

## **WAYS OF UNIVERSAL LIFE: THE TAO, HUMAN HEARTEDNESS, ZEN AND JESUS**

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### **Summary**

This philosophical analysis lays bare the defining and transformative principles of Taoism, Confucianism, Mohism, and Zen Buddhism as spiritual philosophies with contrasts and comparisons including the original Jesus. Explanation focuses on primary sources, principled capacities to relate to the eco-social life-ground and implied ways of universal life.

### **1. Non-Theist Religions: An Introduction**

While major Indo-European and Middle-East religions are theist, the great religious philosophies from the Far East - Taoism, Confucianism and Zen – have no God. In other words, their ultimate ontological principles do not conceive of Ultimate Being as separate from and prior to embodied life. Thus the ancient dualisms of man and God,

matter and spirit do not arise. Where then do we find the transcendent in these spiritual philosophies? In Taoism, the transcendent is found in the invisible ordering mystery of the cosmic Tao. In Zen, the transcendent is the unmediated experience of the infinite in the Now. In Confucianism which is most widespread as a governing doctrine, Heaven refers to a self-subsistent moral law or Great Norm of cosmic harmony.

Again however life value as of ultimate concern remains only implicit, so philosophical analysis is required to lay bare its exact place and limits in these organizing visions of enlightenment. Coherent spiritual philosophies East and West remain distinguished by transcendence of material self interest and what is empirically established in the world. And both seek some ‘way of universal life’ that transforms all divisions including death itself into a higher unity of the Real, the True and the Good. Yet analysis must first move beyond life incoherent religion as explained in *World Visions of Universal Being from Life incoherent Religion to Life-Coherent Spirituality*. The explanation to follow does not deny that an absolute Ruler, Superior, or Master on earth may still emerge in these religions without God. Nor does it overlook how structures of life oppression may continue to reign with first principles of social rule assumed as sacrosanct. Life-blind conformity at the cost of people’s lives is again invariably the sign of life incoherent religion, but not in the primary sources of the religion philosophies studied ahead except when so flagged.

## **2. Ultimate Principles and Understanding the Tao**

Of all the religious philosophies, Taoism is the most life-grounded in principle. First articulated by Lao tzu or Lao tse or Laozi – the English versions vary – its author is recorded as born around 550 BCE, the elder of Confucius. Disputes about the dates have, however, become a minor industry so that the entry of “Laozi” in the online *Stanford Encyclopedia* discusses little else. As often occurs, undecidable scholastic disputations replace coming to grips with profoundly challenging meanings. This analysis, in contrast, is concerned solely with the defining principles and arguments of the *Tao-te Ching* itself. Yet insofar as it is steeped in culture with a language of 45,000 ideographic characters, we first require translations by scholars familiar with both for life-value analysis to decode the underlying philosophical principles which the work expresses. Wing tsit Chan’s translation in his definitive *Sourcebook of Chinese Philosophy* is thus principally relied on along with the Feng-English version, and further cross-checked with *An Accurate Translation of the Tao-te Ching* by Derek Lin online. Throughout the primary sources examined ahead, a general rule of meaning is applied. The test of any underlying principle of explanation is that it is consistent with authoritative translations *and* applies to all contexts. In this way, the philosophical principles explained are tested in both respects across the works in question. As in linguistic science looking for the deep structure underneath surface sentences, philosophical method identifies ultimately regulating principles which are confirmed in all instances to ensure the meta level of meaning that is defined.

Yet sometimes a textual meaning still evades clear definition. Thus the *Tao-te Ching* cautions in its first line: “The Tao that can be named is not the eternal Tao”. The first level of this meaning is that we must not equate words with what they refer to. The later Zen saying that “the finger pointing at the moon is not the moon” derives from this

original insight. The moon is, however, a more direct experience than the edgeless Way of Nature to which Tao refers. The Tao is claimed to be too “deep and profound” for any concept to represent without partiality of meaning. For concepts by their nature exclude all they do not refer to. Thus the concept of “table” excludes all that is *not*-table. The harmonizing way of cosmic reality – the Tao – has, in contrast, no lines of division or confinement. Words draw boundaries of demarcation where no real boundaries exist.

The *Upanishads* of India emphasize this basic point in a more mystical way. Name and form, *nama* and *rupa*, draw lines of division when there is only one underlying reality, “the One without a second”. This is the Supreme Being and only It ultimately exists according to this philosophy. Reconnection to the One occurs by withdrawing the senses and consciousness from the world to behold “the Real” from within, “face to face” - the divine infinite of the inner *Atman* which is opened to by yogic introspection. Lao tzu, however, goes in an opposite direction – not away from, but *to* the surrounding world and universe which hosts all life as the Way of Nature.

The *Tao-te Ching* (literally “the book of the Way of all functions”) finds the Tao in the principles of the natural cosmos which apply to all beings – for example, the rising and falling moments of all life in diverse cycles of return. The cycles themselves become intrinsic to the sage’s experience of the world, the depths of the present in perpetual transformation. Thus the *Tao-te Ching* says “Hold onto to the Tao of old to master the things of the present. This is the bond of Tao” (Chapter 14). That is, there is an immutable pattern of the world’s changes and the sage dwells in it to understand the manifold states it expresses in the present of its cyclic turning. The Natural Way is to live in natural life function (*te*) within a universe of natural functions in attuned consciousness to its recurring patterns. This grounding of way of life in Nature characterizes much First Peoples’ philosophy as well, but this connection is little recognized. A difference is that the Tao is what governs the myriad beings of the one ecological whole, but it also includes more primarily the “Non-Being” from which all beings come and from which it differs in that it “can never be worn out”. “Let there always be Non-Being, Lao says in his first lines, “so we may see the subtlety of things, but let there always be Being so we see their outcome”. Tao is “empty as well as full”. Lao’s philosophy is earthy, but never earth bound. For infinitely behind, around and in-between beings is the empty space of “non-being”. This apparently empty space within and around all that exists includes the heavens and its invisible laws from which the cosmos manifests, but it is also what enables beings to function *as* embodied beings – from the space within the cup or bowl that enables its function to the space in between creatures that allows them to move and function to the sky above all that exists. Thus Being and Non-Being are inseparable and complementary within the one Tao, and this is why Lao says what is otherwise indecipherable: “The two are the same”. That is, they are inseparable aspects of the One Tao.

Throughout Lao implies the *yin* (receptive) and *yang* (active) tendencies within the Tao whose interaction produces all processes and outcomes – for example, day and night, the seasons, and species life cycles. Much of the *Tao-te Ching* is in the rhythm of this yin-yang interaction producing change with each function of the Tao manifesting in accordance with this law-governed dynamic of the whole. “The Tao produced the One”

– that is, the invisible natural laws and energy (*ch'i*) which precipitate into the cosmos and its perpetual changes and cycles. “The One produced the two” – that is, the yin and yang tendencies in interrelation. “The two produced the three” – that is, the process of transformative becoming - and “the three produced the ten thousand things” (the timeless Chinese metaphor for all entities that exist). Together all of this constitutes the “grand harmony” – an all-embracing concept which crosses the Taoist and Confucian thought systems as an ultimate onto-ethical norm. Within its eternal ordering, every life and form of being finds its proper (Confucian) or natural (Taoist) place. All beings arise, reach their limit, and revert back. The Taoist sage does not detach from the changes as in Buddhism, but “rides the transformations of the elements” as Chuang Tzu puts it, and lives one with the Tao across the endless advances and returns of all beings – the Taoist way of universal life. “Being great means functioning everywhere”, Lao says in Chapter 25. Taoism’s notion of the “grand harmony” expresses the ultimate idea of all Chinese philosophy. Even the class warrior Mao tse Tung declares it the ultimate goal of revolutionary Communism.

### 3. Challenging All Orthodoxies by the Natural Way

Unlike fundamentalist and life incoherent religions, there is no supernatural being or magic thinking in the *Tao-te Ching* - although these have been variously superimposed since. Perhaps because it continuously calls into question ruling beliefs which are normally taboo to confront, it has been mystified, caricatured, and appropriated for 2500 years. To anyone thinking in terms of conventional givens, its lines may simply not make sense. Yet Lao’s profound challenges of inherited ways of seeing apply more than ever to globalization today, and may constitute the most critical reflection on civilization that exists. The *Tao-te Ching* can only be decoded from a standpoint that thinks through natural every image and step. Like the First Peoples’ spiritual philosophy of North America, it is in deep accord with Nature and inimical to artificial norms and prohibitions. “The more taboos and prohibitions there are in the world”, Lao says, “the poorer are the people” (Chapter 57). In fact Lao confronts conventional life bindings at every turn from the start, beginning with his affirmation of “non-being” as primary. Much Confucian reading of this onto-axiology sees it as an ‘irresponsible worship of nothingness’ – just as was seen in Buddhism which replaced Taoism in China before itself radically declining. The “abyss” and “great emptiness” do not resonate with social convention. As the *Tao-te Ching* shifts parameters of meaning so that non-being and receptivity become primary and artificial ordering by rank and ambition are rejected, conventional “propriety” and “the great hypocrisy” are left behind. When it says that “the wise greet both favor and disgrace with apprehension, and of these favor is considered inferior” (Chapter 12,) Confucian scholars cannot make sense of what it means and even change its words. How could anyone regard favor as worse than disgrace?

This position, however, follows from the *Tao-te Ching*’s repudiation of Confucian conventions which bind natural life function and ordering. Thus if one is favored by such artificial and life-repressive standards, then this approval is inferior from the standpoint of the natural way. Lao makes the point more emphatic later in Chapter 41. “Great purity”, he says, “appears like disgrace”. In other words, the one who does follow the natural way appears to be unworthy through the eyes of propriety. One thinks

here of Diogenes in Greek civilization who also preferred to live outside conventional society and was called “the cynic”. Elsewhere Lao goes even further. He repudiates the very cornerstones of Confucian morality, saying “abandon humanity and discard righteousness” (Chapter 19). The *Tao-te Ching* does not mean inhumanity or amorality as many interpret it. Rather as throughout this last testament –Lao tzu repudiates the airs, roles and hypocrisies of “humanity” and “righteousness” but not their life substance.

We need to bear in mind that the *Tao-te Ching* ardently condemns war, militarization and capital punishment. To speak against the military institution and capital punishment over two millennia ago – as it does in Chapters 46 and 27 respectively – shows true humanity and righteousness far ahead of its time. What it opposes are the *pretenses* of “humanity and righteousness” endemic in official society and Confucian propriety. The *Tao-te Ching* even provocatively asserts in the same chapter, “abandon sageliness and discard wisdom”. Again it means the hypocrisies and pomposity, not the life substance. In fact, the *Tao-te Ching* goes further than any work for millennia when it calls for mutual education rather than punishment as the way to deal with wrong-doers (Chapter 46). In short, learning is of ultimate importance, the reality of wisdom not role display of it. What is abhorred is the self-serving role playing of “humanity”, “morality” and “wisdom” as the masks for repressing and harming life. In particular state killing of wrongdoers as “justice” is deplored. “There is always the master executioner [of the Tao] which “misses nothing”, he says in Chapter 74, and “whoever undertakes to hew wood for the master carpenter rarely escapes injuring his own hands”. Rather than losing one’s life within the countless rules of conduct and ceremony while social climbing the hierarchy in which ceremonial killing displaces deep social learning, the *Tao-te Ching* argues for the natural way of life function.

In Chapters 18 and 38 especially, explanation moves through the primary Confucian values of “superior virtue”, “humanity”, “propriety”, and “filial piety”, and presses the distinction between their real and “substantial” versus “superficial” forms as well as the “ulterior motive” of ambition and power behind their moralist disguises. Here as elsewhere the *Tao-te Ching* always conceives of authentic virtue as grounded in doing what nourishes life in its natural mode. While it deplores hypocritically coercive moralism, it does so for opposite reasons than the freedom of the *übermensch* (“superman”) in Nietzschean theory. Life serving action from behind with no ulterior motive or show is the standard throughout. The sage thus “does not claim credit” but “performs his function and then withdraws”(Chapters 2, 17). The choral idea is “to produce but not take possession” – the defining principle of the Tao and the sage at once. The *Tao-te Ching* asserts that declarations of moral virtues are in fact hypocritical. Only when real “virtue”, “humanity” and “righteousness” have been lost does “the doctrine” of each arise (Chapter 38). On the other hand, to sincerely “rule people and serve heaven, there is nothing better than frugality”(59). In short, the *Tao-te Ching* repudiates all morality not nourishing life function.

### 3.1. The Taoist Aesthetic of Nature

The life-value critique of the *Tao-te Ching* also reaches into the domains of the official arts and ceremonies. Consider these initially paradoxical but categorical declarations in

Chapter 12. “The five colors cause one’s eyes to be blind”. “The five tones cause one’s ears to be deaf”. “The five tastes cause one’s palate to be spoiled”. These statements come one after another with no explanation. Again one must fill in the blanks by adopting Lao’s standpoint of the natural life way. His point is that divisions of color, sound and taste into homogenous man-made frames, deadens sentient life. Only privileged people in Lao’s day could afford such artificial occupations of the sense fields at the cost of spontaneous natural life sights, sounds and tastes in far subtler composition. Yet it is not only because the rulers sate such unnatural desires “while the fields are exceedingly weedy and the granaries empty”, a reprehension of social injustice *Tao-te Ching* expresses elsewhere. Here Lao deplores the lack of *taste* of the loud showpieces, music and foodstuffs on display – precisely what is assumed as impressive. The *Tao-te Ching* asserts the opposite. The great events occupy the fields of seeing, hearing and scenting life by an unbearably invasive bad taste.

The problem named here penetrates to the very organizing structure of perception. In the official Chinese world-view, the fivefold classification of reality extends across domains of phenomena, and here it carves up the fields of sentient life into homogenous blocks across the senses. The light spectrum is divided into five conventional and uniform colors. The vibrational fields of hearing are divided into five prescribed tones. And scents and tastes are treated to the same monotonic ordering of the infinite spectra of light, sounds and tastes of Nature. Dividing all experienced colors, sounds and flavors into five forms is claimed by Confucians to uphold harmonious relations – always the goal in China across schools of thought. But for the *Tao-te Ching* this conventional structuring of sentience destroys the sense experiencing of the subtle harmonies of Nature by grandiose set-pieces of official sights, sounds and flavors. The seeing, hearing and scenting of the 10,000 beings in natural transformation are so invaded and occupied that the “eyes are made blind”, “the ears deaf”, and “the palate spoiled”. Readers might here think of today’s corporate motors and commercials occupying every sense field of life to recognize the totalizing occupation of life sensibility that the *Tao-te Ching* first describes. When are the eyes, ears and taste anywhere free to experience the sublime sentient fields without this deadening interference? When the later Zen philosophy seeks to restore awakens to the transcendent beauty of undivided Nature and “the original mind”, it relates back to this foundational insight of the *Tao-te Ching*. Yet in general, awareness of the despoliation of life sentience by what is thought to be civilization goes unnoticed by aesthetic understanding.

We might here compare the lament of Chief Seattl of the First Peoples of America: “There is no quiet place in the white [*sic*] man’s cities, no place to hear the leaves of spring or the rustle of insect’s wings - - the smell of the wind cleansed by a midday rain or scented with pinion pine - - the sight of the great land with buffalo free of the iron roads and talking machines - - .” The *Tao-te Ching* then continues the chapter with a sentence which mystifies interpreters, “racing and hunting cause one’s mind to be mad”. His connection of the reduced sense fields of life to “racing and hunting” also relates well to the contemporary world. The transcendent experience of the open senses is overwhelmed by one racing, chasing and hunting after another (think of today’s commercial sports and televised bombings of cities) so that they “cause one’s mind to be mad”. The insanity is to destroy life’s beauty without being aware of it in pursuit of

ephemeral want objects including the deaths of other life. “They are the mad ones” is what the First Nation mother says millennia later as she and her child watch the developers tear up the valley of life below. Lao is more categorical. He opposes every man-made device or entertainment that interferes with natural life function and enjoyment. He says at the end of the *Tao-te Ching*, “Let there be ten or a hundred times more utensils, but let them not be needed or used - - Even if there are ships and carriages, none will ride in them. Even if there are armor and weapons, none will display them” (Chapter 80). The *Tao-te Ching* does not here speak against the inventions and contrivances, but rather against pervasive use of them. In contemporary terms, we might think of the person who has a car, but usually walks and bicycles, of armaments for society that are kept out of sight, and of utensils for special occasions. In this way, the world of life is left free and natural in its sights and sounds without useless contesting – the aesthetic of natural life function.

What would Lao say to the charge that he opposes ever new devices and entertainments created by the technologies and free markets of the day? In fact, the *Tao-te Ching* has an answer which points to a more exciting life. Yet first human sentience and action are to be re-grounded. In Chapter 13, the *Tao-te Ching* says, “The sage loves the world as his body and that is why he may be entrusted with the empire”. Identification with the “world as one’s body” is not the way of enlightenment, but only rule in accordance with it can be trusted. Lao is the first known thinker to recognize this way of universal life, and the only one to ground the legitimacy of rule in it. We see here perhaps the most demanding qualification for rule in world thought.

#### **4. Good and Bad Decoded: Nourishing Function versus Selfish Desires**

According to legend, Lao only wrote his work as an older man leaving China on request from border officials. That he was returning to Nature or going into the wilderness to re-enter its wider cycles is not discussed. All scholars know is that no more was heard from Lao tzu/tse/zi except the *Tao-te Ching* - “the Book of the Way and its Functions”, his sole work and last testament. The first chapter is appropriately a conception of the life and death from the view of the natural way. All being and non-being are inseparable within the whole of the cosmos or the individual life. By Chapter 2 – all the chapters are in verse form usually under 10-20 lines long – the *Tao-te Ching* has introduced the famous but elusive principle of *wu-wei* – typically rendered as “non-action” or “*wei wu-wei*”, the “way of non-action”. In Lao’s own words, the sage “produces but does not take possession” – a concept that recurs from Chapter 2 on. He “nourishes function in accord with Nature”, but then moves on “without claiming credit” and without “ulterior motive” or desire for anything external to the function - “these are like remnants of food and tumors of action” (Chapter 24). Observe that the notion of ‘non-action’ does *not* mean absence of active life function or mere manipulation – as it is often misunderstood to do - but means no action for gaining something extrinsic to the life function itself. Lao’s position here is analogous to Krishna’s defining principle of action in the *Bhagavad-gita*: “You have a right to your action only, never at all to its fruits” (Chapter 2, verse 47). But it is different in that only action in accord with natural life requirements is affirmed. This is why the standard translation of *wu-wei* as “no unnatural action” is true so far as goes. More exactly, *nourishing life function* is the value logic of all action for Lao tzu - or *not* action in accordance with the standard

motives of external reward, credit, or pretense of superiority. This is Lao tzu's implicit notion of the Good although he generally steers clear of normative categories.

As we have seen, the *Tao-te Ching* ultimately calls for identification with “the world as one's body” so that as we have seen in Chapter 25, “Being great means functioning everywhere”. The sage in this way “models himself after earth”. His recurrent analogous role models are water “which nourishes all things” and the sun “which shines on all alike”. This idea of benefiting all alike is the ultimate value of the *Tao-te Ching*. Thus the sage puts himself in the background”, he says in Chapter 7, “but finds himself in the foreground./ He puts himself away and yet always remains./ Is it not because he has no personal interests that his personal interests /are fulfilled?” In the final chapter, the idea of the sage's universal identity as personal identity emerges again in choral summary: “The more he gives to others, the more he has himself. /The more he gives to others the more he has of his own”. One can see the early formulation of the message of Jesus five centuries later. The apparent paradox of serving other life interests to realize one's own is resolved when one recognizes that “the good man” of the *Tao-te Ching* is one with the Tao, and so these conclusions follow. “The more he has of his own” and “the more his personal interests are fulfilled” show, moreover, that this “giving to receive” is not mere submergence in the Tao, but the Tao experienced and enjoyed as one's true being. This profound idea crosses all the great religions. As Christian Humphreys nicely puts it to explain the Buddhist way of universal being, the enlightened person is “not a drop in the ocean, but the ocean poured into a drop”.

The previous chapter's analysis has explained the core principle of giving action for its own sake and not for expectation or reward. Yet Lao is more exact than Krishna about what the nature of the action must be to be enlightened. It *must be functional within the life whole*. Even if in forced combat - the *Tao-te Ching* is by no means passive - the enlightened person focuses on bringing aggressors “to the way of reversion” by natural methods learned by identifying with other creatures - the strike of the heron, the evasion of the fish, and so on among myriad natural functions the sage draws on. The *Tao-te Ching* is the origin of “weaponless combat” now called martial arts. Always be in accord with the natural way not violate it is the ultimate principle. If the out-of-control desires of men must be engaged in direct struggle, the wise “honor the left not the right”, “never make light of the enemy”, “march without formation”, “hold weapons without seeming to have them”, “use surprise tactics” of reversal, “withdraw as soon as one's work is done”, and “weep over slaughter” with no victory celebration but “funeral ceremonies” (Chapters 69 and 31). The *Tao-te Ching* is also the philosophical foundation of guerilla warfare. The caricature idea of Taoism as a limp quietism or devious opportunism confuses patience and long-term thinking with conventional projections. The common feature of this philosophy across domains is that no action is not in accord with life supporting transformation. This is the meaning of *wu-wei* which has often been turned upside down as “inaction”.

#### **4.1. The Deathless Way of Human Virtue and Universal Life Identification**

This higher consciousness of the Tao and its functions with which the sage becomes one in microcosmic wholeness is, it is implied, the *te* or function/virtue of human being. Yet *Tao-te Ching* never puts humanity on a pedestal. Indeed it rejects humanism as

anthropocentric, saying in Chapter 5: “Heaven and earth are not humane./ They regard all things as straw dogs. /The sage is not humane./ he regards all people as straw dogs”. The idea here is not misanthropist. Straw dogs refer to straw bales burned for sacrifices which in China mark life-sustaining natural functions like Spring and Harvest. So too human beings - - their bodies come and go as transformations within the whole, and for the one who identifies with the whole the “ancestral sacrifice is never suspended”. The *Tao-te Ching* thus says in Chapter 50 “in him [the sage] there is no room for death”. There are only changing functions, and the enlightened are one with each and all of them. Even “wild buffalo cannot butt their horns against him, tigers cannot fasten their claws into him, weapons of war cannot thrust their blades into him”. Magic-thinking interpretations abound around such claims of apparent invulnerability and immortality. Yet all that is meant is that understanding different life functions within the Tao enables vital co-existence with them, including voracious tigers. Even attacks by man-made weapons are met with non-being or empty space - in distance from them or by martial art elusion. Being and non-being are inseparable in the person of the Tao as they are in the Tao itself. If still murdered, the Tao does not die, nor do its functions. That is why “there is no room for death in the sage” whatever happens. In contrast, “violent people die a violent death - - the father of my teaching” (42).

What goes wrong to explain why so few open to the natural way? The answer is that the unenlightened want what they can get, the more without limit the better. For this mindset, Taoist natural function is absurdly out of fashion and to be laughed at. “If the lowest type did not laugh at it”, says Lao in Chapter 41, “it would not be the Tao”. The ultimate root of evil the *Tao-te Ching* argues is selfish desires, and it acknowledges “only the most diligent” get beyond this level. In Chapter 46, this ultimate principle of how the human condition goes wrong is especially categorical and far-reaching. “There is no calamity greater than lavish desires”, the *Tao-te Ching* says. “There is no greater guilt than discontentment. And there is no greater disaster than greed”. The principles apply as much to the present as 2500 years ago. Observe that not only is desire for ever more a motor of disaster, but discontentment is no less blameworthy. As in all religious philosophies, however, analysis remains at the level of individual motivation. While there is no criterial principle here whereby to distinguish desire and discontentment from real need, life-value analysis provides it – that without which life capacity and function are reduced. This principle of need-desire distinction is of ultimate importance here and elsewhere. It also fits well with the *Tao-te Ching* which argues to *reduce selfish desires* along with the converse to *rejoice in natural life function* - the innermost Taoist logic of good and bad across domains. The more impartial and comprehensive one’s life bearings, it is also clear, the more one is in accord with the Tao. “Who follows Tao is identified with the Tao - - - Being all-embracing he lasts forever - - - The all-embracing quality of the great virtue (*te*) follows from the Tao.” This is the *Tao-te Ching*’s answer to the problem of death. An all-embracing life is deathless.

This universal identity is also affirmed by the other great Taoist thinker, Chuang-tzu (also called Zhuangzi). He elaborates the enjoyment of “being one with the Tao” in transcendental terms. Thus he says in various contexts: “Personally realize the infinite to the highest degree and travel in the realm of which there is no sign - - To realize life is good is the way to realize death is good - - Even if great oceans burned up, he would not feel hot - - Being such he mounts upon the clouds and forces of heaven, rides on the

sun and moon, and roams beyond the four seas”. None of this is possible for the individual body, as magic-thinking interpretations misconceive the meaning. Chuang Tzu here speaks of the universal life of the sage who experiences all the transformations of Nature. Since s/he is one with the Tao, s/he “revolves in the infinite” and no more suffers death, burning, or spatio-temporal confinement than the Tao itself. Death of the individual life is natural for every being, he often affirms. Yet that it makes room for and enables other life is the reason *why* “what makes my life good is what makes my death good” – the profound unspoken meaning hidden within Chuang’s Chapter 6 aphorism.

#### 4.2. The Universal Life Principles beneath Relativism and Desires

An ultimate distinction between the philosophies of Lao and Chuang is that Chuang Tzu is a moral relativist, saying such things as: “If man sleeps in dampness, he will shrivel up and die, but is that true of eels? Who is right, the man or the eel?” Or more nihilistically: “Neither life nor death affects the sage, how much less can such matters as benefit and harm?” (Chapter 2). His implied argument is that since every being has its different requirements and joys, universal general claims of “right and wrong” must be false. Indeed he calls such moral universals “petty biases - - imposed on others” which do not recognize the differences among beings. Chuang Tzu adopts a kind of postmodernist position millennia before Postmodernism. Yet he captures the essence of Taoism and the Great Vehicle of Buddhism at the same time when he says, “the sage is united with the sound and breath of things” while still repudiating any principle of value common to all life. What Chuang and the anti-universal argument he founds do not recognize is that despite all such differences among beings and their functions, it remains true on a second-order level that *all* have life necessities of some kind which they must have (“benefits”) if their lives are not to be not to be despoiled (“harms”). Moreover for this higher-level understanding of natural life and function, the former is “right” and in accord with the Tao, while the latter is not and is therefore “wrong”.

As we have seen, Lao tzu recognizes this higher-order level of understanding in every generic principle considered above – in particular, the underlying general principles to nourish function and to move on, and to reduce all desires to life need. As so often happens, however, these higher-order principles of understanding are lost. Unexcavated as well is the underlying universal argument pattern applying to all human beings across cultures and times which the *Tao-te Ching* implies. We may call this the *desire reduction argument*. More burdened with reality than Chuang-tzu’s soaring imagination, its implicit train of reasoning is as follows:

- (1) desires beyond life needs are the ultimate problem;
- (2) most people seem to want more;
- (3) wanting more leads to conflict over who gets it;
- (4) this leads to sacrificial competition and war;
- (5) rules come in to limit the life sacrifice,
- (6) but are only effective on the level of appearances;
- (7) while life sacrifice is intensified by people competing for more
- (8) as desires grow in spite of external rules to stop them and pretenses of higher motive.
- (9) Therefore reduce desires, rules and competition by

(10) nourishing and enjoying natural life functions within the Tao.

(10) has been spelled out in prior explanation. It implies: (i) enabling natural life function (ii) within (iii) the infinite harmony of being and non-being/yin and yang in process (iv) with liberated enjoyment of the Tao's transformations (v) as the universal Way across time, place and changes. This is the 'way of universal life' decodable in the *Tao-te Ching*. Explanatory analysis now moves to *test* the Taoist philosophy at its most challenging turns of understanding.

## 5. Testing the Limits of the Tao: The Problems of Evil and Knowledge

As we have seen, Taoist action requires inclusive awareness of the mutually supportive functions of life in encompassing awareness of the Tao's infinite transformations in accordance with natural laws – the *Tao-te Ching's* spiritual ecology. At the most basic, the way of Nature seeks to follow the “Way of Heaven which reduces whatever is excessive and supplements what is insufficient” instead of the “way of man that reduces the insufficient to offer to the excessive” (Chapter 77). Scientifically decoded, “the Way of Heaven” can be equated to the ecological laws of nature. The “way of man”, on the other hand, is the inequality, dysfunction and waste of selfish rulers. As elsewhere, the underlying *social system* which selfish rulers express is a missing link of understanding. Taoism like other great philosophies of salvation focuses on selfish desires as the ultimate problem, not the regulating social mechanism that selects for these desires and their expansion across selves and generations. In any case, the *Tao-te Ching* gives a complex argument of why desires themselves are the problem, as we have seen above. The issue then becomes how people are to reduce their desires, leaving aside the question of social-system determination. The *Tao-te Ching* speaks to the problem of people's selfishness at many levels. The natural way is easier and more relaxed. It is in accord with Nature and the lives of other beings. It does not require contesting against others for what is wanted. Thus, the *Tao-te Ching* concludes, if rulers follow the way of minimal desires “the people will follow of their own accord”. Even when the “companions of death” are in ascendancy, the method is straightforward. “Do without ado”, he says in Chapter 63, “Prepare for the difficult while it is still easy - - Therefore the sage never strives for the great/And thereby the great is achieved”. Chapter 64 continues: “The journey of a thousand li begins where one stands - - The sage desires to have no desires”. There may be no chapter not somehow engaging the issue of reducing desires, working with natural function, and overcoming selfishness in attunement to the way of universal life.

The initially enigmatic Chapter 27 is especially illuminating on desire containment and its natural achievement. “A well-shut door needs no bolts, and yet it cannot be entered”, Lao says - meaning that people who remain true to life function and enjoyment require nothing to lock their desires in, including prisons. The *Tao-te Ching* continues, “A well-tied knot needs no rope, and yet none can untie it” – meaning that tying up people does not prevent crime while well-tied understanding cannot be undone. The underlying principle is that the Tao rejects no person and no thing, so neither should the rule of man. Like the Tao “the sage is always good in saving things so that nothing is rejected”. Likewise it “is always good in saving men with no man rejected” but again always directed to life function. In short, all is used for life with *no waste* of any person or

thing. “This is the light”. When the *Tao-te Ching* says in this chapter that “the bad is the material from which the good may learn./ He who does not value the teacher [of the bad]/ Or greatly care for the material [the bad itself]/ Is greatly deluded although he may be learned”, he speaks to the ancient “*problem of evil*” as it is known in philosophy and theology. His answer is not to eliminate bad people, but to enable learning from their wrongs while saving their lives. Observe the difference from the world’s dominant theologies and justice systems. At the personal level, one is reminded of the anonymous Sufi saying: “People punish and feel guilty for their sins, but the person of the path learns from his heedlessness”. For the *Tao-te Ching*, life function is always the guide. The converse is that if the bad does *not* provide resources to learn from - but continues to be suppressed, denied, unseen, caged, killed, or otherwise unused for better – then the learned are deluded and the people ignorant of the secret of the Tao. The worse the evil is, the more far-reaching the learning that is demanded. “Such is the essential mystery”, the chapter concludes.

What Lao repudiates is “knowledge” and “learning” imposed by memorization of received lines or conditioned reactions to force. When the *Tao-te Ching* shockingly says “Abandon learning” (Chapter 20), it immediately poses a question which appears to be a non-sequitur: “How much difference is there between ‘Yes Sir’, and ‘Of course not’ ”. The point is that learning and knowledge are *not* binary yes-no accumulations of word lines and behavioral repertoires – Yes Sir, No Sir in obedient reactions. The eternal lesson, the *Tao-te Ching* argues, is to understand the natural functions of the Tao. Official knowledge programmed into learners to compete for official position is, in contrast, “a disease” (Chapter 71. That is, it invades natural community with forced divisions and false pretenses of certitude disconnected from life need. Yet where do we draw the line with the reality principle of civilization? Here the *Tao-te Ching*’s second last chapter answers with the most radical “return to the roots” on record. We have already seen that the *Tao-te Ching* here recommends consigning man-made carriages, ships, weapons and utensils to less and less use. Here it goes on to say, “let the people again knot cords”. By this it means a return to the customary method of recording by knots in cords in place of the abstractions of written symbols. It thus calls into question the baseline of human civilization, the written word.

For the *Tao-te Ching*, not even movement beyond one’s own village should break the ties to the ancient ways embedded in Nature and direct life function. Here it goes further still and implies that literacy and numeracy decouple people from natural life function and that they should be allowed to return to tying knots instead. Lao’s position confronts us by a clear line of division between “natural function”(te) and *wu-wei*, on the one hand, and rules of thought and action like reading and writing abstract symbols, on the other. He seems thereby to reject what has most enabled the human species’ evolutionary success and elevation above the animal world. In opposition to the *Tao-te Ching*, life-value onto-axiology affirms reading and writing as of the highest value in capacitating humanity to ever more comprehensive ranges of life. The conflict of values here arises because Nature is the model for the *Tao-te-ching*, and literacy in writing is not found in Nature. Yet humanity can achieve deeper and wider understanding of natural functions and the laws of the Tao itself by reading and writing, as in ecological science. If Nature is the model, such deathless connective comprehension is ruled out. At the same time, without the written word in all its forms of creation and

communication, the crippling of humanly evolved capacities and their enjoyment would be entailed. We see here through the life function principle the limits of the natural Tao as well as the good of civilization.

### **5.1. The Tao versus Life-Incoherent ‘Development’: The 10,000 Chariots of Being**

Yet the *Tao-te Ching* uniquely flags the dangers of human civilization which had already begun to invade, destroy and enslave the societies and environments of aboriginal societies. In this way, the *Tao-te Ching* speaks for all the First Peoples of the world in observing what civilization and its abstract symbol systems do to the Way of Nature if not life coherent in principle – alienate mind from body, rulers from community function, technological powers from natural life functions, and human beings from direct experience. Not least, there is the people’s great loss of the companions and space of the natural life. “Where have our fellow creatures gone? Where do the waters flow pure with life? Where is the great music not drowned? - - ” . A great cry of loss has been heard over 500 years in the modern millennium and the *Tao-te Ching* composed 2500 years ago bears witness to it at an early stage of the world’s oldest civilization.

The globally ruling assumption says all this is inevitable and ultimately good in a grand narrative of ‘development’ which does not, however, distinguish between more commodities sold for profit and more life means for people – the core blindness of our era. The *Tao-te Ching* in deep contrast points to the experiencing life of the Natural Way and its leaving Nature free – with the enlightened person attuned to the infinite modes of Nature in myriad species transformations. “How”, the *Tao-te Ching* asks in its most dynamic single sentence, “can a lord of ten thousand chariots behave carelessly in his empire?”(Chapter 27). What this means is that the sage is conscious of the ten thousand beings of the Tao which bear him as the chariots of his being. This for the *Tao-te Ching* is the true life body of knowing beyond man’s doctrines and self desires. The later Chuang Tzu thus sings of the transcendental joys of being one with its universal life “If our bodies could go through ten thousand transformations without end”, he says of the Tao’s life-death cycles, “how incomparable such joy could be! Therefore the sage roams freely in the realm where nothing can escape but all endures” (Chapter 6).

### **6. The Mandate of Heaven, the Confucian Moral Order, and the Mohist Heresy**

Confucian humanism finds its historical ground in a profound historical change in the Chou conquest of the Shang dynasty long before the *Tao-te Ching* (1751-1112 BCE). This dynastic change marks a transition from tribal to feudal society in which prayers for rain are replaced by irrigation and, at the moral level, the Mandate of Heaven or Great Norm - a *higher self-existent moral law* - replaces an anthropomorphic Lord. The Shang were said to have failed in their duties and fulfillment of the Mandate of Heaven and its impartial and immutable moral ordering of the cosmos which the new dynasty claimed it served. This tradition of an ultimate moral validation of imperial rule and its passing from the dynasty that does not fulfill it to one that does continues for millennia to the Communist Revolution of 1949. This revolution itself may be interpreted as a

new dynasty fulfilling the moral Mandate of Heaven, only this time it is the Communist Party rather than a blood-line imperial dynasty.

“Heaven” throughout is not the heaven of a theist God or an otherworldly place. It is the source of ultimate moral law which properly governs the cosmos. While Confucian philosophy features Rules of Propriety, Humanity and Filial Piety within the Five Relations of Emperor-Minister, Father-Son, Husband-Wife, Older Brother-Younger-Brother and Guest-Host, Taoism, as we have seen above, rejects this whole normative framework for natural relations beneath official rules, roles and commands. Confucians on the other hand regarded the “five relations”/”moral relationships”/”universal ways” – all these terms are used to designate the same structure of *filial piety* and *propriety* - as based in natural law which necessitates the natural superiority and inferiority of the rulers and the ruled in each archetypal relationship. The emperor, minister, husband, and older brother are endowed with the right of superiors, and their inferior in each case of father and children, lord and subjects, man and wife, older and younger has the obligation to serve the senior position. Ever more detailed articulations of the rights and duties for each within these ruling-ruled relationships are then instituted through time. Most philosophically interesting is the relationship of guest-host with the guest in the ruling position. Perhaps the guest is the ‘official guest’ or, as interpreted today, the relationship between friends. Not much is said in the literature about the principle. “Filial piety” is in any case the generic concept for all of the five moral relationships and their derivatives. Thus the emperor regards the people as his children, the husband relates to his wife as weaker and dependent, the older person is paternal in relationship to the younger, and so on.

Why all this is singled out for philosophical analysis is that the whole complex edifice of ruling-serving relationships is simply *assumed* – not only through most of China’s history, but also through much of the history and culture of other East Asian societies like Japan and Korea. It operates as a kind regulating set of cultural universals defining the laws of how to live in society, with corresponding feelings of responsibility, guilt, shame and virtue attending the proper fulfillment of one’s position. This is the essential meaning of propriety and its subjective correlative of filial piety. In its original hold, it is more important than economics or worldly success and almost no known Confucian thinker puts profit or self-gain before duty. To do so is regarded by 2500 years of Confucian philosophy as the mark of an “inferior person”. As with Buddhism and other religions, however, wealthy businessmen have long been prominent in the funding of temples, monasteries and institutions whose moral principles were prior to globalization felt to properly govern their conduct and aspirations.

The hierarchy of moral authority in Confucianism ultimately begins in the Mandate of Heaven itself to which the Emperor or “Son of Heaven” is himself bound in filial piety and service – and so on through minister, father, husband, older brother, and received guest. Slaves, younger sisters, and workers do not warrant mention in the five moral relationships, but fall into the inferior role down the line in organized order. Nothing is more important than order and harmony in China’s ages-old civilization and societies influenced by it - not only for the dominant Confucian culture but for its adversaries of Taoism and Mohism and eventually for the Communist Party. The critical question arises. Cannot even absolutism or fascism be claimed as desirable for the ordered

harmony it imposes? This meta question is not asked within the dominant traditions including after the Communist Party's ascension to rule. Rather, thousands of rules and regulations sedimented over centuries to articulate specific duties and obligations within the ultimate framework of ruling-ruled and the "moral relationships" it governs. According to the sacred Book of Rites transmitted by Confucius in its later form as the *Doctrine of the Mean*, "the Great Way of the sage" embraces "the three hundred rules of ceremonies and the three thousand rules of conduct" (Chapter 27). This maze of decorum is what the Tao-te Ching repudiated as unnatural. With their unifying universal moral principles of the five relations, however, Confucian philosophy presupposes the regulating edifice as natural and eternal. While the Legalist School in China emphasizes law and punishment instead of *jen* to bring naturally bad dispositions into the required obedience, its position is little respected by the sage tradition. "Legalism" reports Wing tsit Chan seeks "regimentation, accumulation of power, subjugation of the individual, uniformity of thought, and use of force". The general pattern of state absolutism may be familiar, but the title of this school as "Legalism" seems misconceived since it prioritizes imperial command over rule of law, dismisses legal precedent as relevant only to the past, and provides for no rights to individuals and communities beyond ruler ordinances.

What most distinguishes Confucian thought from such absolutism is the central importance of *jen* - which is exactly equated to "*human-heartedness*" over 2300 years since Mencius. It means to think and act in terms from the heart of the golden rule, first articulated by Confucius as "don't not do unto others what you would not have done unto you". (*Analects* 5:11). One must think from an organized heart. Thus the father-son relationship – the paradigm of the moral hierarchy of filial piety – ought never to do to his son what he would not like done to him *if he were the son* in the inferior position. The structure of rule and subordination is itself never questioned. The five moral relations are assumed as natural, necessary and ordained by Heaven. Ruin is believed to follow free violation, especially if the Emperor at the top disobeys his father - the source of the ruling moral order itself. He thereby loses "the Mandate of Heaven". When Communism comes to rule China after over 2500 years of this moral hierarchy of rule remaining in place, it understandably rejects Confucianism as "feudal" and "reactionary". While the new rule seems thus to override the five moral relations, it essentially re-frames them within "the Party's leading role" at all levels in the "collective interest of the working class", the ultimate ground of moral and political value in this philosophy. Heaven, however, does not disappear as a concept, but is expressed in such mottoes as "Women Hold Up Half of Heaven". Relations of rule and subordination continue, but within a revolutionarily re-set vertical hierarchy of social order. Inherited private property as the basis of lordship and command is first eradicated in the name of the working class, but after deep "market reforms" the ruling order becomes a hybrid. Developing under non-private central authority with no sacred dogmas of 'an invisible hand' regulating production and distribution, this mass-industrializing order has developed to global dominance in the last decade. While all this has been understood as a revolution indebted to the European philosophy of Marxism-Leninism, it might be most simply comprehended as the Mandate of Heaven passing to a new Emperor, the Communist Party.

In this light, the defining philosophy of rule by collective worker interests has thread-lines to the ancient past, specifically the Mohist philosophy first articulated 24 centuries

earlier. The philosophy of Mo Tzu (479-438 BCE) not only helps to define Confucian philosophy by negation. Its proto ideal of the universal human right to live humanly across class and other divisions anticipates perhaps the greatest long-term movement in human thought. While Mo Tzu's philosophy is today hardly known beyond scholars of Chinese philosophy, its underlying core idea has proved timeless. The principle of "universal love" becomes advocated for the first time, and it is defined in this-worldly terms: promotion of benefit and removal of harm for all people whatever their position within society.

### **6.1. The Mo Tzu: The First Philosophy of Human Rule for Universal Social Well-Being**

Mo Tzu's defining and ultimately regulating principle of thought is comprehensive and universalist: "*to serve the promotion of benefits for the world and removal of harm from the world*". This doctrine of "universal love" as Mo calls it predates Christianity by almost five centuries, but is repudiated by Confucianism since its emergence as "love without distinctions". Even Communist philosophy which may be seen as analogous in claimed ideals to Mohism never mentions it. The essential reason the Confucian tradition has been dismissive of Mohism is that it promotes what becomes a permanent slogan of invalidation – a "universal love without distinctions". This form of love is repudiated from the start because it is seen as an indiscriminate negation of the graded relations of responsibility and honor within the family, the community and the wider world. The superior and inferior ranks of hierarchical order are first principles which are believed necessary and natural for social harmony and stable positional functions. As Mohism is perceived to challenge the very organizing principles of the ruling order, it is attacked by even the progressive Mencius. Almost as provocative to Confucian orthodoxy, Mohism like Taoism rejected elaborate ceremonies, expensive funerals, and privileges of rank. All are repudiated as a waste of resources properly devoted to promote universal benefit for the people. What is needed instead, *The Mo Tzu* argues, is a universal love in which other countries, families, all regard each others' lives "*as their own*" whatever their positions within the five relations and feudal-lord domains (Part 2, Chapter 15). In this way, Mo Tzu claimed, no more divisions can occur between rich and poor, oppressor and oppressed, cunning and ignorant, strong and weak, and so on.

To provide a sense of the radical nature of Mo Tzu's vision, we may note why contemporary Communist Party culture is silent on Mo Tzu, but not Confucius whose teachings are now exported to Western universities. Mo tzu opposes what it promotes - graded orders of benefits and positional privilege, notably between greater and lesser payment according to the designated value of work performed, but also lavish private profits from industrial enterprises while hundreds of millions are impoverished without social security. The ultimate problem of Mohism for Confucian thought, in contrast, is that "universal love without distinctions" means that one should regard other people as members of one's own family, or another man as one's father, or a worker as a minister of state, or - - There was no limit to the gross impropriety and breaking the mould of social order that was seen. Thus almost every known Confucian thinker after Mo Tzu rejects his doctrine of equality a-priori. Not until K'ang Yu-wei in the twentieth century does such an ideal arise again. The Mohist ideals of universal mutual benefit and prevention of harm are visions that do not die. What is most provocative to ruling

culture is that Mo Tzu does not just expatiate about a utopian possibility, but advocates enforcement of these ideals by law – including by the elimination of lavish ceremonies which Confucians abhorred as an attack on the arts and culture itself. We may recall Lao’s rejection of the official arts and ceremonies, but Mo Tzu goes further. Legal punishment and reward are to enforce the social re-ordering. Lavish privilege is not to be only criticized for its violation of natural function, but to be prohibited by force of law. This was and is anathema to Confucian thinking and ruling ideology in general. Yet according to Mo, enforcement of universal benefit and prevention of harm follows from the fact that it is self-evidently the “will of Heaven” (*Tienzi*) which shows it “loves all people” by the means of life it provides for humanity (Part 1, Chapter 26). Heaven’s mandate must therefore be implemented by humanity. Accordingly, rewards are to go to those who follow the path of universal benefit, and punishment to those who do not, as in the golden-age past of “sage kings”. Like most Confucians and Lao tzu, Mo Tzu looks to an ancient golden age of sagely rule.

There is no need here to labor the problems of meaning and implementation in Mo Tzu’s vision of righteous rule. What are the sound criteria to decide benefit and harm across times, individuals and cultures? What are the defining principles to decide the punishments and rewards to ensure them? How can productive provision be ensured if all are guaranteed life means? These were not the questions Confucians posed, however. It was the lack of discrimination between persons, families and ranks that was unacceptable. Although Mo Tzu was himself once a chief officer of Sung, the force of his movement and school arose out of the dispossessed classes. Mohism flourished with many followers for two centuries, and then no Mohist philosopher appeared again. As the leading scholar of Chinese philosophy, Wing tsit Chan, explains: “If it is correct that Mohism represented the interests of the working class, then the opposition between Confucianism and Mohism is a foregone conclusion”. He adds the Mohist “condemnation of war did not endear them to rulers” - - Mo Tzu who had about 300 followers “did not hesitate to walk for ten days and nights to dissuade a ruler from making war”. In effect, Mohism has been remembered only as what Confucianism was *not* - another expunction of a doctrine in conflict with the ruling order. In this case, however, Mohism challenged the now oldest continuous order in history with perhaps the oldest opposing vision, an equal humanity under law.

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Herrigel, Eugen (1953/1971), *Zen and the Art of Archery*, 90pp. New York: Vintage Books. [A classic study of Zen practice by a philosopher who reports his training immersion in its discipline over six years to achieve enlightenment.]

Hume, David, (electronic), *The Complete Works and Correspondence of David Hume* [The famous sceptic leads Anglo-American philosophy in erasing the significance of the inner life, arguing that that the self is but a bundle of perceptions with no core, and that the proper relation of human reason to appetites and passions is not to guide but “to serve and obey them”.]

James, William (1902/1990), *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 517 pp. New York: Vintage Books. [James’ classic work on religion where his signature concept of pragmatism - the truth is what works - is used to assess religious belief, leading to his notion of “a mother sea of consciousness” as a dynamic “finite God”.]

Jonas, Hans (1963), *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* 432 pp. Boston: Beacon Press. [The eminent theologian and phenomenologist explains the Gnostic split between the divine paradise of God and the fallen world of the Demiurge maker which it is the mission of Jesus and humanity to heal.]

Jones, Alexander (ed) (1972), *Jerusalem Bible*, 1693pp. [The most scholarly of contemporary translations, this primary source includes all Old and New Testament books with notes.]

Jung, Karl (1957), “On the Tibetan Book of the Dead”, in Evans-Wentz (trans), *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, pp. xliv-lxiv. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [This overview provides a synthesis of Jung’s psychological ontology and Tibetan Buddhism, with truth won by recognition that light consciousness with no circumference is the ground and ultimate reality with “categories of the imagination” projecting onto the world unconscious as “reality”.]

Kierkegaard, S. (1978), *Kierkegaard's Writings*, (eds. H.V. and E.V. Hong) 24 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press. [The most comprehensive collection of Kierkegaard's work explains his exploration of the "infinite inwardness" as connected to a transcendent, unknowable God.]

*Kabbalah* (trans. D.C. Matt), 221 pp. San Francisco, Harper. [This is a translation of selections from the Jewish mystic tradition seeking cosmic consciousness without denying the world.]

*Koran* (trans. Dawood, N.J.), 454pp. London: Penguin. [This is a scholarly translation and transparent arrangement of the Holy Qur'an with historical notes.]

McLuhan, T.C. (1971), *Touch the Earth*, 261 pp. New York: Pocket Books. [This is perhaps the richest survey of direct shortish quotations from the First Peoples of North America.]

McMurtry, J. (1989), *Understanding War*, 90 pp. Toronto: Science for Peace [A concise overview demonstrating the locked choice-spaces of the military paradigm of war with decoding of religious justifications as cover stories of political-economic power.]

McMurtry, J. (1998), *Unequal Freedoms: The Global Market As An Ethical System*, 372 pp. Toronto and Westport CT: Garamond and Kumarian [Introduces concepts of universal life identity and civil commons as alternative to refuted principles of capitalist doctrine.]

McMurtry, J. (2002), *Value Wars: The Global Market versus the Life Economy*, 262pp. London: Pluto Press [Tracks the underlying principles of money-value versus life-value in the 'new world order' across wars, ecological crises, financial predation, and public-sector meltdowns.]

Merton, Thomas (1961), *Mystics and Zen Masters*, 302 pp. New York: Delta. [A leading Christian monk provides a survey of mystic thinkers across the world featuring Zen/Buddhism.]

Mitchell, S. (1991), *The Enlightened Mind*, 221 pp. New York: Harper-Collins. [This anthology of over 50 sages across cultures includes selections by Dogen and Einstein.]

Muller, Max, (ed) (1879-1910), *Sacred Books of the East*, 50 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press. [Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Islam, Parsi/Zarathustran, Confucian and Taoist scriptures are translated in the most comprehensive reference source extant.]

Nicholson, Reynaud Alleyne (1914/1963), *The Mystics of Islam*, 178 pp. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. [This is a classic account of Sufi mystics and mysticism through the ages.]

Perry, R.B. (1969), *Realms of Value: A Critique of Human Civilization*, 487 pp. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. [Perry justifies the ruling idea that the good = what is desired, an axiology which implicitly justifies the value-system of a globalized market order.]

Plato (1961), *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (ed. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns), New York: Pantheon Books: [Plato's "Theory of Forms" – very influential in Christianity and Islam - posits pure, transcendental, eternal ideas of which all material entities are inferior, mutable copies.]

Radhakrishnan, S. and Moore, C. (1957), *Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*, 683pp. Princeton: Princeton University Press. [This premier reference source of Indian philosophy includes the full texts of the principal Upanishads, Bhagavad-gita, and definitive sources of Buddhism.]

Robinson, J.M. (ed.) (1978), *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 549 pp. San Francisco: Harper. [This scholarly collection includes the non-fitting Gospel of Thomas.]

Samuelson, Paul and Nordhaus W.D. (2005), *ECONOMICS*, 784 pp. New York: McGraw-Hill. [This is the standard global reference text of contemporary economics in which the preface invokes the value imperative to "Spread the gospel of [capitalist] economics anyway we can".]

Shah, Idries (1964), *The Sufis*, 452 pp. New York: Doubleday. [Shah assembles Sufi stories in illustration of a spiritually open and dynamic philosophy outside official rules and dogma.]

Schweitzer, Albert (1936), “The Ethics of Reverence for Life”, *Christendom*, 1, 225-39. [This is the most crystalline argument for theologian Schweitzer’s argument for “an absolute ethics of will-to-live [which] must reverence every form of life”.]

Smith, Adam (1776/1966), *An Inquiry into Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. 2 vols. New York: A.M. Kelley. [This is the founding work of “the moral science” in which the “invisible hand” of the “free market” is understood to necessitate the “common good”.]

Solomon, R.C. and Higgins, K. (1995), *World Philosophy: A Text with Readings*, 350 pp. New York: McGraw-Hill. [A distinctively all-round collection from all continents and traditions.] .

Spinoza, Baruch (1985), *The Collected Works of Spinoza* (ed. E. Curley), 7 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press. [Spinoza argues that God is infinite substance whose thinking and extended modes and attributes are rational in structure and can be better (more adequately) or worse (less adequately) comprehended by deductive reasoning to one rational whole.]

Suzuki, D.T. (1956). *Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings of D.T. Suzuki* (ed. W. Barrett). 294 pp. Garden City N.Y.: Doubleday [Writings of the most widely recognized scholar of Zen.]

Tatia, Nathmal (1994), *Tattvartha Sutra; That Which Is*, 324 pp. New York: HarperCollins.[The sacred texts with notes of the Jain religion.]

Tillich, Paul (1958), *Dynamics of Faith*, 276 pp. New York: Harper Torchbooks.[Theologian Tillich undogmatically explains God’s will in humanity as “ultimate concern”.]

Whitehead, A.N. (1938), *Modes of Thought*, 172 pp. New York: Macmillan [Whitehead’s “process philosophy” conceives Nature as “alive”, “feeling”, and “purposing” energy flows consistent with dynamic physics, the totality of which processes he conceives as God.]

### **Biographical Sketch**

**John McMurtry** holds his B.A. and M.A. from the University of Toronto and his Ph.D. from University College London, and has been a longtime Professor of Philosophy at the University of Guelph and now University Professor Emeritus. An elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, his many articles, chapters, books and interviews have been globally published and translated.