

广厦

中国与新世界秩序研究

SOME THOUGHTS ON CHINA AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

乔卡特 著 石沉 译



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Dedication

To my Canadian parents, Francis Galt Carter and Sylvia Carter,
and

To my Chinese parents, He Yan Ling and Song Zhen

The Roof Whirled Away by Winds

Du Fu

*When will this long night of drizzle come to an end?
Now I dream of an immense mansion, tens of thousands of rooms,
Where all the cold creatures can take shelter, their faces alight;
Not moved by the wind or the rain, a mansion as solid as the mountain
Alas, when shall I see such a majestic house?
If I could see this, even though my poor house were torn down,
Even though I were frozen to death I would be content.*

Introduction

The next logical step in our social evolution from family, to tribe, to city, to nation, is a world commonwealth of nations. Consciously or unconsciously, humanity has been engaged in an endeavour to create this world community.

Globalization is a sign that we are entering our long-awaited stage of maturity. We are arriving at what has been variously called the New World Order, the Omega Point, the Global Village, Tian Xia Yi Jia (All Under Heaven One Family), the Grand Synthesis, the Kingdom of God on Earth, and so on;

It is no longer just a dream; the survival of the human race, in fact, depends on constructing this New World Order.

If China is rich in material, cultural, and spiritual resources and potentialities; then it is important to understand China's maturation process and potential contributions as we face the challenges of the adult stage of our collective life.

This book contains my thoughts, and references to those of others, collected so far, exploring this theme.

A picture emerges; the more the definition of modernization and prosperity includes spiritual development - as well as material - the more the collective endeavour humanity faces seems feasible, and the more apparent will China's potential contributions be.

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The Maturation of Humanity

1.1 A Global Process

In the Map of Human Maturation (Fig. 1) we can see the world's civilizations as rivers converging on one sea. Flowing for centuries in relative isolation, they entered a period of nation-building followed by a recent accelerating globalization. Simultaneous with the radial inflow of civilizations, humanity has climbed a ladder of social evolution. There has been a progression of social units from family, to tribe, to city, to nation and finally an implicit family of nations.

These stages of social development have emerged in different parts of the globe under the influence of various local civilizations. Each step (family, city, nation) has enhanced the capacity of individuals not diminished it. Each step forward has expanded the opportunities for the individuals within it, has brought with it greater opportunities for expression of the human spirit, transplanting it to larger and larger "gardens", until we have arrived at this climactic, the consciousness of our oneness. We are now looking at each other, for the first time, across the same body of water with all of our

collective experience and a vast heritage of cultural wealth available for mutual exploration and use. For the first time, your world and my world has become our world.

What forces are behind these phenomena?

The British historian Arnold J. Toynbee referred to civilization as a process, an endeavor...

....to create a state of society in which the whole of mankind will be able to live together in harmony as members of a single all-inclusive family. This is, I believe, the goal at which all civilizations so far have been aiming unconsciously, if not consciously.^[1]

Abdu'l-Baha (1844-1921), a Persian seer and author, compares humanity's growth process to the maturation process of an individual. He says humanity has gone through collective stages of childhood, and youth, and is now entering its long-awaited stage of maturity. Each stage defined the boundary of the social group, and the boundaries of cooperation and mutual helpfulness. These boundaries now extend to the whole planet. They trace our collective maturation: our social infancy, childhood, and current transition to adulthood from adolescent national, religious, and ethnic rivalry. We must now acquire the “virtues and powers, new moral standards, and new capacities” appropriate for our new universal condition, a single all-inclusive family.

[1] Arnold Toynbee, A Study of History, abridged one-volume edition, p.44.

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All created things have their degree or stage of maturity. The period of maturity in the life of a tree is the time of its fruit-bearing...The animal attains a stage of full growth and completeness, and in the human kingdom man reaches his maturity when the light of intelligence attains its greatest power and development... Similarly there are periods and stages in the collective life of humanity. At one time it was passing through its stage of childhood, at another its period of youth, but now it has entered its long predicted phase of maturity, the evidences of which are everywhere apparent...That which was applicable to human needs during the early history of the race can neither meet nor satisfy the demands of this day, this period of newness and consummation. Humanity has emerged from its former state of limitation and preliminary training. Man must now become imbued with new virtues and powers, new moral standards, new capacities. New bounties, perfect bestowals, are awaiting and already descending upon him. The gifts and blessings of the period of youth, although timely and sufficient during the adolescence of mankind, are now incapable of meeting the requirements of its maturity.^[1]

Ervin Laszlo, former President of the Club of Rome, says that from the evolutionary standpoint the world as a system is moving toward a higher order of organization, toward a global community, a "Grand Synthesis" of cooperating nations. And, except for a few countries with large enough populations and territory, such as the United States, the former USSR and China, which he calls generalist societies, "few societies have developed adequate levels of autonomy".

Although a few specialist economies - such as Singapore,

[1] Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, Baha'i Publishing Trust, USA, 1982, p. 438-9.

Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan, among others - manage to find profitable niches for themselves, the majority of the specialists - that is, the some 120 Third World countries that have neither large supplies of valuable natural resources or command an evolved technological infrastructure - find themselves in an increasingly untenable situation.

It is in the self-interest of the nations to undertake the next stage of their evolution, a transnational community.^[1]

Gorbachev agrees, saying,

At a time when the world is so interrelated it is myopic to set national interests so far ahead of world problems,^[2]

Even though China is a relatively autonomous, “generalist” society, and its experience of the early years of global awakening was a century of imperialist exploitation, its leaders still say.

It will not be going too far to say, that without a world government, it is impossible to avoid inter-country wars. To set up the central government would be big progress for mankind. With such a government, a country's internal order could be maintained. As there is no world government, the current world has no order.^[3]

We could conclude from the above that we have, all along, been involved in a collective maturation process; a process of which we are just becoming aware. It is in an organic process where the diverse elements of a complex system are struggling to become a harmonious

[1] Laszlo, Ervin, *The Grand Synthesis*, p.137-9.

[2] Gorbachev, *Associated Press*, Sat May 8, 9:31 PM E.T.

[3] Yan Xue Tong, China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, quoted in *China Daily* editorial, July 28, 1999.

whole, without which the parts can not properly function or even survive. We are entering a necessary stage of growth, a turbulent period of globalization, a prelude to social, political and spiritual maturity. We could view the centuries of experimentation in civilization with their corresponding belief systems as a training process, a long, slow civilizing of human character, expressed in an ever-advancing civilization.

The creation of a global community, at least in terms of trade, transportation, and communication is already unfolding before our eyes.

The scientific and technological advances occurring in this unusually blessed century portend a great surge forward in the social evolution of the planet, and indicate the means by which the practical problems of humanity may be solved. They provide indeed, the very means for the administration of the complex life of a united world.^[1]

[1] To the Peoples of the World: A Baha'i Statement on Peace, The Universal House of Justice, Baha'i Studies Series No. 14, Canada, 1986.

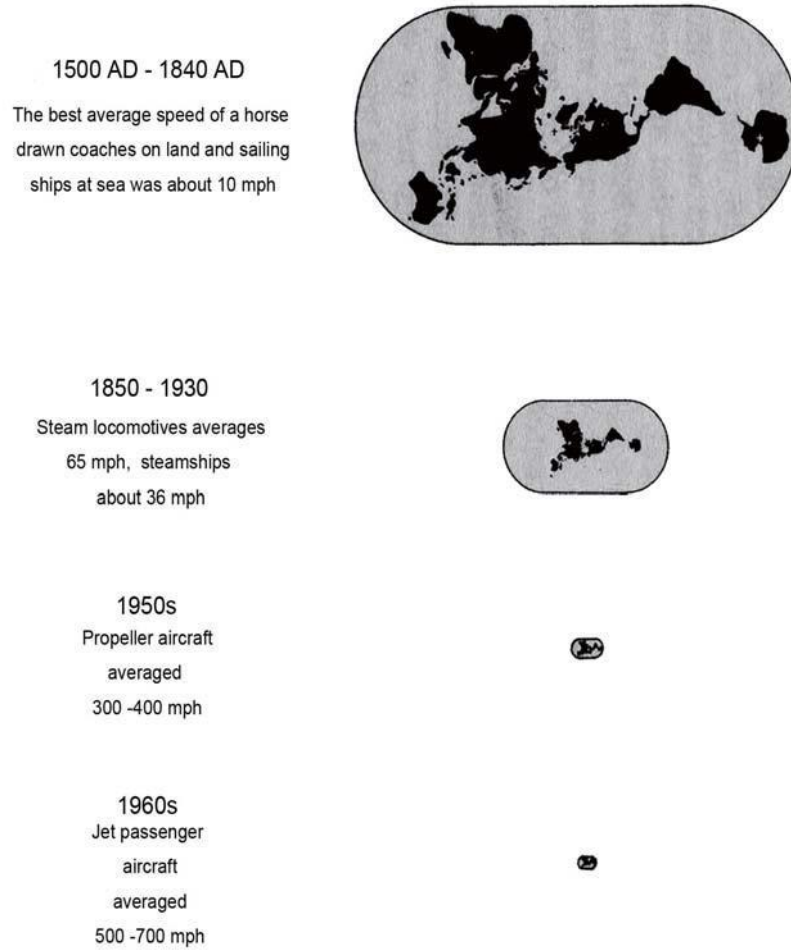


Fig. 2a The Shrinking Planet

YEAR	500,000 BC	20,000 BC	500 BC	300 BC	1500 AD	1900 AD	1925	1950	1965	2008
Required time to travel around the globe	A few hundred thousand years	A few thousand years	A few hundred years	A few tens of years	A few years	A few months	A few weeks	A few days	A few hours	5 hours
Means of Transportation	Human on foot (over ice bridges)	On foot and by canoe	Canoe with small sail or paddles or relays of runners	Large sail boats with oars, pack animals and horse chariots	Big sailing ships (with compass), horse teams, and coaches	Steam boats and railroads (Suez and Panama Canals)	Steamships, trans-continental railways, autos and airplanes	Steamships, railways, autos, jet and rocket aircraft	Atomic ships, high speed railway, and rocket-jet aircraft	Concorde Mach 2 (twice speed of sound), beginnings of commercial space travel
Distance per day on land (Km)	24	24 - 32	32	24 - 40	32 - 40	480 - 1440	640 - 1440	800 - 2400	1600 - 3200	7500 - 10,000
Distance per day, by sea or air (Km)		32 by sea	64 by sea	216 by sea	280 by sea	400 by sea	4800 - 9,600 by air	9,600 - 15,200 by air	300,000 by air	600,000 by air
Potential State Size	None	A small valley near a small lake	Small part of a continent	Large area of a continent with coastal colonies	Greater parts of a continent with trans-oceanic colonies	Greater parts of a continent with trans-oceanic colonies	Full continents & trans-oceanic common-wealths	The globe	The globe and more	The globe and more

Fig. 2b The Shrinking Planet

There is also movement on political and social fronts:

Among the favorable signs are the steadily growing strength of the steps towards world order taken initially near the beginning of this century in the creation of the League of Nations, succeeded by the more broadly based United Nations Organization; the achievement since the Second World War of independence by the majority of all the nations on earth, indicating the completion of the process of nation-building, and the involvement of these fledgling nations with older ones in matters of mutual concern; the consequent vast increase in cooperation among hitherto isolated and antagonistic peoples and groups in international undertakings in the scientific, educational, legal, economic and cultural fields; the rise in recent decades of an unprecedented number of international humanitarian organizations; the spread of women's and youth movements calling for an end to war; and the spontaneous spawning of widening networks of ordinary people seeking understanding through personal communication.

To an extent unimaginable a decade ago, the ideal of world peace is taking on form and substance. Obstacles that long seemed immovable have collapsed in humanity's path; apparently irreconcilable conflicts have begun to surrender to processes of consultation and resolution; a willingness to counter military aggression through unified international action is emerging. The effect has been to awaken in both the masses of humanity and many world leaders a degree of hopefulness about the future of our planet that had been nearly extinguished.^[1]

Until this global community is established, at least at the level of a political truce, working on problems of development, international,

[1] Baha'i International Community, Office of Public Information, The Prosperity of Humankind, 1995, p.1.

national and urban, is like plucking flood victims out of the water and not building a dam. Since we are now one body, true national autonomy can only come after its parts are peacefully connected and co-operating.

Today, humanity has entered on its collective coming-of-age, endowed with the capacity to see the entire panorama of its development as a single process. The challenge of maturity is to accept that we are one people, to free ourselves from the limited identities and creeds of the past, and to build together the foundations of global civilization.

...the earth's inhabitants are now challenged to draw on their collective inheritance to take up, consciously and systematically, the responsibility for the design of their future.^[1] to..."erect.....a social system at once progressive and peaceful, dynamic and harmonious, a system giving free play to individual creativity and initiative but based on co-operation and reciprocity.^[2]

The primary question to be resolved is how the present world, with its entrenched pattern of conflict, can change to a world in which harmony and co-operation will prevail. World order can be founded only on an unshakable consciousness of the oneness of mankind, a spiritual truth which all the human sciences confirm.^[3]

We could also speculate that this is the beginning of the Age of Peace foretold by the Founders of all the religions. It might also be the time dreamt of by Chinese poets and philosophers, the early days of the Great Unity, the Great Harmony.

In the world of Great Unity, the whole world becomes a great

[1] Ibid, Introduction

[2] To the Peoples of the World: A Baha'i Statement on Peace, Introduction, The Universal House of Justice, October 1985.

[3] Ibid, Part 3.

unity. There is no division into national states and no differences between races. There will be no war...

All people are equal, and do not consider position or rank as an honour either. Only wisdom and humanity are promoted and encouraged. Wisdom is to initiate things, accomplish undertakings, promote utility and benefits and advance people, while humanity is to confer benefits extensively on all the people and to bring salvation to them, to love people and to benefit things.

In the Age of Great Peace, since man's nature is already good and his ability and intelligence is superior, they only rejoice in matters of wisdom and humanity. New institutions appear every day. Public benefits increase every day. The human mind gets stronger every day. And knowledge becomes clearer every day. People in the whole world together reach the realm of humanity, longevity, perfect happiness, and infinite goodness and wisdom...

Heaven is my father and earth is my mother...all people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions...^[1]

[1] Zhang Zai (1020-77), a Neo-Confucian pioneer. *The Chinese Religion and the Baha'i Faith*, Phyllis Ghim Lian Chew, George Ronald Publisher, Oxford, 1993, p.73

1.2 The Need for Balanced Inner and Outer Development

Just when the modern age seems to be providing the technical and institutional means to create "an immense mansion...where all the cold creatures can take shelter, their faces alight"^[1]; its progress is severely handicapped by corruption, selfishness, and greed; nationalism, terrorism, and religious and racial prejudice. Just when globalization raises the promise of mutually beneficial international exchange, the threat of increased domination of the strong over the weak raises its head.

We may well ask, "Will the world be dominated by powerful nations and corporations further widening the gap between the rich and the poor?" "Will our cultural assets, our potential contributions to a New World Order, be suffocated by a strident western materialistic consumerism?" "Can the cycle of wars ever be ended?" "Will we come to our senses before environmental destruction makes

[1] Du Fu (AD 713-770)

development impossible?” “Are we really at the dawn of a New Era or on the brink of global disaster?”

However thrilling the prospects may be, present patterns of behavior do not inspire confidence in the process. It is only natural to wonder whether globalization will, in fact, unify the human race without imposing uniformity or simply propel the universalization of the culture of consumerism. Is it the bearer of prosperity for the masses or the mere expression of the economic interests of a privileged few? Will it lead to the establishment of a just order or to the consolidation of existing structures of power?^[1]

The dark shadows indicate we still lack mature behavior and principles, and mature institutions that correspond to the conditions of our new “global village”. The imbalances in the world are a sign that our “inner”, spiritual development, has not kept up with our “outer”, material development.

People cannot exist without forming groups for mutual support. Humans, unlike animals, cannot exist in isolation. The capacity to obtain higher and more complex levels of organization was not possible without corresponding higher levels of understanding, cooperation and reciprocity. Cooperation and mutual helpfulness are the community’s basic operating principles and the glue of social life: the more they are expressed, the higher the quality of life, inner and outer.

Moral knowledge and behavior orients, strengthens, and protects material development. Morality is efficient; spiritual qualities are part of the capacity to carry out programs of reform, and spiritual vision supports the will to implement them. The material warp of development intersects the spiritual woof. Development with

[1] Dr. Farzam Arbab, *The Lab, the Temple, and the Market*, Edited by Sharon Harper, IDRC, Canada, 2000, pp.1-2.

only material well-being as a goal has made prosperity more, not less, elusive. Human beings are far more complex. Not addressing the spiritual capacity of people, and regarding them simply as consumers in a material world, severely limits development strategy and starves deeper, richer, and finally more productive sources of motivation. Maturation implies we have latent “new virtues and powers, new moral standards, new capacities”, that must be pressed into use. Starving the development of that capacity leads to further instability.

Social advancement, we know, arises from the ideals and shared beliefs that weld society together. Meaningful social change results as much from the development of qualities and attitudes that foster constructive patterns of human interaction as from the acquisition of technical capacities. True prosperity - a well-being founded on peace, cooperation, altruism, dignity, rectitude of conduct and justice - flows from the light of spiritual awareness and virtue as well as from material discovery and progress.

Such qualities as trustworthiness, compassion, forbearance, fidelity, generosity, humility, courage, and willingness to sacrifice for the common good have constituted the invisible yet essential foundations of progressive community life.^[1]

Self-regulation by people who possess these qualities is a surer long-term foundation for successful progress than regulation by punishments, threats, and corruption hot-lines. Working to preserve and develop them will translate into material as well as spiritual strength.

A group of American sociologists, for example, observing their country's social health suffering from a lack of meaningful life goals, said,

[1] Overcoming Corruption and Safeguarding Integrity in Public Institutions: A Bahá'í Perspective "Global Forum on Fighting Corruption II", May 2001, the Hague, Netherlands.

Work without social utility is intrinsically meaningless in any larger social or moral context and necessarily produces an alienation that is only partly eased by monetary rewards. Alienation from, and lack of participation in, a larger 'social ecology' characterized by 'civic friendship', results in meaningless work, restless competition, a self-centered life, a split between the ethos of family life and the brutally competitive work place, and education focused on careerism with neither 'personal meaning or civic virtue'.^[1]

Economic prosperity and technological development are not the goals of modernization; they are the means to help attain inner and outer maturity at our new level of co-existence.

Until both the material and the spiritual needs and aspirations of individuals are acknowledged, development efforts will largely continue to fail. Human happiness, security and well-being, social cohesion, and economic justice are not mere by-products of material success. Rather, they emerge from a complex and dynamic interplay between the satisfaction of material and social needs and the spiritual fulfillment of the individual.

By linking material progress with fundamental spiritual aspirations, by appealing to those universal values which enable the individual to transcend narrow self-interest, the peoples of the world can be empowered to translate high-minded ideals and principles into constructive, sustained actions for their own well-being and the betterment of their communities.

Thus, a paradigm of development that seeks to promote global prosperity must take into account both the spiritual and

[1] Bellah, Robert, et al, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, New York, Perennial Library, 1985, p. 288.

material natures of the individual and society, while responding to the increasing interdependence of the peoples and nations of the planet.^[1]

This unprecedented economic crisis, together with the social breakdown it has helped to engender, reflects a profound error of conception about human nature itself. For the levels of response elicited from human beings by the incentives of the prevailing order are not only inadequate, but seem almost irrelevant in the face of world events. We are being shown that, unless the development of society finds a purpose beyond the mere amelioration of material conditions, it will fail of attaining even these goals. That purpose must be sought in spiritual dimensions of life and motivation that transcend a constantly changing economic landscape and an artificially imposed division of societies into 'developed' and developing.^[2]

...unless the moral character of a nation is educated, as well as its brain and its talents, civilization has no sure basis.^[3]

China's philosophers also agree the vitality of the spirit will die unless it is nourished with rectitude and justice. It is the nourished spirit that fills the gap between the inner and outer worlds, between "heaven and earth".

I know how to nourish my vast vital spirit...it is not easy to describe it in words. For it is a spirit extremely great and extremely strong. When nourished by rectitude and kept integral, it fills up all between heaven and earth. It is a spirit that must be mated to justice and natural law. Without these it would be starved. In fact, it is born of an accumulation of justice, not

[1] Baha'i International Community, *Toward a Development Paradigm for 21st Century*, August, 1994.

[2] Baha'i International Community, Office of Public Information, *The Prosperity of Humankind*, Introduction, 1995..

[3] Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks*, Baha'i Publishing Trust, London, 1979, p. 31.

something which justice invades from outside and takes to itself. Its very life depends upon justice. For whenever your conduct does not satisfy your conscience, the vital spirit suffers starvation.^[1]

Cao Yun Xiang, Head of Qinghua University from 1921-22, places a similar emphasis on the importance of good character, and its relationship to development;

.....when we examine the forces that can make for human progress in the world, it will be found that the advance of modern civilization depends vitally upon education and science: that the capacity for concerted action rests upon the principles of equality and spirit of service; that the ability to cooperate harmoniously in political, financial and industrial relations must be based upon the virtues of honesty and unselfishness... Therefore, it follows naturally that wherever a people is ignorant, incapable of cooperation, and unwilling to render service unselfishly, but, on the other hand, is inclined to oppress the good and weak and to stand in awe of the wicked and strong in order to advance its selfi sh interests, such a people is liable to be very backward in the march of human progress.^[2]

Confidence in the globalization process is increased if we see the shadows as part of a turbulent transition to our collective maturity; and as an expression, not of our intrinsic nature, but as manifestations of less mature stages of our growth.

A candid acknowledgment that prejudice, war and exploitation have been the expression of immature stages in a vast historical process and that the human race is today experiencing

[1] Mencius, Legge, bk. 2, pt. 1, ch. 2, arts. 12-14.

[2] Cao Yun Xiang, Head of Qinghua University, excerpt from the introduction to his Chinese translation of Baha'u'llah and the New Era.

the unavoidable tumult which marks its collective coming of age is not a reason for despair but a prerequisite to undertaking the stupendous enterprise of building a peaceful world.^[1]

If our level of our confidence is sufficient, we may be willing to search for the “new virtues and powers, new moral standards, new capacities” we need for our collective adulthood.

[1] To the People's of the World: A Baha'i Statement on Peace, The Universal House of Justice, Baha'i Study Series No.14, pp.-4.

1.3 China's Contribution to the Maturation of Humanity

Humanity is facing “the stupendous enterprise of building a peaceful world”^[1]. We are looking for “a paradigm of development that seeks to promote global prosperity” and that takes “into account both the spiritual and material natures of the individual and society, while responding to the increasing interdependence of the peoples and nations of the planet”^[2].

What might be China's contributions?

In 1990, John Fairbank, the noted Harvard sinologist, in the introduction to his recent book, *China: A New History*, refers to China as a latecomer to modernity. And, he asks whether China has emerged from isolation just in time to participate in the demise of the world or, with millennia of survival experience, to rescue it?

In 1923, Shoghi Effendi, an author and an astute observer of

[1] To the People's of the World: A Baha'i Statement on Peace, The Universal House of Justice, Baha'i Study Series No.14, pp.-4.

[2] Baha'i International Community, Toward a Development Paradigm for 21st Century, August, 1994.

world affairs, said:

China, a land which has its own world and civilization, whose people (1923) constitute one-fourth of the population of the globe, which ranks foremost among all nations in material, cultural, and spiritual resources and potentialities, and whose future is assuredly bright.^[1]

In 1921, Bertrand Russell, while serving as a teacher in Beijing in the 1920s, observed China's: "production without possession, action without self-assertion, and development without domination".^[2]

In 1917, Abdu'l-Baha (son of Baha'u'llah, Founder of the Baha'i Faith) said:

China has the most great capability. The Chinese people are most simple-hearted and truth-seeking... Truly, I say, the Chinese are free from any deceit and hypocrisies and are prompted with ideal motives. China is the country of the future.^[3]

These statements of high expectation for China do not focus on China's business acumen or its capacity for hard work. Nor do they stress China's great period of scientific and engineering accomplishment which made it, until the 14th century, the most advanced civilization on earth. Instead, they refer, mainly, to China's character, to its social and spiritual capacity and potential. Is this the nature of China's potential contribution to a New World Order?

.....through the last forty centuries China must have matured her thought and learned many lessons in the art of living. Maybe

[1] Letter from Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is of the East, 23 January 1923.

[2] Russell, Bertrand, *The Basic Writings Writings of Bertrand Russell: 1903-1959*, Edited by Robert E. Egner and Lester E. Denno, George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1961.

[3] Abdu'l-Baha, Reported in *Star of the West*, vol. 8, April 28, 1917, No.3, p.37.

China has something to contribute. Surely there must be a better way, a more humane way of settling international disputes than just by cutting each other's throats. Surely, with China's four hundred million people (in 1930), four thousand years of culture and vast resources, she must have something to contribute to the peace and progress of mankind.^[1]

If we make a brief survey of China's spiritual-philosophical heritage we find China's spiritual education has the imprint of Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. From Daoism, for example, China derives capacity to merge opposites and resolve paradoxes, a capacity to see systems and "wholes" more than dichotomies; from Confucianism it has learned much regarding the application of spirituality to daily life; and from Buddhism it has received high-minded spirituality and a keen sense of the coherence between the material and the spiritual.

We find in China:

- Love of justice expressed in the words of China's poets and philosophers;^[2]
- Belief in harmony, reciprocity;
- Long Confucian tradition that a belief system is the foundation of social order;
- Belief in "Tian Xia Yi Jia" (All under heaven is one family),
- Love of perfection that generated so many centuries of civilized beauty;
- Appetite for consensus-seeking, not litigation, to resolve conflicts;

[1] James Yen, Intellectual Shock of China, Star of the West, 19, Mass Education Movement in China, October, 1925, 16:7.

[2] An example: the Chinese word for city is 'cheng shi' which literally means 'walled market' has within it the concept of justice. "The pattern of 'shi' (market) first evolved in the Metal Script arising from the character 'ping' meaning 'equal' or 'fair'. Its early meaning was, of course, a place where people assemble to carry out fair barter transactions."

- Capacity for obedience; open-mindedness and lack of prejudice;
- Desire to "seek truth from facts";
- Love for practical application of knowledge; the admiration for deeds not words;
- Importance given to family relationships, especially respect for parents.
- Centuries of wisdom contained in popular axioms that are embedded in the language.

Quoted below is one of the well known Four Books of Confucianism, The Great Learning (Da Xue), an “executive summary” of the teachings of Confucius. Every school child for centuries memorized it; and its theme is embedded deeply in Chinese culture.^[1] Briefly, it states that the goal of development is to illustrate virtue; the methods include regulation, cultivation, rectification, and investigation; the process relates the accomplishment of peaceful development with the internal life of the nation, the well-being of society to the spiritual health of the individual. "From the son of Heaven down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of their person as the root of everything besides." The investigation of reality by the individual is the fulcrum upon which the inner and outer balance depends. The Emperor was entrusted by Heaven to maintain this relationship. Failure to do so justified his removal.

What the Great Learning teaches, is – to illustrate illustrious virtue: to renovate the people; and to rest in the highest excellence. The point where to rest being known, the object of pursuit is then

[1] For example, in 1997, at a parent-teacher meeting at my son's school, Hei Zhi Ma Hu Tong Elementary near Beijing's Drum Tower, his teacher addressed the issue of the purpose of education. Her presentation included the statement, "Wo bu pa ben, wo pa huai". Roughly translated it means, "I don't fear stupidity; I fear bad character."

determined; and, that being determined, a calm unperturbedness may be attained. To that calmness there will succeed a tranquil repose. In that repose there may be a careful deliberation, and that deliberation will be followed by the attainment of the desired end. Things have their root and their completion. Affairs have their end and their beginning. To know what is first and what is last will lead near to what is taught in the Great Learning.

The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the empire, first ordered well their own States.

Wishing to order well their own States, they first regulated their families.

Wishing to order well their families, they first cultivated their persons.

Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts.

Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts.

Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge.

Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things.

Things being investigated, knowledge became complete.

Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere.

Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified.

Their hearts being rectified their persons were cultivated.

Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated.

Their families being regulated, their States were rightly governed.

Their States being rightly governed, the whole empire was made tranquil and happy.^[1]

[1] Excerpt from The Great Learning, part of the Confucian doctrine contained in The Four Books, Hunan Publishing House, 1995, pp. 3-5.

We can trace the Chinese sense of solidarity and social responsibility, at least in part, to the Mahayana Buddhist teaching that,

....universal salvation (is) based on the idea of the fundamental oneness of all beings. ...Individuals may purify themselves and thereby escape the miseries of sinful existence, yet the salvation of anyone is imperfect so long as and so far as there remain any who have not realized the universal spiritual communion...To save oneself by saving others is the gospel of universal love taught by Buddhism.^[1]

If we look for the conceptual underpinnings of sustainable development we are well served by the Chinese notions of harmony, the importance of relationships, balance, moderation, and the belief that the group is more important than the individual. Are these not preferable to unrestrained expansion, satisfaction of wants, acquisition, consumerism and the notion that the individual is more important the group? The beauty of China's art, much of its poetry, and, in particular, its garden design all prefigure one of the essential concerns of sustainability, harmony between man and nature.

From just a quick look at China's social-philosophical-spiritual heritage we begin to see why there might be such a high regard for China's "resources and potentialities". We find active and latent elements in China's spiritual gene pool which are very relevant to humanity's transition to its collective adulthood.

Chinese people will be the first to admit that they have not always lived up to their own values and teachings. They point to the violence in its history. They also point to China's present day concerns such as corruption, social problems, environmental

[1] E. A. Burtt, *The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha*, A Mentor Book, 1955.p.124.

degradation, and the increasing gap between rich and poor.

When we consider violence in China's history we should set it against the background of China's over-arching achievement of a great civilization, beginning thousand of years ago, reaching maturity in the Tang-Song period, and declining slowly until the reign of the last Emperor ended in 1912. Violence marked each Dynasty transition, two periods of territorial expansion, and the revolution and civil war that established the Peoples' Republic of China. China's long history had periods of stable growth contrasting with periods of disunity and chaos. We should note that the main periods of conquest and expansion occurred in the Yuan and Qing Dynasties, when China was controlled not by Chinese people, but by foreigners. The Mongols [Yuan Dynasty (1268-1368)] and the Man [Qing Dynasty (1644-1912)] tribes from the north, Mongolia and Manchuria respectively, occupied China, steering the Chinese "ship of state". It also should be noted, in more recent times, China was not part of the colonization of the globe, but was violently colonized by others.

Despite the violence, China has managed the largest group of people for the longest period of time. We should see the periodic turmoil, therefore, not as inherent in Chinese character, but as lapses - or lack of better means at the time - on a longer path of civilization-building.

Similarly, the pain China feels from the current social and environmental problems, and a growing uneasy sense that wealth does not bring happiness, indicate the discrepancy with its ethical standards and the distance from its spiritual roots. The discomfort indicates the extent to which the value system is alive, spinning like a flywheel in the Chinese psyche. The voice of China's beloved poet, Du Fu, can still be heard:

Behind the red-painted doors wine and meat are stinking.

*On the wild roads lie corpses of people frozen to death.
A hair breadth divides wealth and poverty.
This strange contrast fills me with unappeasable anguish.*^[1]

If we see these flaws as an "expression of immature stages in a vast historical process", then we can leave open the possibility that, while China's spiritual heritage may currently be weakened or threatened, it is not lost. Acknowledging these weaknesses is already a sign of maturity.

The growing recognition that material and spiritual development must go hand-in-hand comes after a century of questioning, sorting, experimenting, and learning from mistakes.

In the years following the founding of the PRC, it was essential to focus on improving China's material conditions. At a time of poverty and shortages, there was little conflict between traditional and revolutionary virtues such as self-restraint, propriety, service to others, moderation, obedience, etc. China made significant movement towards "abolishing long-standing structures of injustice and domination, conquering absolute poverty for one-fifth of the population of the planet, and sweeping aside deeply rooted belief systems based on superstition"^[2].

The process included the near extinction of its spiritual heritage during the passionate, adolescent self-destruction of the Cultural Revolution, a determined campaign to destroy the Four Olds (Old Thought, Old Traditions, Old Habits, and Old Culture). In the late 1970s, China passed from this near cultural suicide, to enter "a process of experiment and reform while trying to establish a new relationship with the rest of the world"^[3]. The relationship to the past matured to an on-going sorting out of this vast inheritance with

[1] Du Fu quoted in *The White Pony*, an Anthology of Chinese Poetry, Edited by Robert Payne, Mentor Books, 1960, p. 183.

[2] *Thoughts on China*, article by Dr. Farzam Arbab, May 19, 1989.

[3] *ibid*

a view to finding modernization with "Chinese characteristics". The negative focus on what society was against matured to a more adult search for positive goals for advancement and prosperity.

1978 was a watershed year, beginning a period of material progress, when the Open Door Policy invited individual initiative, both foreign and domestic, to participate in the reconstruction (economic and scientific) of the country. One of the greatest signs of maturity was to turn away from isolationism and consciously engage with the world outside. China now lived and breathed "reform" with its on-going struggle to modernize, to "Catch up with the West". The search for a modern Chinese identity has not followed the road of a parochial nationalism; on the contrary, China experimented freely with non-Chinese science, technology, business methods, architectural design, law, etc. China has moved from conquering absolute poverty, to opening its doors, to becoming the new emerging economic power of Asia. In a few short years, China has catapulted itself into rapid economic advancement, with the world beating a path to its Open Door to invest in its development.

China abandoned centuries of indifference to science to give it an exalted station.^[1] Science and "high-tech" are now regarded as the signs of, and a major tool, for economic development. With recent increased investment in research, China is poised to become a world leader in scientific endeavor.

China has spent the past 100 years in a conscious struggle to advance. It is not complacent, nor is it languishing in a state of torpor. Recent entry into the WTO, winning the 2008 Olympics bid for Beijing and for the World's Fair in Shanghai in 2010, all contribute to a re-awakening sense of confidence and optimism about China's

[1] "For 2,000 years the Chinese people had a most remarkable record in science and technology. Then from two to three centuries ago a decline set in. Commenting on ancient Chinese technological discoveries and inventions, Dr. Joseph Needham writes in the preface to his great work *Science and Civilization in China* that they were 'often far in advance of contemporary Europe especially up to the 15th century'." Institute of the History of Natural Sciences, Chinese Academy of Science, a compilation, *Ancient China's Technology and Science*, Foreign Language Press, 1983, p.1.

prospects. Since the 1978 Open Door policy there has been a visible rush of growth, a great release of capacity.

However, in more recent years, along with success, shadows have appeared in China's modernization drive. As corruption, social, and environmental problems persist, the signs of a weakened spiritual condition have become more apparent. Corruption is of special concern in a culture that relates leadership with virtue. The tolerance of this practice may be a greater threat to stability than the individual selfish act.

Now that relative wealth has come and it is acceptable for some to get rich first, people are not sure what to do with this wealth other than have a comfortable life. There is a conflicting mix of values. The Chinese habit of balancing the rights of the individual with the rights of the group causes deep reservations about the modern tendency to pursue material wealth for its own sake. There is a growing realization that money does not bring happiness, that there is a lack of a "social ecology", a lack of material and spiritual coherence. China is experiencing first-hand that the advancement of material comfort, technology and science are not sufficient ends in themselves and do not guarantee a "Harmonious Society".

With the opening to the West, China's spiritual resources have been further obscured by a foreign consumer-oriented materialistic development paradigm. The more China "buys into" a definition of "modern" that disregards the development of our spiritual capacity, the less likely it will see the value its potential spiritual contribution.

China's under-appreciation of her transcendent understandings is inhibited not only by the emphasis on material development, but is further slowed by her own self-deprecating nature. "Yes, our country is backward," many Chinese people nod, reinforcing the West's sense of its own superiority.

The advancement of science, while contributing to material development, needs dialogue with morality in order to apply fairly

and appropriately its benefits and power. In the hands of the corrupt, the cruel or the unwise, science and technology can be applied to destructive ends as well as peaceful ones. For example, all humanity is painfully aware of the huge, excessive stockpile of nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, etc., an obvious miss-application of science. On less lethal, but more insidious fronts we have a new age of computer theft and virus vandalism.

The empowerment of humankind through a vast increase in access to science and technology requires a strategy for development which is centered around an ongoing and intensifying dialogue between scientific and spiritual knowledge.^[1]

In 1939, a foreigner, Juliet Bredon, said,

Admirable and interesting as all this modern progress is, the big problem for the future of Peking, as for China, is to adapt the new standards to the psychology of the Chinese people. Days of transition often bring mistakes and “hurry up” modernity risks depersonalizing everything. Between the two poles of the very old and the very new the pendulum swings to and fro. To hasten its movement without disturbing its balance is the difficult and delicate task which the thinking people of China have set themselves to do, well knowing one thing is sure – that morals and ethics have to keep pace with (scientific) knowledge or all is lost.^[2]

The shadows on China’s development drive are an inverse prescription of the spiritual qualities required for balanced inner and outer growth. They are a signal. Now that absolute poverty has almost disappeared, it is time, for the development focus to shift

[1] Baha’i International Community, Office of Public Information, The Prosperity of Humankind, Part 4, 1995.

[2] Juliet Bredon, Peking, pp.54-5, 1931

back to the root, to the “cultivation of the person”, to improving moral values and behavior.

From their history, older and more recent, Chinese people are vitally aware of the price to be paid when balance is lost. China has been made stronger and more resilient through hardship. China has gained, through suffering and success, capacity to consciously design its own future. It understands the process described by Meng Zi and in the "I Ching":

When heaven is about to bestow a great mission or charge upon someone, it invariably begins by exercising his mind with suffering, toughening his sinews and bones with toil, exposing his body to hunger, subjecting him to extreme poverty, and frustrating all his plans. All these methods are meant to stimulate his mind, strengthen his nature, and increase his abilities.^[1]

The pain and embarrassment, in recent years, caused by the lack of material-spiritual balance will challenge China to search for deeper solutions to important social issues.

As China begins to compare the true needs of our time with the finer fruits of its heritage, they will find China is the carrier of many of the qualities, skills, attitudes, and capacities the world needs in its struggle to mature and leave behind its "entrenched pattern of conflict". It may be a confirmation and a joy, lifting the hearts of the Chinese people, to find so much of their vast cultural, philosophical, and spiritual heritage is in tune with the requirements of the new age, to find they have valuable contributions to make to “true” modernization. It may be, as John Fairbank suggests, that China’s destiny is not only to achieve a more dynamic balance between the material and the spiritual within its own nation, but also to share that experience with the world.

[1] Mencius, Legge, bk.6, pt.2, ch.15, art.2

As China becomes more and more involved with other nations, it can, through its own example and its concerted efforts to foster world peace, become a most effective participant in the development of a new, world civilization. China does not need to follow the same path already trodden by other nations; it can open a new path that will lead it directly to an honored position in a New World Order that China, itself, will have helped to build.^[1]

[1] Thoughts on China, article by Dr. Farzam Arbab, May 19, 1989.

Aspects of Maturation

Present day conceptions of what is natural and appropriate in relationships - among human beings themselves, between human beings and nature, between the individual and society, and between the members of society and its institutions - reflect levels of understanding arrived at by the human race during earlier and less mature stages in its development. If humanity is indeed coming of age, if all the inhabitants of the planet constitute a single people, if justice is to be the ruling principle of social organization - then existing conceptions that were born out of ignorance of these emerging realities have to be recast.^[1]

The following sections explore various aspects of China's path to maturation. Some are written explicitly about China, and other are included as relevant to China's maturation. In the future, more sections could be added and more could be said in each section.

- 2.1 The Maturation of the Individual
- 2.2 The Maturation of Society
- 2.3 The Maturation of Belief Systems
- 2.4 The Maturation of Relations with Authority
- 2.5 The Maturation of Community Life
- 2.6 The Maturation of Relations between Men and Women
- 2.7 The Maturation of Culture
- 2.8 The Maturation of our Relationship with the Environment
- 2.9 The Maturation of Decision-making

[1] Baha'i International Community, Office of Public Information, The Prosperity of Humankind, Part 3.

广厦

2.1 The Maturation of the Individual

The importance attached to the quality of the individual person as an essential development goal is imbedded in Chinese culture. For example,

Confucianism traced back the ordering of national life to the regulation of the family and the regulation of the family life to the cultivation of the personal life.....It makes a "logical connection between a world order as the final aim and the cultivation of the personal life of individuals as a necessary start..."^[1]

The Confucian scholar-organizer Zhu Xi (1130-1200), hoped that proper government would rest upon "universal self-discipline". He stressed moral cultivation of the individual as the foundation of social order and good government^[2].

[1] The Wisdom of Confucius, Edited by Lin Yu Tang, The Modern Library, New York, 1938, p. 22.

[2] John K. Fairbank, China: A New History, Belknap Press, Harvard University, Cambridge, London, 1992, p.124.

From the Emperor down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides. It cannot be when the root is neglected, that what should spring from it would be well ordered. It never has been the case that what was of great importance has been slightly cared for, and, at the same time, that what was of slight importance has been greatly cared for.^[1]

The concept of “ren su zhi” (the quality of people) comes up often in discussions in China. The lack of it is frequently referred to as the source of difficulties, a development obstacle.

Natural and harmonious” is the essence of the universe and also an ideal state constantly pursued by man. However, nepotism and selfishness, national conflicts, frictions in families and between man and man, and estrangement between religions -- all stand in the way of human harmony, progress and unity. It is, therefore, imperative to do away with likes and dislikes and improve personality before disputes can be removed.

But the end cannot be achieved by punishment, because punishment can cure only what is external, not what is in the mind. That is why the Confucian school of thought holds that education is a crucial and effective way to make people do what is right to and acquire a lofty personality, because the essence of man’s nature is consistent with the way of the heaven.^[2]

Mencius said: "He who knows his natureknows heaven. To preserve one's mental constitution and nourish one's nature is the way to serve heaven." The way of heaven is harmonious and so is the way of men. The essential display of

[1] Excerpt from The Great Learning, part of the Confucian doctrine contained in The Four Books, Hunan Publishing House, 1995, pp. 3-5.

[2] Sun Li Bo, Unpublished paper, 1998.

human nature should be a kind of peace and tranquility and unity with the natural (cosmic) order. Those who are prone to litigation and stirring up conflicts have deviated from both the way of men and the way of heaven. The responsibility and function of education is to reform and correct people who have strayed from the way of men, correcting their minds before conforming their acts to rules, so as to attain social harmony. According to traditional Chinese ideas, education occupies an important position as a means to improve personality.

In similar terms, Abdu'l-Baha, describes the spiritualization of individuals, the maturation of their spirits as the antidote to crime, as a foundation of social harmony.

Divine civilization... ..so traineth every member of society that no one, with the exception of a negligible few, will undertake to commit a crime. There is thus a great difference between the prevention of crime through measures that are violent and retaliatory, and so training the people, and enlightening them, and spiritualizing them, that without any fear of punishment or vengeance to come, they will shun all criminal acts. They will, indeed, look upon the very commission of a crime as a great disgrace and in itself the harshest of punishments.^[1]

Confidence that moral education can succeed is based on the assumption that human beings are trainable; that they are distinct from animals, are a reflection of “heaven”, with ability and intelligence for organization and community, and have an inherent capacity for love and justice. These views can be found in Chinese philosophical writings, for example:

[1] Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 133.

Water and fire possess power but no life, grass and trees have life but cannot know, birds and animals know but are without the sense of righteousness. Man has power, life, knowledge and the sense of righteousness. Therefore, he is the most precious of all species. His strength is not equal to that of an ox. He cannot run as fast as a horse. Yet horse and oxen are used by man. Why? Because man has the ability and intelligence for organization and community.

The parrot can speak, and yet is nothing more than a bird; the ape can speak, and yet is nothing more than a beast. Here now is a man who observes no rules of propriety; is not his heart that of a beast?...Therefore, when the sage's arose, they framed the rules of propriety in order to teach men, and cause them, by their possession of them, to make a distinction between themselves and brutes.^[1]

For a man to give full realization to his heart is for him to understand his own nature, and a man who knows his own nature will know Heaven. By retaining his heart and nurturing his nature, he is serving Heaven.^[2]

Confidence that moral education can succeed must also be based on the assumption that people are not, by nature, incorrigibly selfish and aggressive. These latter behaviors, when they occur are acquired not intrinsic.

....so much have aggression and conflict come to characterize our social, economic and religious systems, that many have succumbed to the view that such behaviour is intrinsic to human nature and therefore ineradicable.

With the entrenchment of this view, a paralyzing

[1] Legge, Li Chi, bk.1, i, pp. 62 ff

[2] Lao, Mencius, 8A:1.

contradiction has developed in human affairs. On the one hand, people of all nations proclaim not only their readiness but their longing for peace and harmony, for an end to the harrowing apprehensions tormenting their daily lives. On the other, uncritical assent is given to the proposition that human beings are incorrigibly selfi sh and aggressive and thus incapable of erecting a social system at once progressive and peaceful, dynamic and harmonious, a system giving free play to individual creativity and initiative but based on co-operation and reciprocity.

As the need for peace becomes more urgent, this fundamental contradiction, which hinders its realization, demands a reassessment of the assumptions upon which the commonly held view of mankind's historical predicament is based. Dispassionately examined, the evidence reveals that such conduct, far from expressing man's true self, represents a distortion of the human spirit. Satisfaction on this point will enable all people to set in motion constructive social forces which, because they are consistent with human nature, will encourage harmony and co-operation instead of war and confl ict. To choose such a course is not to deny humanity's past but to understand it.^[1]

Whether in the form of the adversarial structure of civil government, the advocacy principle informing most of civil law, a glorification of the struggle between classes and other social groups, or the competitive spirit dominating so much of modern life, confl ict is accepted as the mainspring of human interaction. It represents yet another expression in social organization of the materialistic interpretation of life that has progressively consolidated itself over the past two centuries.^[2]

[1] To the People's of the World: A Baha'i Statement on Peace, The Universal House of Justice, 1985

[2] Baha'i International Community, Office of Public Information, The Prosperity of Humanity.

Most particularly, it is in the glorification of material pursuits, at once the progenitor and common feature of all such ideologies, that we find the roots which nourish the falsehood that human beings are incorrigibly selfish and aggressive. It is here that the ground must be cleared for the building of a new world fit for our descendants.^[1]

Mencius agrees that people are not bad by nature. He compared the human spirit to trees on a mountain hacked and eroded by nearby townspeople and grazing animals. He asks whether their degraded appearance is due to the nature of the trees? He claims, "...it cannot be said that there is no love and justice inherent in the nature of man".

The trees on Ox Mountain were once beautiful. Being situated, however, in the suburbs of a large city, they were hewn down with axes and hatchets; how could they retain their beauty? Still through the growth from their vegetative life day and night, and the nourishing influence of the rain and dew, they were not without buds and sprouts sprung out. But then came the cattle and goats, and browsed among them. This is why it appears so bare and stripped. When people see its bare appearance, they tend to think that there was no wood from the beginning. But is it due to the original nature of the mountain? Similarly, it cannot be said that there is no love and justice inherent in the nature of man. But the way in which a man loses the proper goodness of his mind is just like the way in which those trees were denuded by axes and hatchets. Hacked at, day after day, how can it retain its excellence? Still, there is some growth between day and night, and in the peaceful air of the morning, the mind feels in a degree those inclinations and aversions which are proper to humanity; but

[1] To the People's of the World: A Baha'i Statement on Peace, The Universal House of Justice, 1985.

the feeling is very feeble. And then it is fettered and destroyed by what the man does during the day. The fettering takes place again and again; the restorative influence of the night is not sufficient to preserve the original goodness of his nature; and when the still small voice of the conscience is smothered, his nature is scarcely distinguishable from that of the irrational animals. When people see that man is like an irrational animal, they tend to think that from the beginning he had no capabilities for good; but is this due to his nature?^[1]

In good years the young people often acquire a habit of dependence. In bad years the young people often take to violence. This is not due to the differences in their endowments as conferred by Heaven. It is owing to the different things by which they allow their minds to be ensnared and engulfed.^[2]

The moral education and training of the individual as a cornerstone of development has been understood for millennia in China. Its importance is re-emerging as the forces of greed and corruption undermine social order; and as the deeper happiness based on moral integrity becomes threatened.

[1] Mencius, Legge, ch.8, arts 1-2. See also Chapter 5 for an account of the non-existence of a positive evil.

[2] Mencius, Legge, bk 6, pt. 1, ch. 6, arts 1-7.

2.2 The Maturation of Society

Dr. Husayn Danesh, a Canadian psychologist describes the transition to maturity as a movement from authoritarian and indulgent forms to more mature “integrative” social relations.

Although the authoritarian mode of relating has been and remains the most common in human relationships, there are nevertheless two other modes, the indulgent and the integrative.....the advent of mankind's age of maturity must coincide with the predominance of the integrative approach to life and human relationships. While the authoritarian and indulgent modes display characteristics of childhood and adolescent stages of development, the integrative mode describes a mature type of human relationship, and, therefore, has a special importance in our understanding of the prerequisites for facilitating humanity's transition from its age of adolescence to adulthood.^[1]

[1] H.B. Danesh, M.D., *Unity: the Creative Foundation of Peace*, Baha'i Studies Publications, Canada, 1986.

He presents these modes of relationship as Personality Types. (See table below). We could also consider these types as conditions of the larger society.

Personality Type (National Character)	Characteristics	World View	Emotional and Intellectual Characteristics	Relationships with Others
Authoritarian	Power- oriented	Dichotomous Perceptions	Rigidity	Authoritarian Submission
Indulgent	Pleasure-oriented	Indiscriminate Perceptions	Promiscuity	Anarchic Relationships
Integrative	Growth-oriented	Unity in Diversity	Creativity	Responsibility and Cooperation

Fig. 3 Personality and Social Types

If we apply the above table to China, we could say it is growing from the authoritarian to the integrative condition. From this perspective, we can see authoritarianism, not as a permanent condition, but as a stage of growth.

China has a long history of a hierarchical, centralized social order organized around an Emperor with a mandate from heaven. China exhibits restraint and moderation, respect for the principle of "the subordination of the individual will to that of society", and a habit of obedience. Confucian thought stresses the importance of the well-being of the whole. For instance, it advocates that when an individual comes into conflict with the society or family, he should give up his own interests, that is, to sacrifice himself for the sake of righteousness. The West tends to interpret this restraint and moderation, the emphasis on the importance of the group, not as a respect for the unity of the whole or respect for the institution of leadership, but only in terms of submission to a dictatorial "regime".

The world view of the more mature integrative mode is "unity in diversity". This new world view is now the goal of all societies,

authoritarian or indulgent. If we see each other as cells in an organic social body, and if we accept that individuals can benefit from the organization of the social whole, it is logical that individual behavior that strengthens the whole will also strengthen the individual.

Without this fundamental understanding, there is no motivation to participate in a collective destiny or to be of service to others; it would be difficult to exercise the principles of cooperation and reciprocity.

Human society is composed not of a mass of merely differentiated cells but of associations of individuals, each one of whom is endowed with intelligence and will; nevertheless, the modes of operation that characterize man's biological nature illustrate fundamental principles of existence. Chief among these is that of unity in diversity. Paradoxically, it is precisely the wholeness and complexity of the order constituting the human body - and the perfect integration into it of the body's cells - that permit the full realization of the distinctive capacities inherent in each of these component elements. No cell lives apart from the body, whether in contributing to its functioning or in deriving its share from the well-being of the whole.^[1]

While the individual will is subordinated to that of society, the cultivation of the individual is still, as in the Confucian model, the starting point of development – “the root of everything besides”.

...while the individual will is subordinated to that of society, the individual is not lost in the mass but becomes the focus of primary development, so that he may find his own place in the flow of progress, and society as a whole may benefit from the accumulated talents and abilities of the individuals composing it.

[1] Baha'i International Community, Office of Public Information, The Prosperity of Humankind, p.4.

Such an individual finds fulfillment of his potential not merely in satisfying his own wants but in realizing his completeness in being at one with humanity and with the divinely ordained purpose of creation.

This relationship, so fundamental to the maintenance of civilized life, calls for the utmost degree of understanding and cooperation between society and the individual; and because the need to foster a climate in which the untold potentialities of the individual members of society can develop, this relationship must allow "free scope" for "individuality to assert itself" through modes of spontaneity, initiative and diversity that ensure the viability of society."¹¹

Citizenship, in a mature social contract means individuals act to satisfy, simultaneously, twin goals: to share and express their unique, individual capacities and talents, and to ensure the vitality of the larger society. Helping to create the latter furthers the development of the former.

It may be easier for China to make this transition than for the west to move to maturity from its more "indulgent" condition.

[1] Letter from the Universal House of Justice.

2.3 The Maturation of Belief Systems

Belief Systems: Elements of One Process

If we scan the Map of Human Maturation (Fig.1), we can observe the following patterns:

- “Rivers” of civilizations
- Convergence of these rivers in one ocean
- A strong correlation between each civilization and a belief

system

Each cycle of civilization can be traced to a potent spiritual germinating influence, with its root traced to its Founder. In fact, for most of them, such as, Hindu, Judaic, Buddhist, Christian, and Islamic, the name of the civilization and the name of the belief system, even its Founder, are interchangeable. Founders associated with civilizations include: Krishna and the Gupta civilization, Moses and the Jewish Kingdom, Zoroaster and the Persian Empire,

Buddha's impact on many Asian countries including China, Jesus and the Byzantine Empire, and Mohammed and the Islamic civilization. Western civilization owes its renaissance in 1500 AD, from a thousand years of darkness, to the influence of Islam.

Associated with the maturation period of these great civilizations are the great kingly figures of Solomon, Ashoka, Constantine, Saladin, and Akbar. One of China's early Sage Kings may have been a civilization-Founder. Buddhism did not originate in China, but it took root there. Confucius and Lao Zi never claimed to be Prophets, but their teachings were embraced as essential philosophical foundations of the inner life of China.

Each belief system had a Founder and a "Book". The Founders of belief systems promoted the cause of love and unity, and gave laws and social principles relevant to the time in which they appeared. (For more detail see Appendix.)

If we accept that most moral thought derives from these great belief systems, and, if we accept that mutual helpfulness and reciprocity are the basis of civilization, we could argue that, through the influence of these systems, the innate moral and spiritual faculties of humanity gradually developed and the advancement of civilization was made possible. The religions of the world provided the ethical order - the spiritual roots - that allowed the creation of a social order, from which were born the fruits of civilization; the whole process propelled by the light of the "sun", the vision of the Founder.

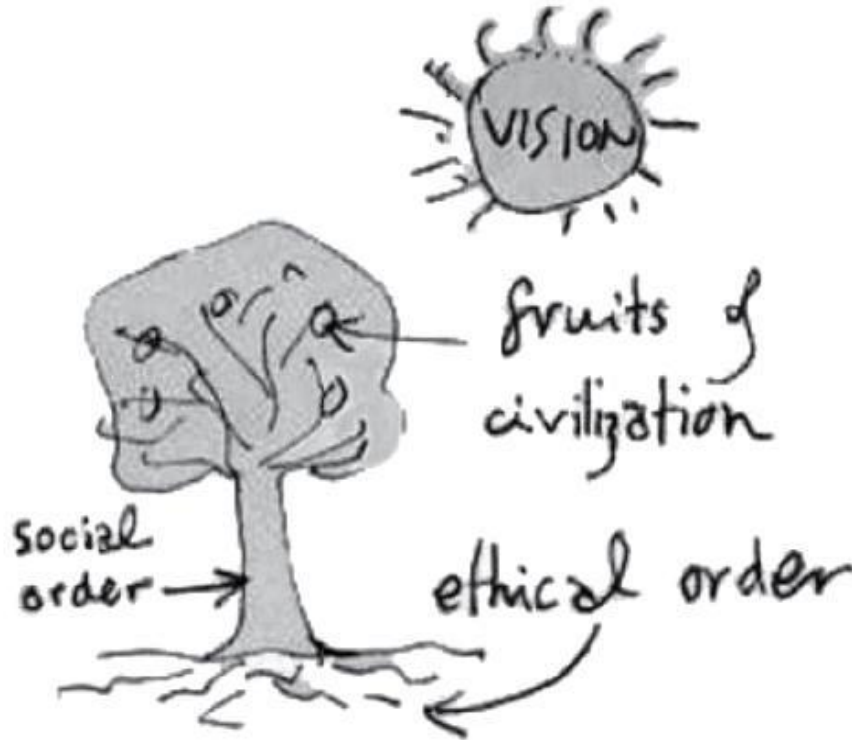


Fig. 4 Elements of Civilization

So far as earthly existence is concerned, many of the greatest achievements of religion have been moral in character. Through its teachings and through the examples of human lives illumined by these teachings, masses of people in all ages and lands have developed the capacity to love. They have learned to discipline the animal side of their natures, to make great sacrifices for the common good, to practice forgiveness, generosity, and trust, to use wealth and other resources in ways that serve the advancement of civilization. Institutional systems have been devised to translate these moral advances into the norms of social life on a vast scale. However obscured by dogmatic accretions and diverted by sectarian conflict, the spiritual impulses set in motion by such transcendent figures as Krishna, Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus, and Muhammad have been the chief influence in the civilizing of

human character.^[1]

Divine Revelation is, He (Bahá'u'lláh) says, the motive power of civilization. When it occurs, its transforming effect on the minds and souls of those who respond to it is replicated in the new society that slowly takes shape around their experience. A new center of loyalty emerges that can win the commitment of peoples from the widest range of cultures; music and the arts seize on symbols that mediate far richer and more mature inspirations; a radical redefinition of concepts of right and wrong makes possible the formulation of new codes of civil law and conduct; new institutions are conceived in order to give expression to impulses of moral responsibility previously ignored or unknown: "He was in the world, and the world was made by him..."^[2]

As the new culture evolves into a civilization, it assimilates achievements and insights of past eras in a multitude of fresh permutations. Features of past cultures that cannot be incorporated atrophy or are taken up by marginal elements among the population. The Word of God creates new possibilities within both the individual consciousness and human relationships.^[3]

Each civilization has a life-span. The civilization process, in each of its manifestations, displayed an internal organic cycle beginning with youthful vigor, followed by maturation and decline. Initially, its belief system provided the moral foundation for the civilization's infancy and childhood. The stability, prosperity, and blossoming of civilizations occurred when the vitality of the belief system was at its peak, inspiring great achievements in social order, culture, and science. When the clarity of inner vision and motive power declined, when the sinews of moral discipline weakened, the civilization crumbled from within.

[1] Baha'i International Community, *The Prosperity of Humankind*, Part 4., 1995.

[2] Baha'i International Community, 1992 May 29, Statement on Baha'u'llah, p. 13.

[3] Baha'i International Community, 1992 May 29, Statement on Baha'u'llah, p. 13.

The rise and decline of China's Dynastic civilization was propelled by Buddhism. The time of the Tang-Song Dynasties is considered the period of maturity. For example, Liang Si Cheng, the architect-historian, refers to evolutionary stages of vitality (Han), elegance (Tang-Song) and rigidity (Ming-Qing). As the creative power of this belief system waned, so too did its civilization.

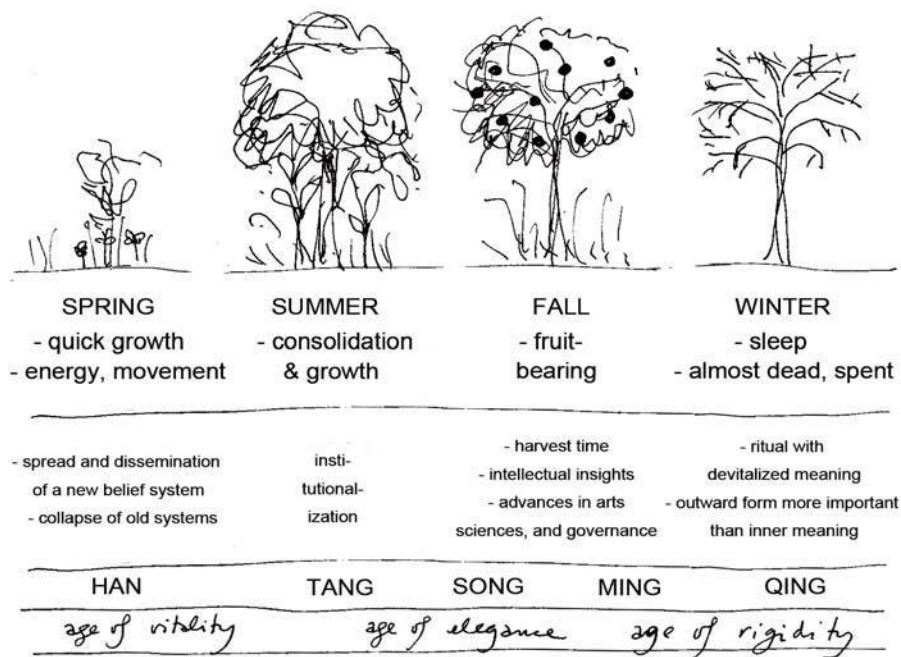


Fig. 5 The Life Cycle of a Civilization

With this in mind we can offer an answer to the “Needham question”.

Joseph Needham (1900-1990), a Cambridge Professor, the principal author of “Science and Civilization in China”, devoted most of his life to demonstrate that China, until the 15th century, was the most advanced civilization on earth, contributing hundreds of mankind’s most familiar inventions. Needham wanted to “fathom what changes suddenly occurred in the China of five centuries ago that made it necessary for modern science to develop not in China

but elsewhere, principally around the shores of the Mediterranean. In the middle of the 15th century virtually all scientific advance in China came to a shuddering halt, and Europe then took the leading role in advancing the world's civilization. Why might this be?"^[1] "Why was China not able to hold on to its early advantage and creative edge?" "Why did the Chinese stop trying?"^[2]

The middle of the 15th century corresponds with latter part of the Buddhist-induced cycle civilization in China; the beginning of the end of its creative power. It was only natural that, as the cycle came to a close, so too was there a decline in invention and scientific advancement.

Thanks to Needham, we can appreciate the vital role China played in the evolution of science and technology.

According to his research, Chinese ideas and inventions were the foundation of the European Agricultural Revolution. This agricultural revolution was the foundation of the European Industrial Revolution, which, in turn, was the foundation of modern science and technology.

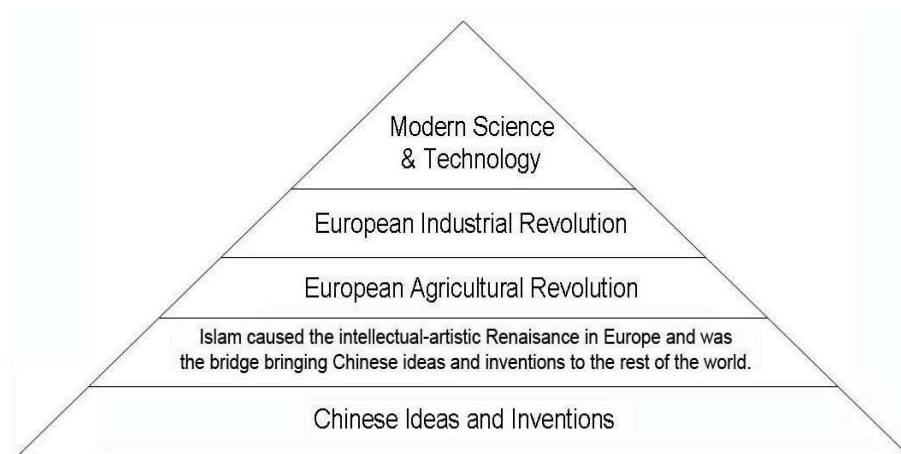


Fig. 6 The Evolution of Science and Technology^[3]

[1] Simon Winchester, *The Man Who Loved China*, HarperCollins, New York, 2008, p.190.

[2] Simon Winchester, *The Man Who Loved China*, HarperCollins, New York, 2008, p.260..

[3] The diagram is based on evidence demonstrated in Robert Temple's book, *The Genius of China*.

At the same time that China's cycle of productivity was beginning to decline, Islam's most creative period was also coming to an end. The civilization inspired by Mohammed passed the flame of development leadership that had blazed mostly to the south of the Mediterranean, to Europe and ignited a "Renaissance". Thanks to Mohammed, the West awoke from a 1000 years of "Dark Ages".

Islam's gift to Europe contained knowledge collected from around the known world, including China. Islam was the critical link bringing China's science and engineering to Europe. In many cases, the time lag between Chinese invention and its application in Europe was over a thousand years.

It would be better if the nations and peoples of the world had a clearer understanding of each other, allowing the mental chasm between East and West to be bridged. After all they are, and have been for several centuries, intimate partners in the business of building a world civilization. The technological world of today is a product of both East and West to an extent which until recently no one had ever imagined. It is now time for the Chinese contribution to be recognized and acknowledged, by east and West alike. And, above all, let this be recognized by today's school children, who will be the generation to absorb it into their fundamental conceptions about the world. When that happens, Chinese and Westerners will be able to look each other in the eye, knowing themselves to be true and full partners.^[1]

The similarity of the "belief system & civilization" process at various times and places throughout history, the essential harmony of the ethical tenets of the various belief systems, and our ascent from cave-dwellers to world citizens; all suggest the relationship between civilizations and belief systems is one, on-going, ever-

[1] Robert Temple, *The Genius of China*, 1998, p. 12

advancing progressive process. The purpose of the process, as Toynbee proposes, is

....to create a state of society in which the whole of mankind will be able to live together in harmony as members of a single all-inclusive family. This is, I believe, the goal at which all civilizations so far have been aiming unconsciously, if not consciously.^[1]

One of the signs of the maturation of humanity is that we begin to see there are no separate “religions”; there is only one spiritual education process. We have mistakenly taken its various appearances as independent and exclusive phenomena. We could see it as a “university”, formerly perceived as separate schools but now appearing as one global “campus”. When we turn to the great historical belief systems extant today, we are looking at the old text books and classroom behavior of our childhood and adolescence. If the belief systems of the past are all part of one on-going, ascending system of “inner” education, then what we need is not to abandon the process but rather to have an update, a new course of instruction appropriate for our one-planet world.

[1] Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, abridged one-volume edition, p.44.

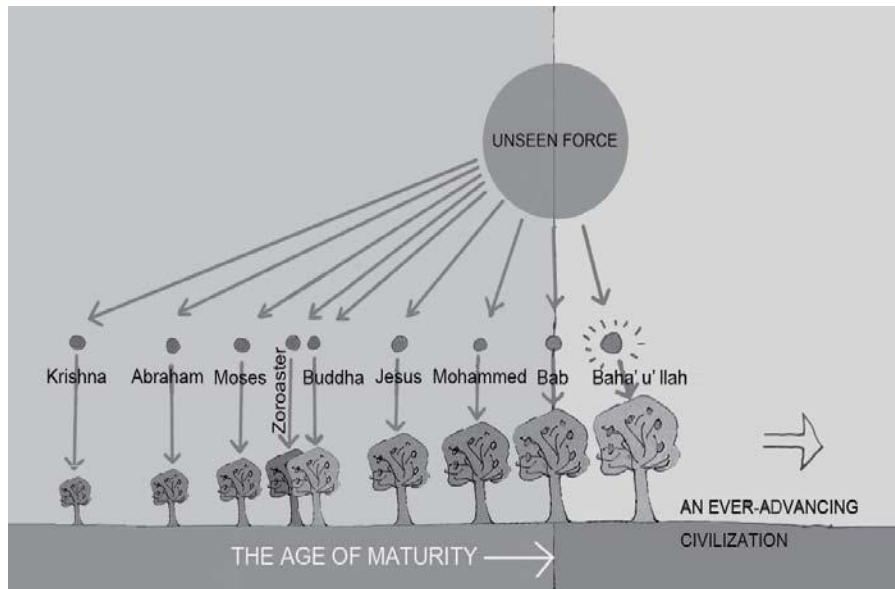


Fig. 7 One Spiritual Education Process

All these religions have their source in Heaven which they obey.

Traced to the source, the three sages are no different.^[1]

In the world there are many different roads but the destination is the same. There are a hundred deliberations but the result is one.^[2]

Seen as one process, there is no basis for the claim to exclusivity for any one belief system. Such a claim misses the common unifying intent of all the systems. Also, this is why, an old belief system, once its vitality is spent, can no longer be the foundation of regeneration. There is need for truth not just re-told, but re-born, a new springtime, a resurrection of real spirit. While there are echoes and even word-for-word repetition of truths from one "dispensation" to the next, genuine regenerating power passes on to the newer appearance of

[1] Poem on the three religions, in the Tao Xuan. Cited in Chan, Religious Pluralism, p.123

[2] The Book of Changes, cited in Legge, The Four Books, pt. 2, ch. 5

the belief system.

the entire enterprise that we call civilization is itself a spiritual process, one in which the human mind and heart have created progressively more complex and efficient means to express their inherent moral and intellectual capacities.....The phenomenon is an ever-recurring one; it is without beginning or end because it is fundamental to the evolutionary order itself.^[1]

Although nurtured by the process, humanity has never understood it. Instead, people have constructed around each episode in their spiritual experience a separate religious system. Throughout history, the religious impulse has been hobbled by the resulting contradictions and bitter conflicts.^[2]

[1] Who is Writing the Future? Baha'i International Community, Part 1, 1999.

[2] E.A. Burtt, The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha, A Mentor Book, p.124.

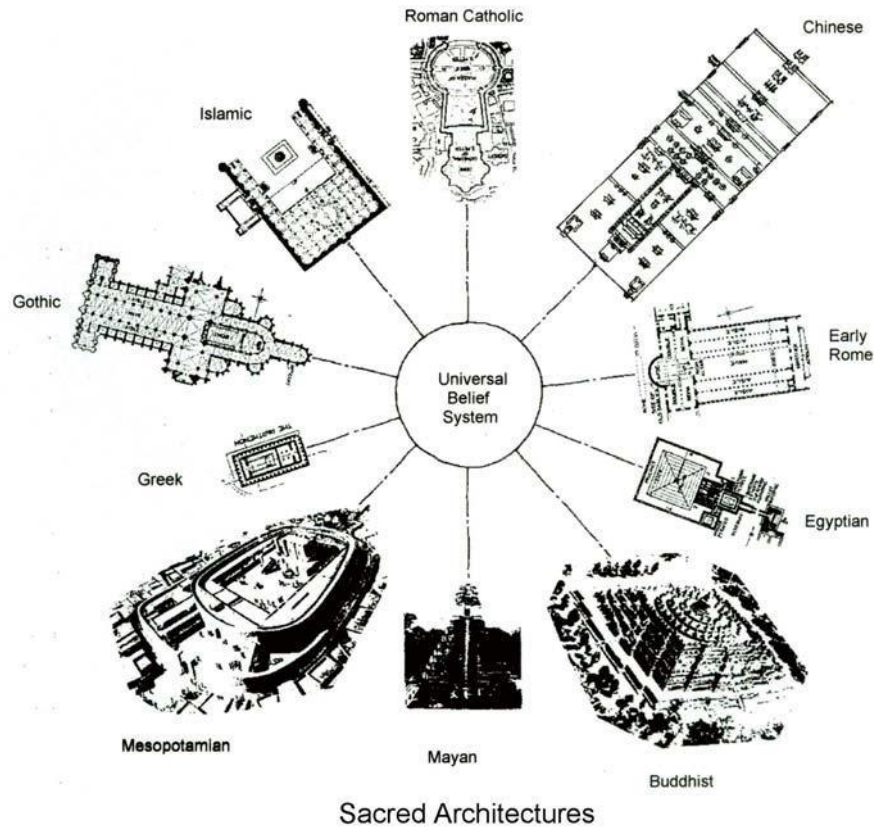


Fig. 8 Convergence of Humanity's Highest Aspirations

Just as science and law move to higher and higher definitions of reality - and are subject to renewal - so too must religion be renewed. The potency of the belief system's "water of life" served a cleansing, purifying function, but, the more it was used, the more it became polluted. For example, James T. C. Liu exalts the Song Dynasty Neo-Confucians to the station of "moral transcendentalists". Later, however, he says, "neo-traditionalism permeated the culture so completely that it lost the power to transform".

As the vitality of the belief system weakens, gradually, the system no longer governs the actions of the people or disciplines them. The social teachings of the system lose relevance as the

society matures. The great spheres of science and religion are no longer in concert. The belief system descends into outward forms, appearances, and rituals, with a lack of inner meaning. They become so out of tune with new stages in growth they must be abandoned. This necessary wintertime of the cycle divides communities into those clinging to a system in its old age and those turning to a new source of inspiration.

Religion is the outer expression of the divine reality. Therefore, it must be living, vitalized, moving and progressive. If it be without motion and non-progressive, it is without the divine life; it is dead. The divine institutes are continuously active and evolutionary; therefore, the revelation of them must be progressive and continuous. All things are subject to reformation.^[1]

While former belief systems crossed national and racial boundaries, they were not able to be universal. For example, while Buddhism was palatable to China, Christianity and Islam made few inroads among the Han people. Humanity was not yet mature enough for a universal system, nor were the transportation and communication infrastructures yet available. In all of these belief systems, however, universalism was latent, anticipating and preparing us for the awaited day of consummation.

For many people today, the first impression of religion is prejudice, superstition, blind and unreasoning obedience, violence and even war, all in its name. If these are the fruits of so-called religion, then are we not better off without it? The following distinctions offered some explanation as to where these justifiable impressions come from:

[1] Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 139.

1. Distinction between Moral and Social Teachings

While the moral teachings of each system are fundamentally the same - the theme of "love your neighbor", for example runs throughout them all; the social teachings related to marriage, inheritance, diet, etc, of each system change and progress as humanity progresses. Centuries of habit within one system, however, made it hard to let go of ingrained traditions and move on to the next level of social laws and principles.

2. Distinction between the Original "Book" and Man-made Additions

There is a difference between the writings of the Founders of the belief systems, and non-essential rituals and habits added by adherents through time. Some of these have obscured and even distorted the original message, making it harder to grasp its intent, let alone the overall evolutionary purpose. Such obfuscation of truth darkens the path to progress. The Founders of the world's belief systems are,

the first Teachers of the human race. They are universal Educators, and the fundamental principles they have laid down are the causes and factors of the advancement of nations. Forms and imitations which creep in afterward are not conducive to that progress. On the contrary, these are destroyers of human foundations established by the heavenly Educators. These are clouds which obscure the Sun of Reality.^[1]

3. Distinction between the "Book" and the Behavior of Some Religious Leaders

Adding further to the confusion is the behavior of some leaders of religions, usually in the later stages of a civilization, who out of

[1] Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 85

ignorance or love of power, clung to outmoded structures that had to melt before the rising sun of the new cycle. Instead of guiding their flocks to the new source of light, they resisted it and even instigated persecution of its founder and followers. For example, Jewish religious leaders persecuted Christ; Christian leaders led the persecution of Muslims; definite signs that the fruit-bearing period of the cycle was in decline.

True religion is the source of love and agreement amongst men, the cause of the development of praiseworthy qualities; but the people are holding to the counterfeit and imitation, negligent of the reality which unifies; so they are bereft and deprived of the radiance of religion. They follow superstitions inherited from their fathers and ancestors. To such an extent has this prevailed that they have taken away the heavenly light of divine truth and sit in the darkness of imitations and imaginations. That which was meant to be conducive to life has become the cause of death; that which should have been an evidence of knowledge is now a proof of ignorance; that which was a factor in the sublimity of human nature has proved to be its degradation. Therefore the realm of the religionist has gradually narrowed and darkened and the sphere of the materialist has widened and advanced; for the religionist has held to imitation and counterfeit, neglecting and discarding holiness and the sacred reality of religion.^[1]

Violence and prejudice in the name of belief systems are distortions of their original intent and do not invalidate their worth; the fire of knowledge in the hand of a child or of the ignorant can be dangerous. Belief systems in decline and decay do not represent their value; disintegration is a sign of decline that is inherent and necessary in a cycle, the cycle will start again afresh, gathering

[1] Abdu'l-Baha, *Foundations of World Unity*, Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, 1972, p.71.

together new and potent forces.

After a time of decay comes the turning point. The powerful light that has been banished returns. The old is discarded and the new is introduced. Both measures accord with the time; therefore no harm results.^[1]

If belief systems are sequential, and the vitality of former ones is spent, then we need a fresh start. If the next step in our evolution is the oneness of the human family; then we need a corresponding, vital belief system that is universal and addresses the needs of our time.

The recent fast-fusion of our world into one place, and the rapid acceleration of learning and invention in the past one or two hundred years suggest a new cycle of civilization - for the first time on a global scale - has already begun. If belief systems impel new stages of human growth, then the force behind this sudden and rapid outburst of integration and disintegration must already exist. Where is it? Who is its Founder?

This renewed belief system must be universal, fulfill the aspirations of peoples everywhere, and be capable of inspiring a global flowering of civilization where cultures can “interact with one another in ever-changing patterns”. It must give “the human mind and heart.....more complex and efficient means to express...its...inherent moral and intellectual capacities”. The ethics of this belief system should be a renewal of the basic “love your neighbor” theme common to all religions; and its social principles must relate to the organization of world citizens on a globalizing planet.

[1] I Ching

The Baha'i Faith

In 1863, Baha'u'llah, son of a prominent Persian official, while in exile in Baghdad, Iraq, claimed to be the inaugurator-founder of just such a renewed belief system. He claimed to deliver the latest in a series of progressive revelations. His central message and goal, the oneness of humanity.

Regard the world as the human body which, though at its creation whole and perfect, hath been afflicted, through various causes, with grave disorders and maladies. Not for one day did it gain ease, nay its sickness waxed more severe, as it fell under the treatment of ignorant physicians, who gave full rein to their personal desires, and have erred grievously. And if, at one time, through the care of an able physician, a member of that body was healed, the rest remained afflicted as before. Thus informeth you the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

That which the Lord hath ordained as the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for the healing of all the world is the union of all its peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith. This can in no wise be achieved except through the power of a skilled, an all-powerful and inspired Physician. This, verily, is the truth, and all else naught but error.^[1]

In a letter to the Hague Peace Conference in 1918, Baha'u'llah's son, Abdu'l-Baha wrote,

And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is that although material civilization is one of the means for the progress of the world of mankind, yet until it becomes combined with divine civilization the desired result, which is the felicity of mankind,

[1] Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 254.

will not be attained. Consider! These battleships that reduce a city to ruins within the space of an hour are the result of material civilization; likewise the Krupp guns, the Mauser rifles, dynamite, submarines, torpedo boats, armed aircraft and bombing aeroplanes—all these weapons of war are malignant fruits of material civilization. Had material civilization been combined with divine civilization, these fiery weapons would never have been invented. Nay, rather human energy would have been wholly devoted to useful inventions and concentrated on praiseworthy discoveries. Material civilization is like a globe of glass. Divine civilization is the light itself, and the glass without the light is dark. Material civilization is like the body. No matter how infinitely graceful, elegant and beautiful it may be, it is dead. Divine civilization is like the spirit, and the body gets its life from the spirit, otherwise it becomes a corpse. It has thus been made evident that the world of mankind is in need of the breaths of the Holy Spirit. Without the spirit the world of mankind is lifeless, and without this light the world of mankind is in utter darkness. For the world of nature is an animal world. Until man is born again from the world of nature—that is to say, becomes detached from the world of nature, he is essentially an animal, and it is the teachings of God which convert this animal into a human soul.^[1]

According to Shoghi Effendi, the great-grandson of Baha'u'llah, our coming of age is not a mere enunciation of an ideal. It is a deep organic change to human society with institutions to match its new condition; the necessary consummation of human evolution.

Let there be no mistake. The principle of the Oneness of Mankind - the pivot round which all the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh revolve - is no mere outburst of ignorant emotionalism or an

[1] Abdu'l-Baha, Foundations of World Unity, p. 27

expression of vague and pious hope. Its appeal is not to be merely identified with a reawakening of the spirit of brotherhood and goodwill among men, nor does it aim solely at the fostering of harmonious cooperation among individual peoples and nations. Its implications are deeper, its claims greater than any which the Prophets of old were allowed to advance. Its message is applicable not only to the individual, but concerns itself primarily with the nature of those essential relationships that must bind all the states and nations as members of one human family.

It does not constitute merely the enunciation of an ideal, but stands inseparably associated with:

- *an institution adequate to embody its truth, demonstrate its validity, and perpetuate its influence.*
- *It implies an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced.*
- *It constitutes a challenge, at once bold and universal, to outworn shibboleths of national creeds - creeds that have had their day and which must, in the ordinary course of events as shaped and controlled by Providence, give way to a new gospel, fundamentally different from, and infinitely superior to, what the world has already conceived.*
- *It calls for no less than the reconstruction and the demilitarization of the whole civilized world - a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units.*
- *It represents the consummation of human evolution - an evolution that has had its earliest beginnings in the birth of family life, its subsequent development in the achievement of tribal solidarity, leading in turn to the constitution of the city-state, and expanding later into the institution of independent and sovereign nations.*

The principle of the Oneness of Mankind, as proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh, carries with it no more and no less than a solemn assertion that attainment to this final stage in this stupendous evolution is not only necessary but inevitable, that its realization is fast approaching, and that nothing short of a power that is born of God can succeed in establishing it.^[1]

The Bahá'í Faith recognizes the unity of God and of His Prophets, upholds the principle of an unfettered search after truth, condemns all forms of superstition and prejudice, teaches that the fundamental purpose of religion is to promote concord and harmony, that it must go hand-in-hand with science, and that it constitutes the sole and ultimate basis of a peaceful, an ordered and progressive society.

It inculcates the principle of equal opportunity, rights and privileges for both sexes, advocates compulsory education, abolishes extremes of poverty and wealth, exalts work performed in the spirit of service to the rank of worship, recommends the adoption of an auxiliary international language, and provides the necessary agencies for the establishment and safeguarding of a permanent and universal peace.^[2]

The Bahá'í Faith is the youngest of the world's independent religions. Its founder, Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892), is regarded by Bahá'ís as the most recent in the line of Messengers of God that stretches back beyond recorded time and that includes Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Krishna, Zoroaster, Christ and Muhammad.

The central theme of Bahá'u'lláh's message is that humanity is one single race and that the day has come for its unification in one global society. God, Bahá'u'lláh said, has set in motion historical forces that are breaking down traditional barriers of race, class, creed, and nation and that will, in time, give birth to a

[1] Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*, p. 42

[2] Shoghi Effendi, *Guardian of the Bahá'u'lláh Faith*

universal civilization. The principal challenge facing the peoples of the earth is to accept the fact of their oneness and to assist the processes of unification.

One of the purposes of the Bahá'í Faith is to help make this possible. A worldwide community of some five to six million Bahá'ís, representative of most of the nations, races and cultures on earth, is working to give Bahá'u'lláh's teachings practical effect. They come from more than 2,000 different tribal, racial, and ethnic groups and live in 247 countries and dependent territories. The Britannica Book of the Year (1992-present) referred to the Bahá'í Faith as the second-most geographically widespread religion in the world, after Christianity.

Their experience will be a source of encouragement to all who share their vision of humanity as one global family and the earth as one homeland.

2.4 The Maturation of Relations with Authority

As humanity matures so too will the nature of the leader-led relationship. We need to gradually leave behind power-oriented authoritarian social structures and move toward more mature growth-oriented social structures characterized by responsibility and cooperation.

In Part 2.2 it was proposed that the West was moving to maturity from a relatively more “indulgent” social condition and that China was moving to maturity from a relatively more “authoritarian” social condition. The West often assumes the rest of the world will follow its model, including its form of government. In the past thirty years since the Open Door Policy began, however, China has effected momentous changes on its own terms, only borrowing selectively from the West. It has always defined and pursued its own course of development, and done so with relatively little turmoil. Its current stated development goal is a Harmonious Society; a goal that is also very Chinese, a concept deeply rooted in Chinese philosophy for

centuries.

A more mature world community is a desired goal, but the East and West need not follow the same path to get there. With these thoughts in mind, we look at only two aspects of this vast topic: individual freedom, and the party-system.

Individual Freedom

If the relationships in a mature society are characterized by responsibility to and cooperation with others, then this implies individual freedom must have boundaries. As mentioned in Part 2.1, “if we accept that individuals can benefit from the organization of the social whole, it is logical that individual behavior that strengthens the whole will also strengthen the individual”. In order to preserve the whole, the rights of the group are greater than the rights of the individual. Freedom of the individual, therefore, requires a capacity to understand social relations and acquire appropriate behaviors.

The notion that the quality of freedom relates to the knowledge and training of individuals is well understood in China. The quotation from Confucius, below, is so well known to Chinese people that they often identify the age of a person not by years, but by the maturity of his relationship to freedom. Confucius said:

At fifteen my heart was set on learning; at thirty, I stood firm in the society; at forty I had no more doubts; at fifty, I knew the mandate of heaven; at sixty, my ear can tell the good from the bad; at seventy I could follow my heart's desire without transgressing the norm.^[1] (Another translation of this last part: “At seventy, I could follow the dictates of my own heart for what I desired no longer overstepped the boundaries of right.^[2])

[1] Conucius, Analects, 2:4 Shandong Friendship Press, p. 216-7, 2005.

[2] Confucius, Analects, 2:4

Someone in their thirties is referred to as being in the “er li” – “stand firm” stage of development; in their forties, the “hu huo” – “not confused” stage; in their fifties, “zhi tian ming” – “understand the meaning of life”; sixties, “er shun”, “can distinguish good from bad”; and in their 70s, “er cong xin suo yu” – “follow desire from the heart without transgressing the norm”. It is understood that real freedom is attained after a life-long learning process, that it has limits. Freedom should not overstep “the boundaries of right”.

This understanding of freedom, reinforced by a capacity to cope with the difficult challenges of life with relative equanimity, is a Chinese characteristic. Although the new generation worships “freedom” there is within them as well the built-in Chinese characteristic of self-restraint. This explains why Chinese people, including the young ones, are mystified by the self-destructive and violent clashes in many other countries, especially ones associated with members of religious groups. It also explains their astonishment that the United States would allow individuals the right to carry weapons.

Most urban Chinese people obey the one-child law because they agree the consequences of over-population require this drastic solution. Has anyone thanked China for its restraint, keeping the world population down? If you've ever been in a Chinese city on a crowded bus at rush hour you would experience first-hand the logic of this policy. China persists despite difficult side effects: namely, the one-child policy helps produce spoiled children, and there are fewer children to look after elderly parents. Lack of a social welfare system makes survival in the countryside difficult. Life depends on having a son who will stay at home. The conflict between this need and the One Child Policy results in the abortion of female fetuses. This problem will persist until the education level is higher and more retirement fund programs are in place.

Chinese self-restraint, more than fear or external threat, has

suppressed the kind of criticism of leadership that would lead to instability. China sees leaders as passengers in a boat held up by the water, the people. The people know that criticism should guide the boat, not sink it.

The West tends to see these behaviors, not as actions that might safeguard freedom, but as a lack of freedom and even as resignation to oppression.

While China still has along way to go to achieve a more mature society - the inertia of thousands of years of authoritarian social structure still lingers - these fruits of Chinese experience may be more in tune with the requirements of our collective maturity than the West would like to admit.

Party-Systems

In a mature society we shift from adversarial institutions and attitudes to systems characterized by unity, consultation, and participation.

Just as a family cannot be governed by a father and mother who are adversaries, so too must a mature society be governed by institutions that are united.

Western definitions of democracy, in addition to representative government, usually add, as additional prerequisites, unrestrained freedom to criticize government actions, and a multiparty system. Multi-party systems were conceived in a time of our collective adolescence when power was all-important. These youthful institutions with their built-in checks and balances were necessary to inhibit the abuse of power. As our attention shifts to more adult organizing principles such as justice and unity, we will begin to discard these adversarial forms of government.

For Chinese people, with a governance system, for centuries, with one center undivided, such institutions and concepts as the "loyal opposition" are a moral and intellectual contradiction. A multi-

party system is not only foreign to China; it would be a divisive and retrograde step. A party system would prolong adolescent rivalry and could even lead to civil war. As China moves toward maturity, it can skip over this adversarial structure of civil government, the party system of the West. It can, instead, continue to expand and improve its current governance model, a system of district, provincial, and national elected delegates, by increasing public participation and consultation.

2.5 The Maturation of Community Life

There is a level of social organization, larger than the family and smaller than the city, that we can call “community”. We have experienced some aspects of community life in villages, neighbourhoods, and the Chinese Work Unit. Since most of the world is emerging from authoritarian social structures, these earlier forms of community were led by village heads, dominant persons, or appointed leaders. Networks of friends, common-interest groups, school-based friendships, web-friends, etc. all have some characteristics of community, but do not have a physical locality.

All of the above have been, and are, conducive to human growth and development, but several factors in our modern world call for the creation of more mature forms of community. When our capacity and education were less, we could be managed in top-down fashion by leaders who - for better or worse - addressed our needs.

With the improvement of education and the accelerating spread of knowledge, we are experiencing a vast increase in

individual human capacity. The corresponding increase in capacity to participate in the quest for progress requires a new “climate in which the untold potentialities of the individual members of society can develop”, where new social and administrative forms can safely channel this surging energy.

With the discovery that material development alone does not bring happiness, a search for more meaningful activity has begun. We need community life where the individual finds “his own place in the flow of progress, and society as a whole may benefit from the accumulated talents and abilities of the individuals composing it”; where the individual “finds fulfillment of his potential not merely in satisfying his own wants but in realizing his completeness in being at one with humanity and with the divinely ordained purpose of creation”.

With the move to a more integrative form of society characterized by creativity, responsibility, cooperation, we need opportunities close at hand to contribute, learn and serve.

With the increased complexity and cross-fertilization of social growth, the larger social units – the city, the nation, the planet - need much greater participation at the grass-roots level.

With the above factors in mind, we can redefine community as ”a comprehensive unit of civilization composed of individuals, families and institutions that are originators and encouragers of systems, agencies and organizations working together with a common purpose for the welfare of people both within and beyond its borders; it is a composition of diverse, interacting participants that are achieving unity in an unremitting quest for spiritual and social progress.”^[1]

China has a habit of group-consciousness called "Ji Ti" (togetherness). Although its origin precedes the entry of Buddhism to China, this concept was given a powerful boost by the Mahayana

[1] The Universal House of Justice, The Four Year Plan, pp.34-35

emphasis on salvation of the individual through salvation of the group. China's Ji Ti sense and peaceful orientation are valuable foundations for community building.

The "Ji Ti" sense is usually focused on family, friends, and the Chinese people as a whole. The social structure jumps from the larger scale immediately down to the smaller scale of the workplace, the family and the individual. The work unit used to be a kind of community, but this institution is disappearing. There is a hierarchy of administrative units in the city, district government, street committee, etc, but they are more administrative than social. There are pockets of community, but they are limited to old school friends, places of work, and the extended family.

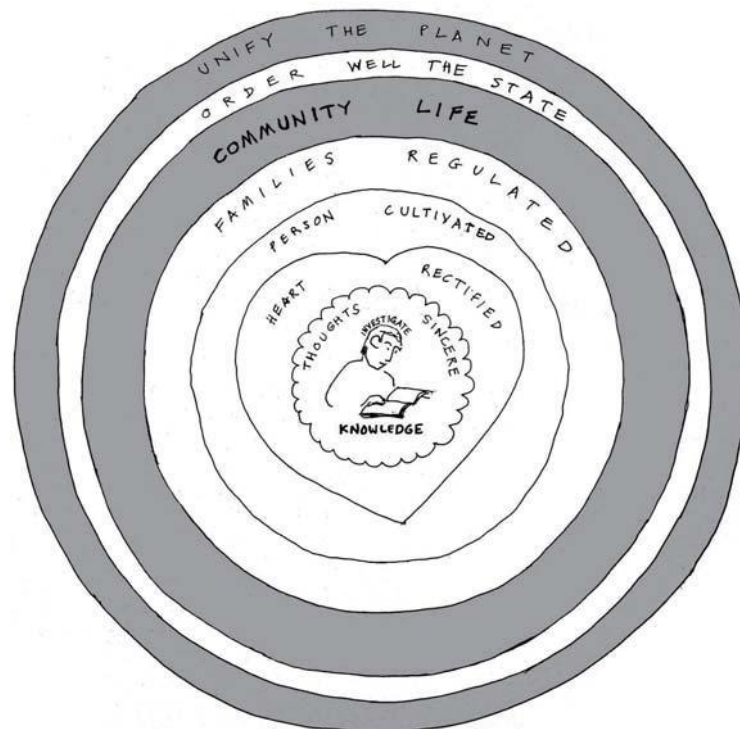


Fig. 9 The Society-Individual Relationship

A ring for community life has been added between the state and the family.

Lin Yu Tang (1895-1976) pointed out in 1935 in his book, “My Country and My People”, that the Confucian teaching, the Great Learning, moves through the levels of social organization and leaves out community. He says that the jump from State to family is indicative. He says unity and loyalty are operative at these two levels, but this sense is weak in between.

The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the empire, first ordered well their own States.

Wishing to order well their own States, they first regulated their families.

Wishing to order well their families, they first cultivated their persons.

Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts.^[1]

Perhaps, in the past this amount of social structure was enough. Confucius might agree to add "community life" to the spectrum of steps in the social ladder, because in modern times, society - and the individuals in it - has matured.

One of the most visible characteristics of China since it opened up is the increased capacity of individuals both men and women. As China starts to mature beyond an authoritarian social structure, millions of people are deciding, on their own, how to channel their energy and talents. They are choosing their own education, careers, starting their own businesses, and traveling to other parts of the country and the world where there are work opportunities. A professional service attitude has started to replace paternalistic patterns. A vast pool of energy is emerging, ready to be tapped.

The city will be more effective and its life improved if we find

[1] Excerpt from The Great Learning, part of the Confucian doctrine contained in The Four Books, Hunan Publishing House, 1995, pp. 3-5.

social and administrative mechanisms to channel the increased latent capacity of individuals. The current condition of anonymity outside the circle of family and friends, with more and more sections of the city surrounded by walls and security guards, reflects a fear of strangers, and is a consequence of a lack of community. We need institutions and outlets for mutual support and cooperation that are closer to home. Just as mutual support and reciprocity in the family or among a circle of friends brings benefits and security, expanding the boundaries of mutual support and reciprocity into a friendly, well-managed community will expand, too, the scope of benefits and security.

The creation of the institutions of a global society, a web of interconnected structures that hold society together at all levels, from local to international institutions that gradually become the patrimony of all the inhabitants of the planet is for me one of the major challenges of development planning and strategy. Without it, I fear, globalization will be synonymous with the marginalisation of the masses.^[1]

There is skepticism and caution about touching this social layer. Even people of "good will" hesitate. The desire for isolation and anonymity mainly comes from the fear of un-ending, unmanageable requests from people we don't know; once you start helping someone there may be no end to the demand.

This fear is justified; there is no coordinating administrative layer at the neighborhood level to manage such an initiative. Such an extension of community cannot arise without a corresponding institutional development, and maturation in social qualities and skills. To share information, to channel the traffic between needs and service, to expand the boundaries of trust requires a new form of

[1] Dr. Farzam Arbab, *The Lab, the Temple, and the Market*, IDRC, 2001.

organization and leadership at the community level.

If social participation were a real part of life, urban children and youth, for example, could participate in community service that could be a vital part of the school curriculum. It would broaden their current activities of study-homework-computer games by exposing them more intimately and practically with the society around them. This, in turn, would give their studies a clearer sense of purpose. They could more easily imagine how they might apply what they learn to the needs of the world around them. Placing value and importance on this kind of social education will also ameliorate the difficulties of the single-child family by giving children more surrogate brothers and sisters to interact with. The atmosphere of growth through service will reduce self-centeredness.

Youth can make valuable contributions to community-building. Currently, in China, most of their time is spent on academic achievement with an emphasis on numerical scores. This tends to isolate them from life and limit their social growth. If youth were involved in the education of the younger ones, for example, they too would have a real service to perform and a level of responsibility that they are ready for but is never used. Involvement in community work would also give them a chance to get to know members of the opposite sex in ways other than dating. You know a person better when you see how they work, how they interact with other people, how they handle responsibility, etc.

China's Ji Ti sense and peaceful orientation are valuable foundations for community building. The circle of trust needs to be expanded. A sign of a mature belief system would be that it helps create successful community life.

So far, we have been looking at the community within its borders. In this age of the internet and easier transportation, local communities have interesting new channels of interaction. The potential for the community to impact the welfare of people beyond

its borders, and to be impacted, has now extended from other communities in the same city to communities in cities all over the world.

Beginning with an outburst of invention that started in 1844, with the invention of the telegraph, cities have increasingly become nodes in an international web spread all over the surface of the planet. The main technological components for the construction of modern cities all appeared in the 12 years from 1877 to 1889. Through them the city expanded horizontally and vertically; its time for work, recreation, and family life could extend more easily into the evening hours; and the speed and ease of mutual access, either within the city or from city to city was greatly enhanced.

Steam Power	1781
Railway	1800
Telegraph	1844
Telephone	1877
Incandescent Lamp	1880
Skyscraper	1880
Electric Trolley Car	1885
Subway	1886
Automobile	1889
Elevator	1889
Wireless Radio	1901
Flight	1908
TV	1920
Computers	1930
Internet	1980

Fig. 10 Inventions and their Date of Creation

The international system of telecommunications has greatly reinforced the cities new dimension and purpose; they are becoming part of an interactive network on a planetary scale. They are

becoming part of the infrastructure of a global civilization. Cities, and the communities within them, are bases from which individuals have access to the resources of the world and can participate in building a global society. Theoretically, the more cities and communities function in this role; the more their capacity will be nourished and released.

2.6 The Maturation of the Relations between Men and Women

Women hold up half the sky. Chairman Mao Ze Dong

The world in the past has been ruled by force and man has dominated over woman by reason of his more forceful and aggressive qualities both of body and mind. But the scales are shifting, force is losing its weight, and mental alertness, intuition, and the spiritual qualities of love and service, in which women is strong, are gaining ascendancy. Hence the new age will be an age less masculine and more permeated with the feminine ideals, or to speak more exactly, will be an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more properly balanced.^[1]

As long as the authoritarian mode predominates, women, like a minority, have to know the men better than the men know them.

[1] Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'u'llah and the New Era, 1976 U.S. edition, p.156.

Women are frustrated by the authoritarian and traditional attitudes, overt or unconscious, of men. This partly explains the high suicide rate among Chinese women^[1]. Women are waiting in the wings, some pressing more than others, for better chances to apply their capacities. There are many very mature and capable single women in China for whom it seems impossible to find a good husband, even though the number of men is higher than that of women. Many that marry seem resigned to be the unacknowledged educators of their husbands.

The assumption of superiority by man will continue to be depressing to the ambition of woman.^[2]

Part of the reason for this suffering is that women have a greater recognition of the essential cooperative nature of human existence. They are already displaying some of the characteristics of the integrative mode while the men are still in the authoritarian mode.

Men are more burdened with the more adolescent attitudes and habits of competition and control. Maturity for a man is autonomy and separation from others, independence and individual achievement. A concern with relationships, and co-operation appear as weaknesses.^{[3][4]}

Women do have a much greater and more refined ability to encompass others' needs and to do this with ease. By this I mean

[1] I left my home at Xuan Wu Men in Beijing, one morning (1991) and saw the dead body of a woman on the sidewalk under a sheet of plastic. Her hand was sticking out. She has jumped from the top of a 12 story building. People said it was because her family wanted a boy and she had given birth to a girl.

[2] Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, US edition, 1982, p.76.

[3] Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice, Harvard Press, 1982.

[4] When I am on a bus in Beijing, I play a game that I have never lost. Without looking at the driver, I guess whether it's a man or a woman. (There are many women bus-drivers in China.) If the bus lurches forward after stopping, and stops with a hard hitting of the brakes, and the speed is high, I know the driver is a man. If acceleration and deceleration are smooth and the speed is moderate, I know the driver is a woman. The women don't think they are in a race and have to compete; they consider more than the men the needs of passengers standing in the aisle...sudden stopping and starting would throw them off balance.

that women are better geared than men to first recognize others' needs and then to believe strongly that others' needs can be served - that they can respond to others' needs without feeling this is a detraction from their sense of identity.

....serving others is a basic principle around which women's lives are organized; it is far from such for men....Obviously people have to serve each other's needs, since human beings have needs. Who will serve them if not other people?

Despite the competitive aspects of any society, there must be a bedrock modicum of cooperation for society to exist at all. (I define cooperative as behavior that aids and enhances the development of other human beings while advancing one's own.) It is certainly clear we have not reached a very high level of cooperative living. To the extent that it exists, women have assumed the greater responsibility for providing it. Although they may not label it in large letters, women in families are constantly trying to work out some sort of cooperative system that attends to each person's needs. Their task is greatly impeded by the unequal premise on which our families are based, but it has been women who have practiced trying.^[1]

Centuries of responsibility for family life and the education of children have prepared women to make a crucial contribution to humanity's progress; they are better equipped to help the transition from the current authoritarian mode to an integrative mode. The need to build a more accessible community life will offer more opportunities for simultaneous self-development and service to others. It is likely that women will be leaders in this endeavor.

....until recently, few opportunities for simultaneous self-

[1] Dr. Jean Baker-Miller, *Towards a New Psychology of Women*, Beacon Press, Boston, Second Edition, p.62-3.

development and service to others have existed; there were virtually no social forms in which this combination could be put into operation.... For men the prospect of combining self-development with service to others seems an impossibly complex proposition. For women this complexity is not so great.^[1]

Old economic models that regard the world as impersonal markets where individuals behave as self-interested independent consumers are becoming increasingly inadequate. Efforts are being made now to update this model by factoring in environmental capital and social capital. What if the motivation is the good of the group? What if the model recognizes the importance and role of the family and community? What would spiritually mature economics look like where altruism was stronger than self-centeredness? It is in these areas that women, with millennia of experience have a crucial contribution to make.^[2]

Given the vital role of economic activity in the advancement of civilization, visible evidence of the pace at which development is progressing will be the extent to which women gain access to all avenues of economic endeavor. This challenge goes beyond ensuring an equitable distribution of opportunity, important as that is. It calls for a fundamental rethinking of economic issues in a manner that will invite the full participation of a range of human experience and insight hitherto largely excluded from the discourse. The classical economic models of impersonal markets in which human beings act as autonomous makers of self-regarding choices will not serve the needs of a world motivated by ideals of unity and justice. Society will find itself increasingly challenged

[1] Dr. Jean Baker-Miller, *Towards a New Psychology of Women*, Beacon Press, Boston, Second Edition, p.62-3.

[2] Paraphrased from Baha'i International Community, Office of Public Information, *The Prosperity of Humankind*, Part 5. Cao Yun Xiang, Head of Qinghua University 1921-22, excerpt from the introduction to his Chinese translation of Baha'u'llah and the New Era.

to develop new economic models shaped by insights that arise from a sympathetic understanding of shared experience, from viewing human beings in relation to others, and from a recognition of the centrality to social well-being of the role of the family and the community. Such an intellectual breakthrough - strongly altruistic rather than self-centered in focus - must draw heavily on both the spiritual and scientific sensibilities of the race, and millennia of experience have prepared women to make crucial contributions to the common effort.^[1]

In our new stage of maturity, the education of girls takes on a new importance. The transmission of attitudes of cooperation and service are more easily transferred to the next generation by mothers; as the old adage goes, 'Educate a man and you educate an individual. If you educate a woman you educate a family.'^[2] If lack of resources force a choice, the education of girls should be, therefore, of even greater priority than that of boys.

Even from a purely economic point of view, so says the Chief Economist of the World Bank, the training of women for the training of the next generation "...quite possibly yields a higher rate of return than any other investment in the world....The most effective way to break the cycle of poverty is to investment in the education of girls. In low-income countries, to make the education of girls on a par with that of boys through the secondary level would cost less than ten percent of what these same countries spend on defense. "Parents in low-income countries fail to invest in their daughters because they do not expect them to make an economic contribution to the family". In rural China, they move out of the home to that of their husband. In the short term,

[1] Baha'i International Community, Office of Public Information, The Prosperity of Humanity.

[2] Agnes Jung, Unveiling India, A Woman's Journey, 1987, p.92.

Girls are less valuable than boys and are kept at home to do chores while their brothers are sent to school – the prophecy becomes self-fulfilling, trapping women in a vicious cycle of neglect. An educated mother, on the other hand, has greater earning abilities outside the home and faces an entirely different set of choices. She is likely to have fewer, healthier children and can insist on the development of all her children, ensuring that her daughters are given a fair chance. The education of her daughters then makes it much more likely that the next generation of girls, as well as of boys, will be educated and healthy. The vicious cycle is thus transformed into a virtuous cycle.^[1]

The emancipation of women, the achievement of full equality between the sexes, is one of the most important, though less acknowledged prerequisites of peace.

The denial of such equality perpetrates an injustice against one half of the world's population and promotes in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life, and ultimately to international relations. There are no grounds, moral, practical, or biological, upon which such denial can be justified. Only as women are welcomed into full partnership in all fields of human endeavor will the moral and psychological climate be created in which international peace can emerge.^[2]

The education of women will be a mighty step toward its abolition and ending for she will use her whole influence against war. Woman rears the child and educates the youth to maturity.

[1] Lawrence Summers, Chief Economist, World Bank. Essay for Scientific American, The Most Influential Investment, August 1992.

[2] To the People's of the World: A Baha'i Statement on Peace, The Universal House of Justice, Baha'i Study Series No.14, p. 13.

She will refuse to give her sons for sacrifice upon the fields of battle. In truth she will be the greatest factor in establishing Universal Peace and international arbitration. Assuredly women will abolish warfare amongst mankind. Inasmuch as human society consists of two factors, the male and the female, each complement the other, the happiness and stability of humanity cannot be assured unless they are perfected. Therefore the standard and status of man and woman must become equalized.^[1]

If "China ranks foremost among all nations in material, cultural and spiritual resources and potentialities"^[2] and if women are foremost in orienting themselves to a paradigm of integrative human relationships and service, then perhaps the whole world should turn to China's women; the foremost among the foremost!

[1] Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, US edition, 1982, p.104.

[2] Letter from Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is of the East, 23 January 1923.

2.7 The Maturation of Culture

The currents of history suggest a world community is not just inevitable but is even the purpose of creation. The civilizations that rose with the arrival of new belief systems pulled together formerly separated peoples. For example, Buddhism linked India and China; Christianity, before the Dark Ages, linked the middle-eastern and Roman worlds; Islam linked the worlds of Greece and Rome, Arabia, Persia, India, and China. Today, no part of the world is left out; all are submerged in an intense, universal meeting of cultures. Also, the expanded scope and power of expression of the individual in each step of social evolution – family, tribe, city, and nation – suggest further progress is possible as we enter this stage of world civilization.

Will there be synergistic, creative interaction, or survival of the fittest? What will happen to Chinese culture?

Much like the role played by the gene pool in the biological

life of humankind and its environment, the immense wealth of cultural diversity achieved over thousands of years is vital to the social and economic development of a human race experiencing its collective coming-of-age. It represents a heritage that must be permitted to bear its fruit in a global civilization. On the one hand, cultural expressions need to be protected from suffocation by the materialistic influences currently holding sway. On the other, cultures must be enabled to interact with one another in ever-changing patterns of civilization, free of manipulation for partisan political ends.^[1]

The Chinese Revolution succeeded in “abolishing long-standing structures of injustice and domination, conquering absolute poverty for one-fifth of the population of the planet, and sweeping aside deeply rooted...belief systems based on superstition.” As Lu Xun had said, some things should be left behind.

If we want to preserve our national characteristics, we must first make sure they can preserve us. Distinctive things are not necessarily good, so why must they be preserved? Why keep a carbuncle just because it's Chinese?^[2]

This process, at times violent, brought into question every aspect of China's culture.

Not soon after recovering from the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, just when the slate had been wiped clean, just at this vulnerable turning point, China opened its doors to the West and foreign culture poured in. China's modernization received obvious benefits, but at what cost to its culture, traditions, and spiritual life? There are mixed feelings about interaction with other cultures. Is

[1] The Prosperity of Humankind, Baha'i International Community, 1995.

[2] Lu Xun (1881-1936), Chinese author and social critic.

China's cultural expression being "suffocated by the materialistic influences currently holding sway"? Entry into the process of global community and global culture has awakened both fear and hope.

The former is expressed, for example, by Professor Li Dao Zeng, author of the statement below. He is among the learned of China whose particular contribution includes the preservation and study of China's vast human settlement resources, expressed in classical and vernacular traditions. He is one of the caretakers of an important part of the cultural gene pool. While he hopes for the creative transformation of his ancient culture, he sees the current process of "cultural globalization" leading only to "conflict and compromise".

"Globalization" is becoming an up-to-date trend of thought. It seems easier for people to understand its meaning with the development of economy, finance, science and technology. But, "cultural globalization" cannot hold water in any significance. The world cultural development in the future would probably be a result of conflict and compromise, mutual motion and dialogue between "globalization" and "localization".local culture is the "soul" of the city. We should have to understand the traditional local culture from three different layers mentioned above, and to make efforts on the "creative transformation" in our ancient culture, so that it could be of help for our current practice.^[1]

He and his colleagues believe China has, embedded in its cultural resources, many principles and solutions to sustainable material and social development, a universe of spiritual stimulation and awareness. Research trips to traditional towns and minority peoples' villages provide them with a source of respite and inspiration. Here, the intensity of the cultural "gene pool" is

[1] Li Dao Zeng, From an article called "Global Localization" and Creative Transformation, published in World Architecture Magazine January, 2004, p. 85.

refreshing. It includes the craft and hand skills that, until the Modern Movement in architecture, have always been an integral part of a mature architectural language. They feel pain most keenly when we abandon or destroy such treasures in the name of progress.

The process of reinterpreting China's old architectural and urban patterns in modern contexts will need the resources of that cultural gene pool. How much of it will be available when the deeper search begins?

Artists and musicians also share these concerns. For example, the young Chinese artist, Yang Mian, who works in metal sculpture and oil paint, says foreign influence is a form of cultural oppression and has induced insensitivity.

Without paying tribute to history and the involvement of the cultural circle, architecture in China is all the same everywhere. There is no individuality, not or the tradition of regional culture. This is not due to political power. The fact that our culture is being oppressed and has become insensitive accounts for the situation. The construction procedure of our cities is only a product of developers' personal preference on the condition of not breaking any regulations. What developers are after is profit and they take the advantage of marketing gimmicks. We only have to take a look at all the property projects in our city to discover that all of them are the same kind of tube-shaped buildings, appearing in advertisements in the name of "European" and "Continental Style", "Roman Garden", High-profile Community, Ideal Homeland, Waterside Landscape, etc.

The musician, Tan Dun^m, laments the disappearance of tradition and searches for a Spiritual Map through which vulnerable rural folk

[1] Tan shot to fame after winning prestigious awards including an Oscar and a Grammy for his score to the film 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon' in 2001 and is acclaimed for his creative repertoire that spans the boundaries of classical, multimedia, Eastern and Western musical systems.

culture can be retrieved. Although he sees modernization severing the connection to China's soul and roots", he also sees in technology the means to record and disseminate, and hence, help preserve, the fragile and vanishing elements of culture.

BEIJING (AFP) - When Tan Dun visited his native Hunan province as a music student in 1981, he was captivated by the shamanistic sounds made by an old man who was drumming on stones and singing to the wind. "He was singing his primitive songs: talking to the heaven and the earth, the wind and the clouds, singing in dialogues with the former and next lives," the Oscar-winning composer said. "I was stunned." When Tan returned to the village some 20 years later as a famed composer to look for the old man, he was heartbroken to find he had died. "My memory of that old man was so profound, perfect and beautiful. And all of a sudden it disappeared and I realised that everything else is also disappearing," Tan told AFP in an interview.

The New York-based composer said he was haunted by rural China's vanishing ethnic traditions from which he draws most of his musical inspiration. In the face of China's break-neck economic development, rural traditions are being erased as quickly as skyscrapers are springing up, Tan said. "Everywhere, tradition is disappearing," he said, with a sigh. "This is very serious because in China, development is taking place so quickly. While this is fantastic, we have to be very careful about conserving culture and traditions."

Affected by the death of the old man in his village, Tan became determined to use his music to help preserve the vulnerable rural folk culture he feels passionate about. "There must be a way, like a spiritual map, to retrieve things even though they are lost," he said.

Tan's deep sense of loss inspired his multimedia composition

The Map: Concerto for Cello, Video and Orchestra, a mix of ancient and modern sights and sounds. The innovative piece, premiered by cellist Yo-Yo Ma (news - web sites) and the Boston Symphony Orchestra last year, was intended to draw attention to the endangered musical cultures of minority peoples living in Hunan. The concerto features the Tujia, Miao and Dong ethnic minorities playing traditional pipes and cymbals, blowing leaves and singing antiphonally -- a technique that allows the human voice to carry over long distances.

"The Map is a very personal journey, ... trying to trace things back, trying to make the sounds everlasting, trying to make the traditions everlasting," Tan said. "I hope if technology and tradition can combine, technology can be humanized and can rejuvenate traditions." Tan said the composition was also a spiritual journey to trace his own roots. "I was trying to look for an alternative way, an invisible road, to go back to my home in Hunan," he said.

"In ancient times, you tried to find your way round by listening to sounds: that sensation is a great inspiration," he said. He told his Beijing audience that he hoped Chinese people, amid the rapid modernisation, could still find ways of connecting with their ancient roots. "I hope that through The Map, people can find an alternative way home, not by bike, boat or plane but by following that invisible road home -- the one that connects our souls and our roots," the composer said.

In the absence of encouragement to do otherwise, rural people are often the first to let go of their traditions when the chance comes for wage-jobs in nearby growing towns. In wealthier villages, for example, they often abandon the wood-frame, brick-wall, and clay-tile traditional house for a concrete-brick structure with stucco or glazed tile wall finish. Although the result can be garish and

awkward, for them the choice is clear; the new home has more space, is drier, warmer, and has electricity and indoor plumbing. And, to them, it “looks” modern.

Are there any reasons for hope? There was a time, earlier in its history, roughly 200 to 800 AD, when a strong foreign influence penetrated China, and the result was very different. Buddhism from India, for several hundred years, instead of suffocating the Chinese spirit proved to liberate it. After, 800 AD, its influence began to decline when it succumbed to its material success, abused its power, and was suppressed.

The process is described by two famous Chinese architects, Professor Dai Nian Ci and his teacher, Professor Liang Se Cheng, founder of the School of Architecture at Qinghua University.

Since the 4th century AD, cultures in the east and west had a collision and intermixing due to the eastward propagation of Buddhism causing a tremendous change in Chinese architecture under the influence of Indian and West-Asian cultures, resulting in a new page in Chinese architecture by entering into the Tang-Song Period of architectural culture (6-13th centuries). The building masters at that time, on accepting outside influences, did not resort to mechanical transplantation of foreign forces. On the contrary, they had created something new of their own through digestion and absorption.In turn, “Many ancient Japanese buildings had strong influences from China but they assumed definite Japanese characteristics.”^[1]

Buddhism reached China at approximately the beginning of the Christian era. Though there are records of the erection of a Buddhist pagoda as early as the beginning of the third century A.D, we possess today no Buddhist monument before the middle of the

[1] Professor Dai Nian Ci, Paper presented at Qinghua conference, Modernization and Traditional Culture – One of the problems confronted by the Asian Architect, September 1989.

fifth century. However, from then on until the later fourteenth century, the history of Chinese architecture is chiefly the history of Buddhist (and a few Taoist) temples and their pagodas.^[1]

The reader should not be surprised that the overwhelming number of architectural examples (in China).....are Buddhist temples, pagodas and tombs. In all times and at all places religion has provided the strongest impetus to architectural creation.^[2]

Because this earlier interaction was creative, Professor Dai hoped it could happen again.

All these precedents led me to believe that while accepting the western building technologies, the contemporary Asian architects would be able to create their own new and peculiar architectural cultures by means of digestion, absorption and the intermixing of eastern and western cultures.

Most Asian countries have a common feature: they all have an ancient civilization of their own. Due to variations in geographical and natural conditions, different nationalities and ethnicities, and heterogeneous historical processes, each culture has its own specific character. All of them had their moments of glory, but later on they all fell behind the European Countries from various causes (maybe with the exception of Japan). As we entered the 20th century, especially the latter half, we were again engaged in the same task: to catch up with the advanced Western countries in the shortest time possible. For this purpose, we have to learn from them modern science and technology as well as advanced thinking and experiences. That is why then eastern and western cultures conjoin here, with inevitable conflicts followed by a certain degree of intermixing.

[1] Liang Se Cheng, A Pictorial History of Chinese Architecture, MIT Press, 1984, p.31.

[2] Liang Si Cheng, A Pictorial History of Chinese Architecture, MIT Press, 1984, p.3.

I believe that out of these conflicts and inter-mixing a variety of new cultures will emerge. They will become worthy parts of the great family of World Culture.^[1]

Professor Wu Liang Yong, laments the erosion of diversity of regional culture.

Under the strong global economic and cultural impact, the 20th century has seen an erosion of diversity in traditional cultures, an erosion of regional identity and consequently a loss of the visual anchors to the soul of the towns and cities.^[2]

He relates culture to the soul, the spirit of a place. Although there is erosion, he derives hope from witnessing what has happened when architects with spirit, nurtured by another culture, have returned to their native lands to create a modern architecture that has been cross-fertilized with new elements, but is still very much reflects local culture.

At the same time, the 20th century has also seen a regionally rooted architectural blossoming which has contributed to the richness of the world architectural culture. Early in the 20th century, accomplished architects from various countries went to North America to make their careers, including Saarinen in an earlier time and Gropius and Mies Van der Rohe in the postwar era. The new country had a lasting influence on their work. Some American architects, including Wright, went to Asia to receive the nurture of oriental culture, returning to create his own Usonian architecture. Concomitantly, some architects from Asia went to

[1] Professor Dai Nian Ci, Paper presented at Qinghua conference, Modernization and Traditional Culture - One of the problems confronted by the Asian Architect, September, 1989.

[2] Prof. Wu Liang Yong, Looking Forward to Architecture of the New Millennium, Keynote Speech for the XX UIA Congress, Beijing 1999.

the west to study and returned to their respective countries to exercise their talents, e.g. Japan's F. Maki, India's C. Correa, and China's Lu Yan Zhi, Liang Se Cheng, etc.

All this indicates that different cultures can be absorbed to become ingredients of the new regional cultures. At the same time, the masterpieces of their work also indicated that they were not isolated from their environment. The world is therefore a large garden where the blossoms may cross-fertilize to create new varieties of their time.^[1]

In order to enhance the richness and possibilities of this cross-fertilization process, he advises,

We should preserve regional (cultural) diversity as we preserve bio-diversity.^[2]

Where there was a spiritual influence, as in the case of Buddhism's impact on China, there was a process of digestion, absorption and intermixing that influenced a flowering of Chinese culture. Current misgivings about globalization stem from observing a process without heart, an invasion of a culture of materialistic consumerism. Under conditions of mutual respect and attraction, cultural interaction can give birth to endless creative permutations. Ruthless materialistic criteria condemn much cultural expression to the realm of the "backward and worthless".

The implication is that without a spiritual foundation, globalization will lead to conflict and compromise, where "cultural globalization cannot hold water in any significance". If we regard humanity as one family reaching for maturity, impelled on its path by a series of civilization-inducing belief systems, or as an organic

[1] *ibid*

[2] *ibid*

whole whose vitality depends on a rich “gene pool” of cultural diversity, then it is urgent to find Tan Dun’s “Spiritual Map”, a basis for spiritually-inspired development.

In a living system, such as the human body, the whole sustains and nourishes the parts. As the synergistic metaphors of ecology imply, social, economic, technical, intellectual, and spiritual life are all interdependent; the lack of diversity in any aspect hurts the progress of the whole. The culture landscape is like the rivers and the sea. Local flavors are upstream in their respective rivers; at the same time, they feed the ocean of a global civilization. Life-sustaining water, evaporating from the sea returns to revitalize local landscapes. The greater the variety of input: the greater the strength and beauty of the whole.

A new world order, based on a universal belief system, regarding humanity as one family, will value its component civilizations. It will be necessary to exercise adult capacities of mutual respect, appreciation, even love, of differences, and trust in creative synergies. Motivation will come from unifying visions, such as the Chinese “Tian Xia Yi Jia”, a “garden” where variety and differences only make it more beautiful.

China’s participation in the creation of a world civilization could not only be a place to share its own heritage, but could induce what Professor Li Dao Zeng hopes for, “a creative transformation in our ancient culture”. Interaction within a spiritually-inspired humanity, ultimately, may be the only hope for preserving and regenerating China’s cultural heritage.

2.8 The Maturation of our Relationship with the Environment

The environmental crisis also demonstrates the need for a balanced dynamic between outer reality and our inner vision.

...[T]he pattern of economic growth being replicated has proven so detrimental to the environment as to call its viability into question. The challenge of bringing prosperity to all the peoples of the world through a process of sustainable development will not be met solely by the application of technology and the expansion of current schemes of organization. It demands a radical departure from the materialistic philosophies that have created today's concurrence of abject poverty and irresponsible wealth.^[1]

The fallacies in theories based on the belief that there is no limit to nature's capacity to fulfill any demand made on it by

[1] Dr. Farzam Arbab, *The Lab, the Temple, and the Market*, Edited by Sharon Harper, IDRC, Canada, 2000, pp.1-2.

human beings have now been coldly exposed. A culture which attaches absolute value to expansion, to acquisition, and to the satisfaction of people's wants is being compelled to recognize that such goals are not, by themselves, realistic guides to policy.

Some of the virtues and attitudes required for sustainable development, such as moderation, balance, and synergy, have long been understood by Chinese philosophers and sages. Chinese artists with their portrayal of small human beings in a vast landscape reflect an attitude toward nature of awe, humility, and respect for beauty.

*No calamity is greater than not knowing what is enough
No fault worse than wanting too much
Whoever knows what is enough
Has enough.
Attachment comes at wasteful cost;
Hoarding leads to a certain loss;
Knowing what is enough avoids disgrace;
Knowing when to stop secures from peril.
Only thus can you long last.^[1]*

*The sage does not hoard,
The more he does for others,
The more he has himself.
The more he gives,
The more he gets.^[2]*

While, lately, China has greatly increased its eco-footprint, it still displays many features of sustainable development. Chinese pragmatism, moderation, frugality, and limited land resources

[1] Lao Zi, Dao De Jing, ch. 46 and 44

[2] Lao Zi, Dao De Jing, ch. 8.

result in optimum land utilization, a Spartan lifestyle, and a diet that is low on the food chain. One of the most important sustainable characteristics of Chinese cities is their optimum density (not too dense; not too spread out). There is extensive use of bicycles for transportation. Southern orientation of housing for passive solar heating is almost universal. There is an extensive informal, private-sector recycling of paper, glass, plastic, appliances, and furniture, and a good supply of "incubator" buildings for start-up companies. At least in urban areas, there is self-imposed birth control.

The conformance to sustainable development, however, is more fortuitous than conscious. With rising wealth, the advantages of optimum city construction and energy-saving lifestyles will erode unless there is increased environmental awareness and education. The common aspiration to get "rich and comfortable" could erode and negate existing sustainable characteristics.

The 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (The Rio Declaration) recommended each nation create an Agenda for the 21st century. China was the first to complete its own Agenda 21, a broad-ranging strategy and plan for sustainable economic and social development. So far, it has been mainly a top-down activity. Efforts to mature on other fronts, for example, belief systems, relationship with authority, the participation of women, and the development of communities and cities, all have the potential to give the Agenda 21 program a fresh dose of bottom-up energy and renewed hope for implementation. Agenda 21 should be part of the national school curriculum and a topic of consultation for every community.

2.9 The Maturation of Decision-making

Consultation

Central to the task of reconceptualizing the system of human relationships is the process that Bah á'u'll áh refers to as consultation. "In all things it is necessary to consult," is His advice. "The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation."

The standard of truth seeking this process demands is far beyond the patterns of negotiation and compromise that tend to characterize the present-day discussion of human affairs. It cannot be achieved -- indeed, its attainment is severely handicapped -- by the culture of protest that is another widely prevailing feature of contemporary society. Debate, propaganda, the adversarial method, the entire apparatus of partisanship that have long been such familiar features of collective action are all fundamentally harmful to its purpose: that is, arriving at a consensus about the truth of a given

situation and the wisest choice of action among the options open at any given moment.

What Bah á'u'll áh is calling for is a consultative process in which the individual participants strive to transcend their respective points of view, in order to function as members of a body with its own interests and goals. In such an atmosphere, characterized by both candor and courtesy, ideas belong not to the individual to whom they occur during the discussion but to the group as a whole, to take up, discard, or revise as seems to best serve the goal pursued. Consultation succeeds to the extent that all participants support the decisions arrived at, regardless of the individual opinions with which they entered the discussion. Under such circumstances an earlier decision can be readily reconsidered if experience exposes any shortcomings.

Viewed in such a light, consultation is the operating expression of justice in human affairs. So vital is it to the success of collective endeavor that it must constitute a basic feature of a viable strategy of social and economic development. Indeed, the participation of the people on whose commitment and efforts the success of such a strategy depends becomes effective only as consultation is made the organizing principle of every project. "No man can attain his true station," is Bah á'u'll áh's counsel, "except through his justice. No power can exist except through unity. No welfare and no well-being can be attained except through consultation."^[1]

Note:

This material was prepared in 1993 for presentation to social workers in China. The focus was on consultation and family life. When we read this material we can replace the word "family" with words such as: group, marriage, enterprise, organization, government council, etc.

[1] Baha'í International Community, Office of Public Information, The Prosperity of Humankind, Part III.

One measure of the progress of a community is the extent to which participation and cooperative methods of decision-making are used. Consultation requires maturity, helps foster maturity, and calls on its participants to exercise maturity. But education about the requirements of consultation is necessary in order for maturation to take place.

Goals are important to the success of the consultation

The best goal is to discover the best course of action to take for the well-being of all. If the individual consultants have any other goal than this - for instance, to gain or retain power, win an argument, or simply to save face - their ambitions will only get in the way and the consultation will not be completely successful in achieving its goal.

Qualities are needed for successful consultation: and consultation can help develop those qualities: pure motive, a desire to serve others, patience, humility, justice and open-mindedness, love, well-trained minds (ability to recognize and apply principles), unity, and willingness to set aside personal dislike for the sake of making good decisions. True respect is manifested through words and deeds. Without respect, there can be no trust-and without trust, it is not possible to capitalize on human diversity. Intimidation silences the meek, and disrespect antagonizes the proud. Families cannot afford such silences if their aim is to solve family problems. Unity of thought and action emerge from an acceptance of differences, not in negation. Uniformity is no more desirable in families than conceit and self-centeredness are in individuals.

The following elements are essential to good consultation:

- Establish the full facts;
- Decide on the principles to be applied,
- Discuss the matter and
- Make a decision with the intention of carrying out the decision in unity.

Family conversation is often undisciplined or suppressed. When there is a conscious decision to consult according to an agreed-upon process of consultation, self-discipline and freedom become possible. For there is no freedom without self-discipline, only domination and submission.

Establish the facts

Often families fail at the beginning of consultation by not being able to agree on the facts. This is not because there are no solid facts to be found, but because the members, if they are only interested in their own way, may reject the facts which do not suit their case.

Facts should include the identification of opportunities.

Principles

Time must be spent researching basic agreement on the principles to be applied before consultation can properly begin.

Justice is the operation of love at the group level. It is essential to unity.

Discussion

Unity of purpose is essential to good consultation, not unity of opinion. The clash of differing opinions can often produce the spark of truth, so long as it is the opinions and not the personalities which are clashing. Everyone should express his or her opinion with the conviction that it will contribute in some way to the discussion. Each should speak frankly, but with courtesy and moderation. Shy people should summon up the courage to speak forthrightly, and talkative people should strive for brevity and self-restraint.

All opinion must be listened to with an open mind and judged fairly. Shouting, sarcasm and name-calling cause feelings of hostility which obscure the truth and make proper consultation impossible.

It is helpful to choose a chairperson who will ensure that everyone participates; that each opinion is listened to carefully and considered on its own merits; that no-one dominates or diverts the discussion.

Each idea must be offered to the group as a gift; it should not be identified in anyone's mind with the person who first suggested it.

This means that the idea can be changed and developed, or even rejected, without anyone feeling hurt. If the participants are adopting the right approach, they will be able to see the best course of action to be taken, whatever their own original opinion might have been. In this way a person is able to change his or her mind completely during the course of the consultation, and even sometimes argue against an idea they originally suggested, without losing face. In fact, it becomes a sign of maturity and skill to be able to be flexible, responsive, and astute in detecting possible new solutions to a problem.

It is not hard to see that the goal of good consultation can produce a good environment for the development of spiritual attributes which will be very helpful in producing good family life.

Making a Decision

If the consultation has gone successfully through the preceding steps, making a decision will probably prove the easiest part. It is likely also that it will be a unanimous decision. But if unanimity cannot be achieved, a majority opinion must prevail. Each member should respect the consulting body enough to carry out its decision obediently and confidently – even if he or she did not vote in favour of it.

Unity

Unity in itself brings benefits. When a decision is not obeyed, it is never certain whether it was wrong in itself or whether sabotage made it fail. When a decision is carried out wholeheartedly, however,

it soon becomes apparent if the decision was wrong, and it can quickly be reversed. But if the decision was right the benefits will be felt immediately.

Appendix:

The Relationship between Civilization and Belief Systems

The question of religion as the main force impelling civilization is one of the main themes of this book. So far, Buddhism and the Baha'i Faith have been mentioned. To illustrate this point further, below are quoted a few brief references to Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

1. Judaism

At a time when the tribes of Israel were wandering and dispersed, Moses assembled, united and educated them to higher degrees of capacity and progress. He transformed their degradation into glory, changed their poverty into wealth and replaced their vices by virtues until they rose to such a zenith that the splendor of the sovereignty of Solomon was made possible and the fame of their civilization extended to the East and the West.

For example, Socrates came from Greece to learn from Jewish scholars. When he returned home he was forced to commit suicide for promoting the concepts he learned in Israel, namely, the idea of "one God" and the immortality of the soul.^[1]

2. Christianity

When Christ came, the Jewish civilization had declined. He said He had come

[1] Abdu'l-Baha, Foundations of World Unity, Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, 1972, p.22.

to gather together the lost tribes or scattered sheep of Moses. He not only shepherded the flock of Israel, but brought together people of Chaldea, Egypt, Syria, ancient Assyria and Phoenicia. These people were in a state of utmost hostility, thirsting for the blood of each other with the ferocity of animals; but Christ brought them together, cemented and united them in his cause and established such a bond of love among them that enmity and warfare were abandoned.^[1]

Within a few hundred years a civilization inspired by His teachings began to appear.

One demonstration of the excellent character of the Christians in those days was their dedication to charity and good works, and the fact that they founded hospitals and philanthropic institutions. For example, the first person to establish public clinics throughout the Roman Empire where the poor, the injured and the helpless received medical care, was the Emperor Constantine. This great king was the first Roman ruler to champion the Cause of Christ. He spared no efforts, dedicating his life to the promotion of the principles of the Gospel, and he solidly established the Roman government, which in reality had been nothing but a system of unrelieved oppression, on moderation and justice. His blessed name shines out across the dawn of history like the morning star, and his rank and fame among the world's noblest and most highly civilized is still on the tongues of Christians of all denominations.^[2]

Galen, the Greek physician and philosopher, who lived in the second century A.D., wrote a treatise upon the civilization of nations. He was not a Christian but he has borne testimony

[1] Abdu'l-Baha, Foundations of World Unity, Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, 1972, p.22.

[2] Abdu'l-Baha, Secret of Divine Civilization, Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, p. 85.

that religious beliefs exercise an extraordinary effect upon the problems of civilization. In substance he says, 'There are certain people among us, followers of Jesus the Nazarene who was killed in Jerusalem. These people are truly imbued with moral principles which are the envy of philosophers. They believe in God and fear Him. They have hopes in His favors, therefore they shun all unworthy deeds and actions and incline to praiseworthy ethics and morals. Day and night they strive that their deeds may be commendable and that they may contribute to the welfare of humanity; therefore each one of them is virtually a philosopher, for these people have attained unto that which is the essence and purport of philosophy. These people have praiseworthy morals even though they may be illiterate.'^[1]

The belief in the correspondence of microcosm and the macrocosm, in the harmonic structure of the universe, in the comprehension of God through the mathematical symbols of center, circle and sphere.....acquired new life in the Renaissance, and found visual expression in the Renaissance church.....For the men of the Renaissance, their architecture with its strict geometry, the equipoise of its harmonic order, its formal serenity and, above all, with the sphere of the dome, echoed and at the same time revealed the perfection, omnipotence and goodness of God.

Renaissance architects... "were convinced that universal harmony could not reveal itself entirely unless it were realized in space through architecture conceived in the service of religion."^[2]

3. Islam

When the influence of Jesus began to decline and Europe began to enter a 1000 years of darkness, Muhammed appeared. At the same time, to the south, Arabian nomadic tribes....

[1] Abdu'l-Baha, Foundations of World Unity, Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, 1972, p.56.

[2] Rudolf Wittkower, Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism, 1998, Academy Editions, p.39.

were widely separated, living in the deserts under lawless conditions, strife and bloodshed continual among them, no tribe free from the menace of attack and destruction by another, --at such a critical time Mohammed appeared. He gathered these wild tribes of the desert together, reconciled, united and caused them to agree so that enmity and warfare ceased. The Arabian nation immediately advanced until its dominion extended westward to Spain and Andalusia.^[1]

The savage peoples of the Hijaz, before that Flame of supreme Prophethood was lit in the lamp of Mecca, were the most brutish and benighted of all the peoples of the earth. In all the histories, their depraved and vicious practices, their ferocity and their constant feuds, are a matter of record. In those days the civilized peoples of the world did not even consider the Arab tribes of Mecca and Medina as human beings. Here were tribes so benighted and untamed that during the period of the Jahiliyyih they would bury their seven-year-old daughters alive And yet, after..... Mohammad rose over them, they were - because of the education bestowed on them by that Mine of perfections,.....and the blessings vouchsafed by the Divine Law - within a brief interval gathered into the shelter of the principle of Divine oneness. This brutish people then attained such a high degree of human perfection and civilization that all their contemporaries marveled at them. Those very peoples who had always mocked the Arabs and held them up to ridicule as a breed devoid of judgment, now eagerly sought them out, visiting their countries to acquire enlightenment and culture, technical skills, statecraft, arts and sciences.the rise of this brutish and despicable element, in such a short interval, to the supreme heights of human perfection, is the greatest demonstration of the rightfulness of the Lord Muhammad's Prophethood.^[2]

[1] Abdu'l-Baha, Foundations of World Unity, Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, 1972, p.23.

[2] Abdu'l-Baha, Secret of Divine Civilization, Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, Pages: 87-8.

The indebtedness of Europe to Islam is now better known and acknowledged. Islam took Europe out of the Dark Ages and propelled it into its Renaissance.

If from Rome, as a center, two lines be drawn, one of which passes eastward, and touches the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus, the other westward, and crosses the Pyrenees, nearly all those Mediterranean countries lying to the south of these lines were living at the time of which we speak, (about 900 AD) under the dogma, 'There is but One God, and Mohammed is His prophet'. I have now to relate how these lines were pushed forward on Europe, that to the east by military, that to the west by intellectual force. On Rome, as on a pivot, they worked; now opening now closing, now threatening to curve round at their extremes and compress paganizing¹ Christendom in their clasp; then, through the conclusive throes of the nations they had enclosed, receding

[1] Draper uses the term "paganizing Christianity". He is referring to Christianity's condition at the time of Muhammad, when it had descended from the glory days of Constantine and, after about 500 AD, fell under the control of materialistic and corrupt leaders.

"What a firm foundation of excellent character was laid down (in the days of Constantine), thanks to the training of holy souls who arose to promote the teachings of the Gospel. How many primary schools, colleges, hospitals, were established, and institutions where fatherless and indigent children received their education. How many were the individuals who sacrificed their own personal advantages and 'out of desire to please the Lord' devoted the days of their lives to teaching the masses.

When, however, the time approached for the effulgent beauty of Muhammad to dawn upon the world, the control of Christian affairs passed into the hands of ignorant priests. Those heavenly breezes, soft-flowing from the regions of Divine grace, died away, and the laws of the great Evangel, the rock-foundation on which the civilization of the world was based, turned barren of results, this out of misuse and because of the conduct of persons who, seemingly fair, were yet inwardly foul.

The noted historians of Europe, in describing the conditions, manners, politics, learning and culture, in all their aspects, of early, medieval and modern times, unanimously record that during the ten centuries constituting the Middle Ages, from the beginning of the sixth century of the Christian era till the close of the fifteenth, Europe was in every respect and to an extreme degree, barbaric and dark. The principal cause of this was that the monks, referred to by European peoples as spiritual and religious leaders, had given up the abiding glory that comes from obedience to the sacred commandments and heavenly teachings of the Gospel, and had joined forces with the presumptuous and tyrannical rulers of the temporal governments of those times. They had turned their eyes away from everlasting glory, and were devoting all their efforts to the furtherance of their mutual worldly interests and passing and perishable advantages. Ultimately things reached a point where the masses were hopeless prisoners in the hands of these two groups, and all this brought down in ruins the whole structure of the religion, culture, welfare and civilization of the peoples of Europe." (Abdu'l-Baha, Secret of Divine Civilization, Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, Pages: 85-87.)

from one another and quivering throughout their whole length, but receding only for an instant, to shut more closely again. It was as if from the hot sands of Africa invisible arms were put forth, enfolding Europe in their grasp, and trying to join their hands to give paganizing Christendom a fearful and mortal compression. There were struggles and resistances, but the portentous hands clasped at last. Historically we call the pressure that was then made the Reformation.^[1]

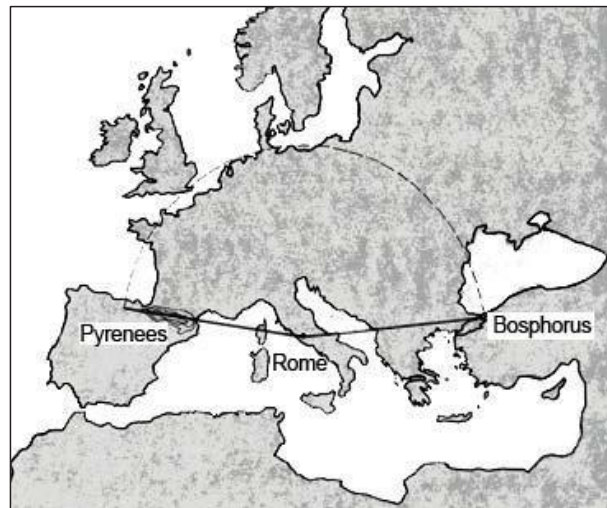


Fig. 11 Islamic Influence on Europe

To the west by intellectual force:

In the early ages of Islam the peoples of Europe acquired the sciences and arts of civilization from Islam as practiced by the inhabitants of Andalusia (southern Spain). A careful and thorough investigation of the historical record will establish the fact that the major part of the civilization of Europe is derived from Islam; for all the writings of Muslim scholars and divines

[1] John W. Draper, *The Intellectual Development of Europe*, Harper and Brothers, 1905 edition, pp.1-2.

and philosophers were gradually collected in Europe and were with the most painstaking care weighed and debated at academic gatherings and in the centers of learning, after which their valued contents would be put to use. Today, numerous copies of the works of Muslim scholars which are not to be found in Islamic countries, are available in the libraries of Europe. Furthermore, the laws and principles current in all European countries are derived to a considerable degree and indeed virtually in their entirety from the works on jurisprudence and the legal decision of Muslim theologians.^[1]

Those European intellectuals who are well-informed as to the facts of Europe's past, and are characterized by truthfulness and a sense of justice, unanimously acknowledge that in every particular the basic elements of their civilization are derived from Islam.

...the author (Draper) shows how the totality of Europe's civilization - its laws, principles, institutions, its sciences, philosophies, varied learning, its civilized manners and customs, its literature, art and industry, its organization, its discipline, its behavior, its commendable character traits, and even many of the words current in the French language, derives from the Arabs. One by one, he investigates each of these elements in detail, even giving the period when each was brought over from Islam. He describes as well the arrival of the Arabs in the West, in what is now Spain, and how in a short time they established a well-developed civilization there, and to what a high degree of excellence their administrative system and scholarship attained, and how solidly founded and well regulated were their schools and colleges, where sciences and philosophy, arts and crafts, were taught; what a high level of leadership they achieved in the arts of civilization and how many were the children of Europe's leading families who were sent to attend the schools of Cordova and Granada, Seville

[1] Abdu'l-Baha, *Secret of Divine Civilization*, Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, p. 89.

and Toledo to acquire the sciences and arts of civilized life. He even records that a European named Gerbert came to the West and enrolled at the University of Cordova in Arab territory, studied arts and sciences there, and after his return to Europe achieved such prominence that ultimately he was elevated to the leadership of the Catholic Church and became the Pope.^[1]

To the east by military force:

The beginnings of European civilization date from the seventh century of the Muslim era. The particulars were these: toward the end of the fifth century of the hegira, the Pope or Head of Christendom set up a great hue and cry over the fact that places sacred to the Christians, such as Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth, had fallen under Muslim rule, and he stirred up the kings and the commoners of Europe to undertake what he considered a holy war. His impassioned outcry waxed so loud that all the countries of Europe responded, and crusading kings at the head of innumerable hosts passed over the Sea of Marmara and made their way to the continent of Asia. In those days the Fatimid caliphs ruled over Egypt and some countries of the West, and most of the time the kings of Syria, that is the Saljuqs, were subject to them as well. Briefly, the kings of the West with their unnumbered armies fell upon Syria and Egypt, and there was continuous warfare between the Syrian rulers and those of Europe for a period of two hundred and three years. Reinforcements were always coming in from Europe, and time and time again the Western rulers stormed and took over every castle in Syria, and as often, the kings of Islam delivered them out of their hands. Finally Saladin, in the year 693 A.H. (1315 AD), drove the European kings and their armies out of Egypt and off the Syrian

[1] Abdu'l-Baha, Secret of Divine Civilization, Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, Pages: 92-4.

coast. Hopelessly beaten, they went back to Europe. In the course of these wars of the Crusades, millions of human beings perished. To sum up, from 490 A.H. (1112 AD) until 693 A.H. (1315 AD), kings, commanders and other European leaders continually came and went between Egypt, Syria and the West, and when in the end they all returned home, they introduced into Europe whatever they had observed over two hundred and odd years in Muslim countries as to government, social development and learning, colleges, schools and the refinements of living. The civilization of Europe dates from that time.^[1]

Islam is a vital link between China and Europe.

Muslims take great pride in citing a hadith that says "Seek knowledge even unto China." It points to the importance of seeking knowledge, even if it meant traveling as far away as China, especially as at the time of the Prophet Muhammad, China was considered the most developed civilization of the period. Islam in China began during the caliphate of 'Uthman ibn Affan (Allayhi Rahma), the third caliph. After triumphing over the Byzantine, Romans and the Persians, 'Uthman ibn Affan, dispatched a deputation to China in 29 AH (650 C.E.), Eighteen years after the Prophet's (pbuh) death), under the leadership by Sa'ad ibn Abi Waqqaas (Allayhi Rahma), Prophet Muhammad's (Salla Allahu wa Allahai wa Sallam) maternal uncle, inviting the Chinese emperor to embrace Islam.

Even before this, the Arab traders during the time of the Prophet, had already brought Islam to China, although this was not an organized effort, but merely as an offshoot of their journey along the Silk Route (land and sea route).

Even though there are only sparse records of the event in

[1] Abdu'l-Baha, Secret of Divine Civilization, Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, Pages: 90-1.

Arab history, a brief one in Chinese history, The Ancient Record of the Tang Dynasty describes the landmark visit. To Chinese Muslims, this event is considered to be the birth of Islam in China. To show his admiration for Islam, the emperor Yung Wei ordered the establishment of China's first mosque. The magnificent Canton city mosque known to this day as the 'Memorial Mosque' still stands today, after fourteen centuries.

One of the first Muslim settlements in China was established in this port city. The Umayyads and Abbasids sent six delegations to China, all of which were warmly received by the Chinese.

The Muslims who immigrated to China eventually began to have a great economic impact and influence on the country. They virtually dominated the import/export business by the time of the Sung Dynasty (960 - 1279 CE). Indeed, the office of Director General of Shipping was consistently held by a Muslim during this period. Under the Ming Dynasty

(1368 - 1644 CE) generally considered to be the golden age of Islam in China, Muslims gradually became fully integrated into Han society.^[1]

[1] <http://chinese-school.net/firms.com/Muslims.html>

Closing

I am from Canada. I have lived in China for over 23 years, most of the time in Beijing. My wife, He Hong Yu, is Chinese. My children, now 13 and 18, were born and raised here and attended local schools. I made my living in China first as teacher of architectural design at Tianjin University and then as an architect in Beijing.

I am not a writer or scholar by profession, but my experience in China has moved me to try to put some of my thoughts on paper. When I first came, I caught a glimpse of an older, more traditional, and less self-assured China. I have shared with people here the transition to a much more confident and globally-aware society. The awakening of China, just as we face the challenge to create a peaceful, united world is, I think, no coincidence.

The current economic crisis is a sign of a deeper crisis of the spirit as humanity faces the challenge of its maturation. We must rise from an adolescent condition of divisiveness and move to a more adult condition of unity. From my reading of Chinese philosophy, poetry and religion, and from my experience of Chinese people, it is precisely here that China has much to offer.

The first part of this short book begins with this assertion and attempts to demonstrate it. The remainder of the book explores some aspects of maturation that all of us, including China, must traverse.

Many more aspects of maturation could be added, for example, the maturation of marriage, the maturation of the family, the maturation of education, to name just a few. Also, obviously, each area touched on here could be explored much more deeply. The thoughts shared are mainly at the level of principal; much more work

needs to be done to apply these principals to the realities of daily life. I recognize that other people may have different ideas about what principals should be applied to solve important social issues, but I hope my presentation offers some food for thought.

Last night my oldest boy, now in his first year in International Studies at Beijing University, shared with me and my wife a presentation he and others were to give the next day to the rest of their class. The topic was “Nuclear Weapons; Are they a deterrent to war?” They were asked particularly to look at the case of India and Pakistan. Their conclusion was, in a rational world, there is some logic to using WMD to inhibit mutual attacks of any kind. But, viewed from space, there are no boundaries between countries; these boundaries are man-made. From this perspective - one I think his generation shares - the use of weapons, especially nuclear weapons, to resolve international conflicts is extreme ignorance.

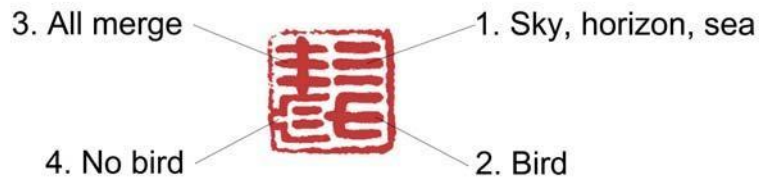
If young people have advanced to this level of thinking, then there is hope for this world.

Joe Carter

Beijing, China

March 2009

My Bird Dream



The bird stood at the edge of the ocean sniffing the breeze,
gazing at the sea.

It started to fly and lifted itself into the air.

It tried to fly high, even up to the sun. Smoke started curling
under its feathers and the heat became unbearable.

He turned back and dove into the sea. Bubbles streamed from
under his wings as he swooped in a large arc past deep undersea
creatures. Unable to breathe, he curved up to the surface.

This time, in the air, he let a breeze lift him. He glided upward
without moving his wings.....Higher and higher until he had a
good view of the sun, now just over the horizon.

He was moving away toward the sun, but his body enlarged.
It rotated to align with the horizon, with one wing covering the sky
and another covering the sea. Larger and larger he grew, and more
and more transparent; the feathers of his upper wing became the
rays of the sun and the feathers of his lower wing became the waves
of the sea. His body grew very long and thin until it became the line
of the horizon. Finally, there was no more bird.

Joe Carter

1971