



Asian Thought

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

In this chapter we will address the following questions:

- ◆ What Do Hindus Believe?
- ◆ What Are the Basic Beliefs of Buddhists?
- ◆ Are the Beliefs of Confucians and Daoists the Same as Those of Hindus and Buddhists?
- ◆ Where Are Zen Buddhism and Shinto Practiced, and What Are Their Teachings?
- ◆ Are There Significant Differences among World Religions?

The wisdom and mysticism of the East have, indeed, very much to give us even though they speak their own language which is impossible to imitate. They should remind us of that which is familiar in our own culture and which we have already forgotten, and we should direct our attention to that which we have pushed aside as insignificant, namely the fate of our own inner man.¹

The Nature of Asian Religion



We live in an increasingly international world, where relations between Asian countries and those of Europe and the Americas have become more crucial than ever before. Modern science and technology have created for the first time in recorded history a universal pattern of civilization, a world society which desperately needs some understanding of diversity.

There is great diversity among world religions. For hundreds of millions of Asians, their religion—no matter what form it takes—is a vital concern of their daily lives, not a mere one-day-a-week observance. The peoples of non-Western cultures see religion as integrally related to and inseparable from all the other areas of life and experience. They generally look upon their religion as the basis of their culture, which gives form and meaning to the rest of existence. Our attempt here is to understand certain beliefs about the transcendent, humanity, and the universe that have been the basis of well-established cultures and beautiful art in the Asian world. Asian philosophy is a way of life.

The Hindu Tradition



“Hinduism, literally ‘the belief of the people of India,’ is the predominant faith of India and of no other nation.”² Taken as a whole, Hinduism is one of the oldest religious traditions in the world. But it is difficult to study, for it is also one of the most diversified religious traditions. There are divisions and subdivisions into which we cannot go, and you should be aware that we are necessarily oversimplifying in this discussion. The problem is further complicated by the fact that there are no exact equivalents in English for certain Indian terms and concepts.

Philosophy (*darshana*) in the Hindu tradition means “seeing the truth” and applying this truth to the problems of everyday life. Thus, for Indian thinkers, the purpose of studying philosophy is not merely to gain knowledge for its own

sake or to satisfy one’s curiosity, but to discover and live the highest kind of life, the life that will bring permanent self-realization or bliss. People must recover truths themselves, not just accept them on blind faith or from the testimony of others. Unless people have convictions and live in accordance with them, they are not philosophers.

Hinduism arose on Indian soil and is largely confined to Indian people. India, however, has known other traditions, including Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. What is called Hinduism today has influenced many other parts of Asia and is steadily growing in parts of Europe and the United States.

HINDU SCRIPTURE

One indication of the difficulty of setting forth the central points in Hindu thought is that there are many texts that, collectively, can be called Hindu Scripture. First, there are the Vedas (literally “knowledge”—that is, sacred knowledge). These are texts written some fifteen hundred years before the common era. The earliest texts are the *Rig Veda*, a collection of over one thousand hymns addressed to the gods—hymns to Indra, the god of civilization, war, and storm; to Varuna, the guardian of morality; and to many others, most of them now forgotten. Included in the Vedas are the *Brahmanas*, lengthy treatises concerned with the details of the sacrificial ritual administered by the Brahmin class. Finally, in the eighth to fifth centuries B.C.E., there were added to these the most famous of the early Indian writings, the **Upanishads**, which attempted to explain the inner meaning of the reality behind the religious quest in a philosophical manner. All these writings form the essential canon of sacred scriptures in the orthodox Hindu tradition.

In the period following the *Upanishads*, there was, within Hinduism, a great development of devotional religion. This was expressed strikingly in the most famous of Indian scriptures, the **Bhagavadgita**, or “Song of the Lord.” There is some doubt as to when the *Gita* was compiled, but it was probably some time during the period 200 B.C.E. to 200 C.E. No other scrip-

ture is more widely read in India today. To read the *Gita* is to be introduced to some of the main themes of Hindu thought as well as to some of the main practices of Hindu life. It also introduces one to splendid Hindu poetry and to the god Krishna.

It is convenient to name four major periods of Hindu thought: first, the early period of Vedic polytheism; second, the period of the Vedanta (literally, “the end of the Veda”), with its descriptions of Absolute **Brahman**; third, a period beginning about 200 B.C.E., with an emphasis on *bhakti* (devotional worship of a theistic god); and last, the modern period, with its response to Western influence.³ “During the classical period—those centuries between 450 B.C. and A.D. 600—occurred the emergence of a Hindu culture that absorbed into itself many different strands of mythology, ritual, and doctrine. This luxuriance of religious standpoints may sometimes baffle the outsider, but it testifies to an important and enduring characteristic of Indian culture—its desire to express and to nurture as many different approaches to the Truth as possible, and to conserve within itself the multiplicity of cultural influences that have affected the Indian subcontinent.”⁴

BRAHMAN AND THE SELF

Central to much of Hindu philosophy is the emphasis on the one unchanging reality that transcends space, time, causality, and all particular things. This Absolute cannot be comprehended by human thought or adequately expressed in words and concepts. According to the nondualistic view (which emphasizes the oneness of existence) only Brahman is real, and the individual souls and the universe are illusory veils obscuring Brahman. Other views hold that the self and the physical world may be real, although they are finite and imperfect. There are also differences among philosophical thinkers about whether the ultimate reality is nonpersonal, superpersonal, or personal. But all agree on the possibility of every soul’s attaining liberation (*moksha*) from the bondage of the physical world.

Closely allied to the concept of Brahman is the concept of the self, or soul, or **atman**. The true self of each person is identical with Brahman. From the transcendental standpoint, the self is immortal, free, and identical with Brahman. The divine nature of the self is veiled, but not destroyed, by false images and ignorance, for it is ultimately without traits and beyond language. The true destiny of the self is the realization of this identity with Brahman. From the phenomenal standpoint, there are many individual selves, enmeshed in the world of affairs and seeking deliverance from the round of births and deaths. Thus we need to distinguish between the real and the empirical self.

What are the relations among Brahman, the self, and the universe that we perceive? A Hindu scholar says: “Brahman is the sole reality, and it appears both as the objective universe and as the individual subject. The former is an illusory manifestation of Brahman, while the latter is Brahman itself appearing under the limitations which form part of that illusory universe.”⁵ The objects of the empirical world, although of a certain order of worldly reality, are appearances in that they belong to the world of cause and effect, to which Brahman does not belong. The individual self, however, is not illusory in this sense. The self is Brahman appearing under limiting conditions. It is not a phenomenon of ignorance the way physical objects are. Through an intuitive, non-logical experience one realizes the identity of the eternal self and Brahman.

CENTRAL VALUES IN HINDUISM

All Hindu systems of thought seem to agree that there are four main values to be completed and brought to perfection in the course of re-birth. In ascending order of importance they are: (1) *Artha* (wealth) and (2) *Kama* (sensuality). These are the worldly or secular values. They are legitimate if they are kept in their places and do not stifle other values. Material prosperity, good health, and long life are desired by most Indians. However, both the life of activity and renunciation are recognized. (3) *Dharma* (social and

individual duties) includes all caste roles and obligations of occupation, gender, kin, generation, and temperament, as well as other ethical responsibilities. (4) *Moksha* (release from finitude and imperfection) is the intrinsic or eternal value, and the supreme spiritual ideal. It gives liberation from the wheel of existence, and cannot be achieved without complete experience and resolution of the other three. Discipline is essential if we are to achieve illumination, and the overcoming of selfishness is essential if we are to realize our genuine self and attain release. Unless a person achieves release in this life, which is rare indeed, she or he is destined to repeat the round of more existences.

According to Hinduism, no soul is eternally damned. The law of *karma*, the law of sowing and reaping, determines the form that will be taken in each new existence. This is the law of cause and effect in human life. Through our conduct we determine our own destiny in that good *karma* is acquired by living up to our *dharmic* duties and bad *karma* by ignoring or violating our given *dharma*. An unethical life may lead to rebirth below the station of the present life, and a life of goodness may lead to a more favored existence or to ultimate liberation from the round of rebirths. Thus, the doctrines of *karma* and rebirth are said to be grounded in the moral structures of the universe. They permit freedom and ethical advance in that they are under our control and are not determined by cosmic or environmental forces completely beyond our influence.

Because of its intricate dependence on the structure of *dharma*, the theory of *karma* and rebirth determines a person's position in the traditional caste system, in which there are four main castes and many subcastes or divisions within these. The caste system has been under attack in recent decades, having been outlawed in the Indian Constitution of 1949, and various outstanding leaders of Hinduism have called attention to the continued abuses of caste and have worked hard to bring about its practical elimination. Nevertheless, the caste system is highly resistant to change, not only because of

the belief that a person's present social status is regulated by the law of *karma* but also because of ingrained social hierarchies based on notions of purity and contamination.

The concept of the four *ashramas*, or stages in the life of the individual, relates the goal of liberation to the needs and tasks of daily life in society. A man's duties are set by the stage of life at which he has arrived. The four stages are (1) the life of a celibate student under the mentorship of a teacher; (2) a long period of householdership, beginning with marriage, when a person assumes the responsibilities of parenthood and other social obligations and when one provides for those dedicated to the spiritual quest; (3) a period of increased religiosity, when householder duties can be passed on to the next generation, during which one retires to the forest with his wife to practice rituals and for meditation and reflection; and (4) by complete renunciation of family and caste and by practicing austerities and rigid self-control, a person seeks union with Brahman. If the person is successful in the fourth stage, struggle and strife cease and he gains peace and freedom through union with the all-embracing World Soul. The inner spirit of humanity is the focus of attention, and its development, illumination, and release are the highest values. These stations were primarily for men. At the time of traditional Hinduism, women were excluded from the more rigorous structures of the *ashramas* and received their spiritual merit from working to uphold the *dharmic* obligations of their husbands.

YOGA

We have already mentioned that, for the Hindu, discipline is essential if one is to achieve illumination: discipline of both body and mind. *Yoga* is a technique of physical and spiritual training by which the bodily and psychic energies are controlled, unified, and directed in order to attain liberation from the world. Yoga is the liberating union of the self (*atman*) with the Self (*Brahman*).

In classical yoga, after the yogi has undergone a long initiatory period of training under a master—the guru—no one else need exist in his or her world. The yogi sheds not only material distractions but also psychic hindrances such as memories, desires, fears, yearnings, and the residue of dreams and impressions; all with the goal of liberation. The importance of classical yoga is that it teaches the complete independence and freedom of the self based on the confidence that the individual mind is able through its own powers to transcend the suffering caused by matter, illusions, and supernatural agencies. Only knowledge can bring liberation. Without this goal, everything—study, work, meditation—is valueless.

RELIGIOUS EXPRESSIONS

Traditional worship of a god in Hinduism is known as *puja*. It can be practiced by anyone regardless of gender, age, or station in life, from the most erudite philosopher to the simplest street sweeper. Because Hinduism is not normally a congregational religion that is practiced in a house of worship by people as a group, the performance of *puja* is left to the individual. Usually there is a *puja* room or niche within the Hindu home, where an image of the god or goddess is enshrined in a painting, a sculpture, or other symbolic referent with flowers, incense, and food. The divinity is invoked with symbolic sounds, prayers, and songs, and often worship includes the use of fire or water. The choice of god or gods, whether it be Krishna, Rama, Shiva, Kali, Shri, or any one of a great variety from the Hindu pantheon, is often a matter of family affiliation or the needs of a given worship. Hindu temples, cared for and presided over by priests, are usually dedicated to a specific divinity and provide an especially quiet place for individual devotion. Seasonal festivities commemorating local myths and figures are expressive and celebratory affairs, often lasting many days and including people from all social backgrounds. Finally, Hindu worship can take the form of pilgrimage to area shrines or to the holy city of

Kashi (modern Banaras) and its sacred river Ganges. Possessing great adaptability and tolerance, Hinduism includes, rather than excludes, unique forms of religious expression. There are a number of reform movements in India today, and some outstanding thinkers have been remolding the Indian consciousness and outlook.⁶

In “The Spirit of Indian Philosophy,” Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan,⁷ after pointing out the diversity of views held by Indian thinkers, indicates seven attitudes that are characteristic of the Indian philosophical mind. (1) Concentration on the spiritual. Philosophy and religion are closely related. Humans are spiritual in nature and are primarily interested in their spiritual destiny and not in material welfare. (2) Belief in the intimate relationship of philosophy and life. (3) The introspective attitude and concern for the inner life. The inner spirit of a person, the subject rather than the object, is the focus of attention and gives the best clue to the nature of the universe. (4) The affinity with idealism. Because reality is “ultimately one and ultimately spiritual,” the tendency is toward nondualistic idealism. (5) The acceptance of direct perception as the only method through which reality can be known. When the mind becomes free from the impurities of attachment and aversion through the practice of yoga or spiritual disciplines, it perceives truth directly, as one perceives a fruit lying on the palm of one’s hand. Reason is useful but insufficient; it leads the seeker as far as it can and then bows out. To know reality is to experience it or to become one with it. (6) A consciousness of tradition and an acceptance of the insights of seers who have lived in the past. This has not, however, made Indian philosophy dogmatic or creedal. (7) An “overall synthetic tradition.” The systems of thought are seen as complementing each other. This stress on the synthetic vision had made possible an intellectual and religious tolerance toward differences within Hinduism and toward other faiths and systems of thought. Hinduism is thus not a fixed and uniform doctrinal system; it is broad, inclusive, and tolerant of different points of view.

*The Buddhist
Quest for
Enlightenment*

THE BUDDHA

Buddhist philosophy has much in common with Hindu philosophy, but it also departs

radically from it at certain points and hence was known among adherents of Hinduism as the “Great Heresy.” Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism (see biography and excerpt, pp. 414–415), lived in Northern India in the fifth century B.C.E. Gautama, although reared in luxury and under sheltered conditions, became greatly concerned about the widespread misery under which people lived. He left his home and family and wandered into the forest in search of the truth about the meaning of existence. Finally, after six years, and lengthy experimentation with asceticism, he returned to the Middle Way (see excerpt, pp. 415). One night shortly thereafter, under the Bo Tree, the truth, it is said, flashed into his mind and he became the “Enlightened One”—the Buddha. Contrary to the spirit of his teaching, Gautama was later idolized and deified, and temples, ceremonies, and a priesthood arose. As a result of Buddha’s teaching and influence, Buddhist thought flourished in India for more than a thousand years. Today it is found mainly in Sri Lanka (Ceylon), Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Tibet, China, Korea, and Japan. In the course of its expansion it has changed considerably.

Buddhism makes a fundamental break with Hinduism in its rejection not only of the Vedic scriptures but also of the concepts of Brahman and *atman*—the metaphysical absolute and the changeless self. Experience, it is said, gives no clear indication of such an all-inclusive World Soul. Gautama rejected the authority ascribed to the ancient gods and urged believers to rely mainly on the resources within themselves. He also rejected the caste system; wisdom and not birth or caste is of importance. He was impressed by ceaseless change, which he observed as pervading everything, and by finiteness and suffering. Gautama was not only a man of great human sympathy and goodwill; he was a thinker

of great philosophic power who decided to spend his life in teaching others to gain understanding.

THE THREE MARKS OF EXISTENCE
AND THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

The central core of Buddhist philosophy is found in the Three Marks of Existence. By carefully observing our everyday experience, unimpeded by normal belief systems and opinions, we notice that the world of our senses is marked by transitoriness or impermanence. We then notice *anatta*, an inability to determine through experiential channels of knowledge whether or not there is a Self; this “no doctrine of a Self” quickly became in early Buddhism the “doctrine of no Self,” whereby we can find no independent essence in existing things. Finally, we discover *dukkha*, suffering, that is experienced because of our attachment to things which change.

The doctrine of the Four Noble Truths then focuses on the relationship between suffering and attachment or desire. There is, first, the fact of the existence of suffering. Unhappiness or pain accompanies the experiences of birth, illness, failure to satisfy desires, separation from friends and loved ones, old age, and death. The problem of suffering is the universal problem of life in a world that is finite and changing. Even the more fortunate are unable to ward off old age and death.

The second noble truth discloses the cause of suffering. Suffering is caused by desires, or *tanha*, which in its original and literal meaning is “thirst.” These desires or cravings are many, and they tend to grow or increase as we attempt to satisfy them. The greatest attachment, however, is to existence itself, for what we want most is to continue indefinitely, to have life as we now know it. The world, however, is marked by change and it is our attachment to these changing things (and especially to our own selves) that causes us the greatest suffering.

The third noble truth is that release is possible. Because we cannot alter the transitory nature of the experiential world, we have to focus

our attention on something else: our attachment to this world. By getting rid of our attachment and desire we automatically get rid of our suffering. By eradicating our desire, we also reduce our ignorance and see for the first time the true nature of the self as a conditioned entity interdependent with all other things in a “chain of causation.” Real happiness comes with this freedom from attachment and if we can gain such enlightenment, the wheel of existence can be ended and *nirvana* experienced.

The fourth noble truth is that there is a way out through the *Noble Eightfold Path*. Right knowledge about the nature of one’s self is a means of removing attachment and suffering.

THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH AND NIRVANA

The Noble Eightfold Path consists of the following steps: (1) Right understanding. We need to realize that the cessation of suffering comes through the elimination of ignorance and of craving, desire, and thirst for a world and a self marked by transitoriness. Without understanding, we do not know the direction from which release is to come. (2) Right aspiration or purpose. Without the goal of enlightenment we are not likely to make a start or to put forth vigorous effort. (3) Right speech. We should be truthful, kind, and humble, and never gossip, slander, or boast. (4) Right conduct. We must not harm other living creatures and must avoid killing, stealing, eating meat, intoxication, and other evils. (5) Right mode of livelihood. Our mode of living and our vocation should be in harmony with the goals toward which we aspire and should be especially consistent with the ethics of nonviolence. (6) Right striving or effort. Discipline is necessary in the attainment of knowledge. (7) Right mindfulness. Our thoughts are important, and must not be permitted to wander or dwell on desires that need to be suppressed. (8) Right concentration. When we are able through meditation and concentration to identify ourselves with truth, the goal of mystic illumination is reached. At this

point we are no longer subject to rebirth, and we may achieve the experience of **nirvana**.

What is *nirvana*? Literally, the term means “blowing out, extinction, ceasing to be.” Does this mean that Buddhist thinkers have set forth a religion or philosophy of escape? Such, however, would be a superficial interpretation, which in no way explains the sense of joyous fulfillment and the appeal of Buddhism to large numbers of people. What is extinguished is attachment to any belief in an eternal, permanent self and to all notions of individuality. The elimination of the bonds of rebirth, of suffering, of ignorance, of desire, is the liberation that is *nirvana*. Cessation of striving, being bound by rebirth, is said to bring a sense of liberation or freedom, peace and contentment, joy, insight, and love or compassion for all living beings.

In order to achieve this freedom, compassion, and wisdom, certain ethical behaviors must be followed. In the earliest Buddhist dialogues five prohibitions are given:

1. Avoid taking life (animal or human).
2. Avoid stealing (taking what is not offered).
3. Avoid illicit sexual relations.
4. Avoid lying.
5. Avoid intoxicants.⁸

The law of *karma* and the doctrine of rebirth were retained by Buddhists when they rejected Hinduism. The law of *karma* is a strong incentive to choose the good and avoid its opposite. If we realize that we are our own saviors, our sense of responsibility is likely to be keen. One should give aid to others, however, whenever this is possible, physically through almsgiving and the like, and spiritually through knowledge and enlightenment.

DIVISIONS WITHIN BUDDHISM

Although Buddhism arose in India and flourished there for more than one thousand years, it is found today mainly in other countries of Asia.⁹ In the course of its development, Buddhism moved from early Buddhism and split into two

The Buddha



Siddhartha Gautama (fifth century B.C.E.) was the founder of the Buddhist religion. His father was a chieftain or king in Northern India. Siddhartha was “the man who had everything”: he was handsome and wealthy and had a model wife and a baby son. It is said that at the time of his birth a prophetic sage predicted that if he became attached to the world and its ways, he would unify India and become a great conqueror; if he saw the true nature of the human condition and forsook the world, he would become a world redeemer.

His father wanted to keep him attached to the world, but Siddhartha eventually turned from material things. On one occasion when he was horseback riding, he saw in turn a decrepit old man, a man racked with pain and disease, and a corpse. Thus he discovered the facts regarding old age, disease, and death; he became troubled over the sorrows of human life and felt a deep desire to help. He also saw a wandering holy man with simple garb and a shaved head. At age 29, he left the palace and his family, and went off alone to seek release from the misery of the world, to discover the cause of human suffering, and to find its spiritual cure. This was the “Great Renunciation.”

After some years of searching, during which he tried asceticism, extreme self-mortification, and more moderate programs of meditation, insight and enlightenment came while he was sitting under a sacred Bo tree. He became the Buddha, the Enlightened One. Buddha then spent his long life teaching and preaching. He established an order of monks and later an order of nuns. His teachings are founded in the “Three Marks of Existence,” the “Four Noble Truths,” and the “Noble Eightfold Path.”

Excerpt from:

The Buddha's First Sermon, known as *The Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness* or *The Setting in Motion of the Wheel of the Dhamma*, taken from the *Mahavagga*

Note: To read Buddhist literature, you should understand that these are not historical documents in the sense of precise, objective recordings of events. Happenings in the life of the Buddha, reports of dialogues between various individuals, parables and stories—all these were set down long after the time of the Buddha and were shaped to teach his ideas as later generations came to understand them.

This, monks, is the Middle Path, the knowledge of which the Tathagata has gained, which leads to insight, which leads to wisdom, which conduces to calm, to knowledge, to perfect enlightenment, to Nirvana.

This, monks, is the Noble Truth of Suffering: birth is suffering; decay is suffering; illness is suffering; death is suffering; presence of objects we hate is suffering; separation from objects we love is suffering; not to obtain what we desire is suffering.

In brief, the five aggregates which spring from grasping, they are painful.

This, monks, is the Noble Truth concerning the Origin of Suffering: verily it originates in that craving which causes the renewal of becoming, is accompanied by sensual delight, and seeks satisfaction now here, now there; that is to say, craving for pleasures, craving for becoming, craving for not becoming.

This, monks, is the Noble Truth concerning the Cessation of Suffering: verily, it is passionless, cessation without remainder of this very craving; the laying aside of, the giving up, the being free from, the harboring no longer of, this craving.

This monks, is the Noble Truth concerning the Path which leads to the cessation of Suffering: verily, it is this noble Eight-fold Path, that is to say, right views, right intent, right speech, right conduct, right means of livelihood, right endeavor, right mindfulness, and right meditation.

This is the Noble Truth concerning suffering. Thus, monks, in things which formerly had not been heard of have I obtained insight, knowledge, understanding, wisdom, intuition. This Noble Truth concerning Suffering must be understood. Thus, monks, in things which formerly had not been heard of have I obtained insight, knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and intuition.

Clarence H. Hamilton, ed., *Buddhism: A Religion of Infinite Compassion* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1952), p. 29.

main branches with various subdivisions within each of these branches. The first branch, Theravada (“Doctrine of the Elders”), or Hinayana (“Small Vehicle”), or Pali Buddhism, prevails mainly in Sri Lanka (Ceylon), Myanmar (Burma), and Thailand. It was a more conservative and individualistic philosophy of escape from suffering. Buddha is represented as a great teacher and master who taught the true way; he is not seen as an incarnation of a cosmic principle or power. Theravada Buddhism, a movement in which monks were central, is now becoming a laypersons’ movement and showing considerable vitality. The second branch, Mahayana (“Great Vehicle”) Buddhism, is found mainly in China, Mongolia, Nepal, Tibet, Korea, and Japan. It is a more broad-minded philosophy with a universal outlook, and it stresses the virtues of wisdom and love. Without minimizing individual enlightenment and freedom from illusion, there is greater stress on compassion for all living beings. For example, a **Bodhisattva** is one who, like Buddha, having attained enlightenment, refuses to enter the fully enlightened state so as to be able to continue to serve his or her fellows. Whereas Theravada Buddhism conceives the Buddha as a human and stresses individual enlightenment, in the Mahayana branch of Buddhism the Buddha is more likely to be conceived as the transcendental eternal principle or Absolute, which may bring release to all people.

*Confucius and Lao-zi**



Chinese civilization was old when Western civilization was in the process of formation.

About the sixth century B.C.E., Confucius and Lao-zi attempted to organize the wisdom of the time into a more orderly system. Both men lived in a period of unrest and confusion, and they sought to restore peace and harmony among people and between them and the order of na-

ture. Lao-zi taught that behind all existence is the impersonal *Dao* (Way). *Dao* is the way the universe works; it is the reality that is immanent in nature and humanity. Confucius revised and systematized the earlier classics. He was an able teacher and administrator, with a practical turn of mind, more interested in helping his people live well than in considering speculative questions. The teachings of Confucius were reaffirmed by Mencius (Meng-zi), a Chinese philosopher who lived one century later. For twenty-five centuries, Chinese ethical ideals, in the form known as “Confucianism,” were influential in the development of Chinese culture. With the establishment of the People’s Republic in 1949 by Mao Ze-dong, the habits and customs of Chinese society were radically transformed. Many of these customs are returning.

Philosophy among the Chinese has tended, on the whole, to be practical and this-worldly. The interest is in achieving a harmonious adjustment to other people, to society in general, and to the demands of nature. There is less emphasis on questions of logic, epistemology, and metaphysics than on moral problems and social philosophy. Chinese writers, furthermore, tend to set forth their convictions in the form of aphorisms, illustrations, and stories that convey general meaning but omit analytical precision, systematic reasoning, and argument. For example, in the *Confucian Analects* the paragraphs consist of only a few words or perhaps a few sentences.

THE ORDER IN NATURE

Traditional Chinese philosophy is predominantly a system of ethical realism. Operating through human life and the universe is “one all-pervading principle, rational and ethical in nature.”¹⁰ For the Chinese, says Francis C. M. Wei, “orderliness and regularity are the fundamental characteristics of the universe.”¹¹ The concepts of Heaven (*Tian*) and the *Dao*, or Way, are prominent. Heaven, for the Confucians, is the dependable order of the Universe and the ground and guardian of the moral law. Heaven not only governs human affairs in accordance with the moral

*The Pinyin System of romanization (spelling) of Chinese characters is used in the text of this chapter.

order of things but gives us a disposition toward harmony and the right. *Dao*, for the Daoists, as we have seen, is the way the universe works and the reality that is immanent in nature and humanity. The *Dao* of Heaven transcends the ordinary experience of nature and humanity, gives meaning to the universe, and helps us do things in the right way. When Heaven is described in personal terms, it may be thought of as Transcendence or Providence. When Heaven is described in impersonal terms, it may be regarded as the “law of nature” or as fate, which determines natural and human events.

In Chinese philosophy, the stress is on the dynamic and changing nature of the process in the midst of which we live. This resembles some Western “process” philosophies. From early Chinese thinking, the concepts “Yang” and “Yin” have been inherited. *Yang* is the active force that is the initiating, creative factor in existence; *Yin* is the more passive and receptive factor. Through the interaction of these two forces, natural processes go on.

HUMANITY AND THE GOOD SOCIETY

In Confucianism, humans occupy a high place in the general scheme of things; we alone can understand the order of things and live according to a moral ideal. Normal persons ought to aspire to be superior people. They should strive for their own development, renounce worldly lusts, and become courteous and gentle. Such persons exhibit integrity of mind in that they are honest with themselves and with others. They are sincere in speech and action and moderate in all things. They avoid avarice, quarrelsomeness, and covetousness, and delight in aiding others. Such superior persons do not go to excess in any direction. They exercise moderation and strive for the “golden mean” or the “just medium,” which enables virtue and happiness to continue and increase through history.

Until the Maoist revolution, the concepts of the community and of social propriety were central in Chinese culture. The basic institution was the family, which usually contained as a house-

hold not only the parents and unmarried children but all the sons with their wives and children and other dependent relatives. Reverence for ancestors and elders was extremely strong in traditional Chinese society. Different attitudes were called for depending on whether a person was dealing with parents, spouse, an official or landowner, a child, or whomever. Different persons had different duties and “places” according to their abilities and their stations in life.

Before the introduction of Buddhism in China, Chinese religious and ethical ideals were dominated by Confucianism and, to a lesser extent, by Daoism. Confucianism was concerned mainly with personal and social relations, whereas Daoism cultivated a sense of the individual’s oneness or unity with the order of the universe, while putting less emphasis on conventions and rules. When Buddhism was introduced into China, many educated Chinese adopted it because of its comprehensive and systematic character. For a number of centuries, many of the ablest Chinese thinkers were Buddhists or were profoundly influenced by Buddhist ideas.

Mao Ze-dong



Marxism¹² has taken firm root in China today and perhaps may be regarded as a fourth religion in Chinese history. Mao Ze-dong (1893–1976), political leader, statesman, poet, and philosopher, took as his goal the radical transformation of Chinese society. He was guided in this enterprise by ideas of Western origin, first, nineteenth-century liberalism, and, then Leninist collectivism. But at the same time he was determined that this “people’s China” should place a high value on its own culture.

A basic aspect of revolutionary change in twentieth-century China has been the effort of young intellectuals to break away from the dependent traditions of the old society. Dissatisfaction with the restrictions of traditional family life led many educated young Chinese at the turn of the century to seek new ways of modernizing their society. Mao Ze-dong was one of numerous

Excerpt from Confucius:
*The Analects**

Note: The Analects is a collection of sayings by Confucius and his pupils pertaining to his teachings and deeds. It was probably put together by some of his pupils and their pupils.

- 1:1. Confucius said, “Is it not a pleasure to learn and to repeat or practice from time to time what has been learned? Is it not delightful to have friends coming from afar? Is one not a superior man if he does not feel hurt even though he is not recognized?”
- 1:2. Yu-Tzu said, “Few of those who are filial sons and respectful brothers will show disrespect to superiors, and there never has been a man who is not disrespectful to superiors and yet creates disorder. A superior man is devoted to the fundamentals (the root). When the root is firmly established, the moral law (Tao) will grow. Filial piety and brotherly respect are the root of humanity.
- 1:3. Confucius said, “A man with clever words and an ingratiating appearance is seldom a man of humanity.”
- 1:4. Tseng-Tzu said, “Every day I examine myself on three points: whether in counseling others I have not been loyal; whether in intercourse with my friends I have not been faithful; and whether I have not repeated again and again and practiced the instructions of my teacher.”
- 1:6. Young men should be filial when at home and respectful to their elders when away from home. They should be earnest and faithful. They should love all extensively and be intimate with men of humanity. When they have any energy to spare after the performance of moral duties, they should use it to study literature and the arts.
- 1:8. Confucius said, “If the superior man is not grave, he will not inspire awe, and his learning will not be on a firm foundation. . . . When you have made mistakes, don’t be afraid to correct them.

The Wade-Giles system of **transliteration** has been kept in this quoted material, as in others in this chapter.

Wing-Tsit Chan, ed. and trans., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

Lao-zi



The age of a hundred philosophers in China (6th–5th cent. B.C.E.) gave rise to myriad new forms of thought, but none has so beguiled us spiritually as that of Lao-zi. Thought to be a contemporary of Confucius, Lao-zi was an archivist at the court palace of Loyang. Legend tells us that when he was about 60, Lao-zi grew weary of a world of chaos and social fragmentation and set off wandering to the west. The western gatekeeper asked him to deposit his wisdom before passing, and the result was the *Lao-zi*, also titled the *Dao De Jing*. These aphoristic and enigmatic passages express a view of life that is quietistic, yielding, receptive, and ultimately affirming of the world just as it is found. Humans are but a small part of the larger ebb and flow of natural change and the best chance for survival comes from perfect and invisible attunement to one's surroundings. No one knows if Lao-zi (which means "old man") really lived or not, but in the end it may not matter, for as is said in traditional China, Daoism is but a state of mind.

students alienated from old ways of life, but unlike many of his contemporaries Mao was sensitive to the social roots of China's political order. Early in his life, Mao realized the depth of popular discontent in China with the existing order of things. The problem was how to sustain and direct such mass anger in support of a social revolution. Mao's rural upbringing made him aware of the tendency of the peasants to avoid political involvement; they were inclined to eat the bitterness of life's hardships and injustices. But he also knew of China's long tradition of peasant rebellions. His solution to this problem of how to involve a basically conservative rural population in a revolution that would completely reshape peasant life developed only after years of effort to or-

ganize support for the communist movement in the Chinese countryside.

On May 4, 1919, the students of Beijing protested the compromising of Chinese interests at the Versailles Peace Conference. They staged anti-Western political demonstrations and sought to reshape their country's political tradition from elitism to mass participation. The "May Fourth" generation, as they became known, was deeply influenced by the success of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 in neighboring Russia. Mao Ze-dong found in Marxism-Leninism concepts that could be used to revolutionize China, and he also saw that China's revolutionary intellectuals continued to use their new ideology in traditional ways.

Excerpt from Lao-zi:

The Dao De Jing

Empty your mind of all thoughts.
Let your heart be at peace.
Watch the turmoil of beings,
but contemplate their return.

Each separate being in the universe
returns to the common source.
Returning to the source is serenity.

If you don't realize the source,
you stumble in confusion and sorrow.
When you realize where you come from,
you naturally become tolerant,
disinterested, amused,
kindhearted as a grandmother,
dignified as a king.
Immersed in the wonder of the Dao,
you can deal with whatever life brings you,
and when death comes, you are ready.

As we have seen, the conflicts and contradictions in life did find expression in some of China's philosophical traditions, most explicitly the Daoist concepts of *yin* and *yang*. Daoism emphasized the ironies and tensions inherent in social institutions; in contrast, however, Confucianism, the philosophy that dominated China's political tradition, sought rule through elite consensus designed to produce the harmonious life. Under Mao and Communist Party influence, a philosophy of conflict has influenced Chinese culture. The Marxist–Leninist concepts of dialectical materialism and class struggle have held for many Chinese a greater sense of reality than Confucian harmony, although there is a definite resurgence of Neo-Confucianism in Taiwan,

Hong Kong, and to a degree in China itself. Mao Ze-dong was only the most influential member of a generation that rejected the Confucian tradition in favor of a doctrine of struggle and change. Inspired by the Marxist dialectic, Mao developed a philosophy of social change. He wrote:

Changes in society are due chiefly to the development of the internal contradictions in society, that is the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, the contradiction between classes and the contradiction between the old and the new; it is the development of these contradictions that pushes society forward and gives the impetus for the suppression of the old by the new. . . . This dialectical world outlook teaches us primarily how to

observe and analyze the movement of opposites in different things and . . . to indicate methods for resolving contradictions.¹³

The Chinese commitment to the ongoing dialectic has brought many upheavals in the political, social, and cultural traditions of China. “Once Mao Tse-tung’s thought is grasped by the broad masses, it becomes an inexhaustible source of strength and a spiritual atom bomb of infinite power.”¹⁴ Mao himself remarked that he wished to be remembered by future generations only as a great teacher.¹⁵ In the Chinese Confucian tradition, however, a teacher has long been considered a model to be emulated by students, a source of authority, rather than just an independent intellect who stimulates students to their own achievements. Thus Mao, even as a teacher of revolution, is likely to remain a powerful model figure who will long be held up for emulation by China’s millions, a symbol of the transformation of China.¹⁶

The Value System of the Japanese



Japanese culture has been strongly influenced by Confucianism and Chinese culture and also by Buddhism and Indian culture. Yet in Japan these acquisitions have been remolded into something distinctive and uniquely Japanese. Because of a common ancestry and language and because of living on a chain of islands separated from the mainland of Asia, Japanese peoples have been able to develop distinctive traits in comparative isolation.

SHINTOISM

The Japanese value system goes back to an early tribal society in which life was centered around the family, the villages, and small neighborhoods. Religious values and moral standards were scarcely distinguished from each other or from the problem of keeping order and making a living. The veneration of the sun; worship of the *kami* (the nature spirits); reverence for the

spirits of ancestors; and respect for and loyalty to parents, older people, and all those in positions of authority were part of one’s duties. **Shinto** is the name used to cover many of these activities and beliefs. At an early date it was the tribal folk religion centering around the family and local shrines (Shrine Shinto), but eventually it became a patriotic state cult connected with the chieftain and court (State Shinto).

Shintoism is the traditional Japanese religion. *Shinto* means literally “the way of the gods,” but the term was not applied until the sixth century C.E., when it was necessary to distinguish the ancient faith from the encroaching Buddhism. Originally, Shintoism was pantheistic and had no written records or written literature, no codified laws, no traditions of philosophical inquiry, and only a rough experience in the arts and sciences. The early belief was that all perceptible objects were in some way alive, inhabited by good or evil spirits. The first tales to be composed speak of waterways, vegetation, and stones that could talk; however, this was more than a simple animism.¹⁷ The much-celebrated Japanese appreciation of nature—a twisted tree, snow falling gently in the distance—can certainly be traced back to early Shintoism. Later, however, the original nature deities were developed into a complex, institutional religion, with a priesthood, shrines, and monasteries all embodying the *cult of the Emperor*, as the son of the great Sun Goddess. From this conviction grew the idea of the Emperor as divine and of Shinto as the state religion.

ZEN BUDDHISM

During the early centuries of the common era, Chinese culture, especially Confucianism, and Indian cultures by way of Buddhism, had an influence in Japan. The Confucian emphasis on loyalty was carried over into the evolving ethical code of the warrior class. Buddhism was introduced and changed on Japanese soil. Zen became the most influential sect of Buddhism in Japan. As Buddhism moved slowly across Asia, it began to receive influences from the different

countries through which it passed. Buddhism reached China as early as the first century C.E. and in due course passed on from China to Korea and Japan. During these travels and transitions, Buddhism developed several divergent forms of teaching, among them one in particular that, under its Japanese name of Zen, was destined to have a strong influence on Western societies in the second half of the twentieth century.

Zen became the most influential sect of Buddhism in Japan. *Zen*, from the Chinese *Chan* has as one of its chief features *zazen*, sitting meditation. Zen Buddhism came to serve not only people seeking salvation and wisdom, but also soldiers; it strengthened the soldiers' self-discipline and gave them poise and courage even in the face of death.

Although Zen has its basis in Mahayana Buddhism, it returns to some of the earliest values emphasized in the Theravada tradition. Like Theravada, Zen focuses on the simplicity of the moment. Reality is not transcendent but can be captured in the fullness of the fleeting here and now. Complete awareness of the experience of each moment as it comes and goes is the goal of Zen meditation.

According to Zen there is no struggle in the fact itself such as between the finite and the infinite, between flesh and the spirit. These are idle distinctions fictitiously designed by the intellect for its own interest. Those who take them too seriously or those who try to read them into the very fact of life are those who take the finger for the moon. When we are hungry we eat; when we are sleepy we lay ourselves down; and where does the infinite come in here? Are not we complete in ourselves and each in himself? Life as it is lived suffices.¹⁸

The discovery of this "reality" is the Zen goal.

When questioned about life's "meaning," about "the reality of the Self," about the "origins of the Universe," or "the nature of nirvana," the Buddha maintained a "noble silence." This is also Zen's way. Such questions are considered essentially irrelevant in the attaining of spiritual freedom. The Zen philosopher Dogen talks about the "without-thinking" mode that

"neither affirms nor denies, accepts nor rejects, believes nor disbelieves." Like the exhausted person leaning on the lawnmower whose eyes gaze downward, the ideal Zen mind thinks and feels nothing specific whatsoever: "He simply is as he is, with no intentional attitude at all."¹⁹ Final "answers" cannot be reached by way of argument or any so-called facts. Thus Zen attempts to force the mind beyond the pattern of ordinary thought processes through the use of the *koan*, a nonsensical statement or question for which there is no logical response. In the use of the *koan*, the intention is to force attention on the truth that explanations in words or phrases explaining "meaning" belong to thought and language and not to actuality. By breaking down familiar distinctions and differences, Zen followers believe they can bring about a grasp of the empty transitory reality, which is a condition that transcends all opposites. In this fashion, the disciple of Zen is pushed toward a personal *experience*, toward an illuminating *realization* of the unity of life.

To be prepared for this experience, everything in Zen—its art, poetry, philosophy, rituals, and techniques—is presented as a tool for the destruction of our illusion that we are selves. Only with the obliteration of that self, that "temporary individuality," will persons be put in touch with "the Is-ness of the Is"—the present, ordinary moment of experience.

INDIVIDUAL VIRTUES AND CULTURAL VALUES

The period from about 1100 to 1600 C.E. saw the development of the code, the *Bushido*, of the samurai or warrior class, the *bushi*. This was a time when many of the Japanese values that have persisted were codified. The code stressed an almost spartan life. The *samurai* was taught to live simply; to seek only the necessities in food, clothing, and shelter; not to desire great possessions; to rise early and avoid idle talk; and to avoid frivolities.

The code of the *samurai* does not differ greatly from that of the merchant and the

peasant, or worker on the land, for the warrior code came to be accepted by all classes. Merchants and peasants, like others in society, are expected to be honest, to work hard, and to place public interest above private gain. Although some character traits are generally or universally desirable in that they apply to all people, many duties depend on the status of the person and on his or her social role or particular circumstances. One has different obligations to one's father, older brother, younger brother, neighbor, mere acquaintance, or a stranger. Rigid adherence to a detailed set of social conventions is expected. Formalized behavior tends to prevent conflicts and make possible a smoothly functioning society in which political values are primary and loyalty is the outstanding value.

Japanese standards and values are based mainly on a respect for external authority. The authority of the emperor, the elders, or tradition is always present. In the past, the Japanese as a people were more willing than Westerners to make their personal desires and wills subordinate to social standards and to accept authority.

The Japanese value system and rules of conduct contain contradictory elements, as do the systems of other societies. Conformism and the desire for self-expression, the suppression of emotion at times and emotional outbursts on occasion, military ruthlessness and a basic compassion and normally peaceful ways of living—these are a few of the contradictory aspects.

The end of World War II wrought many changes in the Japanese way of life. The atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 brought defeat and surrender with startling suddenness. Defeat seemed to deny the validity of the foundation of Japanese national life and to undermine the national morality. Japanese moral standards, traditions, and expectations seemed to be thrown into reverse. The Japanese soon discovered, however, that the occupation forces were not going to exact severe terms but were anxious to help them discover better ways of living. Furthermore, the occupation leaders assumed the superiority of democratic ways. They praised freedom as the basis for ma-

ture and responsible moral decisions. What was to become of the Japanese emphasis on conformity and authority? What was to be the basis for moral action after the Emperor, publicly before the Diet (legislature) and the nation, disclaimed his divine origin, the racial superiority of the Japanese people, and the divine destiny of the nation? The entire value system seemed to be shattered.

Defeat, surrender, occupation, and inflation are only outstanding events in a long series of rapid changes that Japan has been undergoing for nearly a century. Industrialization, urbanization, secularization as a result of a weakening of the traditional religions, the introduction of foreign ideas and ways of doing things, and modernization along many lines also have occurred. While undergoing rapid social and economic change, Japan has moved away from a closed, tradition-bound, authoritarian society toward an open, affluent, capitalistic society patterned after the models of Western Europe and North America.

Reflections



There are a few broad differences in outlook between East and

West. The East and the West tend to view the objective or natural world of the senses from different perspectives. The West has tended in recent times to emphasize the empirical world, as seen in scientific progress. The Hindu thinker is more likely to emphasize the inner nature of the self and a reality beyond the world of the senses, which is regarded as fleeting and illusory. The Buddhist thinker, however, like the Westerner, takes account of the empirical world but focuses instead on its transitory quality and the need for nonattachment to it.

Partly as a result of differences in theories of knowledge and views of reality, the East and West have contrasting attitudes toward human desires and their fulfillment. In the West, there is a tendency to emphasize desires and the need to satisfy them. The effort to satisfy desires has led

to an interest in things and the comforts and pleasures of this world. It has led to competition, to the acquisitive society, and sometimes to unrest and even war. In the East, on the other hand, there is greater emphasis on discipline, self-control, moderation, detachment, and even renunciation. Buddhism, with its claim that suffering and misery come from desire and striving and its stress on release from desire and the suffering it brings, did have a strong influence in China, Japan, and other Asian countries. It needs to be pointed out, however, that both China—with the People’s Revolution—and Japan—through adopting capitalistic goals—have reworked much of their religious heritage.

Thinkers in the West put more emphasis than do most Eastern thinkers on the reality and the value of time. In the West, we find process philosophies and concepts of creative evolution and progress attractive. (Only recently have Asian scholars become interested in process philosophy.) Thus time has a role in Western notions of salvation. For the Hindu or the Buddhist, on the other hand, the good is not in this present world of things, and it is not to be gained by manipulating nature, altering society, or seeking pleasure for ourselves. The good is found through the quest for the One within or beyond, or in attaining liberating knowledge.

People in the West tend to view nature (in the sense of the external world) as something to be exploited. It is used for recreation and fun, and is predominantly exploited for financial gain. Western imagery is expressed in terms of “harnessing nature,” “taming the wilderness,” or “conquering space.” Think of the problem the West has with air and water pollution, strip mining, and the defacing of nature for purposes of advertising. In the Asian world a pervasive concept is “harmony with nature.” The Asians feel that nature is life-sustaining and gives them their food, shelter, and the material for their arts and sciences. There is something ineffable, a sense of oneness, and a nature mysticism that cannot be described adequately by the terms and concepts of scientific and philosophical treatises. It is perhaps best expressed in the gardens, flower arrangements, and the nature art of the Japanese.

Apart from these differences regarding the value of certain kinds of knowledge, the role of desires, the nature of the time process, and the attitude toward nature, there is considerable agreement about morals and values. That is, the things approved and called good and the things disapproved and called evil differ only in minor details. Love and compassion, freedom, and responsibility are emphasized in both Eastern and Western systems.



Glossary Terms

ATMAN The Hindu concept of the soul or self after enlightenment. The true self of each individual is identical with Brahman. The true destiny of the self is the realization of union with Brahman.

BHAGAVADGITA A particular Hindu scripture that has the form of a dialogue between the hero Arjuna and Krishna, an incarnation of the God Vishnu. The most well-known of the Hindu Scriptures; called the *Gita* and the *Song of the Lord*. (Sometimes written *Bhagavad-Gita*.)

BODHISATTVA A term used in Buddhism for a person aspiring to enlightenment, one who is a Buddha-to-be; a Buddhist wise and holy person.

BRAHMAN The central concept in Hindu philosophy of the impersonal supreme being or ultimate reality. The primal source and ultimate goal of all beings, with which Atman, when enlightened, knows itself to be identical.

KARMA In Hinduism, the cosmic law of sowing and reaping, of cause and effect in human life. The law

determines the form that will be taken in each new existence or rebirth. Action is seen as bringing upon oneself inevitable results, good or bad.

NIRVANA The extinction of the finite, changing, desiring self. A cessation of striving that liberates and enlightens one. The elimination of ignorance, lust, and selfishness, which are at the root of suffering.

SHINTO The name given to the many activities and beliefs of the traditional Japanese religion.

TRANSLITERATION The spelling of words translated from a different foreign script. For example, Arabic script, dissimilar to the script of English words, can yield *Qur'an* or *Koran*, *Muslim* or *Moslem*, and various English spellings of "Mohammed."

UPANISHADS A group of philosophical treatises, usually in dialogue form, composed between the eighth and sixth centuries B.C.E. They comprise part of the Hindu Scripture and represent an advance beyond the Vedas, having as their principal message the unity of Brahman and Atman.



Chapter Review

THE NATURE OF ASIAN RELIGION

1. We live in a world society that desperately needs some understanding of its diversity, especially the great diversity among world religions.
2. The peoples of Asian cultures view religion as integrally related to and inseparable from all other areas of life and experience.

THE HINDU TRADITION

1. Hinduism has been practiced for some 5,000 years, making it one of the oldest religious traditions in the world.
2. The purpose of Hindu philosophy is to see the truth and to apply the truth to problems of everyday life.
3. Hindu Scripture is extensive and when collected includes the Vedas and the widely read *Bhagavadgita*.
4. Four major periods of Hindu thought include Vedic polytheism; the Vedanta and the presentation of Absolute Brahman; Bhakti, or the literature of devotional theism, including the *Bhagavadgita*; and the modern period.
5. Central to Hindu philosophy is Brahman, the one unchanging reality that transcends space, time, causality, and all particular things.
6. The concept of the self, *atman*, is closely allied with Brahman.

7. Four main values of Hinduism are: *artha* (wealth), *kama* sensuality, *dharma* (duty or righteousness), and *moksha* (enlightenment or release from finitude).
8. *Karma*, the law of cause and effect in human life, determines the *dharmic* form that *atman* will take in each new existence.
9. The four *ashramas*, or stages of life, are student, householder, forest dweller, and renunciant.
10. *Yoga* is a technique of physical and spiritual training by which the bodily and psychic energies are controlled, unified, and directed in order to attain liberation from the world.

THE BUDDHIST QUEST FOR ENLIGHTENMENT

1. Siddhartha Gautama was the founder of Buddhism, which flourished in India for more than a thousand years. He became known as the Buddha or "Enlightened One."
2. The central core of Buddhist philosophy is found in "The Four Noble Truths."
3. The Noble Eightfold Path can lead to *nirvana*, the experience of cessation of suffering, the liberation from human striving.
4. Two main branches with various subdivisions arose in Buddhism, the main divisions being Theravada and Mahayana.

CONFUCIUS AND LAO-ZI

1. Confucius and Lao-Zi attempted to organize the wisdom of the time into a more orderly system. Philosophy among the Chinese has been practical and this-worldly. They emphasized moral problems and social philosophy.
2. Traditional Chinese philosophy proposes a system of ethical realism in which man occupies a high place in nature.
3. Confucianism was concerned mainly with personal and social relations, whereas Daoism cultivated a sense of oneness with the order of the universe.

MAO ZE-DONG

1. Marxism may be regarded as the religion of China today with Mao Ze-dong as its founder.

THE VALUE SYSTEM OF THE JAPANESE

1. The Japanese value system began in an early tribal society. Standards and values were based mainly on respect for external authority, ensuring a smoothly functioning society. In Japan, since the end of World War II, there has been considerable movement toward a capitalistic

society similar to that of Western Europe and America.

2. Shinto, literally “the way of the Gods,” is the name used to cover many activities and beliefs of the Japanese.
3. Zen Buddhism, the most influential sect of Buddhism in Japan, stresses the universe as one indissoluble substance, one total whole, of which man is only a part. Zen focuses on everyday, ordinary experience, on living the experience of each moment.
4. Individual virtues and cultural values are reflected in the Bushido code and respect for external authority; however, contradictory elements can be found, as in systems of other societies.

REFLECTIONS

1. There are basic sources of misunderstanding between East and West: economic and technological differences; contrasting ideals; differences in outlook on reality and satisfying desires; respective differences concerning time, and attitudes toward nature.
2. The things approved and disapproved differ in minor details; there is considerable agreement about morals and values.



Study Questions and Projects

1. Judaism and Christianity are Middle Eastern in origin. To what extent do their value systems agree with and differ from the Asian philosophies considered in this chapter?
2. Discuss briefly the differences between East and West in their attitude toward sense perception, human desires, the time process, and the world of nature.
3. What are some conclusions to be drawn from a study of the value systems of the Occident and Asia? What are some contributions Asia can make to the Occident, and vice versa?
4. Why is it important to study Asian philosophies? What problems are involved in making such studies?
5. Discuss the following in the Hindu tradition: the aim of studying philosophy; the relations among Brahman, the self, and the universe; the goal of life and the steps to achieve it.
6. What are the four main values in the Hindu outlook on life?
7. Give the distinctive characteristics of Indian philosophy.
8. Discuss the following in Buddhism: what it accepts and rejects in Hinduism; the Three Marks of Existence; the Four Noble Truths; the Eightfold Path; and Nirvana.
9. What are some virtues or character traits that are stressed by Buddhists?

