han period was the first man who applied this teaching of Confucius in abolishing the slavery system in China; thus, compared with the emancipation of slaves in

¹¹Ibid., p. 84.

China, President Lincoln was a mere "follower" of Emperor Kwang Wu.¹²

K'ang went on to maintain that slavery in China was originally a Mongolian institution re-established in China by conquest. Unfortunately Liu Hsin had forged the Classics, falsely attributing the slave laws to Chou Kung, and people had forgotten the true teaching of Confucius. As a result, the slavery system became popular again during the Ming period and thereafter. Thus he declared:

Now it is time to illuminate the universal principles, to employ the teaching of Confucius, to pattern after the system established by Emperor Kwang Wu, to abolish all the slavery records, and to let [the slaves] become men of good standing. . . .¹³

As for other nations, K'ang suggested that the caste systems of India, Turkey, Egypt and Persia should be abolished in favor of equality. After several hundred years, more countries would become democracies, and would inevitably follow the example of the United States in abolishing hereditary nobility. Eventually all the great priests and imperial families would disappear. "Mankind throughout the world will be perfectly equal."¹⁴

¹²K'ang, Ta T'ung Shu (ed.), Ch'ien Tin-an (Shanghai: Chung Hwa Book Store, 1935), pp. 170-71. For convenience it is designated hereafter as the Chinese edition. The English edition is an abridged form; thus, it is frequently necessary to quote from the Chinese edition.

¹³Ibid., p. 173.

¹⁴K'ang, op. cit., English edition, p. 138.

To achieve universal equality among men, the uniting of states and the uniting of social classes must be coupled with the uniting of all the races in the world. For mankind to merge into a single race producing individuals with like complexions and features, K'ang strongly recommended that racial equality could be achieved by changing the non-white peoples into white by means of migration, mixed marriages, nutritious improvement, etc. According to him, it would not be too difficult to join the most numerous yellow race with the superior white race. He believed that if the yellow race could adopt the Western methods of living which were conducive to good health, within a hundred years they would gradually become white, with inter-marriage completing this trend before the perfection of Ta T'ung. The difficulty, claimed K'ang, would be in transforming the brown and the black races, which would require a longer period prior to their entry into the Age of Ta T'ung. He predicted:

Generally speaking, the extremely black Africans will advance to [the stage of] the brown people after another several hundred years; within less than two or three hundred years [the brown people] may advance to the yellow people; within less than a hundred years [the yellow people] may become white.¹⁵

According to his grand evolutionary design, the final goal of racial equality would be accomplished in the following three stages. In the Age of Disorder there would

¹⁵K'ang, op. cit., Chinese edition, p. 188.

be inequality in social status, intelligence, physical appearance and inter-marriage among the different races. In the Age of Approaching Peace, with the gradual disappearance of the brown and black peoples, only the white and yellow races would remain in the world scene. There would be little discrepancy between these two races in their social status, complexion, intelligence, and bodily sizes. Inter-marriage among different races would become popular. As the Age of Universal Peace approached, there would be neither a yellow nor a white race; there would be no difference among the peoples of the world in their social status, complexion, intelligence and bodily size.¹⁶

Long-Range Evolutionary Design:
the Sexually Promiscuous,
Familyless, and Communistic
World Community

Coupled with the abolition of state, social class, and racial distinction there would be a universal abolition of sex barriers, family ties, and private property. In so doing K'ang was suggesting a world community of sexual promiscuity, a world community without family institution, and, most importantly, a world community of outright communism.

From his survey of the universal suffering of women under the male dominance, K'ang declared that he had a great wish: to bring all the women in the world, of the future, to complete equality with an independence from men.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 191.

He attacked the founders of Buddhism, Brahmanism, Christianity, and Islam for their failure to look into the suffering of the other half of humanity.¹⁷ He was particularly critical of the Sung Confucians for their "high principles" which had caused countless numbers of widows to grieve in wretched alleys, and be harassed by cold and hunger,¹⁸ and of foot-binding which had resulted in the injuries of billions of women.¹⁹ According to him, the equality between husband and wife had been the wish of Confucius.²⁰ Confucius had created the institution that the bridegroom should receive his bride in person to indicate the mutual respect between husband and wife; he had authored no principle requiring that a wife should be treated as a slave.²¹ Above all, divorce had been instituted in ancient times and had been practiced widely, including the family of Confucius.²²

Concerning Western women, K'ang noted that in Europe and America they were generally free in studying, talking, entertaining, travelling about, and sightseeing, choosing their husbands, and obtaining divorces. However, he was dissatisfied with the inequality between men and

¹⁷K'ang, op. cit., English edition, p. 150.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 157.

¹⁹K'ang, op. cit., Chinese edition, p. 214.

²⁰Ibid., p. 232.

²¹Ibid., p. 216.

²²Ibid., p. 250.

women in other areas,²³ particularly because education for women was not successful and women's political rights were not sufficiently developed.²⁴

He proposed to emancipate the women of the world through the following three stages. First, imprisonment and slavery, punishment and restriction would be discontinued. Then the prohibition against social intercourse, entertaining, freely going out and coming in, and sightseeing would be discarded, as in European and American custom. Then women all over the world would be entitled to hold political office, vote, become members of parliament and hold citizenship as men do.²⁵ This would be the progress of women from the Age of Disorder, through the Age of Approaching Peace, to the Age of Universal Peace.

Finally, K'ang suggested, in order to achieve complete equality of women with men in the Age of Universal Peace, there should be no husband and wife, but only free partners bound by a "love contract"; the minimum time for this contract would be only one month, subject to renewal if both parties so desired.²⁶ "Therefore, the more we try" declared K'ang, "to prevent lust, the more it arises. Why should we not get rid of both the embankment and water [sic]:

²³K'ang, op. cit., English edition, p. 153.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 154-55; p. 152.

²⁵Ibid., p. 159.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 163-66.

there will be no danger of being flooded."²⁷ Following K'ang's suggestion the future world of Ta T'ung would indeed be a sexually promiscuous community.²⁸

²⁷K'ang, op. cit., Chinese edition, p. 252.

²⁸In a letter to K'ang in 1896, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao reminded K'ang of the latter's inadequate knowledge of Buddhism. He said that after having read a few scriptures in Hinayana he was surprised to notice that K'ang's teachings of Universal Peace and Great Unity had already been rejected by the Buddha. See "Liang's Letter to K'ang" in Su Yü (ed.), Defending Confucianism: A Collection of Rebuttals (3 vols.; By the editor, 1898), III, Appendixes. I have attempted painstakingly to trace Liang's assertion to the Buddhist sources. Due to the pressure of time, I was unable to locate all the sources, thus unable to validate Liang's observation. In my opinion, K'ang's proposal to abolish marriage ties was, on the surface, in anticipation of the increasing instability of marriage life in the West. In reality, his ideas of racial equality and sexual freedom were partly taken from the Buddhist myth which he found in Buddhist literature. As told by the Hinayana scriptures, in this solar universe north of the Mount Sumeru there exists a world called Uttarakura. Although the civilization there has not been highly developed, its inhabitants do enjoy the highest degree of equality among their fellow human beings, as compared with their counterparts on other planets. There, all human beings are of the same race, possess the same form of physical appearance, and bear the same kind of complexion. There is no way to mark difference except of sex. It is interesting to note that both men and women enjoy "free love" for which trees will bend down to make covers and flowers will come into bloom to make beddings. To avoid incest in case that the two parties are parent and child, or two immediate relatives, trees will not bend, leaves will wither away, and flowers will not come into bloom. Furthermore, born as good natured people, they are sexually not lustful as are their counterparts on earth where only sky is the ceiling. Ordinarily, for the most sexually lustful ones the occasions of physical union for men and women in ones's lifetime probably will not exceed five. Three or four occasions would be the norm. Therefore the "sexual freedom" which they have enjoyed is not without limitation; it is innately checked by the composition of their nature. For a general description of Uttarakura see Ch'i-shih ching in The Tripitaka, I, 310-65. Also see Ta lo t'an ching, ibid., 227-309; Ch'i-shih yin-pen ching, ibid., 365-420.

The abolition of the sex barrier would not be complete if the family barrier remained, and K'ang proposed to do away with this too. He maintained that the Chinese family system, though it provides for effective reproduction and encourages honoring parents, (especially when compared with the Western counterpart) it was still narrower in its practice of Jen because of the barrier of the clan system. But he quickly pointed out that it was impossible for the Western family system to achieve complete equality for all mankind because there too each one would look after his own children.²⁹ According to his Theory of Three Ages, to have people educated entirely by the family would be the system of the Age of Disorder, to have schools and also to have family to educate people would be the system of the Age of Approaching Peace, and to abolish family, to leave education entirely to the schools would be the system of the Age of Universal Peace.³⁰ Therefore, he suggested that mankind do away with their families and live in schools, or public institutions. To uproot the family barrier K'ang designed a series of public institutions that would take care of all human beings from the pre-natal education to the disposal of the dead by electrical machines.³¹ He said:

²⁹K'ang, op. cit., Chinese edition, p. 285.

³⁰K'ang, op. cit., English edition, p. 181.

³¹Liang Ch'i-ch'ao mentioned that one of the main ideas in Ta T'ung Shu was the cremation of the dead for fertilizer factories; see Liang, Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Period, p. 97. This indicates that the electrification of the dead was a later revision. Probably K'ang thought that the dead were useless for making fertilizers.

Now the way of life is not otherwise to be born, to be nurtured, to be educated, to be supported, and [to encounter] old age, sickness, suffering, and death. These matters will all belong to the public [domain]: for, from begetting to burying, all will be managed by the [public] government, and will not be provided for by the individual's parents or children. The parents will not have the toil of nurturing and caring for the children, [n]or the expense of educating them. Moreover, the children will be cut off from the father and mother and will not see them very often, for being removed to distant places. Yet again, [because of] moving about, they will not be acquainted with each other.³²

In his suggestion to abolish the boundary of livelihood, i.e., the private property, K'ang showed a strong dissatisfaction with the stupendous progress in science and technology. It had failed to improve the living of the people, or to meet the deficiencies of public spirit. He repudiated socialism, communism, trade unionism, as well as capitalism, holding that they were unable to cope with the economic situations of the world. According to K'ang, the phalanges suggested by the Englishman Fourier [sic] were impractical because they allowed transactions in property. In communism, the existence of family and state would defeat the purpose of the economic system. Moreover, he noted the sharp conflict among the capitalists and the acute struggle between labor and capital, which would tend to result in disaster and bloodshed. But he quickly dismissed socialism

³²K'ang, op. cit., English edition, p. 186. K'ang fails to make any provision to prevent world-wide sexual incest. For if the parent and the child are separated and not acquainted with each other, the father and daughter, or the mother and the son, may enter into "a love contract" by ignorance after the removal of the sex barrier.

and trade unionism for their failure to do away with family and private property, contending that they were in no position to solve the unusual great struggle. As for the theory of free competition, namely, the free enterprise system, K'ang maintained that it would be suitable to the Age of Disorder only, for men would never attain equality while deceit and corruption resulted from free competition. Above all, the very existence of family and private property would generate competition, which in return would result in corruption and deceit. Therefore, he strongly suggested that if men wished to attain universal equality, all commerce, industry and agriculture should be transferred to and owned by the world community. The world government should set up individual departments, whose functions would be to plan, supervise and carry out economic activities for the entire world population.³³

A critical question arises from K'ang's communistic suggestion. How would this be fitted into his grand evolutionary design? K'ang seems to have presented two supplementary answers. First, the taking-away of private property should pass through the following three stages. In the Age of Disorder, the people should be allowed to have private property and if it were taken for official use, it must be paid for. In the Age of Approaching Peace, private property should not be taken away without great cause. Finally, upon entering the Age of Universal Peace, all people in the world

³³K'ang, op. cit., Chinese edition, p. 362.

have given up their private property.³⁴ In other words, all mankind would live under a world-wide, planned communistic economic system.

But how is the abolition of private property related to the doing-away of family and state? K'ang maintained that the key to the public ownership of the means of production would be the adoption of the love contract based upon the principle of natural right. He proposed:

Do we wish to abolish the family? Merely [to] bring about that the principle of natural right is clearly understood. Men and women are all equal and independent. [In] marriage, we will not again use the terms "husband" and "wife," we will only permit the signing of a contract of union for [a number of] months and years, and that is all. Carry these [measures] out for sixty years, and then the peoples of all the world will no [longer have] families.³⁵

Without the burdensome family ties, K'ang optimistically predicted that there would be no problem of inheritance. By then all means of production would be easily transferred to the world community.

Long-Range Evolutionary Design:
the Disorderless, Animal-Loving,
and Painless World Community

The questions arise from K'ang's proposal are:
How is the stateless, classless, racially-mixed (or all white), sexually promiscuous, familyless (or parentless),

³⁴K'ang, op. cit., English edition, p. 125.

³⁵Ibid., p. 226. I have changed "heaven-conferred human rights" in Thompson's text to "natural right." The Chinese term t'ien-fu jen-ch'üan, namely, "heaven-conferred human rights," was an early Chinese translation of "natural right."

and communistic world community to be governed? Will the peoples of the world then stand in need of any governmental organizations? K'ang's grand design indicated that an all-inclusive totalitarian world government would be needed. The institutions would be composed of three levels: the local, the degree, and the public. K'ang anticipated that when men entered the Age of Ta T'ung, because of the tremendous progress in transportation and communication, travel around the world would take only several days or perhaps less. By then the earth would seem comparable in size to a big county in China.³⁶ With the disappearance of state and racial barriers, mankind would then stand in no need of using geographical considerations in dividing administrative responsibilities. They should set up no continental sub-governments to continue discrimination and hatred. Thus to uproot the selfishness of mankind the future world government, namely, the Public Government, should be subdivided into several thousand governments of degree, whose size would be comparable to a village of today. Each degree government would consist of a number of self-governing, local units, such as nurseries, hospitals, schools, farms, shops, and factories.

³⁶K'ang, op. cit., Chinese edition, p. 388. Undoubtedly this is a very prophetic insight. If K'ang were alive today, probably he would claim that the world transportation had already entered the Age of Ta T'ung; in the meantime he might deplore over the slow progress in man's abolition of the nine boundaries or barriers.

The operation of the three levels of governmental organizations should be highly democratic. Public officials would be able-minded sages possessing high morality and character. They should be elected by public vote on telephones. Being very modest, the elected candidates would decline twice or thrice before accepting governmental positions. There would be no misconduct, nor any competing, clamoring, or assassination among party politicians as there is under the present constitutional governments. People of that age would look back at the political behavior of today and consider it barbaric and absurd.³⁷

However, in a world of Ta T'ung in which everything would be owned by the governments, men would stand in need of incentives and prohibitions to ensure continuing progress, while guarding against any reversion to decadence and stupidity. Thus he further suggested that measures should be taken to encourage people's efforts in their striving for excellence, knowledge and benevolence. By then, the world order and human nature would become so perfect that there would be neither crime, nor litigation. There might be mistakes or faults and these could be easily prevented by instituting the following four prohibitions: against laziness, against idolizing an individual, against competition, and against abortion.³⁸

³⁷K'ang, op. cit., English edition, pp. 234-35.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 254-60.

Furthermore, the equality and happiness of mankind would not be advanced if these virtues were not extended to the animal world. Therefore K'ang proposed to abolish the "kind" barrier that separated man from other species. In so doing, he was contemptuous of Moses and Mohammed for their "leading men to devour men" in the course of building their own states. He was also critical of some Chinese sages, Jesus, Zoroaster, and Socrates for their selfishness towards their own kind, i.e., mankind only.³⁹ However, he noted that had mankind not been able to destroy the animals the human species could not have survived, and the past several thousand years of Disorder would have been utterly impossible.⁴⁰ Therefore, he equally rejected the prohibitions against killing animals by Buddhism and Hinduism as impractical for the Age of Disorder, despite their being the most benevolent of humanity.⁴¹

According to K'ang, the Tao of Confucius consisted of three stages. In the Age of Disorder people loved their kin only. In the Age of Approaching Peace they would extend their love to other people. Finally, in the Age of Universal Peace they would extend their love to all creatures (literally, things). These three stages constituted an inevitable natural

³⁹K'ang, op. cit., Chinese edition, p. 432.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 433.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 434.

order in the progress of mankind.⁴² Thus he suggested that in the Age of Disorder, eating of flesh and killing of living creatures would still be allowed. Moving toward the Age of Approaching Peace men would use electric machines to slaughter animals so that they would not suffer. Eventually both killing and the desire for killing would come to an end in the Age of Universal Peace. By then new devices would emerge and men would eat substitutes for animal meat. There would be no harmful animals. All animals would be tamed and would become pets of mankind living happily and peacefully in well-furnished zoos.⁴³

Lastly, the universal happiness of all men and all animals would be incomplete if suffering itself were not uprooted. Therefore he proposed to abolish the suffering barrier in order to help mankind obtain utmost happiness. According to him, the purpose of creating social and political institutions was to seek happiness and avoid suffering. Every social and political institution should be judged by the extent to which it had increased human happiness and decreased human suffering. He also applied this to his future work of Ta T'ung.

⁴²K'ang, op. cit., English edition, p. 266. The idea of extending one's compassion from kinsmen to include people, then to all creatures, was directly taken from Mencius; see K'ang, The Esoteric Meanings of Mencius, I, Chüan I, 4. K'ang in his Study of the Editions, Great Principles and Esoteric Dicta of the Spring and Autumn Annals, X, Chüan XI, 21b-24a, offered a detailed presentation regarding Confucius' compassion for animals. According to him, that the Annals concluded with the capture of a unicorn indicated that Confucius had repositied his Way of Animals, as a matter of fact, the Tao for all sentiment beings, in the Ch'un Ch'iu.

⁴³K'ang, op. cit., Chinese edition, pp. 432-37.

As a result of the long evolution of "material culture," K'ang predicted that the future world would be full of material abundance and men would enjoy their happiness in dwelling, eating and clothing, etc., as they never had before. But in addition to material well-being, K'ang seems to regard the spiritual well-being as an inalienable part of the universal happiness of mankind. Thus he gave due emphasis to the happiness of the soul and expressed great dissatisfaction with the Western religions of Christianity and Islam. In his estimation both religions would be extinct in the Age of Ta T'ung because of their theological shallowness and practical inadequacy. The only major religions that would satisfy man's want for happiness of soul would be Taoism and Buddhism. The former would provide man with the art of achieving immortality; the latter, the teaching of buddhahood.⁴⁴

However, according to his evolutionary design, religious life in the Age of Ta T'ung would not be exclusively dominated by Taoism and Buddhism. Essentially it would take the form of a New Religion embracing the strong points of all the world religions as a result of public discussion and universal consensus. In other words, it would be a syncretic religious system. According to K'ang's projection, conceptions of gods and heaven would cease to command reverence; people would only revere the former philosophers and the soul of

⁴⁴K'ang, op. cit., English edition, pp. 274-75.

every man.⁴⁵ Translated into plain language, K'ang's New Religion would be a Confucian syncretism based upon the universal equality of soul among all men, an integralist system of knowledge composed of various aspects or levels of truth.

With material abundance, physical longevity and spiritual power men would further devote themselves to the study of the roaming through heavens. K'ang declared that, in his estimation, there were two hundred forty-two different heavens existing in this universe beyond the knowledge of European astronomers. The total number of heavens he claimed to know also superseded the twenty-five revealed by Buddhism and the eighteen by Taoism.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 126-27. Following the sacred school approach, probably there will be no inter-religious discussion as K'ang has suggested, nor can inter-religious discussion reach any universal agreement upon which a new religion can be formed. In my opinion, due to the great encounter of all kinds of knowledge, the religious scholars of each major religion have already begun to syncretize the strong points of others. Therefore, in the foreseeable future, side by side with the common ground they have gained through syncretization each major religion will tend to retain its own distinctive identity. It is very possible that in anticipation of the possible emergence of a One-World, the most imaginative scholars of each religion are beginning to draft constitutions based upon One-World Philosophy, the difference of which is only subject to the cross-pressure of the opposing ideas as well as to the theological uniqueness of each credo.

⁴⁶K'ang, All Heavens, II, Chüan IX, 8a. The names of each heaven and its respective number of people were given in II, Chüan X.

Ideology or Utopia?

K'ang's deep reverence for Confucius, his life-long devotion to the rediscovery of Confucius' teachings by means of the method of containment, the eliciting revelation, even by means of apocrypha, his re-interpretation of Confucianism as an integral unity on a basis of grand synthesis, his strong contention on the cause of China's backwardness and particularly his further development of the Theory of Three Ages into the philosophy of Ta T'ung, a constitution for all mankind as well as animals, give rise to the question as to whether he intended to apply them to the social and political situations in China and the world. If he did, the next question is: To what extent did he apply his entire system of syncretic philosophy to the social and political order which he had been confronting? A careful study of K'ang's political and social application of his rediscovery of the authentic version of Confucianism indicates that K'ang's political philosophy was a strange mixture of ideology and utopia. Generally speaking, his universal constitution, or the philosophy of Ta T'ung, was, in actuality, an outright ideological syncretism despite its strong radical contention, while its reform program for the Chinese nation was originally a distinctive system of utopia but was rendered completely obsolete due to the change of events. The obsolescence of the reform program further rendered the philosophy of Ta T'ung more ideological in its articulation.

The reason why Ta T'ung Shu was essentially an ideological syncretism lies first in that its author never intended its realization. This has been explained by K'ang's disciple Liang Ch'i-ch'ao when he related that K'ang had written his work but kept it secret from other men except for two leading disciples including Liang himself and never taught its ideas to his students. In accordance with the iron law of historical progress K'ang considered the mentioning of the doctrine of Ta T'ung as committing mankind to flood and ravening beasts. According to Liang:

Nevertheless, K'ang from beginning to end advocated salvation of the present world by the principle of "partial security" [Small Tranquility] alone; in regard to the problems of politics as well as social ethics, he considered it his duty to maintain the status quo [sic]. He had formulated a new ideal which he considered most worthy and most perfect, yet he did not desire its realization and even fought with all his might to suppress it. I suppose the strangeness and unpredictability of human nature can hardly exceed this.⁴⁷

The exact reason why K'ang did not desire the realization of Ta T'ung is that, in his own theory, the present age being one of Disorder, and Multi-state Rivalry, the very practice of the doctrine would inevitably result in disaster and confusion. Probably in K'ang's estimation the final realization of the world-wide perspective was too remote to be regarded as desirable and practicable. It was obvious that K'ang originally intended only to elaborate a theory and reposit it just as Confucius had done waiting for another sage to put

⁴⁷Liang, Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Period, p. 98.

it into practice. Thus the very concept, the Multi-state Rivalry, which K'ang used as a theoretical foundation for predicting the coming world events forbade him from taking consideration of the early realization of the doctrine of Ta T'ung.

That Ta T'ung Shu was ideological in K'ang's system of political thinking lies further in that the doctrine of Ta T'ung was used by K'ang, after the 1898 coup d'état, and particularly after 1911, as a shield against his Republican opponents in the defense of his obsolete constitutional monarchism. Although the draft was first written in 1884, the whole manuscript was not completed until 1902 when K'ang was living in exile in India. Then the book was subjected to a process of constant revision and enlargement.⁴⁸ It was only after the 1911 Republican Revolution that K'ang, being forced to defend his unsuccessful constitutional monarchism, gave permission for the publication of the first two parts concerning the universal suffering of all human beings and the way to abolish national barriers. The purpose of the publication was to refute republicanism and the concomitant new thoughts by claiming that they had already been contained in K'ang's thinking, but that they were not ripe for adoption. In so doing, K'ang unwittingly contradicted himself, contending

⁴⁸The fact that K'ang mentioned China's adoption of the Western calendar in Ta T'ung Shu, Chinese edition, p. 129, indicates that the manuscript was revised after 1911, the year when China formally adopted the solar calendar.

that now it was close to the age divinely prophesied by Confucius; in the meantime, as Liang well put it, he fought with all his might to suppress the realization of this ideal. Thus this inconsistency helped transform K'ang's seemingly radical political philosophy into an ideological tool serving the obsolete monarchical cause. Concerning this, I shall have more to say in the second half of the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI

THE 1898 REFORM AND THEREAFTER

Institutional Reform of 1898

K'ang's proposal for institutional reform made him the most important and also the most influential Confucian religious scholar in the last century. Many of the traditional and obsolete institutions, such as the selection of administrators based upon their knowledge of the Four Books, had been in operation for a thousand years, and the transportation of grain by the canal system had gone on for two thousand years. These came to an abrupt end during the One Hundred Days Reform in 1898. In fact, if the coup d'état had not occurred, the entire framework of the Confucian sacred school, including its knowledge and social and political structure, would have undergone a radical transformation.

The main theme of this broad and historically unprecedented program of reform was that the Chinese nation, upon entering the Age of Multi-state Rivalry, should be adapted to the new situation by replacing her obsolete ideas and institutions with those of the West. Provisions for these changes were contained in Confucius' teachings, or at least, had been anticipated by the Sage. In other words,

the reform program was intended to syncretize Western ideas and institutions into the Chinese system in order to save the Chinese nation and its Confucian sacred knowledge by means of a massive and complete social and political change. Although these changes would accomplish an ideological objective, i.e., the preservation of the Manchu ruling house, the social and political revolution was essentially a utopian syncretism.

I referred earlier to K'ang's attempts to convince his fellow religious scholars to rediscover and restore the authentic Confucianism. These endeavors can be seen in his various publications, such as the Study of Forged Classics During the Hsin Period, Confucius as a Reformer, and Bibliography of Japanese Books, etc. In 1888, four years after the Sino-French War over Vietnam, or four years after he had begun drafting the constitution for all mankind, K'ang strove to present his discovery to the Son of Heaven, Kwang Hsü, who was the center of the power structure of the Confucian sacred school. It was a long, persistent, lone, and hard political fight. Incessantly and repeatedly he memorialized the Throne. In 1895, when the Chinese Empire was defeated by Japan, he submitted a joint petition to the Throne signed by hundreds of examination candidates. In 1898, after ten years' tenacious struggle, K'ang finally succeeded in breaking through the opposition of the conservative court officials and won the confidence of the young emperor Kwang

Hsü. His memorials were adopted by the Emperor as the basis for reform and renovation.¹

K'ang attempted to convince the Emperor of his basic premise: that the world situation had fundamentally changed as a result of the Western invasion. He pointed out that the main force bringing about the great change was the modern European nations, which came across the globe with their steamships, telephone lines, railroads, etc., very much like a galaxy of stars descending from the sky. "Since then, our country has no longer lived in the age of great unification (ta-i-t'ung) and isolation; on the contrary, she has entered the Age of Multi-state Rivalry [similar to that of the pre-Ch'in period]."² Therefore, he contended that the Occidental nations should not be looked upon with contempt by China the way she had previously viewed the neighboring peoples. "Nowadays the Occidental nations are competing with one another in the betterment of political institutions and in the progress of learning, which the ancient barbarian tribes had never achieved."³

¹K'ang followed the usual procedure of the literati, taking examinations and entering the officialdom. In 1895 he passed the metropolitan examination and was granted a chin-shih degree. But realizing that he was not much of a bureaucrat, he declined to accept an appointment from the ministry of public works. K'ang's success in bidding for imperial attention, therefore, was due completely to his direct approach to the issue in the capacity of a religious scholar.

²K'ang, "Memorial on Translation of Japanese Books and Sending Students to Japan to Study," in The 1898 Reform, IV, 222. See also the section on Multi-state Rivalry in the preceeding chapter.

³K'ang, "Fourth Memorial," ibid., II, 175.

Furthermore, K'ang reminded the Throne that the basic characteristic of the rivalry among states was that of contrast and contest in social and political institutions. He said that in the present world in international conferences, diplomacy and frequent international communication, the contestants were obliged to compete with one another in terms of their political institutions, social customs, education, technology,⁴ military science,⁵ religion,⁶ as well as their physical fitness.⁷ To K'ang, the rivalry among nations was essentially an all-out contest of strength among contestants in every sphere of their national lives. Survival would be of the fittest; the inferior nations would quickly be eliminated or would merge with the superior ones. For the sake of national survival, the adoption of the advanced Western institutions and ideas was not only desirable, but basically irresistible. Whoever adopted the new political institutions, new laws, new learning and new technology of Europe and America, declared K'ang, would become strong (such as the small country Japan); those who failed to do so

⁴K'ang, "Memorial on Encouraging Industrial Arts" in Memorials in 1898.

⁵K'ang, "Memorial on Reforming Military Examination," ibid.

⁶K'ang, "Memorial on Establishing Confucianism as a State Religion," ibid.

⁷K'ang, "Memorial on Forbidding Feet-binding," ibid.

would become weak (such as the large but conservative Turkey).⁸

The crucial question that arose from the necessity of adopting Western ideas and institutions was: In a world of Multi-state Rivalry in which there were a number of leading states, all of which seemed to have exerted a considerable amount of influence upon the Chinese nation, which state should the Chinese nation look upon as a model state in her search for Westernization? In his memorials to the Throne, K'ang recommended three states as models of reform: Prussia of Bismark, Russia of Peter the Great, and Japan of the Meiji Restoration. According to K'ang, these three states best demonstrated the process of rapid development. But especially impressed by the success of Japan after the restoration of Emperor Meiji, K'ang suggested that the Chinese nation should look upon Japan as the outstanding example in reform and renovation. As early as 1896 in his suggestion on translating Japanese books K'ang had noticed that Japan's tempo of Westernization had offered the world a living example of how a backward nation could develop at a more rapid rate than the advanced states. He observed:

It is the Way of Heaven that the last should be superior to the first; it is the Way of Man that it is easier for the follower than for the predecessor. Reform in the Occident was the slowest. From Bacon up to now it has taken five hundred years [sic] for political institutions

⁸K'ang, "Preface to the Study of Meiji Restoration and Reform in Japan," ibid.

and industrial technology [finally] to arrive at the stage of success. However, Japan's imitation of the West was the fastest. She has succeeded in adopting Western political institutions and industrial technology within thirty years after the Meiji Reform.⁹

Encouraged by the success of Japan's Westernization, K'ang presented the same argument in his memorials. He contended that if the Emperor would follow his suggestion and take Emperor Meiji's courage and determination as his own, the declining Chinese Empire would be transformed into a powerful nation within ten years.¹⁰

To vindicate the necessity of establishing a state religion and the necessity of reform, K'ang also presented the Throne his academic works: Study of the Classics Forged During the Hsin Period, Confucius as a Reformer, and Tung Chung-shu's Study of the Spring and Autumn Annals. He maintained that he had discovered the real version of Confucius' teachings which had been lost for many centuries. Just as the scholar-officials had been reminded, now the Emperor was reminded that Confucius was the founder of a religion; that Confucius actually wrote all of the Six Classics; that Confucius' teachings, compared with other schools of thought in ancient China, were not only all-embracing but also more practical and humane.

⁹K'ang, Bibliography of Japanese Books, Preface, p. iib.

¹⁰K'ang, "Preface to the Study of Meiji Restoration and Reform in Japan" in Memorials in 1898.

Deeply impressed by the Christian religious worship, K'ang contended that the teachings of Confucius and Mencius had contained the worship of God, which was lost because of ignorance. According to his interpretation, the people, no matter how humble, were also the sons of God, therefore, they were entitled to worship God, as the Son of Heaven. Furthermore, K'ang saw the popular pantheistic practice in China as non-Confucian in character and viewed by Westerners as a symbol of barbarism and a target of ridicule. Therefore, he suggested that the worship of Confucius as a founder of a religion should officially be recognized by the Court and promoted to replace those heresies.¹¹

In persuading the Emperor to adopt a constitutional form of government, K'ang appealed to the principle laid down in the Annals that after the Age of Disorder, the world would enter the Age of Approaching Peace; that the Western constitutional parliamentary system was, in fact, supported by the very Classical principles created by the ancient sages.¹² In a word, the adoption of Western ideas and institutions was not only desirable, but essentially foreseen and sanctioned by the spiritual ancestor of the Confucian sacred school.

¹¹K'ang, "Memorial on Establishing Confucianism as a State Religion," ibid.

¹²K'ang, "Memorial on Constitutional Monarchism," ibid. This memorial was submitted to the Emperor in the name of a Manchu minister.

With these convictions regarding reform, K'ang presented to the Emperor sixty-three memorials within a period of only a few months in 1898. Unfortunately, two-thirds of them were lost in the political chaos of the coup d'état. The remaining memorials bear the same characteristics. In each of them K'ang singled out the ideas and institutions that had made the Western nations, or the nations in the process of Westernization, strong and powerful and then proposed that the emperor adopt them. Taken as a whole, this was a scheme of over-all transplantation parallel to K'ang's theory of grand synthesis. Its vast scope encompassed railroad construction; agricultural, commercial and industrial development; military, educational and examination reform; prohibition of foot-binding; establishment of Confucianism as a state religion; re-allocation of the Empire's capital; and the adoption of Western styles of clothes and hair. K'ang attempted to arrange a "telescoped revolution," expecting his grand scheme to be carried out in the span of a few decades, or even a few years. Some parts of this scheme, such as the changes of national uniform and hair-do, could be completed in a few days.

Following K'ang's memorials the young Emperor Kwang Hsü issued a number of decrees between June 11 and September 20 of 1898 calling for national reform. But the progress of reform was quickly halted when the Emperor was imprisoned on September 21, by order of the Empress Dowager. The whole movement of reform was radically reversed. Six

of the reformers were beheaded. K'ang was rescued by the British in Shanghai harbor and subsequently went into exile.¹³

Historians may blame both the Emperor and K'ang as unfit to serve as leaders in a movement they strongly desired.¹⁴ Even K'ang himself confessed after the coup d'état that some reform measures, including the adoption of Western uniform, were economically too expensive and

¹³It may be interesting to note that K'ang wrote a will before attempting to commit suicide. Translated into English it reads: "For the sole purpose of saving the Middle Kingdom and delivering her four hundred millions of population from misery, I have ventured to reform the institutions. As a consequence, I suffer and die. My incarnation into this world was mainly for the sake of bringing salvation to mankind so that everyone on earth would live in the Age of Ta T'ung and Universal Peace. In the future in the course of bringing salvation to the sentient beings, I will never be tired out, nor will I change my mind, through age after age, life after life, even for an infinite number of kalpas, no matter how many dangers and hardships will befall upon me. It is my hope that my disciples and followers will follow my ambition, take salvation as their concern, and never change their minds in time of danger and distress. Wherever I wish, I will appear on earth, or in heavens. Therefore, there is no death. Even after an infinite number of kalpas, I will still reappear on earth to save mankind. Meeting and parting, life and death, are all of the necessary aspects of Reason, in which there is nothing strange when one comes and goes. At this juncture I have nothing in mind as everything has been set aside. The only thing that I regret is that I have failed to return the grace that my mother and my prince have shown to me." Translated from the Chinese text in The 1898 Reform, I, 409.

¹⁴Meribeth E. Cameron, The Reform Movement in China, 1898-1912, (Stanford University, California: Stanford University Press, 1931), p. 49. T'ang Chi-chun in his Essays on the 1898 Reform offers a keen observation on the Emperor Kwang Hsü. After a comparative analysis of K'ang's memorials with the royal decrees, T'ang points out the "contradiction" between K'ang's proposals and the Emperor's response. As he observes, on the fundamental, political issues, such as the instituting of parliament, the adoption of a constitution,

politically too drastic.¹⁵ This was true to a certain extent. But taking the Confucian sacred school as a whole, the centuries-old conservative sacred complex of the literati class, deeply entrenched in the maintenance of status quo would be regarded as the main impediment causing the reform to collapse. This can be analyzed from the intellectual level as well as from the level of social situation.

Generally speaking, the literati took notice of K'ang's new interpretation of Confucius' teachings, and were not slow in understanding the nature of K'ang's attempt to incorporate the Western learning and institutions, but they were slow to appreciate it. Ever since the publication of the Forged Classics the literati reacted violently toward K'ang and the book was suppressed by Imperial Order in 1894 as a result of the conservative scholar-officials' protest. In 1896 K'ang, supported by a group of far-sighted scholars, organized the Ch'iang-hsüeh Hui (Society for the Study of National Rejuvenation) in Peking. It was opposed by the conservative scholar-officials and sealed up by the government. Again early in 1898, after the loss of Kiaochow to Germany and Port Arthur to Russia, K'ang established the

and the equality between Manchus and Hans, etc., the Emperor either merely showed "preparation," or never made any public proclamation. According to his observation, in addition to the possible impediments from the Empress Dowager, it was not possible for Kwang Hsü, a feudal emperor, to follow completely K'ang's democratic ideas. Therefore both men should be treated separately. See T'ang, op. cit., p. 218.

¹⁵K'ang, "Postscript to Memorial on Cutting Hair, Changing Uniforms and Recording New Era," in Memorials in 1898.

Pao-kuo Hui (National Protection Society) in Peking, which was attacked by the conservatives as an open rebellion. K'ang was saved from punishment only when the Emperor dismissed the charges.

The scope of the conservatives' attack on K'ang, his disciples and supporters was vast. The issues involved ranged through the following: (1) whether the Classics had been lost; (2) whether Confucianism was similar to other schools of thought, particularly to the Western ideas and institutions; (3) whether K'ang's faction remained loyal to the ruling Manchu dynasty; (4) whether the Chinese nation could still be considered to be in the middle position of the earth after recent geographic discoveries. These wide ranging accusations and attacks were compiled by Su Yü in a book entitled Defending Confucianism: A Collection of Rebuttals.¹⁶ In summary, all of the conservatives' attacks were centered around the dominant issue: the alleged illegitimate incorporation of barbarian ideas and system into

¹⁶The wood blocks of the book were about nearing completion when the coup d'état took place. Here it may be interesting to point out the controversy over the middle position of China. One of the conservatives conceded that because the earth was round one could not point to a place as its middle position. But he quickly contended that China remained in the middle of the earth by virtue of its racial complexion. "Among the five colors," he declared, "the yellow belongs to the earth. Each is located in the middle. Westerners regarded the Chinese as the yellow race. This indicates that in the very beginning when the universe was being opened up, the Chinese were secretly given the middle position. Westerners laughed at our superiority complex, why did you refute them with such an idea?" See op. cit., III, Chuan VI, 20b.

Confucianism. For example, Chu I-hsin, a respected friend of K'ang, accused him of attempting to smuggle barbarisms into Confucianism in the name of Confucius. In a letter to K'ang he said:

Now you call the uncrowned prince [Confucius] a reformer in order to facilitate the promotion of your own reform movement. Even though the sage Confucius really had a reform intention, he only desired . . . to restore the ancient systems of the Sage Kings of the Three Dynasties; he had no intention of replacing Chinese institutions with barbarian systems.¹⁷

Chu's contention that Confucius had no intention of replacing Chinese institutions with barbarian systems represented the general reaction by the ultra-conservative Confucian religious scholars. The more sophisticated reaction came from Chang Chih-tung, the Viceroy of Hupeh and Hunan. Formerly a supporter of K'ang's reform efforts, Chang later became an arch enemy. In his Exhortation to Study, first printed in 1898, Chang Chih-tung strongly attacked K'ang's re-interpretation of the Classics as well as his reform proposals.¹⁸ According to Chang Chih-tung, the

¹⁷Su Yü, op. cit., I, Chüan I, 11a. Quoted from Li Chien-nung, op. cit., p. 161.

¹⁸K'ang's name was not explicitly mentioned by Chang but the target of the rebuttal was clearly understood by the literati. See Su Yü's Preface to Defending Confucianism: A Collection of Rebuttals. Some chapters of Chang's Exhortation to Study were contained in Su Yü's book. Also see Ku Hung-ming's work in Chinese Historiography Society (ed.), The 1898 Reform, IV, p. 279. It is interesting to note that Exhortation to Study was presented during the climax of the reform days by a member of the Hanlin Academy to the Emperor who, in turn, decreed its nation-wide publication. One may wonder whether the young, enthusiastic Emperor had a clear

contentions that modern international law was contained in the Spring and Autumn Annals, and that Confucius was comparable to Jesus, were utter "self-confusions."¹⁹ To Chang Chih-tung, the discovery of Confucius as an uncrowned prince was not only non-Confucian in character but also poisonous.²⁰ He particularly rejected as an evil thing any attempt to introduce the doctrine of people's rights and a parliamentary system.²¹ Above all, he claimed, the Westerners, despite their varied political institutions, had also the three bonds: i.e., the relationships between prince and subject, father and son, and husband and wife.²² What Chang Chi-tung advocated was a synthesis of Confucianism as its inner learning to govern one's body and mind, and the Western learning as the outer learning to tackle social affairs.²³ The former was essentially Neo-Confucianism, while the latter, the adoption of the Western learning, was limited only to technology and governmental methods as

understanding of Chang's work. For the Emperor's decree see Chang, op. cit., 1898, reprinted by the Chekiang provincial authority. For English translation see China's Only Hope, trans. S. I. Woodbridge, (New York: Young People's Missionary Movement, 1907). Because the English rendering was not an exact translation, I am obliged to refer directly to the Chinese text.

¹⁹ Chang, op. cit., Part II, p. 47a.

²⁰ Ibid., Part I, p. 20a-b.

²¹ Ibid., Part I, pp. 21a-24b.

²² Ibid., Part I, pp. 13a-14b.

²³ Ibid., Part II, p. 47a.

opposed to governmental institutions. In other words, Chang Chih-tung's approach to the issue was merely a continuation of the old utilitarian approach, which had been severely attacked by K'ang. To justify his refutation of K'ang's school of thought as well as his own version of reform, Chang Chih-tung claimed that the Middle Kingdom had been the original home for the Western culture. He maintained:

Should one say that our holy writs had already illustrated the [Western] ideas and regulations, he would be right. But if one should say that our holy writs had already taught Westerner's technology, contained the [knowledge] of Westerner's machinery, and had the same laws with those of the Westerner, he would be wrong.²⁴

The reason why Westerners shared the same ideas and regulations with the Confucian scholars, according to Chang Chih-tung's historical study, was that the Chinese culture spread Westward, first to India, and then to Europe. The Westerners, after adopting the Chinese culture, had modified and perfected it, eventually superseded the Chinese. It follows that Western technology, machinery and laws should have been zealously studied by the Confucian scholars regardless of whether or not they had been mentioned in the Classics.²⁵

Chung Chih-tung's persuasion was an ideological syncretism. For he was opposed to any attempt to change the Manchu royal house as well as the Confucian social structure.

²⁴Ibid., Part II, p. 45b.

²⁵Ibid., Part II, p. 46b.

The nature of the conservatives' attack on K'ang can be understood in connection with the mode of living of the religious scholars in the entire Confucian sacred school. Generally speaking, K'ang's over-all and speedy reform program would call for a complete alteration not only of the governmental structure but of the recruiting process which, in turn, would affect almost every member of the literati class. The scholar-officials who already held appointments were afraid that the new emphasis on Western sciences in the reform movement would break their traditional means of livelihood based upon their knowledge of Confucian Classics.²⁶ Among the students who hoped to receive governmental posts, many were angry at the reformers. They feared that changes in the civil-service examination system and the abolition of the eight-legged essay would block their opportunities to enter the officialdom. "They had no hope for the traditional recompense in return for the energy and time they had spent imitating traditional essays and memorizing the Classics."²⁷ According to Liang Ch'i-chao:

The conservatives . . . had previously relied upon the eight-legged essay to pass the civil-service examination, and now they were to be tested on their practical knowledge; that meant that the steppingstone for their advancement was blocked. What they had formerly depended upon to secure high position was their academic degrees and careers; but now this was changed to the emphasis on real abilities, and the instrument supporting their pride was broken. Graft was the means by

²⁶ Li Chien-nung, op. cit., p. 162.

²⁷ Ibid.

which they enriched themselves in former times, but the new reforms required that all accounts be checked very carefully, thus cutting off the resources which used to provide for the comfort of their descendants.

K'ang Yu-wei's reforms hurt the feelings of several hundred members of the Hanlin academy, several thousand chin-shih, several scores of thousands of chü-jen, and several millions of hsiu-ts'ai and licentiates. Those people joined together to attack the reforms.²⁸

Liang's striking analysis is indicative of the extent to which the introduction of new knowledge tended to affect the social situation of the Confucian religious scholars. Almost all of the means of livelihood which the Confucian scholar-officials had previously relied upon were swiftly wiped out. In this environment of opposition the speedy, over-all reform was doomed to failure. By and large the local officials, who adopted a wait-and-see policy, realized that the Emperor was in no position to promote reforms. They could see no need to incorporate so many foreign ideas and institutions into actual practice. As a result, the mass of decrees that came forth from Peking were, with few exceptions, not put into effect. No positive cooperation came from the mandarin class.

The failure of the 1898 Reform indicated the extent to which K'ang had failed to pass his version of authentic Confucianism through the Confucian sacred school. His later political activities in the Emperor Protection Society and his attempt at a restoration were merely minor swells after

²⁸Liang, Collection of Essays of Liang Chi'ch'ao, I, 3. Quoted from Li Chien-nung, op. cit., p. 510.

the high waves of the great reform. The events had developed so rapidly that K'ang found it increasingly necessary to withdraw from his radical position. As a result, his continuing effort to rediscover the authenticity of Confucius' teachings by varied methods was transformed into an ultra-conservatism, in other words, an ideological syncretism.

Political Thinking After the Coup d'Etat

K'ang's surprising retreat to ideological syncretism after the coup d'état in 1898 resulted from two important historical events. The first was the rising Republican revolutionary movement and its final success in 1911 when the Manchu government was totally overthrown. As a religious scholar he found the political views of his opponents utterly unacceptable to the course which he had charted for the nation. He was alarmed not only that the Manchu government was being wiped out by the swollen tide of anti-Manchu racialism and republicanism; but more importantly about the decline of the traditional monarchical system. This system provides the basic framework of the Confucian sacred school which he had been struggling to preserve by incorporating into it numerous foreign elements. Now that system appeared to be on the brink of total extinction. To combat his radical opponents, K'ang was increasingly forced, in this situation, to defend the Manchu regime which was dominated by the conservatives. K'ang was in the ironic circumstance of having to defend the conservative factions which he had sworn to oppose.

The other event was a personal one. K'ang's political attitudes were strongly influenced during a prolonged period of exile outside China. He experienced a first-hand, personal contact with the world situation, particularly the socio-political institutions of the West. Although he was criticized by a commentator for his "sailor's tourism,"²⁹ his tour of Europe, Asia and the Americas³⁰ offered him ample opportunity to compare the usefulness of the traditional customs, values and institutions that were still effective to the new ones he saw in the West. The discovery of "Western traditionalism," so to speak, probably convinced him that his reform program in 1898 had been too radical and impractical; the adoption of Western uniform was such an example.³¹ He gradually came to the realization that the continuing maintenance of certain traditional values, customs and institutions is essential to, or the necessary evil for, an orderly political transformation in search of Westernization.³² As a result, he was obliged to defend his

²⁹Sung Yün-pin, K'ang Yu-wei, (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1951), 117. Sung is a left-wing writer.

³⁰There are about twenty-eight or so travelogues listed in the catalogue compiled by his disciple Chang Pei-cheng. Most of them are about European countries and many were unpublished manuscripts. See The 1898 Reform, IV, 39-40.

³¹K'ang, "Postscript to Memorial on Cutting Hair, Changing Uniforms and Recording New Era" in Memorials in 1898.

³²See K'ang, "Preface to Turkey Travelogue" in K'ang, Collected Essays of K'ang Yu-wei (6 vols.; Shanghai: Kuo Hua Book Store, 1914). VI, 3b-4a. K'ang was particularly critical of Turkey's rapid imitation of France in constitutional reform.

theory of constitutional monarchism in terms of Western traditionalism.

Thus, K'ang drastically altered the political application of his religious syncretism. He continued to seek support for the claim that Confucianism offered a basis to republicanism and democracy through the rediscovering of authentic truths. But he gradually withdrew from his radical position until his contentions approximated the old utilitarian approach. He was defending a conservative and dying regime and even tried to restore the dethroned Emperor P'u-yi.

Generally speaking, the fundamental theme in K'ang's post coup d'état political writings was that constitutional monarchism was the only effective form of government that would deliver the Chinese nation from the crises of multi-state rivalry. Republicanism, on the other hand, though clearly contained in the holy writs of Confucius, would not suit the prevailing conditions in China. Therefore, if China tried to follow the patterns of the United States and France by adopting the republican form of government, the result would be a national disunity and political chaos.

To vindicate the indispensability of the monarchical form of government headed by a Manchu emperor, K'ang strongly attacked the racial nationalism advanced by his revolutionary opponents. He contended that, according to the Spring and Autumn Annals, the demarcation line between the historical Middle Kingdoms and the barbarian tribes depended on whether

the barbarian tribes were in conformity with the Chinese culture (literally, propriety); not in that they were of different races. He maintained that the idea of the pure or authentic Chinese race was only a myth, for historically there were many barbarian tribes who were mixed with and finally assimilated into the Chinese. In fact, all of the Chinese families, which claimed to be the descendents of the Three Dynasties, were tainted by the blood of the northern barbarians. Furthermore, according to his study, the Manchus were also direct descendents of the Yellow Emperor; in other words, belonging to the great Chinese family. It follows that the spread of revolutionary racialism against the Manchu government was not only historically biased but would also divide the nation by excluding the minority peoples from the Chinese, and eventually give territories away.³³

In addition to historical argument, K'ang argued that the Manchu Court was proceeding along the line of reform; therefore, a Manchu regime basing upon constitutional

³³This was clearly a rebuttal or a rejoinder to Chang Ping-ling (1868-1936). Chang, a Buddhist-Confucianist (Old Text) scholar, derived his anti-Manchu racialism from the Spring and Autumn Annals but with a different approach. Like K'ang, Chang also outlined an ideal world for mankind. In his famous essay "Wu wu lun" (Theory of Five Voidnesses) Chang proposed to make void of the following five "barriers": governments, geographic divisions, the way of humanity, the way of sentient beings as well as the physical universe. See Hsiao Kung-ch'üan, History of Chinese Political Thought, VI, 867-70.

For K'ang's rebuttal see K'ang, "On Revolution" in Chang Nan and Wong Jen-chih (eds.), A Selection of Essays During the Ten Years Period Before the 1911 Revolution, I, 212-13; also see "On Salvation" in K'ang, Collected Essays of K'ang Yu-wei, I, 40b-42b.

monarchism could and would grant freedom to its subjects and there would be no need to resort to revolution. To support his thesis, K'ang pointed out that some new institutions that had been abolished after the coup d'état in 1898 were re-instituted in 1901, and that the Court had recently allowed inter-marriage between the Manchu and the Chinese. These positive developments served notice that even the die-hard officials were willing to submit themselves to change. "Therefore, our four hundred millions of people will obtain political liberty without resorting to revolution."³⁴

The most eloquent argument in defense of the monarchical form of government was his analysis of the European monarchical system, particularly of the constitutional monarchy models in Europe. In reaction toward the 1911 Republican Revolution, K'ang developed this into a theory of public ownership. First, he claimed that Europeans in adopting the constitutional form of government were bound to adopt the monarchy. In so doing they were bound to adopt an alien, especially an alien of a different race, to be their monarch. K'ang cited England as an example, for that country had adopted Henry II from France, William III from Holland, and George I from Germany as its monarchs. He went on to point out that this was not only the most civilized and ancient constitutional state, but it was true for the more recently

³⁴See K'ang, "On Revolution" in op. cit., I, 215.

independent states, such as Belgium, Rumania, Greece, Bulgaria, and Norway. Upon becoming independent of their mother countries each had adopted the monarchy and an alien of a different race as its ruler. The reason why an alien instead of a national was adopted, reasoned K'ang, was that the alien was entrusted with an empty position only. Actually he was divorced of any domestic partisan support and, therefore, the disaster of conflict and usurpation could be well avoided. Furthermore, K'ang contended that the very existence of this empty position could be used as a means to divert political strife from competition for presidency to competition for premiership. Men would compete with one another by peaceful means. "This is a fine institution," K'ang declared, "which the European states have founded after hundreds of trials and errors."³⁵

Secondly, K'ang maintained that a constitutional monarchy was, in fact, a republic in disguise. According to his observation, the dominant political doctrine in the last three hundred years in Europe was that the state should be owned by the public (kung). He said:

. . . to obtain this, people would struggle with all their efforts even at the cost of their lives. Once the state has been converted into a public ownership, the people are not so much concerned with whether the state shall be monarchical or democratic; whether independent or semi-independent; whether governed by the same race or by a different one; whether by the same religion or by a different one. . . .³⁶

³⁵K'ang "On Salvation" ibid., I, 36b-37b.

³⁶K'ang, "On Saving China" ibid., I, 29a-b; also see "An Introduction to a Draft-Constitution for the Republic of China" ibid., III, 34b-35a.

Then he went on to claim that this dominant principle was contained in the teachings of Confucius. He said:

The principle that the state shall be owned by the public was first propounded in our Middle Kingdom. In recording Confucius' teachings of Ta T'ung, the Evolution of Rites stated that "When the Grand Tao was pursued, a public and common spirit ruled all under the sky." The Analects recorded Confucius as having said: "How majestic was the manner in which Shun and Yu held possession of the empire, they did not interfere with [it]." Confucius further said, [as recorded in the Analects], that Shun did nothing but gravely and reverently occupy his royal seat. These illustrate that if a state is owned by the public, the monarch will not interfere with [the operation of the state]; what he does is to occupy his royal seat reverently and gravely, doing nothing. The ideal is that in the Age of Disorder or Small Tranquility, the state is owned by the monarch, while in the Age of Universal Peace or Ta T'ung, the state becomes a possession of the public. In anticipating the necessity of change Confucius had propounded the Principle of Three Ages.³⁷

However, K'ang admitted that the great principle of public ownership of the state propounded by Confucius was only empty words. In actuality, China had stayed for several thousand years in the Age of Disorder in which the state was a monarchical possession. In other words, the Chinese state was a tyranny. The publicly owned state was a European invention. He said:

Europeans termed the public ownership of a state "constitution," which was derived from Greece and correspondent to the propriety of our Middle Kingdom but without involving ghosts and gods. It was the Greeks who had first invented the concept. The Japanese translated it into li-hsien (literally, to set up law) to indicate both the monarch and his subjects are subject

³⁷K'ang, "On Salvation" ibid., I, 29a-b. The Chinese text Pu-yü was interpreted by Chu Hsi "as if they were nothing to him." I have ventured to change it to "not to interfere with" to suit K'ang's interpretation.

to the rule of law. Fundamentally speaking, a constitutional state is one which is owned by the public, i.e., shared by both the monarch and the people; a tyrannical state is one which is privately owned by the monarch only. That a tyrannical state should be the private property of the monarch was the doctrine for the old epoch, while that a constitutional state shall be the public possession is the doctrine for the new epoch.³⁸

Following this argument K'ang suggested that the best candidate for the constitutional monarch would be the Holy Duke--the descendent of Confucius, since the family of Confucius had commanded the popular respect among the Chinese people. However, K'ang pleaded that since the court had already agreed to convene a parliament and allowed the National Assembly (Tzu-cheng Yüan) to draft a constitution,³⁹ the Chinese nation had already become a constitutional state. Nominally China had a monarch; in reality, she was a republic with a monarch occupying an empty throne. In other words, the state was already converted into a public ownership system and, therefore, there was no need to abolish the Manchu royal house which was also part of the Chinese race in favor of a republican regime.⁴⁰

If the Manchu government had already been in essence a republic and its institutions sanctioned by Confucius and generally practiced by the European states, it follows

³⁸Ibid., I, 29b.

³⁹This referred to the concession made by the Manchu rulers to the revolutionists, militarists and constitutionists at the peak of the October Revolution in 1911. For a detailed account see Li Chien-nung, op. cit., pp. 249-55..

⁴⁰K'ang, "On Salvation," op cit., I, 39b-42b.

that the 1911 Republican Revolution and the republican form of government with its widespread radical tendency was not an urgent necessity for the Chinese nation, nor would it suit the general conditions in China. Therefore, any attempt to set up a republican form of government in place of the constitutional monarchical system, which was the Manchu royal house, would be an outright crime.

It is interesting to note that K'ang in his all-out attack on republicanism first made claims for it. He contended that Confucius' teachings had contained republicanism; that Confucius had anticipated the forthcoming of the republican era; and that it was he who had first unveiled this long forgotten truth. "I formerly wrote Ta T'ung Shu," he declared, "which had illuminated it [republicanism] a long time ago."⁴¹ According to him, Confucius had made a prophecy about the coming events within the next one hundred generations. He said:

A generation consists of thirty years; a hundred generations consist of three thousand years. Now it is close to the end of the three thousand years. Confucius had expected that the institutions for the Age of Disorder or Small Tranquility would last three thousand years; after that the institutions for the Age of Approaching Peace would be in operation. . . . Now the Republic has been founded, the monarch has abdicated. We are in the transitional age from Disorder to Approaching Peace. Confucius had already prepared the Tao of Approaching Peace, Universal Peace and Ta T'ung, which would be applicable all over the four seas. . . . Now Confucius had the Tao of Ta T'ung to govern the age of republicanism, my fellow countrymen should be happy and

⁴¹K'ang, "On Saving China," op cit., I, 1b.

respectful. We should study it and further illuminate it, so as to let our four hundred millions of people first enjoy the happiness of Ta T'ung, then extend this happiness to all the nations of the world.⁴²

If the time (1911) had been so close to the prophesy Confucius, and Confucius had had the Tao of Universal Peace and Ta T'ung to govern the age of republicanism, it follows that the republican form of government should be considered the correct political system for the Chinese nation. However, K'ang's contention pointed in the opposite direction. As he mentioned elsewhere, "Linens for summer; furs for winter: to everything its appointed time."⁴³ K'ang contended that republicanism would not suit the demand in China just as linens would not suit winter and furs would be inappropriate for summer. In an Age of Multi-state Rivalry republicanism would be unsuitable for the state, for in competition with other nations the interests of the state would have to be put first. Republicanism, however, tends to be responsive to the interests of the people. According to him, after the French Revolution with its major emphasis upon natural right and individual liberty, the leading trend in Europe and America was the doctrine of imperialism (pa-kuo chu-i) initiated by Germany with a strong emphasis upon governmental regimentation and outward territorial expansion. He said:

⁴²Ibid., I, 20b.

⁴³For instance, see Ta T'ung Shu, English edition, p. 167.

When the world has not arrived at a grand unification, when we are still in the Age of Multi-state Rivalry, the doctrine of imperialism is certainly the most appropriate theory of our time.⁴⁴

He meant that for the sake of national survival, the weak states were left no choice except to imitate the big powers by strengthening governmental regimentation and subjecting the individual interests to those of the state. For this reason, the doctrine of natural right and individualism stood in sharp contrast with other current trends. If individualism prevailed, it would tend to foster parochialism, partisan politics, and militarism, which would eventually lead the nation to complete disunity, such as occurred in the states of Central and South America.⁴⁵

K'ang's bitter opposition to republicanism was not limited to republicanism per se and its side effects. He was most critical of the seemingly all-out imitation of Europe and America, especially of France and the United States, and the tendency to quickly abandon the Confucian essentials. He was particularly critical of the parliament and the government for their worship of the West. He said:

⁴⁴K'ang, "On Saving China," op. cit., I, 3a; also see K'ang, "The Way to Save China," ibid., I, 45a-53b, particularly 52a.

⁴⁵K'ang, "China Will Not Be Able to Escape the Situation in Central and South Americas," ibid., I, 43a-45a.

They do not know how to imitate and cannot imitate the learning, armaments, and material things from Europe and America; what they have imitated are the social customs of Europe and America.⁴⁶

According to K'ang's observation, the all-out superficial imitation of Europe and America was the direct result of the import of the theories of liberty, self-government, equality, revolution, republicanism, and democracy from Europe and America. The acceptance and attempted practice of these theories resulted in the complete abandonment of the national essentials and the decline of Confucianism. Thus he formally declared:

There are things which we are desperately in need of learning from Europe and America. The most important are the material things; economics, philosophy and other learnings that are attached to the material things. . . . If we had had all these, our four hundred millions of people would have become rich and strong. There is no need for equality, liberty, self-government, republicanism, political parties, shaking hands, bowing, taking off one's hat, and change of uniform.⁴⁷

In attacking the republican regime, K'ang deplored the degeneration of social ethics. He criticized the revolutionary opponents for not having patterned themselves after Han, Sung and Ming scholars in moral cultivation. The traditional scholars which he had vigorously attacked now turned out to be t'ien-jen (gods).⁴⁸ The Confucian Classics of the Old Text version which he earlier had refuted as forgery,

⁴⁶K'ang, "The Crisis of China Lies in Her All-out Imitation of Europe-America and Complete Abandonment of Our National Essentials, ibid., II, 14b.

⁴⁷Ibid., II, 15b-16a.

⁴⁸Ibid., II, 14b-15a.

had now become, together with the New Text classics, the most valuable repository of China's best tradition, and should be zealously preserved and widely read.⁴⁹ He admitted that gambling, prostitution, and slavery were necessary evils for the maintenance of livelihood of the people and that the government was not supposed to intervene, as it did in the Western countries.⁵⁰ He even confessed that he was the leading criminal for having pioneered the reform, thus, should be held responsible for the disaster of the nation.⁵¹

In summary, in his combat with the republican "heretics" K'ang came full circle in his relationships with the conservative Confucianists. His refutation of liberty, equality, self-government, and political parties fundamentally weakened his position as a constitutional monarchist; most importantly, his underlying emphasis on the "material things," as seen in Europe and America, put him in the category of the utilitarian approach. Consequently, not only his claim to republicanism became a tool for defending a collapsed status quo, the grand Tao (Ta T'ung Shu) which he had discovered through varied means including apocrypha was also revealed as a nakedly ideological syncretism. This was clear after K'ang printed the first two parts, formally declaring that

⁴⁹Hsiao Kung-ch'üan, "K'ang Yu-wei and Confucianism," op. cit., p. 138.

⁵⁰K'ang, "Legislatures and Governments Shall Not Interfere with Social Customs," op. cit., II, 22b-27b.

⁵¹K'ang, "O Come Back, Spirit of China!" ibid., I, 55b.

the time was not ripe for its realization.⁵² As a matter of fact, K'ang seemed to have no intention of approaching the final and complete union of mankind. On the one hand he strongly predicted that monarchy would cease to exist on earth within a hundred years;⁵³ if the principle of natural right could be carried out for sixty years, the Age of Ta T'ung would befall upon earth.⁵⁴ In the meantime, however, he was attacking the principle of natural right and maintaining that only a monarchical system could be the panacea to save the Chinese nation. K'ang's inconsistency indicated the nature of the later phase of his religious syncretism.

⁵²See also K'ang, General Discussion on Republicanism, (Shanghai: Chang Shen Book Store, 1918), pp. 31-34.

⁵³K'ang, Ta T'ung Shu, English edition, p. 104.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 226. In his preface to the 1919 edition of Ta T'ung Shu, K'ang declared that originally he had anticipated that the Age of Ta T'ung would come within a period of one hundred years; that to his surprise the League of Nations had come into being within a period of only thirty-five years, thus he personally witnessed the beginning of the era of Ta T'ung.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Following the sacred school approach, as developed in Chapter II, this study has examined K'ang's rediscovering Confucianism in the light of the Western impact in the nineteenth century. The study has presented K'ang's universal claim on world cultures, particularly on the Western culture, as well as the authentic version of Confucianism which he painstakingly rediscovered. It also has indicated how K'ang tried to apply this discovery to China either by reforming the Chinese nation or by efforts to stave off the social and political progress in China. After a thorough examination of K'ang's claims and contentions one may dismiss their truth and validity on the grounds that they are in general self-evidently untenable. (I have refuted his pseudo-mysticism in Chapter III, as this is an issue which is likely to be ignored by commentators.)

However, two things must be borne in mind in understanding the uniqueness of K'ang's political philosophy.

First is the extreme character of K'ang's universal claim on world cultures. The study has shown the world-wide scope of new elements incorporated into Confucianism on the one hand and the extent to which K'ang has enlarged the

traditional framework on the other. To make both ends meet K'ang was first obliged to invalidate most of the traditional holy writs, contending either that they did not go back to Confucius or that they had been outmoded by the changing situation. Furthermore, in order to allow for novel ideas K'ang found it necessary to dilute or stretch the text, departing radically from the traditionally accepted interpretation. In the meantime, he showed strong, yet mixed, feelings toward the new knowledge and institutions which he had encountered. He laid claims on them; on many occasions, however, he was critical of their partiality and inaccuracy. The new knowledge was diluted or twisted to suit the Confucian framework.

This extreme character was also clearly shown in his social and political application of such rediscovered truth. After having devoted decades for study and contemplation he produced an elaborate blueprint for reconstructing the world community; however, he also shunned its publication and availed himself of no practical application of it. Most interesting is the fact that he had tried vigorously to transform the Confucian institutions on an over-all basis; yet soon afterward he fought with almost the same amount of enthusiasm for its over-all preservation. Hence, K'ang's religious syncretism can be considered a strange mixture of the most extreme, both ideological and utopian, syncretisms.

Needless to say, K'ang's new version of Confucianism is most extreme when compared with the Neo-Confucianists' attempt to incorporate Taoism and Buddhism. In my opinion, this extremism was a result of the wider scope and greater variety of the Western learning. The varied kinds of knowledge which K'ang encountered consisted not only of metaphysics but also of scientific and social knowledge. Much of this new knowledge was not only fundamentally dissimilar in kind from that of Confucianism but also enormous in quantity. Furthermore, the adoption of new knowledge, particularly of the social knowledge of the utopian type, would inevitably demand corresponding change in social and political organizations for its accomodation. All of these constituted an historically unprecedented challenge to the very existence of Confucianism. Hence it resulted in the emergence of a most extreme syncretism.

Historians may well depict the late nineteenth century as a period in which Confucianism was constantly on trial, its aftermath as a time of rapid and complete collapse of Confucianism. Socio-historically K'ang's drastic syncretism may be viewed as an attempt to head off the historically unprecedented Western impact by means of the breakdown from within (as I have indicated in Chapter II). That is to say, if K'ang's political philosophy had successfully captured the approval of the literati, few Confucian essentials would have been left unaltered. Particularly if his reform proposals had been pushed through, the social and political structure

of the Confucian sacred school would have been radically changed; Confucianism as a system of sacred knowledge and the literati as a sacred school might have survived, even though the central elements would have been replaced. The tragedy of Confucianism lies in that the majority of the literati refused an earlier acceptance of the fate of the breakdown from within; as a consequence, the devastating process of the breakdown from without (see the last section of Chapter II) took place after the turn of this century. The 1911 Republican Revolution, the May Fourth New Cultural Movement, and finally the importation of Marxism from Russia, each dealt a severe blow to the very rationale of the Confucian sacred system of knowledge and its institutions. K'ang's deep apprehensions about the total extinction of Confucianism were justified. In this sense, tragic though it may seem, K'ang should be regarded as the foremost prophetic religious scholar that Confucianism had ever produced.

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