

MEDITATION AND RITUAL IN NEO-CONFUCIAN TRADITION

Compared with the study of the meditative traditions in Buddhism and Hinduism, American scholarly research on meditation in Chinese Neo-Confucianism has only begun to flourish. The following essay is intended as a general introduction to the problem of quiet-sitting (*ching-tso*) as a meditative form of Neo-Confucian self-cultivation which, as will be shown later, is related to the Neo-Confucian concept of action as ritual.

To Sagehood through Self-cultivation

It is generally acknowledged that the central focus of the Neo-Confucian philosophy of life is the realization of sagehood which begins with self-cultivation.¹ Such self-cultivation, of which meditation is only one aspect, is based on the premise that man is inherently good and therefore has the ontological imperative to realize his innate goodness through self-cultivation.² For the Neo-Confucian, the challenge to self-cultivation lies in ordinary existence which requires every act of daily life and social intercourse to be performed as a sacred ritual with an attitude of reverence.³ In this regard, the Neo-Confucians saw themselves to be different from the Buddhists and Taoists whom they criticized as being negativistic and quietistic.

Historically quiet sitting as a form of meditation became an important aspect of Neo-Confucian self-cultivation only after the

1. Wei-ming Tu, "The Neo-Confucian Concept of Man", *Philosophy East and West* XXI:1 (January 1971), p. 79; see also Wei-ming Tu, "Li as a Process of Humanization," *Philosophy East and West* XXII:2 (April 1972), p. 187.

2. Wei-ming Tu, "The Neo-Confucian Concept of Man", p. 79.

3. Tu, "Li as a Process of Humanization", p. 190; see also Wei-ming Tu, "The Creative Tension between *jen* and *li*," *Philosophy East and West* XVIII:1-2 (January/April 1968), pp. 29-39.

introduction of Buddhism to China. Seeking methods of calming both body and mind, Neo-Confucians of the Sung period (960-1280) emulated Ch'an Buddhist practices of meditation for their austerity and rigour, but in doing so, domesticated and secularized them.⁴ The specifics of Neo-Confucian quiet sitting will be detailed later. Suffice it to say here that quiet-sitting, though influenced by Buddhism, was considered by the Neo-Confucians to be different from its Buddhist antecedents which they criticized as quietistic, nihilistic, and world negating. The validity of these Neo-Confucian criticisms of Buddhism need not concern us here. What is important to understand is that they reflect the kind of image which the Neo-Confucians had of themselves as being more world-affirming and socially oriented than the Buddhists.⁵ This positive self-image sets the tone of the Neo-Confucian conceptualization of quiet-sitting as a form of self-cultivation.

Emphasis on self-cultivation which provides the context for the later practice of quiet-sitting can be traced to such classical texts as the *Analects (Lun-yü)* of Confucius, the *Mencius*, *The Great Learning (Ta-hsüeh)*, and *The Doctrine of the Mean (Chung-yung)*. These classical sources stipulate a two-pronged approach to self-cultivation wherein the Confucian gentleman nurtures both his "inner sageliness" and his "outer kingliness".⁶ The way in which such cultivation was carried out was based on a unitary vision of man as one with the universe. This vision, which was explicitly articulated in *Mencius* and *The Doctrine of the Mean*, states that man by nature is good, and in that sense already is what he ought to become because, in his oneness with Heaven and earth, he partakes of the goodness of Heaven and earth. According to *Mencius*, man is endowed with the feelings of commiseration, shame and dislike, deference and compliance (reverence and res-

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4. Wm. Theodore de Bary, "Neo-Confucian Cultivation and the Seventeenth century 'Enlightenment'," (hereafter cited as de Bary, "Cultivation and Enlightenment") in Wm. Theodore de Bary, etc. al., eds., *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), pp. 161-162.
 5. For a discussion of the Neo-Confucian critique of Buddhism see Charles Wei-hsun Fu, "Morality or Beyond: The Neo-Confucian Confrontation with Māhāyāna Buddhism," *Philosophy East and West* XXIII:3 (July 1973), pp. 375-396.
 6. Allusion to *Chuang Tzu*, Chapter, 13; see Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (hereafter cited as Chan, *Source Book*) (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 208-209.

pect), and right and wrong which are the beginnings of the four cardinal virtues of humanity, righteousness, propriety and wisdom.⁷ The full realization of these four beginnings is the basis for "fulfilling one's Nature and knowing Heaven".⁸ *The Doctrine of the Mean*, on the other hand, considered that man's Nature had been mandated from Heaven and as such shared in the goodness, sincerity and creativity of Heaven.⁹ This Nature both gives man the imperative to become good and endows in him the strength, sincerity and creativity through which to realize that goodness.

In Neo-Confucianism the unitary vision of human nature and a moral, creative universe was expanded and deepened by equating Heaven, human Nature and the cardinal virtue of humanity (*jen*) with the concepts of Principle (*li*) and the Supreme Ultimate (*t'ai-chi*) which are one but pervade all things. On this basis it is possible for Chang Tsai (1020-1077) to say:

Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother and even such a small creature as I finds an intimate place in their midst. Therefore, that which fills the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my Nature. All people are my brothers and sisters and all things are my companions.¹⁰

It was also possible for Ch'eng Hao (1032-1085) to write that "the man of humanity (*jen*) forms one body with all things without any differentiation".¹¹ Man thus becomes a filial son of the universe with a mission to care for all the myriad things. Because of the humanity (*jen*) within him, man is the most sentient of all beings with a power of sympathy and empathy with things and an inner urge to penetrate the universe. Man can fulfil his potential to "form one body with all things without differentiation" partly by mastering himself to understand that Nature which he shares with all things and partly by having the determination, courage, and energy, to investigate Principle (*li*) in as many things

7. Mencius, II A:6, VI A:6.

8. Mencius, VII A:1

9. *Chung Yung*, XXII; see also Wei-ming Tu, *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Chung-yung* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1976), p. 117.

10. Chang Tsai, "The Western Inscription," Chan, *Source Book*, p. 497; see also Tu, "The Neo-Confucian Concept of Man," p. 81.

11. Ch'eng Hao, "On Understanding the Nature of Jen (Humanity)," in Chan, *Source Book*, p. 523; see also Tu, "The Neo-Confucian Concept of Man", p. 82.

as possible. As a result, by a gradual process of inclusion, man comes to embrace the entire universe.¹²

Given the nature of his being, if man fails to extend his sensitivity to all things, it is only because his humanity becomes "paralysed" or obscured.¹³ The source of the obscuring, that is the source of evil, is defined differently by different Neo-Confucians. Since this essay deals with self-cultivation of the type practised by the followers of Ch'eng I (1033-1107) and Chu Hsi (1130-1200), it will also examine the problem of evil from Chu Hsi's perspective. According to Chu Hsi, evil can be explained by the fact that moral Principle (*li*) which is innately good and is identical with man's basic Nature (*hsing*) is incorporated into each individual in a physical human body composed of *ch'i* (energy-matter) which can be either good or evil. *Ch'i*, in addition to composing the physical body, is also found along with Principle in the mind (*hsin*) where it is expressed as feelings, emotions, intellect, volitional ideas and the like. If these mental functions become excessive, they manifest themselves as selfish desire and attachments which are evil. Hence in Chu Hsi's system the goal of inner cultivation, which sometimes takes the form of meditation, is to purify the mind to allow the goodness of one's Nature rather than the evil of excessive emotions (*ch'i*) to manifest itself.¹⁴

On the basis of the first chapter of *The Doctrine of the Mean*, Neo-Confucians of the Ch'eng-Chu persuasion identified two aspects of mind which require cultivation if the goodness of man's Nature is to be realized: 1) the tranquil, quiescent mind before feelings and thoughts have arisen and 2) the active, feeling, thinking mind.¹⁵ Since the tranquil mind is the abode of Principles which man shares in common with the entire universe and since the functions of the active mind are to be expressed in due degree in accord with those universal Principles in the context of human society, the approach to self-cultivation implied in *The Doctrine of the Mean* takes on cosmic proportions. It is far from being mere cultivation of the private self. On the one hand,

12. Tu, "The Neo-Confucian Concept of Man," pp. 82-83.

13. Ch'eng Hao, "Selected Sayings," in Chan, *Source Book*, p. 530:11.

14. See Chan, *Source Book*, pp. 588-653; Tu, "The Neo-Confucian Concept of Man," pp. 83-84.

15. For an analysis of this passage see Tu, *Centrality and Commonality*, pp. 2-6.

the Neo-Confucian's experience of the tranquillity of the unactivated mind is an experience not just of the quiescent mind alone but of the ultimate reality of the universe (*li*) as well. On the other hand the harmonious expression of man's activated feelings must take place within the human community.¹⁶ For according to the Neo-Confucian, the quiescent mind necessarily must become activated and must find expression in human relationships. Such a theory of cultivation which presupposes man's connection both with the cosmos and with society presents a balanced vision of man and the universe which is neither Heaven-centred nor man-centred but which rather focuses on the dynamic mutuality between them. Man finds a transcendent anchorage in Heaven or Principle by nurturing the Principle contained in his quiescent mind while Heaven or Principle finds immanent confirmation in man as he expresses himself in the relationships of human society.¹⁷

The actual process of self-cultivation in Neo-Confucianism is a dialectical interplay between mental self-examination which sometimes takes the form of meditation and daily activity as ritual. There is no linear progression either from the external, active aspects of cultivation to the tranquil, internal ones or vice versa. Rather, cultivation for the active and tranquil aspects of the self are meant to mutually complement and support each other.¹⁸ Nevertheless, for purposes of clarity this essay will first explore the internal, meditative aspects of cultivation and then the external, ritual ones. It should be kept in mind that this essay aims at presenting a composite picture of Ch'eng-Chu meditation and ritual practices. From among the variety of practices and theories that will be described, individual Neo-Confucians establish their own priorities of emphasis. In actuality there is considerably more variation in individual practice of self-cultivation among Neo-Confucians, even of the Ch'eng-Chu school, than is implied by the following description.

The Interior Path of Self-cultivation

The beginning point of Neo-Confucian self-cultivation is found in each individual's inner decision to follow the path to

16. Tu, *Centrality and Commonality*, pp. 5-6.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 8

18. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

self-realization and sagehood. One "sets one's will" (*li-chih*) on cultivation¹⁹ — a decision which is possible to man because of the internal reserves of goodness and creativity within his very being. Once one's will is set, one's decision made, cultivation becomes an ongoing process which requires courage and moral strength, not so much because the specific acts of cultivation (e.g., treating one's father as he should be treated) are so difficult, but because of the difficulty in maintaining total consistency in practice. To be effective, cultivation must be pervasive and never-ending, and there lies the difficulty. "Isolated acts of righteousness"²⁰ (like treating one's father properly some of the time) do not amount to much. Only the constant accumulation of righteous deeds (like treating one's father and all other human beings properly every moment of every day) can lead to the gradual transformation of the self.²¹ Even the sages must maintain this pervasive constancy of cultivation, for the being of the sage rests in his doing. When he ceases to act as a sage, his mind becomes overridden with desires (i.e., evil, "wilted" *ch'i*), and he will cease to be a sage. Put another way, even the "sage" must continually cultivate himself because, no matter how "sagely" he becomes, there are still aspects of the infinity of the Way which he has not plumbed to the most profound depths or been able to put into practice.²²

It is also crucial that self-cultivation must be pursued "for the self"²³ through personal integrity and commitment to the moral life in all situations. Mere expedient compliance with the demands of society or the expectations of peers will not suffice. Such inner integrity and sense of purpose can be gained by creating what the Ch'eng-Chu Neo-Confucians referred to as a master, ruler, or centre (*chu*) in the mind. The "master" in the mind is a guiding intent and inner collectedness of mind that can enable man to avoid both the abandoned pursuit of fame and fortune externally, and the quest for excessive quietism and emptiness in the mind. For the followers of Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi, the "master" in the mind is an attitude called reverence or seriousness (*ching*).

19. Tu, "The Creative Tension between *jen* and *li*," p. 32.

20. *Mencius*, II A:2.

21. *Ibid.*, see also *Chung Yung*, VIII and Tu, *Centrality and Commonality*, p. 41.

22. *Chung Yung* XII; see also Tu, *Centrality and Commonality*, p. 43.

23. *Analects*, XV: 23; see also Tu, *Centrality and Commonality*, p. 26.

This *ching* (reverence) was taken by some Neo-Confucians as an alternative to the Buddhist *ching* (quietude) as an approach to mind cultivation.²⁴ Indeed an examination of the Neo-Confucian *ching* (reverence) can provide one a means for understanding the total Th'eng-Chu approach to self-cultivation since such reverence is an attitude which permeates all aspects of cultivation. *Ching* (reverence/seriousness) is an ancient Chinese concept going back to the time before Confucius. Originally, the term implied an attitude of reverence shown by an inferior to his superior and included the attitude of men toward deities and spiritual beings. Later, the term came to denote care, attentiveness, concentration or devotion shown by a person while performing duties entrusted to him by a superior. For example, Confucius refers to care or attentiveness (*ching*) in carrying out filial duties to parents.²⁵ Finally, by extension, *ching* came to imply the respect that man shows towards his inner self. As an attitude toward parents or spirits, *ching* is collected, concentrated and free from muddle or distraction. It allows man to be in full possession of himself at all times and allows the mind to be engaged in action as well as in contemplation. Moreover, the various aspects and meanings of *ching* are interdependent. To collect the self and be attentive implies respect and taking things seriously; being respectful or reverential implies being collected and attentive.²⁶

By early Ming times, (1368-1644), certain Neo-Confucians like Hu Chü-jen (1434-1484), süeh Hsüan (1389-1464), Wu Yü-pi (1392-1469), and others came to analyse the concept of *ching* in terms of wide variety of concepts and practices derived from the early Confucian classics and the writings of the Sung philosophers. Hu Chü-jen, for example, saw *ching* as being composed of at least nine aspects and as being relevant to cultivation of the mind in both its active and quiescent states and to the practice of action as ritual.

Hu regarded five aspects of reverence (*ching*) as being relevant to the quiescent mind before feelings are aroused. He termed these aspects 1. maintaining, preserving, nourishing, and nurturing

24. Yung-ch'un Ts'ai, *The philosophy of Ch'eng I* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1950), p. 257.

25. *Analects*. II:7, IV:18.

26. Ts'ai, *The Philosophy of Ch'eng I*, p. 249; A.C. Graham, *Two Chinese Philosophers: Ch'eng Ming-tao and Ch'eng Yi-ch'un* (London: Lund Humphries, 1958), pp. 68-69.

or 'self-preservation and self-nourishing (*ts'ao-ts'un han-yang*)²⁷. 2. concentrating on one thing without getting away from it (*chu-i wu-shih*),²⁸ 3. always to be doing something—where the "doing" implies a constant collectedness of the quiescent mind (*pi yu shih yen*)²⁹, 4. being reverent and thereby straightening the inner life (*ching i chih-nei*)³⁰, and 5. caution and apprehension (*chieh-shen k'ung-chü*)³¹. All of these generally refer to a concentration of the quiescent mind rather than being an objective focusing on one thing which implies concentration in the sense of an increased density of the quiescent mind being aware of its own nature. The mind is capable of generating such concentrated integration because of its innate *ability* to know and produce feelings; although at this stage of cultivation, the knowing and feelings are not yet aroused and as yet have no objects to focus upon. The quiescent mind in a state of reverence or *ching* nurtures the virtues of humility, righteousness, property and wisdom, which ontologically are part of man's Nature within his mind. The nurturing takes place because the pure, objectless attitude of reverence fills the mind, straightens it, and keeps out evil spontaneously without use of coercion.³²

The quiescent mind "mastered" by reverence is frequently compared to a house with its lord in residence. Chaos cannot enter such a house even though the lord inside may not be actively doing anything. Similarly, with *ching* or reverence at home as "master" of the mind, chaos and selfishness cannot enter.³³ The "mastered" quiescent mind is sometimes referred to by the Neo-Confucians as No-Mind (*wu-hsin*). This No-Mind, compared to the Buddhist idea of the same name, is seen to be a mind with no selfishness, a mind that is not manipulated, and is not irreversibly "set either for anything or against anything."³⁴ It is merely

27. *Ts'ao-ts'un* is an allusion to *Mencius* VI A:8.

28. An allusion to the Ch'eng brothers, see *Erh Ch'eng ch'uan-shu* (Ssu-pen-pei-yao edition), 15:1a; see also Chan, *Source Book*, p. 552.

29. *Mencius*, II A:2

30. *I Ching*: Wen Yen Commentary to the k'un hexagram.

31. *Chung Yung* I

32. Analysis of *ching* is based on *Hu Chü-jen. Chü-yeh lu (Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng edition, Shanghai, 1935-37)*, chapters II, III & VIII *passim*; see also my article "Hu Chü-jen's Self-Cultivation as Reverence and Ritual in Everyday Life," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, forthcoming.

33. *Hu, Chü-yeh lu*, III:35:6.

34. *Analects*, IV: 10.

empty, open, receptive to the moral Principle (*li*) which fills its vacuity and thus allows the perfected mind to reflect the moral structure, dynamism, and creativity of the universe. Neo-Confucians believe that the idea of No-Mind represents a fruitful, creative tension. On the one hand, No-Mind is vacuous (*hsü*) i.e. open and at peace with no incoming impressions: yet simultaneously it is full (*shih*) of moral Principle and is thus not totally nihilistically void as the Neo-Confucians believe the Buddhist "No-Mind" to be.³⁵

The Ch'eng-Chu Neo-Confucians also saw another three or four aspects of reverence (*ching*) as being relevant to cultivation of the active mind after feelings have been aroused. These aspects include: 1. Being watchful over the self while alone (*shen-tu*)³⁶ which is an aspect of reverence directed at the springs of motivation, at observing thoughts at their inception as they emerge from the quiescent mind. Such watchfulness should have the quality of trembling in fear as if on the brink of an abyss or treating on thin ice; for at the moment of inception, feelings can either ascend to goodness or descend to selfish desire.³⁷ 2. Aroused alertness (*t'ihsi-huan-hsing*) which can prevent negative mind states from arising. 3. Self-examination and observation (*hsing-ch'a*) either of feelings at the moment of inception or of already activated feelings and ideas. Self-examination allows man to discern which thoughts are good and which are evil and aids man in conquering the evil ideas and preserving and strengthening the good ones. 4. Being righteous and thereby squaring the external life (*i i fang-wai*)³⁸, which is an aspect of reverence that bridges cultivation of the active mind and engagement in action as ritual. As an attitude of the active mind, righteousness as an aspect of reverence aids man in manifesting to the proper degree the feelings

35. de Bary, "Cultivation and Enlightenment," p. 184; Ts'ai, the *Philosophy of Ch'eng I*, p. 251; Graham, *Two Chinese Philosophers*, pp. 70-71; Heinrich Busch, "The Tung-lin Academy and its Political and Philosophical Significance," (hereafter cited as Busch, "Tung-lin Academy"), *Monumenta Serica* XIV (1949-55), p. 125.

36. *Ta Hsüeh*, VI; *Chung Yung*, I.

37. *Shih Ching*, Pt. II, Bk. 5, Ode 2, stanza 6; *Analects*, VIII: 3; see also Chün-i T'ang, "The Development of the Concept of Moral Mind from Wang Yang-ming to Wang Chi," in Wm. Theodore de Bary, et al., eds., *Self and Society in Ming Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), pp. 96-97.

38. *I Ching*: Wen Yen Commentary to the k'un hexagram:

of commiseration, shame and dislike, respect and reverence, and a sense of right and wrong. These feelings are the active manifestations of the virtues of humanity, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom which are inherent in man's nature.³⁹

The Rituals of Self-cultivation

So far, this essay has dealt primarily with the theories used by Neo-Confucians to explain their approach to mind cultivation or meditation. The question remains as to how the theories were put into practice. In other words, how did one actually go about collecting the quiescent mind so it would be filled with reverence? At least part of the answer for many Neo-Confucians from Sung to Ch'ing (1644-1911)—men like Ch'eng Hao, Yang Shih (1053-1135), Li T'ung (1088-1158), Lo Ts'ung-yen (1072-1136), Ch'en Hsien-chang (1428-1500), Ku Hsien-ch'eng (1550-1612), Kao P'an-lung (1562-1626), Lu Lung-ch'i (1630-1693), and Chang Po-hsing (1552-1725)—was the practice of quiet-sitting (*ching-tso*) which amounted to a secularized variation on Ch'an Buddhist "sitting in meditation" (*tso-ch'an*).

(i) *Quiet-sitting*

Generally, quiet-sitting might mean no more than a few moments of quiet reflection. Technically, it could mean a rather extended period of contemplation of the inner ground of the mind with the aim of calming the body and mind to get at the roots of motivation and to establish intentions which from their very inception are in conformity with moral Principle (*li*)⁴⁰

Quiet-sitting was based on the assumption that the quiescent mind returns to itself and can have passive awareness of its own Nature. To Ku Hsien-ch'eng in the late Ming, who saw himself in the tradition of Li T'ung, the way to calm the mind in quiet-sitting was to dwell on that moment just when thought emerges from the unactivated into the activated mind. Ku wrote:

39. Analysis of *ching* based on Hu, *Chü-yeh lu*, chapters II, III & VIII.

40. Busch, "Tung-lin Academy," p. 125.

Quiet-sitting is very difficult. If the mind has something to dwell on, it stagnates; if it has nothing to dwell on, it drifts. The state "antecedent to the activation of happiness, anger, sorrow and joy" of which Li T'ung speaks, is just in the middle between having and not having something to dwell on. It offers an entrance to the interior. If one methodically and continuously makes use of it, the *ch'i* after a while gradually becomes calm and the mind settled and one can be in this state of calm when one is alone, when one is occupied, and when one is with people, and even when happiness, anger, sorrow, and joy suddenly overtake us.⁴¹

The specific methods used in practising quiet-sitting varied from one Neo-Confucian to another party depending on whether the individual concerned was using quiet-sitting for formal meditation or merely for brief reflection. Depending on one's preferences and purpose, one could sit in a half or full lotus position or merely sit on a chair. Eyes could be kept fully shut or fully open, not half open and half closed as in Ch'an meditation. Some practitioners advocated the use of breathing exercises as an aid to concentration; a manual on breath control, the *T'iao hsi chen*, has been attributed to Chu Hsi. Others insisted that breath control was too quietistic. Some degree of isolation was usually involved in quiet-sitting, although the practice was not formally monastic. Some Neo-Confucians sat quietly for brief periods (eg., for the length of time it takes a stick of incense to burn out) in their own homes at the beginning and end of the day, or in preparation for study, or alternated with study as just one special act of daily life interspersed with normal activities.⁴² Other Neo-Confucians like Kao P'an-lung spent as much as half of each day in quiet-sitting, the other half in reading, study and teaching.⁴³ Kao also went on occasional "retreats" where he would practise meditation in stretches of a week or longer. On these retreats, he set rules for diet and sleeping: reducing consumption of meat

41. Ku Hsien-ch'eng quoted in Busch, "Tung-lin Academy," p. 119.

42. de Bary, "Cultivation and Enlightenment," pp. 170-172; see also Wm. Theodore de Bary, "Introduction," *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, pp. 13-18.

43. Busch, "Tung-lin Academy," pp. 114-120, 122-130; Rodney L. Taylor, *The Cultivation of Sagehood as a Religious Goal in Neo-Confucianism: A Study of Selected Writings of Kao P'an-lung (1562-1626)* (hereafter cited as Taylor, *Cultivation of Sagehood*) (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1974), pp. 112-120, 158-159, 227-280.

and wine, walking after each meal, not sleeping past waking, and engaging in long hours of quiet-sitting.⁴⁴ Kao and many other Neo-Confucians also built studios or "houses of devoted learning" (*ching-she*) which were used for meditation, concentrated study, reading and discussions and which generally had an air of great solemnity designed to impart a feeling of being at one with the Tao. For some Neo-Confucians like Ch'en Hsien-chang who spent ten years of his life in such a studio "staying indoors without ever going out, devoting myself solely to a search for the proper method for moral and spiritual endeavour"⁴⁵ the *ching-she* came close to being a monastic retreat. Consequently, although the Neo-Confucian studios were privately owned and not formally monastic, it is not accidental that the term *ching-she*, which the Neo-Confucians sometimes used for their studios, was the same term previously used by the Buddhists to translate the Sanskrit word *vihara* (house of religious devotion, monastery).⁴⁶

(ii) *Diary of self-examination*

An activity complementary to quiet-sitting, which was used as an aid in cultivating the activated mind, was the keeping of a diary of self-examination. Wu Yü-pi in the early Ming, for example, kept a daily record wherein he recorded his activities, his dreams, and his attempts to control undesirable, excessive mind states. In one entry he notes, "Toward evening two adverse affairs arose. Even though I was disturbed internally, I immediately dissolved it so that the anger had no way to take shape. To work on oneself steadily in this way would be good."⁴⁷ Similarly, in the Ch'ing period, Lu Lung-ch'i kept a diary in which he daily examined and criticized his own actions and attitudes, and wrote in it maxims from the Classics and the words of his teachers and friends. He also frequently showed the diary to friends for them

44. Taylor, *Cultivation of Sagehood*, p. 120.

45. Yu-wen Jen, "Ch'en Hsien-chang's Philosophy of the Natural," in *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, p. 57.

46. Information on "House of devoted learning" (*ching-she*) comes from James T.C. Liu, "How Did Neo-Confucianism Become the State Orthodoxy?," *Philosophy East and West* XXIII:4 (October 1973), p. 491.

47. He Lumut Wilhelm, "On Ming Orthodoxy," *Monumenta Serica* XXIX (1970-71), p. 33; see also Wing-tsit Chan, "The Ch'eng-Chu School of Early Ming," in *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, pp. 29-52.

to add criticisms.⁴⁸ Perhaps the most famous of all self-criticism diaries, however, was the one kept by Yen Yüan *au* (1635-1704). Yen reflected on his mind state several times daily and then recorded his findings symbolically. Tu Wei-ming has described Yen's system as follows:

If he found his mind to be purely present (absolutely attentive) for a given period, he would mark a circle in the space designated for that period. If his mind was completely absent, he would mark a cross. If its presence exceeded its absence, he would leave the main part of the circle white; otherwise he left the main part of the circle in black. He also had symbols to represent control of his speech and temper. If he made one superfluous remark, he would add a line to the circle. If his superfluous remarks surpassed five, he would cross off the circle. If he lost his temper once, he would add a T to the circle. If he lost his temper more than five times, he would cancel the circle with three lines. This was a rather rigid application of Mencius' instruction that true learning consists of nothing but the search for the lost mind.⁴⁹

The concentration of energy and the focus of attention required in keeping such a diary demanded the total devotion of the author. When Yen Yüen applied this rigorous self-control to his daily affairs, his mode of living became highly ritualized. Every action in fact became ritual.

(iii) *Activity in Quiescence*

For the Neo-Confucian, the goodness of Nature revealed in the quiescent mind through meditation must ultimately be expressed actively in a social context. Inner goodness merely as a concept for its own sake is meaningless. In fact, in Mencian terms, man's inner humaneness (*jen*) without a window on the world

48. Hellmut Wilhelm, "Chinese Confucianism on the Eve of the Encounter," in Marius Jansen, ed., *Changing Japanese Attitudes toward Modernization* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp. 292-293; see also Wing-tsit Chan, "The *Hsing-li ching-i* and the Ch'eng-Chu School of the Seventeenth Century," in *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, pp. 543-579.

49. Wei-ming Tu, "Yen Yüan (1635-1704): From Inner Experience to Lived Concreteness," in *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, p. 518; the allusion is to Mencius, VI A:11.

gets suffocated inside. Like a spring beginning to flow or a fire beginning to burn, humaneness must have a vent to expand or it will be cut off and snuffed out before it can realize its true potential.⁵⁰ The window on the world is action as ritual. Such action represents not the outer aspect of an inner/outer dichotomy in self-cultivation but an extension of man's inner goodness and his inner decision to sagehood into action in the world. As an extension of man's inner humanity (*jen*), action as ritual must be permeated with the same attitude of reverence (*ching*) that pervades the "mastered" mind in activity and quiescence. Such reverence grows and extends itself out of the tranquil mind, first, to pervade all thoughts, and later, to permeate all actions that are the fruition of those thoughts. All such actions, no matter how mundane, that are in harmony with moral Principle and are suffused with a reverential attitude constitute ritual. Thus in the words of Confucius the man who achieves sagehood does not see, hear, speak, or do anything contrary to ritual.⁵¹

Through action as ritual, man is able to extend himself ever outward to ever broader groups of people. Beginning with the practice of filiality and extending gradually outward to interaction with members of family, neighbourhood, state, and world, the sagely man is ultimately able to embrace the entire universe. In the process of extension, the sagely person successively transcends limiting structures like egoism, nepotism, and ethnocentrism until he reaches a true universalism and cosmopolitanism. Nevertheless, he also continues to maintain a sense of his own locality and integrity.⁵²

In actual practice, commitment to a life style that emphasized all action as ritual took on many individual features among the Neo-Confucians. Sometimes men like Wang Ken (1483-1541) reverted to wearing old-fashioned clothes described in the

50. Tu, "Li as a Process of Humanization," p. 193; the allusion is to *Mencius* IIA:6.

51. *Analects*, XII: 1.

52. Tu, "Li as a Process of Humanization," p. 197; other stimulating works treating the problem of ritual include Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius—The Secular as Sacred* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972) and Noah Edward Fehl, *Li, Rites and Propriety in Literature and Life* (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1971, distributed by The University Press of Hawaii).

Classical ritual texts.⁵³ Generally, devotion to actions as ritual manifested itself in adherence to strict forms of behaviour: squatting with back straight, walking in measured steps looking straight ahead, bowing slowly and deeply to express sincere propriety, speaking in a dignified way with a limited number of carefully made gestures,⁵⁴ and maintaining strict separation of the personal belongings of husband and wife.⁵⁵ There are also numerous examples of Neo-Confucians—among them Yen Yüan and Hu Chü-jen—who followed the letter of the ancient mourning rituals so meticulously that they impaired their health.⁵⁶

Neo-Confucian ritual has frequently been viewed by modern scholars as no more than an elaborate code for coercing individuals into conformity with society. Yet truly dedicated Neo-Confucians viewed the person who complied with morality for sheer conformity as a *hsiang-yüan* or goody-goody who, in Confucius' terms, was a "thief of virtue" who drifted with social conventions.⁵⁷ True practice of action as ritual represented a delicate balance between individual moral decision as to the oughtness of specific behaviour in specific situations on the one hand, and compliance with the general rules of social behaviour on the other. Far from representing mere compliance with the *status quo*, the dedicated Neo-Confucian could practise "pure", archaic rituals as a silent critique of what he viewed as current, decadent customs. He could in fact express his alienation from society by adopting a ritualized life style regarded as bizarre by his contemporaries.⁵⁸

Conclusion

The goal of the interrelated practices of meditation or mind-cultivation and action as ritual in Neo-Confucianism was for man

53. Wm. Theodore de Bary, "Individualism and Humanitarianism in Late Ming Thought", in *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, p. 159.

54. Liu, "How Did Neo-Confucianism Become the State Orthodoxy?," p. 497.

55. Hu, *Chü-yeh lu*: Chang Chi Preface, 1.

56. Tu, "Yen Yüan," pp. 518-519.

57. *Analects*. XVII:13; *Mencius*, VII B:37; see also Tu, "The Creative Tension between *jen* and *li*," p. 38.

58. See Tu, "The Creative Tension between *jen* and *li*," pp. 36-38; Liu, "How Did Neo-Confucianism Become the State Orthodoxy?," pp. 495-498; de Bary, "Introduction," *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, pp. 20-25; Antonio S. Cua, "The Concept of Paradigmatic Individuals in the Ethics of Confucius," *Inquiry* XIV:1-2 (Summer 1971), pp. 49-53.

to transform himself into a living sage. Yet the implication of a means/ends dichotomy is misleading, for the end lies in the practice of the means. As one's mind is nurtured and as one's action as ritual becomes perfected, one is gradually transformed. Then like Confucius at seventy, one can joyously follow one's heart's desire without transgressing moral principles.⁵⁹

59. *Analects* II:4