
II. The Mission for Mankind

Toward the Ecumenical Unity of East and West: Confucianism, Christianity, and the Peace of Faith

by Michael Billington

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By putting the notion of the one mankind, defined from the standpoint of our common future as the reference point as how to think about political, economic, social, and cultural issues, President



EIRNS

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Xi has established a higher level of reason, a conceptual basis for a peace order on the whole planet. It is no coincidence that the concept for an entirely New Paradigm in human history would come from China, as it is coherent with the 2,500-year-old Confucian tradition. . . . Does this mean that the idea of building a harmonious world in which all nations can work together for the common aims of humanity is a utopia, a dream that can never become a reality? I believe that the universal history of mankind can provide the answer to that question, because it shows that there are some profound characteristics, the ideal of the highest humanity, shared by the most noble expressions of different cultures.

—Helga Zepp-LaRouche, to the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, Beijing, May 14-15, 2017

The quote above, from Helga Zepp-LaRouche’s speech at the Belt and Road conference in Beijing last year, is a very good introduction to the subject of this report. The previous classes in this series have presented the opposite poles within Western civilization—those of the Platonic tradition of a humanist conception that represents the recognition of the creative power of the human mind as the basis upon which all of humanity is defined; and counter to that, the oligarchical, Aristotelian idea that people are born either as masters or slaves, that people have to be governed in the same way animals are trained, with punishments and rewards and a strict hand, considering the mind is at best a kind of lifeless computer analyzing sense perceptions.

Such a world, as we’ve seen—especially as represented by the British Empire historically and the Aristotelian spokesmen for the British Empire, such as Hobbes, Locke, Hume, and Bertrand Russell—views man as an animal, justifying an oligarchical society. We’ve also seen that every great renaissance through-



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Helga Zepp-LaRouche at the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, May 14, 2017.

out our history, every great period of republican advance, was based on the opposite concept, that of the Platonic view of man, that man is born good through the creative power of the mind—the creative potential of every human being—to participate in the unfolding creation of the universe.

This is generally identified as a humanist Christian view in the West. Looking at that view from the perspective of another culture is most valuable. It's extremely important that everyone take into their heart a culture other than his or her own. At this point in history, looking at the incredible transformation in China and its contribution to the world through the New Silk Road, it's really almost the responsibility of every human being to look into Chinese history, Chinese culture, and Chinese philosophy. It's especially important since the spokesmen for the British Empire are terrified that the United States might actually link up with China, and with Russia. Lyndon LaRouche has argued for decades that the unity of these three great nations and cultures—and hopefully with India as well—is the necessary force needed to end the concept of Empire once and for all, to create a New Paradigm based on the common aims of mankind, as opposed to the British imperial view of the “lesser races” who have to be governed by the elite, by the aristocracy.

That would mean the end of the empire. We see that at hand now, and it's for that reason that we see such hysterical attacks on both China and Russia, and the demonization of Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping. President Xi is declared to be a new Mao Zedong, a dictator who oppresses his people, who prevents freedom in his nation, who is an aggressor against his neighbors, and on and on, denying and covering up the greatest burst of creativity and invention seen in many decades, now taking place in China and expanding throughout the world through the New Silk Road.

For instance, Senator Marco Rubio and others in the Congress are trying to outlaw the Confucius Institutes, of which there are over one hundred in the United States, led by Chinese educators who have come to the United States, and to nations all over the world, to teach the Chinese language, culture and traditions. Marco Rubio declares that this language and cultural education is poisoning the minds of our children, making our children think that somehow there is something good in China when of course, we all should know that China is a dictatorial hell-hole, and so forth. It reminds me of the charges against Socrates—that he was poisoning the minds of the children through the Platonic approach to reason.

Creativity and Culture

It's generally the case that people in both the East and the West often accept the idea that there's some fundamental division between the Chinese way of thinking and the Western way of thinking, and that it's an unbridgeable gap. As Rudyard Kipling, the British imperialist said, “East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.” This is not a statement of fact, but a statement of British imperial policy, making sure that the division continues to exist. It is by keeping the world divided that imperial rule can be maintained over divided nations.

Of course, there are different characteristics to Western culture and Chinese culture. But those who argue that there are fundamental differences in ways of thinking, in the use of creative reason, are those who also argue that their side is the superior and the other side is inferior. You see this in China as well as you see it here.

What I want to do today is to refute that conception, to show that what is fundamental to human beings everywhere is this fight between the humanist conception of man and the oligarchical view of man as some sort of advanced animal at best; that this fight has existed in the entire history of Western culture and the entire history of Chinese culture; and in showing that, to show the compatibility between the humanist view on both sides and the common nature of the oligarchical view on both sides.

Look first at Gottfried Leibniz, who died in 1716. Leibniz was the seminal influence on the founders of the American republic. Leibniz was also a seminal influence on Lyndon LaRouche, in his teenage years when he was studying German critical philosophy and found that Leibniz had profound ideas that were coherent with his own sense of humanity. What might not be as well known is that Leibniz was also in very close collaboration with the Chinese. He was in correspondence with the Jesuit missionaries—this was the second group of Jesuit missionaries who had gone into China, many from Paris, where Leibniz was at that time. The missionaries were translating the works of Confucius, of Mencius, and especially of Zhu Xi, who is much less known in the West, but in a certain sense is comparable to Nicholas of Cusa, whose work gave rise to the Renaissance in Europe. In the 12th Century, during the Song Dynasty, Zhu Xi led a renaissance of Confucian thought, as Cusa had revived Platonic thought, and advanced it, in the West. There was a great renaissance in the Song dynasty, in science, art, philosophy and culture, which was only stopped by the Mongol invasion

of China in the 13th Century that crushed much of Chinese civilization. Zhu Xi's ideas were later revived and remain the core of China's culture and system of government into modern times.

Leibniz studied the translations of the Chinese scholars intently. He recognized that there was a close similarity between the most fundamental Chinese philosophical ideas—what he called the “natural philosophy” or the “natural theology” of the Chinese—and those of Western Christian culture. He also recognized that the Chinese not only had great ideas, but had developed a nation which had far and away bigger cities than anything that existed in Europe at the time, a much more broadly educated population, and a highly developed educational system. Leibniz believed that one must look at long waves of history, and saw in China a culture that had succeeded in creating a highly advanced civilization, which civilization demonstrated that the Chinese must have discovered the most profound truths about man and nature. Only such discoveries could facilitate such a long-term development of an advanced culture.

Here is Leibniz, speaking of Eastern and Western culture:

I consider it a singular plan of the fates that human cultivation and refinement should today be concentrated, as it were, in the two extremes of our continent, in Europe and in China, which adorns the Orient as Europe does the opposite edge of the Earth. Perhaps Supreme Providence has ordained such an arrangement, so that, as the most cultivated and distant peoples stretch out their arms to each other, those in between may gradually be brought to a better way of life.

—*Novissima Sinica*, 1697



Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz



Frontispiece of *Novissima Sinica*, 1697.

This is a beautiful expression of what Helga Zepp-LaRouche calls “The Spirit of the New Silk Road.” This is the concept that great civilizations, in coming in contact with each other, joining forces, acting on the basis of the common interests of these two cultures, can lift up the less developed portions of the world. This is precisely the concept that inspired Lyndon and Helga LaRouche when they first proposed the idea of the New Silk Road, following the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

To make it clear that we are always dealing with two opposite poles of thought, let me turn to the British Empire's Bertrand Russell, the man Lyndon LaRouche described as the “most evil person of the 20th Century.” Not surprisingly, Bertrand Russell was also involved in China. At the time of World War I, Sun Yat Sen, the founder of the Chinese Republic in 1911, argued strenuously that China should stay

out of the emerging war in Europe, which would become the First World War. But, he said, if we must be involved in the war, then we must be on the side of Germany, which was the least offensive of the colonial powers that had each grabbed a chunk of China during the previous hundred years. The British, Sun noted, had looted and destroyed; had imposed opium on the population and created mass famine; the Germans had been relatively more benevolent in Shandong, which was their sphere of influence in China. Sun said that if China were to join the war on the side of the British, and if the war was then won by the British, China would not share in the spoils. Rather, it would be chopped up and handed over to Japan and the other European powers. In fact, that's exactly what happened. Against his advice (he was not in power at the time), China joined with the British, playing a minor part in the war, and at the end of the war, China was indeed chopped up into little

pieces. The German holdings were turned over to Japan, and other European countries took their share.

There arose an angry response against this by the Chinese people, led by the youth, called the May 4th Movement. In that movement, Sun Yat Sen was fighting to establish a republican concept, to bring his republican ideas to the fore in a revolutionary moment.

Unfortunately, on the other side, Bertrand Russell stuck his nose into it, along with John Dewey, his friend from the United States, who advocated “de-schooling,” to “learn by doing” rather than through a classical education.

Together, Russell and Dewey helped create a radical anarchist faction within what later became the Communist Party of China. I would argue that it was at that time, under the influence of Russell and Dewey, that the ideas were born that ultimately came to the fore during the so-called Cultural Revolution from 1966-76—which was an absolute dark age for China, a period of self-destruction.

Here’s what Bertrand Russell said in the book he wrote in 1922, called *The Problem of China*, after his extended time in China:

Instinctive happiness, or the joy of life, is one of the most important . . . goods that we have lost through industrialism; its commonness in China is a strong reason for thinking well of Chinese civilization. Progress and efficiency, for example, make no appeal to the Chinese, except to those who have come under Western influence. By valuing progress and efficiency we have secured power and wealth; by ignoring them, the Chinese, until we brought disturbance, secured on the whole a peaceable existence and a life full of enjoyment.

This is a classic example of the “noble peasant” or “happy peasant” idea of British imperialism: Go into a country, profile it, find the most backward tendencies



Bertrand Russell, left, and his companion Dora Black on his arrival in Shanghai, China, in October 1920.

you possibly can, convince them that they are better off communing with nature, with a life expectancy of 22 or 23, while poisoning every aspect of an advanced culture that exists within that civilization. Especially in the case of China, you’re dealing with a nation that had 5,000 years of one of the most advanced cultures in the world.

This is what you’re dealing with still today, both in the West and in the East; the influence of Leibniz and the humanist conception, versus the British imperial conception, including empiricists like Russell who fundamentally hate human beings, who believe that you have to have masters and slaves, and of course, the masters must

be British.

Confucianism

Confucius lived from 551 to 479 B.C. This is a poem he loved from the even more ancient *Book of Poetry*. It is one of the most simple and profound representations of Confucian thinking in all of the literature:

Heaven, in creating Mankind,
Created all things according to Law,
Such that people can grasp these laws,
And will love virtue.

This says many things. First of all, mankind was created. That’s important. There are a lot of people who argue that Confucianism is not a religion, that it is not a faith, but just a philosophy. I don’t think that is the important question, whether you call it a religion or not. Instead, address the Confucian concepts about man, nature, creativity and the creation of the universe. This poem states clearly: Mankind was created, it was not just some natural, arbitrary phenomenon, and by implication, the universe as a whole was created. By whom? The poem says, by Heaven—perhaps you could say God, but the Chinese say Heaven.

The next line says that Heaven created all things “according to Law,” which means there is a lawfulness to

that universe. It is not haphazard; it's not Darwinian survival of the fittest. There's a lawful development process that created all things, not only mankind, but nature itself, according to principles.

It goes on: The creation is intelligible, people can "grasp these laws." Lyndon LaRouche argues, similarly, that the basis for any scientific truth is that it can be subjected to an "intelligible representation"—that it is comprehensible to mankind, which can then put it into action through the creation of machine tools, applying them to the advancement of mankind.

The last line is the most important. Not only can people grasp these laws and apply them, but that will help them "love virtue." In other words, virtue is not just doing good or being kind, it's the advancement of human knowledge about the principles that exist in our universe, and applying those laws.

That, in a sense, encapsulates in my mind the entirety of the human tradition, East and West; and it's one which Confucius directly identified as the most profound concept. Mencius, later, quoted this poem and referenced the comments by Confucius, so it's clearly seen as a fundamental piece of their worldview.

Natural Law and Civil Law

Look now at a quote from the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, "On New Things," written by Pope Leo XIII in 1891. It addresses issues arising from the industrial revolution regarding relations between labor and capital, the rights of man in that new, changing society: "For laws are to be obeyed only insofar as they conform with right reason, and thus with the eternal laws of God."

This is a fundamental principle of the nation state. The fact that something is a law in a civil society does not mean that it's just, or even that it should be followed—a very revolutionary concept actually, and one which has been acted upon by people



Confucius

speaking to the king of one of the ancient kingdoms, said no—as the king you have the mandate of Heaven, but the mandate is that you have to make your society just and prosperous. And if, in fact, your policies have led to the general decay and collapse of your society, and people are in "distress and want," then that mandate of Heaven "shall be taken away from you forever." Again, a very revolutionary concept, and one which has been acted upon; and one which should prod us to action given the situation in the world today.

The Philosophy of *Ren*

Confucianism is generally known as the philosophy of *Ren* (sometimes spelled *Jen*). Here is what Confucius said when a student asked, what is *ren*? "Love all men," he answered. It's not just love. It's sometimes translated in English as "love." It's sometimes translated as "benevolence," but I would argue that the only accurate translation would be "*agapē*," which is the Greek word that has become commonly used in English as a higher form of love—a love of mankind as a whole, a love of God, a love of the Creation. In this passage, from the *Analects* of Confucius, the student then asks, "What about wisdom?" The Master said, "Know all men." It doesn't mean to know this or that fact, or to know every person in the universe, obvi-



Pope Leo XIII

ously. It means to know mankind, to know the nature of the human race.

Confucianism identifies Four Virtues. The first of these, and the greatest of these, is *Ren*, or *Agapē*. The others are Righteousness, Propriety (or the Rites, meaning right action, proper action which benefits oneself and society), and Wisdom (or Knowledge). Compare this with the very famous biblical passage from *I Corinthians* 13:13, which reads: “And now abideth faith, hope, and love (*agapē*), these three; but the greatest of these is love (*agapē*).”

The Greek word *agapē* is usually translated “charity” or “love” in this passage, but neither captures the original meaning of *agapē*. In fact, it is exactly parallel to the concept of *ren* in Chinese, meaning a higher form of love. Zhu Xi said that *ren* is the *principle* of love, or the *source* of love. This is the fundamental concept of Confucianism, with a very clear parallel in the Western humanist Christian tradition.

Mencius (372-289 B.C.)

The second great Confucian scholar, Mencius, lived almost two hundred years after Confucius. The book *Mencius*, a collection of his sayings and writings, is full of polemical criticisms of spokesmen of the several anti-Confucian sects, in which he addresses concepts of the mind and the nature of man in greater depth than his mentor Confucius. It makes for delightful reading.

In the very first Book, Part 1, of *Mencius*, he says:

They are only men of education, who, without a certain livelihood, are able to maintain a fixed heart. As to the people, if they have not a certain livelihood, it follows that they will not have a fixed heart. And if they have not a fixed heart, there is nothing which they will not do, in the way of self-abandonment, of moral deflection, of depravity, and of wild license. When they thus have been involved in crime, to follow them up and punish them—this is to entrap the people.

This is an elaboration on the concept of the Mandate of Heaven. If people don't have jobs, if they're unem-

ployed, if they have no future, they are more likely to turn to drugs and crime and licentiousness. But then he adds that the government responsible for such conditions is more responsible than the criminal! You may need to arrest the criminal, but it is a form of entrapment!

In Book 6, Part 1, Mencius is talking to one of the kings:

Is there any difference between killing a man with a stick and with a sword?

The king said, “There is no difference!”

Is there any difference between doing it with a sword and with the style of government?

“There is no difference,” was the reply.

Then Mencius says,

There are people dying from famine on the roads, and you do not issue the stores of your granaries for them. When people die, you say, “It is not owing to me; it is owing to the year [to the times].” In what does this differ from stabbing a man and killing him, and then saying—“It was not I; it was the weapon”? Let your Majesty cease to lay the blame on the year, and instantly from all the

nation the people will come to you.

This is another expression of that idea of the mandate of Heaven.

Legalism

The primary political and ideological force which Mencius and his followers had to confront was that of Legalism, which became the foundation for the tyrannical rule of the so-called “First Emperor” in China, Qin Shi-Huang, who conquered the other kingdoms, consolidating China for the first time in 221 B.C. The two primary sources of Legalist thought were Xun Zi and Shang Yang.

Xun Zi said:

The nature of man is evil; his goodness is acquired. Being what it is, man is born, first, with a



Mencius

desire for gain.... Second, man is born with envy and hate.... Third man is born with passions of the ear and eye as well as the love of sound and beauty.

This doesn't mean the love of beauty in the profound sense, but rather avarice, wanting to hold and possess beautiful things. He basically asserts that man is an animal, just as an animal is not born with any of these natural qualities. He has to be trained the way an animal would be trained.

Shang Yang concurs, and applies that to politics, calling for the use of "the two handles"—punishment and reward: animal training, with "one reward for nine punishments." He also said: "If the ruler levies money from the rich in order to give alms to the poor, he is robbing the diligent and frugal and indulging the lazy and extravagant."

These were the thoughts that guided the Qin Shi-Huang dynasty. He believed that you were "guilty" if you were poor. Many of the poor were rounded up and sent out to do such things as building the wall. He began the first wall; not the wall you see today, but an earthen wall. The bodies of those who died building the wall were thrown into the wall itself. Chin Shi-Huang is most famous for having buried the Confucian scholars alive and for the burning of the Confucian books, some of which were lost to history.

The Qin Dynasty was overthrown only nineteen years later, giving rise to the Han Dynasty, which generally restored Confucian teaching, but in a manner similar to the Roman Empire at that time in the West, which adopted Christianity in name, but only as one among the many religions and multiple gods.

Mencius on the Mind

Mencius is most remembered for his insistence that man is born fundamentally good due to the creative powers of the mind. He said:

Benevolence (*ren*), righteousness, propriety, and knowledge are not infused into us from without. We are certainly furnished with them. And a different view is simply owing to want of reflection.



Shang Yang

Hence it is said, "Seek and you will find them. Neglect and you will lose them." Men differ from one another in regard to them—some as much again as others, some five times as much, and some to an incalculable amount—it is because they cannot carry out fully their natural powers.

He refers to these qualities as the "inborn luminous virtue," which exists within every human being as a potential. Because of the creative power of the mind, one has the potential to act upon these fundamental virtues. But, they tend to be obscured by the dependence on sense perceptions, by acting upon sense perceptions rather than the mind. On the

mind, he says:

Therefore, if it receive its proper nourishment, there is nothing which will not grow. If it lose its proper nourishment, there is nothing which will not decay away. Confucius said, "Hold it fast, and it remains with you. Let it go, and you lose it. Its outgoing and incoming cannot be defined as to time or place." It is the mind of which this is said!

Mencius spoke directly about the notion of the sublime:

I like life, and I also like righteousness. If I cannot keep the two together, I will let life go, and choose righteousness. I like life indeed, but there is that which I like more than life, and therefore, I will not seek to possess it by any improper ways. I dislike death, indeed, but there is that which I dislike more than death, and therefore there are occasions when I will not avoid danger.

A reader today must surely be reminded of the famous speech by Martin Luther King on the night before he was assassinated, when he said that he had been to the mountaintop:

Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned

about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land!

This captures the profound notion of the sublime in man, the necessity that people look inside themselves for those qualities which are more important to them than life itself, for which they'd be willing to die. Not that they want to die, but that they would be willing, in order to achieve a greater purpose towards one's actual mission in life, which is eternal, which looks to the future of mankind. This was precisely the way that Mencius and later Zhu Xi thought.

One last quote from Mencius:

The disciple Gong Du said, "All are equally men, but some are great men, and some are little men—how is this?"

Mencius replied, "Those who follow that part of themselves which is great are great men; those who follow that part which is little are little men.

"The senses of hearing and seeing do not think, and are obscured by external things. To the mind belongs the office of thinking. By thinking, it gets the right view of things; by neglecting to think, it fails to do this. These—the senses and the mind—are what Heaven has given to us. Let a man first stand fast in the supremacy of the nobler part of his constitution, and the inferior part will not be able to take it from him. It is simply this which makes the great man."

Again here, it's this concept of the humanist creative powers of the mind versus sense perception, and against the political notion that the way to control people is through punishment and reward: rewards in the form of sensual pleasures like the pornography and the drugs and the violence and degradation that takes place today under the name of entertainment. This is titillating the senses in order to convince people that they need not think; that they can lead their lives in a way which has no long-term purpose, no goal either for oneself or for humanity as a whole.

Again, to show the contrast in China, I want to say a few words about Daoism, another anti-Confucian belief structure in ancient China, and one which is still influ-



Joseph Needham

ential today. Lao Zi, who lived about the same time as Confucius, is the primary figure of Daoism. He wrote the *Dao de Jing* (Classic of the Way), which is the favorite of British China-profilers and many in the counter-culture today. You can think of the Daoists as the Greenies of today, that we must not poison the Earth by developing technology. Lao Zi says:

Banish wisdom, discard knowledge and the people will be benefitted a hundredfold.
Banish benevolence, discard righteousness, and the people will be dutiful and compassionate.
Banish skill, discard profit, and thieves and robbers will disappear.
Banish learning, and there will be no more grieving.

The happy peasant! It is clear why the British imperialists and their cohorts love Daoism.

Here is a separate poem from Lao Zi. This was the favorite quote of Joseph Needham, who was the British Empire's China expert. His biography is called *The Man Who Loved China*, but the truth is he loved the backwardness of China. He wrote seventeen volumes called *The Science and Civilization of China*, but it is based on the lie that science in China came from this Daoist ideology. Joseph Needham loved the Cultural Revolution, praising the self-destruction of the nation as the pinnacle of Chinese greatness. Here is the poem of Lao Zi he so loved:

Heaven and Earth are without
benevolence [agapē].
They treat the ten thousand
things as straw dogs.
Nor is the sage benevolent
[agapic],
To him also are the hundred
clans but straw dogs.

The ten thousand things and the hundred clans are common ways of saying “all things” and “all people” in Chinese. Needham made no effort to hide his hatred for actual knowledge and actual humanity.

The other infamous Daoist was named Zhuang Zi, who lived several hundred years after Lao Zi. He often uses Confucius as a character in his stories, in an effort to ridicule and degrade him. One of the most famous describes Confucius walking along a country road, where he comes upon a peasant who is scooping water by hand out of a trench into his field, one scoop at a time. Confucius stops and says: “If you had a machine here, in a day you could irrigate one hundred times your present area. The labor required is trifling, as compared with the work done. Would you not like one?”

Confucius then describes a well-sweep—a machine like a mill-wheel, driven with foot-pedals, with multiple cups which scoop up water from the trench, transferring it into the field. Zhuang Zi then relates that this wise Daoist peasant denounces Confucius, saying that “anyone who is cunning with instruments must also have a scheming heart,” and that the machine is “not a fit vehicle for the Dao.” His last words: “It is not that I do not know of such things. I should be ashamed to use them.”

Confucius and Schiller

One more comparison between East and West is drawn from [Helga Zepp-LaRouche’s lecture in New York](#) on April 7 of this year, which beautifully compares the ideas of Confucius and the German poet Friedrich Schiller, after whom our Schiller Institute is named.

Schiller, in his essay “Grace and Dignity,” defines what he calls the “beautiful soul” or the “golden soul” in this way:



Friedrich Schiller

We call it the beautiful soul when the moral sentiment has assured itself of all emotions of a person, ultimately to the degree that it may abandon the guidance of the will to emotions, and never run the danger of being in contradiction with its own decisions.

It is often debated whether one should favor the mind over emotions, or the other way around. But, Schiller—and as you’ll see also in Confucius and other Confucians—made the point that one must not suppress the emotions, but uplift them, to the level of the creative mind. This is what Leibniz meant when he talked about happiness, as

in the U.S. Constitutional commitment to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” which comes from Leibniz. He certainly didn’t mean the happiness of the flesh, but that happiness which comes from participating in developing or mastering great discoveries in science, classical music and art, from knowing that you are contributing in a way that is going to advance all of mankind, by contributing new knowledge and new artistic beauty to the universe.

Schiller is saying the same thing. You have to lift those emotions up to the point where they are so committed to beauty and to the Good that you can follow your emotions, because you trust that they are not going to lead you to do anything against the Good. This is what Schiller meant by the beautiful soul.

Confucius had a very similar concept, which is seen in this famous section from the *Analecets*. In a sense, he’s describing his own progress through life, but really he’s talking about the stages that people should go through in self-development:

At 15 I set my heart on learning; [He’d reached puberty and he began serious study. By 15, LaRouche was already a committed Leibnizian.]

At 30 I firmly took my stand; [This is particularly important. When the Red Army took over China in 1949, Mao Zedong, standing in Tiananmen Square, before the throng, said “China has stood up.” Everyone knew that this was a refer-

ence to this idea in Confucius—the nation had reached adulthood, and could begin the productive part of its life.]

At 40 I had no delusions;

At 50 I knew the mandate of heaven;

At 60 my ear was attuned; [And here he means the senses were attuned to beauty.]

At 70 I could follow my heart's desire without overstepping the boundaries.

This final line is precisely the same as Schiller's idea. By 70, he had so ennobled his emotions, "my heart's desire," that he could follow them, fully trusting that he would not do anything against his mission in life, his sense of duty and responsibility and mission.

Zhu Xi and the Confucian Renaissance

We come now to the genius Zhu Xi, and I believe this is the core of what must be understood in the West to gain a sense of what the Confucian renaissance was about in the Song Dynasty in the 12th Century, and the renaissance taking place today in China.

Zhu Xi lived from 1130 to 1200. He was among those known as neo-Confucians, although I don't like the term neo-Confucians, since philosophers with totally different ideas are grouped together under that term. I think it's better to say that he and his circle initiated a Confucian renaissance. I will compare his work to that of Nicholas of Cusa, the key figure in launching the Renaissance in Europe in the 15th Century.

First, read the following section of Lyndon LaRouche's Preface to his *The Science of Christian Economy*, one of his prison writings published in 1991. He begins by quoting from the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII in 1891, referenced above: "For laws are to be obeyed only insofar as they conform with right reason and thus with the eternal law of God."

LaRouche then references the decay of modern so-

ciety, referring to the "New Age" of the "rock-drug-sex counter culture and increasingly irrational, mass-murderous expressions of self-styled 'ecologism,' or 'neo-Malthusianism'." He continues:

What is notable on these accounts is the increasingly emboldened way in which the two evils, the "New Age" and usury, have exhibited their natural affinities for one another, combining their forces in even the highest places of Anglo-American power, to demand, in the misused name of "freedom" and "ecology," the rapid extermination and global outlawing of every scientific and moral barrier which has hitherto existed as impediments to rampaging immiseration and dictatorial oppression of mankind....

We propose that it is necessary, but not sufficient to view the referenced state of affairs from a Christian standpoint; for practical reasons, it is essential that even the Christian standpoint itself be presented here from an ecumenical standpoint as *ecumenical* is typified by Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa's dialogue, his *De Pace Fidei* (On the Peace of Faith).

Different faiths, religious and/or secularist, can be brought to principled agreement only in two possible alternate ways of manifesting mutual good will. In the one case, they may agree on a common point of taught doctrine, such as the principle of monotheism, as in opposition to the pantheistic pluralism of pagan Babylon, Rome, or the Apollo Cult at Delphi. Or, otherwise, differing faiths may reach coincidence of principled views by the means indicated in the referenced features of the encyclical [of Pope Leo XIII] ... It is the latter alternative upon which we concentrate attention here.

Faith may read those writings it deems sacred, or as authoritative commentaries on such



Zhu Xi

writings. Or, faith may “read the bare book of universal nature,” a book which plainly has been written directly by none other than the Creator himself. It is certain to all men and women of ecumenical good will, that the two kinds of books—the written ones, and the book of nature—cannot contradict one another, on condition that the written one be true, and that both the written and the natural one be read by means of the inner eye of true reason.

So, where doctrinal writings differ, we may turn the eye of ecumenical reason to the common book of nature. Let us argue the point in the following, twofold way. We emphasize, on the one side, the ecumenical notion of *intelligible representation* of a principle of knowledge of cause-effect in our universe, a means by which all men and women, despite differences in profession of monotheistic faith, may be brought by their own powers of reason to agreement upon a common principle of law. Second, we emphasize the importance of stressing *Christian* principles of Christian civilization as *Christian*, even within the framework of a monotheistic ecumenicism.

Consider next this simple illustration. The most ancient among known astronomies, that of the ancient Vedic peoples of Central Asia, illustrates the obvious manner in which a so-called “primitive” people may construct a reliable solar astronomical calendar from scratch. Observe successively the position of the Sun, at dawn, mid-day, and sunset. Mark these observations each in stone. At night, observe the constellations and their stars, to which each of the respective three, day-time observations point. After five years, we have thus the data on which to base a solar astronomical calendar of approximately 365 days per calendar year, measuring the year either from the winter solstice to winter solstice or from the vernal equinox to vernal equinox.

By the same method, the long decimillennial equinoctial cycle is adduced. So, a system of solar astronomy, free of the whore-goddesses Shakti’s and Ishtar’s lunacies, is built up by aid of reason. So the book of nature may be read. God’s book of nature. In such successive revolutions, and related ways, *reason* reveals to us that our universe has the apparent form of a unified

cause-effect process of *Becoming*, a process of *Becoming* which is subsumed by an indivisible Supreme Being, who embodies, among other qualities, what Plato admired as the *Good*. Of such matters of principle, in such a manner, do the very stones cry out.

Consequently, when we demonstrate by access to reason that a certain universal or approximately universal principle must be true, a monotheistic ecumenicism has gained a two-fold advantage. Since all of human knowledge is finally supplied by reason, there can be no valid teaching presented by any religion which contradicts true reason, as we define *reason* in the following chapters; there can be no valid objection to this principle which is to be tolerated on premise of secularist rejection of religious precept.

Now we can look at Zhu Xi and Cusa. Zhu Xi’s school is called the School of Principle. The word for principle is *Li*. The idea of principle, this concept of *Li*, was not a major concept in Confucius’ and Mencius’ writings; it’s something which Zhu Xi gave a special meaning to in further developing the Confucian understanding. Zhu Xi distinguishes between Universal Principle, which is the principle of the universe as a whole, and the individual Principle which is inherent in all created things. He writes: “Universal Principle is simply a comprehensive term for the four virtues [*ren*, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom], and each of them is an individual enumeration for Universal Principle.”

The virtues are themselves expressions of the totality of the Universal Principle.

Leibniz, as I said, had studied the writings of Zhu Xi extensively, as well as those of Confucius and Mencius. Here’s what he says about this concept of the *Li*, the principle. This is in his *Novissima Sinica*:

The first principle of the Chinese is called *Li*, that is, Reason, or the foundation of all nature, the most universal reason and substance; there is nothing greater nor better than *Li*. . . . [It] is not at all capable of divisibility as regards its being, and is the principal basis of all the essences which are and which can exist in the world. But it is also the aggregation of the most perfect multiplicity because the Being of this principle contains the essences of things as they are in their

germinal state. We say as much when we teach that the ideas, the primitive grounds, the prototypes of all essences are all in God. . . . The Chinese also attribute to the *Li* all manner of perfection . . . so perfect that there is nothing to add. One has said it all. Consequently, can we not say that the *Li* of the Chinese is the sovereign substance which we revere under the name of God?

Note the expression: “the Being of this principle contains the essences of things as they are in their germinal state.” Leibniz had his own theory called the *Monadology*, which basically expresses the concept that the monad of the universe as a whole subsumes the essence of every created thing—the multiplicity of things, of individual monads—while each individual monad is a reflection of the totality. This is very close to Zhu Xi’s concept of *Li*.

Let’s look closely at the next passage, known as “The Great Learning,” or *Daxue* in Chinese. *Da* means big or great, and *Xue* means to study or scholarship. The term was generally interpreted within China as “The Great Learning,” but Zhu Xi actually gave it a different interpretation: He said that it should rather be interpreted as “Learning for Adults,” where the *Da* means adults, grown-ups, and *xue* means learning.

Zhu Xi did something quite extraordinary in his interpretation of the entire *Daxue*. Read first of all how “The Great Learning” was interpreted in the traditional way:

The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the kingdom, first ordered well their own states. Wishing to order well their states, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things.

Now, this has good qualities to it, but Zhu Xi said this is not what Confucius meant. Look at the first sentence—it is appealing to the king, to “illustrate illustrious virtue” to the people. But Zhu Xi said that the true meaning is for *all* people to “illustrate illustrious

virtue,” not only the king. So Zhu Xi interpreted the first sentence to be: “Those of antiquity who wished that all men throughout the empire keep their inborn luminous virtue unobscured, put governing their states well first.”

So Zhu Xi said, basically, Confucius didn’t mean this is only for the king—this great learning is not only for the leaders, it’s for all people. Not only that all people must be encouraged to live up to their “inborn luminous virtue,” but also that all people must know that they have the capability, as human beings, to express this inborn luminous virtue, which you don’t want to obscure by the influence of sensual perceptions which disrupt the mind.

Also, at the end of Zhu Xi’s first sentence, he says that *all* men throughout the empire “put governing their states well first.” So, governing the state is also not just the responsibility of the king. Governing the state is the responsibility of all men. In other words, he is universalizing this as a principle of humanity.

Zhu Xi also changes the final sentence in the traditional interpretation, which said that “extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things.” But, Zhu Xi says, this should be interpreted: “The extension of knowledge lies in fully apprehending *the principle in things*.”

Think about that. We’ve already shown that he believed that there was a fundamental principle to all created things, which was not a sensual facet, but a principle which connected it to the Universal Principle. As in Plato’s cave analogy, the things one sees with the senses are only a reflection of its principle, its essence. The physical existence is a shadow of a more profound existence, how it came to be as part of the unfolding creation, and what its role is in the unfolding creation. This is what Lyndon LaRouche calls the “Becoming”—what its role is in that creative process, with man being the most advanced form of that because of the human mind.

So, Zhu Xi says that “The extension of knowledge lies in fully apprehending the principle in things.” You can’t understand the principle in something by measuring it, or touching it, or smelling it, or tasting it. To understand the principle in things, you first of all have to start from the universe as a whole, the way Kepler did when he was examining the Solar system. He came up with laws for the Solar system because he began with a principle, that in fact the Solar system must have coherence with other aspects of the creation—the musical scale, for instance, which he knew was something man

had discovered—concepts which man had discovered as existing in the physical universe, but had not been known until man discovered them.

In that sense, you have to start from a universal principle, and you have to examine things—actions, people, and physical objects—from the question of their role in the unfolding creation of the universe. This is a much higher conception of the creation.

Zhu Xi had his opponents, who didn't agree with him on this. They didn't like the idea that he thought he could go back and change "the way things were."

Nicholas of Cusa

Now look at Nicholas of Cusa's essay *De Pace Fidei* (On the Peace of Faith), as translated by Will Wertz. Cusa was basically arguing, as LaRouche indicated above, that you can find a fundamental truth within any and all monotheistic religions, and that you can thereby come to an ecumenical agreement among religions as a way of maintaining peace, if they can convince each other, and themselves, that there is in fact one unified, universal grain of truth in any monotheistic conception of the universe.

Cusa portrays a dialogue between God, the Word, with a Roman Catholic, an Orthodox Christian, a Jew, a Muslim, and a few others. In the debate, he presents the idea of the Trinity as understood in Christianity as something which could be understood, not in terms of the Christian concept of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, but rather, in terms of principles of nature—as LaRouche said, "The stones cry out"—that you can find an intelligible representation which is a universal expression of what in Christianity is called the Trinity.

The Word addresses the gathered wise men about their various faiths:

You will not find another faith, but rather one and the same single religion presupposed everywhere. You, who are now present here, are called wise men by the sharers of your language, or at the very least philosophers or lovers of wisdom.



Nicholas of Cusa
1401-1464

There can only be one wisdom.... Prior to every creature there is wisdom through which everything created is that which it is.

The Word gains their agreement on that point, and then defines a three-fold nature of the universe. He says there is an overall principle of wisdom—we could call it Unity, because it is completely combined, it's indivisible. And yet, enfolded in that Unity is all the multiplicity of created things. Those things are Equal in the sense that they're all participating in an unfolding creation—participating in the "Becoming." That is their Equality, an Equality in the Unity of the created universe. And, the Connection between this Equality and the Unity is the principle of *agapē*; a higher sense of love,

or you could say, of creativity.

Thus, Cusa reasons, there is this universal way of expressing the Trinity: the Unity, the Equality, and the Connection of all things. The Word says later, "Some name Unity Father, Equality Son, and Connection the Holy Spirit, since those designations, even though they are not proper, nevertheless suitably designate the Trinity." Cusa is asserting that this scientific way of looking at it is actually a higher conception, in order to show the triune nature of the unfolding creativity of the universe. It forces you not to have a fixed sense of nature as a finished product, or of God as an exterior thing. There's a connection, an equality of all things through the participation in this lawful unity of the expanding universe.

Then, just below the "Three-fold nature: Unity, Equality, and Connection," Cusa says there can also be only one Eternal:

However, there cannot be several eternals. Consequently, in the one eternity is found unity, equality of unity, and the union of unity and equality, or connection. Thus, the most simple origin of the universe is triune, since in the origin the originated must be enfolded. Everything originated, however, signifies that it is thus enfolded in its origin, and in everything originated a three-

fold distinction of this kind can be found in the unity of the essence. And for this reason, the simplest origin of everything will be three and one.

The Confucian Trinity

What I was doing, in my work in prison, was to extend Cusa's work to embrace Confucianism. Cusa did not know about Confucius, so there was no Confucian in the dialogue *On the Peace of Faith*. My conclusion should be clear from the above.

If you want to think of a Confucian trinity of Unity, Equality, and Connection, I have defined it here as:

- Universal *Li*, the Universal Principle, which Leibniz compared to the Christian notion of God, the origin of the universe and the Unity of the universe;
- Individual *Li*, the principle of each created thing; the nature of every created thing as it reflects Equality with the Universal;
- *Ren*, as I have equated *ren* with *agapē*, which connects the principle of all created things to the universal principle.

I will close this discussion with the primary example of the opposition to Zhu Xi, that of Wang Yang Ming, who lived a couple of hundred years after Zhu Xi, and whom many unfortunately link with Zhu Xi as a fellow Neo-Confucian. Wang Yang Ming called himself a Confucian, but he is an Aristotelian who became more identified with the Daoist ideology and Zen Buddhist ideology than with Confucianism. His refutation of Zhu Xi is comical but revealing.

Wang decided to test Zhu Xi's hypothesis that every created thing possessed an essence, a principle. He and a friend therefore sat down in his father's garden in front of some bamboo, and determined to sit there and study this bamboo until they discovered the principle of bamboo. They sat there for many hours until they finally got sick and had to give up. His conclusion: There's no such thing as principle; it doesn't exist. It's only what's in your mind; that's the only thing that's real to Wang Yang Ming. Cultural relativism, basically.



Sun Yat Sen

Sun Yat Sen

I will not address here all of the rich contributions of Sun Yat Sen, the leader of the Republican revolution in China in 1911, but I want to conclude with a note about his view of Confucianism. Sun was educated in the American System by an American family in Hawaii, where he had gone to work and study in the 1880s, and became a dedicated advocate of the Hamiltonian concepts of political economy.

He became a Christian, but remained a Confucian. He said: "We must revive not only our old morality, but also our old learning . . . , the Great Learning," the *Daxue* that I discussed above. He then essentially paraphrased the *Daxue*:

Search into the nature of things [notice he doesn't say "investigate things," but "Search into the nature of things," the principle underlying existence], extend the boundaries of knowledge, make the purpose sincere, regulate the mind, cultivate personal virtue, rule the family, govern the state, pacify the world.

Of course, "pacify the world" is not in the *Daxue*, which was only addressing China. But Sun Yat Sen universalized that concept, saying that the last step in this progression is to "pacify the world."

Sun Yat Sen said later, "Let us pledge ourselves to lift up the fallen and to aid the weak; then, when we become strong and look back upon our own sufferings under the political and economic domination of the Powers, and see weaker and smaller peoples undergoing similar treatment, we will rise and smite that imperialism. Then will we be truly governing the state and pacifying the world." Thus, he saw it to be a Confucian responsibility for China to rise and bring about development in the world, unlike the imperialist looting that had dominated the era of the European powers.

This is indeed a description of what Xi Jinping is doing today through the New Silk Road.