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Guy S. Alitto

Has Man a Future?

Dialogues with the Last Confucian



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Shu Ming Liang (deceased)

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Preface

I am honored to be able to write a preface to this volume.

First I want to explain how this dialogue between Mr. Liang Shuming and me came about.

I became interested in Mr. Liang's life and career as a graduate student at Harvard University, and took it as the subject of my Ph.D. dissertation. I gathered materials in Taiwan and Hong Kong, as well as sought out and interviewed (many of) his old friends and acquaintances. Because of the Sino-American political situation at the time, I never had an opportunity to go to the Chinese mainland and meet personally the subject of my research, Mr. Liang. In the first part of 1973, I had my first opportunity to go to the Chinese mainland. For an American to be able to go to the Chinese mainland at that time was still extremely unusual. Why was I able to make the trip? After President Nixon visited China, several Chinese delegations visited the United States in succession, and I served as their interpreter, and so became a channel of communication between the two countries. So in 1973, my wife and I had this rare opportunity to visit the Chinese mainland. At the time, the first request I made of the Chinese was that I hoped I could meet with Mr. Liang. But because it was the time of the Cultural Revolution, and a very sensitive time, my wishes to pay my respects to Mr. Liang were not answered, so I could only return regretfully to America.

In 1979, at the same time as my study of Liang Shuming *The Last Confucian* was published, the Chinese political situation underwent a tremendous change. This current of reform and openness also changed Mr. Liang's life. He had originally been living with his wife in a small room, but then he was moved by his unit, the People's Political Consultative Conference, into Building Number 22, called the "Ministers' Mansion," where many celebrities such as the writer Ding Ling also lived. Having more comfortable quarters, Mr. Liang felt that it was more appropriate for receiving visitors, and immediately thought of ways of contacting me. One day I suddenly received a phone call from a stranger; it was from an octogenarian named Shi who had been Mr. Liang's student in the 1920s at Peking University. He had just come from Beijing and was delivering a verbal message to me at Mr. Liang's request. It was that Mr. Liang already knew of the publication of *The Last Confucian*, and hoped that he could meet me. A few months passed, and after class one day, a

Chinese student suddenly came to see me. She had just come recently from Beijing to join her father in the United States. She gave me Mr. Liang's address, and told me that she had been a neighbor of "Uncle Liang," and that he very much hoped to be able to see me, and to see the work on him that I had published. I immediately sent him a copy of the book. Before long I received an amicable reply from Mr. Liang, agreeing to my definitely going to Beijing to visit him the next year.

In 1980, the first day I arrived in Beijing, I immediately contacted Mr. Liang. He told me how he had moved to Building Number 22. The next morning, I went to Mr. Liang's residence to visit him formally. All of Mr. Liang's family members, who took my visit very seriously, were also there. Mr. Liang introduced me to his family. I then presented him with some Harvard University souvenirs (I was teaching at Harvard at the time). I also gave him works of his father's. After all of those years and experiencing diverse setbacks, I had finally got to meet Mr. Liang.

Sitting face to face, with only a small table between us, we began our chats. In the 2 weeks that followed, I went to the Liang's home every morning to ask questions of Mr. Liang. I put in order the recordings of our dialogues, and later (a part) was included in Mr. Liang's published collected works. Now it is published in a separate volume.

In our talks, through Mr. Liang I came to understand (more fully) the trait of traditional Chinese intellectuals. This is most worthy of mentioning. During the 2 weeks of intensive conversation, in the first few days Mr. Liang spoke to me a great deal about Buddhism, which perplexed me, and so I asked, "Didn't you abandon Buddhist thought a long time ago?" He answered that he didn't really abandon it. We talked about the title of my book *The Last Confucian*, which fixed him as a Confucian. He said that he could accept the title. Yet sometimes he would express to me that Marxist-Leninist science was very good. When we spoke about traditional Chinese culture, he also praised Daoism. Once, because he had organized the Democratic League, he met with George Marshall. He evaluated Marshall very highly, and thought that he was a good person because he was a pious Christian. At the time, I didn't quite understand. How could a person be both a Buddhist and a Confucian, and also identify with Marxist-Leninist thought and approve of Christianity? Later I finally grasped it. This ability to blend mutually contradictory thought is a special characteristic of typical traditional Chinese intellectuals.

Although, during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods, many schools of thought contended and debated with one another, the scholars of the time did not recognize themselves to be a specific school. For example, when we now discuss Mencius and Xunzi, we recognize them as Confucian, even though one said that human nature was good, and the other that human nature was evil. They were followers of Confucius, but at that time, even Confucius did not necessarily recognize himself to be "Confucian." The academic classifications we are used to today are the system Sima Qian invented for the various pre-Qin thinkers when he wrote about his father Sima Tan's "A Summary of the Six Schools" in his own "Autobiographical Afterword of the Grand Historian." I think that Chinese culture is actually an eclectic blend of many kinds of thought that seem to be incompatible, yet at the same time is a culture that likes to classify things. It is easily seen that

actually most Chinese intellectuals amalgamated various kinds of thought into one eclectic body. For example, although the Cheng brothers, Zhu Xi, Lu Xiangshan and Wang Yangming are all Neo-Confucians who focus on the nature of the mind, there are differences among them. There are Buddhist elements in their thought. Although the late Qing Dynasty intellectuals such as Liang Qichao and Zhang Taiyan were at the two opposite extremes politically and on the New Text/Old Text controversy, they both amalgamated Buddhism, Western thought and Confucianism into their individual thought.

So this perhaps explains why I, having been trained in modern academic standards and categories, thought that it was impossible for someone to be simultaneously a believer in Marxism-Leninism and Confucianism. As far as Mr. Liang was concerned, though, this was not in the least a problem. Looked at in this way, Mr. Liang was still quite a traditional Chinese intellectual.

In my opinion, the various pre-Qin philosophers were each on different paths, but they all assumed the same cosmology, that the universe was an organic whole, with each element in that whole interconnected. So, in such a cosmology, there are no absolute dichotomies and contradictions, only relative ones. This worldview was the underlying bedrock of the thought of all Chinese intellectuals, and so various different elements of thought could coexist in an individual's thought without the currents conflicting.

The greater part of the content of our talks was Mr. Liang's responding to my questions about historical figures in the early twentieth century. Instead of asking him about his contacts and associations in the past, why didn't I just quietly listen to Mr. Liang expostulate his thinking? I study history, and naturally want to preserve much of the historical materials. As far as I know, Mr. Liang was the last person who had personally participated in those several decades of violent cultural change and who was still healthy and clear-headed, and who, moreover, knew and had contact with so many important intellectuals. His memories were of great value, so I went well beyond my role of interviewer in guiding the conversation in hopes that these unique experiences of his could be recorded for posterity.

This special case of the biographer finally meeting the biographee only after publication of the biography is unprecedented in modern Chinese history. After having had these talks with Mr. Liang, I added a final chapter to *The Last Confucian* to supplement and revise the original, especially the section on his suffering during the Cultural Revolution. Because I had not been able to contact him before the book was finished, and because there was no other relevant documentation available, I did not know the details, and so could not include them in the book. Only after we talked did I know the real situation and added it in this last chapter. On the whole, I did not revise the structure or content of the book after meeting Mr. Liang. After our talks I discovered Mr. Liang's "unity of inner feelings and outer action." His writings had honestly reflected his impressions. He never disguised his true feelings and thoughts in order to be in tune with the times or the situation, so the Mr. Liang that I had seen through his writings and the real-life Mr. Liang with whom I talked were identical. So although I was fated not to meet him before the book was completed, I was still able, through his writings, to know Mr. Liang's real personality and ways of thinking.

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Introduction

Professor Guy Alitto of the University of Chicago is the author of *The Last Confucian: Liang Shuming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity*. In order to confirm the facts and make corrections to the parts of the book that are not fully accurate or complete, he visited specifically to have special interviews with Mr. Liang Shuming in August of 1980.¹ They had over ten long talks.

In these conversations they discussed the cultural characteristics of Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and representative figures, involving many famous people in the cultural and political realms (Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu, Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Chiang Kai-shek, Kang Youwei, Zhang Taiyan, Hu Shi, Feng Youlan...), reviewed the important activities of Mr. Liang's life (teaching at Peking University, working in the Rural Reconstruction Movement, founding the Democratic League...). Because these conversations were so rich in content, they are important reference materials for understanding and studying Mr. Liang Shuming's thought and activities, as well as the social and historical events of Modern China.

¹I researched and wrote the book long before American researchers could even visit China, let alone conduct individual interviews and primary research. In 1980, I received a hitherto unprecedented invitation to meet with and converse directly with Mr. Liang Shuming. This proved to be not only a chance to meet with this important personage of twentieth century China, but also a fortuitous opportunity to clarify and correct portions of the record that heretofore were incomplete or not quite accurate.

Chapter 1

August 12, 1980

- Alitto: How did you learn about the publication of my book [referring to *The Last Confucian*]? Was it through a friend?
- Liang: [We both know] someone surnamed Zhu, right?
- Alitto: Yes, that's right. She was a student of mine [at a university in the U.S. state of Ohio]. She told me that you knew about the book. So, how did you find out about my book? Was the book in China or abroad...?¹
- Liang: A friend of mine in the U.S. sent me a copy.
- Alitto: Sent from the U.S.
- Liang: Yes. One surnamed Hu. His name is Hu Shiru.²
- Alitto: Oh! Hu Shiru! He also contacted me. Was he a student of yours in the 1920s at Peking University, or...?
- Liang: I don't remember him very well, although he is well acquainted with me.
- Alitto: About three months ago I saw your picture in the newspaper alongside an article about your move to this house. I believe the newspaper was *Dagongbao*, published in Hong Kong. Did reporters visit you in person for that article or...?
- Liang: Yes, three reporters came from the China News Service.

¹ One of my students approached me after class and said that "Liang Bobo" [Uncle Liang] knew about the book and hoped that I would visit him. She had just arrived from China, and had lived in the same neighborhood as Liang. It was an extraordinary coincidence that such a person would end up in my classroom at a public university in a small American city.

² This man, an engineer who had lived in the U.S. for many decades, was one of Liang's students at Peking University in the early 1920s. He had gone to China right after Mr. Liang had moved into a suitable, gracious residence and so was able to receive foreigners. During the Cultural Revolution, Liang and his wife were thrown into one small room with almost all of the room taken up by the bed. Obviously it was not suitable for receiving visitors from abroad. Hu phoned me right after he returned to the U.S. Once again, this was quite an extraordinary coincidence that one of the first foreign visitors who had seen Liang was able to contact me. Hu phoned me shortly after Ms. Zhu had spoken with me after class.

- Alitto: Well, I'm not a reporter. If I write an article in the future, I will first send you a copy.
- Liang: That's good. Doing it that way is good.
- Alitto: I am still not sure which kind of newspaper or magazine will carry my article. It also depends on the editor's interest in the story.
- Liang: Right.
- Alitto: When I was doing research for your biography, I met many students of yours from the old days along with people who worked with you in Zouping. Have any of your students been in contact with you lately? For instance, I met a man in Hong Kong surnamed Hu [who I interviewed several times].
- Liang: Do you mean Hu Shisan? His original name is Hu Yinghan, and his sobriquet is Shisan.³
- Alitto: Yes, that's him. I visited him ten years ago when I was in Hong Kong and started my research. He provided me with a lot of very valuable materials. I also met a man named Wang Shaoshang. It seemed that he was a student of yours at the First Middle School, in Guangzhou. (Liang: Right.) I also met Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan in Hong Kong. They are also your acquaintances. (Liang: Right.) In the U.S. I met another person surnamed Zhang who worked in rural reconstruction in Ding County, Hebei Province, during the old days. In any case, he was at a university in the U.S....⁴ In the past several years, I haven't been in touch with him. In Taiwan, I became acquainted with a man named Zhou Shaoxian.⁵ He admires you greatly and has published a number of essays about you. Recently a Taiwan newspaper translated and published

³ This Mr. Hu was one of Liang's most loyal students. In Hong Kong in the 1950s he had publicly defended Liang during the criticisms of him. Mr. Hu was originally one of the Research Department's students in Zouping in the 1930s. He still had contact with Mr. Liang in the late 1940s. I spent over a week talking to Mr. Hu in 1970. After I met Mr. Liang, I realized that Mr. Hu had modeled his dress, demeaned behavior, and manner of speech after Liang. Of course, Mr. Hu's own view of the world, his personal philosophy and his ideas in general were closely modeled on Liang's as well.

⁴ I conflated two men surnamed Zhang into one. One was an old rural reconstruction worker who I discovered at Berea College, in Kentucky, U.S.A. He told me about his experiences, and shared with me his impressions of Mr. Liang. It was this Mr. Zhang who had worked in Ding County, Hebei, with Mr. Yan Yangchu. Another Mr. Zhang was Zhang Hongjun (张鸿钧) whom I found at Donghai University in Taiwan. Both he and his wife were Sociologists who had both been involved with rural work. I interviewed them at some length twice. Mr. Zhang had had considerable contact with Mr. Liang. I remember very clearly the only "disagreement" between husband and wife when they were telling me of their experiences and contact with Mr. Liang. Mr. Zhang described Mr. Liang to me as "very handsome," and his wife disagreed, saying that she didn't find Liang so attractive.

⁵ Mr. Zhou was an extraordinary elder gentleman. He had been a student at the Shandong Rural Reconstruction Institute. After the war started, he was part of a guerilla unit in his home county of Laiyang, Shandong. Although he was an academic, he was clearly a man of action as well. Mr. Zhou, like all of Liang's students that I met, was extremely loyal to Liang, and often publicly defended him. In Taiwan at that time, Liang's books could not be republished. Mr. Zhou often railed against the Guomindang (KMT) for being hostile to Liang.

an essay of mine. They only selected some parts of it for translation, so it was not very systematic, and Mr. Zhou wrote an essay criticizing it.

Liang: What publication was this in?

Alitto: In the *China Times*. In recent months, Hong Kong newspapers have also published some articles about you, for two or three times.

Liang: Yes, they came to interview me.

Alitto: In the past several decades I know that you have been a part of the People's Political Consultative Conference.

Liang: Yes, I have been a member of this body from its founding to the present without interruption.

Alitto: Do you still write or...?

Liang: I have been writing in the past few years, but most recently I have written very little. A few years ago my most important project was writing a very long book, titled *The Human Heart/Mind and Human Life*.

Alitto: You began to write it a very long time ago.

Liang: Yes. This is a very long piece. It is bound into three volumes. There is also a shorter book I finished which discusses Laozi, Confucius and Indian Buddhism. It discusses these three schools of thought. It is not as long as *The Human Heart/Mind and Human Life*. It is a comparatively condensed treatment.

Alitto: None of these have been published yet, right?

Liang: None of them have been published. In the past, ... it is better now, but in the past, the government controlled thought, and one could not publish freely.⁶

Alitto: Was this because of the Gang of Four's...?

Liang: It was not entirely because of the Gang of Four. It was this way for many years. It is better now, comparatively. Restrictions on publishing are now a bit more relaxed. To obtain approval to get my books published, I presented a short essay to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. The essay, about twelve thousand words, was entitled something like "How Should We Evaluate Confucius Now?" I gave it to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. My purpose was to represent my thoughts. I gave them this short essay, rather than my three-volume work, to make it convenient for them. Reading the longer book would take too much time. So I gave them this short essay. My intention was to ask them to examine it. The Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference at that time was Deng Xiaoping. But of course he was too busy. He gave it to his Deputy Secretary General to read for him. The Deputy Secretary General told me himself that the essay had been given to him to read. He said that he had read it, attached comments, and sent it to Deng Xiaoping. But it had not yet been handed down.

Alitto: So you are still waiting...

⁶ Although Deng Xiaoping's reforms were only just starting in mid-1980s, they had an immediate effect on the intellectual atmosphere, which I found completely different from my earlier 1973 visit to China.

- Liang: The efficiency of this bureaucracy is not very high.
- Alitto: Yes. So is the case in the U.S.
- Liang: So I pressed the issue and asked for my essay back. The Deputy Secretary General [of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference] told me that I shouldn't be anxious about it because the essay was quite long, and so on. Then he couldn't find it! He had great piles of documents, through which he searched and searched, but couldn't find it.
- Alitto: Did you have a copy of that?
- Liang: I had a copy, of course.
- Alitto: Does China have photo reproduction equipment now?
- Liang: Yes.
- Alitto: I'm afraid it's not so common.
- Liang: That's true.
- Alitto: Too bad. If there were [more] photo reproduction equipment...
- Liang: It would be much better.
- Alitto: I represent the American academic world in eagerly looking forward to having an opportunity to read your latest work. I hope in the near future to have the opportunity. My former colleague, a native Chinese [currently teaching at] at the University of California, Berkeley, Tu Wei-ming, studies Confucianism in the U.S.
- Liang: He came to see me.
- Alitto: Did he? Before he went back to China, he told me that he planned to see you. Did he mention me? Just before he left he had a problem with his sponsoring unit. I also didn't know what to do [about securing a visa to visit China and you]. He [Tu] said that probably Beijing Normal University would sponsor me, but since they didn't contact me I thought that there was no way to come. Only then did I trouble you to contact the People's Political Consultative Conference on my behalf.
- Liang: It was still better to go through the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.⁷ [When the] man from Berkeley, Tu Wei-ming, came to see me, he left me some of his writings, all in Chinese, on the philosophy of Wang Yangming. He has now gone to the Dunhuang caves?
- Alitto: Oh, he went to Dunhuang. I didn't know.
- Liang: He went to Dunhuang to see the ancient...
- Alitto: He has been researching Zhu Xi for the past several years. I have known him for more than a decade, because we are both Harvard University Ph.D.s. He was there earlier than I. Have you had the opportunity to see Western publications about Chinese philosophy?
- Liang: It's very difficult for me to read Western languages, so I have a friend read them for me.

⁷ Mr. Liang had asked his unit, the People's Political Consultative Conference, to be my official sponsor. This was just a formality, as it never had any contact with me, but having a sponsoring unit was necessary for any foreigner to visit China in those days. Professor Tu's sponsoring unit was Beijing Normal University, which is why he suggested that I contact that institution.

Alitto: There are several books that are not easily translated.

Liang: When he has finished reading, he tells me about [the content].

Alitto: My Chinese friend said that possibly it [*The Last Confucian*] would be translated into Chinese. I don't think it will be easy. Westerners find it easy, clear and lively, but translating it into Chinese would be very difficult. It isn't easy to convey the subtle connotations. I am already acquainted with this problem. In an article Zhou Shaoxian published, he disagreed with some of my most fundamental concepts about you. I think that it is because there is a difference in methods employed by Westerners studying China, and those used by Chinese themselves. Mr. Zhou was your student, and so his standpoint is different. If I had a hint of criticism [of you], Mr. Zhou would definitely [disagree]. Chinese find Westerners' analytical methods relatively strange and unfamiliar. Mr. Liang, you have done a comparative study of Chinese and Western cultures; probably you recognize that the methods and analytical styles used by Eastern and Western scholarly circles are different. ... I don't know, you mean your friend has orally translated several parts of several books for you?

Liang: He tells me about them orally.

Alitto: I couldn't guarantee that they translated very well; perhaps they misunderstood some things. But, by and large, do you have a response [to the books]?

Liang: No, not at all. (Alitto: No?) I mean, in talking with you, I hope that you will understand the sources of my thought. The basis of my thought is Confucianism and Buddhism. This is the most important thing. That is more important than understanding my past. I hope you can know more about Confucianism and Buddhism. I want to tell you all about my Confucianism and Buddhism. I mean, I will put the emphasis in our conversations on this, rather than on my personal affairs or my opinions. Because Confucianism and Buddhism are my basis, if you can understand the basis, that would be best of all, the most important thing. Not only do I hope this for you but also I hope that Europeans and Americans can better understand these two schools of thought: Confucianism and Buddhism.

Alitto: Mr. Liang, has your interest in Buddhism and Buddhist studies been rekindled, or increased, as you have grown older? At the time of the May Fourth Movement, you publicly abandoned Buddhism and converted to Confucianism.

Liang: That is not relevant. You may say I abandoned Buddhism, but I really didn't abandon it. Originally I did want to leave the secular world and become a monk. What I abandoned was my plan for leaving the secular world and becoming a monk. But in my thought, on the philosophical level, I did not abandon Buddhism.

Alitto: Oh, I now understand a bit better. Actually, I also wrote about the same thing in the book, that is, you hadn't completely abandoned Buddhism, but you felt that the problems of the time didn't need Buddhism as much as Confucianism. So because of this, you began to study Confucianism.

Liang: Let me explain myself. When I was young, around sixteen or seventeen, I wanted to become a monk.

Alitto: I got that wrong. You actually wanted to become a monk, and not just a Buddhist layman.⁸

Liang: Right. I did want to leave the secular world and become a monk. I didn't give up this ambition until I reached the age of twenty-nine. But if I wanted to become a monk, I could not get married. But a person is not only composed of a brain. He is more than just thought. He cannot leave his corporal body. If I had really followed my ambition early on and had gone to a monastery, there probably would have been no problem, and [my life] would probably have been most congenial, and I would have lived out my life quietly.

But before I could leave the secular world and enter a monastery, I was drawn into Peking University to teach philosophy by Mr. Cai Yuanpei. Because of this, my life underwent a change. What change was this? I didn't go off to a monastery, but instead I scurried off into the world of learning and the company of intellectuals. It is difficult to avoid having a spirit of competition. This desire to excel over others arises from the corporeal. If it had been as I first wanted, very early leaving secular life for a monastery, that could have been peaceful and stable, walking a calm path. But when I got to the university and into the company of a lot of intellectuals, debates developed easily, and created a desire to excel over others. This desire to excel over others arises from the corporeal. The problem of sex easily arises from the corporeal. A monk does not need to get married; he is able to live in a monastery and can completely forget [sex], and can completely want no part of taking a wife. But when I got to the university, and was together with intellectuals, often I had this desire to excel over others. This was a corporeal problem. Once it arose, I also wanted to marry.

Originally, I didn't want to marry. When my mother was still alive, when I was in my teens she wanted to arrange an engagement according to Chinese custom. I refused. After I got to Peking University, in the company of intellectuals, I had a desire to excel. The forces of the corporeal arose, and I wanted to get married. So only after I reached age 29 did I abandon my plan to leave the secular world.

...

Liang: I lectured in Jinan during the summer of 1921. There was something called the summer session lecture series, and they invited me to be the lecturer for

⁸ One valuable aspect of these interviews is that Mr. Liang explains his subjective state at any given time. In this case, for example, none of the published documents or interviews I had with those who knew Liang suggested that he was still a completely committed Buddhist, so without his own statements in these interviews, there was no way of knowing. Many similar situations occurred during these interviews: that the "outer" published or remembered record and Liang's "inner" record were different. Of course, Mr. Liang could not be explaining his subjective state at that point 70 years ago; he was telling what he remembered 70 years later as his subjective state at that time.

this session. I lectured in Jinan for forty days. I lectured every morning for half a day. After forty days of lecturing I returned to Beijing. There were two friends of mine who took notes—they transcribed the lectures. But they were not able to keep up with my lecturing. In the end, they had some other engagement and failed to take notes for the last chapter of *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, so I wrote it myself.

Alitto: Is that so? It really is a shame that I did not have the opportunity to meet you and ask your advice face to face [before writing your biography]. Obviously this is important.

Liang: All of this is about me as an individual, my personal affairs. As I said, my greatest hope is that you understand Confucianism and Buddhism.⁹ I'm talking to you in hopes that you have a real understanding of things Eastern, at least those Eastern things most valuable. Of course I'm not quite familiar with the academia in Europe and America, but I'm afraid that very few people can truly understand Confucianism and Buddhism. So I keenly hope that you can understand Confucianism and Buddhism. I'll tell you what I understand, and very much hope that this will be the major task in our conversations. We can talk slowly and gradually and meet several times. (Alitto: That would be great.) If you can stay more in Beijing, we can talk more. While I am talking about Buddhism and Confucianism, I hope that you will ask questions. You must first settle the questions in your own mind, and only then can you understand. If you have not settled the problems and questions in your own thought, it amounts to not having heard anything.

Alitto: Yes, the book is primarily about your thought. Naturally it should be this way, but sometimes your thought is connected to your life. Probably in the future, before it quickly comes out in paperback, I can change some of these factual errors. (Liang: Revise it.)¹⁰ I'll revise it. Naturally I agree that thought is the most important topic, but a person's thought cannot be divorced from his individual life.

⁹ This was a tension between us during these interviews. Mr. Liang wanted to explain his understanding of Confucianism and Buddhism, while I, as a historian, wanted him to talk about his own life, observations, experiences and views on historical events and personages. This is called "oral history." As Mr. Liang was a historical figure himself, I wanted to make a record of what he remembered of "history" while his mind was clear and he was in good health. Mr. Liang's greatest interest was explaining Confucianism and Buddhism to a foreigner. I had a second series of interviews with Mr. Liang some years later. In those interviews, he no longer stressed explaining Chinese thought to me, but rather, he resigned himself (for my benefit?) to recounting his experiences and telling his views. Mr. Liang is perhaps one of the best subjects in all of China for an oral history. First, he was utterly honest and forthright, and did not shape his narratives to make himself look good. Second, his life wove in, through and around every important historical event and person in twentieth century China. I hope to publish the second set of interviews later.

¹⁰ Although I did later publish a second edition of the book, the University of California Press advised me that completely revising the text would be prohibitively expensive, so I was limited to adding a chapter at the end, which incorporated some of the information from the interviews. I now plan to publish a completely revised edition that would incorporate all of the information from both sets of interviews.

Liang: Right, it absolutely cannot be separated from life. When it comes to this kind of situation I can say something. We were just talking about my desire, when I was young, to become a monk, so I can be considered a Buddhist in certain respects. But a Buddhist must be viewed from two aspects and, you could say, must be discussed in two parts. Primitive Buddhism, which we can call Hinayana, emphasized leaving the secular world. What does “leaving the secular world” mean? To “leave the secular world” means to leave “Production and Annihilation” (or Birth and Death; *utpādanīrodha*).¹¹ What do we mean by the “world” (the finite, impermanent world)? That is, the endless cycle of birth and death. In Buddhist terminology this is called the “Wheel of Transmigration” (*samsara*), meaning that this life is all similar and continuous (*xiangsixiangxu*). “Similar” means that all life is almost the same. Life is like this. There is no such thing as the me of today that is still the me of yesterday. It is merely that they resemble each other. The me of today and the me of yesterday are similar. It is impermanent and unceasing. It never ceases; it cannot cease. Because it appears continuous, nothing ever stops. Life has no end. Some people think that death means the end of life, but there is no such thing as an end in Buddhism. It is not discontinuous, but not constant either, not the same eternally. As we just mentioned, the me of today is not the me of yesterday. There’s no such thing. It has already changed. The “me” changes from morning to evening, from instant to instant. That’s why life is continuous and impermanent (*feiduan-feichang*). This is the Buddhist attitude toward life.

Now, I just mentioned Primitive Buddhism, which is commonly called Hinayana. The Hinayana school laid down three conditions. The first condition is all phenomena (*sarva dharma*) are impermanent (*anitya*). That is, there are no permanent, constant things. Everything is in constant flux. The second point is that all dharmas are non-self; they have no ego. All phenomena and all dharmas are different. The first point is—“Whatever is phenomenal is impermanent.” All are flowing, in flux. That is, the cycle of life is like flowing water, in continuous flux. So, they say, “Whatever is phenomenal is impermanent.” The second is that no dharma has an ego. There are two kinds of dharma. One is effective or phenomenal dharma (*Samskrta Dharma*). The other is dharma not subject to causation, condition or dependence (*Asamskrta Dharma*). The first is the dharma of birth and death (*utpādanīrodha*). The second is the eternal, supramundane dharma, “immortal—neither dying nor being reborn” (*anīrodhānupāda*). Some people ask, “Can the finite impermanent world have something permanent and eternal in it?” The Buddhist answer is that if there are both the birth/death cycle there would be something that neither is born nor dies. Birth-Death and No-Birth No-Death are a

¹¹ I have added the Sanskrit equivalents of Chinese terms to the text. Of course, Mr. Liang used only Chinese when speaking.

single thing, not two separate entities. That is to say, the dharma of birth and death and the dharma of the eternal are reducible to each other. No matter which of the two is concerned, there is no ego.

Man is one of “all living beings” (*sattva*). From the lowest organism, the most primitive amoeba, to man—all develop from having “egos.” All must eat. All must take from the environment. All organisms, from the most primitive right up to man (as the highest), all share something. What is it? They all seek satisfaction from the external, from the environment. In the Buddhist view, this is a mistake, a loss of their basic nature. What is the basic nature? That is “satisfied and content with their own nature, with no dissatisfactions.” This is Buddha. Don’t regard Buddha as a god or a ruler. It’s not like that. So what is Buddha? Buddha is the thing-in-itself of the universe. The nomenon of the universe can be said to have all inside. All things are inside. The phenomena are all inclusive. Since everything is inside, it has nothing. Nothingness. According to Buddhist doctrines, there are two aspects. One is embracing all phenomena in the cosmos; but all the same it is ultimate nothingness. These are two aspects of the same thing. The Buddha is to leave the world. The mundane world is an endless cycle of birth and death, and this, together with the eternal, perpetual aspect of the world, although seemingly two entities, in reality is the same thing. Didn’t I just mention the Hinayana Primitive Buddhist doctrine, the doctrine that “all phenomena are impermanent” and that “nothing has an ego”? The third doctrine is Nirvana—calm and quiet, free from temptation and distress. This is Hinayana. The three Hinayana principles are the only complete Buddhadharmas (the law preached by the Buddha).

The Hinayana is the Way of the Arhat (the perfect man of Hinayana). The Mahayana school, building on the foundation of the Hinayana, had a great reversal, a major revision. The Mahayana does not escape from the mundane world. The Mahayana doctrine are these two principles: “non-abandonment of sentient beings” and “non-residence in Nirvana.” What does this call for? The doctrine is that the Buddha will return to the mundane world. The Hinayana wants to avoid the trouble of endless cycle of birth and death. The Mahayana has already transcended the endless cycle of birth and death, and so could enter the eternal realm. But that seems, to quote a Confucian saying, “to attend to one’s own virtue in solitude—to protect oneself, but alone.” The Bodhisattva and the Arhat are different. The Arhat solves the problem for himself, and strives for purity and salvation for himself. The Bodhisattva does not abandon the rest of living things. The Bodhisattva wants to return to the mundane world and already has the possibility of not being born nor dying. But the Bodhisattva still wants to return to the world. Why? Because of non-abandonment of living things. Let’s end our talk here for today.

Alitto: OK. Thank you. May I ask a question? I came to the conclusion from studying the materials [that is, your works] that you yourself considered the Buddhist concept of Bodhisattva and the Confucian concept of Sage-to-be to be the same (one can’t say fundamentally, but perhaps in some aspects); it

seems that it was a similar role. Perhaps I'm not speaking clearly.¹² My Chinese level is inadequate, but perhaps you understand my meaning, that a Sage and a Bodhisattva are similar in some respects. So when studying your writings, I felt that you were being like this, being both Bodhisattva and Sage. What do you think of this?

Liang: Yes, definitely almost the same. It is this way, but I would add an aspect. Confucians take the human standpoint; anyway, Confucian discourse never loses its focus on humanity. Confucians never depart from the human. They don't even talk much about supernatural beings. Wasn't it Zilu who asked Confucius about death? He replied, "While you do not know life, how can you know death?" "While you aren't able to serve men, how can you serve spirits?" Matters after death, matters of supernatural beings...

¹² As is obvious from this transcript, my command of Chinese had weakened considerably from its high point in 1972–1973, when I undertook a "sideline" occupation as Chinese-English interpreter. From 1973 to 1980, I had few opportunities to use spoken Chinese. Consequently, I unfortunately often ended up speaking "broken" Chinese during these interviews.

Chapter 2

August 13, 1980

- Alitto: Please don't feel obliged to answer any questions that you think are awkward or difficult, Okay? For example, what do you think of contemporary Confucian thought, tradition and academic theory? Or, can we ask if present Chinese society can be considered Confucian?
- Liang: In the last few decades, especially after Mao Zedong founded a new regime in Beijing, naturally everything changed. Although he could not escape the old influences of China, but it seems that Mao despised Confucius, so wasn't there a "Criticize Confucius" Campaign?
- Alitto: The Criticize Confucius Campaign¹ seemed to have little to do with Confucius himself. The way we have understood it in the U.S. is that the Gang of Four used "Criticize Lin Biao Criticize Confucius" to criticize their political rivals. At least that is how we understood the situation in the West.
- Liang: But the words "Criticize Confucius" were used. Mao was a person of genius, so he had contempt for everything. He lacked respect for the old culture and the old learning. Actually he himself was unable to break out of this old culture.
- Alitto: That is to say that present Chinese society is considered to be a kind of Confucian society. So, what Confucian thought still remains in the hearts and minds of Chinese?
- Liang: I think that nothing has been retained. Current society does not use that kind of old language, and does not follow those old moral lessons. In fact, Chinese family ethics have been changed considerably, quite different from those of the old society. This difference can be illustrated by two facts. The first is that women have risen. Before, women were mostly in the

¹ The common understanding of this movement in the West was that it was aimed at Zhou Enlai, for whom Confucius was a stand-in. The name "Duke of Zhou" (周公) was also part of the campaign, and, of course, the name can also mean "the honorable Zhou (Enlai)."

home, and very seldom worked outside the home, and even more seldom did they involve themselves in politics. Now, women have political positions. This is the first change. The second is that the extended family no longer exists. In the old days, while the father was still living, the sons and daughters-in-law would stay together with him. Even while the grandfather was still alive, the family would not split up, and the family property was not divided. Three generations would live together and the family property was still together. If the family did divide the property, people would laugh at and criticize them. There is no such [extended family] practice in foreign countries. Now there is none in China either. The nuclear family is the rule now. There are no extended families living together with communal property. There are no longer such things. So, this too is a great change. The greatest of these changes are the transfer of women from the home into society, and their participation in government and politics.

Alitto: Let us put these issues aside for now. Does the essence of Chinese culture, its core substance, still exist?

Liang: There are still some remnants of Confucian culture. It is, of course, not possible to sweep away all traditional cultural lock, stock and barrel. Something still remains.

Alitto: So, there remains some...

Liang: What does still remain is in the area of family ethics.

Alitto: In your book *The Essence of Chinese Culture*, you mention a definition of the essence of Chinese culture; you defined it as that which makes humans human. The early Chinese sages discovered what made humans human prematurely, before the minimal primal material demands of humans were met. Do you still think that what makes humans human is the most important in Chinese culture?

Liang: What, in my view, to my knowledge, is the difference between Chinese culture and Western culture, and Indian culture? It is that Chinese culture knows of human "rationality."² Chinese culture believes in the human; it does not believe in God, as with Western culture or in Allah as in Islamic culture. Chinese culture is built upon and trusts the human. The distinguishing characteristic of Confucianism is that it relies on, and is built upon, humans, not some other being. This is what Mencius later pointed out—that "human nature is good." Confucius himself said no such thing, but Mencius mentioned it specifically. So the distinguishing characteristic

²In English, of course, "reason" or "rationality" does not connote anything like what Liang is suggesting. As I note later, some culturally conservative Western intellectuals referred to this "moral sense" that Liang speaks of by other terms. For example, Cardinal Henry Newman, a prominent nineteenth century thinker, used the term "illative sense." It means what Liang's "rationality" (理性) means. One such Western intellectual did indeed use the English term "rationality" exactly the way Liang did. That was Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

of Confucianism is that it believes in, and is confident in, humans. Humans can make mistakes, or sink into degeneracy. But how can you correct the human who makes mistakes? How can you keep him from moral degeneracy, from doing evil? What do you rely on to do this? Aside from the human himself, there is nothing else that is dependable. So I feel that the distinguishing feature of Confucianism is that it has faith in man. In foreign countries, in Christianity, it is said that Adam ate some fruit. There is such wording? (Alitto: Yes, there is.) There is such a theory.

Alitto: Yes, in a chapter in the Bible there is this story.

Liang: This is in the West. In India there is something different still. India is very strange indeed. From ancient times [the tradition of] India was to deny human life, to negate it. It held that human life itself was a mistake. This was the common attitude and convention in ancient India. Were there any exceptions to this attitude? Yes. In Buddhist writing there is the saying "to act in accord with the world, its ways and customs, and with non-Buddhist doctrines." Act in "Accord," with the "World." This was a non-Buddhist sect, and was held as a heretical, outside path. A lot of other religions, aside from Buddhism, also excluded it and considered it cult. This was the one and only affirmation of life in ancient Indian thought. Aside from this, all others held that human life was bafflement. The ancient traditions of India were quite different from everywhere else. This is very strange.

Alitto: What is the greatest threat to Chinese culture, in the present situation?

Liang: I think that there is no threat.

Alitto: You think that there is no threat?

Liang: Even if some of the old customs, practices and usages are now destroyed, I think that the future is bright (for Chinese culture). Sixty years ago in the last chapter of my book *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, I said that the future culture of the world would be a revived Chinese culture. I am explicitly not pessimistic about the future of Chinese culture.

Alitto: Mr. Liang, you still hold that the future world culture will be...

Liang: A revival of Chinese culture.

Alitto: Chinese culture...

Liang: Will revive.

Alitto: Revive. Oh! Why did I ask? Because in *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, you made this kind of prediction, but in your books written after that, you seldom mention this. You have just said that those old social customs and habits no longer exist.

Liang: They were undermined.

Alitto: In that case, what in Chinese traditional culture must be preserved? What things?

Liang: Of course I want to answer this question. I want to explain why I'm so optimistic about the future of Chinese culture.

Alitto: Good.

Liang: Very early I made an analysis of human life, and concluded that it has three great problems.³ The first is the problem of “humans versus the natural world.” This is the first and foremost problem. Before humankind had created cultures and civilizations, humans suffered from floods, wild animals, earthquakes, and so on. So later Western culture developed. The development of Western culture can be encapsulated in two phrases: the conquest of nature and the utilization of nature. It adopts an attitude of conquest toward nature, an attitude of utilization. In this Western culture has always been very successful, right down to the present. Its successes continue to be higher and higher through time. It can now go into space and circle the earth; it can go to the moon. In its conquest and utilization of nature, Western culture has achieved great success and great victories. This is a characteristic of Western culture. It is a problem of man versus matter [nature]. As soon as man opened his eyes and looked around, what he saw was matter. He extended his hand and what he touched was matter, what he was standing on was matter. So, man versus matter was the first problem encountered by man, and Western culture solved this problem. Aren’t the solutions to this problem highly developed? Following on this path, I think that it is quite natural that human society should advance into socialism; capitalism will evolve into socialism. So-called “capitalism” is a society in which the individual is the basic unit. Capitalism can be encapsulated into eight characters: *gerenbenwei*, *ziwozhongxin* (Individual-based Egocentrism, and Self Centeredness). These characterize European and American modern societies. It is obvious that these societies (all human societies) will undergo a transformation to socialism in the future. Socialism is unavoidable. Capitalism will become a relic of the past. That is to say, the means of production and the materials of production definitely will be publicly owned. At present property is nominally individually owned. In fact, the economic production of a society is the whole society’s production, not just the big capitalists’. Later society will become socialistic. This is inevitable. It is unavoidable that capitalism will develop into socialism. Society based on the individual as the unit will become based on society as the unit. When this has taken place, man comes to confront what I call the second problem, the problem of man versus man. That is, how to make it so that men can get along together, live in peace together. To do this, the relationship between man and man must be straightened out. That is, create a situation whereby I show consideration for you, and you show consideration for me. An old Chinese term describing this is “to give precedence to

³ What follows is a summary of Liang’s argument in *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*. He does not alter the original argument at all, but insists still that human societies by their very nature will evolve a kind of Chinese culture. He said the same thing about the inevitability of socialism for all human societies, so in his mind, there is a parallel between the two entities—Chinese culture and socialism.

the other out of courtesy (*lirang*),” and “to govern a state with courtesy (*lirangweiguo*).” At that time, the problem of man versus man will become the primary one, while the problem of man versus nature will not have totally disappeared, but it will have receded to second place in importance.

... That is to say, science and industry will continue to advance, but the major problem will be the problem of man versus man. This is the way in the future. In the future, when this problem must be solved, that will be the time of Chinese culture, because Chinese culture is based on the family. The old term for this is “filial piety and fraternal duty”: the father is benevolent and the child is filial. I only use four words: *xiao* (filial piety), *ti* (fraternal duty), *ci* (kindness), and *he* (peace-harmony). So, in my view, when human society reaches the stage of socialism, then probably all people will have to strive for filial piety, fraternal duty, kindness and peace-harmony, to strive for respect for age, for treating children and the young with kindness, for harmony and good relations between brothers, and so go create good relations generally throughout society. This is the problem that takes place within a socialist society. Again, I say, at this stage the problem of man versus nature still exists, but is in second place, not the most pressing problem. And so this stage I call the revival of Chinese culture.

I do want to say more about this now. After the revival of Chinese culture will come the revival of Indian culture. I estimate, just off the cuff, that this revival of Chinese culture will probably last a very long time. Probably humanity will be in this kind of atmosphere and circumstances—these kinds of customs, conventions, and social practices—for a long time. But society will still change; it won’t be forever this way. It will change and transform, in my view, into a revival of Indian culture. What was ancient Indian culture like? What would it look like? I just inadvertently mentioned “acting in accord with the world, its ways and customs, and with non-buddhist doctrines.” That is, that particular sect affirmed human life. Its influence was quite small. Broader ancient Indian society, however, denied life, saying that human life had no value, even to the extent that life was deluding and confusing. Human life takes place in delusion and confusion. This attitude was common in ancient India, aside from the exception of the one small sect that I mentioned before. There were many religions in India aside from Buddhism, which arose later. Buddhism was not the earliest school of thought in India. Yet Buddhism pushed these attitudes of negation to their natural conclusion most completely. So, in my view, in the far distant future of mankind, this attitude and atmosphere of ancient India will arise. People will feel that their own life has no value. In Buddhist terms, the person will want to seek “release” or “deliverance” or “liberation from worldly cares” (*mukti*). This is the ultimate liberation. So, the above is my own deduction, my own logic.

Alitto: Actually, this reckoning is similar to that expressed in *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*. I myself am persuaded by your theory.

According to logical inference of developments in the future, it should be like this. But I still have a theory. I think that this process of modernization, or you could say the process of rationalization, is in conflict with, in contradiction with, in contradiction with “what makes humans human”—be it the “human” in Indian culture or in Chinese culture. Does the present Four Modernizations Movement hold any harm for Chinese culture?

Liang: China exists in this present world, and cannot go against the current. It can only advance forward and develop material culture, which was necessary. But the important thing is that in the past, the development of Western material culture was based upon capitalism. Ever since the overwhelming power of the West reached China, China has had no opportunity to develop capitalism. So China had to take the socialist road. It could only seek individual welfare within the context of the welfare of the whole society. It could not allow the welfare of the individual to prevail over the welfare of society. So the appearance and success of the Communist Party in China is very reasonable, and not peculiar or strange at all.

Alitto: What do you think the West should learn from the East, China in particular?

Liang: This is what I just said.

Alitto: In the future, Western culture and Western society will evolve into [the way of] China. In the present phase of history, what should Western society learn from the East, from China?

Liang: What should it learn? I'll answer that question. A human being, immediately upon being born, is related to other humans. At the least, he is related to his parents, and siblings. As he grows up, he has friends, teachers and so on. These relationships are called “*renlun*” (human ethical relationships) in Chinese. Human beings always live in the interpersonal relationships. One cannot be detached from other people, so how to foster the relationships becomes a major question. And those relationships, as the Chinese old term goes, are called “*renlun*.”

The distinguishing feature of Chinese culture lies in this. Chinese culture puts importance on human relationships. It expands the familial relationships into broader society beyond the family. For example, a teacher is called “teacher-father,” a schoolmate is called a “school brother.” In ways like this, a person always has the close, family-like, intimate feelings. Applying such relationships to society, it seems to bring distant people closer together, to bring outsiders inside. This is the distinguishing feature of China and Chinese culture. To put this feature into a few words, it is the opposite of the individual-centered, egocentric way. What is that, then? The essence of the matter is mutually to value and respect the other party.

For example, since Confucius (in *The Analects*) liked to talk about filial piety and fraternal duty, we should ask what they are. They are respect for and obedience to the older generation on the part of the young. There is also the virtue of kindness, which means affection and kindness for the younger generation on the part of the older generation. So, to sum up in

a word, these virtues are mutual respect. For example, a guest arrives. The host shows respect for the guest. In all things, the host thinks of and is considerate to the guest. The best seat is given to the guest. Tea is made for the guest. Now, a good guest will also turn this around, and respect his host. He will take the host into consideration in everything. And so, in Chinese society there exists the custom of “*lirang*.” What is this *lirang*? “*Rang*” is regarding the other person as important. “*Li*” is to respect the other. China, under Confucian influence, has always told people to respect others. Afterwards, when capitalism has passed away, and socialism has arrived, probably this *lirang* as a social convention will also arrive [on a world-wide scale]. With everyone living together, mutual respect is very important. So, that’s why I say that the future of the world will be a revival of Chinese culture. I will say, in conclusion, that I have always felt that Marxism is quite good. It is superior to Utopian (“Fantasy”) Socialism.

Alitto: “Fantasy.” France’s...

Liang: Owen of England, and Fourier. There were three men.

Alitto: Yes, yes. In the past there were many. In the 19th century there were quite a few. In any case, I know your...

Liang: Utopian Socialists. Their hearts were in the right place, but they didn’t understand that the natural development of society and history would produce socialism. So Marxism is called Scientific Socialism, which means that objective development of history will be in that direction.

Alitto: Chinese culture is extremely old, in a sustained unbroken continuity. In comparison with the short-lived cultures of the West and the Middle East, what is the special nature of Chinese culture that allowed this? Why did it occur? That is to say, what is the major reason for the length and continuity of Chinese culture? (Liang: A long history.) Longer by far than any other culture anywhere in the world. What’s the major reason?

Liang: I remember there was a man who wrote a discourse on this question and answered it. There was one, or you could say there were two. There were two people who did it. One of the two is already dead. He had studied biology in Europe. His name was Zhou Taixuan. Possibly the other hasn’t yet died. If he is still alive, he’s older than I. He’s now ninety-some. He had studied in France. His name is Xu Bingchang.⁴

...

Liang: Some sixty years ago, when I was only in my twenties, I published *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*. In that book, I explained

⁴I still do not understand why Mr. Liang mentioned these two men. Neither of them, as far as I have been able to discover, attempted to answer my question about the longevity and continuity of Chinese culture. Mr. Xu was a historian of sorts, but his specialties were the very early period and archaeology. He actually died in 1976. Mr. Zhou was a famous biologist who, aside from his scientific work, did publish on less specialized topics about humanity. As far as I know, however, he did not address the question of Chinese culture directly. He died in 1968.

Confucius according to my understanding of him at the time. Now, doesn't Confucius often speak about Perfect Virtue (*ren*)? What did I say in that book? I said that Confucian *ren* is a kind of extremely sensitive, acute intuition. Didn't Mencius like to use the terms "intuitive understanding of the good (conscience)," which was what we call "instinct." "*Zhijue*" in Chinese is called "intuition" in English. "*Benneng*" is called "instinct" in English. So in this way, I used these modern terms to explain Confucius's and Mencius's thought. Now, I know I was wrong. These modern terms are close to the meanings I meant to convey; they are close, but they are not very direct equivalents. It was not really correct, nor completely incorrect, because Confucius's "Perfect Virtue" can be very deep and profound, so much so that it becomes abstruse. Isn't there this sentence in *The Analects*? The master said, "Is 'Perfect Virtue' a thing remote? I wish for it, and then virtue is at hand." If you explain *ren* in too abstruse a fashion, it is too one-sided, too narrow. *Ren* does not necessarily have to be explained in profound, abstruse ways. *Ren* is both shallow and profound, both simple and complex. If you only understand its superficial, shallow, easy aspects, that is not real understanding. So my mistake in that book was to stress its simple, shallow aspects too much. Mencius is also that way. When you go to understand Mencius's "intuitive understanding of the good," it can be understood both on a shallow level and on a profound level. For example, "intuitive understanding of the good," that is, conscience. Who doesn't have a conscience? Everyone does. Is this saying right or wrong? Can you put it this way? You can certainly put it this [simple] way. But, on the other hand, you can't understand it too simplistically, too shallowly either.

Why can't it be too simplistic, too shallow? Because we humans live within society, and cannot depart from society. It is likely that humans will follow the mores and usages of their society. If the mores of a society take [this] to be right, the individual considers it right. If the morals and mores of a society take it to be wrong, so does the individual human. It is easy for people to do this. But societies and their mores and morals are different. There are differences in both time and space. East and West are different. The modern and the ancient are different. People tend to follow their social norms. So, what is considered wrong in one society is considered right in another. This is very common, unless it is an inherently extremely gifted person, or an extraordinarily wise person, who possibly won't follow conventions—he often would lead a revolution. Exceptionally gifted people are this way, and so it is hard to say if these words apply to them.

Alitto: Each society has its own customs and mores. Each society has its own value...

Liang: Value judgments.

Alitto: Value judgments. If we say that each society is different, then does humanity have a universal truth, a universal standard for value judgments?

Liang: The answer is yes and no.

Alitto: "Yes" is to say...

Liang: Let's first address its non-existence. This life of ours must be lived in a society, so we must go along with the values of our respective societies. If you oppose society, you will not be accepted by society. So the values can be taken as "customs" or "etiquette." Probably on the one side of the issue, we can admit that each age, each place—that is to say, each society—has different customs, mores and morals. Probably it is natural to be in accord with different societies' values. The "rules of propriety" are for that time and place reasonable and true. On the other hand, however, there is also a kind of truth, which is not the "right" or "reason" of a particular time and place, bound by customs and mores. Rather, it is an absolute truth. This truth does exist, but only very few enlightened brilliant people are conscious of it, or realize it. They can rise above and see further than the average people. On the one hand, there are few of these people. On the other hand, there is an old Chinese saying that "Something something... great height and brilliancy, so as to pursue the course of the Mean." This kind of person is himself very brilliant and wise, but he does not want to divorce himself from the society of his time. So the path he takes is still the middle path. I don't know if you are aware that I never studied the Four Books and Five Classics?

Alitto: Yes, I am.

Liang: So the quotation I just used is not complete. "Something something... great height and brilliancy, so as to pursue the course of the Mean." This is because I never memorized the Classics, and so I'm not all that familiar with them. (The original phrase is: to raise it to its greatest height and brilliancy, so as to pursue the course of the Mean.—compiler)

Alitto: It's OK. I know. I haven't memorized ancient books but I know this sentence. These enlightened ones understand and are conscious of the truth. It's all one truth, right? It's one standard for all value judgments. That is to say, no matter where the enlightened ones are from, their conscious truth is the same.

Liang: We should say that there is only one absolute truth, but I usually say that there is a material physical truth and a human truth. The reason used in natural sciences and social sciences, especially the former, is this "material physical truth." This truth exists objectively, and does not follow man's will. It doesn't make any difference whether you like this truth or not, it still is ever there. The other kind of truth, "human truth," exists subjectively. When encountering this kind of truth, everyone nods his head, and says "Right" or "Yes." This truth (or reason) has some element of subjectivity. When encountering this kind of truth, people have a favorable impression of it, and are well disposed toward it. Let's say it is a matter of justice, for example. A person will say that he has a "sense of what is right." Justice resides in a sense of what is right. So in my final analysis, there are two truths—a physical truth and a human truth.

Master Zhu (Zhu Xi) of the Song Dynasty never made a distinction between these two truths. He had a paragraph, which I cannot recite.

Anyway, he never separated these two kinds of truth or reason. I can give you another example, concerning biological evolution. That is, in natural selection, the weak are eaten by the strong. This is a phenomenon that has an objective existence, a truth or a reason of the natural world. But we humans all dislike and oppose it. We feel that...

Alitto: Do you mean that people, no matter when they live or what place they are from, all dislike it? This “we” is in reference to humankind, no matter where one is from?

Liang: In what stands to reason with humans, the phenomenon of the weak being oppressed, being bullied gives a feeling of unfairness to the onlooker, and the onlooker does not like it. This feeling of dislike is reason, a kind of human truth. “The strong eating the weak” has an objective existence and that objective existence is material physical truth.⁵

I would like to continue today with what I said yesterday.⁶ I’m afraid that I didn’t make myself clear enough yesterday. So I have written it down. Mahayana Buddhism is based upon Hinayana Buddhism, and is a great reversal of it. Why a great reversal? Hinayana wants to renounce this world. The Mahayana Bodhisattva is “non-abandonment of sentient beings” and “non-residence in Nirvana.” Hinayana wants to end up in this place, wants to go to the tranquility of Nirvana; the Mahayana Bodhisattva does not abandon sentient beings and so does not reside in Nirvana, does not want to end up in Nirvana. That is to say, the Hinayana rule is to go beyond this world; the Mahayana, given a choice, still returns to this world. This is the Mahayana way.

So, in my own case, I admit to being a follower of Buddhism; I would not deny being a follower of Confucius either. Why? Why don’t I deny it? Because this way of the Mahayana Bodhisattva—I want to follow the way of the Bodhisattva—is “not to abandon sentient beings” and “not to reside in Nirvana.” So I want to go into the world. Because of this, all through my life, for example, everyone knows that I worked in rural reconstruction, rural movement, and that I worked in politics as a mediator between the two Parties (that is, national affairs), especially when Japan invaded China, so would this be considered “leaving the mundane world” or not? This [activity] does not in the slightest go against “leaving the mundane world.” Because this is what? It is the way of the Bodhisattva.⁷ This is not Hinayana.

⁵ This is one of the many times I tried to have Mr. Liang speak to the question of universal values and the source of morality. In each case, he proceeds from Mencius’s argument that values are inherent in human biology.

⁶ Mr. Liang continues to want to become the bearer of the Buddhist and Confucian messages to the West through me. What he explains here, however, is relatively basic Mahayana Buddhism; I don’t find anything particular or different in this description from his already recorded interpretation of Buddhism.

⁷ Here Liang says outright what I suggested in my first article on him, that he saw himself as acting in a messianic role of Bodhisattva. Like many of the first generation of radical reformers—Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Tan Sitong and, to some degree, Zhang Taiyan, all of whom had a deep and abiding interest in Buddhism—he saw his activist role in society and politics as Bodhisattva-like.

Hinayana wants to go into the mountains, to some monastery and not emerge. Mahayana is “non-abandonment of sentient beings” and “non-residence in Nirvana.” You can say that I am a Confucian, a follower of Confucius, and you can say that I am a follower of Siddhartha, because there is no conflict or contradiction [between the two].

Alitto: No conflict between the two. This is a relatively new way of putting it. For example, during the Tang Dynasty, or before then when Buddhism had just reached China, there was conflict between the two. So you are saying...

Liang: Insufficient understanding. The enlightened person has no problem. So, it seems that the Song Confucians had rejected Buddhism and Daoism, I think that it was a question of insufficient understanding. For the wise, enlightened person, there is no obstruction to understand; he sees everything clearly. If there is obstruction, it is that you yourself create an obstruction for yourself. But as a matter of fact it is not necessary. The enlightened person transcends this. Quite a few of the Song Dynasty Confucians like Master Zhu (Zhu Xi) rejected Buddhism and Daoism.

Alitto: Yesterday you said that you were a Buddhist all along.⁸

Liang: Because very early when I was quite young, a teenager, I wanted to become a monk.

Alitto: Thereupon to the present you had preserved your original...

Liang: It's still that way, but now I don't have to become a monk. In fact, I still want to.

Alitto: Still want to become a monk?

Liang: Yes, still. If I would be allowed to go live in a mountain monastery, I would be quite happy.

Alitto: Yes. Do you still meditate or do Buddhist cultivation...?

Liang: The basic way involves three words (Liang writes out the words for Alitto to see): discipline (*sila*), meditation (*dhyāna*) and wisdom (*prajñā*). These are disciplines that must be maintained. There are many rules of discipline. For example, one cannot marry. If you have already married, you must leave home and become a monk. Killing is forbidden, eating meat is forbidden and so on. There are many prohibitions. Only after observing these prohibitions can you achieve meditation referring to the trance state that we just mentioned. So only after you have observed the prohibitions can

⁸ Throughout these interviews, Mr. Liang maintained that he is simultaneously a Buddhist, Confucian, Daoist, Marxist, and Vitalist (à la Bergson), who also has a great respect for Christianity. In my view, this is part of a long tradition of eclecticism in Chinese thought, one of the first more important examples being the Han Dynasty “National Doctrine” (国教), which was Dong Zhongshu's eclectic mixture of Confucian teachings, Legalist teachings, Daoism, and cosmologies derived from the *Book of Changes* and folk religion. At the end of the Han, the earliest folk religious text we have, the *Taipingjing* (《太平经》) is similarly eclectic in composition, even including Moist (墨子) elements. In my view, this is a traditional attitude of Chinese intellectuals, even into the twentieth century. Liang's friend, Li Dazhao, for instance, was simultaneously a French-style Vitalist and a nationalist while he was embracing Communist internationalism. Often Westerners do not understand this attitude, and take it to be self-contradictory.

you achieve Samadhi. Only through this can you achieve wisdom. Buddhism does not hold what we commonly regard as intelligence and wisdom to be “wisdom.” Buddhism regards that kind of intelligence as merely a kind of cleverness and perceptiveness, not genuine wisdom, not the Great Wisdom. Great Wisdom comes only through Samadhi, and through it one has a breakthrough in consciousness. Of course, everyone knows that in the past there were thirteen different school’s of Buddhism in China; an important and well-developed one was Chan.⁹ In Chan Buddhism there is a saying that expresses its special feature or characteristic. What was the Chan school’s special feature? It’s “not relying upon language for explanation.” So, language and writing are not needed; it is not based upon language and writing. The Chan school was quite well-developed. There was a book called *Jingde Records of the Transmission of the Lamp*. Later there were many more *Records of the Transmission of the Lamp*. Altogether there were five books combined to constitute the *Five Lamps Combined*. All tell Chan school stories. Laymen can’t understand these stories. For example, a famous successful Chan master is called a “Most Virtuous” (*Bhadanta*). So one Chan Buddhist went to see the “Most Virtuous.” As soon as he saw him, the Most Virtuous struck him with a stick, and he understood. The man understood. Other people don’t understand this matter. This is a Chan story. This is called the “Stick.” There is another called the “Shout.” A pilgrim went to the Chan Most Virtuous for instruction. He didn’t say a word, but gave a great shout. The pilgrim also understood. These kinds of stories are in the *Records of the Transmission of the Lamp*.

Alitto: I remember that I read some of those stories. So the Chan school is...

Liang: I mean, the Chan school does not rely upon language or writing, and two sides can influence each other. An old, successful monk who has achieved enlightenment can have influence on a newly arrived person, and make him able to achieve enlightenment, but he does not use language. An enlightenment of language is still on the conscious level. Only [an enlightenment] that is life-changing in a fundamental way can be considered true enlightenment.

Alitto: When you were young, in your teens, was it after the Republican Revolution when you had a spiritual crisis?

Liang: It was before the Republican Revolution. (Alitto: Before?) At the time of the Revolution I was nineteen. I wanted to become a monk at sixteen or seventeen.

Alitto: Oh, sixteen or seventeen. I was wrong about that. I thought that only after the Revolution did you really turn to Buddhism. That is to say, before then

⁹ In the West, “Chan” (禪) is almost universally known in the Japanese reading of the word “Zen,” because the Japanese version made the biggest impact in Western popular culture, especially in the 1950s.

you were adopting Western thinking, in any case, Western schools of thought. Only after the Revolution did you have a spiritual crisis, and turn to Buddhism. I was wrong.

Liang: I wanted to become a monk very early.

Alitto: But you also participated in the Republican Revolution. When you were participating in the Revolution, did you still want to be a monk?

Liang: I just spoke of this. Becoming a monk is going to the quietude of a monastery. This can be said to be an ideal for both Hinayana and Mahayana, but Mahayana is different in that it wants to save the world; it does not want to abandon living things.

Alitto: I understand this, but reading about that time of your life in books and essays you wrote, I got the impression that it was only after the Republican Revolution that you wanted to leave home and become a monk.

Liang: I have often said that there are two questions that have occupied my mind. One question is the practical problem of China. China was in a kind of national crisis, and the social problems were very serious. This practical problem stimulated my mind and occupied my brain. There is another problem. I just mentioned a practical problem. There is another problem that transcends practicality, which is the problem of human life. What should be done with its afflictions and uncertainties, the misunderstandings of life, and doubts about it? Isn't this what I just mentioned about wanting to leave home and become a monk? These two problems are not the same. One makes me involve myself in social and national affairs for society and the country; and the other makes me want to leave society.

Alitto: In fact these two problems are related. For instance, there is a close relationship between the problems of China and the rural reconstruction that you led; rural reconstruction is closely related to Chinese culture; and Chinese culture is intimately related to human life, human existence, and the life of the people. I have always felt that these two problems are closely related. Oh, do you dislike smoke?¹⁰ (Liang: It doesn't matter.) On this, I base myself on a Western psychologist. He wrote a biography of the medieval age German Martin Luther, and also wrote a biography of Gandhi.¹¹

¹⁰ I lit my pipe. I often smoked my pipe as we talked. I now regret smoking in front of him, because I am sure that Mr. Liang was just being polite when he said he didn't mind it.

¹¹ This is in reference to Erik Erickson, a Psychoanalyst and Professor of Psychology at Harvard. His focus was on personality and identity, and this work led to his theory of Stages of Psychosocial Development. In illustrating this theory, he wrote two famous biographies of historical figures, *Young Man Luther* (1958) and *Gandhi's Truth* (1969). These two figures, Erickson wrote, were "spiritually talented." I was impressed by the two biographies and saw Liang Shuming as another example of a "spiritually talented" person who transferred his own spiritual crisis on to humanity as a whole. Liang's own life before his book *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, for example, had traversed the "three paths" he described for humanity's cultural evolution. He was first a utilitarian who was in favor of a Western-style government for China. Then he became dis-illusioned and became a Buddhist. After his father's suicide, he then went onto the Confucian path. As Erickson describes them, Luther and Gandhi did something similar with their lives.

He used a method of analysis which held that there are some sagacious people—Gandhi for one, Luther for another—who combine together their own personal problems and problems of humanity. No matter where they are from, you could say the exceptionally sagacious are like sages, so I used this theory to analyze your situation, which is also like those examples of his. I got some things wrong, though—for example I thought that only after the Republican Revolution did you genuinely believe in Buddhism. Before that you just had an interest in it, but only after the Revolution did your own problems force you to delve deeply into Buddhist studies. Before that you had an interest, all right, but it was not...

Liang: It was that way. I spoke of it yesterday a bit. I did speak of it yesterday. All along I wanted to leave home and become a monk. Not until the age of 29 did I abandon it; I only married at age 29.

Alitto: Why do I mention this again? Because I made a mistake. It's embarrassing, writing your biography and making a mistake about such an important thing. Before the revolution, how did you find Consciousness-Only Buddhism...

Liang: At that time I really didn't understand Consciousness-Only very well. It is very difficult to understand. The Faxiang (*dharmalakṣaṇa*) Consciousness-Only (*Yogācāra*) school in Buddhist studies is very hard to understand.

Alitto: It is difficult to understand, all right. You only started studying Consciousness-Only in the first and second years of the Republic.

Liang: Not yet. (Alitto: No?) At that time I couldn't understand it. I studied the Consciousness-Only school after I got to Peking University. Cai Yuanpei engaged me to teach Indian Philosophy at Peking University.

Alitto: But in 1916 you already published "On Tracing the Origin and Solving Doubts," so you had already studied Consciousness-Only.

Liang: That wasn't really considered study of Consciousness-Only. (Alitto: That can't be considered study?) In the article I quoted a lot from the Consciousness-Only school. There were an Old school and a New school within the Consciousness-Only school. The New school was derived from the monk Xuan Zang. You know Xuan Zang? (Alitto: Yes, I know.) Xuan Zang of the Tang Dynasty, Tang Tripitaka. At the time I wrote the article, I really didn't understand the New school of Consciousness-Only. I hadn't read its texts. What I had read was all Old school texts, and it was from these texts that I quoted in the article.

Alitto: I got this wrong too.

Liang: An ordinary layman would have a hard time distinguishing between the two schools of Consciousness-Only.

Alitto: Mr. Liang, you are so healthy.

Liang: My health has not been that good; it's just that I have had no illness.

Alitto: How sharp you are, virtually completely the same as a young person. Ordinary people feel that you have some secret. Is this secret related to Buddhism?

Liang: There is no relationship between my good health and Buddhism. Didn't I just mention discipline, meditation, and wisdom? Discipline I have some.

What is it? From a very young age I have abstained from eating meat. Not eating meat is the Buddhist injunction against killing, so no animals are eaten. Originally I didn't intend to marry. Only after age 29 did I abandon this idea of remaining celibate. Before age 29, I always wanted to become a monk.

Alitto: Are you still a vegetarian?

Liang: To this day I am still a vegetarian. I have been a vegetarian for seventy years.

Alitto: It's already been 70 years. So since you were 8, no, 18...

Liang: 70 years ago, I was living in Beijing, living together with my father. I already wanted to be a vegetarian then, but my father didn't like the idea, so I didn't do it. I did have an opportunity right then to leave Beijing and go to Xi'an, and so at that time I started practicing vegetarianism. From that time on, I have never stopped.

Alitto: I don't remember this. When did you go to Xi'an? For what reason?

Liang: Right at that time, my brother, my elder brother was in Xi'an, and I went to see him. My father was in Beijing; he [brother] was in Xi'an. I went to Xi'an.

Alitto: Wasn't this after the Revolution?

Liang: After the Revolution.

Alitto: So, it should be in 1912.

Liang: Right. A bit later than 1912, in 1913.

Alitto: Oh, 1913. How long did you stay in Xi'an that time?

Liang: Not too long, just a few months.

Alitto: In 1912 you went to Nanjing? In 1912?

Liang: I went there once. I participated in the Republican Revolution. After the revolution, I wanted to go to Guangxi, because Guangxi Province wanted to send students abroad to study. I went together with a few Guangxi men.

Alitto: Oh, so you didn't go...

...

Liang: He [Wang Jingwei] was here a few years before, before the Revolution, that is, he was here the first year of the Xuantong reign [1908]. He, together with a Sichuanese friend surnamed Huang, secretly came to Beijing. He wanted to use a bomb to kill the Prince Regent. The Prince Regent was the Emperor Xuantong's father. Because the Emperor Xuantong was a child, only four years old, the Prince Regent virtually controlled the government. Wang Jingwei had come to assassinate the Prince Regent. To do this he went at night to a place where the Prince Regent's horse carriage would pass. There were no automobiles yet. He went to this place and buried a bomb during the night, but someone saw him, and so he was arrested, and thrown into prison. Originally someone arrested for attempted assassination of the Prince Regent would possibly be executed. He wasn't executed; he was locked up, right up to when the Southern Revolutionary Army arose and confronted the North. In Beijing at that time, Yuan Shikai had emerged; he released Wang Jingwei from prison, and asked him to be

an intermediary and think of a way to negotiate peace [between the North and South]. It happened this way.

Alitto: The time you yourself went from Beijing to Nanjing was...

Liang: At this time I hadn't gone to Nanjing yet. (Alitto: Not yet?) Strictly speaking, I had not. It was like this. I'll continue what I was just speaking about. Wang was released by Yuan to be a mediator between the North and the Southern Revolutionaries. Wang organized a Beijing-Tianjin branch of the Revolutionary Alliance (the Tongmenghui). The Revolutionary Alliance was founded by Sun Yat-sen. Its official name was the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance. This new branch was considered its northern branch.

When I was still in middle school, I had already secretly joined a revolutionary organization, which was part of the Beijing-Tianjin branch of the Revolutionary Alliance that I just mentioned led by Wang Jingwei. At that time I was also a news reporter. The newspaper office was in Tianjin. Later it was moved to Beijing. For a time I led the life of a news reporter. Moreover, I was a field reporter who went out to cover the news on the spot. There was such a period. After the Republican Revolution, I went to Nanjing once. Later I doubled back. After Nanjing, I went to Wuxi, and from Wuxi doubled back. At that time my plan had been to go to Guangxi to sign up for the examination and go abroad to study, but I didn't succeed in going.

Alitto: I was wrong about this too. In my book this is wrong.

Liang: What is in the book?

Alitto: In the book I said that after the Revolution had been successful, and Sun Yat-sen had gone to Nanjing to be the Provisional President, you went to Nanjing because the Revolutionary Alliance people all went to Nanjing to begin the work of constructing a nation. I knew that at that time you were a reporter. I thought that around March, April or May of 1912 you went to Nanjing. In the end I was wrong. Your original intention was to go to Guangxi.

Liang: I did want to go to Guangxi and then came back quickly.

Alitto: The Beijing-Tianjin Revolutionary Alliance branch was organized after the Wuhan Uprising, I know now. But was it Wang Jingwei who founded it, or was it before...

Liang: Wang Jingwei organized it quite suddenly.

Alitto: In Taiwan, I read some documents from the Beijing-Tianjin branch of the Revolutionary Alliance. Wang Jingwei wasn't mentioned in them. I found the name of a classmate of yours. I couldn't find your name. In the book I speculated that you might have used another name.¹²

¹² These documents were in the Nationalist Party Archives, which at the time were still in a small town outside of Taizhong called Caotun. Perhaps the documents I saw were prior to Liang's joining, although I did see a classmate of his from Shuntian Middle School (顺天中学) on the membership list. Liang told me at another time he had smuggled arms in a mule cart.

Liang: At that time, we were all together in the Revolutionary Alliance. Because, the revolutionary army had arisen, the Qing court abdicated governmental power. Some of us originally were fooling around with bombs and pistols, but then we began to run a newspaper. (Alitto: *The Republic*.) We ran *The Republic*. The head of *The Republic* was Zhen Yuanxi. This man also ran a Chinese language newspaper in the U.S.A. At the time I was a field reporter, not someone who sat in the newspaper office writing essays, but was outside all the time. At that time, *The Republic*'s office was in Tianjin, and my home was in Beijing, so I commuted back and forth between the two cities, covering stories.

Alitto: Did you get to know Huang Yuansheng at this time?

Liang: I got to know him after this.

Alitto: Later? He was assassinated in the U.S. in 1915.¹³ (Liang: He was killed by assassination.) So was the first time you met Cai Yuanpei when you were a reporter...

Liang: I met Cai Yuanpei once during this period, but he didn't remember me. Afterwards, in 1917, when he became president of Peking University, I really got to know him. I had him sent my essay "On Tracing the Origin and Solving Doubts" for comments. He said, that when he was passing through Shanghai, he had read it and found it very good. He said that he was now going to Peking University, and asked me to come on board.¹⁴ I said that I really wasn't qualified to teach Indian thought. At the time, scholars of Europe and Japan did not include Buddhism as one of the six schools of Indian philosophy. Strictly speaking, I really didn't know much about Japanese or European scholarship on Indian philosophy. I only liked Buddhism, that's all. When Cai invited me, something else had come up, and being occupied with it, I couldn't accept Mr. Cai's invitation to teach at Peking University.

What was I busy with at the time? By that time Yuan Shikai had already died and the North and South were reunited. The major force that overthrew Yuan was in the Southwest. In Guangxi, the important figures were Cai E and Lu Rongting. In Guizhou, it was Liu Xianshi. Among the forces overthrowing Yuan inside the government was Liang Qichao (Rengong). In the North, when Yuan was dying he had asked Duan Qirui to come into politics. Duan was, among the Beiyang militarists, a very honest, decent,

¹³ I think that previously it had been widely speculated that Yuan Shikai's agents had assassinated him. In fact, the affair turns out to be a farcical tragedy. As Huang had indeed written an ambiguous article backing Yuan Shikai's imperial plans, he was somehow considered by Sun Yat-sen's Revolutionary Party to be on Yuan's side. So, Huang fled to San Francisco to escape from Yuan's wrath, and was shot to death by the Revolutionary Party assassin because he was considered Yuan's backer. The order, carried out on Christmas night, came down from Sun himself.

¹⁴ Astonishing as it seems today, it was solely on the basis of this essay that Cai appointed Liang as professor at Peking University. Liang, of course, had never even attended the university, much less had specialized academic training in Indian thought.

fine person. Duan resolutely and firmly opposed Yuan Shikai's becoming emperor from the first. So a group of Yuan's supporters wanted to assassinate him. He was at the time Minister of the Army. He resigned and went to live in the Western Hills of Beijing. They still wanted to assassinate him. The upshot was that he was never killed. Yuan's plan for becoming emperor failed. In order to maintain the power of the Beiyang clique, he had to ask Duan to return to Beijing. Because Yuan was intent upon becoming emperor, he had already abolished the State Council and had set up a Political Bureau within the Presidential Palace. At the time he knew that he was dying, that he was done for, and he asked Duan to abolish this organ, restore the State Council and assume the post of Premier. Because Duan was honest and upright, and because he had opposed Yuan's plans to be emperor, the Southwestern forces still recognized Duan. In any case the Southwestern forces didn't have sufficient military forces to attack Beijing, so they came to terms. A cabinet that united the North and South was organized.

An older relative of mine entered the government as a representative of the Southwest. (Alitto: Zhang Yaozeng?) This was Zhang Yaozeng, who drafted me to be his confidential secretary. There were secret telegrams and letters between the anti-Yuan forces of the Southwest—Guangxi, Yunnan and Sichuan—and him; I managed these affairs for him. So when Mr. Cai asked me to come to Peking University to teach, I could not go. I asked a friend of mine to substitute for me. The next year the political situation changed, and Duan left. Zhang also fell from power. Only at this time was I able to go to Peking University.

Alitto: Your article "On Tracing the Origin and Solving Doubts" was originally published in *Eastern Miscellany*. Did you have a friend at *Eastern Miscellany*? That is, did you send it to him, send the manuscript to him, and he wasn't...

Liang: That friend of mine was very famous...

Alitto: Zhang Shizhao?

Liang: Yes, exactly.

Alitto: When did you get acquainted with Zhang Shizhao? I didn't mention in the book when you got to know him.

Liang: Zhang Shizhao (Xingyan) was famous primarily because of his magazine *The Tiger*. I hadn't met him, but I had sent manuscripts to this magazine. It was this kind of relationship. What were we just talking about?

Alitto: I said that I made mistakes about the events of these years. I thought that you went to Nanjing after the Republican Revolution was successful. I found this very interesting. I knew more or less about these events, but I wasn't clear on the details. How would you evaluate the historical figures of that time, such as Chen Duxiu? It's best to start with Mr. Huang Yuansheng. How did you get to know him? What sort of person was he?

Liang: He was a very famous journalist of the time, because he was extremely smart and had literary talent, and had made a lot of friends. He was connected

with secretaries in the Presidential Palace when Yuan Shikai was President and people in the State Council too. He wrote dispatches for the *Shenbao* in Shanghai. These dispatches included some news reports and some essays. In this way, he became a famous news reporter. When I had returned from Xi'an, I began to get to know him. At the time I had a book, the title was... (Alitto: Oh, yes, the "Preface.") I had selected some essays from the late Zhou, Han and Wei Dynasties, especially those that were able to express thought and theory. In the late Zhou there were a lot of scholars, especially those like Han Feizi and so on; in the Han and Wei Dynasties there were also some. I assembled their essays together, and titled it *Selected Literature from the Late Zhou, Han and Wei Dynasties*. I had asked Mr. Huang Yuansheng to write a preface for this book. That is how I met him.

Alitto: What was your major purpose in putting these essays together?

Liang: My purpose in putting out this book was to introduce some of the writings of those periods. The language used in these essays was relatively easy to understand, but at the same time comparatively elegant and refined, not really colloquial. This was especially so of some of Han Feizi's and some of Mozi's writings, as well as some of Zhuangzi's. I didn't include any of Laozi's. So they were writings of this sort, also including some from the Han and Wei periods. At that time, the colloquial written language had not arisen. Only when Chen Duxiu and Hu Shi started the New Literature Movement at Peking University was there a colloquial written language.

Alitto: Your motive was to establish a standard, a written language better suited to modern society, correct?

Liang: Somewhat like a kind of liberation, more liberating than the Tongcheng school, which promoted the classical Chinese.

Alitto: Was Mr. Huang Yuansheng also concerned about the problem of the written language?

Liang: Not necessarily, but I was acquainted with him, and asked him to write a preface. I asked him to read the manuscript and write a preface. We were friends, and he was relatively open-minded.

Alitto: At that time were you much concerned about the problem of the written language?

Liang: He, as I just said, was a news reporter. His writings were not in the colloquial language, but it was a classical language quite easy to understand and popular. I took the volume of things that I had selected, and asked him to write a preface. He wrote one. After he wrote the preface, he left for America, and on shipboard on the way, he wrote "Confessions." When he arrived, he died.

Alitto: Yes. Was there any direct connection between the essay he wrote and your article "On Tracing the Origin and Solving Doubts"?

Liang: Because I read his article "Confessions," I wrote "On Tracing the Origin and Solving Doubts."

Alitto: So, after having read this article, you wanted to express your ideas on this question....

- Liang: He left Beijing to go to the U.S. Actually he was fleeing. Why was he fleeing? Because he was a talented, smart and famous news reporter. Yuan Shikai, in his bid to be emperor, had wanted to win him over. He sent someone to speak with him directly, hoping that he could write an article praising the imperial system. At that time there was an American named “Bidenuo” [Frank Goodnow].¹⁵ So, wanting to institute an imperial system, he hoped that Huang would write an article supporting it. Huang was not willing to write it, and so Yuan threatened him. He did not willingly write it, or willingly become someone supporting the imperial system, so he wrote a bad article that was ambiguous. Friends told him that he couldn’t hand in such an ambiguous article. It wouldn’t pass muster; they wouldn’t be satisfied with it. You should either surrender or leave immediately. He chose the latter, and stole out of Beijing.
- Alitto: He wrote the article on the boat. It seems that it had no relationship to the matter you just mentioned.
- Liang: He fled because of this matter. In the “Confessions” article he wrote that he had continuously been hanging together with the ruling class, the high officials and aristocrats of the time. Although it seemed that he did not join them and although he didn’t, he was well acquainted with them. They wanted to force him to support the imperial system. He wasn’t willing and had to run. So this confession was a matter of repenting for the actions of his past life. He was a person of talent and talented people all have desires; in sexual matters and spending money he had been wanton. His repentance was in these areas.
- Alitto: What relationship was there between his article and yours?
- Liang: Which one?
- Alitto: “On Tracing the Origin and Solving Doubts.”
- Liang: I wrote my article only after I saw his “Confessions.”
- Alitto: I think that in that article he had brought up some problems of modern society.
- Liang: My article “On Tracing the Origin and Solving Doubts” implied that it would have been much better if I had supplied my Buddhist ideas to Mr. Huang earlier. I feel sorry that I hadn’t. At the beginning of “On Tracing the Origin and Solving Doubts,” I wrote this; it seemed that I had not given my friend something very valuable.
- Alitto: I didn’t get this wrong. What do you think of Chen Duxiu?
- Liang: Chen Duxiu was really a formidable person.
- Alitto: You met him only after you went to Peking University, or...

¹⁵ Frank Goodnow was a famous Columbia University Professor of Administrative Law. He had worked with both President Taft and then-governor of New York, Theodore Roosevelt. In 1912, he became a legal advisor to the Yuan Shikai government, and in this capacity, he helped draft a new constitution. The reason that Liang remembered him was because of his assertion that the Chinese people were not mature enough for a republican form of government; Yuan Shikai immediately used Goodnow to promote his Imperial plans.

Liang: I ran into him right before I went to Peking University. There was someone who was known by everyone, Li Dazhao. He had some guests over to his house for dinner. He invited Chen and he invited me. That was the first time I met Chen. At that time, Chen had just come from Shanghai to Beijing. He had intended to persuade people to buy shares from him in an “East Asia Library” publishing house he was creating. Each share was 50 silver dollars, and two shares were 100 dollars. He hoped that his old friends would persuade everyone to buy shares in order to finance this publishing house of his. He came to Beijing for this purpose. Right at that time Cai Yuanpei had returned from abroad and assumed the presidency of Peking University. He needed a corps of teachers, obviously. He couldn’t teach everything himself. He was an old friend of Chen Duxiu’s, so he told Chen, “Alright, since you have come to Beijing, forget about this publishing house project. Don’t mess with publishing houses. You come help me out?” So, in this way, the three of us—Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao and myself—entered Peking University at the same time.

Alitto: My impression is that your relationship with Chen Duxiu wasn’t as good as yours with Li Dazhao.

Liang: Right. My relationship with Li started slightly earlier than with Chen. When I ran into Chen, it was at a banquet at Li’s. But we three entered Peking University at the same time.

Alitto: With Chen Duxiu, you...

Liang: Chen left a very strong impression on me. Chen was someone who could really make breakthroughs, a man of great power.

Alitto: What do you think of the role he played in history?

Liang: He started the Communist Party.

Alitto: Right! Very important?

Liang: Very important.

Alitto: He and Li Dazhao, naturally they together founded the Communist Party.

Liang: The friendship between the two was very good, but their personalities were different.

Alitto: So, Li was relatively...

Liang: On the surface Li was a very gentle person. Everyone who had personal contact with him liked him. In fact, though, he was a very radical person in his heart.

Alitto: His personal relations with others were comparatively good.

Liang: Better than Chen Duxiu did in his relationships. Most people’s attitude toward Chen Duxiu was to “respect him but give him a wide berth.” Everyone was afraid because he was often very rude in his speech with others. At meetings of the University, he was the dean of the College of Arts. There was a College of Sciences, which was headed by Mr. Xia Yuanli. These two were of the same rank, one in the Arts and one in the Sciences. During meetings Chen would be very rude toward Mr. Xia and embarrass him.

Alitto: Li Dazhao wasn’t that kind of person. Which of these two people do you feel yourself...

- Liang: Of course my relationship with Li Dazhao's was better.
- Alitto: Was the most important reason that Li was gentle, or...
- Liang: Yes, Li was gentle.
- Alitto: In thought, was Li's close to your own? So [your good relationship with him] had to do with thought, or with the way he conducted himself?
- Liang: It was very strange. What was strange? Both Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao were members of the Chinese Communist Party, but Li never said anything to me about joining it. I don't know why. We were good friends but he never tried to get me into the party.
- Alitto: What about Chen Duxiu? I remember he had talked about this with you. In *The Chinese People's Final Awakening* (It should be *The Final Awakening of the Chinese People's Self-salvation Movement*.—compiler) you mentioned Chen Duxiu's criticism of your conception of the rural reconstruction, calling it some petite bourgeois fantasy. At that time Chen Duxiu wanted you to join the Party. You didn't...he also didn't...
- Liang: No, he also didn't ask me to join the Party.
- Alitto: What was your relationship with Hu Shi like? What do you think of Hu Shi?
- Liang: Hu Shi was a very smart man.
- Alitto: Did you usually get along well with him?
- Liang: We got along fine. At the time at Peking University there was a New clique and an Old clique. The New clique included Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, Hu Shi and Lu Xun. But Lu Xun wasn't a Peking University professor. He worked in the Ministry of Education. He did teach some courses at Peking University, though. He taught a course on the "History of Chinese Fiction." He didn't have much strong connection with Peking University. He was also a part of the New Youth Group, which included Chen Duxiu, Hu Shi, Li Dazhao, and also Tao Menghe.
- Alitto: Do you say that your relations with the New Youth Group were not that close? Who were you extremely close to at that time?
- Liang: During that time at Peking University, there were two cliques, the New and the Old. There were two student periodicals, one called the *New Tide*, and the other called the *National Heritage*, which was devoted to China's old literature. They were matched by two student cliques, which were in turn both backed by professors. I wasn't in the New clique, and ever less in the Old clique, because the Old clique was interested in China's old style learning, of which I had no mastery. After all, I was younger than them. Hu Shi was older than me, but not by much, probably only by one or two years. Li Dazhao was probably three or four years older.
- Alitto: Hu Shi was three years older than you?
- Liang: Not by that much.
- Alitto: You were born in 1893. (Liang: Yes.) At the time of your birth Hu Shi was already three years old, when his father was the county magistrate of Taidong County in Taiwan. I wrote that in the book. You were younger by a bit than these people—Hu Shi, Li Dazhao, of course Lu Xun and Cai

Yuanpei were both older than you by a lot. This is the reason why you didn't go with the New Youth group and why you left Peking University, because you were relatively young, and it wasn't so easy to deal with the people of the various cliques.

Liang: I went to Peking University in 1917, and left in 1924. Altogether from start to finish, I was at Peking University for seven years. To my recollection, Mr. Cai was thirty years older, and it seems that Hu Shi was about one year older.

Alitto: From what I researched, he was born in 1890, and you were born in 1893, three years' difference. In the second chapter talking about your family, when you were born, Hu Shi was already a few years old and Chairman Mao was two months old. (Liang: Chairman Mao and I were born in the same year, but he was born some months later.) Because of this, I remember very clearly that Hu Shi was three years older.

Liang: Chen Duxiu was much older than I.

Alitto: There was also a Philosophy Department member Mr. Yang, who was Chairman Mao's father-in-law. (Liang: Right.) You met Chairman Mao for the first time at Mr. Yang's house?

Liang: Yes, it was that way.

Alitto: Was Mr. Yang someone who you could talk to?

Liang: Mr. Yang's name was Yang Changji; he used the sobriquet Huaizhong. He was much older than we were. At Peking University, he was in the Philosophy Department. He taught "Western Ethics" and the "History of Western Ethics." We were both in the Philosophy Department, colleagues. But he was much older than we were. He did come to my house frequently. Why did he come to my house often? It was not to see me, but to see my elder brother.

Alitto: Oh, it was that way. He already knew your elder brother?

Liang: Right.

Alitto: I'm now clear. I had thought that it was because you were a member of the Department of Philosophy that you were often together with him.

Liang: This elder brother was not my sibling.

Alitto: Oh, he wasn't your sibling.

Liang: He was an elder relative of the same lineage.

Alitto: Your elder maternal cousin?

Liang: No, the same lineage, so he was surnamed Liang. I am also surnamed Liang. If he was an elder maternal cousin, he would not be surnamed Liang. The Chinese wording is different from that of foreign countries. He was surnamed Liang, and was Hunanese. On my desk is an article I am writing right now for the new *Hunan Province Gazetteer*, a provincial history. The provincial gazetteer has a section called "Biographies of Local Personages." In that section there is my elder brother. He was someone of importance in Hunan and he came to Beijing to stay with me, so the present *Hunan Provincial Gazetteer* wanted me to write a biography; it's on my desk.

Alitto: Was it because Mr. Yang was a Hunanese that there was this relationship?

Liang: I'll explain the relationship Mr. Yang had with this elder brother of mine. What relationship did he have with my elder brother? At the time, under the influence of Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, the Guangxu Emperor wanted to carry out reforms. In the entire nation, the first province to respond actively to Beijing's Reform Movement was Hunan.

The governing authorities in Hunan, those who held the political power—previously each province had a governor, and some provinces had a governor-general. Hunan and Hubei were under one governor-general. Hunan itself had a governor. Hunan had had several famous governors. At the time of the Reforms the province in the lead of reform movement [was Hunan]. My elder brother took an active part in the Hunan Reform Movement. Now they want me to write [his biography]. For example, at that time Chinese first called those who had been influenced by Europe “paying attention to foreign affairs,” and later [because] it was felt that this phrase “foreign affairs” wasn't good, [and because] “outstanding talents knew current affairs,” [the term was changed to] “current affairs” [actually referring to Western learning]. So first in Hunan, an “Academy of Current Affairs” was established with Liang Qichao as the Dean. This elder brother of mine helped Liang Qichao with the “Academy of Current Affairs.” At that time they wanted new education, and also wanted to set up industry, so in order to set up industry, there was a Vocational Academy. My elder brother sponsored this Vocational Academy. What was taught in the Academy? Industry and Mining, so the province established a Bureau of Industry and Mining and an Office of Academic Affairs. My elder brother was both in the Office of Academic Affairs and in the Bureau of Industry and Mining.

This Mr. Yang—that is Yang Changji (Yang Huaizhong), was considered a student of my elder brother. He addressed my elder brother as teacher. Because at the time an aspect of the reforms was to learn from Europe and America, so people would be sent to Europe and America to study. Of course, Japan was closer and it seemed relatively convenient. So, at one time those studying in Japan were quite numerous. This elder brother of mine suggested to the provincial authorities—the governor—rather than sending young people out to study, it was better to send those who had already had some knowledge resources and some grounding in education domestically. The provincial authorities—the governor—approved his suggestion. He suggested—originally didn't each province have civil service examinations for the Juren Degree? The first examination was for the Xiucai Degree....

...

Alitto: ...researched question...the region of Henan, western Henan,¹⁶ I want to write a local history, from the late Ming Dynasty to the present. Probably

¹⁶ The area referred to here, a highly successful local self-government “experiment” in the 1920s and 1930s is the area west of Nanyang, sometimes called Wanxi (宛西), consisting of Zhenping (镇平), Neixiang (内乡), Xixia (西峡), Xichuan (淅川) and Deng (邓) Counties.

I'll come again the year after next and stay in China for a long period, and I hope to have the opportunity to go to western Henan to have a look. I've already collected the materials abroad—the university libraries in the U.S., the Library of Congress. In Hong Kong and Taiwan there are some people... There's an old gentleman, older than you by two years, Chen Zhonghua; Shunde is his sobriquet. I learned some things from him too. Mr. Meng also worked there?

Liang: He was Peng Yuting's student, a Henanese. Back then we had a Henan Village Government Academy. He was a student at the Village Government Academy. (Alitto: Oh, he was a student at the Village Government Academy!) He stayed in the region of western Henan and participated in militia work and local self-defense.

Alitto: You went to Zhenping and Neixiang Counties?

Liang: I've been to Zhenping.

Alitto: What time was that?

Liang: During the War of Resistance.

Alitto: Before that you were at the Henan Village Government Academy in Hui County, together with Peng Yuting?

Liang: He was the Academy's president.

Alitto: Yes. You didn't go to Zhenping then?

Liang: I didn't go then. I went later, during the War of Resistance. We withdrew from Shandong, going from east to west, withdrawing to Zhenping.

Alitto: The "we" refers to whom?

Liang: "We" were a group of friends and students, a lot of cadre of the Rural Reconstruction Institute, a large number of people. When we withdrew, we brought with us a portion of the militia conscripts, along with 800 rifles, military uniforms, and over a hundred thousand silver dollars. At the time, we stayed in Zhenping. There was a large temple in Zhenping. We stayed in the large temple. Outside the county seat, outside was a large temple.

Alitto: Do you remember the situation in Zhenping at that time? What impressions do you have?

Liang: We didn't stay there that long. After Zhenping, we went on to Wuhan. At the time, the central government was still in Wuhan, and so we went to take up matters with the government. At that time, the Minister of the Political Department was Chen Cheng. He also wanted two or three hundred of the students transferred into Wuhan for inspection. He gave an admonitory talk to them. Afterwards he appointed a person, recommended by us, to return to Zhenping to lead the students. This person led our men and the rifles back to Shandong. When they returned to Shandong, they were divided into Wuhan for inspection four routes, east, west, north and south, and then went to carry on guerilla operations behind enemy lines.

Alitto: What impressions do you have of Peng Yuting?

Liang: Peng Yuting and I were very good friends. He was the president of the Henan Village Government Academy. The vice president was Liang Zhonghua. I was the Academic Dean. Actually I drew up all the academy's

regulations and measures. The students there...now there are not many students there.

Alitto: In your mind, what sort of man was Peng Yuting like?

Liang: He was a man of wholehearted dedication. A Chinese old saying holds that a person with a dark face is a good person, and a pale face indicates wickedness. Now, Peng was with very dark complexion, and an extremely good person.

Alitto: He was also a quite capable man.

Liang: Very capable. Unfortunately he was assassinated, murdered.

Alitto: It seems that in Nanzhao County, or in Zhenping County, there was a Yang family. In Zhenping County there was a powerful local bully who had supported Peng Yuting's education. Peng returned, and that person who had supported his education thought that this was an opportunity. Peng returned, but in the end did not accommodate him and give him preferential treatment. He became angry, got in touch with this Nanzhao County rich and powerful person, and carried out the assassination. Did you meet Bie Tingfang?

Liang: I also met him.

Alitto: Did he come to Zouping to see you?

Liang: No, he was in Neixiang County. I ran into him in Zhenping County. When I went to Zhenping, he did too, and we met.

Alitto: What impression did he leave with you?

Liang: My personal impression was that he was a very crude person. Probably his heart was good, but he had a local bully style and demeanor. He decided everything himself alone and imposed these decisions on everyone by force.

Alitto: Naturally Peng Yuting's education...

Liang: Peng was much better.

Alitto: Do you consider the Zhenping self-government to have been successful?

Liang: At that time it was quite successful. The county magistrate and county government existed in name only. The local self-government divided the entire county into ten districts, and organized a ten-district office. Everyone elected Peng Yuting to be the director. The ten district heads together with Peng Yuting formed the ten-district office. The office handled all matters. The county government was an empty shell put to the side and performing no function.

...

Alitto: Aside from you, who in the modern period is a representative Confucian personage?

Liang: I can't say, but I will address a few words to the issue. There's someone named Feng Youlan. When I was teaching at Peking University, he was a student in my class. He studied in America. While in America, he often sent letters to me, corresponding with me. After he returned from America he became a university professor, a very famous one. He authored three books, especially [well-known] is the one titled *History of Chinese*

Philosophy. This man—each person has his own disposition and individual personalities are different—he appears to be a Confucian and to have developed and elaborated upon traditional Chinese thought. It appears that way, but in reality, he behaves more like a follower of Laozi and Zhuangzi. The Laozi school is not like the Confucian in that a follower does not have a commitment to one's own integrity and to honesty. He isn't that way. He is more like what, like...the expression "...*shibugong*" ...the four characters "*wanshibugong*" (cynical and frivolous). He is not like [a Confucian] who loyally follows and acts according to the principles he believes in, who does not bend with the prevailing wind. No, he is more cynical and frivolous.

Alitto: Actually we Westerners who study China generally acknowledged this.

Liang: Later, didn't that Jiang Qing think highly of him and go to Peking University to see him? He even gave some poems to Jiang Qing. Later Jiang Qing was defeated, so his reputation withered. He is still alive, still at Peking University, but he doesn't have any work responsibilities. All he has now is a good salary, that is, a professor's salary. His health has not been good either. He has cataracts, and someone supports him when walking.

Alitto: No one is representative [of Confucianism]?

Liang: No. There is another philosopher. He cannot really be considered as representing Confucianism. Someone named He Lin. He is better [than Feng], not so willful and wanton. He teaches mostly German philosophy, Hegel. There is another philosopher named Shen Youding. (Alitto: Afraid I don't know about him.) They all play an important role in the Institute of Philosophy at the Chinese Academy of Sciences. There is another philosopher in Beijing; he studied in the U.S., his name...it's on the tip of my tongue.

Alitto: Do you think that the Hong Kong Confucian thinkers like Mou Zongsan and Tang Junyi have made a contribution to the elucidation and development of modern Confucianism?

Liang: They have made a contribution.

Alitto: Have you read their publications?

Liang: I have here six volumes by Tang Junyi. I haven't read Mou's.

Alitto: What about Tang Junyi?

Liang: He's good. I think that what he has to say about Confucianism is all accurate.

Alitto: You appreciate his...

Liang: Mou is a Shandongese, Tang a Sichuanese. I have been sent Tang's works. I have six big volumes of his.

Alitto: In general, do you approve of his interpretations about Confucianism?

Liang: I think that he really understands Confucianism. Right now I have only two volumes left of the six. Someone took four away. It's a pity that Tang has already passed away. Mou is still alive.

Alitto: Yes, Mou is still alive. Are they considered Xiong Shili's students?

- Liang: Mou is. It seems that Tang has no connection with Xiong. Mou has been on intimate terms with Xiong. He addressed him as teacher. It seems Tang did not.
- Alitto: Did Mr. Xiong also teach at Peking University?
- Liang: He taught there.
- Alitto: You met him at that time or after he had arrived at Peking University? Or before then?
- Liang: I knew him before that. In fact, it was I who brought him to Peking University.
- Alitto: In the materials that I read I didn't see anything about him personally...
- Liang: Mr. Xiong and I were together for forty years.
- Alitto: So when you were in Shandong, he went too?
- Liang: He was with me in Shandong for a period. He didn't follow me from beginning to the end. In 1924, I went to Shandong to start a school. We went together. When I returned to Beijing from Shandong, we again were living together. In that period when I went to Guangdong, he went to West Lake in Hangzhou. Those two years we were separated. Later, when the War of Resistance started, I withdrew to Sichuan, and we were again together.
- Alitto: As far as his publications go, can he be considered close to your own thought philosophically...
- Liang: Xiong Shili was worthy of being called Confucian. From start to finish, his thought was Confucian. Other people mistakenly call him Buddhist, mistakenly term his theories Buddhist. Actually, this is not so. In China there was a Buddhist group. It was in Nanjing, and was called the Institute of Buddhist Studies. (Alitto: It was Ouyang Jingwu?) Yes, there was an Institute of Buddhist Studies run by Ouyang Jingwu. I knew Xiong very well, I advised him to go to this Institute to study. How we became friends was kind of funny. At that time Mr. Xiong was teaching Chinese language at the Nankai Middle School. He had written articles for Liang Qichao's journal called *The Justice*. These articles were written from a Confucian position vilifying Buddhism, saying that Buddhism was no good, that it made people lose their moorings spiritually and philosophically... In my article I criticized him. I said that in "this place" (referring to China) "a common fellow," (an ordinary Chinese) was "striving for survival" such and such. I said that his words were nonsense, that he was wrong. The article was published and he read it. In 1920, he wrote me a postcard from Nankai Middle School to Peking University. His postcard said, "You reprimanded me quite deservedly. I'm now on summer vacation and am coming to Beijing. I want to meet you." And so it was in this way we began our relationship. So he arrived in Beijing that summer. His personality had its cheerful side. When he was talking in high spirits, he would laugh heartily, and would gesticulate wildly, waving his hands and stomping his feet very exuberantly. He criticized Buddhism from a Confucian perspective, but I was myself a Buddhist, so I told him that he didn't understand Buddhism, that the Buddhist doctrine was extremely profound. He said he was going to

explore Buddhism. I said, “All right, I’ll introduce you to Ouyang Jingwu and his Institute of Buddhist Studies.”

Alitto: Oh, it was this way.

Liang: So there he went through my introduction, and for three years, from 1920 through 1922, he studied there. Now, I was at Peking University teaching; at first I was teaching Indian Philosophy and later added Consciousness-Only Buddhism. Consciousness-Only is an extremely specialized type of learning, technically very difficult. It originated with Xuan Zang of the Tang Dynasty. A follower of his, Kui Ji, also contributed to it. This type of doctrine is actually very scientific, with a lot of “names and phenomenal appearances”. That is why it is sometimes called the “appearances school (dharma-character school).” It has a lot of technical terms that make extremely fine distinctions. These terms cannot be used arbitrarily, or casually. In using these terms one must be precise. The entire body of doctrine is highly structured and systematic, very scientific-like.

At the beginning, I taught Indian Philosophy at Peking University, then I also taught Confucianism, Buddhism and Consciousness-Only Buddhism. When I was teaching Consciousness-Only Buddhism, I quoted a lot of Western scientists in order to explain it. The Consciousness-Only doctrine speaks of eight *parijñāna* (kinds of cognition, or consciousness). The first five are the senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, tactile feeling). The sixth is *mano-vijñāna*, the intellect. The six ones enable us to cope with our external environment. The seventh is called *klistamanas* [the discriminating sense] and the eighth, the *ālāyavijñāna* [the “storehouse consciousness” from which come all “seeds” of consciousness]. These last two come from egoism and the ego. Compared with the eighth, the seventh is far more... Not only do we humans have the ego, but all [other] animals do. All of us satisfy our desires from the external environment. So, with all animals we distinguish between the self and the “other,” the internal and the external.

Thus I was at Peking University, writing and lecturing on the Consciousness-Only school, and published two books on it. When I tried to continue writing, however, I felt that I was not really competent to deal with Consciousness-Only, and was not at all sure if I was correct. So I thought, well, the people at the Nanjing Institute of Buddhist Studies are true experts in this field. They can really penetrate and grasp the doctrines of Xuan Zang, Kui Ji and their school, so why don’t I ask one of them to come teach this subject at Peking University? I had a discussion with President Cai Yuanpei about it, explaining that I was not really qualified to teach this subject, had no confidence and so on, and that I wanted to get one of the scholars from the Buddhist Institute at Nanjing to do it. President Cai agreed to provide the position, so I went to Nanjing. Of course, Ouyang Jingwu himself could not be moved from the Nanjing Institute, so I thought that I would invite one of his disciples, a man named Lü [Lü Zheng]. Lü was an excellent scholar who knew Tibetan and Sanskrit, a man of great erudition. But Lü was Ouyang’s right-hand man and so he would not let Lü leave.

At that time, Mr. Xiong was already starting his third year at the institute. This was the winter of 1922, and it was I who, after all, was responsible for his being there in the first place, and he was an old friend. So, when I couldn't get the man I wanted, I invited Mr. Xiong to come instead. I invited him to teach Consciousness-Only Buddhism at Peking University. Ah! How could I have known that he would do the opposite of what I had hoped! I didn't have any confidence in my own understanding, and was afraid that I was teaching a confused jumble, distorting what Xuan Zang introduced from India. My original aim was to get an expert on Consciousness-Only to come teach instead of me, as I thought that this would be a more suitable arrangement. Who would have thought that after Mr. Xiong arrived, in fact he would do precisely the opposite of what I had hoped. He wanted to create an entirely new pattern of things, to start a whole new entity. He entitled his lectures on Consciousness-Only the "New Consciousness-Only." For fear that I might distort or lose the original message of the ancients, I asked Mr. Xiong to come teach Consciousness-Only for me, and he very subjectively simply took his own interpretations to be the substance of Consciousness-Only! But since he had already arrived at Peking University as a professor there was no way I could then ask him to leave. So I was stuck.

Chapter 3

August 14, 1980

Liang: Now, I'm just speaking off the cuff, but I think that the nationality with which the Chinese can most easily get close is the American, but relations between them are not necessarily very deep.¹ On meeting, Chinese and Americans establish good feelings between each other very quickly. Take Nixon's visit to China as an example. Didn't Nixon, upon departing, issue a Shanghai Communiqué? He quickly got on friendly terms with Premier Zhou Enlai, very harmonious. He respected and understood China, and was well disposed toward it. Of course, our Premier Zhou was extraordinary, a very very good person all around, and extremely intelligent. He was an extremely perceptive and sensitive person, with a quick mind. So, of course, he had the ability to make friends very quickly and easily. Although during that visit, Nixon was not quite in accord with Zhou on many issues, especially the Taiwan question, it didn't matter. Because they achieved a level of friendship, they were able to put the question aside temporarily. This was also because Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou took the long view and were not anxious that the question be settled immediately. This attitude of Mao's and Zhou's was very good. Up to the present, especially with Kissinger's role in all of this, in the whole world, Chinese affection and friendship with the United States is stronger than with any other country. China really has had better relations with the U.S.A. than with any other country. But the country with which at the outset we called our "Elder Brother" and which we took as our ideal model, is now the country towards which our feelings are most negative.

Alitto: What opinions do you have about the question of Taiwan?

¹ I happened to share this view, which is also shared by many others in the field including my teacher at Harvard, Benjamin Schwartz. Americans and Chinese on the whole both have the tendency to be very good at "cocktail party" interactions.

- Liang: As far as the Taiwan situation goes, right now Chiang Ching-kuo is forced to speak in very cautious terms and keep tight-lipped and has not been willing to open up. But in actuality, I think that what he really thinks is another matter. He must keep close-mouthed and refuse to have anything to do with the mainland, because as soon as he would open up, he would be finished. So, he has refused to link up the two postal systems, to trade and so on. This is on the surface, superficial. He is afraid that if he ever gave any indication of a desire to become closer to the mainland, he would fall from power. That Taiwan will revert to the Motherland sometime in the future is a certainty. It is just a matter of time.
- Alitto: Everyone now recognizes Taiwan's rapid economic development. Taiwan's economy has been quite successful. Do you have any opinion about this question? Or, if the mainland and Taiwan were now united, there would be other problems. Taiwan has developed so rapidly, and the mainland has not. Even if they were united, there would be a lot of conflict. The mainland and Taiwan have different ways in many areas. Not only do they have the pre-Liberation Nationalist Party there,² but before that there were also Japanese there. From the first Sino-Japanese War [1894] to the present, the developmental orientation of the two has not been the same. Do you have any opinion on these questions?
- Liang: I think that the Chinese government, the Chinese authorities, have to respect Taiwan's position. It cannot resort to force against Chiang Ching-kuo, and has to respect the feelings of the masses of ordinary people in Taiwan. As soon as there comes an opportunity—a sudden change in world affairs—then Taiwan would return to China. But China absolutely will not (even in that case) reach out to change or reform Taiwan. The Chinese government must do all it can to respect the popular feelings of the people of Taiwan, not to respect Chiang Ching-kuo, but to respect Taiwan.
- Alitto: Another question. It's already been thirty-one years since Liberation. The Nationalist Party in Taiwan is not what it was in bygone years. The new has replaced the old. The average person in Taiwan thinks of himself as Taiwanese. Even today's thirty-year-olds were born in Taiwan; thirty-six-, thirty-seven-year-olds, although born inside the mainland, still grew up in Taiwan. Because of this, Taiwanese have not had any contact [with the mainland of China] for a long time. Their concept is: I am Chinese; Chinese culture is our Taiwanese culture; I am Taiwanese; my ancestors came from the Chinese mainland, but I myself have never gone there, and I haven't any contact with it.³ In my opinion this is a problem, a problem of thought. Do you have any views on this?

² This is to distinguish the present-day Nationalist Party (Guomindang, KMT) in Taiwan from the Revolutionary Nationalist Party that exists on the mainland.

³ This was the situation in 1980. Since then, of course, the situation in Taiwan has changed enormously. Taiwan has transitioned to a multi-party political system, and thus has effectively ended the Nationalist Party's monopoly on political power. The rise (and partial fall) of Taiwanese nationalism is another great change.

- Liang: Not worth mentioning. But I have heard that when Taiwanese and people from the mainland have the opportunity to meet, they are fine together.
- Alitto: They are fine together, right. When I was in the U.S., there was a delegation and we also ran into students from Taiwan... Do you have any predictions about China's future?
- Liang: That depends upon the future of the world in general. It is not just a question of China itself. For example, if there was another world war, China would be affected. And another world war is just a matter of time.⁴
- Alitto: If this comes to pass, then we humans are finished. Nuclear weapons—if the USSR and the US really did go to war—even the very soil of the earth would be affected. Even the survival of the next generations would become problematic. Your words are very pessimistic.
- Liang: I have only a very shallow, half-formed opinion on the question, but my view is that an eventual war between the USSR and the U.S.A. is practically inevitable. But I have another conjecture, and that is that a world war would not last long, but as soon as it broke out, both the USSR and the U.S.A. would then have internal problems.
- Alitto: If nuclear weapons are used, even social organizations will go. I understand what you mean. I'm saying that if the cities are all blasted flat, all the people killed, radiation would also affect people in the countryside. Of course, one could say that problems would arise in society, and probably at that point, basically there would be no "society," while scattered numbers of people would still survive. Probably on this point Chinese and American views differ. Chairman Mao said that the Atomic Bomb was nothing much, a paper tiger or something, but most Americans feel that once you have this kind of thing, everything is finished.
- Liang: Well, my opinion is that the internal problems of both the U.S.A. and the USSR would explode as soon as war broke out. I could use a quote from Chairman Mao, who also had a view on the possibility of world war. He said, "Probably war would lead to revolution, or probably a revolution would avert a war." He said this. If the USSR had an internal revolution, America too had a revolution, and then there would be no great war. Perhaps the rise of revolution can avert a war, without the two major powers fighting. Or, perhaps a war would bring about revolution. The war would not have to last long to lead to an internal revolution. He had such kind of statement and I think possibly so. Precisely at the time that the world is on the point of a great change, China quite possibly will not have to suffer from another war. When the two superpowers are having their internal revolutions, China will be able to be stable and steady. I don't know very much about foreign affairs or foreign countries. (Alitto: You are too modest.) It's not modesty. I truly know very little. These guesses of

⁴I was struck at how much Liang's views on such matters had been affected by general popular views, and, as such, shockingly naive. He admitted as much. Naturally he knew nothing of international affairs that had not presented by the Chinese media.

mine or these views of mine I'm afraid don't have much value. I mean it, for I've never been to either Europe or America.

Alitto: Have you ever had the desire to travel abroad?⁵

Liang: It would be good to go abroad to look around. I'm willing to go. Some friends of mine have been urging me to go. A friend of mine made a joke. He said that if I wanted to go to the U.S., I wouldn't have to worry about travel expenses. I could give lectures and this would provide enough for my living expenses.⁶ And he could be my interpreter.

Alitto: Have you ever had...

Liang: I do not have much interest in that. I myself is not much into that, but some friends suggest me going.

Alitto: Don't you...?

Liang: I don't really have any strong feelings about going. Of course, it would be interesting, because I've seen very little, and so a trip would increase my understanding of things.

Alitto: If shortly an American university or some such institution invites you to go to the U.S., would you be willing to go?

Liang: If a university invites me, I would naturally be willing to go.

Alitto: We were just speaking of the U.S. Do you have interest in other parts of the world?

Liang: Going to Europe.

Alitto: Well, I thought you might want to visit India or some other Asian countries, because you have studied Indian philosophy.

Liang: I haven't much desire to visit India. There is a Chinese who has lived in India for a long time, named Tan Yunshan. He came to China and visited me, and we corresponded, but later the contact stopped. Tan was at that school founded by Tagore [Cheena-Bhavana (Institute of Chinese Language and Culture), Visva-Bharati University].

⁵ Liang had traveled to Japan at the invitation of Japanese rural reconstruction colleagues and toured rural reconstruction sites during the trip.

⁶ Immediately upon returning to the U.S., I contacted the "Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China (美中学术交流委员会)." This was an organization founded in 1966 as part of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences to facilitate academic traffic between the U.S. and China. The Committee was dissolved in the 1990s as scholarly communication between our two countries became commonplace, eliminating the need for such a committee. I relied Liang's interest to the Executive Director of the Committee and requested that such a trip be organized for him. The director agreed, and, according to her, contacted Mr. Liang's unit, the People's Political Consultative Conference. Later, I was told that the authorities in China would not allow such a visit. Mr. Liang, however, was informed that it was the American side that balked. Frankly, I think this is unlikely, because it would have been on the initiative of the Committee that the question would have been brought up in the first place. I suspect that the Chinese authorities felt that Mr. Liang was too old and frail to make such a journey, and, moreover, because he was famous for speaking his mind, they might have been anxious about the possibility that Mr. Liang might make statements in the U.S. that could be embarrassing.

Alitto: Oh, you also met Tagore when he was visiting China. Hasn't today's China been improved greatly from the China of fifty years before? What areas have been improved, and what aspects are still awaiting improvement?

Liang: China had undergone many decades of civil war. During the warlord wars, China could not build, could not progress. There was a lot of destruction and very little progress. Originally, we had never expected that Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Party would be driven out of the mainland, because quite obviously the Nationalist Party government was the government of China, and the Communist Party only occupied a few areas. The Nationalist Party represented China to the world. America supported the Nationalist Party both militarily and politically. We never expected that, with its number of soldiers and weapons, its American weapons, U.S. support diplomatically, with many kinds of favorable conditions, it was sent packing. This was very surprising. It was because Chiang Kai-shek was really bad; Chiang Kai-shek had not won the people's hearts and minds. He had never acted in good faith; his word counted for nothing. He had no good faith, it's that...

I had quite a lot of contact with Chairman Mao. He was full of shifts and devices, a great talent, a man with a clever mind and great strategies. He didn't have any connections, no patron with influence who helped him. He was a man alone. I visited his hometown Shaoshan twice. I visited the place where he had studied and met the people from his village. He was still working on the land at fifteen or sixteen. So, that such a man with this kind of background, a man all alone without assistance, actually created the New China, is truly amazing. This man was truly extraordinary. If not for him, there would be no Chinese Communist Party. If there were no Chinese Communist Party, there would have been no New China. The Party depended upon him and everybody relied on the Party. Although originally a single solitary individual, he became the highest authority. He took hold of the reins of all power. (He exercised control over everything.) In his old age, however, he was no longer capable. Yes, when he got old, he got muddle-headed. No one could do anything to save the situation because his prestige was too great, too powerful. Now it's all right. Now everyone can evaluate him. He was actually responsible for the rise of the Gang of Four. I now hear that a public trial is planned for the Gang of Four. Now the greatest effort must be made to rectify [Mao's mistakes]. Now we need collective leadership, instead of a single supreme leader. We must now make the utmost efforts to rectify the mistakes of the past. So, you could say that the last few years have been much more stable and steady, with no more social and political turmoil, especially like the disorder of 1966. So now China is advancing steadily, smoothly, and more united than before. So, given the present situation and the impending government reorganization—meetings are to be held this August to discuss this issue, I think that China will be in better shape than in the past several decades. Hua Guofeng, although in one sense colorless with no outstanding characteristics, is a

steady, cautious person. In one sense, however, he is not ordinary. He has worked for several years on the grass roots level, from the villages. He is a person quite reliable and modest. There are a lot of matters of which Deng Xiaoping actually has charge, with the assistance of other people. So, in my humble opinion, I am extremely optimistic about the present situation, which is much better than before.

Alitto: Compared with 50 years ago, how would you evaluate the present? What are the areas of greatest improvement?

Liang: Well, in the areas of Party and government and society. The relationship between the Party and society is changing. In the past, the leadership of the party was too strong, and society at large was too passive. This is now slowly changing. The lower levels of society are now rising up. At present there are two slogans. One is democracy, the other, rule by law. In the past, there was no rule by law. Mao's word was law, and everyone else was passive. It was almost like Mao made decisions, and everyone else just went along with him. Everyone exalted and extolled him. Now, the situation is changing into one of rule by law. For example, in a factory workshop, the workers elect the workshop director. The production brigade chiefs in rural communes are also nominated and elected by the members. (Alitto: Even at the grass-root level...) This situation is much sounder. So, those two slogans are still apt—rule by law and democracy. The strength of democracy is slowly rising. The slogans are not just empty talk. So, as I said, I am very optimistic about China's future.

Alitto: In your opinion, what about the modernization, democracy, legality? These are only the most recent of several attempts of China's government to modernize the country. Which of the attempts in the past 100 years most resembles the present one? There were many people and governments, and yourself...

Liang: Of course, originally, there were various ideals, slogans, etc., but in the past they were just that, ideals and slogans. Now, the present plan, as opposed to the previous ones, is not stopping at the level of ideals and slogans. This one in fact is having some effect in reality, especially most recently. Now there is an opportunity to advance while there was no such thing in the past. Aside from the recent periods of social and political turmoil, even in those relatively stable periods, China was not democratic, nor was it really ruled by law. Naturally it had even less democracy and even less rule by law during periods of turmoil, which were almost like civil war. The trains weren't running and so on. Now, things are starting to become stable and routinized.

Alitto: I was referring to the content of the present plan. The content seems similar to several movements in the past promoted by various Chinese governments before liberation—you yourself had promoted some plans too. Which one is closest to the present plan? In the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s...

Liang: I know, but what I mean is that the movements in the past were all empty talk.

- Alitto: All empty talk? How would you compare your Rural Reconstruction Movement with the present movement?
- Liang: There are some similarities. (Alitto: In greater detail.) As far as I am concerned, what I wanted to do with rural reconstruction was to bring some organization and mobilization to the scattered, disorganized countryside and its traditional “familialism,” by which each person cared only for his own family, and completely ignored any wider community. So, as far as the Rural Reconstruction Movement’s aim of organizing the peasantry into groups, I think that this has indeed been accomplished. Previously, China lacked two things: first, organizations in supra-familial organizational forms and second, modern science and technology. As far as the latter was concerned, the question was how to introduce science and technology into Chinese agriculture effectively and how to industrialize agriculture. So, now this task can be accomplished too. So, the two original goals I had for the Rural Reconstruction Movement—group organization and science/technology have been or will be accomplished.⁷
- Alitto: I asked this question because in my book I compared what we call the Maoist type of rural reconstruction and your own, I mean, the rural cooperative and modernization plans of you two. My conclusion was that there were many similarities between the two. What you wanted to do has indeed been accomplished after the 1950s.
- Liang: I would like to supplement that with a statement. Chairman Mao gave an address called the “Ten Great Relationships,” a very important address. He gave it in 1956, when he was at his peak, when he was very clear-headed and sober, when he was eliciting the opinions of everyone, inviting people to express dissenting views on things. At that time he openly acknowledged that he had made some mistakes in the past, and that he took

⁷ Mr. Liang’s major goals in rural reconstruction were indeed to “organize” the countryside and diffuse modern technology there. Practically every political figure during the Republic did indeed complain that China was, as Sun Yat-sen put it, “a sheet of loose sand.” Sun, and many others, complained that Chinese society was suffering not from a lack of “liberty,” but from a surfeit of it. Everyone, then, hoped to transform the sand into cement, but the question was how. In the late Qing, moreover, a completely new concept appeared—mobilization. It appeared simultaneously with the idea of a modern nation to which its citizens owe loyalty. Therefore, underneath the organization question was the perceived need for mobilization. All figures were also interested in diffusing modern technologies throughout rural society. Liang’s rural reconstruction movement, however, had one other goal that these other leaders and movements did not include and, by their nature, could not include. It was a cultural revival that was to preserve Chinese cultural values—epitomized in his term “reason” (理性). Liang emphasized the idea that rural reconstruction must not be a political movement, but rather a grass-roots cultural movement. He had concluded by the late 1920s that governmental power was inherently like “an iron hook,” and society was like a bean curd. No matter what good intentions the iron hook might possess, as soon as it goes to “help” the bean curd, it destroys it. “As soon as you take power, you are separated from society... No matter if even a sage took power, it would not work.” *Theory of Rural Reconstruction* (《乡村建设理论》), 1937, p. 319. He never mentioned this special goal of rural reconstruction during these interviews.

responsibility himself for them, rather than blaming others. It was at that time he was most reasonable and most sensible. Later, he became confused and muddle-headed.

Alitto: I know that at present you are not a member of the Democratic League. (Liang: Yes.) But it was you who... (Liang: Yes, I started it.) Could you give your views on the relationship between the Democratic League, the smaller political parties, and the process of national construction?

Liang: I think that I am, and was, somewhat different from the others [non-Communist Party and non-Nationalist Party intellectuals who engaged in political activities]. Almost all the others vainly hoped for the establishment of British-style rule by political parties. That is, in the national assembly, there would be two large parties; when one was in power, the other would supervise the governance, would oversee the government of its rivals. If the party in power made any mistakes, or did something that was objectionable to the party out of power, the latter would then take power. So the two parties would rotate, taking turns being in power. This is the situation in England, and to an extent, in the U.S.A. So the others all dreamed of establishing this kind of government.

I said that this kind of government did not meet the needs of China, because economically, industrially in particular, China was so different from the Western countries. China was not an industrialized, developed country, so this kind of government would not work. China's most urgent task was to develop economically as quickly as possible. In order to accomplish this, China needed a truly national, central political authority to adopt a fixed, definite guiding principle, a fixed course of action. This fixing of a definite course of action would be through a national governmental power or regime, and should maintain stability for several decades. Only in this way would China be able to develop economically and catch up with the foreign countries. So, I felt and feel that this alternating of political parties in power simply would not work because the national course of action, would change whenever the other political party out of power came into power. So, today one policy, tomorrow another. That just won't work. I maintained this view consistently. The others all disagreed with me, as they all had in mind an Anglo-American style of a two-party political system. Later, the situation in China, astonishingly enough, ended up precisely the way that I thought it would.⁸ The Nationalist Party was driven

⁸ This is indeed true. Liang had always argued that until the customs, habits and attitudes of the masses changed, constitutional government would be a mere superficial copy of a foreign institution that would definitely fail. "China has not reached a stage where it can have a successful constitution." (《中国此刻尚不到有宪法成功的时候》) Jan. 4, 1934, *Dagongbao* (《大公报》). He continued this argument after the war as well. It is not a little ironic that Liang, who created and, for a time, lead the only truly liberal democratic political force in that period in China, the last incarnation being the Democratic League (民主同盟), had little faith that liberal democracy could work in China.

out, and the Chinese mainland was united. The CCP took power and did accomplish some things in these years. It's too bad that during those decades of control, there were several periods of political and social turmoil. But now, it looks as though these periods of turmoil are over and will not recur, so that from now on China can stride forward rapidly. So, as I said, I am very optimistic about the future. This is my view, and this is my hope.

Alitto: Do you still have frequent contact with your colleagues in the Rural Reconstruction Movement?

Liang: Unfortunately, nine-tenths of the friends and students who worked together with me in rural reconstruction have passed away. Only I lived to a ripe old age. There are almost none else still alive. Well, for instance, Mr. Meng Xianguang,⁹ who is visiting me now, is around but, on the whole, these students and colleagues are almost all gone. My rural reconstruction movement was first in Henan and Shandong. He is Henanese.

Alitto: Henanese? Mr. Meng?

Liang: Right. He is my student.

Alitto: He is Henanese, and with Peng Yuting....

Liang: Yes. He's Peng Yuting's student.

Alitto: Oh! So originally he was Peng Yuting's student. Aside from him, are there others?

⁹ During one of the times I visited Mr. Liang, There was an old man in another room, reading a book manuscript. This was Mr. Meng Xianguang, who was visiting from Nanchong, Sichuan. Mr. Liang introduced me to him later, and I interviewed him several times separately. Mr. Meng, a student of Mr. Liang dating from 1928, worked with Mr. Liang's colleague Peng Yuting, who headed an extremely successful local self-government experiment in Zhenping County, west of Nanyang in Henan Province. Mr. Meng was 70 years old when I met him, but was still full of enthusiasm for local projects to help the public. Later in the 1980s, Mr. Liang's son, Peikuan, told me that Mr. Meng was going to use some property that had been returned to him to do rural reconstruction work in his home locale in Henan; afterward he envisioned a project in the "great northwest," the traditionally poverty-stricken area that the Chinese government was endeavoring to help economically. I interviewed Mr. Meng mostly about his work in Henan reconstruction, but in the process got to know him quite well. He was, like every one of Mr. Liang's students that I had met, fiercely loyal to Mr. Liang, and burned with a flame of enthusiasm for good works in the public sector. Mr. Meng and I were also tied together by an extraordinary coincidence. In the fall of 1972, the first official Chinese delegations visited the United States, as arranged by the Zhou-Kissinger protocols for cultural and educational exchange which Premier Zhou Enlai and Secretary of State Kissinger had negotiated earlier in the year. I was the American interpreter for these delegations. The first was a delegation of medical doctors (医学代表团), the deputy delegation head of which was Dr. Fu Yicheng (傅一成), vice president of the China Medical Association. As I traveled with the delegation and was the chief source of information on U.S. society and politics, I got to know Dr. Fu very well. One night after a very late interview, I took Mr. Meng back to the place where he was staying with a relative. As I walked him into the courtyard of the house, who should I see, washing his shirt at the water tap but Dr. Fu! He was Mr. Meng's relative! And this was the second coincidence involving Dr. Fu. As I boarded the train from Shenzhen to Guangzhou on my first actual visit to China in May 1973, who should I just happen to run into but Dr. Fu! He had just come south to welcome a Canadian medical delegation. Given that, in the entire country of a billion at that time I knew 30 people at most, the chances against such coincidences are truly astronomical, yet similar events occur every time I visit China.

- Liang: Of course there are others. I can't say that they are completely gone, but there are very few.
- Alitto: Do you have contact [with them]?
- Liang: There is a man surnamed Li, here in Beijing, a man from Suiyuan Province [parts covered by today's Inner Mongolia]. He is 70. Mr. Meng too is over 70. They are all already retired.
- Alitto: You don't know much about those colleagues who are still alive today, do you?
- Liang: Only a few are still alive. Aside from Mr. Meng and Mr. Li, who are in Beijing, there are others in various provinces. Most, however, are dead. During the war with Japan, quite a few capable students of mine were killed in action.
- Alitto: In the Hong Kong newspaper, the *Guangmingbao*, you published some long descriptions of your travels behind enemy lines during the war, and mentioned that a lot of your students in Shandong were in a guerilla organization. That group was almost completely [killed by the Japanese]...

Chapter 4

August 15, 1980

Liang: The learning of the ancient India was not really something you could talk about, or something the brain could comprehend, or something that resides in consciousness. The basic nature of their learning was to fundamentally transform one's life. It is not a kind of idle talk for the mouth and brain. They have something called "yoga," in Chinese called "*yujia*." Each school's yoga, although on the surface similar, is different. What is the similarity? It is to achieve liberation or release from the life of this mundane world. It causes one to undergo a basic transformation so that one is no longer an ordinary person. This is called "*zhengguo*"—the fruits or rewards of each stage of attainment. Each school has its own *zhengguo*. Each is similar, in form, but different, in actual content.

So, as for my own view, as a Buddhist, I would say that Buddhism in terms of the fruits or attainments, has never gone astray, and has always reached the supreme liberation. What is the supreme liberation? Becoming Buddha, reaching the supreme, perfect *bodhi*. So, Buddhist books and sutras are different from the writings in which we ordinarily record our thoughts, our consciousness. They have hard content, practical things, i.e., transformation of one's life. A human is no longer human. There are various stages, the highest being transformation into Buddha, Buddhahood. From the bottom to the top there are ten stages. Each of the ten stages is called a "*di*."¹ So, of Buddhist scriptures and sutras, there is one very famous, and very important: the *Yogācārabhūmi* (*yujiashi dilun*), a work of more than 100 volumes. The message is, to reach Buddhahood, you must practice yoga. Someone who practices yoga is called a *yujiashi*.

¹ Daśabhūmi—the "ten stages" in the 52 sections of the development of a bodhisattva into a Buddha. The first of these is worldly wisdom, which has not been "fertilized" by Truth, and so is called the "dry" wisdom stage (干慧地). Each of the ten stages is connected with each of the ten "pāramitās," which Mr. Liang proceeds to discuss next.

Each stage, one after another, advances upward. The eighth stage is a Bodhisattva. The tenth stage is Buddhahood. Yesterday we talked about the three things: discipline (*sīla*), meditation (*dhyāna*), wisdom (*prajñā*).

You must first observe the disciplines, for only then is it possible to enter into meditation by tranquilizing the body, mouth and mind. Only by doing this can you achieve wisdom. These are only three things. Usually they say there are six “*pāramitās*” [almsgiving, discipline, patience, zealous progress, meditation, wisdom]. That is, aside from discipline, meditation and wisdom, there are three others. One is *dāna* (almsgiving), which means you can give everything away, not retaining anything. One is called *vīrya* (zealous progress). The sixth is *prajñā* (wisdom, *banruo*). [Mr. Liang was speaking of the six *pāramitās*, and left out “patience” (*kṣānti*) in the listing: almsgiving, patience, zealous progress, discipline, meditation and wisdom; he repeated wisdom (*hui*), that is, “*banruo*.”—compiler] One must practice the six *pāramitās*. Afterwards, your life is transformed. So, the important essential significance of all of this is transformation, or elevation of one’s life. Complete transformation is, level by level, attained at the eighth stage,² which is the eighth stage of the *Yogācārabhūmi*, and at the eighth stage one can become a Bodhisattva. Attaining the tenth stage, one can become Buddha.³ What I’ve been talking about above can be summarized into this: the important thing in Buddhism is to transform one’s own life, or elevate one’s own life. These are not empty theories.⁴

To return to discuss Mr. Xiong. Where was he wrong? He was an ordinary “everyman.” In Chinese we call this “*fanfu*.” A “*fanfu*” is an ordinary man. He never did these real practices of cultivation himself. He discussed these disciplines and practices of others. That won’t do. Later I’ll explain further. In Buddhist learning, one of the main features of Yogācāra philosophy is Consciousness-Only. Now, Mr. Xiong, who was an ordinary person, not an adept of yoga, wanted to create a new Consciousness-Only Buddhism. On the one hand, his New Consciousness-Only appropriated

² Pratyeka-buddhahood (辟支佛), by which only the “dead ashes” of the past is left. At this stage, one understands the 12 *nidānas*, or chain of causation, and so attains complete wisdom.

³ 佛地。The point at which the bodhisattva has arrived at highest enlightenment and is just about to become a Buddha.

⁴ Throughout his life and in all that he said and wrote, Mr. Liang stressed practice (praxis) and practicality (effectiveness). This central strand of his thought is obvious even in his discussion of Buddhism, which most people has nothing to do with either. Mr. Liang’s personality, as exemplified by his actions throughout his life to the very end, was itself a manifestation of these points of emphasis. He himself used the Chinese phrase “表里如一”(unity of inner feelings and outer action), which he used to describe himself later in this day’s interview. That is, he would translate any idea he had into action in the real world. His personal actions were always like this (as shown by the episode of his conduct during the “Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius” Campaign discussed below), and his public actions, such as the way in which the entire Rural Reconstruction Movement was designed specifically to express his cultural philosophy.

something of the ancient Indians, while at the same time he adulterated it with his own opinions to modify it. I think that this enterprise was irresponsible tomfoolery. But, since I had already brought him from Nanjing to Peking University, I could do nothing about it. If he wanted to lecture on the New Consciousness-Only, let him do it. I should add that my relationship with him was quite friendly and cordial. Because he was outspoken and of sanguine disposition, liked to speak in a loud voice interlarded with great loud laughs. Sometimes he would have great outburst of temper. But because of his happy disposition, we still had a friendly relationship. So, this concludes this question. We can now talk about other questions.

Alitto: There is a question that I asked yesterday, but you hadn't finished talking about it. I asked you about the effect of Mou Zongsan and Tang Junyi in Hong Kong. You felt that they had a contribution to the development of Confucian thought, and that, in the main, Tang Junyi's publications were alright. (Liang: Yes.) Are you in favor of anyone else who had written books on Confucian ideology in the last few decades?

Liang: It seems that yesterday I mentioned Feng Youlan. (Alitto: Yes, you mentioned and talked about him.) Feng's books also are about Confucianism, and China's ancient learning. I don't have a good impression of him [however] because of his conduct.

Alitto: This question is about you yourself. Your publications have been praised extremely highly by the academic world both inside and outside of China. Among your works, which one do you cherish and treasure the most? Is there any...

Liang: It hasn't been published yet.

Alitto: Oh, it hasn't been published yet, that is...

Liang: *The Human Mind/Heart and Human Life*. (*The Human Mind/Heart and Human Life* was published four years after this conversation, in 1984.—compiler) *The Human Mind/Heart and Human Life* is the most complete...

Alitto: Are there any of your works that you think are now out of date?

Liang: There is one part in *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies* that is out of date.

Alitto: Some part of it is out of date, but the book as a whole is not. The part you mentioned about the understanding of some thoughts of Confucius and Mencius...

Liang: My understanding of Confucius and Mencius was shallow and a bit crude. Shallowness and crudeness are also mistakes.

Alitto: Of the books already published, the one you most cherish is...

Liang: Of those that are already published, I think that *The Essence of Chinese Culture* was the best done.

Alitto: I have asked this question. But I want to repeat the question: to what do you ascribe your vigorous old age?

Liang: The body is the basis of one's mind and spirit. So, up to now, I've had no illness, and though I'm old now, my spirit is about the same as it was before. But I know very well indeed that my memory is very far from what

it was before. Often I just can't remember something. I know that it is somewhere in my mind, but can't bring it to the surface. For example, there is a contemporary Chinese philosopher—he also studied in the U.S.A.—I admire him very much, but, you see, I can't think of his name.⁵

Alitto: This kind of thing often happens [even] at my age!

Liang: I'll tell you a little story about him. The American philanthropist [Rockefeller] donated a large amount of money to build a hospital [Peking Union Hospital] in China, and did quite a lot of other good work. So he created a committee. On the committee was an [American] Dr. Meng You [his Chinese name]. I can't think of his English name. He was the chairperson of the committee and invited some famous Chinese scholars to attend the committee. One was Hu Shi, the other—the man whose name I can't think of. Yet I still remember his face. He's very interesting. (Mr. Liang is referring to Mr. Jin Yuelin.—compiler) He was not at Peking University, but at the Philosophy Institute in the Academy of Sciences. Once Dr. Meng You was hosting a meeting in the hospital and the other members were there. Hu Shi asked this man [Mr. Jin], "Did you read that article I wrote?" "Yes," the man replied, "it was very good." So, since he had praised the article, Hu Shi was pleased and asked for further comments, "So you think it was very good, was it?" and so on. The man replied, "Yes, it was very good. Too bad it lacked one sentence." Hu Shi quickly asked, "What sentence?" He replied, "You need to add, 'I'm not an expert in philosophy.'"⁶

This was because in that essay, Hu Shi had said that philosophy was only bad science. The man therefore made fun of his ignorance about philosophy. But I can't think of his name! Possibly this man is still living. If he is, he is older than I. Anyway, I haven't heard any news of his death. He had studied in the U.S.A. Originally, he had been sent to study political science, but he didn't like politics, he liked logic. He remained a bachelor, very rare in China. Isn't there the saying that "there are three unfilial things, the worst of which is to not produce an offspring"? This man never married...

...

Liang: Well, my health and age could have something to do with my vegetarian diet; I eat no flesh or animals.

⁵ Mr. Liang's mind and memory were extremely impressive for a man of any age. At this time he was still writing every day, which I assume kept his mind sharp. It certainly did not seem to be impaired in the least by his 89 years.

⁶ Mr. Liang told me this story twice during our interviews. He obviously enjoyed telling it each time, and laughed and smiled broadly. I had the impression that Mr. Liang felt that Hu Shi was indeed no philosopher, and that his various theories were philosophically groundless. To put it a bit more bluntly, I suspect that Mr. Liang thought Hu Shi to be an intellectual lightweight. Upon arriving at Peking University in 1917, Hu and Liang met. Apparently Mr. Liang wanted to pursue a certain question onto a more serious intellectual level, and Mr. Hu refused, saying, apparently to Liang's resentment, that it was hot and it was a social occasion, not an academic one.

Alitto: And you don't drink or smoke?

Liang: Right. I can drink a little grape wine, but that hardly counts; it's very mild with low alcoholic content.⁷ I've been a vegetarian for 69 years. I also eat small quantities. I also have some exercise [regimens] which I learned from others. I'm talking about myself now, not those methods of others. In days of this weather, I wake up at five a.m., and get up. While still in bed I exercise.

Alitto: What are the like?

Liang: There are many that I do. The most important are like this: the most important is a rubbing of the kidneys with the hands (Liang demonstrates where), and then rub the eyes, rub them again, and massage the eyes again. Three times like that, not too much.

Alitto: This kind of exercise is...you said you learned it. What kind of exercises are they considered?

Liang: This kind of exercise is passed on. There are a great variety of exercises. I'm not finished describing them. What I just mentioned is just some of many. Rubbing the kidneys is one kind of exercise. Then another important one is rubbing the arch of the foot. (Liang demonstrates.)

I should explain that there are two major, famous traditions in Chinese learning, two traditions that have been passed down from ancient times. One is the Daoist, the school of Zhuangzi and Laozi. One is the Confucian, the school of Confucius. These two traditions are dissimilar, and are both passed down from antiquity. The Chinese medical tradition is derived from Daoism. It is different from the Western, not only in the medicines it uses. The essential difference is theoretical principle, because the Chinese tradition never developed skills in dissection and anatomy. Well, in far antiquity it did. The *Shiji* talks about Bian Que and Cang Gong. He sometimes opened up the abdomen, took out the intestines to wash them, and later sewed it up. The ancient books have accounts of this thing. Later, the Chinese didn't dare cut open the body. They relied only on you taking some medicine. The classical Chinese medical books include the *Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine* and the *Difficult Classic*. The author of the latter—whoever it was—likes to discuss the Energy Channels of the body.⁸ That is, the blood circulation through the veins and arteries. But this discussion is not like that in dissection and anatomical study of the West. It is from the Daoist tradition. Daoism wants the cerebrum to rest. The function of the cerebrum is primarily to cope with the external, the

⁷ When he invited me out to a vegetarian restaurant the week after this, Mr. Liang did respond to my toasts in beer with taking a few sips himself. As he said, one eats to satisfy oneself, but one drinks to satisfy others. This is perfectly consistent with his interpretation of the spirit of Chinese culture, which stresses respect for the "other" in a relationship.

⁸ Mr. Liang had something of a hobby in medicine, as did his father, Liang Ji, who often brewed the medicine for members of the family.

environment. It wants the cerebrum to rest. When the cerebrum is at rest, humans also have an autonomic nervous system. This system is also under the cerebrum, but when the cerebrum rests, it can operate, and function even better. This is because when the cerebrum rests, it can avoid the interference of the cerebrum. For example, our digestive systems and circulatory systems all belong to the autonomic nervous system. If, when we eat, we are worried about something, or anxious, that eating will not be good; it will influence the digestive process. If you force yourself to eat when worried or nervous, it will influence the digestive process. If you force yourself to eat when angry, you get into trouble. If there is no such external stimuli, if you let nature take its course, and the autonomous nervous system very naturally carries out its activities, then digestion is good.

In my view, usually “*qigong*” (the technique of using one’s inner strength, such as control of muscle and breathing—translator) requires that the cerebrum rest to allow the autonomic nervous system to function freely, and to utilize the body’s own inherent function. Utilizing this inherent function can repair any breakdowns or illness that the body might have. So, in my view, *qigong* operates like this. But I, I too have studied *qigong*. Because I like to think, to ponder, I often have insomnia. Insomnia causes great suffering. So, over twenty years ago, it’s now 1980, so it was about 1956, there was a place on the seashore called Beidaihe. It was an excellent spot for relaxation and excursions. Now a *qigong* sanatorium had been established there. I had insomnia, and so went to that *qigong* sanatorium, and stayed there for some time in summer. There were three kinds of skills used at this sanitarium, each different from the others. Naturally, as soon as you entered you began with meditation. The environment they provided for this was quite good. Each person had a small room. The room was not so big, and was provided for you to rest in and sleep in. The room was designed so as to never have any strong light rays enter. But you were completely free to go out for a walk whenever you felt like it, and to return whenever you wanted. From when you started, for all 24 hours of the day, you were not permitted to see anyone else, to have any contact with others, or to read books or newspapers. You may sit any time you wanted, but only in the proscribed correct posture. You could also lie down—either on your right or left side; that was up to you. The important thing was to allow your cerebrum to rest, to settle down. As soon as you settled down, acting according to instructions, it naturally took effect, and you naturally proceeded down the *qigong* path.

Didn’t I just mention that there were three kinds of skills at this sanitarium? For many people who went there, recuperating was quite effective. It was most efficacious and successful for stomach ailments. For example, for ulcers or for gastropotosis. If you practiced *qigong* under their guidance, stomach ulcers would be cured. X-rays showed the ulcer scarred over. Gastropotosis would also be healed. So, this was making use of the vigor of the body itself. No medicines were taken. So those many sick people who went there to recuperate were healed.

Now, I went because of my insomnia, and for this, it was also effective. This cure of course was also based upon resting the cerebrum, not using the brain. But I didn't get the way as instructed by the *qigong* sanitarium. It seemed that [my] way was not like that; possibly [my way] was Buddhist. Incidentally, I want to say...I don't dare say...I "suspect" that these *qigong* practices came from a school of ancient Daoism, and although I did do this practice according to their conditions—having the cerebrum rest, settling down, being tranquil, but the state I achieved was "the state without thought." That is, the "zone" in which there was no conscious thought. I think the phenomenon and practice are like the Buddhist meditation skill that I spoke of before. Isn't it what we used to call "an old monk enters a trance" (very calm and without worldly passions)? One can be completely without any ratiocination. It's very good. When one has had this experience, it feels so great, so [when] going to do it again, one has expectations, waiting for it to come, hoping for it. Then it won't work. If you expect and hope for it to come, it won't come. You have to let go. You mustn't think "that was so wonderful yesterday; I still want it to happen again today"; it won't work. You have to set it aside, set it aside, set it aside. Only if you don't look forward to it will it happen. If you want it to come, it won't. I achieved this, I think it's very good; it seems it's a trance, it's Buddhist, different from their *qigong*. Later I returned to Beijing, and went to live in a temple in the Western Hills for two months.

...[I] didn't continue the exercise. This is one aspect. Another aspect is that my life has always been quite flat, mild-flavored, with no excitement, which seems to have benefited my life. It's as though I don't have any great demands on life. I don't have any great joys or pleasures derived from the satisfaction of some desire. At the same time, I have no unhappiness, no anger or frustration from unsatisfied desires or demands. I simply don't really have any great desire. For example, in my small study group of about ten-odd or twenty-some people, as in all these small groups, you can talk freely, you can express criticisms randomly. Whatever is on your mind, you can express it to everyone. They have a slogan "an Exchange of Views." That is, you express your views, and we'll express our views. You can criticize me and I will criticize you. So then, you have debates, you "cross swords." Now the other members of the group criticized me, for example, during the "Criticize Lin Biao and Criticize Confucius" Campaign in 1973. Everyone in the group was criticizing Confucius. I said, "Probably for the Communist Party leadership it is necessary politically to criticize Confucius. I'm not too clear on this. But Chairman Mao has said that different opinions can be retained. Okay, I have reservations about criticizing Confucius." At first, I expressed that I would retain my opinions on Confucius. However, I also wouldn't say anything negative in the anti-Confucius campaign. I would simply remain silent. But the members of my study group often intentionally taunted or tempted me into expressing some opinion, so as to criticize me. So I expressed my opinion and ended

up being attacked on all sides. Once, in the midst of being attacked by everyone in the group, I said, “Okay, I’ll quietly listen to everyone’s criticisms and won’t say anything more.” I think that happened in 1974 or 1975.⁹

Alitto: It seems it was 1976 that the newspapers published an article saying that high level cadre visited you with this demand—that you write an essay criticizing Confucius—and you refused. Was this true?¹⁰

Liang: No, it was not.

Alitto: So this never happened. Oh, in the event you were just talking about—the average person in this situation would be quite anxious, but you still maintained your neutral flatness, so it didn’t influence your health. Is this what you mean? (Liang: Yes.) That’s reasonable.

Liang: After Liberation, Chairman Mao wanted everyone to study and reform themselves in small study groups. Probably in these years there were five groups. The number of people in each group varied; each group probably had twenty-some members. The larger had forty-some. Weren’t there some democratic political parties, like the Democratic League, the Revolutionary Committee of the KMT? There were also the China Association for Promoting Democracy, the Jiusan Society, the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, the China Democratic National Construction Association, and also some members without party affiliations, who were combined together and called the “group directly under the People’s Political Consultative Conference.” It was in this study group that I said those words. Although I started the Democratic League, later I left it and was without any party affiliations. So, the story I just told was with the small study group without party affiliation. Now the five groups I just mentioned got together in some joint sessions to criticize me.

Alitto: So were these joint sessions in 1973, 1974 or...

Liang: These sessions were held through 1974 and 1975. Of course the group of all democratic personages was much larger, five small groups involving over one hundred members. So, there was a speaker’s platform, and I remember over ten people spoke, one after another, criticizing me. I remained silent, refusing to express an opinion, even when they tried forcing me to. To remain silence was not good either,...anyway I did not

⁹ It was almost certainly 1974, as the campaign started in the latter part of 1973. Criticism of Confucius was, of course, meant to be criticism of Premier Zhou Enlai, and so the Confucian hero, the Duke of Zhou, was added to the list, a clear pun on the surname Zhou.

¹⁰ This report appeared in several publications outside of China. It was accurate in that Liang did respond to the campaign by refusing to criticize Confucius. For the most part, the report was comparable to what Mr. Liang told me. The reports stated that Liang replied that he was a man of independent thought whose inner convictions and outer actions were identical. His inner convictions were that he could not criticize Confucius, so his outer actions could not criticize Confucius. As far as I can see, the newspaper reports attributed only one statement to him that he himself denied (see elsewhere in these transcripts). The statement was that Liang observed that “he was already 83” and so “had nothing to fear.”

asy a word till the meetings were over. After the enlarged session meetings at which I was criticized, my own small group of nonparty affiliated personages asked me, “What did you think of the criticisms leveled at you at the enlarged sessions?” I answered with a quotation from *The Analects* of Confucius, “The commander of the forces of a large state may be carried off, but the will of even a common man cannot be taken from him.”¹¹ After I said this, I didn’t say another word.

Alitto: So this kind of attitude is good for your health.

Liang: Yes. I am always steady and stable, with inner equilibrium. So, at the time when I said this, I used eight Chinese characters: “*dulisikao, biaoliruyi*”—independent thought; unity of inner feelings and outer action. I am not someone who goes along with the crowd. Whatever I think, I say. My interior self and exterior self are identical. I don’t hide anything. Generally, everyone is good to me. The last time I sat down and had a leisurely chat with Chairman Mao, as we two are doing now, was in September 1973. It was then that we had our conflict.

Alitto: That was 1953, not 1973.

Liang: Right, 1953. I made a mistake. It was September of 1953.

Alitto: In a 1977 newspaper, when a reporter interviewed you, you said that after that September 1953 open conflict with Mao, you didn’t have this kind of private discussion [with him] again.

Liang: Yes. No more leisurely chat after that. Before this, he used to send his car to pick me up and bring me to his house in the Zhongnanhai. If he didn’t send his car for me, I couldn’t go in.

Alitto: You mean your home was too far away from the Zhongnanhai?

Liang: You couldn’t get through his front gate unless his car brought you in. The car that he had sent out was allowed to pass through, otherwise, you could not get in.¹²

Alitto: When you had these leisurely chats with Chairman Mao, what sorts of topics did you talk about, like philosophy?

Liang: No particular topics. He very informally used to send his car out to just come over to his house. These talks were not always about politics.

Alitto: Oh, no particular topics, not formal conversation...

Liang: No. He just invited me over to talk when he pleased. Sometimes we had dinner there too. There was no one else present, just he and I, and perhaps Jiang Qing, and his secretary general Lin Zuhan (Lin Boqu). So there were often four of us.

¹¹ Newspaper reports outside of China included Liang’s quotation of this Confucian *Analects*.

¹² Apparently Mr. Liang did make at least one attempt to see Chairman Mao after this. He wrote something for Mao’s birthday (probably the 1973 birthday, his eightieth), took a bus to the Zhongnanhai and reported to the guards at the gate that he had a birthday present for the Chairman. The guard replied, “Our Chairman does not accept gifts” and, of course, would not let him go in. I think that it is significant that Liang, who had already reached 80 years of age, had the initiative and determination to get himself to the gate, despite the physical difficulty and the psychological pressure.

Alitto: So, I had thought that since you were studying philosophy he would talk philosophical things with you. You say that it wasn't like that?

Liang: So, we just chatted about this and that, our subjects were taken at random. You know, I went to Yan'an in 1938, six months after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident and the outbreak of the war. Our dialogue began then. We both had a great desire to talk together, and both of us were very interested in each other's ideas. Why did I go to Yan'an almost immediately after the war broke out? That was because after the Japanese came, the entire country collapsed. For example, right after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, in the South in Shanghai, on August 13, a battle started. But we didn't have any capacities of resistance. Shanghai fell, and we pulled back to Nanjing. Nanjing fell and we pulled back to Wuhan. In the North, Beijing and Tianjin fell. All of Shandong fell. People were running in all directions to get away from the Japanese. It was a complete collapse, as though no one was in charge. It was obvious that Chiang's government had no way, no capacity to do anything about the situation. I was extremely disappointed in the performance of the Nanjing government.

Alitto: Oh, because in those several months, the Japanese occupied a lot of places, and the Nanjing government had no way of stopping it, you went to Yan'an then....

Liang: When we reached Wuhan, where the national government had retreated to, I got Chiang's approval to go take a look at Yan'an. Before I visited Yan'an, I was extremely downcast and pessimistic. What to do perplexed me. Everyone was fleeing. The Nanjing government was totally incompetent. What to do? So, I thought I'd go see if the Communist Party had any way of dealing with the situation. So, with this mind, I went to see Mao, and found that Mao was not the least bit pessimistic. He told me, "China must unavoidably have to undergo this great disaster. But the Japanese should not be joyful too soon. I expect they will be defeated." At the time I went to see him, he was in the midst of writing "On Protracted War," so he told me in effect the contents of his essay. He said that the Japanese had overrated their own strength. They were dreaming vainly of swallowing up China. A vain dream, a joke. China was a big country, too big, and Japan was just too small. Moreover, it wasn't just a Sino-Japanese question. The world powers would not stand idly by and watch Japan annex China. "An unjust cause draws meager support. A just cause draws myriad support." Later the world powers all stood against Japan.

... We of course had to discuss Old China, our view of it and our theories about it, and it was in this area that our opinions differed. The most important disagreement was on the question of class. He maintained that China had always had class struggle, and I said that in Old China, from the Qin-Han period on, especially in the last 600 years since the Ming-Qing period, although there naturally were differences between rich and poor, there was circulation and communication between high and low. (There was economic, social and political mobility.) These distinctions were not

like classes in the West, which were fixed and fully formed. In China, society and social groups were loose, unorganized and fluid. Because of this mobility, society was fluid and unorganized, and so the struggles were not all that intense or sharp. It was not a situation of two opposing classes—aristocrats versus serfs, as in the Western Middle Ages, or capitalists versus workers in capitalist society. China didn't have any such thing. Chinese like harmony and compromise. Yes, there was struggle, but it was not habitual, nor did it have any great dynamic force. Mao could not completely deny this. We debated for a long time. Finally he said, "Mr. Liang, you are overly emphasizing the peculiar, distinctive nature of Chinese society, but Chinese society is still a human society, and so still has its qualities which it shares with all human societies." I answered, "I completely agree with you. But it is precisely because I completely agree with you that Chinese society has qualities in common with other human societies, that its peculiar or distinctive features are more important. For example, let's say we are speaking of a person. You say, I 'know' that person. Only if you can say what the special characteristic of that person is, what is distinctive about him can you then say you 'know' him. If you speak about the person only from the aspect of his characteristics that he has in common with others—that he is a male, middle-aged, and so on, it won't do. You must speak of his special features as an individual, and only then can you really know him." So, I told Chairman Mao, "Your approach is not as good as mine. I grasp into the special, distinctive features of Chinese society and so really know her better than you." Well, because of this kind of disagreement, we reached an impasse, and our discussions were concluded.¹³

Many years later, he was in Beijing creating the new nation, I arrived in Beijing in early 1950.¹⁴ The first time we saw each other again—in March—we started up right where we left off, arguing the same question. Why did we meet in March? Because in February, he and Premier Zhou were in Moscow, and he returned in March. When we did meet in March, the first thing he said to me was, "Now you will take a position in the government, right?" I wasn't able to make up my mind, and only after I thought deeply for a while did I answer, "Is it so bad to keep me on the outside of the government?" Now, I had my hidden purpose in this reply, but he became angry at it. In offering me a government post, he wanted to get a bit friendlier with me, but I didn't want to get any closer to him. At that time, I really didn't want to attach myself too closely because I misunderstood the whole situation. How did I misunderstand it? It was that I didn't

¹³ I was completely amazed at Mr. Liang's capacity to summarize these meetings with Mao with such accuracy. This description and analysis was exactly the same as he had recorded just a few months after the event. I myself had observed that he must have made his point very well, because shortly after this, Mao began stressing "the special, distinctive features of Chinese society," history, and culture.

¹⁴ At Mao's request (order?) Liang returned to Beijing from Beibei, Sichuan, in January, 1950.

know that the overall situation in China was going to stabilize. I wouldn't permit myself to be that optimistic. In the past, China had been fighting civil wars continuously. How many decades we have had endless civil wars!

Of course, the past had its reasons for happening as it did, but I had seen a portent that seemed to indicate that further civil war was unavoidable. Sichuan was the last area to be liberated by the communist armies. I had been living in Beibei, outside of Chongqing. At that time there were three armies coming into Sichuan. One came in from Shaanxi, Peng Dehuai's 1st Field Army. There were two other armies entering Sichuan from the Yangtze Valley, converging on Chongqing. One was led by Liu Bocheng and Deng Xiaoping, the 2nd Field Army. There was a third under Lin Biao, the 4th Field Army, also coming from the Yangtze Valley. Of course, I could not see the other column taking Chengdu. In Chongqing, I encountered an incident, which told me that there were going to be some problems. What problems? At that time I was in Beibei running a school. I had my children and friends and others living with me there at the school. There was a low-ranking general in the 2nd Field Army, perhaps a battalion commander—who arrived in Beibei and came to pay his respects to me. When he was about to leave, he said to me, "You should really go into Chongqing and look around the streets. Our army has all arrived." I answered, "Yes, I want to go." He said, "I'll leave a car here to take you." He then said to the driver of that car, "Tomorrow bring Mr. Liang to Chongqing." I said, "Wonderful, I did want to go into Chongqing to see the situation." So the next morning I got into the car and rode into Chongqing. I had a friend in Chongqing, in a place called Shangqingsi, and so I had the driver take me to his house. The driver then said, "I'm going to have lunch. I'll be right back." Unexpectedly, he returned and told me, "I can't bring you back to Beibei in the car. It was confiscated by the troops of another field army." Now the car originally belonged to the mayor of Chongqing, some sort of public vehicle. And yet when the armies arrived, they started confiscating it back and forth from each other. So, I thought to myself, this is not a good sign. There was something else I saw which bothered me. The equipment of the 4th Field Army was very good. Its uniforms, weapons and shoes, and so on. It was a relatively wealthy army. Others were not. I felt that this disparity did not bode well.

When I left Sichuan and saw Mao again in Beijing, the entire country was divided into six military administrative regions. The Sichuan area was the southwestern military administrative region. Lin Biao was in charge of the southeastern one before he went to Wuhan.... Although the Nationalists were defeated, couldn't they return and fight again? Now, I had always been in the middle between the two major Parties, and was like a very fair-minded representative of society as a whole. So, I was able to talk to both sides. That is, I could talk to the Chiang Kai-shek side and could also talk to the Communists, so it seemed that it would be better to preserve my middleman status. It was because of these kinds of situations I answered

the way I did when he wanted me to take a government position. It made him quite unhappy. He wanted to get closer to me and I didn't want to get close to him! On the one hand, he was a little bit unhappy; On the other hand, he just wanted me not to keep such a distance from him. So, after that he often sent his car to bring me over for a talk. When he had time from his duties, he sent for me. We never had a real topic, but just chatted at random, and sometimes we dined together.

Alitto: You chitchatted or...?

Liang: With no objective.

Alitto: Oh, no objective. Just some leisurely talk.

Liang: Just whatever we felt like talking about, we talked about. But there were two things that often came up. The first, I wanted to understand more about the methods of the Chinese Communist Party. Just what did they do in their work, what sort of way did they do it? After they got control of the political authority or power of the entire nation, how would they act, what methods would they employ? The other thing is, in the light of this desire, I wanted to go around the country and view their operations from the grass-roots level, so I could ascertain exactly how we (that is, my rural reconstruction ideas) differed, and see if I could offer advice, or could talk to him on these matters. It was right then that Mao himself suggested such an inspection trip. He said that since I had worked before in rural reconstruction, both in Henan and Shandong, and had known about the situation in the rural areas, I could go to some rural areas to see what kind of changes there had been since Liberation. So, I said, "Okay." So it so happened that his own wishes coincided with my own. Now, the chronology of this was—I arrived in Beijing from Sichuan in January. He returned from Moscow on the 10th of March. On the 11th, there was a big banquet welcoming him back from Moscow. At the banquet, Chairman Mao made an appointment with me for the next day. So when we were talking the next day, he instructed his secretary general, Mr. Lin Zuhun, "Mr. Liang is going out to the countryside to observe. Make the arrangements. Send telegrams ahead. Whatever province he is to go to, have that province make the travel arrangements and accommodations ready." So I went on my inspection trip. During the trip I returned to Beijing once, but for most of the next six months I was on the road observing. Since I had worked in Henan (I had helped found the Henan Village Government Institute), my first stop was Henan. At the time, Henan was divided into two separate provinces, one called Henan, and one called Pingyuan. (Later they were united into one province called Henan.) I first visited the part that was called Henan and then the part called Pingyuan. After that, I traveled in Shandong and went back to Beijing for a bit, and then right away went off again, this time to the Northeastern provinces. At that time the Northeast was divided into six provinces, all of which I traveled to and observed. Then I returned to Beijing.

Alitto: When you were in Henan, did you tour any places? Did you go to Zhenping County?

Liang: I didn't go there. That time I didn't go, but there was someone surnamed Lu who had worked there. He was a very optimistic man. I went to the Northeast. He went with me. I didn't bring just one person with me. There were three or four who traveled with me. One was surnamed Huang, one Li, and one Meng.

Alitto: So did you go to all those areas in Shandong—Zouping, Heze, and other areas where you previously worked?

Liang: I went to Heze and Zouping, also Lüshun, Dalian. When returning from there, I went through Liaoning Province, the Northeast. At the time there were already a lot of air-raid drills in the Northeast. All lights had to be extinguished at night, or all windows had to be covered for fear of being bombed. Upon getting back to Beijing, I went to see Chairman Mao. I told him "Too bad, unfortunate." He said, "What's unfortunate?" Well, then when I was inspecting the Northeast, the post-war atmosphere was quite good, and it looked as though the region was recovering. The heavy industries that were destroyed during the war, the important mines like the Anshan Steel Works and Fushun mining facilities were being put back in operation. But, of course, if we have another war, they wouldn't be able to continue to be put back in operation. So it was too bad. He shook his head and said, "We won't have a war. We don't want to fight at all. America doesn't want to fight either. It's best if we don't fight each other." Now, wasn't it in October that China did enter the Korean War? So, there was a war after all.

At that time I feared that the war would result in China being broken up again. It didn't turn out that way. Unexpectedly Mao was able to do away with this situation of China being broken up into military regions. He was able to bring Gao Gang to Beijing and so remove him from his base in the Northeast. When I visited the Northeast, Gao Gang controlled it completely, just as though he was a king. He issued his own currency, different from the national currency. So, Mao was able to bring Gao to Beijing and criticize him and later Gao committed suicide. ...

Alitto: Between 1950 and 1953 you often went to Mao's?

Liang: Yes, he sent his car for me. If he didn't have me picked up by his car, I wouldn't be able to get in the gates—the big gate of the Zhongnanhai.

Alitto: I said like this in the book, that you went to Yan'an and talked with him a week, straight through every day morning to evening.

Liang: The first time I went to Yan'an, I stayed there for sixteen days. During eight of those days I was meeting with Mao.

Alitto: My analysis is like this: you emphasized the characteristics, the distinctive, special aspects of China while Chairman Mao emphasized the common aspects. However, I felt that after your visit—that is, in 1939, Chairman Mao also started to emphasize the particularities of China, the special qualities and characteristics of China, rather than the universal, common

aspects. So I speculated that you might have influenced his thinking. Would you agree?

Liang: I don't dare say that.

Alitto: That is to say, you are not someone in authority. Look at what he wrote after you went to see him. Look at how this policy of his went, how it looked more and more like the measures of a village government commune.¹⁵ In the book I also quoted the opinions of others, and people felt that it was reasonable. Some felt that there were many and great differences between you and him. For example, the question of class struggle. But during the War of Resistance, the Chinese Communists did not do class struggle. During the war, the Communist Party was doing rural reconstruction, which was quite close to your rural reconstruction. In the book I did not dare decide firmly that this was the case [that you influenced Mao], but it did seem to be that way. Another possibility is that at the time Chairman Mao was creating this line of thought in accordance with China's objective realities of the time. Now, you yourself also created rural reconstruction, which was quite close to your rural reconstruction. theory in accordance with China's objective realities. Probably because these realities were similar, the two theories were also quite close to one another.

Liang: Well, possibly in general approach there were similarities. Our starting points were similar. His revolutionary approach was to have the countryside surround the cities. His starting point was the countryside, and I also wanted to construct a new China starting from the countryside.¹⁶ So, our starting points, our general approaches, were similar.

Alitto: Not only could you say that the circumstances in Yan'an during the war, the circumstances in the base areas, in North China, Central China, in Shaanxi were generally similar; even the concrete details were often similar. After Liberation, many plans of Chairman Mao's focus corresponded with the rural reconstruction. For example, rural emphasis, and having small-scale industry dispersed in the countryside, so as not to have them concentrated in the big

¹⁵ People usually use the term "Sinification of Marxism" to describe Mao's policies which he fashioned in 1939 and after.

¹⁶ Here Mr. Liang inadvertently admits that his rural reconstruction program was aimed at organization of rural society, diffusion of modern technology, and thus the creation of a new civilization. Liang had hoped that using the more culturally conservative rural society as a base, he would effect a total economic, political and social revolution that would result in "a new kind of civilization, the likes of which had never existed before," and which he further predicted would be "the inevitable fate of mankind." In effect, Liang had hoped to create a new world civilization that would be superior to the "abnormal," "distorted," money-based, overly industrialized and urbanized civilization of the West. "This is our historic mission....Our movement is both for the Chinese people and for the world." *The Theory of Rural Reconstruction* (《乡村建设理论》), 1937, p. 143, p. 146, pp. 445-447. A general account of the Shandong Rural Reconstruction Institute and the Zouping Experimental District (《山东乡村建设研究院及邹平实验区概况》), Zouping, 1936, p. 6. In these interviews however, Mr. Liang was always very careful to say that all of his goals for rural reconstruction had been met, and so never makes reference outright to this larger, more ambitious goal of creating a "new civilization."

- cities. This was one similarity. There were many. In the book one could say that this was proved. I don't know if in regard to this question you...
- Liang: Yes there are those similarities. As I said, our starting points were the same. The essential thing is that we both wanted to point the Chinese revolution in that direction. My own rural reconstruction movement had two goals: the first was to organize the dispersed, unorganized Chinese countryside into groups, and the second was to introduce and diffuse modern science and technology. So, Chairman Mao did accomplish this through, originally through low-level cooperatives, high-level cooperatives and then the communes. This of course, in my opinion, was an inevitable process. In order for China to progress, the unorganized, loose countryside had to be organized in some way, for only with organization could advanced science and technology be used. In fact, everyone had to walk this path.
- Alitto: From 1950 to 1953, when you were going to Chairman Mao's house to talk, you just mentioned that at the time you and he chatted about anything you wanted.
- Liang: We had informal discussions.
- Alitto: Oh, informal discussion. Of course there had been many topics discussed, but can you think of some now that were discussed....
- Liang: I recorded them all.
- Alitto: You recorded them all?
- Liang: I recorded them in a notebook.
- Alitto: Oh, that's great. Are you going to...?
- Liang: I hid it away. I didn't publish it.
- Alitto: You never published it?
- Liang: But, if you want to see it, you can.
- Alitto: Of course I want to see it. If you have a record, that's great for me.
- Liang: Tomorrow I'll find it for you.
- Alitto: Don't go to any trouble. If you have them hidden in some spot difficult to find, there's no hurry. Of course I want to see them, but I don't want to compel you. After the open conflict with Chairman Mao, in September 1953, did you still have private random chats with him, or fewer, or none?
- Liang: No, I no longer had an opportunity for leisurely chats after that.
- Alitto: No more leisurely chats. Maybe at meetings...
- Liang: We would meet at meetings or conferences, perhaps shake hands and exchange a few words.
- Alitto: His attitude changed? Or let's say he was not so friendly as before...
- Liang: Well, his attitude had not changed much. We would meet, shake hands, and exchange a few words. That is, he would come over to shake hands and say hello. But never again did he have me come over to his house to talk.
- Alitto: Since Liberation, with what people have you had the most contact? People in literature, the academic world, the political world? Friends? Relatives?
- Liang: Well, about the same in each category. For example, didn't I found the Democratic League? Well, I occasionally saw friends from that group. Or, students from my days of running schools of Henan and Shandong. Some come to see me from the provinces. Some still correspond with me. Let me

think. People who call me teacher, or who took classes with me number about four thousand.

Alitto: Four thousand people are quite a lot. As the proverb goes, “the peaches and plums fill the world.” (You have students everywhere.) So with those who live in Beijing, you often have an opportunity...

Liang: There are some... But many have already passed away. After all, most people die in their sixties or seventies, or eighties. People who live to 80 are really very few. Only I myself have lived so long.

Alitto: But you probably have a lot of friends in the 1950s and 1960s.

Liang: There are some, in the provinces, and we correspond.

Alitto: Now many people from those days have passed away. Of course Chairman Mao and Zhou Enlai have passed away. (Liang: Committee Chairman Zhu [De] has also passed away.) Those friends of yours—Chen Mingshu, Li Zongren, Li Jishen have all gone. That is to say, in the 1950s and 1960s you had contact with old friends. I remember in researching your life, in 1966 Li Zongren returned home from America, and you went to meet him. So, you still had these kinds of opportunities for meeting old friends. This might be a strange question, but if you could return to your childhood and start all over again, if you had had chance to live your life over again, what would your undertakings be?

Liang: I never really thought about it. I would probably talk more, have more to say. The most important thing would still be my book, *The Human Mind/Heart and Human Life*. After I finished that book, I was satisfied with my life. I have another book, much shorter. This smaller book manuscript is titled *A General Introduction to Eastern Philosophies* and discusses the three important Chinese intellectual traditions: Confucianism, Daoism of China and Buddhism from India. I discuss these three traditions in relatively simple language and in abbreviated form. I also compare them to each other. So, with the completion of these books, you could say, “All of my aspirations have been fulfilled.”¹⁷

Alitto: So would you, if you were in your teens, take a different occupation, or still do scholarship?

Liang: I have often expressed to people that I am not a scholar.

Alitto: Yes, I know, you have made such statement in your books several times.

Liang: I do admit that I’m someone who has his own ideas, who acts according to his own ideas, and puts them into practice. Because a “scholar” or “academic” in

¹⁷ In these interviews, Mr. Liang did act very much as though it was his responsibility to introduce to the world all of the major features of “Eastern” (meaning Chinese) culture. This shorter book performed the same function, and much of what he wanted to convey to me was what he had written in it. There is a certain consistency in the way he wanted to transmit to me all of China’s major philosophical traditions. In a way, Mr. Liang’s fame and distinguished career as a thinker started with discussion of the relationship of certain philosophical ideas and cultural patterns, as with *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*. So, he continued to think along these lines right to the end of his long life.

Chinese parlance is someone who has mastered China's traditional scholarship and literature, the classics and so on. I have never mastered the classics and classical literature. When I was small, I never read the Four Books and Five Classics. To this day, there are many characters in the classics that I just don't know, so that's one point. Another is that I never mastered modern science of any sort, and my Western languages aren't very good. In science you have to study foreign languages. My Western languages won't do. So, speaking of scholarship, I am only able to take a pass. I say that [as a scholar] I won't do.

Alitto: You really feel this way?

Liang: I myself recognize that I am someone of independent thought. I have consistency between my thoughts and my actions.

Alitto: So, if you had your life to live over, would you be the same—a man of independent thought, and a man who acts upon his own independent thought? And so, you would not be a scientist, a doctor, or a statesman?

Liang: Well, since I was young, I have always had an interest in medicine. So, for instance, the PPCC had several small sections to which its members were attached. One could choose what sections to join. There was one for literature and education, one for medicine and health and one for international relations (this group had the most members). Now, I joined the Medicine and Health Group. It included both Chinese and Western medicines.

Alitto: In the book *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, there is something about medical culture, concerning Chinese and Western medicines. It seems that your father had also studied some medicine? In his "Chronological Biography," cooking medical mixtures is mentioned.

Liang: My father only had some small interest, which did not count. If my mother or any of us children were sick, he would often make medicine for us. In Chinese we have the phrase "Confucian medicine." It seems that all Chinese scholars were able to understand medical books and medical writings. So was my father. He would often treat his own family, but not outsiders.

Alitto: What is your favorite food?

Liang: Food? I'm a vegetarian.

Alitto: Then what is your favorite fruit and vegetable?

Liang: I like most fruits and vegetables.

Alitto: Do you have any particular preference?

Liang: No particular preference.

Alitto: What's your favorite pastime? Or you just have no pastime at all?

Liang: I do have pastime. My favorite physical activity is walking, strolls in parks and such.

Alitto: It seems in 1956 or 1957, some Hong Kong friends said that you studied Tai Chi.¹⁸

¹⁸ As with other Chinese terms that have become part of the English language, I use the incorrect but customary English language Romanization (as with the Romanization of Chiang Kai-shek).

Liang: I studied it.

Alitto: How long did you practice it?

Liang: From the time I started to study it to now, I have practiced it for many years, but I didn't do it steadily, rather it was intermittent. Especially after the Sino-Japanese war broke out and in the immediate post-war period, I was busy running around everywhere involved in national affairs, so I usually didn't have much time for exercise.

Alitto: You mean, you had studied it long before?

Liang: Yes, long before.

Alitto: I didn't know this. I had thought that you began studying it only in the 1950s.

Liang: I had studied it long before, when I was about thirty years old. But after studying it I put it aside; I didn't continue to practice seriously. When I lived by Deshengmen, in Beijing, I was quite near to Jingye Lake (Jishuitan). There was a small hill and everyone used to go there to practice Tai Chi in the early morning.

Alitto: I don't remember you living at Deshengmen. Was that at Jishuitan?

Liang: Yes, at Jishuitan. My house. The property is still there.

Alitto: Oh, when did you start to live there?

Liang: Since the early Republic, sixty years ago.

Alitto: I got this wrong. I thought that the house was your father's friend Peng Yisun's. I didn't know that the Liang family was there too.

Liang: Peng Yisun's house was on the southwestern end of Jishuitan. It was a multi-story house. Ours was on the northwest corner of the lake. The house is still there, but is occupied by others.

Alitto: In your father's Chronological Biography, it seems that he often lived at Peng's house.

Liang: Right. Sometimes my father lived at Peng's house. It was from Peng's house that he left to commit suicide in the lake.

Alitto: It seems that he was about to pass his 60th birthday. As I understood, which was what I wrote, children going to school would stay at Mr. Peng's house. If the Liang family house was very near, it would seem...

Liang: It was on the northern end.

Alitto: Jishuitan was not that big, so the distance wasn't that great...

Liang: It was on the southwestern end of Jishuitan. Our house was in the northwestern corner. The house is still there, and is occupied by others.

Alitto: There was a small island in the Jishuitan pond on which there was a small temple. In the Chronological Biography there was a "High Temple" mentioned.

Liang: But that temple's name was not the "High Temple [to the God of War]" which was on the southern end of Jishuitan, and was very large. We were just speaking of that small temple.

Alitto: Oh, the small temple. When I came in 1973, I wasn't able to meet you. But this place I know I [originally] didn't dare go see; I was afraid. At

that time I couldn't find the stone monument to your father. There was a base for it, but the stone stele was already off, and I couldn't find it. I asked a lot of people in the neighborhood when the monument was knocked down. Someone told me that during the War of Resistance it was still there.

Liang: It was during the Cultural Revolution, in 1966.

Alitto: Oh, someone in the neighborhood had already sawed the stele up into several pieces to be used as building material.¹⁹ Mr. Liang, during the Cultural Revolution period, were you persecuted? Or...

Liang: I had a "Shockwave."

Alitto: "Shockwave." I hadn't heard this term. What does "Shockwave" mean?

Liang: A Shockwave was an attack.

Alitto: Was it the Red Guards?

Liang: The Red Guards, the little Red Guards. They were all junior high school students.

Alitto: They all were junior high school students, and you were still living at the Deshengmen residence?

Liang: Yes, there. The place is called Little Copper Well.

Alitto: They drove away your family and occupied your house?

Liang: They occupied the north side buildings, and kept us captive in the south side buildings. The south side had five rooms, and they kept us in the middle room, a little narrow place.

Alitto: How long did they occupy it?

Liang: They occupied it for twenty-one or twenty-two days, in the northern rooms. They thought it was very good because at that time my house had a telephone, with which they could amuse themselves. I got away light, as they didn't actually beat me up, but they did beat my wife.

Alitto: Was she injured?

Liang: This happened on August 24th. It was hot in summer, and so she was wearing one thin layer of clothing. They beat her so that the blood soaked through to the outside of her clothing.

Alitto: They must have beaten her very heavily to have that happen.

Liang: They didn't beat her lightly. But they didn't beat me.

¹⁹ In 1973 I did go to the spot alone, and saw the base of the monument. Because I was a foreigner which wasn't very common in those days, a crowd of young neighborhood children started following me and staring. I asked them if they knew where the monument was. They told me that they indeed did know of the whereabouts of the stele, and would bring me to see it. They took me to a neighborhood house's yard, where I found the monument sawed up into blocks, clearly intended for use in construction. I had just started to read what characters I could see when the owner of the house came rushing out and shooed me and the children out of the yard. He didn't even speak while he was doing it, assuming that I wouldn't understand anyway. His action was brusque and hostile. I, of course, could not very well argue with him. Until the late 1980s, I do not think people in Beijing welcomed foreigners walking in the hutongs.

- Alitto: Did they beat her as soon as they broke in, or was it...
- Liang: When they first broke into the house, they didn't beat her. First, they threw outside all the furniture in the house, such as the glass cabinet, from the north side rooms. They ripped our bed apart. They took all of the books on the bookshelves and threw them on the ground outside. They even ripped up reference books—dictionaries like my *Cihai*, *Ciyuan* and so on—books that didn't have any ideological content.
- Alitto: What was the reason for that?
- Liang: They were children, and so didn't so much as concern themselves with the rationality of their actions.
- Alitto: So your wife was beaten, and your furniture was also...
- Liang: Destroyed. A lot of cases had paintings and calligraphy in them. They threw them all together and burnt them.
- Alitto: Burnt? The losses were great.
- Liang: The ashes made such a great pile that when I hired a cart to take it away, they had to make several trips. They were moving ashes for three days before they finally carried it all away. Things were really chaotic in those days.
- Alitto: I had this wrong in the book, too. Your friends in Hong Kong hadn't heard about your losses, so I wrote that during the Cultural Revolution, it didn't appear to have...
- Liang: Nothing happened to me. They didn't beat me.
- Alitto: Yes. At least they did destroy things and beat your...
- Liang: Our losses were great.
- Alitto: I had thought that you were still considered as Chairman Mao's friend from the old days, and so they wouldn't dare do anything. So, I wrote it wrong. Your wife who was beaten until blood flowed, did she go to a hospital, or...
- Liang: She didn't.
- Alitto: Her age at that time was quite great?
- Liang: My wife was 71. I was 74.
- Alitto: Oh, is that so? I got that wrong.²⁰
- Liang: Aside from this attack in my own house, there were also "struggles" against her. They led her outside and held her there with others. Others were attacked and struggled against too.
- Alitto: "Struggle" means that they cursed them....
- Liang: Ah, struggle is criticism and cursing, but they didn't struggle against me.
- Alitto: Yes. This is rather strange. Did those children know who you were?
- Liang: They knew. They shoved me into the little room among the five rooms (in the southern wing), and didn't let me come out.
- Alitto: Oh, that is strange. Were these kids from Beijing, or...

²⁰ I had mistaken Mrs. Liang's age because, as Liang later told me, she had lied about her age when they married. The newspaper reports on the wedding were my only source of her age, and so I got it wrong. Of course, everyone else at the time, including the Liangs, had got it wrong too.

- Liang: The kids were all from the Number 123 Middle School. The area where I lived was called the "Little Copper Well." There was a gap in the city wall at that point. The No. 123 Middle School was right outside this gap; it was a junior high school.
- Alitto: Were they children of the neighborhood?
- Liang: Not too far. The school was only about 1500 feet away from the house.
- Alitto: After these 21 or 22 days...
- Liang: Only then did they withdraw.
- Alitto: After they withdrew did anything else happen?
- Liang: Comparatively speaking, nothing.
- Alitto: Comparatively speaking, nothing? That's pretty good. This was something that took place in 1966. (Liang: On August 24, 1966.) After that one time, nothing else occurred.
- Liang: Nothing else occurred.
- Alitto: At that time, your student Huang Genyong lived with you? Or lived in Beijing, at that time?
- Liang: In Beijing.
- Alitto: I had heard in Hong Kong that during the Cultural Revolution he was driven back to Guangdong. Was that true?
- Liang: True. He was sent under escort back to his hometown in Guangdong. Everybody on that train was from Beijing, all driven to the train, and sent under Red Guard escort back to the South.
- Alitto: Why did they want to do that? To escort them to the South?
- Liang: They wanted you to return home, back to your place of origin.
- Alitto: Why did they want them to return home? Was he [Huang] being sent down to the countryside? He was still in Beijing; a lot of people in Beijing were not natives. Why did they want to drive him out?
- Liang: There were a lot of cases like this. Generally speaking, all of the southerners were sent back to the South.
- Alitto: Were there any other friends who also suffered from this....
- Liang: Very many.
- Alitto: Can you give some examples?
- Liang: There were very many. In Beijing there were as many as ten thousand households that were harassed and sent back to their original home areas during this period.
- Alitto: So Li Zongren, Li Jishen, Chen Mingshu...
- Liang: They weren't here. At this time they were not in Beijing.
- Alitto: Did Chairman Mao contact you during the Cultural Revolution?
- Liang: No.
- Alitto: Did Zhou Enlai contact you?
- Liang: No one did.
- Alitto: Do you have relatives in Beijing at present? You have two sons in Beijing. How many grandchildren?
- Liang: I have three grandsons and one granddaughter.

- Alitto: Aside from them, are those from your elder brother's family still in Beijing or in other places? Your elder brother had two daughters.
- Liang: One daughter lives here with me. She is the wife of Huang Genyong. After Huang died, she came from Guangdong to see me, and lives here.
- Alitto: Do you have other relatives?
- Liang: I still have relatives in Beijing. For example, my first wife's family is still in Beijing. Their surname is Huang.
- Alitto: Your mother is surnamed Zhang. Are there Zhangs in Beijing?
- Liang: Yes. My elder son's wife is from that Zhang family.
- Alitto: You still have a son at the Academy of Sciences.
- Liang: My elder son is at the Institute of Biophysics, Academy of Sciences in wBeijing. His name is Peikuan. The younger son, named Peishu, is at the Soviet Union Research Institute of the Central Committee. It does research on the Soviet Union.
- Alitto: Research on the Soviet Union. I didn't know that. Has he been at the research institute straight through, or...
- Liang: In the past he worked at *People's Daily*.
- Alitto: Did he join the Party? When did he join it? Very early, or...
- Liang: His elder brother was somewhat earlier in joining the Party. He joined later.
- Alitto: After the War of Resistance or....
- Liang: It was early, but still it was after Liberation. My elder daughter-in-law was possibly earlier than that. She [joined the party] before the liberation of Beijing. My elder son was a bit later, in the early period of Beijing's liberation, already more than thirty years ago.
- Alitto: What is the greatest disappointment or regret in your life?
- Liang: I don't have any.
- Alitto: How could it be possible that you have no disappointments?
- Liang: I have accomplished what I wanted to in this life. So I have no regrets and disappointments. For example, during the War of Resistance against Japan, I went rushing around between the two major parties to avoid civil war. Well, I did it. My plan was successful. I founded the Democratic League. Other people thought that I wanted to found a party, but that was not my intention. My own feeling was that China didn't need any new political party, like America or England. So, although I founded the Democratic League, my purpose was for this organization to represent society in general, in between the two major parties, and to make the two parties compromise with each other and to further the war against Japan, and the building of the nation. Finally, when I felt that the organization was no longer needed, I withdrew. So, the Democratic League, and the China Democratic National Construction Association still exist, and I don't belong to them.
- Alitto: Well, civil war was not avoided. Can this be counted as a regret, or a disappointment? You threw yourself into the task...
- Liang: As I just said, I never expected that the Communists would be victorious and unite China. I didn't expect it because the Nationalists were so large, so powerful. They had all the advantages, and yet they actually were

defeated! They were astonishingly unable to hold up, and the mainland was united by the hands of the Communists. So, this development was all to the good. What was bad was the fighting itself.

Alitto: Yes! War always causes the people distress. OK, let's take it that you weren't disappointed.

Liang: I'd like to ask, if we go to a vegetarian restaurant for a meal, what day would you find suitable?

Alitto: I think that of course it's OK, but may I be the host?

Liang: It should be me.

Alitto: Well, if you insist. I think that if you...

Liang: On which day do you have more free time?

Alitto: Today is Friday, and Friday afternoon I have to go to Peking University. Tomorrow is Saturday; possibly I might have something to do after noon-time. After Sunday, I have no business. Ah, I do have something on Monday. Sunday...

Liang: If it were Sunday, it would be best.

Alitto: You think that Sunday is best?

Liang: On Sunday, I can have my two sons go together.

Alitto: OK. Fine, of course. I had been thinking of asking you out for a meal. I don't know what you're accustomed to. Possibly you didn't like going out to eat, so I didn't dare invite you. You go to vegetarian restaurants...

Liang: There is a vegetarian restaurant.

Alitto: Are you tired now?

Liang: We can stop for today.

Chapter 5

August 16, 1980

- Alitto: I would like to ask a question that you probably think is not good, because you have already answered it in your writings. But I thought that you might have changed your mind in the meantime, so I'm going to ask it anyway. Do you feel that China will to some degree help bring about a blend, a mixture between Eastern and Western cultures?
- Liang: In fact, China has already taken that direction. China must absorb some of Western science and culture. It has already proceeded in this direction. As to the opposite, how much Western culture has been influenced by Chinese culture, I wouldn't dare say. It is very obvious that the West has influenced China.
- Alitto: But you have said that there will certainly come a day that humanity will, in effect, be Sinicized, and will adopt some form of Chinese culture, that humanity's culture will eventually evolve into Confucian culture.
- Liang: This will not happen until socialism is adopted by the world, after the age of capitalism. In my view, capitalism will gradually die out and the age of socialism will arrive. The difference between socialism and capitalism is that one is based on society, and the other based on the individual. Capitalism is based on individual egocentrism and self centeredness. You cannot say that socialism is based on self centeredness. It is based on mutual respect among individuals.¹

¹ Given that Liang has been some form of socialist since middle school, perhaps this addition to his predictions on the way human culture would evolve is not surprising. In his various theoretical formulations in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, socialism of some sort was always a part of his programs, yet he had never said that the world must become socialist before a form of Chinese culture would become the dominant culture of the world. I see this, as well as in his thought in general, as a very Chinese urge to Eclecticism. That is, as I've stated above, the Chinese way of dealing with anything is to seek harmony and synthesis. There is an unspoken assumption as early as all the pre-Qin texts that the universe is one organic whole that is in flux. The various components of the universe, although they appear to be incompatible with one another, are still interdependent, interpenetrating parts of an indivisible harmonious whole. If two elements are judged to be good and/or true,

- Alitto: I have two more questions. Are the present socialist countries based on society in actuality? The violence practiced in socialist countries—Eastern Europe, Cuba, the USSR, or Cambodia. In Cambodia, for example, millions were killed. Is this an example of mutual respect?
- Liang: Of course not. I think that the presence of socialism in Russia is an anomaly. In Russia, it did not evolve naturally because Russia did not have that much of a capitalist stage. Under the Czars there was not that much development of capitalism. Then, suddenly, there was socialism. They did not develop as a capitalist society to the natural terminus, and then move to socialism.²
- Alitto: Yes, I know what you mean. Then this is true also of Eastern Europe, of Vietnam, Cuba and Cambodia?
- Liang: So in Russia it went from a Czarist dictatorship to a Communist Party dictatorship. If Russia had been allowed to develop under Lenin's leadership, it would have developed later.³ Unfortunately, Lenin died too young. So it's the old tradition still in the Czarist rule. That tradition still had great power. So after Lenin died, there was a major turning point. Now, especially with Brezhnev... the situation is abnormal. They are still traveling in the same course as the Czars, despotism. The ordinary Russian does not enjoy the freedom and democracy of the Western Europeans, and Russia does not enjoy a really advanced industry, which would have resulted in an affluent society and a high standard of living. So Russian youth look at Western Europe with envy. So the USSR, from Khrushchev to Brezhnev, cannot be considered a socialist country.⁴ The USSR is, in my view, a kind of abnormality, an anomaly, which conforms to the history of Russia. Later on, as it develops, it will possibly, in my own view, reverse itself. That is to say, I think that the Party will not be able to maintain their despotism, their rule very long. It will undergo a transformation. This kind of rule cannot

even though they might appear to be completely incompatible, they are assumed to be compatible in some way and so possibly parts of an eclectic mix. So, too, Liang's early thought combined many strains of Western thought that the West would have considered inherently incompatible, and combines them with seemingly contradictory Chinese thought, the various strains of which also appear to have some tensions among them, such as the Buddhist, Daoist and Confucian traditions. Likewise, after 1949, Liang had no problem incorporating the seemingly incompatible Marxism into his Idealist/Vitalist eclectic combination of Western and Chinese thought.

²By this logic, of course, socialism in China is even more an anomaly. In the two decades before World War I, Russia was industrializing very rapidly. Not so in the case of the two decades before 1949 in China. This anomaly has now been erased by China's 30 years of rapid economic development and "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics."

³This is not the opinion of the majority of historians of modern Russia.

⁴I must say that Liang's picture of the Soviet Union probably came partly from his second son, who was a researcher at the Soviet Union Research Institute attached to the Party Central Committee. The implications of some of these statements, such as this one, are alarming. If, for instance, the USSR cannot be considered a socialist country, "from Khrushchev to Brezhnev," then, the Stalinist USSR was a socialist country.

last for long. When an opportunity arrives, it will change.⁵ It won't be like China now. China later will not undergo great changes.

Alitto: Another question. As far as the history of advanced industrial countries by far is concerned, Marx has made misjudgement. He originally predicted that the proletariat would grow more and more numerous, and the capitalists would be fewer and fewer, with the final result that revolution would break out. But in contemporary Japan, Germany, the U.S., Canada and such places, this phenomenon has not occurred; instead there have appeared certain types of what might be called classes that previously no one had thought about. In industry, white-collar workers are more and more numerous; work in the service industry has increased. A capitalist is not as clear-cut and explicit an entity as Marx had said. So, since he was wrong, it is not certain how history in the 21st century will develop.

Liang: He did not expect in his reckoning, his viewpoint and the present situation were not in agreement, not of the sort that he predicted. For the present situation, their interpretation is "the economic substructure, the superstructure." I think that the superstructure in the U.S. is very powerful. This is because the superstructure is not just a question of power alone. It includes culture and learning, which are all tied up with wealth and power. So, it would not be easy to overturn such a superstructure.

Alitto: This brings up another question, that of American popular culture. The common people and masses everywhere have welcomed it. Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union are this way. Western Europe is this way, and many places in Asia are this way, having been influenced by U.S. culture. In some countries one can't say that it is a [politically] imperialist influence. In Eastern Europe it has no economic and political power at all. But the mass culture that has developed in the U.S. has influence everywhere, in my opinion. Why is this? Even to the extent of clothing fashions. The people in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union [liked] American-style mirrors, jeans, and such. Why is this? What has produced this phenomenon?

Liang: In many areas the U.S. really is advanced, and other countries want to learn from it.

Alitto: Is there, after all, any distinction between the advanced and backward in cultural products? Technology can be measured by objective requirements, and can also be considered....

Liang: I think that "culture" includes technology.

Alitto: Yes, cultural products, things like TV programs that the U.S. produces are an example. A lot of countries show American TV programming. But how is it possible to say that American TV programs and products of mass culture are advanced? Because culture has two meanings, a broad one and a narrow one. But how can one speak of advanced or backward culture?

⁵ Liang was remarkably perceptive, in that this is precisely what happened a few years after he predicted it.

For instance, in Japan a lot of Japanese watch U.S. TV programs on Japanese TV stations. Why don't they watch their own programs? This is the phenomenon. American cultural influence is very great. Why? Because America is industrially advanced, so the peoples of many nations [identify American culture with "advanced" culture and so are attracted to it]. In my view, it's like following the fashion worldwide. This includes clothing styles, cosmetics, books, magazines, TV programs, movies and so on. I'd like to ask, how did all these so-called mass cultural products and the influence of the U.S. culture come into being?

Liang: I don't know if my answer would be correct or not (Alitto: There is no "correct answer."), if my answer would address your question or not. Because America is advanced industrially, scientifically, technologically, more so than the USSR, so China wants to learn from it, as well as other advanced nations like Japan and West Germany.

Alitto: Will you say a few words about what you have learned and what you have never learned in your life?

Liang: All learning is not simply a copying from others. Learning is a very creative activity, all in one's own subjective area. But, there are others who are different. Some create little, and learn much from others. China has a proverb: "To draw the gourd exactly according to its appearance." Some people just learn by copying, with little creativeness. I am the opposite. I have always studied and learned with creativeness. Although all creativeness also involves learning, it is still different. Some people create a lot while learning. I myself am like that. I take some material from the outside, but when in my hands, I apply it in creating. I am a person of great creative nature.

Take Chinese traditional learning and culture as an example. My foundations are very weak. I already mentioned that I never learned the classics well. But the quintessence of the classics has helped me very much. I can still appreciate and comprehend it. For example, the greatest Chinese scholar, Confucius. I feel that I really understand Confucius, better than Zhu Xi in the Song Dynasty did. I often say to people, as an example: Confucius says of himself:

At fifteen, I set my heart upon learning;
 At thirty, I established myself;
 At forty, I no longer had doubts;
 At fifty, I knew the decrees of Heaven;
 At sixty, I heard truth with docile ear;
 At seventy, I could follow the dictates of my own heart, without overstepping the boundaries of right...

Zhu Xi explains every stage. One word difficult to explain is the "*ershun*." Zhu Xi explains this as meaning "As soon as the words of the sage enter the ear, the mind/heart understands." I don't agree with this, I think that the meaning for each one of these stages is difficult to understand, and that the meanings should not be guessed at wildly. "At fifteen, I set my heart upon

learning” seems easier to understand. “At thirty, I established myself.” What does “establish” mean? “At forty, I no longer had doubts.” Doubts? Doubts about what? “At fifty, I knew the decrees of Heaven.” What are the “decrees of Heaven”? What does “docile ear” mean? I think that when Confucius was forty he didn’t know what kind of progress—what stage—he would have reached at fifty. He hadn’t achieved it yet. So if even he didn’t know, how would we be able to know? When you don’t know, don’t say, don’t talk. So I don’t agree with people like Zhu Xi. He had to express an opinion. I don’t agree with this explanation. We don’t dare explain randomly or guess wildly. If you don’t know then say you don’t know. We should admit what we don’t know. So, on the one hand, we should admit that we don’t know. On the other hand, what we do know is what it isn’t. That is, we can eliminate possibilities. We know that Confucius wasn’t talking about the natural world, or about social science, or politics or economics. We know that he wasn’t talking about all these other matters. He was speaking of his own life, his own existence, not anything external. His kind of knowledge was a knowledge of life and existence, not other kinds of knowledge. Wasn’t his favorite disciple Yan Hui (Yan Yuan)? ...

... It is not a change, or move, or shift in space. So, it is the same as the “not repeating the same mistake.”⁶ At least, there are similarities between the two. In the *Book of Changes*, there is one section that discusses Yan Hui: “He knows immediately after he made a mistake that he had made one. After he knows, he won’t repeat it.” So, it is somewhat similar to “not repeating the same mistake.” Confucius always spoke from the perspective of the continuous changes and transformation of life. So, when someone asked who loved learning, he praised Yan Hui.

Now what was Yan Hui’s strong point? Just these two things: not taking anger out on others and not repeating the same mistake, which we cannot truly know. That we can’t truly know, however, is only one aspect. Another aspect is that he didn’t talk about odd things, didn’t speak of natural phenomena or social science.⁷ He concentrated on one’s own life. So, no matter student or teacher, their efforts were directed toward their own lives. Of those who passed Confucianism along, I recognize the elder Cheng, Cheng Hao, of the Song and Wang Yangming of the Ming Dynasty.

Alitto: In 1922, when you published *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, you also said that some of Wang Yangming’s followers, Wang Gen (Wang Xinzhai) and the others, also understood the true way of

⁶This is a reference to *The Analects* 6.3 (Yongye). The Duke Ai asked which of the disciples loved to learn. Confucius replied to him, “There was Yan Hui; he loved learning. He did not transfer his anger; he did not repeat a mistake. Unfortunately, his life span was short and he died; and now there is not such another person as he. I have not yet heard of anyone who loves learning as he did.” (《论语·雍也第六》, 三章: 哀公问: “弟子孰为好学?” 孔子对曰: “有颜回者好学, 不迁怒, 不贰过。不幸短命死矣, 今也则亡, 未闻好学者也。”)

⁷*The Analects* 7.21: The master did not speak of extraordinary things, feats of strength, disorder, and spiritual beings. (《论语·述而第七》, 二十一章: 子不语怪、力、乱、神。)

Confucius. So, you still haven't changed your mind? Your statement now and that [in the book of 60 years ago] is about the same.

Liang: In this respect, my opinions are about the same as before. But in the book of 60 years ago, when explaining Confucius' thought, I used the terms "intuition" and "instinct." In both cases, I didn't use them very well.⁸

Alitto: Yes, but you can still be considered a member of the Wang Yangming school?

Liang: Yes, right. Don't they divide all thinkers into the Lu-Wang and the Cheng-Zhu schools? So, I can be considered as belonging to the Lu-Wang school. "Lu" is a Song Dynasty thinker, Wang a Ming Dynasty one. In the Song Dynasty, there were the Cheng brothers. Now, the elder and the younger are different. (The younger brother: Cheng Yichuan; the elder brother: Cheng Hao.) I recognize that Cheng Hao was the correct, or enlightened one. But Zhu Xi didn't understand him. Doesn't Zhu Xi have a book called the *"Reflections on Things at Hand"*? In that book, he didn't quote Cheng Hao... It is not that he said Cheng Hao was wrong or no good. Rather, he said that Cheng Hao's thought was too profound, too brilliant! This judgment resulted from Cheng Hao's thought not being suited to his own temperament or disposition. But I think that in the Song, it is Cheng Hao who was the true Confucian, and in the Ming, Wang Yangming. But the thinker I like most of all is the one following Wang Yangming, Wang Xinzhai. Wang was a man from the lower classes, a salt worker. A lot of his followers were workers and peasants, ordinary people. They were not necessarily the highest ranked academic scholars, because they were all overly bookish. People from the lower classes were not so learned, and some were illiterate, but they could comprehend and understand their own vital forces, their own lives, and this is what is needed. This sort of approach is in accord with Confucius himself and with the true Confucian school. So, because of this, I have always liked Wang Xinzhai very much, and in my book, *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, I praised him.⁹

Alitto: Early in your life, you worked at a great number of different projects. After you participated in the revolution, you were a journalist, and after that, a Buddhist lay devotee, and you taught at a university. Which of these occupations, as far as your later life is concerned, had the greatest influence?

⁸I asked Mr. Liang this question several times during these interviews as well as those conducted later in 1984. The only mistake he admitted to, in his vast production of writings over many decades, is this confusion of intuition and instinct.

⁹In many respects, Mr. Liang's rural reconstruction movement was a twentieth century version of the Taizhou school, of which Wang Xinzhai (Wang Gen) was the leader. Liang hoped that through education, the masses would all become enthusiastic in seeking Sagehood. This was precisely what Wang Gen and the Taizhou school was all about. Wang Yangming, after all, was a high-ranking official. His student Wang Gen was a commoner who, like Liang, had a sense of mission to lead a social movement, not a political one. And like Wang Gen, Liang again and again refused to serve as an official.

Liang: Although I had been a journalist, and an instructor, in fact the more important occupation of all was my work in social movements and politics. Didn't I have a relationship with Mao Zedong and Chiang Kai-shek, and the two Parties? When George Marshall was in China, I had a lot of contact with him. He very much wanted to have the two Parties find a compromise and peace.¹⁰ I also worked on this, so worked quite a bit in political movements and social activities; working in rural reconstruction is a social movement. Political and social activities probably occupied a great part of my life. Teaching, I had done this, at Peking University. Later I also had a lot of students. Well, I was a journalist when I was young, and later I went to Hong Kong to run *Guangmingbao*, and so again was a journalist. The thing I very seldom did was to be an official. I had a very good friend, Li Jishen. When I was 36 years old, I went to Guangdong Province to see him. He had not sought my agreement. I went to live in the countryside about 30 kilometers outside of Guangzhou.¹¹ He didn't get my agreement, but he issued the news to the National Government in Nanjing that I was a member of the Guangdong Provincial Government Committee. I did not take up the office and indicated that I wouldn't do so. So, you could say that I have never been an official. In my entire life, I've never been an official, but I have done social and political activities.¹²

Alitto: That is, aside from having been the county magistrate of Zouping.

Liang: Right, you saw that! Because we were administrating Zouping County, which was under the Rural Reconstruction Institute. There was a period of about two months, right then we couldn't find someone for the post of county magistrate, so I myself held this office part-time.

Alitto: Right, so it could be said that you have been an official.

Liang: Yes.

Alitto: Concerning this book you...

Liang: I don't know.

¹⁰ Despite Liang's founding of the non-Nationalist non-Communist democratic political group during the war, and despite his leading it precisely during its most significant period, 1947, he is mentioned less than Zhang Junmai or even Luo Longji in the Western language historical scholarship of the period. Obviously, these latter figures promoted themselves more into the limelight than Liang did. It is also often forgotten how active Liang was as the intermediary not only between the two major Chinese political Parties, but also between them and George Marshall. For his part, Marshall greatly admired Liang and the group of liberal democratic intellectuals he led. Indeed, in Marshall's mind, the ideal solution to the conflict between the Nationalists and the Communists was to have Liang's group, which he described as "a fine group of men," emerge as an important political force that might lead China to democracy.

¹¹ Mr. Liang's point here is that he was out of communication with Li Jishen in Guangzhou. This would explain why Mr. Li didn't contact him before reporting to the Nanjing National Government that Mr. Liang was a part of the Guangdong Provincial Government.

¹² Never having held an official post was something of which Mr. Liang was extremely proud. He mentioned it several times in his writing, and mentioned it to me during these interviews and those a few years later.

- Alitto: You don't know about it? After I returned to the U.S., I will ask a Hong Kong friend of mine to buy it and send it to you. I myself haven't read it yet. I heard that there was such a book.
- Liang: What's the title?
- Alitto: I don't know. I think I can find it.
- Liang: You don't know the title; the content is about me.
- Alitto: Exactly. It seems that it is in the form of a biography; it isn't a Chinese style chronological biography.¹³ Mentioning this kind of work, I also compiled one, down to when the War of Resistance starts. I compiled a Chinese language chronological biography, but it's different from the traditional Chinese chronological biography in that it has footnotes, illustrating the materials from which I got the information about an event. It's a Western-style book. I think that probably I'll publish it in Hong Kong. Before publication, I can send it to you for you to read. You can correct the mistakes. (Liang: Alright.) I haven't compiled the part from the War of Resistance to the present yet. Probably it should be divided into two volumes, because I think it would be better to publish it soon.
- Liang: I have two books that I don't know if you've read or not, about my first visit to Yan'an, and my first talks with Mao.
- Alitto: I have seen some in the *Guangmingbao*...
- Liang: Yes, some were published in the *Guangmingbao* in Hong Kong.¹⁴
- Alitto: I found the complete set of the Hong Kong *Guangmingbao*.
- Liang: Oh? That's not an easy thing to do.
- Alitto: Several articles were divided into several parts, such as "What am I striving for?" This is there. It is a recollection of your past life. Looking back on your life, what do you think was the most important thing in it?
- Liang: The biggest was working in society and in social movements. Rural reconstruction was a social movement; this kind of social movement had considerable influence. For three years straight we held an annual nation-wide rural work symposium. Rural work was an important task at which I labored in the past. Another was the task of uniting the parties to resist Japan.

¹³ I do not remember what I was referring to when I told Mr. Liang. At the time I interviewed him for the first time, there was, amazingly, no real published work done on him inside or outside the mainland of China, aside from my own book. He was mentioned, of course, in academic histories about other subjects. Some of his works had been republished in Taiwan, but even there, a ban was in effect. When I went to Taiwan for Chinese language study and dissertation research in 1969 and 1970, I brought with me photocopies of Liang's work that I had made in the Harvard University Library.

¹⁴ In 1941, the group of liberal democratic political parties that Mr. Liang had formed the year before had decided to create a voice for itself through a publication. The Nationalist Party would not have allowed such an organ to appear in Chongqing or the other big West China cities, so Mr. Liang clandestinely stole out of Sichuan to go to Hong Kong. There he set up and began to publish the *Guangming Daily* (《光明日报》), the official organ of the Chinese League of Democratic Political Groups (中国民主政团大同盟). The newspaper closed when the Japanese occupied Hong Kong on December 25, 1941. The name lives on in the current Chinese national newspaper, *Guangming Daily*.

Because I had gone once to the guerilla area, and there had seen the troops of the two parties fighting with one another, I became fearful that this would lead to civil war, so I first organized the “Comrades Association for United and National Construction,” and later the “Democratic League.” Others mistakenly thought that I wanted to organize my own political group. Actually this was wrong. I did not hold that, aside from the two major parties, China needed a third group. I never meant that. The Democratic League was not a third political group, so what was it? It was to promote the two major parties to unite in resisting Japan, and cooperate in constructing the nation. As long as there was unity in resisting Japan, it would be fine; as long as the nation would be cooperatively constructed, it would be fine. I did not want to create some kind of political group, so now the Democratic League still exists, but I am not a member. In the first phase [of my life] I devoted myself to social movements; in the second phase, to national affairs.¹⁵

Alitto: In your private life, what was the important event? You just mentioned the two important things for society, for the nation, for the people. What was important in your personal life?

Liang: My writing of books, especially the largest and the most important one, called *The Human Mind/Heart and Human Life*. I asked a friend of mine who has good English, “How should the name of my most recent book *The Human Mind/Heart and Human Life* (*Renxin yu Rensheng*) be translated into English?” He said that this term “*renxin*” is not one word in English, but rather there were two words that had some relationship to it. One was “Mind,” and the other “Heart.” That would be “Mind, Heart and Life.”

Alitto: Yes. I also think it’s not suitable, although directly translated into English is like this. The word “*xin*” has two meanings, but it is still a bit not... (Liang: Strained?) It isn’t pleasing to the ear. How about this: if you want, I would be happy to translate the book into English, no problem.

Liang: I think that this is the most important thing in my life; having written this book is the most important thing.

Alitto: I think that your life hasn’t been completely smooth sailing. In it there have certainly been heart-breaking events. Do you want to talk about them? It might serve to encourage and stimulate later scholars who find themselves in difficult straits. You have encountered a lot of setbacks, right?

Liang: I think that it seems I haven’t actually had any heart-breaking events. (Alitto: Really?) No. I only feel that I have things that I haven’t done well,

¹⁵ Actually, Liang had devoted himself to national affairs, at least part-time, for his entire adult life. His first employment in 1917 was a critically important post in a national ministry. The next year he published a quasi-political pamphlet, “If We Do not Take Action, What Will Happen to the People?” (吾曹不出, 如苍生何?) Even during the 1920s and 1930s, Liang continued to have contact with political power-holders, and sought to influence their conduct and national affairs. During the war and after, of course, he devoted himself to political tasks, stopping only after he retired as leader of the Democratic League in late 1946.

things that I've failed or made mistakes about. For example, speaking of mistakes, that event in September of 1953 was my own mistake. I was too arrogant, too bigheaded, and so refused to go along with His Honor Mao. After that event I thought that I shouldn't have acted that way. I should have respected him more, and should not have fallen out with him.

Alitto: So at that time did you feel sad?

Liang: I didn't feel sad. I just felt that I had made a mistake, that I had been in the wrong, but that can't be considered feeling sad. If I have been sad in my life, it was at the death of my first wife. I was a bit grieved. Because I felt that she really was so good, and so her dying was a saddening event. Right when I was 40-some years old. Previously the Chinese ancients had a saying, "It is a great misfortune to lose a spouse in middle age." That is, if it were a bit earlier, not middle age, for example at thirty... Is it considered a great misfortune to lose a spouse at thirty? Naturally it is considered still a great misfortune, but it is easier to forget when younger. After a while, the sadness passes, and is forgotten. The great misfortune of losing a spouse in middle age is also different from in old age when both spouses are going to die soon and it seems it's not that bad. Right in middle age, right when the feelings of the two spouses are deepest, their emotions are intense. This time is different from youth and old age. So, if I've had a saddening event, it was [the death of] my first wife, who was also the mother of my two sons.

Alitto: I got this wrong in the book. I can only blame myself for having listened to people in Hong Kong and Taiwan who knew you previously. They said actually it seemed that you got along better with your second wife. I made a mistake.¹⁶

Liang: Things happen differently from one's original expectations and plans. An example is my first wife. I cherish her memory. She wasn't very educated, but was literate. She had no learning. Later I had a chance to have a second wife. The second wife happened to be introduced to me by a friend. She was a graduate of a Normal University, and moreover was...

... A person's personality, temperament is inborn; it's the inborn aspect that is important. Assuming someone has his inborn aspect and his acquired aspect, it is the inborn aspect that is the most important. His personality, temperament, intelligence and wisdom are all inborn.

¹⁶These friends of Liang's whom I interviewed had seen him and his second wife together, and felt that they got along well and, because of the second Mrs. Liang's educational background, that they were better matched than he and his first wife. As the only other source I had about Liang's second marriage were the newspaper reports about his second marriage (which described the match in similarly rosy terms), I had concluded that his second marriage was the better one. One cannot but wonder, however, if the Liang of the 1940s and the Liang at the time of these interviews were "different" in this regard. Liang's first wife had been the companion of his glorious youth. His second wife had been with him during the most discouraging and difficult periods. She was his companion for 40 years, into advanced old age, and therefore close to the unromantic present. My interviewees had all seen the couple together close to the beginning of their marriage. Probably the truth lies somewhere in between Liang's memory in 1980 and the impressions of interviewees.

- Alitto: I got this wrong, an improper mistake; because as I understood, your first wife passed away while in Shandong. Your friends felt that your relationship with her wasn't as close as that with your second wife. Anyway, I was wrong.
- Liang: I'll add another point. That is, my second wife, wasn't she a university graduate from the education department? When she and I were married, I was fifty and she was three years younger. She was already 47, too old.
- Alitto: This I also got wrong. I had thought that she was ten years younger, actually it was only...
- Liang: She was three years younger. Marrying at 30 for a woman is not very early. At 40, it's considered late. At 47, it's too late. These kinds of people who marry too late have very strong personalities.
- Alitto: Yes, because they have already gotten used to the single life.
- Liang: A strong personality, with the consequence that it easily...
- Alitto: I got this exactly wrong. The newspaper reports about you said that she was ten years younger. I wrote according to the newspapers of the time.
- Liang: Wasn't she too old? 47 is too old. She concealed her age.
- Alitto: Yes, this I didn't know.
- Liang: She concealed her age. She herself concealed it. The friend who introduced her to me also concealed it. In reality her age was too great.
- Alitto: This is very interesting. The impression of your friend I mentioned and the impression of the newspapers at the time were both the diametric opposite of the real state of affairs.
- Liang: It was like that.
- Alitto: An interesting phenomenon. Now I think, in China, I can search for material and interview a lot of people, but still... I just remembered. Mr. Hu Yinghan told me that after the war was over, one day in Beijing he and you and your wife were together, so...
- Liang: That was the second one.
- Alitto: Yes, with the second one. The question of women came up. Mr. Hu said that you mentioned a kind of theory that women were not creators, that they were the creators of creators, and your wife lost her temper and asked you how you could possibly say such a thing. Mr. Hu said that you then convulsed with laughter. Was there such an event? Possibly you don't remember such a small incident. (Liang: Right.) What opinion do you have of the Women's Liberation Movement in the West?
- Liang: Didn't I say the last time? I had a foreign friend. His [Chinese] name was Wei Xiqin (Wei Zhong) [Alfred Westharp]. He spoke insightfully on men and women being different, that which you just mentioned, it was he who said it.¹⁷ Naturally, this is to say that Heaven gave women the duty, or you could say, the mission, the important one, to bear children. In a woman's life it is the period in the middle that she can bear children. She can't [bear children] too early or too late, when old. When it is too early, a woman is

¹⁷ Translator note: The previous mention of Westharp and his theory does not appear in this transcript, although it was on the original tape recordings.

not yet very womanlike. When too old, she is also not very womanlike. In any case, it is in that period in the middle of her life that she is a real woman. In this phase, Heaven has given her the responsibility, the mission, to bear children. This mission lies in the body, not in the brain. A man's mission lies in the brain. So to perform work according to nature is correct. Going against nature and forcing things is not good. So Westharp's argument was that doing scholarship, or even going so far as to be a politician or a military expert, was not suitable [for women]. But possibly being an artist was still suitable. This was his opinion. I agree with him.

It seems that there had been a famous German philosopher—his name was [in Chinese] Shubenhua [Schopenhauer]. He said: What are females? What are women? Women are big children, that is, they are children but they aren't very small children. Big Children. Women are likely to form a group. For example, at a big meeting, the women would get together to talk with one another. The men naturally also gather together into groups, but many will be by themselves. Go to a large meeting and you would see this situation. Women sit together in a group, and speak with one another very happily. In Beijing speech—in which unlike the men who are able to “keep cool”—[women] are a bit flighty. This is all to say that male and female dispositions are different. The importance of this is as I just said, it seems that naturally Heaven gave males the mission to create—no matter academic or political creation, even the creation of military command in combat—it's all creation. This kind of creation should fall to men. Do not look to have this kind of creation fall to women. Because a woman has her assignment; she has her Heaven-given mission. I actually agree with these remarks of Westharp's.¹⁸

Alitto: Have you changed your notions from what you and Westharp said on the question in the 1920s?

Liang: As far as my views on the differentiation between men and women are concerned, they are still the same.

Alitto: I don't know, but possibly you don't know about Women's Liberation Movement, especially in the U.S. Europe has it too. The movement demands equal rights for men and women, even in the U.S. females have special treatment. In seeking employment, females should have special treatment. Some have discussed women are already following military careers—but we are presently debating the question whether they should be in combat. Even some of the more radical women's liberationists say that females should not have dealings with males, should not marry them, should not have sexual relations with them; only women together with

¹⁸ Such a statement does very much separate Liang from mainstream contemporary thought in China and abroad. Foreign academics would take this opinion of women are concerned to be the very epitome of male chauvinism.

women are right. It sounds quite strange, especially to a Chinese. First, have you heard about the U.S. Women's Liberation Movement? Second, what is your reaction to or opinion of it?

Liang: I actually agree with the opinions of my foreign friend Westharp that I just mentioned. That friend had also said, "Foreign, especially Western, women are man-like. Chinese men are woman-like."

Alitto: Do you think that this is correct?

Liang: This is a fact. It is this way factually. Is it correct? I think that there is some truth in it. Foreign women are a bit man-like. Moreover, it seems that they are not only already man-like, but in addition, they strive to be men.

Alitto: Would your second wife be considered a women's liberationist?¹⁹

Liang: Didn't she get married very late? She had been straight through a middle school teacher, and a Normal School teacher. She had been a middle school teacher continuously for several dozen years. She had a strong personality, so it was difficult to keep from having conflicts with people. It happened that in August 1966, there was that Cultural Revolution campaign. She was beaten very severely.

Alitto: Who is the Chinese you most admire, either in the past or at present?

Liang: Very early, when I was young I admired Zhang Shizhao. His sobriquet was Xingyan. His nom de plume was "Qitong" (that is, "Autumn Tong tree"). When I was still young, in middle school, between 14 and 19 years old—during this time I read Mr. Zhang Xingyan's (Zhang Shizhao's) articles. I didn't know the [real] name of this person. I just saw his nom de plume Qitong. One form that his articles took was as European dispatches. He wrote articles at Enrope for newspapers. I read them with great interest. I especially liked his discussions of political systems. Because at that time China had started to copy Western political institutions, there was the issue of a national parliament, so there was much discussion over whether to adopt a bicameral or unicameral assembly. Other matters that he wrote on were the English system of a cabinet responsible to the parliament, a party cabinet. I was extremely interested in these essays. At that time in my life, I was fanatical about government reform in China and most admired the English-style government. So, just then he was writing on those things and discussing them—such as in learning from foreign countries, whether China should adopt a bicameral system or a unicameral system. I liked to read these essays of his very much, although I didn't know who the writer was. I was in my teens, in middle school in Beijing, and after reading his articles in newspapers, I admired this person and his writings very much.

Later, I started reading the *Minlibao* of Shanghai. Most of its articles were also on politics. He wrote for it too—called himself Xingyan. I said to

¹⁹This was a stupid and unfair question on my part, in that it was already obvious Mr. Liang had no idea what "Women's Liberation" was.

myself, “This Xingyan must be the Qiutong I have read before.” I still didn’t know his real name, but I judged them to be the same person. Later, Liang Qichao established a publication *Guofengbao* in Japan. It also mostly featured articles on politics and government. Once, there was an article on translation of Western scholarship or academic things into Chinese. Yan Fu (Yan Jidao) had in the past also discussed this problem of translation. He had three criteria: fidelity or faithfulness; ability to convey; the third was elegance. Yan was very particular about it. So in translating foreign writing, he would adhere to these three criteria. So, he always translated into literary Chinese, very elegant. He did not use colloquial style. This is the problem of translation. So, in the *Guofengbao*, I read an article on the translation problem. It was signed Mingzhi. The topic was very different from his other writings on politics. It was not signed Qiutong, or Xingyan, but a new pen name, Mingzhi. However, I believed the three must have been one and the same. Later it proved to be accurate.

At that time he was in Japan publishing a journal called *The Tiger* (*Jiayin*). It was at that time that I corresponded with him and only after that did I know his name was Zhang Shizhao. Later he came to Beijing. I liked being with him very much, and admired him. After that, however, I was greatly disappointed. Why? The revered Mr. Zhang, older than I by quite a bit, was a very talented and able person, so his desires were also powerful. So his personal life was corrupt. He smoked opium, gambled, visited prostitutes, had concubines, altogether three. I was most disappointed. But although I was disgusted with his personal character, up to the time he was 90, I still associated with him.

Alitto: He passed away in Hong Kong in 1973.

Liang: Right, at age 93.

Alitto: Look, this isn’t bad. Although his life was this way, he still lived to 93. It seems it didn’t have any influence on his health!

Liang: Yes, it would seem that way.

Alitto: Others whom you admired were...

Liang: This was someone who I admired when I was young. There’s another Zhang, that is, Zhang Binglin (Zhang Taiyan). I think his scholarship was good, he also was... I think that he was still a layman [in Buddhism], that he knew very little about [true Buddhism]. Wasn’t he an important revolutionary figure in his youth? At that time, he was critical of Confucius. Later he changed, and then revered Confucius in his old age.

Alitto: Before the 1911 revolution he was an advocate of the “*National Essence*.” He didn’t want Confucius, but wanted to retain Mozi and Xunzi. What aspect of him did you most admire?

Liang: His erudition was very profound, and his personality was independent, original. Never went along with everybody else in his opinions. He was of strong character.

Alitto: Anyone else? You have spoken of... (Liang: Two Zhangs.) Later in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, was there any change in the people you admired?

Liang: Speaking of famous people of the time, didn't famous figures in China include Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao? I much disliked Kang Youwei, but admired Liang Qichao very much. It also so happened that I was close friends with Liang Qichao, had a lot of contact with him. This was quite extraordinary, as he was of the older generation. He made an overture to me first, when I was still very young, a beginning student. I very much admired this in him. He was twenty years older than I. This was very modest, self-effacing on his part. I was first acquainted with him through his writings in his *New Citizen Journal*, which I liked very much. Later, we got to know each other.

In 1920, as I said, he came to see me at my home. He was of the older generation, and he was famous. I was not yet famous at the time. I admired him in my heart. Why did he come to see me? At that time, he was interested in Buddhism. Someone told him that I was teaching Buddhism, so he came to see me. In the area of Buddhism, he was quite modest; even though I was of the younger generation, he was quite deferential. Alas, I lost all of the many letters he wrote me; they were not preserved (referring to them being destroyed during the Cultural Revolution—compiler).

Alitto: So you had some contact with him until...

Liang: Continuously until the spring of 1929, when he died. In 1929, I returned to Beijing from Guangdong; he had already died by the time I arrived. When I was still in Guangdong, we still corresponded. But I disliked Kang Youwei, very much.

Alitto: Yes. Especially after he promoted Confucianism as a religion, it seems that you...

Liang: Wasn't he working on some kind of Confucian Church? But that problem was relatively small. (Alitto: This problem was small? You say that he...) That was part of it, but not the most important reason. The most important problem was that he was hypocritical and deceitful in many matters. For example, he used to predate his writings. That is, he would put a much earlier date on them before he actually wrote them. Why? This was dishonest.

Alitto: Right. I had thought that possibly you opposed some parts of his *The Great Commonwealth*, parts that you didn't agree with?

Liang: Didn't he write *The Great Commonwealth*? I still have it on my shelf. I think that his *Great Commonwealth* ideal is by no means profound or advanced and not worth all the lavish praise. Well, it's fine to think of the very distant future, what society will be like, and fine to write it down, but it should be recognized that the worth of such an enterprise is certainly not great. Science should be emphasized, and not simply spout fantasies and pipe dreams. Of course, fantasies can be articulated, but they have no great value. The only kind of thinking that has real value is seeking the truth from the facts, and come down out of the clouds. Kang had a swelled head and was extremely proud of himself. Of course, I admit, when he started his career, during the 100-day reform, helping the emperor institute reforms, he was great, very creative, indeed imbued with a creative spirit. But later he was no good.

- Alitto: The final question is, what Chinese do you admire most? Zhang Shizhao or...
- Liang: The two Zhangs, and also Zhang Taiyan.
- Alitto: If I ask who you think the greatest Chinese is, would your answer be different? Is there a difference between who you admire and who you think great?
- Liang: There is a difference.
- Alitto: So, who do you feel is the greatest Chinese, no matter whether a historical figure or someone still alive?
- Liang: I feel that it's not in the too distant past, and also not the present. I'm afraid that it is Mao Zedong.
- Alitto: So it's still Mao Zedong? Well, you...
- Liang: He was really formidable. He is a world-class great historical figure. When he became old, however, he was no good. He made a lot of mistakes in his dotage.
- Alitto: What was Mao Zedong's greatest achievement?
- Liang: It was that he created the Communist Party. Without Mao Zedong there would be no Communist Party. If there were no Chinese Communist Party, there would be no New China. This is absolute, 100 % fact. But in his later years, he became muddle-headed, and made a lot of mistakes and failures. Now, Zhou Enlai on the other hand did not fail in his later years. Zhou Enlai was what we used to call a "paragon." You cannot not find any failures, or any mistakes in him; they are practically absent. He was truly a "paragon." But, as it happens, he was innately a second fiddle. He was born to be Mao Zedong's assistant. As a man, however, he was the best, the very best.
- Alitto: I actually also think that you are right in this statement.
- Liang: Everyone honors Zhou Enlai's memory. On the other hand, some people were and are dissatisfied with Mao, or with certain things he did.
- Alitto: Comparing Mao with other figures in Chinese history, which figure in Chinese history does Mao most resemble? In a hundred years from now, when studying China of this age, with what figure in Chinese history will future historians compare his historical role to?
- Liang: Most people see him as a Han Gaozu or as a Tang Taizong as in the Chinese history of the past several thousand years, but Mao himself thought that these dynastic founding emperors were run of the mill, nothing special.
- Alitto: Another separate question: Who is the foreigner whom you most admire? That is to say, among those you have heard about, or have read about, who do you most admire?
- Liang: Well, at least about philosophical thinkers, the person I like the most, and whom I most revere, is Henri Bergson.
- Alitto: So, to the present it's still him. I remember that when you were writing *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, you said this. You said that the first time you read Bergson's writings, you felt that it was a matter of great joy in your life. So you still feel that as far as foreign thinkers are concerned...

Liang: Of course I also admire the profundity of Germany's Kant.

Alitto: What about foreigners in the area of politics?

Liang: I'm not really so clear on who the great people are in politics or in military matters. In general, those great people who are often mentioned, like Napoleon...well, I just go along with everyone else, and don't have any particular opinion of my own.

Alitto: A lot of people say that you are a uniquely wise and profound man. What supported your motivation for your achievements?

Liang: Supported my motivation? I don't quite understand this.

Alitto: Eh, we can say "motivation," or we can say "psychological or spiritual anchorage." That is to say, why do you have the attainments you have today?

Liang: I derived great strength from Buddhism.

Alitto: OK. I understand now.

Liang: I really want to talk about Confucius and Buddhism again. Didn't you say that I was the "Last Confucian"? I want to say a word more about the similarities and differences between Buddhism and Confucianism. Possibly I have already expressed these opinions before. Confucius and Confucians always speak from the standpoint of humanity, of humans or of humanism. Confucius, no matter what he is talking about, still is in the sphere of the human. But Buddhism transcends humanity. Its central focus is not on the human himself, but rather on an area that transcends the human. So, these two kinds of thought are very different. Yet, there is one area in which they are similar, and that is "egoless self-sacrifice for the salvation of the world." That is, they both seek to forget the self and save the suffering. In Buddhist terms, this object of salvation is "sentient beings." The suffering of sentient beings is the suffering of the Buddhist, which is shared. In China, let's take Mozi as an example. Now, Mozi also sought to do the same. He spent his entire life trying to save people, rushing around for others. So, on the surface, there is no difference between the Mohists, Buddhists and Confucians. The major difference between the Confucian enterprise of salvation and the Buddhist lay in the concept of "self" or "ego." The school that analyzed this problem of self most completely was the Buddhist Consciousness-Only (Yogācāra) school. It talks about the eight consciousnesses. The first six are the senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, tactile feeling, and also mind. These first six are for coping with the external world; they are all tools, or instruments. They are all directed toward the external. Using these six tools is life, is living beings, e.g., a living person, a living human. This is called "*dīqiyuandiba*" (the seventh and eighth consciousnesses control the six others).

Alitto: I really should devote more study to this aspect of things. In researching your thought when you were studying Consciousness- Only, [I found] it very complex. Your thought is very complex. I didn't devote much time to Buddhism.

Liang: The seventh mind is called the "manas consciousness"; the eighth is called the "storehouse consciousness." These two consciousnesses apply,

use and control the first six. This is called “*diquyuandiba*.” That is, it holds to a self (clinging to the self called “*wozhi*”—*ātma-grāha*—clinging to the idea of a self). (Alitto: “*Wozhi*”?) This kind of “holding” (making a motion with hand).

There are two kinds of things clinging to notion of the reality of the ego. One is called “*fenbie wozhi*” (the clinging to this notion of the reality of the ego as a result of intellectual reasoning). The other is called “*jusheng wozhi*” (the inborn instinctive cleaving to the idea of the self). This refers to the natural, intuitive assumption of the reality of the self, prior to intellectual reasoning. This inborn instinctive cleaving to the idea of the self is extremely deep, very concealed. The “clinging to this notion as a result of intellectual reasoning” is shallow. The deepest and strongest of the clinging to the reality of the self (*wozhi*, *ātma-grāha*) is our very life, the root of life. In ordinary activity, in life, the clinging to this notion as a result of intellectual reasoning is also active. But when we are sleeping—the deepest dreamless sleep with the cerebrum being as though completely inactive, very very deep sleep—at that time, the “clinging to the notion of the reality of the self as a result of intellectual reasoning” does not appear. But the inborn instinctive cleaving to the idea of the self does not weaken in the slightest; in deep sleep it’s still this way. Perhaps I’ve been injured, fallen from a height and it appears as if I were dead. I’m not dead, but just about. At that time the clinging to this notion as a result of intellectual reasoning disappears. But the inborn instinctive cleaving to the idea of the self is still present. So this instinctual grip on the self is very profound, concealed and not obvious, but it has great strength.

Now I would like to talk about the differences between Confucianism and Buddhism. Buddhism wants to refute false tenets, it wants to refute the notion of the reality of the self. I remember once I wrote down on a piece of paper six characters “*qihuo zaoye shouku*.” Buddhism looks at all like this. “*Qihuo*”—“the arising of illusions.” That is, confusion, bewilderment, insufficient acuity. Where is the illusion? What are you referring to when you say illusion? It refers to this “holding on to the notion of the existence of ego.” Within this “holding on to the notion of the existence of ego” tenet, there are two kinds: “the notion of the reality of the self as a result of intellectual reasoning,” and a more profound, concealed, stronger “inborn instinctive cleaving to the idea of the self.”

Now I’m going to speak [more] of the differences between Buddhism and Confucianism. Buddhism wants to thoroughly destroy illusions. It also says that it wants to destroy the two illusions. Why “two illusions”? On the one hand there is the “illusions of the reality of the self (*wozhi*),” and on the other, the opposite, “illusions of the reality of things, or phenomenon” (*fazhi*). “*Fa*” refers to things. Buddhism wants to destroy these two illusions. “Destroying the two illusions” is also called “excising the two graspings.” What are those “two graspings (*upādāna*)”? They are “*nengqu*” (ability to grasp) and “*suoqu*” (that which is grasped)—two sides of the same thing.

No “ability,” no “object.” Both are together, meaning that there is no grasping or grasped. What is this? This is Buddha. This is one integrated whole; one integrated whole that contains no binaries. Buddhism holds that differentiation or distinction is a mistake, and wants to restore one integrated whole, to re-establish one integrated whole. The cosmos is a blended, indiscrete single body. This is Buddha. Ordinary people think that Buddha is a deity. That is wrong. We won’t discuss that.

We’ll continue further with the differences and similarities of Buddhism and Confucianism. According to my interpretation, it’s this way. Which way? Confucianism—Confucius did not destroy the “inborn instinctive cleaving to the idea of the self”; if that were destroyed, then there would be no activity. Life is situated in the “inborn instinctive cleaving to the idea of the self.” Only with this illusion of the existence of the self is there all activity coming from the natural instincts of humans. In all of these activities the “inborn illusion of self” prevails. So since Confucianism does not depart from human life, it is unlike Hinayana Buddhism’s desire for the calm and quiet of Nirvana and desire to leave home and be a monk. Confucianism by no means wants that. Confucianism wants activity in the human world. Confucianism wants completely real human beings like us. It does not want to be a deity. It wants the same as we are, wearing clothes, eating food, “drinking, eating and sex.” But we are not completely the same. There is one aspect that is completely the same as us—the primal wants, life, rest, sleep. Where is the difference [with what Confucianism wants]? He doesn’t want this [“clinging to this notion as a result of intellectual reasoning”].

Confucianism is with “an all-encompassing, empty and impartial mind” in the process of satisfying primal wants. The eight characters: *kuorandagong*, *wulaishunying* (with an all-encompassing, empty and impartial mind, taking things as they come)²⁰—these eight characters are Confucian. Although the Confucian satisfies the primal instincts and all the activities are just like ours, in life the Confucian has only “the inborn instinctive cleaving to the idea of the self,” not “the notion of the reality of the self as a result of intellectual reasoning.” Why doesn’t it have the

²⁰ This is Cheng Hao’s (程颢) phrase that appears in his “Letter on fixing one’s nature” (《定性书》). It appears in the writings of other important Neo-Confucians, such as Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming. The original passage is: A general rule of the cosmos is that its mind permeates all things, even though it itself has no mind. It is a rule of the Sage that his emotions are in accord with all things in the universe, even though he himself has no emotions. Therefore, the Superior Man has an all-encompassing, empty and impartial mind, taking things as they come. (夫天地之常, 以其心普万物而无心; 圣人之常, 以其情顺万物而无情。故君子之学, 莫若廓然而大公, 物来而顺应。) I have used the more colloquial English phrase “take things as they come” rather than the more accurate but stilted possibilities of “reacts appropriately to the various phenomena as they present themselves,” or “harmoniously reacts to things as they come.” Mr. Liang thought highly of the phrase, and used it often. He also assessed Cheng Hao as the only Song Dynasty thinker who really understood Confucianism.

latter? It's "an all-encompassing, empty and impartial mind," and "taking things as they come." For example, my loved one dies, and I cry. This is "with an all-encompassing, empty and impartial mind, taking things as they come." The weather is good, and I'm delighted and happy. This is "taking things as they come." At this time there is no "clinging to the notion of the reality of the self as a result of intellectual reasoning," but it never departs from the "inborn instinctive cleaving to the idea of the self." Only because there is this latter "me" do I cry, or laugh. That there is no obstructing of laughter or tears is also "an all-encompassing, empty and impartial mind." This is Confucianism. But Buddhism isn't like this; it transcends this. For example, if my body is hacked with a knife, I will be in pain. Even if it was Confucius, he couldn't but feel pain. But if you plunge a knife into Buddha, it makes no difference, he doesn't suffer. Confucius suffers. The Buddha transcends this. They are not the same.

Alitto: In these [past] sixty-some years of life, you have both followed Confucianism, and had a Buddhist side...

Liang: I only love, like, and admire Buddhism, but that's as far as it goes. I only like, admire, and am inclined toward Buddhism, but I'm an ordinary person.

Alitto: I understand. In *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, and also like a lot of Chinese historical figures, you went from Buddhism to Confucianism. Like a lot of Neo-Confucians, such as Wang Yangming... In any case there are a lot of people like this. You openly declared "I was a Buddhist previously, and now I am going to Confucianism," then...

Liang: I'd add a word here. I led a life as an individual, but intellectually I was inclined toward Buddhism. My intellectual inclination was toward Buddhism, but I still led an individual life. An individual life should be following the Confucian path, but I still wanted to lead a good life but didn't succeed entirely. If I would explain further how it was insufficient, it was in the areas of "destroying the notion of the reality of the ego" and having "an all-encompassing, empty and impartial mind." I had hoped that I would be able to be that way, but it was not enough.

Alitto: You just mentioned that you were insufficient in those areas—that is the standard attitude, especially of Neo-Confucians. That is, whatever I do, it will never be good enough, not thorough enough. In the U.S. recently, there has been a discussion of this question. Did the Song and Ming Neo-Confucians have a philosophy of life the same as the Western Puritans? The conclusion of many is that there are many similarities. Forever progressing toward goodness, forever perfecting, continuously practicing self-cultivation. This is the same as the Puritans. You just said that this is the standard attitude of Confucians. What I can't make out, however, is in the end how to divide the Buddhist and Confucian intellectual parts. In the past sixty years, intellectually, you have been more inclined toward Buddhism, meaning that you didn't become a monk, and that your life was Confucian. (Liang: I never became a monk.) Some

scholars say that Neo-Confucianism from the Song and Ming on has some elements of Buddhism.

Liang: I think that others look at it that way; others, it appears, are criticizing them for being too close to Chan Buddhism, and Asceticism. I think these views are not correct.

Alitto: Yes, your own view is that these views are not correct. Your works contain this opinion. A lot of foreign scholars of Chinese thought don't mean this in a critical way, but are analyzing the difference between Han Confucianism and Song Confucianism. From the Song on, [they find that] Neo-Confucians have some Buddhist elements.

Liang: In general, it is easy to say that they seem to have been influenced by Buddhism, even to the extent of saying that certain Confucians... For example the famous Confucian of the Song Dynasty Yang Cihu (Yang Jian). Most people say that he was Chan. Actually this was not so. They also say that Wang Yangming himself appears to be close to Chan. Or Wang Yangming's student Wang Longxi. Wang Longxi is also quite famous. They say that they appear to have absorbed some of Chan Buddhism, or are followers of Chan Buddhism. This is completely inaccurate. Also, the Song and Ming scholars also were anti-Buddhist, and held that to be infected even a little was intolerable. There are also those who pull Chan Buddhism and Confucianism together.

Alitto: In your opinion, your situation of being intellectually inclined toward Buddhism and in life striving toward the Confucian ideal is relatively similar to which thinker in Chinese history?

Liang: I hope to do this better, to strive upward. I want to be like Wang Yangming.

Alitto: Do you feel that Wang Yangming has both [Confucian] and Buddhist elements? I mean to say...

Liang: Actually I understand a bit of Buddhist principles. In my thought and consciousness I understand some Buddhism, but in my real life I hope to follow Wang Yangming's example.

Alitto: What I mean is, in Chinese history were there others who like you understood Buddhism, but in their lives...

Liang: I'm afraid quite a few.

Alitto: Quite a few?

Liang: I'm afraid quite a few. A lot of the Song and Ming Confucians were this way.

Alitto: A lot of them understood Buddhism...

Liang: I'm afraid that there were quite a few. I think especially of two men. One was Luo Jinxi (Luo Rufang), who was very good and extremely wise. He was "an all-encompassing, empty and impartial mind" who "took things as they came."

Alitto: What are the most pronounced differences between you and Mr. Xiong Shili?

Liang: You could say that it is our difference in style, in our way of doing things, in our general approaches. I am, compared to him, conscientious, earnest and cautious.

Alitto: What is the biggest difference in thought?

...

Liang: ...In reality, his thought has an element of repudiating Buddhism. Although others believe that he was someone who was Buddhist, but in reality, he was not Buddhist.²¹

Alitto: What in your entire life would you say is your greatest accomplishment or achievement?

Liang: I don't admit to having any accomplishments, but of the things that I have done, I would say that my book, *The Human Mind/Heart and Human Life*, is probably my academic contribution, my accomplishment. Into that book I put all of my abilities, all of the wisdom and understanding that I have. So, in the area of thought and academic work, this is what I did. This is one area. Another is the political activity of those many decades, an area in which I devoted a great deal of time and effort.

Alitto: Mr. Liang, you are very old and wise. Do you have any views on death?

Liang: I have already said, death does not mean complete extinction. It is not what most people think, which is that death is the end of everything. Didn't I use the eight-character phrase: *xiangsi-xiangxu, feiduanfeichang*?—Life, divided into endless instants, is at best similar and continuous; the meaning of life is neither interrupted nor persistent. Life is basically like this. The ego or me of today is similar to the ego or me of yesterday. The me of right now and the me of one minute ago are also similar. And that's all there is to it. They are not the same. But there is no break, no discontinuity. It's not permanent. It's not the same thing. All humans are like this; all sentient beings are like this. So, this is my view of death.

Alitto: People nevertheless always fear death. People always fear...

Liang: They don't want to die. Actually there is no need for fear. There is no need to hope for immortality, or for long life. It is best to follow the natural course. Let nature take its course. That is having "an all-encompassing, empty and impartial mind."

Alitto: In the past thirty years or so, has your philosophy of life changed in any way?

Liang: No, no change.

²¹ Mr. Liang was usually quite humble and self-effacing. He repeatedly denied having the qualifications to be a scholar. When it came to the matter of who was a true Buddhist, however, he felt very confident in making sweeping pronouncements. He dismissed both Xiong Shili, whom he liked personally and with whom he had spent a good deal of time, and Zhang Taiyan, whom he deeply respected for his personality and his scholarship, as "not understanding" Buddhism. He never made similar claims to being able to determine who understood the "true" Confucianism. He said that Feng Youlan was not a true Confucian because of his sycophancy, but never actually claimed that Feng's writings weren't "Confucian."

Alitto: Which one single person has most influenced your life and thought?

Liang: You mean in the past or right now?

Alitto: Both included.

Liang: In the past I was most influenced by Buddhism and Confucianism.

Alitto: So you were most influenced by the Buddha and Confucius? (Liang: Yes.) Have any others influenced you?

Liang: If you are referring to my contemporaries, such as my friends and teachers, there are two people. One was a Fujianese. Doesn't China have a Fujian Province? There's a Fujianese, Mr. Lin, who is someone I very much admired. In thought and in his actions as a man, I revered and admired him, and he was also someone who influenced me greatly.

Alitto: Who is this Mr. Lin?

Liang: Perhaps there are some people who don't pay him much attention, but in fact he was someone of much worth. His name was Lin Zhijun, and his sobriquet was Zaiping.²²

Alitto: I didn't pay attention to him either. How is it that you knew him? Was he your teacher or your friend?

Liang: First I'll say something about Mr. Lin. He was of extraordinarily noble character. It seems that people didn't pay much attention to him, that he was not all that famous. In fact, he was the person who Liang Qichao most admired. Mr. Liang was quite famous; he was not so well known as Mr. Liang. But Mr. Liang most admired him. When Mr. Liang was about to die, he sent a great box of his writings—manuscripts, some finished, some not finished, poems, essays, some dealing with politics, some with academic matters—a great big box, with the injunction to his wife and children—to give the box to Mr. Lin, wanting Mr. Lin to examine them and decide which were wanted and which were not necessary to keep, and to decide on his collected works after his death. So this book of Mr. Liang Rengong (Qichao) published after death—generally these are called “collected works,” sometimes titled “complete works”—was titled “Collected Works” for publication. When he was still alive, many bookstores published many of his works for him, so the “Works of the Ice Drinkers Studio” is extensive. [Before he died] he gave the great box filled with his published works, his unpublished works, and unfinished manuscripts to Mr. Lin, to have Mr. Lin examine and approve them. The final result was the “Collected Works from the Ice Drinkers Studio.” I mention this to prove Mr. Lin's erudition, and even more to prove his moral character. His moral character was excellent, the highest.

²² Lin Zaiping was a colleague of Liang's at Peking University with whom, along with Xiong Shili, he often engaged in philosophical discussion. Xiong also seems to have been influenced by Lin. Liang's assessment of Lin, as was often the case when he assessed historical figures, focused more on personal character than on intellectual prowess. Foreign historians have ignored Lin, so not much is known about him abroad.

There is another matter I want to mention. Mr. Liang Rengong was very active in politics. He had a political party that he led. The name of this political party changed through time. He wanted to have Mr. Lin join his political party, and for a time Mr. Lin did participate, but after a short time, he withdrew. Even though Mr. Lin was a very good friend of Mr. Liang, he would not engage in this business of his with him. Why? Because in seeing Mr. Liang in politics, he saw that Mr. Liang was politically ambitious and that he wanted to do a lot politically. But Mr. Lin had no such ambition. Mr. Lin found fault with Liang Rengong, disliked Liang's moral disorder. Mr. Lin truly refused to be corrupted by bad influences. You could say that he was as clean as a whistle in all aspects—politically, socially, or whatever—throughout his life. So it was because of his character that Liang Qichao admired and respected him so, and that he left his affairs in Lin's hands after his death—to examine and finalize his writings, decide which to keep and publish. So, from this incident you can see Mr. Lin's great worth. His merit was truly tremendous. He was 14 years older than I. I'm now 88. If he were still living, he would be over a hundred now. I truly admire him. I can't be considered his student, but I should call myself his later generation. He was very good to me and looked after me. I often introduced him to my friends, for example Wu Guanqi and Xiong Shili. They both met him through me, because I was so close to him. Mr. Lin used to call Xiong Shili "Old" Xiong. They all developed deep friendships. Later, Mr. Xiong would always give his manuscripts to Mr. Lin for inspection.

Alitto: How did you get to know him?

Liang: They were all of the older generation. Mr. Lin was 14 years older than I, Liang Qichao 20 years, and Mr. Cai Yuanpei 30 years. I was really fortunate. The older generation of scholars all thought highly of me very early on. They didn't wait for me to seek them out; they sought me out, protected and took care of me before I had really done anything. Mr. Lin was also like that. So it was with Liang Qichao, and so with Cai Yuanpei. They patronized me and appreciated my abilities, and looked out for me while I was still very young. I wasn't even 30, just 28 years old when Mr. Liang Qichao came to see me at my home. He was such a celebrity, and I wasn't at all famous. At that time, the older generation of scholars were modest and humble, and looked out for young people of promise, and wanted to help them. Their desires were admirable. Mr. Lin, Mr. Liang and Mr. Cai were all like this. If Mr. Cai hadn't thought highly of me, I would never have been able to teach at Peking University. I was very young.

Alitto: Did Mr. Lin also seek you out?

Liang: Yes, I'll tell you of my experience. When I was 24 years old, I took an unimportant position in the central government of the time. It was as a secretary in the Ministry of Justice. Right before I took the position, my article "On Tracing the Origins and Solving Doubts" came out. In the Ministry there was a man named Yu [Shaosong] whose rank was slightly higher than mine. I can't think of his name right now. He was a friend of

Mr. Lin's. Mr. Lin read my article "On Tracing the Origins and Solving Doubts," and so asked Mr. Yu to introduce us. (He had heard that I was working there.) He told me that he wanted to get to know me. So, that person who was my friend, who was working in the Ministry of Justice with me, introduced us and we became friends. Didn't I say just now that when I was 28, Mr. Liang Qichao came to see me and introduced himself? That time, Mr. Lin came with him. Mr. Liang also brought his son, Liang Sicheng, the architect. There was another person of some repute with them, Mr. Jiang Fangzhen. The four of them—Liang Qichao, Jiang Fangzhen, Lin Zaiping and Liang Sicheng—came in the same car to my home to see me; at that time I was 28 years old.

Next is Mr. Wu Guanqi. Mr. Wu was also a person of great merit. If someone were to ask me, what person whom you personally have seen in your entire life you most admire, my answer would be him. He was a good friend of Mr. Lin's, but different from him. Mr. Lin was an erudite, learned man. He very much liked to write poetry. But this Mr. Wu did not. He was a down-to-earth and practical-minded man. Didn't I just say that the most important thing I've done in my scholarly life was my book, *The Human Heart/Mind and Human Life*? I have felt that I have a very heavy, great responsibility. That is, to propagate Mr. Wu's own work and his character to the world. Mr. Wu was an unadulterated Confucian, a practical-minded, pragmatic Confucian. He manifested this throughout his life. ...

Chapter 6

August 17, 1980

Liang: [He was] able to be “imperturbably self-directed” in life. I’ll give you an example. When I was 36 years old, I had two friends, one surnamed Wang and the other Huang. We three friends went to see Mr. Wu. At that time, Mr. Wu had a very heavy responsibility. The Nationalist Party had a Nationalist Revolutionary Army. The Nationalist Revolutionary Army had a general headquarters. The commander of it was Chiang Kai-shek. The Chief of Staff was Li Jishen. Chiang Kai-shek was the commander of the Northern Expeditionary Army. Li Jishen, as Chief of Staff, remained in Guangdong. Mr. Wu and Mr. Li were very good friends. Mr. Li regarded Mr. Wu as his teacher. So, when Li had the responsibility of administering the rear area, he appointed Mr. Wu to be the Director of the Office of the Chief of Staff. The three of us went to Guangdong. I was thirty-six years old at the time. We went to see Li Jishen, and also went to see Mr. Wu in Wu’s office. Noontime came, and he invited us for lunch. After lunch, he said, “Make yourselves at home. Talk together freely. I have to rest a bit. I’ll nap for fifteen minutes.” He sat down on a chair, closed his eyes and fell asleep. After he had slept for fifteen minutes, he woke up. I admired this greatly and was greatly astonished. Why? It was right at that time that I was suffering from insomnia. So when I wanted to sleep I could not. When I didn’t want to sleep... He said he would sleep and he fell asleep right away. He said he would wake, and fifteen minutes later he woke up. My Goodness! I was truly astonished, and admired it! This is indicative of how he was serenely inner-directed. He actually was able to keep the body and the spirit united, really able to be inner-directed, quite an achievement.

Alitto: I admire people like that too. Speaking of influence, how did Messrs. Wu and Lin influence your life, or your thought?

- Liang: I admired Mr. Lin very much. As much as I admired him, he did not influence me as much as Mr. Wu did. If I was to emulate someone, I would emulate him.¹
- Alitto: That is, the influence is... Mr. Wu was your model. Is that what you mean?
- Liang: Right. I should add a word about Mr. Wu. He was an authentic military man. At the end of the Qing, he already had been engaged in training the new style armies that were modeled on foreign armies. He was someone who was training the New Armies, and commanded troops. Later he participated in the 1911 Revolution, and even after that, he went to Infantry University and graduated from it. After graduation, he remained at Infantry University as an instructor. He was originally a student there, but because he made excellent grades, he later was an instructor there. He diligently put into practice the two old sayings... (Mr. Liang writes them down for Alitto. According to Liang's "A Brief Biography of Mr. Wu Yongbo,"² these two old sayings should be "Be true to your words; in your conduct be sincere and respectful."³) This was the kind of man he was. After he graduated, at that time he went to be a section head in the Third Bureau of the Chief of Staff Headquarters. Responding to Yuan Shikai's attempt to become emperor, all of the Beijing officialdom—from high officials down to their underlings—was pandering to Yuan Shikai, sending memorials and petitions urging him to become emperor, expressing their support. Officials high and low in every government office had to sign. Wasn't he the section head in the Third Bureau of the Chief of Staff Headquarters? They wanted him to sign, but he was unwilling to. He said, "When I put my name to something, I must be certain that it is right. I am presently thinking over whether I should sign, and have not made a decision, and still haven't affirmed that I should sign. So, I cannot sign." Everyone said, "All else signed, but you don't sign; isn't this matter dangerous or bad?" That can't be helped.⁴

¹ Liang always seemed to be seeking total control over the self, and he admired anyone who seemed to have achieved it. Both of these men, Lin and Wu, were able to fall asleep at will. As sleep was always one aspect of his life over which he never had control, he was exceedingly impressed by those who had this "talent." Probably because Mr. Liang's mind was always hyperactive, he had difficulty with sleep throughout his life, beginning at a young age. As I reminded him a few minutes after this, he had been greatly impressed by a Hypnotism performance he saw in 1912. He took the performance as further evidence of the power of the mind over the body. It obviously made a powerful impression, as he recalled it decades later and mentioned it in his writings.

² Alone among the various people Liang admired, Mr. Wu Yongbo (Wu Guanqi) seems to be the only one who apparently left no mark on history and historical scholarship. I suspect that the biography Mr. Liang wrote for him is the only thing published about him.

³ *The Analects* 15.6 (《论语卫灵公·15》, 六章).

⁴ Once again, it appears that every one of Liang's early friends, acquaintances, family, family friends—as well as everyone he admired—were anti-Yuan Shikai. He mentions this kind of opposition to Yuan again and again as a manifestation of integrity and nobility. At the time of Yuan's attempt to reestablish the monarchy (with himself as the monarch), Liang was just 20 years old, in Beijing, and had just become an active member of society. After the Republican Revolution itself, the Monarchist movement was the first major political crisis he encountered. It seemed to have left a lasting impression.

The War of Resistance to Japan started up; the Japanese were invading China. Mr. Wu commanded guerillas, about two thousand men, in Guangdong. He was a guerilla commander dealing with the enemy. From the time that the Japanese first occupied Guangdong, to the time when the Japanese withdrew from China, Mr. Wu went through eight solid years as a guerilla commander. But his area of activity was not the entire province, but rather only a four-county area. There's an incident that happened during this period that I should mention. He was always able to predict the enemy's actions. Once he was leading a part of his troops—the two thousand men were split up, not [all] with him. He had not more than a few hundred, something like 300 men, so there were three hundred men with him, and the two thousand were distributed in several places. There was an intelligence officer sent out to spy out a certain area. That intelligence agent returned to report, saying that there was a body of the enemy, possibly 300 men—about the same number of troops that he [Wu] had with him—coming north from the south, coming to their location. Possibly they were coming to attack? Mr. Wu thought for a moment, and said that the enemy was not tracking them to attack and that he reckoned that the enemy's target was such and such a place. Everyone half believed him, thought his reckonings [might be] correct, but weren't completely sure. He then said to everyone, "You keep watch. I want to rest," because he was not too strong [physically]. In the countryside outside the county town there was a high platform which was a stage for opera performances for the lunar New Year. He had a chair, said that he was going to rest, and so he rested. At this time everyone on the one hand was afraid that the enemy was coming, because the spy had reported that over two hundred of them were coming in this direction, and on the other had believed the commander's words—that the enemy was not pursuing them but had another target, but no one dared make predictions about this matter. Probably the commander was just resting, and didn't necessarily fall asleep. Someone went onto the stage to look at him and he had fallen asleep after all, and was sleeping very soundly. That is to say, he was able to "pick it up, and put it down." Ordinary people cannot pick it up or put it down. He was truly serenely self-directed. This kind of learning is not book learning, and isn't the kind of learning that is casually chattered about. This is Confucius' life learning.

Don't I often mention what Confucius had said: "At fifteen, I set my heart upon learning." What kind of learning was that "learning"? After that he said, "At thirty, I established myself." We don't know either what this "establishment" is, and how he established himself. Age by age he was speaking about life and being, and didn't speak about anything outside it. The disciple he valued and loved the most was Yanzi (Yan Hui). What was Yanzi's strength? One was that he did not take his anger out on others, and that he did not repeat the same mistake. How does one not take anger out on others? How does one not repeat the same mistake? It's not good to guess wildly, but rather to see it clearly. He didn't speak about either else

except for his life and being. So Mr. Wu's learning and skill is authentically and thoroughly Confucian. He walked the Confucian road most correctly. I've never seen another person like this. He did not talk philosophy.

Alitto: In my book, I think I mentioned that his wife was related to your first wife.

Liang: In Beijing speech, Mr. Wu and I were "*lianjin*," that is, my wife was the younger sister of his wife. This is not considered as "in-laws." My wife and his wife were blood sisters. In Beijing speech, this is called "*lianjin*," which is to say that the aprons were linked up. His wife was the elder sister, and my wife was the younger. Moreover, my marriage was through Mr. Wu's introduction.

Alitto: But there are other matters about him I didn't know, and couldn't find any material. Now I'm clear on it. Mr. Liang, do you have any hobbies? Your students all said that you had no hobbies, that you did scholarship or other work from morning to night. I don't know if this was true, or whether...

Liang: I'll tell a little story. I have a friend who had studied in the U.S., specializing in Mass Education, also called Adult Education. This person's name was Yu Qingtang⁵, a lady. She was together with friends chatting, and she asked me jokingly what my hobby was. I answered, "I don't know what hobby I have. Eating? I am not that fond of eating. Having fun? I'm not too fond of having fun. Opera? I can take it or leave it. If you ask what in the end I am most fond of, naturally I am fond of using my brain, fond of thinking." "Gosh," Madame Yu said, "that is really frightening."

Alitto: You just mentioned opera, referring to Beijing Opera?

Liang: Beijing Opera.

Alitto: Because you grew up in Beijing, you can appreciate Beijing Opera. But these past thirty years, after Liberation, did you go listen to opera?

Liang: Before, when I was small, I had a certain proclivity, one not too good. One could say that it was a mistake, a fault—that is, I labored at being unconventional and novel. As for the opera, my father, mother, and elder brother—I was second in birth order, I had an elder brother—they were all fond of opera. After finishing dinner in the summertime, they would go outside taking the cool breezes, and they would talk about opera—which opera was best, who sang best, just chatting like that. Just because they were quite fond of this thing, I wanted to be the maverick. I did not talk [opera] names. So if, say, an opera was quite good—if they went, I would not go. I was always fond of deviating from the general rule.

Now that I think of it, when I was in middle school, everyone would have to draw a topic for his or her essay composition; the teacher could [evaluate]

⁵ Yu Qingtang (1897–1949) was a Columbia University, Teacher's College Ph.D. who had a successful career in academia, and for a time was also involved in the penal system in Jiangsu. She worked in social education, women's education and adult education. Professor Yu also published on rural education, which is probably why she and Mr. Liang were friends. She was the director of the Social Education Bureau in the Department of Education in 1949, but died that year.

your writing style [from it]. Ordinary people when drawing a paper theme, would develop that theme a bit, and so write a paper on it. I, however, was straining to be original and unconventional. In mentioning some ancient historical figure or some event, most would praise the figure. I intentionally would express my dissatisfaction with him, that is, to be a maverick. One of our teachers, a very old man, saw my essay and called it an essay “reversing a previous judgment.” People all said this way, but I insisted that way. He was most unhappy. His comments were extremely critical, saying that “As you are always in opposition to common tastes, you are doomed to fail.” Another Chinese language teacher was different. His comment used lines from a poem of Du Fu’s, “Fight to the death to find words that startle.”⁶ This is a line from a poem of Du Fu’s, which explains how I was in my youth, consciously trying to be different. I had this fault.⁷

Alitto: This book has something about this. The old man’s criticism was that when you were young, you were a conscious maverick. Do you often go to the opera or...?

Liang: Not very often.

Alitto: What operas do you like? The “literary” kind that is mainly acting and singing (*wen*) or the “martial” kind that has acrobatics (*wu*)?

Liang: I like that kind of opera that they say is “a martial opera sung literarily.” It’s a martial opera, but the plot and action is still singing, so there is not much fighting. So, a martial opera, but one whose emphasis is on literary singing. I like this kind of opera.

Alitto: Is there any opera that you particularly like?

Liang: Yes. There is an opera with painted-face characters. The major painted-face characters perform warrior roles. One of these characters is called Huang Tianba. I especially like that opera.

Alitto: At your second marriage in Guilin, you sang a bit of that opera.

Liang: Yes, I sang some opera.

Alitto: Before I didn’t know that you especially liked the Huang Tianba opera. Aside from opera, of which all Beijing people are fond, are there any other pastimes?

Liang: Of course, there are some novels that I like to read, such as *Dream of Red Chambers*.

Alitto: So you like the classic novels such as *Dream of Red Chambers* or *The Water Margin*.

Liang: There’s also one called *The Travels of Lao Can*.

Alitto: That’s also one you fairly like?

⁶This is the second of the first two lines of the poem “A Short Poem Written at the Moment When a Rising River Looked Like a Rolling Ocean” (《江上值水如海势聊短述》), which go “I was stubborn by nature and addicted to perfect lines, fought to the death to find words that startle.” (为人性僻耽佳句,语不惊人死不休) Indeed, this would be an accurate assessment of Liang, one which he himself makes. He was “stubborn by nature,” by his own admission.

⁷It is this “fault” of Liang’s that was partly responsible for his stubborn adherence on his own views, no matter what the cost.

Liang: Yes.

Alitto: I also like it. Those late Qing novels such as *The Travels of Lao Can*, and also...*Twenty Years*...

Liang: *Strange Events Witnessed in the Last Twenty Years*.

Alitto: *Bureaucracy* something...

Liang: *Bureaucracy Exposed*.

Alitto: So you like all of these, or...

Liang: I have read them all.

Alitto: Do you have a favorite author?

Liang: That should be... There is one novel that is interesting no matter how many times one reads it—*Dream of Red Chambers*, which is profound. You always feel it is of interest. Other novels, well, you read them once, and that's it. So, it's *Dream of Red Chambers*...⁸

Alitto: So, [these are books] "that one never tires of reading." What books have you read after Liberation? I know what you had read before Liberation, but do not know what you have read after it.

Liang: After Liberation, I have read no books especially worth mentioning. Other people ask me that, and I blurt out no answer. After you asked me, I have to slowly think about it.

Alitto: Well, I see on your bookshelf works of Lenin.

Liang: I remember one book I have read that I liked very much. There is a Japanese, whom I very much admire. (Mr. Liang writes the author's name for Alitto: Heshang Zhao [Kawakami Hajime].) Later he was a Marxist, and wanted to put it [Marxism] into practice. He was a Communist Party member. But doesn't Marxism say that "religion is opium"? He agreed with Marxism but he didn't agree with this. He said, "Science has scientific truth, religion has religious truth." Moreover, he said that he himself had religious experience.

Alitto: Was it Chan Buddhism?

Liang: People probably say that my type of experience was Chan Buddhist; I don't know if it was Chan or not. He wrote a book *Autobiography of Kawakami Hajime*.⁹ In Chinese it made two thick volumes. I very much

⁸ It would appear that Mr. Liang did read some of the various classic colloquial language novels, including those at the end of the Qing Dynasty, but he certainly didn't read much fiction. For the most part, he maintained the orthodox Confucian attitude toward works of fiction—that such things were not quite worthy of the attention of a proper gentleman. Mr. Liang seldom saw films or plays, and seemed to have little patience with them. Mr. Hu Yinghan told me of an incident that took place in the Zouping County town in the 1930s. An acting troupe performed a contemporary drama. Such an event was exceedingly rare in rural Zouping so apparently most of the rural reconstruction institute students attended. Mr. Liang, however, left early in the play.

⁹ Kawakami Hajime (1879–1946) was an early member of the Japanese Communist Party, and Marxist scholar. His autobiography (*Jijoden* 《自叙传》) was published after his death in 1946. In it, he refers often to Confucius and Chinese Confucian texts, which is perhaps why Liang sought out the book. Although he was a pioneer Marxist scholar in Japan, he still proclaimed throughout the book that his major life priority was spirituality. He had, moreover, an exceedingly eclectic concept of spirituality. It is easy to see why Liang was attracted to him.

liked it. Moreover, I copied down his experience—his words—in my notebook. He was special. The religious experience he spoke of was not casual, empty talk. He spoke of a true transformation of his own life. When he spoke about this, there was a sentence of this sort: “When I had this experience, it seemed that I had been cast out, to take a look, and I myself took a look. When I had this experience, my body underwent a transformation; I pinched my own flesh with my hand, and it didn’t hurt. Moreover, it was like a layer of my skin peeled off.” So, this was not only a conscious transformation, a transformation in thought, but it was also a transformation that happened in the concrete. He himself said, “Science has scientific truth; religion has religious truth.” So, on the one hand I agree with Marx’s statement that religion is people’s opium, but on the other, I feel that Marx never had a genuine religious experience.

Alitto: Mr. Liang, have you ever had that kind of...

Liang: No, not of the sort of experience that he describes. But I have said, while I was meditating I have had [experienced] a state in which I had no thoughts, a completely vacuous mind.

Alitto: When you were young, you had seen a performance of hypnotism, and it seemed the impression it left was quite deep. I’ve forgotten in which work you mentioned this incident. Later, did you do any research on hypnotism?

Liang: I didn’t do research on hypnotism. It was just the first year of the Republic, 1912, I saw a Cantonese perform hypnotism. At the same time I had a young friend—just a bit younger than I—who was from Gansu. He could hypnotize. Guo Weiping could hypnotize. I had a younger cousin—that is, my mother’s nephew, my maternal uncle’s child—he could also hypnotize.

Alitto: He could self-hypnotize, or...

Liang: Hypnotize others.

Alitto: Because a lot of people feel that being hypnotized is a psychological state that up to now is not fully understood. The more profound parts are still not understood, and often are similar to the special experiences of very pious religious believers. China’s “*qigong*” and the psychological state are a bit similar. It seems that recently someone was performing *qigong* in Beijing.

Liang: No matter if it’s *qigong* or hypnotism, both effect profound, physiological changes that are difficult to fathom, and not easily understood. That person Guo Weiping, the Gansu native I just mentioned, had such an experience as this: He had a friend, a relative who was sick in London, England. His family members were very worried and concerned about the sick person. They didn’t know what the situation was with the illness; as they were separated from him by long distances, correspondence was quite slow, so it was difficult to know what was going on. Guo Weiping said, “If you want to see the sick person, I can help you, using hypnotism.” He could make the hypnotized person see the relative in London. He could see what the situation was.

Alitto: I’ve heard about such things. There’s something else that probably you have an opinion on—in Chinese folk religions, there is something one could say was a skill. Looked at from the outside, it’s superstition. Looked

at from another angle, you could say these things really exist. For example, fortunetellers... how could they be so frighteningly accurate sometimes! Toward this kind of thing I don't know if you have...

Liang: I've had experience.

Alitto: Can you tell about it?

Liang: In Chinese, it's called "Casting the Eight Characters." There is a casting I still have, written down. According to my birthdate characters, he [the fortuneteller] calculated what would happen each year [of my life]. When he got to age 74, he stopped calculating, stopped talking. So, when I saw this report of his, the meaning was after age 74, there was nothing. [I took it to mean] "Your lifespan will be only 74 years." According to the tone, it should have been like this, but I'm already well over 80. So should it be [considered] wrong? (Alitto: Yes.) It was still correct. What he had for each year before that was all correct. For example, when you are 24, your luck will turn good, your wife will be such and such, your son will be such and such, you will become famous in this way... He predicted up until age 74.

Alitto: Everything up to 74 was very accurate?

Liang: It was all quite accurate. Everything before 74 was quite accurate. But at 74, it was inaccurate. It was inaccurate, yet accurate. Why? Because in the year I was 74, 1966, on August 24, our house was searched and my possessions confiscated or destroyed. That time my fate was very bad, and I received quite a big blow. But he [the fortuneteller] overstated the case a bit. He thought that it seemed my destiny was to be terminated. I wasn't terminated, but at age 74, on August 24, 1966, I received a great blow, was "assaulted." That's true.

Alitto: Do you have a way of explaining this kind of thing? What are its reasons?

Liang: One could say that it's just inexplicable and I don't know how it should be explained. That's [true] in one respect. In another respect [however], I feel that a human's life has some predetermined aspects. Isn't there a doctrine of Predestination? Probably most of ordinary human life is predestined, that is to say, more than 95% of the people are predestined. But a person of great wisdom is probably in a different category. I forgot to mention...this person I greatly admire. (Liang writes the name.)

Alitto: Yes, Ma Yifu. I know of him.

Liang: Talking about the old Chinese learning, he was extremely well read, especially in the old Chinese books. He had seen much, a person of great understanding. Moreover, he was... I just used the word "great understanding." He seemed to have great understanding of all Eastern learning—Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. Mr. Ma was someone one could say who was much admired by me.¹⁰

¹⁰ Ma Yifu (1883–1967) was educated in Europe, America, and Japan, and in fact authored works on the history of European literature. He was known primarily, however, as a master of Chinese, especially Confucian philosophy. Mr. Ma was also a noted seal and woodblock carver. As Mr. Ma was a cloistered academic, one assumes that it was his scholarship, not his social or political activities, that Liang admired so much.

Alitto: What was your relationship with him?

Liang: [Our relationship was] only that I admired him, and asked for his advice. He had always lived in Hangzhou. I also went to Hangzhou to see him and ask for his advice, more than once. When the War of Resistance to Japan began, he also withdrew to the southwest, to Sichuan. His friend asked him to teach, and founded a "Revival Academy." At the Revival Academy he accepted students and taught and at the same time carved words on a woodblock for printing. Chinese people liked to use woodblock to carve and print books. He carved several books of Confucian works that he held to be important. These included collected works of Luo Rufang (Luo Jinxi), and of Yang Cihu (Yang Jian). This old gentleman's knowledge was abundant. He knew and understood quite a lot, especially in the old scholarship of China. He has died.

...

Alitto: Was it that you read fairly much of this...?

Liang: Right. I can only say that in the past I did not read sufficiently, and did not understand deeply. After Liberation, I read more. I sincerely admired Marx and Engels, especially his so-called "Scientific Socialism," which was better than [those of] Owen of England or Fournier of France. They all loved socialism, like the famous scientist Einstein, who also loved socialism. But Marx and Engels, they said that the historical development of human society would naturally go to that point, that it would naturally reach socialism, communism, through objective development, the development of society. This view of theirs is different from and better than [those] subjective views. I remember the first time I went to see Mao Zedong in Yan'an. As I was leaving, he told me, "I want to tell you something important. You must read *Anti-Duhring*." Isn't there a book of Engel's called *Anti-Duhring*? Later I read *Anti-Duhring*.¹¹ It was good, but there were still parts that I didn't understand completely.

Alitto: There are also a lot of books on philosophy and history, the *History of the Han Dynasty* and *General World History*. Don't you often read more books in these areas?

Liang: I read more books about thought.

Alitto: Have you read a bit about literature?

Liang: I've not read many books about Western and foreign literature; I still like to read books about philosophy the most. I just mentioned Bergson, his *Creative Evolution*. There is another one, *Time and Free Will*. The English

¹¹ The original name of this piece is *Herrn Eugen Dührings Umwälzung der Wissenschaft* (Mr. Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science) but in English it has been known under the name "Anti-Duhring." Perhaps the most popular and enduring of Engels' writings, this was an important document in the construction of the theory of Historical Materialism. Duhring took political and military force to be the primary forces shaping history, while Engels argues that economics is the primary force shaping history. Liang must have liked it especially because it is a relatively lucid exposition of Marx's fundamental ideas and concepts.

language edition is called *Time and Free Will* [which Liang pronounced in English with standard pronunciation]. There is another called *Material and Memory*. That was hard to understand. I very much enjoy and admire Bergson, but his books are not easy to read.

Alitto: Aside from books... movies, do you ever go to the movies?

Liang: Very very seldom.

Alitto: Do you have a favorite movie?

Liang: Not that comes to mind. There's a TV in the house, and so I'll take a look when convenient. I don't have that much interest to go out to a movie theater. I am not willing to go to that much trouble, but it's still all right if I can watch it conveniently [on TV].

Alitto: Did you go to the movies before Liberation?

Liang: Even less. I was very busy before Liberation.

Alitto: I remember...aside from this incident, were there others, or say, some other incidents of persecution or of damage to you?

Liang: I remember on August 24, 1966, Red Guard militants came to our house. They said that they had come to rebel, and there was some damage, and they injured my wife.

Alitto: I still don't understand this. Why did they go to your house? Did they go to your house specifically?

Liang: They didn't go to my house only. At that time, in that August of the Cultural Revolution, one could say that numerous households suffered. The weather in Beijing was also like this.

Alitto: Did they know who you were?

Liang: You could say that they knew, and yet they didn't know that much about me. They were junior high school students, and their school was just north of my house. It was just about half a kilometer or slightly more away. It was quite convenient for them to go from the school to the house. They were junior high students, and so had very little knowledge. You could say they didn't know anything about me. At the time, I wrote to Chairman Mao asking for help; the letter probably didn't reach him, or he probably got it and it elicited no sympathy from him, I don't know. I did write letters, one to Mao and one to Zhou [Enlai], but there was no word from either.

Alitto: This matter I got wrong in my book. I wrote that you had no trouble during the Cultural Revolution. I was wrong. Your friends in Hong Kong all said so, and I could only listen to them. I also suggested that only because you were a friend of Mao's that you weren't persecuted.

Liang: No, afraid not.

Alitto: Another question. When they burst in, what did they say? How were they going to rebel?

Liang: A group of kids—young teenage boys and girls burst through the door. At the time I lived in the northern main room of the house. I said, "You coming to inspect, right?" They said, "No, we have come to rebel." I didn't want to say anything. I just let them do what they wanted. So, they destroyed a lot of things. They dragged a glass case outside and smashed it. They confiscated trunks. They carted away some things.

- Alitto: Carted away? That's the equivalent of theft.¹²
- Liang: It wasn't theft. Theft isn't done in a public manner. This was openly done.
- Alitto: Then it's robbing?
- Liang: Openly done robbery. They took apart our bedding, as well as our mosquito netting. They were of low morals. They burnt things to a great pile of ashes. It took more than a day to carry the ashes away.
- Alitto: So the first day was like that. Were there still...
- Liang: Several days in a row.
- Alitto: There were several days in a row of this?
- Liang: Yeah.
- Alitto: Did they beat your wife when they first came, or did they beat her later?
- Liang: In the middle of the several days.
- Alitto: Did they explain the reason when they were beating her?
- Liang: They didn't give any reasons. They also had her kneel in punishment, right when the sun was the hottest, they had her kneel in the sun.
- Alitto: They didn't say what you two had...
- Liang: They didn't say.
- Alitto: They didn't give any reason?
- Liang: No, they did not.
- Alitto: They didn't speak?
- Liang: Yeah. They weren't just doing this to our family.
- Alitto: Yes, I know, but you two were already quite old....
- Liang: Over seventy.
- Alitto: Beating an old lady... this is too... Didn't they say why they beat your wife but not you?
- Liang: They didn't explain this either.
- Alitto: Did they criticize your past actions or your past publications?
- Liang: No, neither.
- Alitto: They just made trouble, just like that.
- Liang: Yeah.
- Alitto: Aside from your books and furniture, did they destroy anything like paintings or calligraphy?
- Liang: Some of mine; there were some of my father's things, my grandfather's things, my great grandfather's things. Because [these things] provoked them [the Red Guards].
- Alitto: Oh! What else?
- Liang: For example, China has always prized painting and calligraphy, the kind of painting and calligraphy that you can hang up. Moreover, they occupied my place for twenty days, perhaps twenty-one days.
- Alitto: When they left, did they explain the reasons?
- Liang: No.

¹² This exchange doesn't make any sense in English, in that the word I used, "*tou*," is usually translated "to steal," which of course constitutes "theft." The word "*tou*" often implies the synonyms for theft, such as filch or pilfer, that imply covertness. Another meaning of "*tou*" used as an adjective is "surreptitious."

- Alitto: Not then either? Then they didn't talk to you during the entire process?
- Liang: They were busy. Very busy. They made the northern hall where I lived their base area.
- Alitto: A base area?
- Liang: That was because at that time we had a telephone installed. They used that telephone; they could have communication with their own school through the phone. They also went to the neighboring families to rebel, manhandling them, and driving those people back to their hometowns. Anyway, whoever wasn't of Beijing was sent away. My niece and her husband were Cantonese, and they were sent back to Guangdong. The trains were packed with people who were being sent back under escort to their hometowns. This was one matter. Another matter was to have young students go run around everywhere—young students didn't need tickets to ride the train. For example, there was a Mr. Chen Weizhi? At the time he was a junior high student and took advantage of this opportunity to go at will to Xinjiang—a very far place—and in the south he went to Yunnan, Guangxi and Guangdong.
- Alitto: Right. I just remembered. In 1974 and 1975, when I was studying at University [of California, Berkeley], there were two brothers surnamed Pan. Before Liberation, their parents were in the United States. [My friend] and his brother stayed in Beijing. They were junior high school students at that time, and traveled around everywhere.
- Liang: Yes, they were running around everywhere, as they pleased.
- Alitto: They weren't reasonable at all, they just...
- Liang: Right.
- Alitto: So, the day that your wife was beaten was the first day, the second day or in between? (Liang: In between.) After she was beaten was she brought to the hospital?
- Liang: No, she wasn't.
- Alitto: Did any of your friends come to see you at that time?
- Liang: No one visited anyone else, because they were afraid of getting into trouble, so if possible no one left home. People didn't even go to buy food and drink. (Alitto: How could that work?) As much as possible they ate whatever was left in their own kitchens. People didn't go out to shop for more than ten days, much less to visit friends and relatives.
- Alitto: Did any of your relatives and Red Guards have...?
- Liang: You have already seen, I have an elder son, and a second son. They didn't live with me. They came to see me, but they could do nothing at all. Moreover, the Red Guards said "Don't you come around here!" Usually they left. Friends and relatives did not visit each other. They couldn't even fend for themselves. That was a very rare, strange situation.
- Alitto: When this situation developed, what were you thinking?
- Liang: When I became the object of these assaults, I was a bit unhappy at first. (Alitto: Well, when these sorts of things happen, naturally you were unhappy.) After a while, I took it easy and began to write again. At that time, I had no reference books, as my books had all been destroyed, but I relied on things in my mind to write. That manuscript of mine is still

here—I wrote *A Comparative Study of Buddhism and Confucianism*, discussing their commonalities and differences.

Alitto: So you were able to remain cool as a cucumber.

Liang: Actually, it was nothing at all....

Alitto: At present, what in your life was the greatest...?

Liang: After all, we all heard that Chairman Mao had launched this event [Cultural Revolution]. The Red Guards all had an armband. Mao dressed up in a costume the same as the Red Guards and also wore this armband, and moreover, reviewed the Red Guards at Tian'anmen [Square].

Alitto: That I remember, in the newspapers...

Liang: He said that he was the head of the Red Guards, and led them.

Alitto: Well, at that time did you feel that Chairman Mao had gone...

Liang: Gone crazy? (Alitto: Yes.) I didn't see it that way. I felt that he was acting recklessly. There was trouble in Beijing; there was trouble everywhere. I just said that tickets were not required to ride the train, so everyone chased around everywhere helter-skelter. In some places the rail lines were cut, and so trains couldn't go through. One could say that there was no order in the entire country. For nearly a year the entire country was in turmoil, and the railway system was damaged. The youth of the entire nation were running around helter-skelter, going anywhere they felt like. Later, he felt that this wouldn't do, and so he said repeatedly to struggle verbally, not to resort to violence. But violence was prevalent, house-burning and fighting. At that time his words had no effect. He didn't want violence, but there was violence everywhere throughout the nation. Even he was unable to stop it.

Alitto: At that time, I had just started to study China, and my impression was similar to this. It was just that...

Liang: He was able to launch it but was unable to control it.

Alitto: Yes, he was able to extend it, but unable to contract it. When the Gang of Four was in power, what aspect of your life was most affected?

Liang: I can't say very clearly offhand. At that time Jiang Qing was in charge. Jiang Qing led off the disturbances. Wasn't there an American woman reporter...?

Alitto: It was a scholar, named [Roxane] Witke, surnamed Witke.

Liang: She visited with Jiang Qing.

Alitto: Yes, I know this person pretty well.

Liang: She was acting like a news reporter interviewing Jiang Qing, right?

Alitto: No, it was like this. It was in 1972 she came to China as an ordinary traveler. But she had studied Chinese history. She was [taught] at a state university in New York. She herself wasn't so special. At that time she didn't have much of a name in the American academic world. After she arrived in Beijing, it seemed that she wanted to interview women who had taken part in the revolution. That is to say, she wanted to conduct interviews in the manner in which I am interviewing you. Suddenly, some people informed her that she was very soon going to meet Comrade Jiang Qing. She had ten minutes to prepare, then went to see her. The first time she met her face-to-face in Guangzhou.

Liang: First in Beijing, and then in Guangzhou.

Alitto: Yes, first in Beijing and later in Guangzhou. The first time in Beijing she said there was someone beside her taking notes...no, recording, a tape recorder. Her Chinese was not too good. She wrote down what the interpreter told her, taking her own notes. Jiang Qing said, "After you return to the U.S., the recording will be translated into English and sent to you." The transcript of the first meeting was sent to her. After that, she received none. I heard that someone in the Zhongnanhai discovered this matter, and forbid her...the result was that she used the notes that she took herself as material and devoted herself to this for four or five years. In 1978 or 1977 the book came out, entitled *Comrade Jiang Qing*.¹³

Liang: We had heard that Jiang Qing wanted to be Empress [in this pattern]. She was like the Han Emperor Gaozu's Empress Lü, or Empress Wu Zetian of the Tang Dynasty. She had the Survey Bureau Chief in the military area come from Hainan to Guangzhou [who] told a lot of military secrets to that American...

Alitto: That I dare not assure you. After she returned to the U.S., I met with her to discuss this affair. She spoke about a lot of things concerning Jiang Qing—how it was when she was a small child, how she became a film actress in Shanghai, how she was oppressed by someone, how she got to know Chairman Mao. There was nothing in what she told me that had to do with military affairs.¹⁴

Liang: There were a lot of military matters that, for the welfare of the nation, should be kept confidential, that she all told that...

Alitto: I don't know anything about that.

Liang: A few years after that, Jiang Qing was imprisoned. Speaking of them, wasn't there also Yao Wenyuan? The Gang of Four included Yao Wenyuan and Zhang Chunqiao. At that time the Beijing *Red Flag* magazine was controlled by Yao Wenyuan. Yao Wenyuan changed a lot of documents. The originals were made public. At that time, wasn't there a Madame somebody in Sri Lanka, a female politician, and in India there was Madame Gandhi, and it seemed that there was also someone in South America. (Alitto: Right, in Argentina.)¹⁵ So Jiang Qing said,

¹³ Roxane Witke, *Comrade Chiang Ch'ing* (Boston, 1977).

¹⁴ About many matters, including this sort, Mr. Liang was quite naive and ill-informed.

¹⁵ I think that Mr. Liang may have been thinking of "Evita" Perón (María Eva Duarte de Perón). Madame Gandhi's entry into politics was through her father and grandfather, not her husband. She was a Congress Party leader in her own right and was Prime Minister of India for 15 years, and her rule ended with her assassination in 1977. There are no resemblances to Jiang Qing. There are, however, many parallels between Eva Perón and Jiang Qing. "Evita," as she came to be known, left home at an early age to seek her fortune on the stage in the big city, exactly as Jiang Qing did. She married Juan Domingo Perón before he took power (as Jiang Qing did with Mao) and was officially (as Jiang Qing was, in a fashion) titled "Spiritual Leader of the Nation." Unlike Jiang Qing, however, Evita's posthumous career has been glorious and long. Evita is still remembered with great fondness by many Argentineans, and she has been the subject of popular entertainments worldwide (such as the musical play and movie "Evita"). One doubts, on the other hand, if anyone anywhere remembers Jiang Qing with fondness, if she is remembered at all.

we women should be the masters and administer the affairs of the nation. She was like that.

Alitto: How did this influence your own life?

Liang: It didn't. There was no influence.

Alitto: So the way that the Gang of Four influenced your life...

Liang: You might also say that the Gang of Four influenced us. How did it influence us? She wanted to refute a rumor. There was a rumor... I can't say clearly now the matter. There was a rumor. What rumor? It was about Jiang Qing. She asked us—members of the People's Political Consultative Conference—and other democratic party people, "Have you heard this rumor? Can you have a critical view of these rumors, or do you believe them, or what?" The first thing they asked was whether or not we had heard the rumors. The second was what attitude [we] had toward them. Each person had to write [an answer].

Alitto: Oh, so every person had to write one?

Liang: Yeah, each person had to write one. Write what? Whether I had heard, or [if] I had heard them, what I had heard, what I hadn't heard, and my attitude toward them. I remember that at that time I wrote it, and handed it over to the United Front Department. Later, after the Gang of Four was overthrown, the documents were sent back to each person. I then received what I had written at the time.

Alitto: I don't understand. Did Jiang Qing want people to write down their attitude toward the rumors?

Liang: Right, Jiang Qing asked.

Alitto: This is truly strange.

Liang: Jiang Qing wanted to ask. This question was transmitted to the members of the People's Political Consultative Conference, and to each democratic party group. Since she asked, all we could do was write out responses. What she asked was: did you hear the rumors or not? Then you can say you heard them. Some people denied that they heard them. What I wrote—since you wanted me to write, I would tell the truth. I had heard some rumors, I had heard such and so forth.

Alitto: Each person had to write one.

Liang: Yeah, each person had to write one.

Alitto: That was quite a lot of people. One would never finish asking.

Liang: Exactly. A lot of people, several hundred. After we wrote it, we sealed it up, and addressed it to the Director of the United Front Department. Others were not allowed to see it. So, I did as instructed. But after the fall of the Gang of Four, all of the original documents were returned to their respective authors.

Alitto: When the Gang of Four was in power, didn't the policies that they carried out influence your everyday life?

Liang: Yes, you could say that there was influence, and you could also say that there was no particular influence. At the time it was a situation of chaotic disorder. We didn't know how far this would go. It seems as though there was no direct influence on our daily life.

- Alitto: Your lifestyle didn't undergo any great change?
- Liang: As I just said, friends and relatives didn't dare have social contact.¹⁶
- Alitto: Do you mean to say that from 1966 to 1976 people didn't dare have social contact?
- Liang: At the beginning it was like that. Later it slowly became a bit better, and I felt that I didn't know what it would evolve into. I didn't know.
- Alitto: Everyone shouts about the negative aspects of the Cultural Revolution. Do you see any good or any positive side to it?
- Liang: I can't say.
- Alitto: You can't say?
- Liang: I can't say because its destructiveness was so great; it had no positive, constructive side.
- Alitto: One of the aims of the Cultural Revolution was to equalize people's positions in society...
- Liang: There's no causal relationship between the two that can be spoken of, except that the two were simultaneous. They both happened in Mao's later years, when he was a bit senile and muddle-headed. All the turmoil happened at that time. Right at that time a Sun Yat-sen University [Guangdong Province] professor named Yang Rongguo wrote an essay criticizing Confucius. Chairman Mao heaped praise on it and acclaimed it. Then there was a Criticize Confucius Campaign. Feng Youlan also then pandered himself and wrote for it. For the moment, one could not say the word "Confucius." You had to say "the second son of the Kong family." The pictorial magazine *People's Pictorial* published a great many paintings satirizing Confucius. In the *Zhuangzi* isn't there a [famous brigand] Dao Zhi, who criticized Confucius? This was made into a picture. It was all during Chairman Mao's senility.

In 1970, at a meeting of the Chinese Communist Party, the Central Committee passed a document. What document? It was a draft constitution that was going to be brought up in the People's National Assembly for passage. This draft stipulated that Lin Biao was Chairman Mao's close comrade in arms, that he was the deputy commander-in-chief to Mao's commander-in-chief. He was the first deputy commander-in-chief, Mao's intimate successor, and close comrade in arms, Chairman Mao's successor. The document passed by the CCP Central Committee was like that in 1970. It was passed in September. I have that document with me here. Before a year had passed, it was again in September, September of 1971, Lin Biao tried to assassinate Chairman Mao. A year before it was still said that he

¹⁶ Throughout these interviews, Liang never mentions a major change in his life style due to the Cultural Revolution. After he and his wife were ousted from their original home, they were housed in one small room in another part of Beijing. Most of the room, I was later told, was taken up by the bed. He had no proper desk or library or the other accoutrements of a scholar. His wife's health started failing and, from what I had heard later, was semi-comatose for her last years. At least during these interviews, he never mentions any of this, even in response to my repeated questioning.

was the close comrade in arms, but the next September he tried to assassinate Chairman Mao. Because this affair went off, Lin Biao himself died in a plane crash. At this time he [Mao] criticized Lin, [criticizing also] “whoever had boarded this pirate’s boat” (that is, whoever was going along with Lin Biao).

So in his later years...in my reckoning, after age 73, he was no longer capable; he was muddle-headed and confused. He died at 80. First there was criticism of Lin Biao, only after which came criticism of Confucius. This was because when the room that Lin occupied was searched, a paper was found with “Practicing self-discipline, Acting in accordance with morality” written on it. Probably Lin Biao using “Practicing self-discipline, Acting in accordance with morality” as a code, representing something or another. But this saying came from Confucius, and later it was criticism of Lin Biao, followed by criticism of Confucius. This was recklessness on Mao’s part. Didn’t I just mention Yang Rongguo and the essay he wrote, which Mao praised and commended? As soon as Mao did this, Feng Youlan also wrote an essay criticizing Confucius. For a time, no one used the name “Confucius,” but rather “the second son of the Kong family.” This fad of the time was really quite laughable.

Alitto: In actuality, did this have anything to do with Confucius?

Liang: The movement happened when Mao himself wasn’t very lucid or coherent; it was an act of recklessness of his when he was not very lucid. “Criticize Lin Biao” was already enough of a joke when it was he himself who had raised Lin up. What was he doing criticizing Lin? “Criticize Lin Biao” led to “Criticize Confucius.” There was a period of a few months separating the two. First it was “Criticize Lin,” and after a few months, it was “Criticize Confucius.”

Alitto: I have read some articles, historically...

Chapter 7

August 18, 1980

Liang: Didn't I say that at the time no more than three or four months after Chairman Mao criticized Lin, he launched the Criticize Confucius Campaign? Feng Youlan wrote an essay criticizing Confucius. Our small student group in the People's Political Consultative Conference held a biweekly study session. A larger group would have thirty people, a smaller one ten to twenty. We would have these small group meetings. At these meetings, the leadership would want to have everyone discuss some document sent out by the Party Central Committee, or something Mao had said. First, the "Criticize Lin Biao" document was sent out for discussion. Then the "Criticize Confucius" document was sent. Everyone who attended the small group meeting had to speak, so I couldn't but speak. So, this is what I said: I said that Chairman Mao himself said, "I personally lead the Criticize Confucius Campaign." Probably this was only because it was politically a necessity. But I was not sure about this and did not understand what was politically necessary for me to criticize. Chairman Mao probably thought this was necessary, but since I didn't understand, I couldn't go along with everyone and follow Chairman Mao in criticizing Confucius. I didn't understand. Moreover, he said that the retaining of different opinions was to be tolerated, so I wanted to retain mine. I would not speak. Since I was reserving my opinion, I would not speak. Naturally I didn't say anything in opposition either.

But it was like this: those who followed the tide thought that acting like this made it seem as if I was making up my mind independently, so they were always thinking of ways to lure me into speaking, and then criticize and censure me. Those twenty to thirty member groups I just mentioned held a joint session of five different study groups just to criticize me. Several hundred people from those five groups criticized me. I sat there listening, but did not speak. They didn't want me to speak either, so I didn't speak. After this joint session of five small study groups consisting of several hundred people meeting as one, each small group also met individually.

People would ask me: “How did you feel after listening to everybody’s criticism during the enlarged session? What opinions do you have? Any reflections?” I quoted *The Analects*, an old saying in the old books. What did it say? It said: “The three armies may be robbed of their supreme commander, but a common man cannot be robbed of his will.” You can lock up the supreme commander, but you can’t take away a common person’s will. A “common person” is just an ordinary guy, but his ambitions, his will, cannot be taken from him. I made this expression of my attitude. Later Yang Rongguo¹ [who had criticized me] fell [from power]. The reason was that he had flattered Jiang Qing, and went along with her, writing poems to flatter and praise Jiang Qing, just as Feng Youlan did. Feng Youlan, originally a famous professor, also was no good. Everyone despised him. So that was it.

Alitto: What would you want to tell later generations? That is to say, what wisdom, what essence of your experience would you like to pass on?

Liang: My thought, my advocacies are all in my book, *The Hunan Mind/Heart and Human Life*.

Alitto: ...Please give the youth of Europe and America some inspiration.

Liang: The important thing...I should, for example, first know the mores and spirit of American youth before I say anything. But I don’t understand enough of America, Japan and Europe. It’s suitable that only after understanding things should I then directly address particular questions. Really I don’t understand them clearly. I am too distant from them, and not all that clear about their situation, so I can’t say anything. Saying something extremely general would also not be good or of any use. I actually do very much want to go to Europe. I feel that if I could go to Europe and America, I would increase my concrete knowledge, not just listen to people. Each person has his own insight, so I believe that if I could go to Europe and the U.S.,

¹Yang Rongguo (1907–1978), an academic specialist in ancient Chinese thought and an advocate of Dialectical Materialism in the study of history, joined the CCP in 1938. He later also became a standing committee member of the Democratic League. Thus, he was still in Liang’s discussion group in the People’s Political Consultative Conference. He was dean at Hunan University until the Cultural Revolution, during which he and his family suffered greatly. Red Guards invaded his home and confiscated his property. He was beaten and sent to a May Seventh Cadre School. His wife was driven insane, left him, and later drowned. By 1973, however, Yang had been rehabilitated, and had posts in both the Guangdong Provincial Government as well as Sun Yat-sen University. Liang had several reasons for being unhappy at his post-Cultural Revolution disgrace. First, Yang had always been a politicized sycophant scholar whose academic work was in the service of politics, and who was interested in his personal advancement at the cost of his personal integrity. Liang found this kind of scholar to be despicable, and criticized them freely in these interviews. He found their flattery of Jiang Qing particularly offensive. (He placed Feng Youlan in the same category.) Second, in his scholarly work, Yang always maintained a highly critical stance toward Confucius and Confucianism. I must add, on the other hand, that, like most other loyal sycophantic scholar party members, he had suffered greatly in the Cultural Revolution, and it was somewhat understandable that he was terrified into even greater sycophancy, and so took the lead in criticizing Liang.

I would gain much understanding that I don't have now. It's a pity that I haven't been able to go.

Alitto: Actually, speaking of that, I might be able to arrange a visit to the U.S. But you are of great age and so you would need someone to accompany you.

Liang: Certainly. If I go, I would definitely need someone to accompany me.

Alitto: After I return home, I'll follow up on this. Can you give the next generation of Chinese youth some inspiration on how to have a more hopeful future, or...

Liang: Toward the youth of China, it is not the same as speaking about outside—I do know about the situation in China. I want to say probably two kinds of things. One kind is directed toward the Chinese domestic situation, including the political situation. Right now is a time of stability and progress, an era of many possibilities, opportunities to make progress, more so than in previous times. It's now been thirty, thirty-one years [since the founding of the nation]. The situation is better than before. Some people envy the U.S. or envy Europe, and they appear to be dissatisfied with the situation within China. I feel that this is a bit blind; it is blind envy of the foreign. This is not right and not good. Of course, to go abroad to take a look, or to study, is good, but this must be done with a well worked out plan in mind that China under the leadership of the Communist Party must proceed toward socialism. This direction is correct. The term now—"the Four Modernizations"—is still for the purpose of having China walk this path and achieve modernization in these four areas, but it cannot ever leave the socialist path of modernization. It is especially important to know that this is a time of better opportunities than before. The political situation is now stable. Hua Guofeng—Chairman Hua is very stable, and Deng Xiaoping is open-minded. So right now is a time of hope. So, in this time of hope, marching down this correct path, working with what each person can do, what is convenient for them to do, by the sweat of their brow—this should be the path of modern Chinese youth.

Alitto: This question is similar to the one I just asked. Would you give any advice to those scholars in the Chinese cultural domain?

Liang: As far as the present world of thought, the present academic world goes—I do not refer to the various specialized sciences. I know very little about the various specialized sciences; none are my own field. I don't have a specialty. But I do have an opinion, which is that in China at present, the more famous, the more prominent [scholars] are all mathematicians. Several mathematicians have been invited to go abroad. Mathematics is different from the empirical sciences. Empirical science requires experiments and laboratories and observation and empirical practice. Mathematics can be done behind closed doors. Currently there is a kind of fad, that prominent [scholars] are all mathematicians. If they [academics] move too far in this direction, and not in the other direction, it won't be good. This is a short-coming. How can we have the general atmosphere not tend in this direction, toward this kind of abstract science? This kind of science I think is called "abstract" (said in English). There's another kind of science called "concrete."

It seems that attention should be paid to concrete science. (Alitto: That is, utilitarian science.) Applied science. It [academic work] should not be overly devoted to the abstract. Attention should be placed on reality. But I also feel that there has always been a certain inclination in China, i.e., that of talking about the practical often with insufficient attention paid to impractical, basic scholarship. I think that the point of emphasis should be moved from the practical to the basic. What I can say is this.

Alitto: This question involves Philosophy. In this ever-changing world, what is eternal truth?² That is, is a universal, eternal truth possible? Do you think that an intellectual should...

Liang: In general, a particular body of knowledge explores and pursues truth. That body of knowledge seeks to become universal, to be fundamental [to human understanding]. I think that any scientific discipline pursues the profound. The more it pursues the profound, the more it will pass into the realm of philosophy. So, paying attention to philosophy is helpful in doing science. This is an idea of mine.

Alitto: That is to say, each society has its own ideology. Each era has its own ideology. (Liang: Right.) Even science is an ideology produced in a particular era. Some say that it cannot transcend, that even science cannot transcend its temporality (Liang: Local.) or its locality. Is an eternal truth possible?

Liang: I'm afraid that this is a relative term. I can't understand Einstein sufficiently well, because the basis of his scholarship is in the natural sciences, in mathematics and in mechanics. But his worldview, his Theory of Relativity touches upon philosophy; it slips into the realm of philosophy. I very much like his Theory of Relativity and feel that it corroborates my own understanding of the cosmos. To be more specific, it is commonly thought that space is horizontal, while time is vertical. But I think this is just a vulgar view, and does not get to the cosmological truth.

The horizontal is space, and the vertical is time. It's really not this way. Space and time are joined together. Moreover, there is space within time. The cosmos is in flux, infinitely varying, and is endless. Anyone who has any understanding of human life would feel that the cosmos is infinitely in constant flux, that one is in the mist of this flux, and that one cannot be separated from it. From heaven above to the earth below, all things in nature—in the old Chinese phrase, “the myriad things of nature are one body”—are one. This one thing is in flux; it varies infinitely. That is to say, time and space cannot be separated. Space is part of time. Space and time are not two entities. Aren't there a lot of sayings from Confucius in *The*

²This is, of course, the central epistemological question of modern times. I asked this question in several forms throughout these interviews, trying to get Mr. Liang to articulate his view on the question. He answered in several ways, but none sufficient to satisfy me. By 1980, Postmodernism began to make itself felt in American academia, and by 1990 it was dominating it. The answer to this question from Postmodern or Postmodern-like “theory” is relatively direct: “No.” As Jean Baudrillard (1929–2007) put it, “The secret of theory is, indeed, that truth doesn't exist.”

Analects? In one section: “The master was on the river bank”—Confucius was on a riverbank—and he said, “It passes on just like this, never ceasing day or night!”³ It was referring to the flow of the water. He saw the water flowing and said “It passes on just like this, never ceasing day or night!” Unceasing flowing like this day and night. This was a sigh. This sigh was not in reference to the water flowing before him, but rather it referred to the entirety of the cosmos, the entirety of human life, the entirety of human history. This statement has profound significance, but people are fully occupied with affairs of the moment, busy with the affairs of life. They have no time; they are too busy, they are busy the entire day dealing with their environments and thus lack a deep understanding [of this which I have just outlined].

My meaning, my informal interpretation of this is: I feel that Einstein, through the discipline of Physics, gained an insight, an understanding of the broader cosmos. He did not separate time and space; he held that they were the same thing and that there was space in time. The entirety of the cosmos is in flux like this; we ourselves are also in flux.⁴ We don’t want to take too narrow or too close a view of the world. We should take the broad view of things. Taking the broad view enables us to be broad of mind, and see that anxiety about things is of no use; the broad view tells us not to always get confused amidst the gamut of human emotions. The ancients had this saying, “Head upwards looking beyond the farthest heavens, taking the broad view....” I forget what follows. Yesterday didn’t I write the eight characters “...taking things as they come”? I feel that we should be that way, not be tossed and confused by the gamut of emotions, but transcend these; we should also not hold on to the illusions [of existence of self and the world].

- Alitto: Can humans have a life without disputes and fighting? How do you think we can decrease disputes and fighting?
- Liang: Disputes and fighting are facts of the biological world. Not only is humanity like this. In speaking of the struggle for survival isn’t there the saying that “the bigger fish eat the smaller fish”? Dog eats dog. So, this is an undeniable fact. Everyone in the biological world can be seen engaged in these kinds of mutual struggle, murder, and fights to the death. But humanity should be more elevated than animals, and in fact, it already is. This is one aspect of humanity. There is another aspect that in the situation of competition,

³ *The Analects* 9.17 (《论语·子罕第九》, 十七章).

⁴ Liang had very early seen Einstein as reinforcing ancient truths. In *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, he claimed that the Theory of Relativity confirmed scientifically the Consciousness-Only Buddhist view of a world in which fundamental reality is manifest in the changing phenomena of successive events acting according to the Law of Cause and Effect (因明). Master Taixu (太虚大师) argued the same thing after Liang did. They were not alone among May Fourth era Chinese intellectuals in claiming that Einstein had proved scientifically their own cosmologies.

struggle and mutual slaughter, there is already looking after one another, and helping the weak and small. The history of societal development marches forward, ever decreasing mutual estrangement and mutual discrimination [between people]; minds broaden and become generous and tolerant; people look after others. I think that this probably develops through time; it becomes more and more developed through time. The overall trajectory of this development is this way.

When humanity had no culture at all, it led a collective life, but the collectives were not large. Gradually the collective bodies increased in size. At first there were struggles between small collective bodies causing great estrangement and misunderstanding. The more things progressed, the more they evolved, the more they became civilized, the easier it became for people to have emotional communication with one another, and the easier it was for mutual understanding to be enhanced. In the future, in socialism after capitalism, it will probably be even more this way. So in looking at mankind's future, we should be optimistic. What question were we discussing just now?

Alitto: I just asked you if there was any [possibility] of a conflict-free, struggle-free life, and what had to happen before it was possible to decrease disputes and struggles.

Liang: I think that this matter is one of natural development. This aspect of people's demands [drives] the natural course of development in this direction. The natural future [course] is in this direction. In the immediate present, wars still can't be avoided, but this is still only the present. In the distant future, capitalist society will certainly become a thing of the past. After capitalism comes socialism; it should be socialism. The sight of capitalist society are fixed on production and pursuit of production, but after the transformation into socialist society, production will be always advancing, so people's sight will be fixed on life; it will be fixed on how to live life and on how to have peaceful coexistence; the way to do that is through small collectives. The situation of struggle between small collectives will change. The scope of the collective will be expanded, and simultaneously there won't be that kind of hostility and estrangement between collectives. It seems there was a saying, "one world, one man" (spoken in English), one world, maybe not, but everyone will be in peaceful coexistence. The future definitely will be this way. Because no one would dare use lethal weapons, everyone will coexist peacefully. Gradually, the prejudices, distinctions and hostilities between races and continents will recede. People will not dare to have destructive wars.

Alitto: An important point in my book is a comparison between you and Chairman Mao. There are similarities. The greatest difference between you and him is how each of you viewed struggle. Chairman Mao liked struggle. He felt that it was something good, that contradictions were a good thing, that politics was a good thing. You, at least in my view, wanted to avoid political struggle and contradictions. For example, this question of class struggle. Chairman Mao always felt that the more violent

the better, the more fighting the better. Your rural reconstruction theory and plans always aimed at avoiding direct contractions and struggle. What do you think about what I have just said?

Liang: That's about right, about right. Chairman Mao emphasized class struggle. Because of his emphasis on the existence of classes, he emphasized class struggle. This had become a major trend of thought in China in the past, but now, it is slowly passing away; that is, within the nation it is slowly passing away. The present leadership of China on the one hand hopes for world peace, and not to make war. On the other hand, they say that war is unavoidable. They say that the Soviet Union is the number one enemy, so we are closer to Japan and the U.S. Most recently the problem of Afghanistan is one that every country in the world has focused its attention on, they are looking to see how this develops. The origin and development of this situation is all because the Soviet Union takes the offensive. The U.S. and others are on the defensive. It seems the Chinese leadership says that war is unavoidable. Because the Soviet Union is always advancing there....

Alitto: Yes. The fact is, if a war with nuclear weapons actually breaks out... let me think how to say it. The Soviet Union has been aggressive everywhere. Afghanistan is just the most recent example. A mistake the U.S. made over ten years ago was not to have withdrawn from Vietnam earlier. After Vietnam, Americans do not want to become involved abroad. The result is that we have yielded to the USSR everywhere, in Africa, Latin America and Asia. What do you think the world needs today? Do you think that the world today has hope? And what does China have to do to put its efforts on the world stage?

Liang: There are many tragic things. We don't want to look at them, but they will still happen. But I myself say, I think that human history is uninterruptedly developing. It naturally will go ahead and develop, and not stop. Since it will develop naturally with nothing that can obstruct it, at the same time development is good. In development unavoidably there will be destruction; unavoidably there is some great destruction. On one hand, it's unavoidable; on the other, we seek to avoid it. We at least try hard to reduce and to narrow the unavoidable. This is still something that we should strive for. But one need not be pessimistic toward the future. Since things are going to develop in this way anyway, what use is being pessimistic? Things will develop. Development is always good. I think that development is always good.

Alitto: This kind of statement "Development is always good" really is the opposite of conservatism. Your "Development is always good" is precisely the diametrical opposite of many conservative points of view.

Liang: Isn't there a term "optimist"? It seems that I am an optimist.

Alitto: This question is about historical personages. Please concretely relate, the more detailed the better, what relationships and contacts you have had with historical personages. Please assess their historical roles.

Liang: These are personages of what time?

Alitto: Of any time. For example, Peng Yisun had what kind of [relationship] with you?

Liang: We had a very close relationship. He was a good friend of my father. In the old Chinese convention, they were “brothers of alliance.” His surname was Peng, and ours was Liang—two families—but two very close, good friends entered into a fraternal relationship. At the same time he was my elder brother’s father-in-law. His oldest daughter was my elder sister-in-law. Also, from the time I began primary school,⁵ I boarded at his place as a student. At that time China had not established a school system like the West for learning things. He ran the equivalent of a primary school, called the Enlightenment School. I went through primary school there. So he and I had three different relationships. One was a kin relationship, as he was my elder brother’s father-in-law; one was being a brother with my father, the second kind of relationship; I would be considered as his student, and he my teacher, the third kind of relationship. So, we had three different kinds of relationships. This man had great creative power. He was a reformer of the time, a patriotic reformer.⁶ Because he worked in this movement he offended many people. Most importantly, he offended Yuan Shikai, and so Yuan Shikai sent him off to Xinjiang.⁷

Alitto: I know the general situation. Please elaborate in detail as to what kind of person he was, or assess him in his historical role.

Liang: Together with him, or you could say helping him, was his brother-in-law, the husband of his younger sister. This man was surnamed Hang, and his given name was Xinzhai. This man had revolutionary consciousness, the consciousness of overthrowing the Qing Dynasty. But Mr. Peng did not. Mr. Peng was a patriotic reformist. He was for very progressive, unconservative and creative reform. He paid no attention to the threats of others. He invested all his family wealth in a newspaper and went bankrupt. He was such a person. So, he made a rather deep impression on me.

Alitto: Mr. Peng died in 1924, didn’t he? Did his newspaper (Liang: *Capital Talk Daily*) *Capital Talk Daily* continue for a time⁸, didn’t the Department of Civil Affairs...

⁵ This first primary school that Liang attended was burnt down by the Boxers (义和团) in 1900 because it was a “foreign school” (洋学堂).

⁶ Liang used the term “patriotic” with good reason. Much of what Peng Yisun and Liang’s father did, in their publications, opera reform projects and adult education, was directed at instilling a sense of patriotism among ordinary people. At that time, modern patriotic ideas and feelings were limited primarily to the elite classes.

⁷ Liang’s extended family as well as his friends like Peng Yisun and Huang Yuansheng, had a strong dislike for Yuan. Aside from Liang Ji and Peng Yisun, the Liang family’s intergenerational in-law family, the Zhangs of Yunnan, were also actively anti-Yuan.

⁸ Founded in 1904, this was one of the first Chinese-run newspapers in the entire country, and the most influential in Beijing. It was meant for mass consumption, rather than the elite. Before this, Peng had founded *Enlightenment Pictorial* (《启蒙画报》), which I think might have been the earliest such publication for children. After *Capital Talk Daily*, Peng founded *China* (《中华报》), a publication aimed at the elite. The major characteristics of all of Peng’s enterprises were populism and patriotism. His major goal was raising the cultural level of the masses and instilling them with national consciousness and patriotic feelings.

Liang: He died. I had taken over running it for a while. Because it was losing money after he was sent to Xinjiang, *Capital Talk Daily* closed down. After it closed down someone surnamed Ding, a Muslim, ran a *Foreign Countries Vernacular Newspaper*. This newspaper was in small page format. It replaced *Capital Talk Daily*. After he returned from Xinjiang, *Capital Talk Daily* was going to be revived, but it could not recover the original market, as this market had been taken by Ding's foreign newspaper, so *Capital Talk Daily* lost money. Later, it just didn't fly. Speaking further about my relationship with Mr. Peng would repeat what I have already said. I already spoke of my relationship with Mr. Liang Rengong.

Alitto: You told a part. I didn't know if what you had said was complete.

Liang: My relationship with Mr. Liang was not that long. He was in the North. Later I went to Guangdong, to Li Jishen's. When I was in Guangdong, I was 36. Liang Rengong was exactly 20 years older than I. While I was in Guangdong, he died in Beijing in 1929. Most of my contact with him was in Beijing. He was in charge of the Tsinghua University Institute of Chinese Civilization. At the time, the Tsinghua University Institute of Chinese Civilization had four professors. Liang Rengong was one. Another was Wang Jing'an (Wang Guowei), another was Chen Yinke. The fourth was Zhao Yuanren. Zhao Yuanren is still alive in the United States.

Alitto: His daughter was my Chinese language teacher.⁹ I met him several times.

Liang: Probably he's more than 80 years old now.

Alitto: When I saw him he was already...possibly a bit older than you. Possibly he's already 90.

Liang: Possibly. Possibly he is that old. At the time he was one of the four professors at the Institute of Chinese Civilization. He possessed an extremely rich knowledge. I heard that he had this kind of ability: he usually spoke mandarin as we did. But if he went to a new place, for example, Fujian or Guangdong, within a day or two, he was able to speak that place's dialect.

Alitto: Yes, I also heard that.

Liang: I had heard it was that way. Because he understood the locals' speech. From the rhyme and enunciation, he understood the speech after having been there a day or two, so he could speak local speech. People told me it was that way.

Alitto: Yes. When this great master was at the [University of California,] Berkeley, I went to visit him to ask him about Bertrand Russell. Because he had accompanied Mr. Russell...

Liang: There was a time that there was a passage that could be translated [during a Russell lecture], but it turned out that [the interpreter] couldn't translate it. They still had to have Mr. Zhao interpret it.

⁹ Ms. Iris Pien (赵如兰, her married name was Pien) was my third year Chinese language teacher at Harvard. Her field was musicology, but she taught Chinese language as well. For many years, Harvard was the only American university to use Zhao Yuanren's ingenious system of Romanization for mandarin Chinese as well as his textbook *A Mandarin Primer*.

- Alitto: I had heard other stories about his abilities, telling about how he could repeat anything backwards. That is, first speak the several sounds at the end. After he spoke a section, only when the tape recording was played in reverse did it become normal speech. Mr. Zhao really is a linguistic genius. You were just speaking of your relationship with Liang Qichao, and said that he was at the Tsinghua University Institute of Chinese Civilization...
- Liang: At that time I also lived at Tsinghua, staying at someone else's place. I wasn't working at Tsinghua. But Mr. Liang Rengong was managing the Institute of Chinese Civilization, and engaged me to give lectures for a short period, about a month. I lectured on a temporary basis. At that time I had relatively more contact with him. I also met and had contact with Mr. Wang Jing'an at that time. I heard about Mr. Wang Guowei's suicide by drowning at the Summer Palace just a few hours after it happened. I even went off to the Summer Palace to see what the situation was. I also knew Chen Yinke and had some contact with him. He also was someone of rich and broad learning. I did not much seek his instruction. As for Mr. Zhao, I didn't speak with him. Among historical personages, I had a period of closeness with Liang Qichao. There was someone else with whom I was very close. I don't know if you heard of this person—a Shandongese named Wang Hongyi.
- Alitto: Yes, that's in the book. There are about ten pages about your intellectual relationship with him. I have read his writings. Did you get to know him at that time? At first he was in Shandong running a school. Later, when the "May Fourth Movement" began, he came to Beijing and sought out Hu Shi. (Liang: Sought out Hu Shi and Mr. Cai [Yuanpei].) You got to know him at this time?
- Liang: Yeah. Because he was someone of influence in Shandong. He was from Caozhou in Shandong. There was a middle school in Caozhou called the Sixth Middle School under Provincial Administration, which he had founded. Later he was very close to someone named Jin Yunpeng, who had been Chairman of Shandong, Chairman of the provincial government, and the Premier [of China]. [I lectured on] *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies* during the time he was in Shandong. He had great influence in Shandong educational circles, and in 1921, he supported and welcomed me to go to Shandong to lecture during the summer, to give lectures on *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*. Later he, together with Jin Yunpeng, wanted to organize a Shandong Great Company. The company's funds were from mining and railroads—the Boshan Coal Mines and the Qingdao-Jinan Railroad that the Japanese had returned; they wanted to use a part of these funds to found a university. Found what university? One called Qufu University, in Confucius's hometown. They were busy with this and wanted me to come run the university. I said that it wouldn't work. I said that I was thirty-some years old. At that time I was just thirty. How could managing a university be that easy? How could so young a person [as I, who had] just [entered] the academic world [do the job]... This wouldn't work.

Alitto: When you left Peking University, you went to Shandong... (Liang: I did.) I don't quite have this straight. I supposed that the opinions of you and those who founded the university diverged, with the result that you didn't go.

Liang: They wanted me to manage Qufu University. I said: I can't regard such an enterprise as something that could be done casually. If you want to hand over the management to me, we should have done the work for the preparatory stage. There are two kinds of preparatory tasks, two aspects. One is the preparation for the future instructors. The other is the preparation for the university students. They said, "Alright, you go manage it." [I then] went to run a senior high school. On the one hand, a senior high school, and on the other an academy, the "Revive China Academy."

Alitto: The Revive China Academy is also in Caozhou?

Liang: Caozhou. These two institutions were together in the same place, the same city. The students were not only going to be drawn from Shandong. Although the school was in Caozhou, Shandong, students would be recruited in Beijing. I had previously issued a document called "Brief Review of Our Opinions on Education," which was how we were going to run the school. It mentioned a slogan, which was "to Be Friends with You [the student]." [This was] not like the situation in which the teachers talked about some stuff in school and the students received some knowledge, which looked like an instructor selling knowledge. We didn't want it like that. We wanted to be friends with the youth and leading the youth together on the road of life. We recruited students in Beijing. Because this document was issued, a lot of people saw it, and because we recruited students in Beijing, not in Shandong, the recruited students, the later ones, carefully counted, included people from thirteen provinces and cities, some as far away as Suiyuan, Shanxi, Shaanxi, Yunnan, Guangdong, Sichuan, Zhejiang, etc.—students from thirteen provinces and cities. Because we recruited them in Beijing, we brought them to Shandong. But, it was a pity that I myself stayed there for half a year. I brought several friends there to be instructors who worked there a year...

...

Liang: ...At the time there were two cliques of warlords, the Zhili clique and the Anhui clique. There were contradictions between them. When there were contradictions, military activities would influence things.¹⁰ My school couldn't continue. So I withdrew. The group of instructors that I brought

¹⁰ Liang was referring, very vaguely, to the original Anhui clique general Zheng Shiqi (郑士奇), who had been appointed by the Zhili clique in 1923 to rule Shandong. In 1925, as a result of the Second Zhili-Fengtian War in late 1924, the Fengtian clique general Zhang Zongchang (张宗昌) became the ruler of Shandong. Curiously, Liang does not mention the Fengtian clique in this statement, even though it was the victory of Fengtian over Zhili that was responsible for the changed political situation in Shandong and for the end of Liang's school there. The Anhui clique was not involved, as it was the Zhili clique that had appointed Zheng Shiqi.

there had lectured for a full year and they also withdrew. After we pulled out, some students went with us. Because, as I just said, we wanted to be friends with the youth, many students had emotional attachments, and very close relationships with us. So, some students withdrew with us. Everyone lived together in Beijing. At that time, Mr. Xiong Shili was together with me. When I went to Caozhou, he went with me, and left together with me. The second period [we were together] was these two years [1925]. It was not a brief period. So, I wasn't doing anything. I had some students...one was Li Jishen, one was Chen Mingshu. Every month they would send several hundred silver dollars to support us. After they supported us for these two years, they sent a letter saying that we should not closet ourselves in Beijing talking scholarship, because at that time the National Revolution was in Guangzhou [and] the revolutionary waves were strong—they told us not to talk scholarship behind closed doors, to go participate in the revolution together. I also felt that this national revolution was a new lease on life for China. [I felt that] they weren't the old style warlords. The era of the old warlords had passed. They seemed to be a newly arisen force. At that time Mr. Sun [Yat-sen] was influenced by Russia, and allied with Russia and the Communists, with his "Three Great Policies." I also wanted to go take a look around. Before I went myself, I first had three friends go, and then later I would go. When I went I only wanted to observe the situation, and didn't dare involve myself in [the movement]. But because Li Jishen was an old friend...he didn't tell me beforehand and had the Nanjing National Government announce that I was a member of the Guangdong Provincial Government Committee. I wasn't willing [to serve]. This I said before.

Alitto: When you were at Tsinghua University, you mentioned in the book *Morning Talks* that your child was sick. Of course this made you even sadder. Could this be considered the time in your life when your spirits were lowest?

Liang: The sick child is the one whom you met, my oldest son, Peikuan. At this time I was living together with Wei Xiqin, whom I mentioned yesterday. We lived in the western suburbs, not far from the Summer Palace. Not long after this I went south to Guangdong, to Li Jishen's. As I just said, when I went I only wanted to observe, because I felt that this was like a new lease on life for China, a new vibrancy. But I didn't dare participate. I didn't dare commit myself; I just wanted to look around. I ran into a major upheaval. At that time [Marshal] Ye Jianying staged the Red Terror in Guangzhou; they opened the prisons and let out a great many prisoners, including political prisoners. The Red Terror continued for three days, but they were driven out, and so departed. I had this experience.

Alitto: When you were working in Henan as well as in Shandong, Sun Zerang was there as well?

Liang: Right. I was working at the Rural Reconstruction Institute in Shandong. The president was Liang Zhonghua. The vice president was Sun Zerang. I was head of the Research Division, but later Liang Zhonghua resigned,

and I took over as institute president. Sun Zerang was vice president. Later because we opened a second experimental district in Heze, there was a branch institute there, and Sun Zerang went there to take charge of things. But later he died; he died in Sichuan.

Alitto: What kind of man was he? What was his background?

Liang: He had entered an agricultural technical school, but he was a courageous and able man. He was Wang Hongyi's student. (Alitto: Wang Hongyi's student? Shandongese?) Shandongese, from Caozhou. He first served as the [Rural Reconstruction] Institute's vice-president, and later went to his home area. He went to Heze in Caozhou to set up a branch institute. He was first the county magistrate, and later after an administrative district was established, he became Administrative District Commissioner, administering over ten counties. After the War of Resistance started, he withdrew from Shandong with some armed forces, armed militia, about two thousand men. First they went to Wuhan, then from Wuhan to Hunan, and from Hunan into Sichuan. When in Hunan and Sichuan, the government wanted him to be an Administrative District Commissioner. A commissioner could administer over ten counties. There was an administrative district in Hunan, so he was first a commissioner in Hunan, and later was a commissioner in Sichuan. This man had talent and nerve.

Alitto: Were his views on rural reconstruction different from yours?

Liang: Very different. The kind of rural reconstruction I wanted was for the long-term, with far-reaching significance. The devices of the village schools and township schools were designed with quite profound purpose in mind.¹¹ But he was not this way. He focused on the [short-term] necessities of the time. What was the immediate need of the time? Because of the Japanese aggression against China, he concentrated hard on training militia [and] preparing to resist Japan.¹² He focused on this.

Alitto: The book also has this aspect. Heze and Zouping were two different styles of rural reconstruction. Heze style was Sun's. It was like that.

Liang: It was like that.

Alitto: Was he killed in war in Sichuan or did he die of illness?

Liang: He jumped into a river and drowned.

Alitto: Jumped into a river and drowned? Suicide? (Liang: Yeah.) What difficulties was he having that were so bad? Was it still because of...

¹¹ The goal of these schools cum government agencies was nothing less than the complete transformation of the nature of government, a very profound goal indeed. The institutions of local school and local government were to meld into one, with the local government administrators relating to the populace in a teacher-student relationship. In Chinese society, education always carried with it a certain moral content. So, the local school teachers were to serve as quasi-clergy as well. The ideal was the "schoolification of society" (社会学校化). What could be more profound a goal for local government than that!

¹² The Heze area was "wilder" than Zouping, with more bandits and crimes. Sun's first task (which he made his primary task) was to establish law and order, and so he concentrated his efforts on training militia.

Liang: The People's Liberation Army—the Communist Party troops—arrived. When he was in Sichuan he was still an Administrative District Commissioner, administering over ten counties. He was cooperating with Yan Yangchu ["Jimmy" Yen]. You know who Yan Yangchu is? (Alitto: I know.) Yan Yangchu was in Beibei, Sichuan, at a place called Xiemachang, running a rural reconstruction academy. This rural reconstruction academy also had a designated experimental district to do experimental work. Sun Zerang presided over the work of this experimental district. Sun was also considered the local official. So this rural reconstruction work, under the leadership of the local official, was in union with, merged together with, the rural reconstruction academy.

But as soon as the Communist Party troops arrived, the National Party's influence was gone; everything changed. Didn't he [Yan] have a relationship with the rural reconstruction academy? The rural reconstruction academy was founded by Yan Yangchu. Yan wasn't there at the time. He had been in the U.S. and had returned to Shanghai, but didn't dare come to Sichuan. He then went to Taiwan.¹³ Because he was in the U.S., capitalists gave him funds, but told him, "You go over to Chiang's side." The U.S. feared and loathed the Communist Party. Those helping Yan Yangchu were all rich Americans, so he didn't dare go [to Sichuan]. Although he had started the rural reconstruction academy, he didn't dare return. He could only go to Taiwan and to Chiang Kai-shek.

On this side, the Communist Party took over the rural reconstruction academy, taking over the teachers and students, the library and property. When they were taking over the property, the proxy for Yan who had taken over the responsibility was Qu Junong. He had studied abroad and could speak English. So the People's Liberation Army arrested Sun Zerang and Qu Junong [and told them] "You'd better own up to things." They explained [everything], but [the PLA] didn't believe them [and insisted] "You haven't come completely clean yet. There are still some things and money that you haven't handed over." They [the PLA] went after them, and threatened them, "Arrested reactionaries will be shot." They tied up the two and pushed them out together to where they were shooting other people, so it looked as though they would be shot together with the others. Actually they were just brought along to attend the event to frighten them; they weren't shot. Qu Junong was an effete intellectual, and became extremely frightened, because they had been bound to the executions, and then brought back. Qu Junong returned trembling with fear and trepidation, extremely terrified. But Sun was not that way at all. Even though he went too [to the execution ground], he was a man of overwhelming vigor and vitality, and

¹³ In fact, this is false, as is the myth of pressure from "rich Americans" on Yan to "go over to Chiang's side." There was no such pressure, and Yan himself made a special point of not going to Taiwan, as he didn't want to give the appearance of taking sides, and, moreover, he was fed up with Chiang. Later, Yan did rural reconstruction work in the Philippines, not Taiwan.

of great courage. In such circumstances, he was not afraid. He sneered. After they were brought back, seeing that Qu Junong was so frightened and afraid that he would commit suicide, the PLA kept a watch over him. They didn't pay attention to Sun Zerang, relaxing about him and not guarding him. He left and threw himself into the water. He jumped into the Yangtze and drowned....

Chapter 8

August 19, 1980

- Alitto: I know that he [Fei Xiaotong] had a viewpoint on the rural question. He wrote in the 1930s in relatively specialized publications in the discipline of anthropology. But in the 1940s, after the War of Resistance, he published a lot of newspaper articles, and they were later translated into English.¹ I think there were many areas of similarity between them and your publications about rural reconstruction.
- Liang: Right.
- Alitto: I will visit him this trip. He's very busy.
- Liang: Very busy. He just returned from the U.S.
- Alitto: It seems that he is busy in receiving foreign guests.² Every time some friends visit China....
- Liang: He entertains them.
- Alitto: Three days ago, I went to Peking University. I heard that Feng Youlan's health is not very good, [that] he has some difficulty walking on campus, and need someone to accompany him.
- Liang: Someone supports him. His eyes are also going. (Alitto: His eyes aren't well. His health seems to be not well too.) His health is going too.
- Alitto: He is overweight, and the entire body has no strength. We discussed Sun Zerang yesterday. The next name on my list here [of historical figures to

¹ I was referring to Fei, Hsiao-t'ung, *China's Gentry: Essays on Rural Urban Relations* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1953). These seven essays were some of Fei's late 1940s newspaper articles translated into English and then edited by the University of Chicago Anthropologist Margaret Park Redfield. Fei's connection with the University of Chicago goes back to his student days at Yenching University, where the lectures of University of Chicago Sociologist Robert E. Park sparked his interest in sociology and set him on his career path.

² The first time I met Fei Xiaotong was in May of 1973, when he was the head of the National Minorities Institute in Beijing. I brought up the similarities his analysis of rural China had with Liang's, but he insisted (in a somewhat defensive fashion) that his ideas were different from Liang's. Fei also added that his own works were full of "bourgeois thought" and so I should not think too highly of them.

ask about] is Mr. Tao Xingzhi. You knew Mr. Tao Xingzhi for a long time. You met him in the 1920s, 1928 or 1929? After you toured the Xiaozhuang Normal School, you wrote many articles that referenced this place, such as “My Northern Journey...”

Liang: “A Record of What I Saw [on My Northern Journey].” My second son can be considered his student.

Alitto: Where?

Liang: In Sichuan. When he was eight or nine years old, he was Mr. Tao’s student. Mr. Tao was very good indeed, really something.

Alitto: Good in what respects?

Liang: He was a very good person.

Alitto: You mean in his conduct as a man?

Liang: He was a very good person. He had studied in the U.S. Previously these were called “students who had studied abroad,” and they wore western clothes and leather shoes. He also had worn them, but discarded them and wore instead peasant clothes and straw shoes. He founded the Xiaozhuang Normal School. He led a class of students to some empty space outside of Nanjing, where they built the buildings themselves. Really something. This man was great, really good. I never saw anyone like him among those who had studied abroad.

Alitto: Aside from that tour of Xiaozhuang Normal School, what other contact did you have with him....

Liang: When the Japanese came, we withdrew to Sichuan. What work was he doing? Mr. Tao had taken in a group of homeless refugee orphans of both sexes from Wuhan and from along the railway. After he took them in, he brought them to Sichuan, where he trained and educated them. At that time I also sent my second son to him,³ so he can be considered Mr. Tao’s student. That man was wonderful!⁴

Alitto: From the viewpoint of the present, how would you appraise his historical role? How would you describe it?

Liang: He should be considered an educator. I want to say something about his death. How did he die? The Nationalist Party government in Nanjing thought that he was a Communist Party member and treated him as such.

Alitto: When was this?

Liang: The peace talks were held in Nanjing between the two Parties before he died. The Nationalist secret agents on Chiang’s side put him on the black list of people who must be killed. The secret agents were to assassinate him. After this list came to light, he himself was a bit frightened. He died

³ Liang Peishu (梁培恕).

⁴ Intellectually, Liang seemed to have been on the same wave length as Tao. Tao’s famous reversing of the order of the characters of his name (from Zhixing to Xingzhi) is the meaning necessary here? It was quite in line with Liang’s own emphasis on practice and “life-changing” knowledge. Aside from Liang’s own rural work style having commonalities with Tao’s, Liang also admired his self-sacrificing personal character. Of course, they also shared an antipathy to Chiang Kai-shek.

in Shanghai. He didn't die of illness. It seems that he collapsed while on the toilet. We were all in Nanjing [at the negotiations]. Zhou Enlai took a special trip to Shanghai to see him off after he had died. When he was in Wuhan, he had taken in a great many homeless refugee children. At that time he set up an orphans' school [Yucui School] on the upper reaches of the Jialing river in Chongqing, slightly upriver from Beibei. The name of the place was Caojiezi. I sent my second son there to be his student.

Alitto: He shared a lot of similarities with you. He also liked Wang Yangming and his philosophy. He also admired Dewey. He also laid stress on rural education.

... Because of this, I had heard that Chiang Kai-shek had dispatched troops to occupy that place (Liang: to occupy Xiaozhuang). Your student Song...(Liang: Song Leyan) wrote a report. The students could do nothing about it so they fled into the countryside, and lived with the farmers. Chiang Kai-shek's attitude toward rural education and the various methods of rural reconstruction...he was strange. On the one hand he felt that it was necessary, and on the other he was afraid of it.

Liang: In 1924, Sun Yat-sen's policy was to "ally with the Soviet Union and admit the Communists." Afterwards, when the party was in Chiang Kai-shek's hands he "purged the Communists," expelling them from the Guomindang. There was such a period.

Alitto: Yes. I know about that. Do you have any more comments on Tao Xingzhi?

Liang: No other comments. But I often tell my second son, Peishu, "Don't ever forget that you are a student of Tao Xingzhi's!"

Alitto: Did you have any contact with Mr. Ding Wenjiang?

Liang: Well, I met him several times, that's all. I was never very close to him.

Alitto: You did mention him in some of your articles.

Liang: Yes. I did mention him.

Alitto: What do you feel about him?

Liang: I think that he was very talented. Although he was a scientist, he had great talent. Chiang Kai-shek wanted to employ him. I think that he was for a time doing something in Shanghai. (Alitto: Research or ...) He seemed a part of the municipal government of Shanghai.⁵

Alitto: Oh, yes, yes. Do you think that Ding was representative of anything? That is to say, this kind of...

Liang: He and a friend of mine, Zhang Junmai, were very good friends to begin with. They both had a relationship with Liang Qichao. They were part of the Liang Qichao clique, both being juniors and students of Liang's. Though being part of Liang's clique politically, the two of them engaged in polemics against each other over the question of science. Such was the case.

⁵ Ding was employed in Shanghai in 1925, and represented Jiangsu Province in negotiations with the foreign powers, which resulted in the agreement, "Temporary Regulations on Reclamation of Juridical Rights in Shanghai by China." Ding was employed by the militarist controlling Shanghai at the time, Sun Chuanfang (孙传芳).

- Alitto: So, do you believe that he was typical of something in the early years of the Republic?
- Liang: Ding represented the “science party” and Zhang philosophy.
- Alitto: As for Yan Yangchu... (Liang: I had a lot of contact with him.) Do you have any comments on him?
- Liang: He was a very nice person. I heard he’s in the Philippines now.
- Alitto: The last several years, I’m not sure. I had a fellow classmate at Harvard who went there earlier than me. His Ph.D. thesis was on Yan Yangchu and his works. During his research, he went to the Philippines to interview Yan. The thesis hasn’t been published—I have no idea for what reason. In any case, Yan was doing rural work in the Philippines.
- Liang: Yan’s elder son is in Beijing. He came to see me and told me that both his father and his mother were in the Philippines.
- Alitto: What was the greatest difference between Yan’s and your views of rural reconstruction and its practice?
- Liang: Yan lacked any theoretical grasp. He had no head for philosophy. He was originally working in a mass literacy movement. This literacy movement was related to his religion. Religious people very often engage in some philanthropic work and help poverty-stricken people.⁶ During the First World War, French manpower was in short supply because of the war, so they needed laborers. They hired a lot of Chinese peasants as laborers for their factories. Of course, it was a good deal for the peasants, as they could earn more than they could back in China. But they were illiterate, far from home and so could not write letters to the families. So in this way Yan Yangchu started to teach the Chinese laborers to read, so that they could communicate with their families back in China. Afterwards, the situation changed. The French didn’t need foreign labor any more, and the Chinese workers returned to China. So did Yan. But he still wanted to continue to do literacy work. At first he worked in Beijing. Someone told him, “If you want your literacy movement to help poor people, the most important sector of poor people are the peasants. The bulk of the people in China are peasants. Most peasants are illiterate. Rather than do as you are doing you should go to the countryside.” Only in this way did he go to Ding County. His original term was “Poor People’s Education.” Later he called it the “Four Great Educations.” He said that Chinese peasants had four urgent faults—poverty, ignorance, physical weakness and selfishness, and his Four Great Educations were targeted at these four shortcomings. His work was like that.
- Alitto: What is your evaluation of his work and his thought?
- Liang: I think he had no head for philosophy. His theory about “poverty, ignorance, physical weakness and selfishness” was not a very brilliant or clever idea.

⁶ This is one of many remarks that Liang made to me about Christianity. He tended to think highly of it because pious Christians tended to be honest, decent people who were altruistic.

For example, this “poverty”—at the time, the problem of China was not poverty. Why not poverty? Wasn’t China very poor? I thought that the problem was not just “poverty” but “increasing poverty.” When a child was born, it was not a problem of having nothing. If there was a chance for development and creativeness, he would be able to do well. So, the problem was not just poverty but a tendency toward greater and greater poverty. In Chinese society of that time the problem was one of sinking ever downward, sliding down a slope. So the important task was to reverse this tendency and get Chinese society going upward again. But Yan did not understand this. It was insights like this that he lacked.

Alitto: So he could be considered as having too superficial a view of the situation?

Liang: Exactly, superficial.

Alitto: He and Hu Shi had quite a few views in common.

Liang: Yes, that’s right. Hu Shi also had very shallow views of things.

Alitto: I mention Hu Shi quite a lot in my book for comparison and criticise him on this point. Do you think that the similarities between the views of these two men had anything to do with their education in the U.S.?

Liang: Not necessarily. I just thought of something. During our last interview wasn’t I unable to remember someone’s name, someone who also had been educated in the United States? I now remember that his name was Jin Yuelin. He had studied Political Science in the U.S., but what he loved was Logic. They ran into each other at a Peking Union board meeting. Hu had just published an article. Hu asked Mr. Jin, “I have an article. Did you see it?” Jin replied, “I saw it. Very good, very good.” Hu was very happy. He [Jin] continued, “Too bad that you left out one sentence.” “What was that?” [Hu asked.] “When it comes to Philosophy, I’m a layman.” [was Jin’s response.] Because Hu Shi had been unenlightened to say, “What is Philosophy? Philosophy is just bad Science,” meaning immature, indifferent science.

Alitto: I also wanted to ask something. You also think that John Dewey’s thought is of some value, and that Hu Shi’s thought was not his own creation, that he just followed Dewey. Now, you and Hu Shi’s opinions differed. Both of you, it would seem, have toward Dewey...

Liang: He can be considered Dewey’s student. Dewey came to China...

Alitto: That is to say, although both of you differ in many areas in your thought, you still have toward Dewey...

Liang: Of course, Dewey has great value. He seemed to call it “popularly based education.” His mind was by no means shallow; it was quite dynamic and thorough. His books were rather profound. Even simple people can read his books. Brilliant, profound people can perceive Dewey’s excellent and valuable qualities. Hu Shi was unable to understand Dewey. Everyone’s mind is different, and Hu Shi’s mind was shallow.

Alitto: You had a student named Xu Minghong? (Liang: Yes.) Can you talk in comparative detail about him, or your evaluation of him? Mr. Wang Shaoshang of Hong Kong had written a draft of his biography

(Liang: *Biography of Xu Minghong?*), but the draft has not been published yet. Only after he let me read it did I know any details about him [Xu], but you know much more than Mr. Wang.

Liang: I possibly know more than he. I still have letters from Xu Minghong. I have a student, perhaps my closest one, Huang Genyong. Huang was from Guangdong. Xu was also from Guangdong. It was Huang who introduced Xu and me. [There were three—] one was Xu Minghong, one was Huang Genyong and one was Wang Pingshu. The three went south to Guangdong through my introduction, and later they participated in the National Revolutionary Army. During the National Revolutionary Army's Northern Expedition, the three went with the Army to Wuhan. In Wuhan the three had differences. Xu Minghong joined the Communist Party, and was in Wuhan. Wang Pingshu liked the Communist Party's thought, philosophy and theories, especially Historical Materialism. But Huang didn't join the Communist Party, and didn't exactly like its theories. So the three were different. To put it simply, later in Fujian, Li Jishen and Chen Mingshu started a People's Government.⁷ At this time, Xu Minghong had a relatively important position in the People's Government. Huang Genyong also went there. Xu Minghong represented the Fujian People's Government in their dealings with the Communist Party in Jiangxi.

Alitto: I mentioned this in the book. Later he was killed.

Liang: He was assassinated. In Shantou, Xu's hometown, he was killed by Chen Jitang. After the Fujian affair failed, Xu fled back home from Fujian, and died a martyr's death there.

Alitto: What contribution do you think he has made to the Chinese revolution?

Liang: He died for the revolution, died a martyr's death. But I had expressed my disapproval of the Fujian affair. How did I express disapproval? I had held back Huang Genyong from going [to Fujian]. I had said to him, "Don't go. Originally Li Jishen and Chiang Kai-shek were both veteran Nationalist Party members. They both followed Mr. Sun Yat-sen. You can oppose Chiang, but do not yourself oppose him from a position outside the Nationalist Party. You should tell him, 'You have betrayed the Nationalist Party that Sun Yat-sen originally created. I am a Nationalist Party member. You have betrayed the Nationalist Party.' Now if you leave the Nationalist Party, and position yourself outside the Party, you then cede legitimacy to Chiang Kai-shek. This would be a mistake."

⁷ This is in reference to the Fujian Incident (闽变) of November 1933. As they were his close friends, Liang states that Chen Mingshu and Li Jishen founded this government (actually a revolt against the Nanjing National Government). Other leaders in the 19th Route army, such as Cai Tingkai (蔡廷锴) and Jiang Guangnai (蒋光鼐) were also involved. The major motivation of the revolt was antipathy toward Chiang Kai-shek, especially toward his policy of appeasement toward Japan. The promised aid from the Jiangxi Soviet was not forthcoming and this led to the collapse of the enterprise, which began in January of 1934. Xu Minghong played a crucial role in this incident.

Later, right through to the death of Li Jishen, he [Huang] was still the director of the Beijing Revolutionary Nationalist Party, and avowed himself to be a Nationalist Party Member. Why did he go outside of the Nationalist Party? I had heard that originally Xu Minghong was supposed to represent [the People's Government of Fujian] in contacting the Jiangxi Communist Party, but the Communist Party rejected him. If Chairman Mao had taken a position at the time, he would have approved of the alliance. At the time, Chen Shaoyu and Qin Bangxian were in charge [of the Communist Party]. They had seized Chairman Mao's power. They couldn't hold out in Shanghai, so they ran off to Jinggangshan. They said that the Fujian group were petty bourgeois, and were not sufficiently revolutionary, so they did not help Fujian. In fact, the correct strategy was for the Communist Party to ally itself with Fujian and tackle Chiang together. Well, in allowing Chiang to wipe out [the] Fujian [Republic], the Communist strategy was wrong.

Alitto: You were also familiar with Zhou Enlai.

Liang: I knew him very well.

Alitto: What dealings or contact did you have with him?

Liang: It was in politics. First it was in Chongqing. Because North and East China had fallen; we all lived in Chongqing. At that time, I had dealings with him, very close dealings. Later Japan was defeated, and all of us went to Nanjing. The Chinese Communist Party office was at Meiyuanxincun. Our Democratic League office was at Lanjiazhuang. At this time we were coordinating peace talks between the two [major] Parties. Did you bring that book back today?

Alitto: You mean the notebook [you gave me] yesterday? No, I didn't.

Liang: A little book, and a slightly larger one.

Alitto: Oh, those two. Because I hadn't read those parts that were of much value to me, so I copied. I couldn't copy them that fast, but don't worry, there is no...

Liang: I mean, if you brought them back, I could point it out.

Alitto: Oh. I think that aside from what you wrote, you have other evaluations or views of Premier Zhou.

Liang: When the two major parties were conducting peace talks, General Marshall from the U.S. very much wanted to make the two major parties have peace talks. I was the general secretary of the Democratic League. I was also engaged in this work, and wanted to pursue domestic peace and establish a new China. At the time Mr. Zhou was first in Chongqing and later in Nanjing, so we were very close, and I had the most dealings with him. Finally there was a transitional government organized, with 40 members: 20 Nationalist Party members, and the remaining 20 positions divided up among the parties outside the Nationalist Party. That book I just mentioned discusses this question. What did it discuss? That the Nationalist Party allowed the Communist Party and the Democratic League thirteen positions. Whether it should be 13 or 14 was still debated.

The Chinese Democratic League was not one group, it was an alliance, and so he made this gesture. The Nationalist Party's *Central Daily News* and some Shanghai newspapers ridiculed the Democratic League as the tail of the Communist Party, as going along with the Communist Party. I made a statement to the press that the Communist Party was following the Democratic League's lead, and not the vice versa. What did I mean by that? I meant that the Communist Party was not a party of a constitutional government; it was a revolutionary party. It was an armed party that wanted to seize all of China. We had urged them to renounce armed force and cooperate with the Nationalist Party in creating a new China. We had urged it to renounce armed force. It had agreed to do so, and so it agreed with me to follow the path of the Democratic League, and it was by no means a case of me following the Communist Party. This was discussed in that little book. But one thing was quite clear: at the time the Democratic League was cooperating with the Communist Party. The Nationalist Party totally regarded us as doing so.

Alitto: Leaving aside Premier Zhou's political aspects, what kind of man was he?

Liang: I was very close to Premier Zhou. I am confident that I understood him. In ancient Chinese, the best person was called a "paragon," and I totally regarded Mr. Zhou as a paragon. There was nothing you could find fault with, no matter whether in his public or private morals. For example, he and Deng Yingchao had no children. Madame Deng seemed to have said that he could take another woman, but he didn't want to do so. In this area of marital relations, which was a private matter, he was very clean. In his work, he helped Chairman Mao in dealing with both internal matters of China and with the international area. One could say that before and especially after the founding of the state, if Premier Zhou was not handling things internal and foreign, well, Mao alone could not have handled it and would have failed; he relied on Zhou for both. Zhou worked like blazes. Everyone knows that he sometimes did not eat; he had no time to eat, so he was given something in the car and had a few bites, and immediately took off. He would work into the night. He received many foreigners, straight into the night, and slept very little, and didn't care much about food. One could say that he gave himself completely to his nation. If China didn't have Zhou these several decades, it would not have succeeded. Zhou best understood Mao's wishes. My critique of him is that he was by nature a second fiddle. He asked Mao for instructions practically constantly and for everything. Mao would hint at something and he would immediately understand. Mao didn't have to say much. But he [Zhou] himself had very few specific opinions. He went along with Mao completely. One could say that he was Mao's best assistant. He was number two, never the first in command. An old Chinese saying is "a sage ruler and a worthy prime minister." He was the virtuous prime minister. When Zhou died, people from all sides, even the common people...there was no one who didn't miss him, admire him and grieve for him. Even when Mao

- died, it wasn't like this. Of the three [Mao, Zhou and Zhu], Zhou died first. Many people honored his memory in front of Tian'anmen.
- Alitto: Probably future historians will evaluate Premier Zhou's contribution even higher. I think so.
- Liang: No matter in the realm of private morality or public morality, he was the most perfect of men. You couldn't find a flaw or weakness in him.⁸
- Alitto: You have already discussed Cai Yuanpei with me...how you got to know him and how he invited you to teach at Peking University. What evaluation or comments do you have of him?
- Liang: Everyone has the same evaluation of him, and that is that Mr. Cai was able to be all-inclusive. He was able to assemble together all kinds of factions and schools. So he employed Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao. Many of China's scholars of traditional learning, such as Huang Kan (Huang Jigang), Chen Hanzhang, Ma Xulun and Ma Yuzao, all were willing to be employed by him.
- Alitto: He was deeply impressed by your publications, it seemed. I remember that he mentioned your book *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*. He said that the questions Mr. Liang discusses in this book were the most important questions facing humanity, which means that he thought highly of you. Now in that article—when Mr. Cai Yuanpei died, you published an article in a Guangxi newspaper or magazine. I read it. In it you said that from 1921 to 1924 you wanted to leave Peking University, and he urged you not to go. Could you speak in more detail on this matter?
- Liang: At that time I had an illness—headaches and insomnia.
- Alitto: You had headaches? (Liang: Yes.) This I did not know.
- Liang: So, I wanted to leave Peking University, and the company of intellectuals. I wanted to go to the countryside, to live together with simple people, the peasants. I didn't want to bring books, or read books. At one time I had this kind of plan.
- Alitto: So you thought that by this... (Liang: My brain could have a rest.) Your headaches were due to overuse of the brain. Did you see a physician?
- Liang: Of course I went to see physicians (Alitto: Didn't work?) and took sleeping pills. We didn't understand Western medication very well. Once I took the most powerful of sleeping medications, only that once, and it felt as though it had affected my brain in some way, I had the feeling that my brain had been damaged. I didn't know what kind of drug it was. It was a Western drug, something that kept people from becoming excited.⁹

⁸In his appraisals of anyone he knew or of any public figure, one of Liang's major criterion was private morality, especially unselfish action. It was on these grounds, for example, that he gave negative evaluations for Kang Youwei and Feng Youlan in these interviews.

⁹One assumes that Liang meant a tranquilizer.

- Alitto: But if the important problem was headache, would it be better to take... aspirin? This thing is an analgesic, but you took sleeping pills? Well, what did Mr. Cai say, since you wanted...
- Liang: Mr. Cai said, "You can take a vacation; you don't necessarily have to resign." So all I could do was request a leave. I requested a leave twice. One time, I didn't leave Beijing, but I did go to the country, to a broken-down temple, to rest. That temple had only one monk. You could see the sky through the roof of the main hall. So I went into a broken-down temple to rest.
- Alitto: Did it work? That is, on your headaches?
- Liang: Of course, not using the brain, not reading or thinking. Of course I got rest. That was one time. Another time I went to a rural village. The only people there were illiterate peasants, very simple people. I didn't bring any books with me, and I didn't read any newspapers. So there was that time too. But later I abandoned this. Especially because once looking into the villages, I saw that the life of the Chinese peasant was too hard. We were very disturbed. Seeing these hardships made us upset. They treated me as special, and gave me special considerations. This made me uncomfortable, so I left.
- Alitto: Ah, I see. After you left Peking University, did you still have contact with Mr. Cai Yuanpei?
- Liang: Yes, I did, in politics. I'll give you an example. Chiang Kai-shek wanted to eliminate those outside his own faction. He had three targets. One was the Guangxi faction, one was Feng Yuxiang, and the third was Yan Xishan. At the time I'm speaking of, the Guangxi clique's power was very great. Guangdong and Guangxi Provinces were already both in the hands of the Guangxi clique. Right at that time there was the Wuhan branch of the political council. Li Zongren was head of the branch, and Wuhan was also part of the Guangxi clique. Bai Chongxi had arrived in Beijing with his troops. So it seemed that the Guangxi faction was waxing strong. So Chiang's first goal was to destroy the Guangxi clique. Again, right at this time, the Guangxi leadership acted imprudently. At the Wuhan branch they had dismissed the Chairman of the Hunan Provincial Government, Lu Diping, from his post, and installed a Guangxi clique man in his place. Hunan happened to be to the north of Guangdong and Guangxi and to the south of Wuhan. Didn't they connect Guangdong, Guangxi and Wuhan by replacing the Chairman of Hunan with a Guangxi man? Chiang refused to agree to the dismissal, ordered an investigation into the matter, and dispatched someone to carry it out. At that time, although Li Zongren was in charge of the Wuhan branch, he was in Shanghai, not in Wuhan. So he denied responsibility for the affair, claiming not to know about it, and shifting the blame to his subordinates in Wuhan. So, the national government then ordered Cai Yuanpei and Li Zongren to go investigate the matter. I happened to be on my way back from Guangdong and was passing through Shanghai. I was an old friend of Cai's from the Peking University days. He asked me to stay in Shanghai and help him. I answered that I could not be of any help

but that, as far as I knew, the Guangxi faction had absolutely no anti-Chiang purpose. I told him that even before I left Guangdong [to go to Shanghai] they [the Guangxi faction] had already decided to go out [to Shanghai]. That is, all of their important people—Li Jishen, Huang Shaohong, Chen Mingshu, Chen Jitang, and Feng Zhuwan (Feng was administering the finances of Guangdong and Guangxi)—would come to Shanghai and Nanjing, to express their complete obedience to Chiang, and to show that they were not antagonistic toward him. So, Mr. Cai asked for my help, and I answered that he didn't need my help because their attitude toward the central government was supportive. Mr. Cai said that it was all right then. But Chiang was really formidable! As soon as Li arrived in Nanjing from Shanghai, Chiang immediately arrested him and detained him at Tangshan under house arrest. He didn't relax restrictions just because you were expressing complete obedience to his orders and subordination to him. Rather he arrested you so that you couldn't move. His methods were quite ruthless. So, this was one time when I had contact with Mr. Cai, when passing through Shanghai.

Another time...there was a man named Shao Yuanchong. Mr. Cai said to me that this man Shao Yuanchong was really contemptible. He was Li Jishen's chief secretary in Guangzhou. Because he had another secretary for military matters, and one for civil matters, at the time Li Jishen had two secretaries. Shao Yuanchong was of these two chief secretaries. Cai said that I should tell Li Jishen not to employ him. I'll add a point here. This Shao Yuanchong really was contemptible. Chiang Kai-shek had words with Hu Hanmin in Nanjing. I think it was 1930. Chiang then employed force and detained Hu Hanmin also at Tangshan. Wasn't Li Jishen also detained at Tangshan? First Hu and then Li. When Hu was arrested, it was Shao Yuanchong who escorted Hu Hanmin out. But at the time in Guangzhou, nominally, he was the secretary general. He wasn't the provincial government secretary general. He was the secretary general of the [Guangzhou] branch of the political council. One could say that at that time, Li had three secretaries general: one was in the military office, one in the provincial government, and one in the [Guangzhou] branch of the political council. Shao Yuanchong was the third one. So Mr. Cai told me Shao Yuanchong should not be employed. So I asked, if not Shao Yuanchong, then who? Who should be employed in this position in your opinion? Mr. Cai told me that Jin Xiangfan should be employed. (Liang writes down the name for Alitto.) Xiangfan was his sobriquet. His personal name was Jin Zengcheng. Later I spoke to Li Jishen [about this], and Li did as I told him, that is, he did not continue to employ Shao, and employed Jin Xiangfan as the secretary general of the [Guangzhou] branch of the political council.

...

Liang: Didn't you want to go to Zhenping [County], right? You can talk to that student of mine, Meng. He knows very well about it. He was also Peng Yuting's student.

Alitto: OK. Do you mean right now?

Liang: Eh, whenever you want.

Alitto: Mr. Meng is here today. It's up to you. If you are tired now, I...

Liang: Whatever you want.

Alitto: I would still like to talk with you, the more the better. Today, if Mr. Meng can do it in the afternoon—where I'm staying is a relatively quiet place to talk in. I think doing it that way is better. Outside we would not disturb you from doing something else. If you are not tired now, I want to...

Liang: I'm OK, we can talk. Mr. Meng is here. He's reading my book.

Alitto: Does he have the book on...?

Liang: Probably he has.

Alitto: He does? Then he probably is... You also had a lot of contact with him [Chiang Kai-shek], especially during the War of Resistance, and after. You hadn't met him prior to the War, had you?

Liang: No, because I never participated in government... I always worked in society.

Alitto: I know that in the 1930s, before the war, you didn't seem to have a good impression of Chiang Kai-shek. I seem to recall that in your book *The Last Awakening of the Chinese People's Self-salvation Movement*, you compare Chiang with Yuan Shikai, saying that they were about the same, simply very successful warlords. I also remember that during the peace negotiations after the war you didn't seem to like him very much, and blamed the continuation of the civil war on him. Did you make any other comments about him?

Liang: If we are going to talk about Chiang Kai-shek and me, we must start in an earlier period. I was in Shandong doing rural reconstruction at the time that Chiang was in Wuhan in what he called his "Bandit Extermination General Headquarters." The "bandits" referred to the Communist Party. As he was stationing troops in Wuhan, he reorganized the Wuhan Provincial Government. He wasn't very satisfied with the original administration, [so he] had Zhu Jingnong appointed as the superintendent of Education for Hubei. Zhu had studied in the U.S., and had specialized in education. But Zhu was the president of Cheeloo (Qilu) University in Jinan, Shandong. A church ran this university. He had to resign his position as president and then take up the position as superintendent of Education, so, he went from Wuhan back to Jinan. Chiang asked him if he knew Liang Shuming. Zhu answered that he did know me. Chiang said, "When you go back to Jinan, ask him to come to Wuhan to meet me." Zhu returned to Jinan and resigned his university presidency. He saw me in Jinan, and relayed Chiang's invitation to me. I told him, "OK, I have the message." But I didn't go. I couldn't bring myself to go just because he had sent someone with this one sentence. This was the first contact that I had with Chiang.

I had contact with him next in Nanjing, when the Second Interior Affairs Conference was held to discuss the internal affairs of the whole nation. The Ministry of Interior Affairs convened this conference. The Minister was

a Guangxi native, Huang Shaohong. He was eager to adopt innovative and new programs and policies. He wanted to use measures superior to and also inclusive of rural reconstruction, which he called “county government reconstruction.” This would include the county level and the countryside below the county. At this conference he presented his plans. So he invited me and my colleagues working in Shandong, as well as Yan Yangchu, to attend as specialists this conference in Nanjing to help his program of county government reconstruction. So, because of this matter I traveled to Nanjing. At that time, the mayor of Nanjing city was an old friend of mine. I can write his name for you [Shi Ying]. This man was a veteran, an old friend of Sun Yat-sen’s. He was old, quite a bit older than I. When only 19 years old, he won the *Juren* degree, and after that studied Chemistry in England. Mr. Cai Yuanpei engaged him as a professor of chemistry at Peking University. He had helped Sun Yat-sen while abroad, an old friend of Sun’s. At the time he was mayor of Nanjing city, and also a friend of mine. Mr. Shi came to see me at the Central Hotel [where I was staying]. He said, “Chiang Kai-shek had wanted to meet you and you didn’t come. Now that you are already here in Nanjing, you must see him.” I answered that I would see him. Mr. Shi was mayor, so later he called Chiang’s secretary to arrange a time, the evening of a certain day. Mr. Shi came in his car to pick me up for the appointment at Chiang’s official residence. This was the first time I met Chiang Kai-shek. I had never met him previous to this.

Even from the very outset, at this first meeting, I didn’t like him. Why? He was insincere and false. He had heard, he said, that I was very famous and had wanted to meet me. He wanted me to come see him, but I had been unwilling. This time Mr. Shi had made the arrangements and brought me to see him, and so on. How was he insincere and false? He held a pen in his hand—a fountain pen, and also a little notebook. When we were talking—naturally we were just talking at random—I do not remember how I happened to bring it up. At that time the Jiangbei area [northern part of Jiangsu and part of Anhui] had suffered a great flood, and the damage was quite heavy. A friend of mine was doing relief work in the area. I just don’t remember how it came up but I did mention this man’s name and his work in disaster relief. As soon as he heard this, Chiang said, “Very good. What is the name of your friend?” He handed his pen and his notebook to me and said, “Write his name down.” Of course I wrote my friend’s name. It looked very insincere to me, a show of, as we say, “being modest and respectful before a scholar” [lowering oneself before the scholars]. It had the appearance of modesty and respect, of paying great attention to what I said. Sitting there and acting as though he didn’t hear the name clearly, so you “write his name down.” Actually, his secretary was sitting there in any case, he also wrote down the name. He didn’t have to have it written down for him. So, in general, this first meeting with Chiang left me with a very bad impression, and gave me the feeling that he was insincere and false.

After this, of course, I met him many times. At the time of this first meeting, the Japanese hadn't invaded China yet. Later, the War of Resistance that began in the North with the Marco Polo Bridge Incident of July 7, and began in the South on August 13, forced Chiang to resist Japan. He had no choice. It was with the Xi'an Incident that he decided to abandon the Civil War and resist the Japanese. The national government felt the need for the support of society as a whole. The government itself could not resist Japan all alone. So it established a Political Consultative Conference within the Supreme National Defense Conference and invited persons from non-official circles who could represent society, people of some prestige, to be members of this body. I was also appointed to this body. The first time I met Premier Zhou Enlai was at these meetings of this body. At this time, there was in principle a cooperative union between the CCP and the Guomindang for resistance against Japan. Actually, it was the CCP that was advocating for resistance against Japan with no more civil war at the beginning. But the Chinese Communists did not by any means participate in the national government, so how did the two parties join hands to resist Japan? It was in this consultative conference and Supreme National Defense Conference.

At this time the name list of the conference had Mao's name on it, but Mao never attended. Zhou attended. So, the first time I met Mr. Zhou was there at those meetings. Who else participated in the meetings? Huang Yanpei, who was famous in the Shanghai region. Shen Junru, who had just been released from detention, was also there. Shen was a member of the National Salvation Society. This organization advocated for an end to civil war and resistance to Japan. He had been arrested and kept in prison in Suzhou. Chiang had felt that "you were all going with the Communists," but at this time, the two parties had started to cooperate, so the "Seven Gentlemen" were released, and they participated in the Political Consultative Conference. Hu Shi also participated, and so did Zhang Boling of Nankai University, the great military scholar Jiang Fangzhen and the famous Peking University scholar Fu Sinian, and so on. They also found people familiar with diplomacy, for linking up internationally with allies against Japanese. So, because of this, they asked Yan Huiqing and Shi Zhaoji to participate too. They also asked several old Guomindang veterans who had long been alienated from the Nanjing government, such as Ma Junwu, a Guangxi native. All were asked to participate in the Political Consultative Conference under the Supreme National Defense Conference.

At this time, my contacts with Chiang increased somewhat from this conference on. Chiang was busy with directing military operations, however, and so Wang Jingwei was the chairman of the conference. We held all of our meetings at night, because the Japanese planes were bombing. Wang presided over the meetings, as Chiang was very busy with military affairs. At the end of the meeting, Chiang dispatched a secretary of his to see me, and said that Chairman Chiang [as chair of the Military Affairs Committee]

invited me to go to his official residence the next morning at a certain time to talk, e.g. 8 o'clock. I agreed to see him, of course. The secretary approached me right as I was coming out of the meeting hall together with Jiang Fangzhen, so Jiang Fangzhen knew that I would be seeing Chiang the next morning. So he said to me, "When you see Chiang tomorrow, tell him that I want to go to Shandong to inspect matters related to defense. I want to go take a look." I agreed. So, when I was meeting with Chiang, I told him this on behalf of Mr. Jiang Fangzhen. Chiang agreed, and asked me to go together with Jiang Baili [sobriquet] to Shandong. It was pretty good that I would go to Shandong with Jiang Baili. [Later] Jiang Baili told me that there was someone who wanted to meet me, and asked me if I was willing to see him. I asked him who it was. He answered that it was one of Chiang's generals, Hu Zongnan. I answered that I was willing to meet with anyone, no matter whom, especially at this critical moment for the War of Resistance. The greater the degree of solidarity, the greater the degree of success in resisting Japan. He said, "Alright, tomorrow we will pass through Xuzhou (Hu Zongnan was stationed in Xuzhou). We'll go together to have a talk with Hu." The next day, we went by railroad through Xuzhou. Hu Zongnan, his chief of staff, and his secretary general were all waiting at the station for us. We went to Hu's headquarters and talked the whole night. The next day the same train, at the same time, passed through Xuzhou and we boarded and continued on to Shandong. Later in Xi'an, I had some further contact with Hu. He was a politically ambitious man. He didn't want to be just a military man so he wanted to make friends with us.

I also had contact with the subordinate that Chiang Kai-shek trusted most, Chen Cheng. This was at the time of the retreat back to defend Wuhan. Chen Cheng was living at Wuhan University. Wuhan University was located in Luojiashan. Chen lived there. He asked me to his house for dinner and to talk. He was one of the most powerful of Chiang Kai-shek's subordinates. A car was sent to pick us up. So we got in and went to his house at Luojiashan within Wuhan University campus. The University had been closed, but he was not in. But after a few minutes of sitting there waiting, he came in. He talked, but talked about his own topic continually—criticizing, maligning and berating the Minister of the Interior, Huang Shaohong. He said that Huang was a big dummy. He kept talking continually and didn't let me get a word in edgewise. He just kept on, in a very disorganized manner, very angrily. Later one of his staff came in to report that it was time for dinner. So he invited us to go in to dinner. Now, during the time he was eating, of course, he couldn't talk much but he was by no means quiet. After he finished eating, he continued his non-stop diatribe, giving me no chance at all to say anything. I took the opportunity when he was speaking relatively slowly to say something because I wanted to say something about the condition of my people. We had brought out some men and rifles from Shandong, over 800 men and more than 800 rifles. We also had several tens of thousands of silver dollars in cash. As the administrative commissioner and the

county magistrate, we brought out the cash and the armed militia. So I told him that we wanted to go back to Shandong. The militia wanted to fight its way back to its home. Finally, after much effort, I brought up the matter by cutting off his tirade. So, after this experience with him I felt that he wasn't a man of great ability; he was too shallow and superficial. This is an example of the contact I had with people on Chiang's side. Later on, in Taiwan, he was vice president and so on.

When General George Marshall came to China to help make peace between the two parties, I had a lot of contact with him. He came to see me at my house once. That was when I was living in Lanjiazhuang in Nanjing. That was where the headquarters of the Democratic League was located. I couldn't speak English, so a friend of mine, Ye Duiyi, interpreted for me. I felt that General Marshall was a truly good person. He was a devoutly religious man. Chiang Kai-shek was really bothered by him. Didn't Chiang go hide himself off at Lushan? At the time, the weather was not really all that hot. Of course, Lushan was a cool place, but he didn't go off there to escape the heat. He wanted to hide from Marshall. This put General Marshall in a bad position. He repeatedly went to Lushan. He went up to Lushan nine times.

Alitto: Speaking of Chiang Kai-shek hiding out, in your opinion, after the War of Resistance was concluded, it seemed he...looking at this kind of behavior he exhibited in those days, it would seem that it was very stupid. He brought trouble upon himself and so in the end exited the stage pitifully. In your opinion, why did Chiang act so stupidly? Did he just underestimate the strength of the Communists or was he just stupid?

Liang: Well, he was not stupid, all right. However, if it was stupidity, it was just because he was so selfish.

Alitto: Selfish? The basic problem was that he was selfish?

Liang: He didn't trust people. His word never...

Alitto: Meant anything?

Liang: Right! He acted this way thinking himself to be very clever. But what it did was to make him utterly isolated.

Alitto: So, in your view, if after the War of Resistance had concluded, he had been earnestly reasonable with the Communist Party and with the Third Parties, then possibly he would have been able to organize a coalition government. Was it just because he wanted to maintain his dictatorial powers? With the result... one could say that he refused to be reasonable. (Liang: Right.) Because he thought that he had more troops, had good weapons, (Liang: He had U.S. backing.) he had an air force, the CCP didn't have an air force—no matter what, the Nationalist were much stronger than the CCP. (Liang: Many conditions were stronger.) So because of this, he then refused. (Liang: He looked down upon the CCP.) He looked down on the CCP. For example in 1948, the CCP was obviously quite strong, especially in North China and the Northeast. Why didn't he see that the situation was not good, and so make concessions? Or, at least be relatively earnest in the peace talks?

- Liang: His attitude towards the peace talks was to take any small advantage. So, one time Premier Zhou came to him with a CCP proposal that was a concession on the CCP's part, and thought that this would satisfy him. But Chiang came back and said that there was still a problem, and this problem called for a further concession from the CCP. So he kept pressing them continually. The CCP knew quite well that it did not have as much power as Chiang did, and knew that it didn't have international recognition as the government of China as Chiang did, or have American help. So, the situation was like, as the saying in ancient Chinese goes, "troops full of righteous indignation will certainly prevail; troops full of pride will certainly be defeated." It was the CCP's troops that had been continually pressed and filled with righteous indignation.
- Alitto: During the peace negotiations you must have had some opportunities to speak sincerely to Chiang, and try to persuade him to be more serious and conscientious with the peace talks.
- Liang: I had great difficulty in getting to see him. (Alitto: Difficult to see him?) Very difficult. Not only did I have difficulty, even the Nationalist Party leaders had difficulty in seeing him. It was a big headache for General Marshall. He hated him [Chiang]. Didn't he serve as Secretary of State after returning to the U.S.? At that time, he wanted no part of helping Chiang Kai-shek.
- Alitto: A lot of Americans who had lived in China for a long time felt that way. For example, there was John Stuart Service. He was in Chongqing. He also read my book manuscript and urged me to publish it without revision. He wrote a few words in it, saying that this book wasn't bad, and so on. Another example was John Patton Davies. I don't remember his Chinese name. Still another was my teacher John Fairbank. They all said that Chiang was wrong, and that the Chiang regime was corrupt. A lot of Americans feared a Communist success, especially feared the Soviet Union; they thought that the CCP was nothing but a tool of the Soviet Union. Do you think that Chiang Kai-shek made any contribution at all to China and the Chinese Revolution? We have regarded his performance, especially after the War of Resistance, as terrible. As for his overall career, is there any contribution to China?
- Liang: His greatest contribution was to make the CCP successful. If he had been a bit more trustworthy, if his character was somewhat better, the CCP would have been unable to beat him. His greatest contribution was to have created the CCP success.
- Alitto: That makes some sense. You were old friends with Chen Mingshu and had a lot of contact with him. Of the materials I read, there are plenty about him. How did you first meet him?
- Liang: I got to know him after he came to see me in my home in Beijing. That was in 1923. He came to my home in Beijing. I wasn't home, as I had gone to Qufu in Shandong preparing for a school there. So I saw him only upon my return. He had been studying Buddhism together with Xiong Shili at the China Buddhist Institute in Nanjing.

- Alitto: Oh, it was during the time of studying Buddhism. So he got to know Xiong Shili before he met you?
- Liang: He came to Beijing from Nanjing to see me.
- Alitto: Did his calling on you have anything to do with his study of Buddhism?
- Liang: No. He just wanted to be friends with me.
- Alitto: Did he come to ask for your instruction in Buddhism?
- Liang: No, just to be friends.
- Alitto: Only to be friends? You were friends with Chen Mingshu for many years. Did you hit it off right from the first meeting?
- Liang: At our first meeting we did seem to be already quite close in spirit. All the letters that he wrote—he sent to Xiong Shili and I. That’s because Xiong and I lived together. I have preserved many of his letters. But Chen Mingshu was quite different from Li Jishen. Li was, as the saying goes, “kind and discreet, but with little culture.” Chen, on the other hand, was unstable, fickle and capricious.
- Alitto: With his great interest and learning in Buddhism, I would have thought that he would be relatively...
- Liang: The nature and temperament of people are different from birth. Everybody is different. Chen’s personality was just different from Li’s. Li was, after all, a dignified and decorous man of little culture. Chen was a man of some literary talent, and wrote with amazing speed. He wrote letters very quickly...he was especially inconsistent and changeable.
- Alitto: Did you have a lot of contact during the War?
- Liang: We were very close friends.
- Alitto: Did you see him much after Liberation?
- Liang: Quite often. After Liberation, he lived in Beijing. His subordinates were Jiang Guangnai and Cai Tingkai.
- Alitto: I had heard that the day in September 1953 when Mao publicly attacked you, Chen stood up and defended you. Was that true?
- Liang: He broke in and asked Chairman Mao whether this present problem of Liang’s was a political problem, or a problem of his thought. Chairman Mao said it was a problem of thought. If it had been a political problem, it would have been serious, but since it was a problem of thought, then it was not so serious.
- Alitto: Zhou Jingwen wrote a book published in Hong Kong describing this event. [From what you just said] his account appears to be accurate.
- Liang: Zhou Jingwen is a native of the Northeastern provinces. He was long associated with Zhang Xueliang. He lived in Beijing for a period. He was not at all pleased with CCP rule and left [Beijing].
- Alitto: In this book he describes the confrontation with Mao that day. Now I noticed that there were some great differences in wording between what Zhou Jingwen reported Mao saying and what was published in the Fifth Volume of Chairman Mao’s *Selected Works*. Zhou reported him using much more abusive and crude language than in the *Selected Works*. Mr. Zhou reported that in the first sentence, Chairman Mao cursed you

as...stinking...something like stinking bones. This is stronger language than in the Fifth Volume of the *Selected Works*. There are curses in Volume Five, but not that crude.

Liang: Actually, I do record it. I have notes. In fact Premier Zhou was ordered. He [Mao] wanted Zhou to criticize me. In the middle of it he [Mao] cut in, and started talking while Premier Zhou was still at the speaker's lectern.

Alitto: I seem to have gotten it wrong in my book. I had thought that Chairman Mao had interrupted your remarks.

Liang: No, it was Zhou who was standing at the lectern. There was a small table on the dais. Zhou was standing in the back of the small table, and was in the front of the long table at which the vice chairmen and Mao were seated. They were quite close to the small table. When Zhou was speaking...

...

Liang: So, as I said a while ago, Chiang Kai-shek wanted to get three people out of the way, the Guangxi clique, Feng Yuxiang, and Yan Xishan. At that time [when Han Fujun was governor of Henan Province] Feng was under great pressure from Chiang. Feng didn't want to fight Chiang, so he withdrew his troops westward. He gave up Shandong and Henan. Originally he had occupied both Henan and Shandong. He gave them both up. He withdrew north-westward through Tongguan. After going through Tongguan, he held a military conference. At this meeting Han spoke against the withdrawal westward, because with so many troops—around 200,000—they would not be able to survive in such poor areas as Shaanxi and Gansu. Moreover, because of the poverty of the region, our [the troops] presence would also be a burden for the region's people. At this point, Feng became angry and said, "What do you know? Don't say anything more! Get out of here! Leave the conference room! Go outside the door and kneel as punishment!" Feng always handled his subordinates in this high-handed manner, treating them as if they were his children. So Han had to go outside the door—still in the adjoining room—and kneel. After the conference had been adjourned, when Feng was leaving, he passed by the still kneeling Han, gave him a box on the ear, and told him, "Get up!" Then Feng left. Now at this point he was the commander of the general headquarters and also the governor of a province. He had a lot of subordinates of his own. So he just could not take this kind of treatment. So he got up and, with his most trusted officers and their troops, left off the westward march, and instead returned through Tongguan to Henan. As soon as Chiang Kai-shek heard that Han had broken away from Feng, he was overjoyed. He had wanted to separate them. He immediately offered Han the chairmanship of the Shandong Provincial Government. Han was chairman of the Shandong government for ten years.

In 1929 I hadn't had any intention to stay in the North, but as it turned out, I did [stay]. It was because the political situation in Guangdong Province changed. Chiang placed Li Jishen under arrest, and so I didn't want to return to Guangdong. Right around that time, a friend of mine

established the Henan Village Government Academy. Peng Yuting was the president, with Liang Zhonghua serving as vice president. They welcomed my going to work in the school, and so I was the academic dean. At that time, they had just started the school, and so all the substantive questions—content, curriculum, teaching methods and so on—had not yet been decided upon. I was able to make these determinations, and also to write many of the rules and regulations, and methods. Then Han, following Chiang's orders, was transferred to Shandong. At that time, Liu Zhi was one of the big generals in Chiang's army, and he arrived in Kaifeng, Henan. The vice president of the Henan Village Academy, Liang Zhonghua, closed the academy. He was no longer able to run it. He set out for Jinan and reported to Han. Han answered that this didn't matter (that the Academy shut down). He then invited us to bring the school to Shandong. The original body of people involved in the Henan Academy had not yet dispersed, so we all went to Shandong. We consulted together and decided not to use the name "Village Government Academy" anymore. So the name of the school was the Rural Reconstruction Institute. And so that is how we ended up in Zouping, Shandong.

Alitto: It would seem that Han Fujū felt that local self-government and rural reconstruction were important.

Liang: He trusted and believed in us.

Alitto: How did your own relationship with Han Fujū develop?

Liang: It was for this reason. At first, when we were still in Henan, when the academy was still in the planning stages, Peng Yuting came to bring me from Beijing to Henan. We went first to Zhengzhou, and from there to Kaifeng. The provincial government was in Kaifeng at that time. We had just gotten off the train in Kaifeng and were in the hotel when Han Fujū arrived to visit me. He was extremely modest and unassuming. He said to me, "I have heard you lecture in Nanyuan in Beijing." So this meeting was in Henan. Did I just say that he had already been transferred to Shandong? So, when we went to Shandong, I had known him, and had become well acquainted with him long before. Well-acquainted, so we chose Zouping County. This county was not far from Jinan, and it wasn't too far from the railroad either. We chose this place as our experimental district. In this experimental district, the institute was divided into three major sections: a research department, a training department, and an experiment district.

Alitto: Yes. There is a lot of material on all of this. What was Han's attitude toward this? What do you think his motive was for supporting you?

Liang: His intentions were the best. He gave us completely free rein. He let us work independently, and completely gave over to us the County of Zouping. The institute was located in the county, and the county was under the control of the institute. We nominated the county magistrate, and then the provincial government would appoint him and announce the fact. Later, we reorganized the county government. All of the measures we adopted were of an experimental nature, just to see what methods and measures would

be best. For example, originally there were four bureaus outside the county government itself. There were an educational bureau, a reconstruction bureau, a finance bureau, and a security bureau. We amalgamated these four bureaus into the county government itself, and these various matters were managed centrally in the county administration itself. This is an example of the sorts of experiments we carried out.

In the end, Han unintentionally offended Chiang, and so he had Han shot. How did he offend Chiang? When the Xi'an Incident occurred, and Chiang was detained, the CCP sent Zhou Enlai down to Xi'an to consult on what should be done with Chiang. At this time, the various warlords all sent representatives to consult with each other on what action to take. He [Han] sent a cable to Xi'an that proposed that the question of how to punish Chiang should be settled by a conference in which all parties would consult with each other and then decide. Now, this proposal was not to Chiang's advantage, but when this cable was sent Chiang had already been released. When Chiang saw the cable, he said, "I have always been good to you. How could you do something like this?" And so he began to hate Han after this. Han had sent his cable too late; Chiang had already been released. So, later Chiang had Han shot.

Alitto: I had understood that Chiang had Han shot because when the Japanese invaded Shandong, Han did not resist with full force.

Liang: I talked about this in that notebook of mine.

Alitto: Yes, quite clearly. You talked about everything in great detail.

Liang: Well, I took note of what happened each day. Han was a selfish person. He was not able to resist the Japanese completely because he wanted to preserve his own forces, and so he withdrew from Shandong. He was going to move to the west of the railroad.

Alitto: The situation of corruption was part of it, there was too much corruption. What do you think?

Liang: About the same as that.

Alitto: Other people criticize Han Fujun as being an uncouth, uneducated man who understood very little. There are several stories I had heard that illustrate...

Liang: Those stories are all jokes and are not true.

Alitto: They weren't true? (Liang: Not true.) So you feel that Han was not by any means that kind of man?

Liang: But he was still... you can't say that he wasn't a coarse person, but within the coarseness there was some delicacy. The people he employed, upon whom he relied: his Chief of Staff Liu Shuxiang, his Commissioner of Civil Government Li Shuchun, his Commissioner of Finance Wang Xiangrong, his Commissioner of Reconstruction Zhang Honglie, and his Commissioner of Education He Siyuan, who is still living. He must be considered someone who wanted to do some good. This was his good side. But he had a selfish side too, and that was his general selfishness. So, he ran out of Shandong with his troops and his wealth. He also brought out

some Shandong militia, with the intention of bringing them to the west of the railroad too.

Alitto: Why did he want to bring the militia with him? He already had a lot of troops. I had understood that it was the Administrative Commissioner, Sun Zerang....

Liang: Sun also took some with him, but it was not the same matter. The militia that Sun led out numbered around two thousand men. All of them were later handed over to the Ministry of Military Training headed by He Yingqin. Han's plan was not carried out.

Alitto: Speaking of that, I just thought of another question. In the materials I used in my book there is mention of a unit made up of rural reconstruction cadre from your operations in Shandong, called the 32nd...

Liang: The Third Political Brigade.

Alitto: The third? Not the 32nd? I made a mistake. I had written "the 32nd Political Brigade."

Liang: The commander of the Third Political Brigade was Qin Yiwen. I don't know if you have mentioned him.

Alitto: Qin Yiwen? Yes, yes, yes. Would you speak in detail? What kind of organization was the Third Political Brigade?

Liang: Originally, when we withdrew from Shandong, our teachers, students, cadre, and a portion of the militia, together with 800 rifles and tens of thousands of silver dollars in cash—were in one unit. When we made contact with Chen Cheng—Chen was the head of the Ministry of Political Affairs in Wuhan. He acted in his capacity as head of the Ministry of Political Affairs to give our unit its official designation. He gave us neither funds nor arms. He gave us only a designation. The designation was the "Third Political Brigade directly under the Ministry," and Chen let it return to Shandong.

Alitto: So this was a guerilla organization?

Liang: (Interruption by phone) I forgot what we were just speaking of...

Alitto: Speaking of the Third...

Liang: The Third Political Brigade returning to Shandong.

Alitto: I asked if it was fighting guerilla war?

Liang: It was exactly to fight guerilla war. At this time Shandong had already fallen, already in the enemy's hands. Those of us returning divided it into Eastern, Western, Southern and Northern districts. That is, Shandong was divided into Eastern, Western, Southern and Northern districts. Those of us going back were divided among four Detachment Commands, who would bring the people back to the four districts, and mobilize the masses to resist Japan, and fight guerilla actions.

Alitto: The rest of it I'm relatively clear about. Because there was a lot of material to rely on, there was no mistake about this. Were the majority of the Third Political Brigade your students?...

Alitto: Li Zongren? (Liang: Li Zongren, from Guangxi.) How did you get to know him? Where was it?

- Liang: Both Li and Bai Chongxi were natives of Guilin. I can also be considered a native of Guilin. When they ruled Guangxi Province, they used a policy called the "Three Selves Policy." That is self-government, self-defense, and self-sufficiency. They followed these three guidelines.
- Alitto: Was it their original policy, or did you actually [give them the idea]?
- Liang: No, it was their idea.
- Alitto: These ideas are quite similar to those of Peng Yuting's group in Zhenping.
- Liang: They were similar, but they didn't interact, or influence each other. In Guangxi, they were not happy with Chiang Kai-shek's rule, so they were semi-independent. They also took on board some intellectuals and thinkers and worked together. When they brought out this "Three Selves Policy," they invited me to "return" to Guangxi [Liang's formal native place] to lecture. I think that was about 1935. That was the first time I "returned" to Guangxi. Li and Bai were both Guilin men. Bai was a Moslem. That was the first time I went back to Guilin. I was closer to Li than I was to Bai. When the War started, Li was the Fifth War Area Commander, stationed in Xuzhou. Later he invited me to visit him in Xuzhou.
- Alitto: Yes, I have that in my book. He wanted to consult with you on how to mobilize the masses for the war effort.
- Liang: Right. I stayed in Xuzhou for more than a month. I lived on a farm in the northern part of Xuzhou. But I went to Li's headquarters every day to have lunch with him, and to talk with him afterwards. I did this every day for about a month.
- Alitto: Did you talk about plans? Or...
- Liang: We didn't talk about anything in particular. At the time there was an organization called the War Zone Party Policy Committee. I was considered a member of that committee. Every war zone had such a committee. The committee members were appointed by the central government. I was a member of the Party Policy Committee for the Fifth War Zone, and was stationed in Xuzhou, and so stayed there over a month. Afterwards, we withdrew to Wuhan. In Xuzhou, there was one convenient thing—my students, my cadre from Shandong could come see me, and I could then give them instructions on what to do.... I wrote about this in that little book I gave you.
- Alitto: Yes, there was something about that in it. So your relationship with Li Zongren was very close at that time.
- Liang: Originally I... He invited me to go to Guangxi.
- Alitto: During that month, when you were in Xuzhou, you met every day with him.
- Liang: Right. I just said, I didn't stay at his headquarters, but at noon every day I went to have lunch with him.
- Alitto: Later, it seems that you were quite close with him.
- Liang: Yes, quite close.
- Alitto: So, later during the war, did you have contact with him in the rear area in West China?

Liang: He never went to Sichuan.

Alitto: He didn't go to Sichuan? In Guangxi?

Liang: From what I remember, he never went to Sichuan.

Alitto: So, he was always at the front?

Liang: The Fifth War Zone was at Xuzhou. There was a victory at Taierzhuang in the Xuzhou area. Later he couldn't hold out, and so he withdrew to Guangxi, or he stayed in Guangdong. He was often in Guangzhou. It seemed he had a place in Guangzhou called Mapenggang. It seemed that there was a place at Mapenggang in Guangzhou. Bai Chongxi stayed more in Guangxi while Li was not. Li actually let Bai handle all of the affairs in Guangxi. The chairman of the Guangxi Provincial Government was Huang Xuchu. Huang was a very good man.

Alitto: Yes, he had some publications about rural work...there were some books listed that he wrote. I saw them. You also influenced him at the time.

Liang: About that I can't say.

Alitto: Li Zongren...When the CCP had already got to the Yangtze River, Chiang Kai-shek resigned, and Li Zongren became the president...according to some material that I have seen, he wanted to invite you to be...

Liang: He wanted me to become active, to campaign for peace.

Alitto: And you refused?

Liang: Yes.

Alitto: After that until 1965 you had no other contact with Li.

Liang: Did he not go to the U.S.?

Alitto: He did go to the U.S., and came back only in 1965. There was a report in the newspapers about a reception when he first came back. Your name was also... (Liang: Yes.) After that did you see him?

Liang: I saw him sometimes after that....

Chapter 9

August 20, 1980

Liang: ...Yes, I talked about it, but I'm really not that familiar with it. I really know very little about it. One such person was Liu Shipai. He was a famous classicist, and also a professor at Peking University. But I never had any discussions with him.

Alitto: Oh, no discussions. Did you have contact with Mr. Wang Yike?

Liang: Yes, he was a close friend of mine.

Alitto: I don't know the exact circumstances about how you first met him. I know that it was in Henan when you were together. (Liang: Right.) I think that after Henan he did some rural reconstruction work elsewhere. (Liang: He worked in Zouping.) When was the first time you met him?

Liang: I first met him through the introduction of Liang Zhonghua. You didn't write down that name.

Alitto: I have it written on another card.

Liang: Liang Zhonghua introduced us. Liang Zhonghua, Wang Yike and Peng Yuting were all very good friends. Peng was the oldest, Wang was the next and Liang was the youngest. These three were sworn brothers, had sworn a brotherhood oath and so on. I knew Peng and Liang first and then later, after we were in Zouping, Wang came to work there, and so I met him and got to know him. He was the magistrate of Zouping for a time.

Alitto: I heard that he wrote a book called *On Rural Self-Defense*, which Mr. Meng [Xiangguang] told me about yesterday.

Liang: Yes. Mr. Wang wrote that.

Alitto: But Mr. Meng... I have read that book. Mr. Meng said that you, Liang Zhonghua and Peng Yuting actually wrote the book jointly?

Liang: No, we didn't write the book together. The real author was still Mr. Wang. Probably Liang Zhonghua wrote a preface for the book. I really don't remember. But the book's content was mostly the thought of Peng, Liang and Wang. That book can be said to represent their thought.

Alitto: What was your relationship with Mr. Wang when he was in Zouping?

Liang: We needed a county magistrate for Zouping, so we tapped him for the job.

Alitto: Was he then especially brought to Zouping for that purpose?

Liang: No, his tenure as county magistrate was later, because we first had contact at the Henan Village Government Academy and then in Zouping. I first got to know him in Henan.

Alitto: At the Village Government Academy he also had... It seemed he had worked there. (Liang: Where?) The Henan Village Government Academy. He also taught there?

Liang: One could say that if not for him, there would have been no Village Government Academy. Why? Because when we started that school we needed funds, and it was Wang Yike who raised the funds for it.

Wang was a graduate of the Beijing Institute of Politics and Law, but what he had actually studied was Economics. Really, this man was the very best in handling economic or business affairs and such. But what he actually did was not, strictly speaking, business. He did work in cooperatives. For example, in Henan in educational circles he started one called... I can't remember the name now. In any case, it was a credit cooperative. We teachers did not have very high salaries, but every month you should save a little bit and invest in the cooperative. Right! I remember the name now. It was called the Yinli Society. The "yin" of "cause and effect." So he started this Yinli Society in educational circles. So, everyone saved a little and by investing in the cooperative helped one another. Whoever was in need could then borrow from the cooperative. It was lent at a very low rate of interest. It was managed very well. Right at that time there was a conflict between educational circles and the Henan Provincial Government. That is, the government was supposed to issue the funds to run the various schools, but the government often had no money and so was in arrears in its payments to the schools. So, a lot of teachers went without pay. How could they manage to live? And so there was a conflict with the provincial government. The conflict had to be settled peacefully. So a compromise was decided upon. That is, the provincial government would designate a portion of its income sources and give it directly to the educators to manage as they wished, regardless of whether it was sufficient or not. If they managed the funds well, then they would have more. If not, they would have less. Everyone was quite willing to accept this plan. The educators then nominated someone to be in charge of the funds, and that was Wang Yike. He was really good at this kind of thing. He was an expert at accounts and calculations, with the result that he managed the funds very well, and so the living expenses of the teachers were met, without any gap. Moreover, there was a big surplus, and this was saved up. It was this money that was used to start the Henan Village Government Academy.

Alitto: So, it was like this. Then the funds for the Henan Village Government Academy did not come from Han Fujun being chairman of the province?

Liang: He had nothing to do with the creation of the Village Government Academy.

Alitto: I didn't know. I made a mistake.

Liang: At the time, Feng Yuxiang controlled Henan, but the academy had nothing to do with them. It had no relationship to the provincial government. The money came from what Wang Yike had saved up from the funds. He had already satisfied the school principals and students (Mr. Liang meant to say teachers.—translator), I think. Surplus funds remained after this. The provincial government had no control over it either. So this was used to create the Village Government Academy. So, for the success of the Village Government Academy, he was the most important figure to take credit. It would not have succeeded without him.

Alitto: Then Feng Yuxiang and Han Fujun simply didn't...?

Liang: They agreed.

Alitto: Although they agreed, they didn't vigorously push for the...

Liang: His [Feng's] agreeing to it and helping in this matter's success had to do with this person.

Alitto: Wang Hongyi?

Liang: Wang Hongyi was Shandongese, but Feng Yuxiang treated him like a guest, a friend. He respected him, and listened to him.

Alitto: How did they get to know each other?

Liang: Who?

Alitto: Feng Yuxiang and Wang Hongyi.

Liang: I'm not really clear on how they knew each other, but Wang Hongyi introduced me to Feng Yuxiang, in 1924.

Alitto: In 1924, Feng Yuxiang was in Beijing.

Liang: Feng had the title "Inspector of the Army." (Liang writes the words for Alitto.) There were about 50,000 men in his troops. He himself held the rank of Divisional Commander. A division was made up of two brigades. There were three more independent brigades, so five brigades altogether. There weren't 50,000 men. Probably around 35,000 men. They were stationed at Nanyuan in Beijing. It was at that time, through Wang Hongyi's introduction that I first met Feng Yuxiang.

Alitto: Because Wang Hongyi was in Beijing at that time?

Liang: Yes, in Beijing. He invited me on behalf of Feng to visit Feng at his quarters in Nanyuan, and to give lectures to his troops. That was in the first lunar month of 1924. So I met Feng at Nanyuan. I gave five lectures.

Alitto: To what troops were all the lectures given?

Liang: To his troops.

Alitto: Did you lecture to all of his troops at once?

Liang: No. They were divided into separate groups. He had five brigades, right? I gave one lecture to each of his brigades, only to the officers and noncoms. So, one day I lectured to brigade A and the next to brigade B. The content of each lecture was similar though not necessarily. The content could be different. Feng also attended these lectures. Everyone called Feng the "Christian General." He was a believer in Christianity. The "YMCA" was part of the Christian church. So he operated a "YMCA" in his army.

- Alitto: There's a book here written by an American, a biography of Feng Yuxiang, ...Christianity.
- Liang: The person who ran this YMCA of his was named Yu Xinqing. (Liang writes the name for Alitto.) Didn't Feng then marry later? The person he married was Li Dequan. Ms. Li was a member of the church. She was a teacher in a church-run school in Tongzhou.
- Alitto: What kind of things did you and Feng Yuxiang talk about when you met?
- Liang: I didn't talk much with him personally. Even though Wang Hongyi introduced Feng to me, in Feng's army there was a special custom. Didn't he run a YMCA organization in the army? He had a custom of inviting people to give lectures. For example, the famous military scholar Jiang Fangzhen. Feng invited Jiang Fangzhen to come give lectures. Feng also issued a small book to his officers. There were sayings in this small book—maxims and quotations from people usually of two or three sentences, five sentences at most. Not long. He would write that somebody had said such and such. For example, "Zeng Guofan has said such and such" or "Zhuge Liang has said such and such." He even had Jiang Fangzhen quoted in this small booklet. So, this booklet was issued to his officers and noncoms. Feng did an excellent job in supervising and educating his troops. He was always concerned about his men. So his men both loved and feared him very much. Even with the number of troops that he had he would often, when in the ranks, address people by name. Of course, he couldn't remember every single soldier's name, but he did remember quite a few. So his men both loved and feared him.
- Alitto: Feng Yuxiang also had a great interest in rural work, didn't he?
- Liang: Right, right.
- Alitto: Wasn't he friends with Tao Xingzhi?
- Liang: He toured Tao's project at Xiaozhuang.
- Alitto: Some people say that the reason why Chiang Kai-shek shut down the Xiaozhuang project was Tao's close ties to Feng Yuxiang. Speaking of Wang Yike and Liang Zhonghua of the Village Government Academy, since you were acquainted with Feng, then Liang Zhonghua, Wang Yike, Wang Hongyi and Peng Yuting were all acquainted with him, right? Peng also worked there, right?
- Liang: I am not sure how they got to know each other or got to know Feng. My relationship with Feng began in 1924, during the first lunar month, and it was Wang Hongyi who introduced us. Now what did you just ask?
- Alitto: I just asked whether or not it was Feng Yuxiang and Han Fujun who were the sponsors for the Henan Village Government Academy, or...
- Liang: It was founded during the time when Feng controlled Henan, but not on Feng's initiative. It was started by Henanese—such as Wang Yike, Liang Zhonghua, Peng Yuting, and so on. These Henanese presented this proposal (to found such a school) to Feng Yuxiang and Feng accepted it. But Feng did not give them any money for the school. So the academy was established completely independently, without Feng's help.
- Alitto: According to some materials, there was a "Village Government Group." Before you joined, there were already some...(Liang: Right, Village

Government Group.) which consisted of Wang Hongyi, Wang Yike, and Liang Zhonghua. Were there others?

Liang: There were others who belonged to this group. In Henan they established the Henan Village Government Academy and in Beijing they established the *Village Government Monthly*. Both the magazine and the academy used the name "Village Government." The inside story is that money was still needed for the publication of the *Village Government Monthly*. Where did this money come from? Yan Xishan.

Alitto: Oh! So Yan Xishan was connected to this Village Government Group?

Liang: It was all Wang Hongyi. Wang Hongyi was like an "honored guest" of theirs. Feng Yuxiang was a big warlord. And so was Yan Xishan. He was an honored guest of these warlords, a guest of theirs. They both respected him, and would speak with him. He was their advisor. Later I too was engaged by Yan Xishan as an advisor. Wang Hongyi was also the person who introduced me to Yan.

Alitto: Another point. Yan Xishan had an advisor named...

Liang: (Referring to the writing Alitto showed him.) The third character is possibly incorrect. (Alitto: It doesn't matter.) The sound is correct. The character "*kan*" in Xu Songkan's name is possibly not quite right. Mr. Xu Songkan was a famous scholar of Wang Yangming. This person surnamed Zhao is Zhao Daiwen whose sobriquet was Cilog. I seem to have the impression that he was a member of the same Group as Xu Songkan, also a scholar of Wang Yangming. Mr. Zhao was a good person, whom I respect very much. It was at the end of 1921, in December that I was invited to lecture in Shanxi. Actually, it was Zhao who invited me to lecture, but in name, it was Yan Xishan. I lectured in Taiyuan for a month. I lectured at Shanxi University, the secondary school, and the Normal University. Zhao Daiwen arranged it all. He had his own ideas, methods even in naming the schools. For example, the normal school was called the Citizens' Normal School in particular. The students of this kind of school were not young people, but rather adults. They wanted to promote and extend citizens' education and this kind of adult education school was Zhao's innovation. Zhao was a very good man. He was older than Yan Xishan.

Alitto: Zhao was, like Yan, from Wutai and they both studied in Japan.

Liang: Yes, they both studied in Japan. Most people thought of them in this way....

Liang: Ding County. Sun Baoxian had been the magistrate of Ding County.

Alitto: It was a long time ago when you... no, there had been some self-government projects in the last Qing...

Liang: The Zhaicheng Village of Ding County had run such a self-government project. In that village, there were a lot of people with the surname Mi. The character for "rice" that we eat. ...He himself [Mi Digang] did very well in his work. It was famous.

Alitto: Would this be considered the earliest local self-government project in China?

Liang: At the very least it must be considered a pioneer in local self-government.

Alitto: Could that work also be considered "rural reconstruction"?

- Liang: At the time there was no such term. Actually it was local rural self-government!
- Alitto: I had thought that Sun Baoxian, who had been in Ding County (Liang: Magistrate of Ding County.), had caused Yan Xishan to pay more attention to rural reconstruction after Sun got to Shanxi.
- Liang: We don't know about this. At least on the surface, Sun Baoxian was asked to take a position in the Shanxi government.
- Alitto: Wang Hongyi knew both Feng Yuxiang and Yan Xishan.
- Liang: He was a high level advisor to both Yan and Feng. They both respected him very much.
- Alitto: Ok. You said something about Wang Yike. In the first lunar month of 1924, you met Feng Yuxiang through Wang Hongyi. At that time Wang Yike was...
- Liang: I had not yet met Wang Yike then.
- Alitto: So, you didn't meet Wang until after you had returned North from Guangdong. Right?
- Liang: Right. It was in 1929 when I came back from Guangdong. I lectured in Nanyuan in 1924, as I said, but this was in 1929.
- Alitto: So you first met Wang Yike when you began the Henan Village Government Academy?
- Liang: Right.
- Alitto: When did you first meet Liang Zhonghua?
- Liang: I met them both through Wang Hongyi.
- Alitto: So you first met them only after returning to the North from Guangdong.
- Liang: Only then did I meet them.
- Alitto: OK. Among you four men, did you meet Peng Yuting also at this time?
- Liang: Yep.
- Alitto: In Hui County you ran the Village Government Academy. At that time Feng Yuxiang and Chiang Kai-shek were at war, and Han Fujun went to Shandong. The same troupe went to...(Liang: All went to Shandong.) And Peng Yuting...
- Liang: He also went to Shandong.
- Alitto: Wang Yike...worked in Zouping. Where did Wang Yike go after the war started?
- Liang: Didn't I just tell you? He was for a time the county magistrate of Zouping. Later he moved from Zouping to Jining, also in Shandong. Why did he move to Jining? Because the special administrative district office for the surrounding ten counties was in Jining. Liang Zhonghua was the Administrative Commissioner for Jining and so Wang Yike went there to help him out and serve as his chief secretary. Later he died in Jining.
- Alitto: Could we talk about your relationship with Liang Zhonghua?
- Liang: I met him through Wang Hongyi. The three of them—Wang Hongyi, Liang Zhonghua and Peng Yuting were "sworn brothers." Peng Yuting was extremely poor. Wang Hongyi was also extremely poor, but Liang Zhonghua's family had money. The three were originally schoolmates.

Wasn't there an American named Leighton Stuart? Stuart was president of Yenching University. Before that what university... (Alitto: Huiwen.) Yep, Huiwen. The three were classmates at Huiwen University. Peng and Wang were extremely poor and Liang's family had money. Liang helped out Peng and Wang financially. They were extremely close friends. Later, they worked together in these projects.

Alitto: After the closing of the Village Government Academy, you went to Shandong, and Liang Zhonghua was also there. He served as...

Liang: He was president. Liang Zhonghua was president of the Rural Reconstruction Institute. The vice president was Sun Zerang, and I was head of the Research Division. For the first three years, that was the situation. Liang Zhonghua left the institute, and only then did I become president. Originally, I was head of the Research Division.

Alitto: I know about that. Right up to when the War of Resistance broke out Liang Zhonghua was still at the institute. He didn't leave.

Liang: He left before the war started.

Alitto: Where did he go?

Liang: Wasn't he the Administrative Commissioner of Jining?

Alitto: Oh, the Administrative Commissioner of Jining. Yes.

Liang: That directly administered ten or more counties.

Alitto: So he was still in Shandong?

Liang: Yes, still in Shandong.

Alitto: After the war started, where did he go?

Liang: We all withdrew from Shandong. The Japanese advanced into Shandong from Beijing in the North. In our retreat we stopped first in the Luohe, Xinyang areas in Henan. From there we proceeded westward to Zhenping. At that point, Liang Zhonghua became ill. So I went instead of him to make contact with the Nanjing Government of Chiang Kai-shek. At that time, the Nanjing regime had retreated to Wuhan. So in Wuhan I made contact with one of Chiang's subordinates, Chen Cheng.¹ Chen was a member of Chiang's Military Affairs Committee. They had just established a new ministry called the Ministry of Political Affairs. Chen was the minister in charge of it. I told him, "We have a large group of people from Shandong which includes our teachers, students and cadre and some of the local militia. The militia are armed with some 800 rifles. We are also carrying over 100,000 in currency." We stopped at Zhenping for the moment and stayed in a large temple on the outskirts of the county seat. We were

¹ Despite their previous difficulties, Chen Cheng was perhaps the only member of Chiang Kai-shek's clique that Liang got along with somewhat. What characterized both his students and his friends, whether military men, scholars, social activists, or political figures, was a common antipathy toward Chiang. Liang seemed to have got along with many people associated with the northern militarists, such as Feng Yuxiang and Yan Xishan, those associated with the Guangxi Clique, those associated with the 1933 Fujian Revolt, and those Guomindang members who were not part of Chiang's inner circle. Of course, he also got along with the Communist Party leaderships, such as Mao and Zhou.

preparing to return to Shandong and continue resistance to the Japanese invasion. After I made this contact with the Ministry of Political Affairs, our group was given the title the “Third Political Brigade Directly under the Ministry.” The commander of the unit was our man Qin Yiwen and he led our 800 men back into Shandong.

Alitto: What about Liang Zhonghua? Did he go to Sichuan or...

Liang: He was ill for some time, so I substituted for him....

Alitto: Yes, yes, yes. What about after that?

Liang: After this he went to Sichuan. There was a county called Guan. He then lived in this Guan County, convalescing from his illness. Later, he went to work at the West China University in Chengdu, which was a church-run university. Later this school was reorganized as Sichuan University. He worked at Sichuan University. Later he died in Chengdu while a professor at Sichuan University.

Alitto: Your primary connection with Zhenping and the Yuxi area was your relationship with Peng Yuting, right?

Liang: Yes, I was a friend of his.

Alitto: After the Village Government Academy closed, you and Peng Yuting returned to his home area. Have you been to the area around Zhenping and Nanyang any time before the war broke out?

Liang: I went to that area only once.

Alitto: And when was that?

Liang: Didn't I say we stayed in the large temple outside the Zhenping county seat?²

Alitto: That was after the war had started. Before the war started...

Liang: I hadn't been there.

Alitto: That was the first time.

Liang: Yep.

Alitto: Peng was already dead by that time. He was killed, assassinated in 1933.³ So do you have any other experiences with Bie Tingfang and Chen Zhonghua's self-government work in western Henan?⁴

² I think that this must have been the Bodhi Monastery (菩提寺), located on a hill outside the county seat. It was a famous ancient monastery situated in a scenic area. Peng Yuting himself often went there to rest. When I visited in 1982, the Henan Provincial Government had designed it as an important historical preservation site. Because it had been ravaged during the Cultural Revolution, I was not permitted to visit it.

³ This was a murder of revenge. Peng Yuting was assassinated by his own bodyguards, former bandits, who were connected with another bandit gang that Peng had successfully campaigned against previously. The other party involved was an influential local man who had been Peng's patron when young. He was angered by Peng's refusal to grant him a special favor after Peng took power with his "local self-government" revolution against the Henan Provincial Government.

⁴ Peng and Bie Tingfang took power in the four counties to the west of Nanyang in the late 1920s. Chen Zhonghua (陈重华) ruled one of these counties, Xichuan (淅川). The entire area, sometimes called "Wanxi" (宛西), maintained complete independence from the Henan Provincial Government from then until 1940, when Chiang Kai-shek's general Wei Lihuang (卫立煌) betrayed Bie and "angered him to death" (气死).

- Liang: I heard about them and their work from others.
- Alitto: Aside from being together with Peng Yuting at the Village Government Academy for a time, you didn't have any other contact with him?
- Liang: No, no other contact. Afterwards, he returned to work in his hometown and we went to Shandong. We never met again after that.
- Alitto: Did you ever meet Bie Tingfang?
- Liang: I seemed to run into him once in Zhenping.
- Alitto: How long were you in Zhenping altogether, at the temple outside of town?
- Liang: About 20 days.
- Alitto: What did you think of Zhenping? How did you think their work had gone?
- Liang: During those 20 days, or maybe twenty-some days, I accompanied a man named Ji Gang around. He's already deceased.
- Alitto: Was Ji Gang a native of Zhenping, of western Henan?
- Liang: No. Right now Ji Gang's elder brother, Ji Fang, is in Beijing; Ji Fang is the leader of one of the northern parties, called the Peas-ants and Workers Democratic Party. Ji Gang was his younger brother. Ji Gang was the younger, and Ji Fang the older. Ji Fang is still alive. Ji Gang has died. Ji Gang was sent by Chen Cheng to Zhenping to inspect our militia there. We went together (from Wuhan) to Zhenping and stayed there for about 20 days.
- Alitto: Did your visit leave any impression with you of the place?
- Liang: No clear ones. I mainly went with Ji Gang to inspect the militia and our teachers and cadre. He addressed them as a representative of Chen Cheng of the Ministry of Political Affairs.
- Alitto: You have already talked about Alfred Westharp (Wei Xiqin). There's no need to talk about Zhang Yaozeng, because there is already a lot of paternal on him. Was he your paternal elder cousin? (Liang: No.) Or maternal elder cousin?
- Liang: Zhang Yaozeng, he was the cabinet minister of the Ministry of Justice. I was his secretary.
- Alitto: Did you have any contact with him after that?
- Liang: After that, not much. Our relationship after that was like this. He was an important man politically in the early period of the Republic. So the Institute of Modern History of the Academy of Social Sciences considers him to be an important political figure in the early Republic and so they want to write a biography for him. They assigned this task to me. So I have written his biography. It is quite long, especially those sections on his education and his career...
- Alitto: You have written biographies of a lot of people. Aside from him, didn't you say that you have an elder brother surnamed Liang?
- Liang: His biography I haven't finished yet.
- Alitto: So you are now a historian.

- Liang: I have been writing Zhang Yaozeng's biography, and then have finished one for this Mr. Peng. Now the one I'm writing is for an elder cousin of the same lineage, that Hunanese. I am in the midst of writing and haven't finished yet.
- Alitto: Chen Xujing⁵ studied in the U.S. He wrote quite a few essays criticizing rural reconstruction. Did you ever meet him....
- Liang: I did meet him. Later he was...first in Guangdong, and later in Tianjin. Later it appeared that he was in Tianjin Nankai University. Yes, I met him.
- Alitto: How about Qian Jiaju?⁶
- Liang: I knew him a bit better than Chen. I don't know if Chen is still alive. Qian Jiaju is still living in Beijing.
- Alitto: What opinion do you have of these men?
- Liang: Qian Jiaju? (Alitto: Yes.) Qian Jiaju, he...was originally a party member. There was a period during which he was expelled from the party and is now restored to it. He also wrote an essay criticizing me. Later when he was in Hong Kong, we were close. He's still in Beijing.
- Alitto: We've already discussed Feng Youlan. How about Huang Yanpei?⁷
- Liang: I was even closer to Huang Yanpei. But he was much older than I, older by some 15 years. He was a celebrity. When Mao founded the nation, Huang was the Deputy Premier. Zhou Enlai was the Premier. Huang was Deputy Premier and concurrently Minister of Light Industries.
- Alitto: When did you first meet Huang Yanpei?
- Liang: Relatively early on before in Hong Kong...⁸ When we were still working on rural reconstruction in Shandong I met him.
- Alitto: That was because he...
- Liang: He was also working on...
- Alitto: Working on that... This place was in Jiangsu.
- Liang: Jiangsu! At a place called Xugongqiao, near Kunshan. He was working on a rural reconstruction experimental district.

⁵ Chen Xujing (1903–1967) was perhaps the most extreme of advocates for “Wholesale Westernization.” He was highly critical of Liang Shuming and of rural reconstruction.

⁶ Qian Jiaju (1909–2002) did have more contact with Liang because of his membership in the Democratic League and the People's Political Consultative Conference. He moved to Los Angeles in 1989, and subsequently lost his positions in the CPPCC. In the 1930s, Qian was a severe critic of Liang's rural reconstruction movement.

⁷ Huang Yanpei (1878–1965) was also involved in rural work in the 1930s, and was a member of the various groups of democratic parties that Liang had founded. Huang is sometimes erroneously credited with the founding of the Democratic League.

⁸ As Liang knew Huang in the 1930s, it is strange that he mentions Hong Kong here. Possibly it was because Huang was in Hong Kong in 1949 before going to Beijing as part of the newly formed government. Huang made criticisms similar to Liang's about the Party's policy of forcing peasants to sell grain to the government. That is, following the Stalinist model of economic development; the capital to build China's urban industries came from the countryside. Huang was then labeled by Mao Zedong as a “representative for the capitalists.” The open conflict between Mao and Liang in September 1953 was because of the same issue.

Alitto: Right. I just thought of someone, he was Zhejiangese, and also was doing rural reconstruction in his home area, which could also be called local self-government. Shen Dingyi.⁹

Liang: I never met him.

Alitto: You had your most frequent contact with Huang Yanpei in the 1930s, or... (Liang: Right.) At the time you had commented on him or on the rural work done by his group. Now, do you have any different opinions, or still...

Liang: Huang's starting premise was...an organization called the "China Vocational Education Association." He worked in Jiangsu. He could be considered a Shanghai native. His native county was Chuansha, a county contiguous to Shanghai. He won a *juren* degree under the Qing very early on. After he toured the U.S., he started the Vocational Education Association. He felt that graduates of China's new style schools were unemployable after graduation and thus could only look for ways to get official positions. He organized and managed right until his death the Vocational Education Association. Within the framework of this organization, he ran the experimental district at Xugongqiao.

Alitto: You did meet Li Zonghuang?¹⁰

Liang: Yep.

Alitto: He toured the Zouping work. I'm afraid that he has already died.

Liang: Probably a long time ago.

Alitto: That early? I think, right at the time...I had talked with him. I spoke with him at some length. He said...I have notes of his...when he was visiting Zouping and Ding Counties, he wrote notes. He said that that day he had an exchange of views with you, and discussed...He was considered the Nationalist Party expert on local self-government—he found this most interesting. He worked on this right through until he died. He had a local self-government academy, or institute, in Taiwan, which regularly published books. Well, probably he didn't leave a deep impression on you.

⁹ The name is 沈定一. Shen was among the founding members of the Chinese Communist Party. He was expelled from the Party in 1925, and immediately after that participated in the Nationalist Party right-wing "Western Hills Group," and later participated in the Nationalist Party's purge of the Communists. He returned to his native area of Xiaoshan (浙江萧山) in 1928 to run a local self-government experimental area. He was assassinated by unknown parties in the same year. Shen is the subject of an interesting book by R. Keith Schoppa, *Bloody Road: The Mystery of Shen Dingyi in Revolutionary China* (Berkeley, CA. 1995).

¹⁰ Mr. Li Zonghuang (1887–1978) was the Nationalist Party's chief theoretician of local self-government (地方自治) from the 1930s through to the 1970s. I interviewed him quite extensively in 1970 in Taipei, especially about his trips to Zouping, Ding County, and other non-governmental local self-government districts. He was the architect of the Nationalist Party's 1930s local self-government experimental district in Jiangning (江宁) County, Jiangsu. Aside from his writings on local self-government and local administration, he also wrote a history of the Nationalist Party.

- Liang: Very little.
- Alitto: He visited Zouping in 1933 or 1934; so you had not read any of his publications, about local self-government?
- Liang: No.
- Alitto: Did you ever meet Lu Xun?
- Liang: No.
- Alitto: Did you meet Bertrand Russell while he was at Peking University?
- Liang: China invited him to come lecture. I did listen to him lecturing, but I couldn't have conversation with him....
- Alitto: Did you ever meet Wu Zhihui?¹¹
- Liang: I did meet Wu Zhihui, and, for a period of time, I was quite close to him.
- Alitto: What time was that?
- Liang: I was still young at the time. He was of the older generation. I remember when, together with someone surnamed Lu...we three...
- Alitto: Someone surnamed Lu?
- Liang: From Jiangsu. Wu Zhihui was also from Jiangsu. We three went on a ramble on the Great Wall together. There was such a time.
- Alitto: That was when you were still at Peking University?
- Liang: Yep, when I was at Peking University. This old gentleman was really interesting. Previously there were rickshaws in Beijing. He would absolutely not ride in a rickshaw or a sedan chair.
- Alitto: Because he felt that it was...
- Liang: It was bad, wrong, that people should not be used as beasts of burden. He always walked his own path. He was very affectionate toward youth, and wanted to help young people. For example, I had a friend—who could also be considered my student—Zhu Qianzhi. Later on he was quite famous, a first ranked Peking University professor.

When Zhu Qianzhi was still a Peking University student, he had a girlfriend. They would cook together using a coal oil stove, which was more convenient and faster than burning coal. The elderly Mr. Wu said to them, "You don't know how to use that thing. I'll teach you." He was good to young people, very helpful. By chance once a Jiangsuese surnamed Lu, Mr. Wu and I took a hike to Nankou and Badaling. Mr. Wu had his own knapsack, which seemed to be rather heavy. We rode third class on the train. He was an elder statesman, a man of the older generation, in the Nationalist Party. When Chiang Kai-shek was assuming the office of National Chairman, he needed someone to administer the oath of office,

¹¹ I asked Liang about Mr. Wu, not only because he was a famous intellectual and Nationalist Party member at the time, but also because he had publicly criticized Liang's book, *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, not long after its publication in 1922. Apparently, Mr. Liang had forgotten about this criticism or had never paid any attention to it originally. As Wu's criticism was published in the middle of 1923, this ramble on the Great Wall might well have been published after he and Liang had become friends. In any case, as usual, Liang did not seem to pay much mind to criticism.

and so he invited Wu Zhihui to do it. They respected him, but he didn't participate in politics.

Alitto: What do you think of his thought?

Liang: He was a vegetarian. He studied in Europe, both in England and in France.

Alitto: What is your evaluation of him?

Liang: No original or special evaluation; I think it was very good to have such a person in the older generation of the Guomintang.

Alitto: What about Zhang Dongsun? Do you have any... During the War of Resistance, you worked with him in the Democratic League. Did you know him previously, or...

Liang: I knew him much earlier. He liked to talk Philosophy. The man was famous in the academic world. He and Zhang Junmai—the two Zhangs—were close both philosophically and politically. Zhang Junmai was kind and simple-hearted. But Zhang Dongsun was artful, even to the extent of being slippery. In the end, he came very close to bringing on a disaster, just short of bringing on something terrible [upon himself]. Why did we say so? Chairman Mao of the CCP fixed Beijing as the national capital, and at the start the government was called the Central People's Government. The Central People's Government had a sixty-person committee. He and Long Yun from Yunnan were the last two members of the committee. Because Mao's troops were entering Beijing, he [Zhang] was in Beijing, rushing about arranging matters to [have the troops] peacefully enter Beijing. At the time the Nationalist Party force in Beijing was Fu Zuoyi's, whose troops were holding Beijing. The CCP wanted to enter Beijing, and there was negotiations between the two armies to avoid damaging Beijing. Several people were mediating in between. Zhang was also one of those. So after the CCP army entered Beijing, the CCP respected him, and he and Long Yun were the last two of the sixty members [to be appointed].

But he had a weakness, a fault which I just mentioned—slipperiness; he was not kind and simple-hearted. At that time he was at Yenching University, where there were a lot of Americans. He was a professor at Yenching University. He thought that the U.S. was extremely powerful, and didn't dare make a judgment on whether the CCP could unite the entire country, stabilize it and move on steadily down the road. Right then, there was a certain person who could be considered bad, a swindler. This con-man was thirty-something [years of age]. During the Japanese rule of Beijing, he had been in jail with Zhang Dongsun. The Japanese had arrested him, and so the cheat became friendly with Zhang in prison. Later after the CCP entered Beijing, this cheat had contact with him, and sometimes would go to Yenching University to see him. Zhang Dongsun thought that the U.S. was extremely rich, strong, and powerful. Whether the CCP could rule China with stability was not certain, it seemed [at the time]. The cheat bragged to Zhang Dongsun that he had connections with the U.S. State Council, and Zhang believed him. So Zhang Dongsun gave some documents that he had acquired through participating in the People's Government for

him to read. This man sent them off to the U.S. Later Beijing Mayor Peng Zhen caught this man; he asked him if he had any fellow conspirators. He mentioned Zhang Dongsun. It was at this time that I was having regular contact with Chairman Mao. He often sent a car to bring me to the Zhongnanhai to talk. Chairman Mao spoke to me of the Zhang Dongsun incident. He said, "Peng Zhen said that he was to arrest him. I said to Peng Zhen that this scholar was not capable of rebellion, and so it wasn't worth taking him seriously, but he cannot meet with us again. At present we should only warn him, punish him and have him write a self-criticism." I heard that Chairman Mao didn't pass on his first self-criticism, it wouldn't do, was insufficient, and had him write another. The second self-criticism still didn't pass. The third one—I seem to remember that I also read that one—Chairman Mao approved.

When Zhang's "problem" was discovered, he was terrified. Zhang's wife knew me, and before I went to meet Chairman Mao, his wife came to ask for my help as a favor, hoping to find out how serious this incident was. I said OK, and also spoke to Mao about it. Mao's answer was Peng like this; Zhen reported to me such and so forth, Peng Zhen had arrested a swindler, and so on. I told Peng Zhen, don't arrest him; there is no need to arrest Zhang Dongsun, an effete intellectual doesn't have the capacity to rebel, don't mind him, but we cannot forgive him a second time. Chairman Mao told me this personally. I also told this to Zhang Dongsun's wife. I also saw Zhang Dongsun, who was panic-stricken. His crime was "having illicit relations with a foreign country." At that time, there was hostility between China and the U.S. He was mentally disturbed and panic-stricken. He almost couldn't sleep. I saw this situation. It seems that I read his third self-criticism essay. Chairman Mao also read it, and approved it. His self-criticism was profound. It could pass and he was not punished. He was given, moreover, a stipend of one hundred yuan a month, but he was kept under house arrest of a sort. He could not have any contact with anyone outside, so that, afterwards, I could no longer see him.¹²

Alitto: Do you have any impressions of his philosophical writings?

Liang: A thoughtful man of ideas. I think I myself have quoted him.

Alitto: Do you think he could be considered modern China's....

Liang: A thoughtful person, but as a man, he was not kind and simplehearted; he was a finagler who was looking for personal advantage. This man was not

¹²These two events were separated by several years. Zhang was Fu Zuoyi's secret representative in the surrender negotiations in 1948. He wasn't accused of "having illicit relations with a foreign country" until 1951. He was arrested in January of 1968 (relatively late), sent to the famed Qincheng (秦城) prison for high level political prisoners, where he died in 1973. I do not doubt that Zhang was an opportunist (and so the sort of person Liang particularly distained), but I do wonder about the charges concerning the leaking of secret documents. Coming from a family which produced multiple generations of scholar-officials, and being, relatively speaking, a successful opportunist until then, could Zhang have been so stupid as to have believed a "swindler"?

as good as Zhang Junmai. The two Zhangs were extremely close, but Zhang Junmai was loyal, considerate and honest, not like Zhang Dongsun who was a slippery character.

Alitto: Were the two politically connected to each other?

Liang: From the beginning to the end, they stood together.

Alitto: When Chiang Kai-shek was going to convene the National Assembly, Zhang Junmai left the Democratic League to participate.

Liang: Zhang Junmai's group inherited the tradition of Liang Qichao's political group and carried it on. With support of everyone in the group, he was made the leader. Actually, though, he could not lead his group, especially his own students, none of whom listened to him. I knew two of his students, one named Jiang Yuntian, and another named Feng Jinbai. These two did not listen to him. He could not lead the members of his party. One time Chiang and... I represented the Democratic League in joining and allying with the CCP. Wasn't there going to be a coalition cabinet organized? The question was how many positions in the cabinet would be allotted to each party. At that time, for the National Assembly, there were the so-called participants and nonparticipants. The upshot was that neither the CCP nor the Democratic League participated in the National Assembly. After the National Assembly elected the president, it proceeded to establish a new government. His student, for example, Jiang Yuntian, participated in the new government, but he himself did not.

Alitto: Oh, he himself still didn't participate. I misunderstood.

Liang: He himself did not participate. Guo Moruo had been afraid that he would participate, and had sent someone to persuade him, to sound him out. He answered, "I absolutely will not participate, but I cannot manage my subordinates or students." Why couldn't he manage them? He said, "Following me they have been poor but honest. Now it so happens that there is an opportunity to rise to power, they can...I can't prevent them." So his students joined the government, and he didn't.

Alitto: I thought that he had led his party members....

Liang: No, he didn't join, from start to finish. He told us candidly, "I can't manage them."

Alitto: We've already spoken a bit about Feng Yuxiang. How did you get to know him? What evaluation do you have of him, or other contacts with him, or...

Liang: Making an evaluation is problematic, but I can say something about our later contact. Later, didn't he leave the army? First he was at Zhangjiakou fighting the Japanese, but he wasn't successful. He left the army and went to live by himself at Mount Tai. In the Mount Tai foothills, not that far up the path to the top, there was a temple called the "Illumination of All Things Monastery," where he lived. At that time, Han Fujun was the Chairman of Shandong Province and, although he felt enmity toward him, Han still took care of him, sending him 4,000 silver dollars every month. He lived in this temple, and naturally had several guards and

secretaries with him. He also retained two old gentlemen as teachers. One was named Wang Tieshan (Wang Hu), who had served during the Qing Dynasty as the governor of Jiangsu. Wang Hu taught him. There was another surnamed Fan.... This Wang Hu was a native of Ding County. There was another named Fan Mingshu, who was from Shandong. I seem to remember one of them was teaching him [Feng] the *Zuozhuan*. He had engaged these old gentlemen to teach him. Well, I just mentioned that there were several others in attendance, and an English language secretary; he also employed an English language secretary, whom he had probably taken on much earlier, and later continued to follow Feng. Someone surnamed Ren.

Once while I was in Zouping, I had an illness and so went to the German hospital in Jinan. This was when Feng Yuxiang was living in the "Illumination of All Things Monastery" on Mount Tai. He heard about this and dispatched an old subordinate of his, Han Duofeng, bearing a present for me at the hospital. After I recovered and was discharged, I paid a visit to him at the Monastery. There I saw that venerable Mr. Wang Hu teaching him. He had me stay for a meal. Going back I had to return to Jinan by train. My schedule depended on the time of the train. The train from Nanjing passed through Taian on the way to Jinan. I calculated its time to plan my travel.....

Liang: ...Through refraction of clouds, colors are always changing, red turning into blue, green, orange, etc., always changing, very beautiful. I saw it [the scene on Mount Tai near the monastery] once. That was the last time I had contact with Feng Yuxiang.

Alitto: You just said that making an evaluation of him was difficult. Is there any other meaning, about him or his political...

Liang: He was a military man. Politically he didn't have any clever opinions or positions. He wasn't that smart. He and Chiang Kai-shek... Chiang liked to be "on good terms" with people. To get on good terms, the old Chinese way was to become sworn brothers. He was older than Chiang, so Chiang called him elder brother. Chiang was into this routine. He had no way of handling Chiang. He wasn't that smart, but he was a better man than Chiang.

Alitto: In 1930 there was a meeting in Beijing. Feng Yuxiang and Yan Xishan wanted to form a new government, in opposition to Chiang Kai-shek.

Liang: The enlarged meeting.

Alitto: Did you go too?

Liang: I didn't.

Alitto: Really? Some materials said that you did go.

Liang: Before the enlarged meeting, I received a letter of appointment as a high level advisor from Yan Xishan, through Wang Hongyi. Each month he would send me 500 silver dollars as a fee for advising him. At that time, I spoke to Yan. Since he gave me such a lavish fee for being an advisor, I wanted to contribute my opinion. I told him that now China's present

problem was none other than you several big leaders. China's problem was whether or not there would be civil war again—previously there had been civil war. Civil war benefited no one. It would benefit none of you powerful figures, or the common people, and it would sap the vitality of the nation. Rather than having another civil war, it would be better to sacrifice oneself, to fall from power. This was the suggestion I gave him. He should respect the older generation in the Guomindang—the four senior statesmen—Wu Zhihui, Cai Yuanpei, Zhang Jingjiang and Li Shizeng. He should respect them, establish a privy council, and allow them to perform a supervisory function. Each of the big warlords should disarm, and absolutely should not have another civil war. This was my contributory opinion. Later Wang Jingwei and Chen Gongbo went to Taiyuan. He never listened to my council again; instead he organized an enlarged meeting to oppose Chiang. I immediately resigned my position as advisor. Later then, the Great Plains War started.

Alitto: What about Yan Xishan; how was he as a person?

Liang: He had his strengths. He was extraordinary. From the Republican Revolution overthrowing the Qing Dynasty, he arose to seize governmental power in Shanxi, and held on to it for several decades. In no other province can you find a second person that controlled a provincial government continuously for several decades. There is no one else. That he had ability and strengths is out of question, but he was still selfish.

Alitto: He was involved in the various programs carried out by the Shanxi Provincial Government, especially rural self-government.

Liang: I want to say, saying that he was selfish....I just hinted at it just now, but didn't say it outright. I want to say, he was always grasping at power. He wanted his subordinates to adopt a kind of religious ceremony to take a vow to the spirits that they would be loyal to him, and never betray him. People took this oath, which said how they would be punished, and what punishment Heaven would befall them if they were not loyal to the vow. He went in for this sort of game. So I say that he was selfish, he had no [greater] ability. It was limited to this. No more. His moral character, personality and ability stopped with this, and didn't go higher. So as soon as Wang Jingwei and Chen Gongbo arrived there, he cast my advice aside, set up an enlarged meeting to oppose Chiang, and so in this way there was the Great Plains War, with Yan and Feng on the one side, and Chiang on the other. They lost the Henan War. How did they lose? Zhang Xueliang of the Northeast was bribed by Chiang, and entered at their rear. Naturally they lost. He was selfish and unclever. Now I thought of something. Didn't you ask me whom I most admired among the ancients? I just thought of Zhuge Liang.

Zhuge Liang was of noble moral character! There are sayings of his, "Be direct and open." He really was that way, very good! He told his subordinates, "Constantly criticize my faults." If you see any faults or mistakes you must regularly criticize them. He was modest, circumspect and fair. That kind of

character is very good. I should say that of all the ancients, I admire him the most. I made a gift for you, a piece of calligraphy with words of Zhuge Liang's.

Alitto: Did you admire him since you were a child, or...

Liang: I have always admired him. The first time I went into Sichuan, to Chengdu, where there was a shrine to him, I went there and performed the bows. I said, "In my heart I have always wanted to pay obeisance to you. Now having come to your shrine, I must kowtow and pay obeisance to you." The temple had a registry book. I wrote the date that I had come, and that I had knelt down to pay respects.

Alitto: His native place was in western Henan.

Liang: Right, he was born there. Didn't he take charge of Sichuan's... The shrine had a written sign "Temple to Zhuge, Marquis of Wu." The shrine was primarily to him, but Liu Bei's tomb was in the back of it. But everyone calls it the Marquis of Wu Shrine, not including Liu Bei. That is, everyone reveres, loves and respects Zhuge Liang. Sichuanese all commemorate him. They like to wear white turbans. Why white? They say that they are "wearing mourning for Zhuge." When the Chinese have a funeral, they wear mourning for Zhuge. After Zhuge died, many of the people in the area wanted to sacrifice to him. Liu Bei's successor emperor Liu Chan didn't like the idea, but it wouldn't work. If you didn't erect a shrine to Zhuge, the people's shrines to him would be even more numerous, so the government built a proper shrine. (Alitto: Chinese customs...) There are temples to Confucius, sacrificial rites carried out to him.

Alitto: I have given a course called Chinese Culture, which introduces the general characteristics of Chinese culture to university students who have no knowledge about China. I especially like to introduce this kind of customs, which is so different from the West. Did you know Gu Hongming?

Liang: I ran into him.

Alitto: In Beijing?

Liang: Yes, Beijing.

Alitto: When you were at Peking University?

Liang: At Peking University. Didn't I tell you that I withdrew from Hunan? When the troops pulled out I came out with them, and wrote a small pamphlet—"If We do not Take Action, What about the People?" At that time I went to Peking University. I ran into Mr. Gu in the Teachers' Lounge—there was a lounge for the teachers to use before going to the classroom to teach their classes. He was very tall, and wore the old style dress, the dress worn during the Qing Dynasty—the long robe, the riding jacket. The robe was blue and the riding jacket was maroon. He wore a small cap with a red bump on it. He wore a queue. Didn't the Qing people wear queues? He was very tall. Didn't I write the pamphlet, "If We do not Take Action, What about the People?" I had put several copies of it on the table in the Teachers' Lounge for people to see. He picked one up, nodded his head, and said, "A person of high aspirations and determination." He was much older than I, probably by fifty or sixty years. At the time I was only 24.

- Alitto: I knew his granddaughter in Taiwan.¹³ She's [now] already gone to the U.S. I met her when I was studying Chinese. Too bad that her family's papers are gone. What did you think of him? I feel that he was strange. He advocated bound feet and wearing queues. He really was completely conservative.
- Liang: In China a man had a wife and several concubines.
- Alitto: Right, he also advocated...
- Liang: If people expressed opposition or disagreement, he would tell a joke. He said that a teapot could have four cups, but you could not have a cup with four teapots. This man was quite eccentric. He did his utmost to raise up China, and belittle foreign countries. He said such a remark: You foreigners, Europeans, previously you were unable to separate yourselves from the church. Religion taught you morality and restrained you. Later, religion no longer was such a powerful force, and national armies repressed and dominated. China was not like this. China's common people themselves like peace and quiet.
- Alitto: Your book *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies* also expressed this idea.
- Liang: Russell of England very much admired China.
- Alitto: Yes. The saying of Gu Hongming just mentioned, that if the church didn't control Westerners, they were controlled by the state—it was always a force external to person. The case was different in China. After Confucius, it was ethics for ethics' sake, pure ethics—not gods or laws. This is a very big difference between China and the West.
- Liang: Aren't China's common people very disorganized? Disorganization and peace are linked. The more peaceful the more disorganized, the more disorganized the more peaceful. Each goes through life in a disorganized and peaceful manner. Unless in certain periods—China underwent a cycle of order and a cycle of disorder. In a period of order, perhaps after a hundred years or whatever, there must be disorder. The disorder is followed by order. What is "order"? It is everyone settling down, in disorganization and peace. This is different from foreign countries.
- Alitto: Did you have any other opinions on Gu Hongming?
- Liang: This man did have an analytical mind, but he was also one biased old-timer. His thought and positions were quite tendentious and one-sided.

¹³ One of Gu Hongming's granddaughters taught at the American Chinese language school in Taipei (colloquially known as the Stanford Center), and I got to know her very well. Later she went to California to teach Chinese, where she remained. I had asked her if there were any family records, papers or artifacts left from Mr. Gu, but she said that it had all been lost. He was born, raised and educated outside of China. The great irony is that, although he held a position for a time in Zhang Zhidong's (张之洞) staff, he had mastered several European languages before learning Chinese. His important writings were in English. Mr. Gu was unique among Chinese intellectuals in the twentieth century in that he was far more thoroughly and completely culturally conservative than any other. W. Somerset Maugham's sketch of Gu ("The Philosopher") forms the center of his book *On a Chinese Screen* (1922).

- Alitto: You had a Shandongese student, Gong Zhuchuan. He was assassinated during the War of Resistance. I have read some of his essays that he published before the war [in a periodical] called *Rural Movements*. The periodical *Rural Construction* also carried his essays. I also know that during the War of Resistance he made great contributions. I would like to know what you think of him....
- Liang: He was among my best students. I had quite a few favorite students and he was one of them. It was a pity that he was killed.
- Alitto: Regarding this you can find some material. *Guangmingbao* carried articles about what you discovered after you left Shandong...they were interrogated at the CCP headquarters in Chongqing... you did this thing or not... In the end they said, "We don't know. We cannot deny what you say, but..."
- Liang: In 1928, the time of the National Revolutionary Army's Northern Expedition—during the cooperation of the Nationalists and the Communists—Gong Zhuchuan, in his home area of Meng-yin County, was influenced by and joined the Communist Party.
- Alitto: So he joined the Party very early.
- Liang: He joined the Party. His murder probably had something to do with the Party. Why? Because later he left the Party, and became my student. He was not the only one. There was one surnamed Zhao, Zhao Jiyuan, another named Huang Xiaofang. All were leftist in thought and had relations with the Communist Party, and later, because they followed me, they left the Party. So Gong Zhuchuan, Huang Xiaofang and Zhao Jiyuan were all killed.
- Alitto: All were killed during the War of Resistance?
- Liang: Yes, all.
- Alitto: Were they all killed in Shandong?
- Liang: All were in Shandong, after Shandong fell to the enemy, was occupied by the enemy. When the enemy already occupied Shandong, didn't I return to Shandong once? I went around southern Shandong for quite a while. At the end, Gong Zhuchuan escorted me out. When we were parting, he was to go back, and I also said that he didn't need to go on. At that time, although I was sturdy and strong, and had thrown myself into activity, I still suffered from insomnia, and often couldn't sleep at night. Under the moonlight he was escorting me, and we were parting; he stopped and told me, "I am in dread of death, I'm afraid." Afraid of what? Death. He didn't say outright "of being killed," but said only that he was terrified of death. He asked me about it. I told him that I hadn't had this kind of experience. We parted. I went westward; and he returned eastward. At this time I dispatched someone else, whose name was Wang Jingbo, to go to another place. Wang returned and said that Gong Zhuchuan had already been killed. As I just said, it wasn't him alone, [who was killed], not a one-time event. Aside from Gong Zhuchuan...

...

Liang: ...he graduated from the Army College. That student of mine (Slip of the tongue—it should be a friend—compiler) was named Wu Guanqi. Mr. Wu Guanqi was teaching at the time. I began to get to know Li Jishen at the lecture venues and assemblies. He also came to my home to see me. Both Wu and Li graduated from the Army College. Li worked at the Military Studies Bureau in the Army War Ministry. At the time, the government in Beijing was extremely poor, even to the degree that it could not meet its payroll. There was only one exception: the Ministry of Communications administering the Beijing-Zhangjiakou Railway, the Beijing-Hankou Railway, five railways—they also on their own ran a Communications Bank. Those at the Ministry of Communications received their complete salaries. We at Peking University, and even other institutions—for example, the Army War Ministry just mentioned—would only draw about thirty percent of our salaries. That is to say, if your salary was 100 dollars, you would get only 30 dollars. The government always said that it would make up the difference later, but in fact they never did. Everyone was poor. Li Jishen had his family with him in Beijing and was also extremely poor. Right at this time, Wu Guanqi invited him to come back to Guangdong to join the Guangdong First Division, first as Adjutant General and then as Chief of Staff. Later he became the Divisional Commander. And so in this way he started his career as a provincial military leader, and thus controlled Guangdong political power. I got to know him in Beijing. I went to Guangdong Province....

Alitto: You already described in your book in relative detail what you did after you went to Guangdong. Did you still have some contact with Li Jishen after the war started in the 1930s?

Liang: Yes. Later when Chairman Mao founded the new nation in Beijing, didn't Li Jishen also come to participate? The political parties in Beijing included the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Nationalist Party, the Chinese Democratic League, and the China Association for the Promotion of Democracy, and the China Democratic National Construction Association. He was the director of the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Nationalist Party.

Alitto: Did you still have contact with Li Jishen during the War of Resistance?

Liang: The War of Resistance can be divided into two periods. The first period was when the Nationalist Government moved to Chongqing, when he was there presiding over the Wartime Local Nationalist Party Political Committee. The second period started when he moved from Chongqing to Guilin, where he was the director of the local Office of the Military Affairs Committee. During this period I was also in Guilin, having already returned to the interior from Hong Kong. I lived in Guilin for two or three years. So we were in the same place during that period.

Alitto: What is your appraisal of Li Jishen?

Liang: We were very old friends and had a deep friendship for each other. I seem to remember a phrase from the *Records of the Grand Historian*

or the *History of the Han Dynasty*—used to describe Zhou Bo—which can also serve to describe Li Jishen: “kind and discreet, but with little culture.” He couldn’t compose essays or speak eloquently. Long discussions and arguments were not his forte. But he was very calm and steady and was a good man. The only reason that I went to Guangdong was because he was there.

Alitto: Yes, I know about that. The others you’ve already introduced... You’ve even already mentioned Dai Zongqi.¹⁴ Are there any others you want to talk about? Some of your past experiences....

Liang: Well, I really can’t say anything more. I did have contact with several powerful warlords in the past.

Alitto: What you just said reminded me of something. Didn’t I mention that a newspaper in Taiwan published a part of my article introducing you?

Liang: I’m not sure.

Alitto: This article presented you [to the public]. Of course it was only a partial [treatment], not the complete one.

Liang: What publication did it appear in?

Alitto: In a newspaper, the *China Times*. I write that Mr. Liang is not like the simplistic way that many people see him, a conservative. No, he is very complex. His thought is complex, and he as a person is complex. For example, he originally studied Buddhism, and could be considered a Buddhist, but in his preface to the book *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, he mentions that at present Buddhists are not good for China. (Liang: Not suitable.) He strongly opposes Militarism, but he is on intimate terms with warlords, and has acted as their advisor. They didn’t translate this very well; it was off the point. Mr. Zhou—Zhou Shaoxian—criticized me [for this article]... Naturally you are the same as Confucius, “providing education for all without discrimination.” Tomorrow I’ll bring the article. Really it is not well translated, and not systematically. They just translated a portion of the essay. It seems that there was already a Chinese translation of the complete article. It was about some modern Chinese thinkers, such as Liu Shipei or Zhang Taiyan. Concerning traditional classical scholarship, you are not nearly as good as Zhang Taiyan. You really didn’t work on that. You also said something about the *National Heritage* magazine. At that time, Liu Shipei ran it. Wasn’t it called *National Heritage*?

Liang: It was published by Peking University.

Alitto: Yes.

Liang: One was called *New Tide*, and another one was called *National Heritage*.

Alitto: You also criticized it. You said that these old superfluous things were not the most urgent nor most important ones.

¹⁴ I do not remember who this refers to. The compiler didn’t hear the name clearly.

Liang: I didn't criticize *National Heritage*.¹⁵

Alitto: I remember a sentence of yours in *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*. I forget the second part. In any case it is something like "I fear specialized research on the old literature." I'll bring it tomorrow. I'll bring it together with that essay in which Mr. Zhou criticizes me. I was together with Mr. Zhou. I asked him many times about the Shandong rural reconstruction, about your situation. Afterwards, I lost his address, so after this book was published I had no way of sending it to him. I want to inquire about his whereabouts and send this book to him. He helped me quite a lot.

Liang: That Hu...

Alitto: Hu Yinghan. I don't know his address either, and I also want to send the book to him, but...

Liang: Hu Yinghan and Zhou had contacts.

Alitto: They had contacts? If that is the case I have to enquire into it. After my book was published I should have sent a copy to them.

Liang: I have an address for Hu Yinghan here. I can give it to you.

Alitto: Thank you. Let's stop for today.

Liang: OK.

¹⁵ Elsewhere as well, Mr. Liang stated that he had not criticized *National Heritage*. On pp. 204–205 of *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, there is the remark that those engaged in classical studies "pile up stiff rotten goods" and call that Chinese culture. He is right, however, in that he does not specifically mention *National Heritage* by name. The journal was rather short-lived, ending in 1919 with the death of its editor, Liu Shipai. Many of the editors, such as Liu, Zhang Binglin (章炳麟), Ma Xulun (马叙伦), and the two Huangs, (黄侃、黄节), had been associated with the *Journal of National Essence* (《国粹学报》), published in Shanghai from 1905 to 1911. This tradition of regarding the literary heritage as the "national essence" continued into the 1930s through the *Critical Review* (《学衡》) group of Wu Mi (吴宓), Liu Boming (刘伯明) and Mei Guangdi (梅光迪).

Chapter 10

August 21, 1980

Liang: A person is not just of this one life. A person's real substance is transmitted from the distant past down through time. He has a very long and distant past. So his so-called "fate" is none other than his past and his background. A man's life and destiny is decided by his past.

Alitto: Is this related to Buddhism?

Liang: Yes. Buddhism is... I mentioned it once. I used the expression "Life, divided into endless instants, is at best similar and continuous; the meaning of life is neither interrupted nor persistent."—It is linked, part of a continuous process. The me of today is like the me of the past, but isn't identical. Strictly speaking, the me of a previous period and the me of the present are different entities. So a person, from the time he is a small child growing up to old age, like me, I'm over 80 years old, is changing every instant, different every instant. As for this difference, simply speaking, in one aspect, the body is different; the brain is different; the influence from outside has long been different. So all is different, but within the differences is some similarity. So we call it "similar and continuous." In the phrase "neither interrupted nor persistent," "nor persistent" means "not perpetual as before," or you could say "not permanent." So "neither interrupted nor persistent" does not mean permanent, but it is still uninterrupted. This is to say that the present me is not the me of just now, they are not the same thing, but there is no interruption either—it still continues on. That life is "similar and continuous" not only means that there is similarity and continuity between the me of one year old and the me of two years old, and the me of three years old; it also means that after death this similarity and continuity is not broken.

After a man dies, there are two different cases. One is "death here and birth there." One dies here and there another is born. But in another case, some people do not "die here and be born there." It is possible not to be born immediately after death. The longest period is to postpone it for 49 days. The Hinayana texts have this theory, but the longest postponement is 49 days—this is not the ordinary case. The ordinary process is "death here

and birth there.” One dies here; there a child is immediately born. There’s an exception, which is someone of extraordinary cultivation. Perhaps it isn’t cultivation performed in this life; it could be the cultivation performed in the past life. He could be some extraordinarily great person, as mentioned in the Hinayana texts, who won’t necessarily be reborn. He exists for a long period.

There are three realms (*trailokya*) talked about in the Buddhist scriptures. The first is called “the realm of sensuous desire” (*kāmadhātu*)—the primal wants for food, drink and sex. This is all desire. The second is called “the realm of form” (*rūpadhātu*). The third realm is called “the formless realm of pure spirit” (*arūpadhātu*). The Buddhist scriptures have it this way, but it seems that this is not a theory created by the Buddhist scriptures. Rather, it seems that this is a common belief in India; it is commonly held that there are these three realms. The primal desires exist only in the realm of sensuous desire. It does not exist in the realm of form. In the realm of form there is still gender difference, but no food or drink, no intercourse between male and female. In the formless realm of pure spirit, there is nothing at all. The Buddhist scriptures contain such a theory.

Alitto: The meaning of “Predestined” is...for example, you have lived to a great age. You are a famous person, also a thinker, and such. This is all predestined. That time you told me about someone casting your eight characters: saying that at twenty-four you would be famous, that your luck would be good—I’ve forgotten how you put it—the meaning is that, when a person is born, it is related to karma. Some people have a special vision. When they cast the eight characters or look at a person’s face, they will understand this “karma.” Did the fortune-teller mention anyone doing research on you? That is, after this book, probably there will be other biographies....

Liang: I’ll explain. Some fortune-tellers are brilliant; some are not. Some do it accurately; some not so accurately. What a fortune-teller says is difficult to judge. In the past one fortune-teller said that I would live into my sixties. I didn’t keep the written commentary. The written one that is still around predicted until age 74. I had my fortune told again after that, which said that I could reach age 94. Two people predicted that I would reach 94. Both cast my eight characters, and both said that I could live until 94. I don’t know if they are accurate, but there are no other predictions that I would live longer.

Alitto: This is very interesting. These two people at different time, different...

Liang: Right. They didn’t consult together.

Alitto: When you were speaking of historical personages, you didn’t speak about your elder brother. I know there is a biographical dictionary of the Republican era, in which I saw a very short entry for your brother. He was in some railroad bureau. I also know that right after he returned from study in Japan, he was first in Shanxi, or perhaps, Shaanxi.

Liang: Right. He taught in Xi’an, Shaanxi.

- Alitto: So after that? Did he spend his whole life working in the railroad bureau, or...?
- Liang: He worked for quite a long period in the railroad bureau. At the start, his position was not very high, but later he rose in rank. Around the time he was promoted, which railway was he working for? That section of railroad from Beijing to Shanhaiguan. Later, he left the railroad [bureau].
- Alitto: And when was that?
- Liang: It was the Republican era when he was working for the railroad.
- Alitto: Was it before or after the war with Japan?
- Liang: It was before the war. During the war, when the Japanese occupied North China and set up a puppet government, it was, in name, Chinese-governed. We called it the “bogus government.” So, in the puppet government, he got a post as the Consolidated Tax Bureau Chief, collecting taxes. This post was one in which one could become rich. Collecting taxes can make a fortune. During that time he was relatively wealthy. It wasn’t too bad, though, he...he died. In Chinese parlance, he was a traitor, for he worked for the enemy. But because he died so early and resigned before the enemy was defeated—he resigned and died, when the North was returned to China, no one noticed him. He had been a traitor but was unnoticed, just because he resigned and died early.
- Alitto: So, you were in the West during this time, and only heard about this news from far away?
- Liang: Right, right. I was in Sichuan.
- Alitto: When you were in Sichuan, aside from your brother in Beijing, did you have other relatives, so they could inform you about this [news of your brother]?
- Liang: Yes, we had contact.
- Alitto: Didn’t your brother have two daughters?
- Liang: He had several daughters and a son.
- Alitto: A son? Not bad. When was the son born? Do you remember?
- Liang: This son is still in Beijing. My elder son is called Peikuan, and the second called Peishu. This nephew—that is, my brother’s son—is called Peizhong, “*zhong*” meaning “loyal.” He felt that his father had done wrong to work for the Japanese, make so much money, and buy so many houses. So, with the recovery, when the Communists established the new government, he contributed all of this property to the state. He said that these were ill-gotten gains. So, these actions were quite good, so they gave him work. He’s still in Beijing working in the Labor Bureau. He’s still OK.
- Alitto: You had two sisters. I remember that in 1917 the husband of one of your sisters died. And you accompanied the coffin back to the South. Hangzhou?
- Liang: Suzhou.
- Alitto: Which sister was that, the elder or the younger?
- Liang: The elder one.
- Alitto: Was the younger sister already married at that time, or still...
- Liang: She died before she married.

- Alitto: How's that?
- Liang: She didn't fancy getting married, and she died in her thirties at home.
- Alitto: What illness? She was so young....
- Liang: I'm afraid that it was a kind of tuberculosis.
- Alitto: Did your elder sister marry again?
- Liang: My elder sister did marry and have four children, two boys and two girls. Her oldest daughter is in Hunan now. The elder son is in Beijing. The elder son accompanied me when I went to Yan'an the first time.
- Alitto: Oh, he went with you. I didn't know that. In the articles in the *Guangmingbao* he wasn't mentioned.
- Liang: Possibly He's extremely steady. He works for the Broadcasting Bureau.
- Alitto: There was another son, that is, your nephew. Your sister's...
- Liang: He would be called my "*waisheng*."
- Alitto: "*Waisheng*." Right. How about the other one?
- Liang: The other one died. The younger brother died early.
- Alitto: About what year?
- Liang: It was probably forty years ago.
- Alitto: Oh, forty years ago. So he hadn't gone to work yet, or...
- Liang: He joined the Communist Party. (Alitto: He joined the Communist Party?) He joined the Communist Party, too.
- Alitto: He joined the Communist Party, too? Did he join before you went to Yan'an, or afterwards?
- Liang: An abbreviation of the Communist Party is CP. P stands for "party." There was another organization called the CY, Y standing for "young man." Both brothers were members of the CY [Communist Youth League].
- Alitto: That is to say, he was already a member of the CY in the 1930s?
- Liang: No, even earlier.
- Alitto: Even earlier.
- Liang: Now Xiaoqing [Liang's elder nephew] must be 68 years old.
- Alitto: What was his younger brother's name?
- Liang: His younger brother died very early... He had two sisters. One was older than Xiaoqing. He had an elder sister, and a younger one. His elder sister was....
- Alitto: His elder sister was Dehui. (Liang: One was Dexin.) Did the two marry, or were they still...
- Liang: Both married. Dehui is now in Hunan. Dexin is now in Beijing. I can't come up with the younger brother's name. I remember his childhood name. His childhood name was Baobao. Something good is called "treasured possessions" (*baobei*) in Chinese. Her younger brother...we generally called him Baobao. I can't think of his adult name at the moment.
- Alitto: Did he join the Communist Party in Beijing, or in some other place?
- Liang: Beijing.
- Alitto: Was this at the time of the Northern Expedition?
- Liang: Before the Northern Expedition.
- Alitto: Before? That is really being a party elder.

- Liang: Very early.
- Alitto: The Communist Party was only founded in 1921.
- Liang: He joined the Communist Party and was arrested. The time he was arrested, I seem to remember, was when Zhang Zuolin's troops, the Fengtian Army, were in Beijing.
- Alitto: You left at that time, I remember, right when...Li Dazhao was ...by Zhang Zuolin...
- Liang: I was in Shandong, in Zouping. I was working on rural reconstruction. (Mr. Liang misremembers, as he was not in Zouping until 1931, and Zhang Zuolin died in 1928.—translator)
- Alitto: Yes, yes. Wasn't it Zhang Xueliang, Zhang Zuolin's son...
- Liang: Zhang Zuolin.
- Alitto: At that time you were already in...
- Liang: I was in Shandong.
- Alitto: In 1927, Zhang Zuolin came and arrested a lot of intellectuals. (Liang: He arrested Li Dazhao.) Li Dazhao died. At that time a lot of intellectuals left Beijing. It was at this time that your nephew...
- Liang: I remember Zhang Zuolin's subordinates, called the Fengtian Army by Beijing people, controlled Beijing. In Beijing the commander of the military police was named Shao Wenkai. Another Fengtian Army high-ranking officer was named Wang Yizhe. My two nephews were arrested out of my home, because their mother had brought them to my house at Chongwenmen. In the middle of the night some people came, arrested and jailed them. This high-ranking officer Wang Yizhe knew me, and I knew him. I said to him, "These two were children, only teenagers. Could I guarantee them, and straighten them out myself?" Wang agreed. I went to the jail, signed the guarantor pledge and got them out. I then brought them both to Zouping, together with their mother.
- Alitto: Yes, I remember now that some of your friends and students in Taiwan and Hong Kong mentioned that not only were you in Zouping but your younger sister was there too. Now, how did your younger nephew die? Of illness?
- Liang: Yes, of illness. He was even bolder than his elder brother Xiaoqing. He was extremely active in revolutionary work. Didn't I bring the mother and the two kids to Zouping? During the summer break, some of my students wanted to go climb Mount Tai, and my two nephews went with them. OK, so let them go tour Mount Tai. When leaving for Mount Tai, the younger—that is, Baobao—said to his mother, "We're going out and taking the train. It would be good to have a watch," and so he got his mother's watch. Taking the watch had a deeper purpose. There were around ten to twenty who were going on the trip, including my students and the two brothers. As they were on the mountain, they couldn't find him [Baobao]. He had gone. He sold the watch for money, and took the train to Shanghai. In Shanghai he found Communist Party connections, and did underground work there. While doing this work he got a lung disease. It was hard to continue the work. Since he couldn't go on with the work, he revealed his

whereabouts to his brother and my sister went to Shanghai to find him and bring him back. He couldn't work as he had tuberculosis. He later died in Qingdao. Wasn't Xiaoqing also in Qingdao? What was the connection with Qingdao? Because my elder brother was working there. He first worked in the Qingdao Railroad Bureau (for the railroad between Jinan and Qingdao). Later, he was still working for the Railroad Bureau, but was no longer at the Jinan-Qingdao Railroad Bureau. He worked at the Beijing-Fengtian Railroad Bureau. So, my younger nephew died in Qingdao at a young age. He was only 20 years old, 21 at most.

Alitto: So young! Did your sister return to live in Zouping or...

Liang: Yes, she returned to Zouping, but later left for Hunan.

Alitto: Did she have relatives in Hunan or...

Liang: She went to her daughter and son-in-law's home. Her daughter Dehui was married to my nephew. (Alitto: Dehui was married to your nephew?) He was a distant nephew of mine, not closely related. His father was a relative of mine, older than me, so he could be considered my elder brother. But he was a Hunanese.

Alitto: Oh, the person you mentioned before for whom you are writing [a biography]. (Liang: Yes.) But you didn't tell me his name. All I know is that he was surnamed Liang. What was his name?

Liang: Our generation of the Liang family all has "Huan" as the first character of our given names. His name was Liang Huankui. My original name was "Huanding." Dehui was given in marriage to the son of Huankui, who could be considered my nephew. Dehui married my nephew [as it were]. She still lives in Changsha, Hunan.

Alitto: Will she keep living in Hunan or...?

Liang: My great-grandfather and Huankui's great-grandfather were brothers. We had the same paternal great-great-grandfather. Our great-great-grandfather had two sons. One settled in Hunan. One settled elsewhere. Later he was running an antimony mine in Hunan. That's the character for "younger brother" with a metal radical on the left. His younger brother Dingfu had purchased patent rights in France for refining antimony. He returned to Hunan and started antimony-refining operations, right in time for the First World War. It seemed that antimony was used in making arms, and because of this, the price of antimony was very high. He was exporting not the raw ore, but already refined antimony. So, he made quite a lot of money, and became very wealthy; he had offices for selling antimony in London and New York. But he wasn't a good businessman. You could say it was like this. When the price started to fall—probably because the war was over—he didn't sell any more. Instead he began to store it. Who would have thought that instead of recovering, the price continued to drop! So in the end he was unable to sell, and lost a lot of money. So there was a period when he was making a fortune, and then began to lose his original profits.

Alitto: Did you have any other relatives with whom you were close?

- Liang: The relative with whom I was closest was Zhang Yaozeng, whose biography I have already finished.
- Alitto: You could say that he grew up in your house, right? His chronological biography¹...
- Liang: Right. He, his younger brother and sister lived in our house supported by my father. But Zhang Yaozeng left to study in Japan when he was 19. Later, he became prominent politically.
- Alitto: Was it Zhang Yaozeng's elder or younger brother who was in Scotland?
- Liang: Right. His younger brother, who was the same age as I, left for abroad when still only in his teens. Was it Scotland? No, it seems to me Edinburgh.
- Alitto: Edinburgh is in Scotland, and Scotland is in the northern part of England.
- Liang: He went to study in Edinburgh and there he died.
- Alitto: There's another matter of considerable importance that I didn't ask you about, that is, the 1955–1956 criticism of Liang Shuming's... (Liang: There was such a period.) Naturally that is included in this book. I read all the important [materials of the campaign]. My own interpretation is that the criticism was a confused mess; it wasn't logical criticism. I have this conclusion in the book, but I still don't know your psychological state at the time. Was it very hurtful?
- Liang: It wasn't anything. But there were articles written, in the newspapers and periodicals. Aside from that there were also meetings.
- Alitto: There were also meetings. One or two of the materials mentioned the way the meetings were.
- Liang: ...The first time, Guo Moruo, in his capacity as president of the Academy [of Sciences], chaired the meeting that kicked off the campaign. He attended the first meeting, but not the later ones. All the others were presided over by others. We met once every two weeks. Those invited, those who attended, numbered eighty-some, about 82 or 83, and most of them had some sort of relationship with me. There were those from philosophical circles, they consisted of a portion. There were others who were not necessarily in philosophical circles, just those who had worked with me previously. So in this way there were 80, 80-some at the meetings. The meetings were held at the Academy of Sciences every two weeks. As I just said, the first meeting was presided over by Guo Moruo, as the president of the Academy of Sciences. At later sessions, Pan Zinian presided. Altogether there were seven or eight sessions, every two weeks a session. The meetings couldn't be all that numerous.

At the first session I requested the floor, and expressed the hope that everyone would criticize and instruct me as much as they could. I didn't speak again. Afterwards everyone else was asked to discuss things. Nothing

¹ This would seem to be the only suitable translation for “年谱.” The only other possibility is to use a much longer phrase, such as “a year by year listing of the important events in a person's life.”

really happened. Your name list [that Alitto had written on a piece of paper] has one person, Qian Jiaju. He was one of the people there at the time, and one of those who criticized me.

Alitto: Finally a lot of people wrote essays criticizing you. At the time, what did you feel the reason for the campaign was?

Liang: I went to see Pan Zinian once. This was not at the time of the meeting. When I visited him, I asked him a question. His English and French were both very good. He had translated Bergson. At the front was a preface, a translator's preface in which he highly praised and commended Bergson as really something. I visited him privately, not at the meeting place.

I went to see him and told him what I thought: I liked Bergson very much, and you also liked Bergson. It seems that you have changed. You are not like before when you were translating Bergson and praised him highly. Your thought has been transformed. How did this transformation happen? Could you tell me the reasons, so that I could understand it better? He laughed but did not answer me. He only said something like, "It's like building a house. In construction you must lay a foundation. The foundation is different." He answered in this manner. This made sense, it probably was like this. But he never told me how he had changed his foundation, what the process was like. He didn't explain to me how to change the foundations of thought. We didn't know that he had been severely criticized later, though not because of me. It seemed that he had been overthrown, and never rose again.

He had a younger brother, named Pan Hannian, who had been the mayor or deputy mayor or something of Shanghai. He fell from power very early. He was charged with a very serious crime. Unlike his elder brother, Pan Hannian acted rashly without following proper procedure. Pan Zinian didn't have this fault. I'm not very clear on how he fell from power in his party. It was like a storm. Once it was over, all was back to normal.

Alitto: So, why did they launch this kind of criticism campaign?

Liang: Didn't I say I went to see Pan Zinian? And I asked him, "How did you change your thought?" He said, "You need not be too bothered by this criticism; don't take it to heart. It isn't directed at you as an individual. It's like you are used as an exemplar."

Before the criticism of us began, there was serious criticism of someone named Hu Feng. Wasn't Hu Feng later arrested too? Hu Feng's problem was comparatively serious. When they were criticizing Hu, he was no longer in Beijing. He had gone out of the city. Although I was [in Beijing], they did nothing to me, aside from oral criticism, there was nothing else involved.

Alitto: What, after all, was the use of this public criticism of you?

Liang: Didn't Pan Zinian say, you don't have to pay great attention to this criticism; you are just an exemplar, or perhaps something like that. It is not directed at you personally. He said this to me.

Alitto: Do you have any other feelings on this criticism?

Liang: No, nothing.

Alitto: Nothing?

Liang: No.

Alitto: You've studied medicine?

Liang: Yes, yes.

Alitto: ...As I personally understand, as for medicine, you mentioned in *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, upon an analysis of Chinese and Western medicines, that these two entities symbolize a difference between Eastern and Western cultures. Later you continued to study medicine? Even at present do you still...

Liang: One could say that I am mindful of it, mindful of medicine.

Alitto: Why?

Liang: One could say that this special mindfulness of mine...I don't know...I don't remember if I told you that in the People's Political Consultative Conference...

Alitto: Yes, you told me that you are a member of a group. You participated in the medical...

Liang: The Medicine and Public Health Group.

Alitto: Yes, this is because you are really interested in it. Why do you have this interest? I know that long ago you had this interest. Why did you, after all?

Liang: Because life is the object of this study. This is especially true of Chinese medicine. Transmitted down from ancient times, the most important method of treatment is not herbal medicine, but acupuncture and moxibustion. Even earlier back, the latter was termed "stone probe (*zhenbian*)," This character "*bian*" has a stone radical. The ancients used very acute rock for the purpose of treating sickness. At that time there were no metal needles, so very hard stones were used on your body, somewhere you didn't know... This represents Chinese culture, Chinese learning, and Daoist thought. The Chinese medical tradition derives from the Daoist tradition. What was the Daoist tradition like? I often say that Westerners are outward looking, looking at the externals, while the Chinese focus on life itself, and turn their vision inward to the life experience itself. Turning inward onto their own bodies, the Chinese knew about energy channels. Chinese doctors call blood vessels "energy channels." These are channels for vital forces and blood. In traditional Chinese parlance, these were called the vital forces and blood circulation. They are circulated along the energy channels. How were the Daoists able to determine the circulatory system? The reason is Daoist thought. I'll explain. This is because the Daoists focus their discipline precisely upon this circulatory system. In a man's life, the blood/vital force is in the midst of circulation, an unceasing continuous circulation, but we don't know how it circulates and flows. We are not conscious of it. We use our brains and thoughts to deal with the external, to look after the external. Daoism does the opposite; it turns the direction of observation from outward to inward, and makes one a bit

self-conscious of the unconscious. There was an element of autonomy in the Daoist effort. They not only wanted to understand the unconscious, but also to influence it, to alter it. The Daoists wanted to change the circulation of the vital force and blood from something unconscious to something conscious, to change it from something out of one's control to something within one's control. Once one was able to control and influence the unconscious, then one could become an immortal.

An immortal was different from an ordinary human being like us. He can do things that we cannot do. When the temperature is hot, an ordinary person perspires. When the temperature is too cold, an ordinary person becomes numb. But an immortal would not. In ancient times, very early, this kind of skill or discipline existed. In the *Zhuangzi*, it was already there. He was able to achieve longevity. He wouldn't become badly frozen in very cold weather as we did. Because he had a very powerful control of the life force, of life. This is the way of the Daoists. There's no need to talk about other examples. A member of the People's Political Consultative Conference named Wang Baozhen was able to live to 98. He was from Baoding, Hebei. He himself said that he wanted to live to more than 100. But he only lived until 98. It looked as though his life style was according to Daoist precepts. For instance, boiling water that we wouldn't be able to put our hands in without injury, he was able to put his hand in without any harm. He could immerse himself entirely in the [boiling] water.

Alitto: Did you see this personally?

Liang: No, I didn't see it myself, but it was about the same as seeing it personally. I'll tell you what I mean. For a time the People's Political Consultative Conference had a kind of general service facility where you could have a meal, or entertain guests. There were also baths, barbers and so on. The incident with the hot water was related to me by one of the bathing service personnel there. A worker there told me, "Representative Wang bathes very differently from others. Ordinary people usually fill the tub with water from the hot faucet and mix it with cold water. He doesn't. He uses only straight hot water. He bathes in water so hot that one couldn't even put one's hand in." A worker there told this to me. We also went there to take a bath. The worker said, "How weird it was! How could Representative Wang bathe that way?" It was because he was an adept Daoist. He himself told us that he would live to 100. In the end, he didn't make it. [He lived only to] 98.

Alitto: When did he tell you?

Liang: When he was over 90.

...

Liang: No, there were a lower chamber and an upper chamber. At that time he was a member of the lower chamber. He was a veteran old-timer.

Alitto: He had already had such considerable accomplishments that early!

Liang: He was from Baoding.

Alitto: So he was well educated, wasn't he?

Liang: Yeah, probably he had read quite a lot of old-style Chinese books.

- Alitto: There is probably a lot of this kind of folk religion. Very rare among urban intellectuals. I personally saw [similar phenomena] in the New Territories of Hong Kong, Guangdong and in Taiwan.² They all are related to folk organizations. I can't think of how they are able to do this... A lot of movements among the people that are related to religion, the Boxers, the various kinds of religions that are related to the White Lotus,³ often have this kind of skill. It should be connected with the unique medicine of the Chinese.
- Liang: Yeah, they are connected.
- Alitto: It seems that medicine, martial arts, geomancy all share a common basis, which could be the *Book of Changes*. They all seem to have a common basis. At least this is my view. What do you feel about this question? Is there a common or basic...
- Liang: I am not very clear about it. I suspect they do have a common basis. I have not studied the problem in depth. Probably it would be impossible to find out just through reading. You would have to put it into practice, to do it in actual practice.
- Alitto: What do you think of the development of acupuncture in the last twenty or thirty years? What about this fundamental development of using acupuncture as an anesthesia?
- Liang: It has been developing very well. It is now called acupuncture anesthesia. It achieves better effects than using drugs. Patients are fully conscious, and they can talk and laugh throughout the surgery.
- Alitto: Yes, I personally witnessed surgery—major surgery—in which the person's thoracic cavity is opened. You can see everything clearly. Looking at the front [of the person who is having thoracic surgery in his back] you can see he's still chatting [during the surgery]. There are also new developments in Chinese herbal medicine. Western researchers are studying it [to discover] what are the [active] elements in it. There is some other research, for example, on cancer, to see if Chinese herbal medicine [can cure it]. Do you think that in the future Chinese and Western medicines will be combined, or blended together or...?

²I was referring specifically to the laymen priests "Dangki" (童乩) of folk religion in Taiwan. They are sometimes diviners, sometimes a conduit between this world and the other, and sometimes at festivals, they display the power of the god who has descended upon the person by performing extraordinary acts of self-destruction (such as striking themselves with lethal weapons) and remaining unharmed.

³At the time of these interviews, I thought that there had existed historically a sect known as White Lotus, but later scholarship seems to indicate that this name functioned as a generic term for many folk religious groups that were anti-dynastic. The earliest research on this question is in Barend J. ter Haar's book, *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992). It is still possible, though, to refer to a White Lotus tradition in Chinese dissident Buddhist sects.

- Liang: They will be integrated to some degree. It seems that Premier Zhou Enlai had said that he hoped that Chinese and Western medicines would be integrated.
- Alitto: But the difficulty lies in that Chinese things have their own theories—martial arts and such—have traditional elements. The point of departure of the Chinese traditions and that of Western medicine are different. I remember in 1978 I accompanied a group of Chinese doctors who went to the U.S. I also ran into a Chinese medicine physician...[from] Beijing... Aside from those questions about acupuncture anesthesia, he couldn't answer the other questions asked by the Western-style American doctors. Because the theory he learned was different from this [Western theory].⁴
- Liang: Right.
- Alitto: Do you have other opinions on Chinese medicine?
- Liang: No, I don't. All we have done is read a few books and chat with old traditional-style doctors, and hear about their research. I know an old Chinese medicine doctor very well. He is in his eighties. My daughter-in-law—not this one, but my elder daughter-in-law, Peikuan's wife—has a kidney ailment, nephritis. She has often seen this old doctor about it. He addresses me as teacher, although in reality he cannot be counted as one of my students, but he respects me like that. So my elder daughter-in-law often goes to see the doctor, mostly for the kidney ailment. Once, after reading her pulse, he said, "Doesn't your stomach hurt?" My daughter-in-law was startled. She said that right before she left school to see the doctor, she had passed an exercise field where some people were playing soccer. The ball had struck her in the stomach, and her stomach was a bit painful. After the doctor read her pulse, he said, "Doesn't your stomach hurt?" Actually she was going on as in the past, going to see him about her kidney ailment, her nephritis. As soon as he read her pulse, he asked whether her stomach hurt.
- Alitto: It seems that in the West there are not many effective ways of treating nephritis. Does Chinese medicine have any?
- Liang: I'm not too clear on that. It seems that nephritis is not a kind of...
- Alitto: It is an illness relatively difficult to treat.
- Liang: This old Chinese medicine doctor is 80 years old. He was born in 1900. This year is 1980. According to the Chinese way of computing age, he is 81. He can treat others' illnesses, but he himself is ill. What illness?

⁴ Dr. Zhang's specialty was acupuncture, and especially the then newly developed acupuncture anesthesia. As Dr. Zhang did not know any English, I had to interpret for him whenever any of the American doctors or researchers wanted to ask him about it. Neurologists were especially interested. Every time Dr. Zhang wanted to explain anything about how the procedure worked, his first sentence would have several terms that, although they might be literally rendered into English, meant nothing because the traditional Chinese cosmological background and assumptions were not there. Prime examples would be reference to a site (穴) into which the acupuncture needle was put. But the site name meant nothing unless the system of circulation of vital forces was explained. To explain that, one had to explain the forces of *yin* and *yang* (阴阳) and the five elements (五行). As there were no equivalents for any of these terms in Western medical and scientific terminology, this frustrated both of us greatly.

In general terms it's a disease of the brain. In Beijing, we call it palsy. He can't sit up. Someone has to support him. He's still alive, and can talk about Chinese medicine, but his health is ruined. He treated Chairman Mao Zedong.

Alitto: Oh, really?

Liang: Yep. Chairman Mao lived in the Zhongnanhai. He (the doctor) usually also lived in the Zhongnanhai.

Alitto: This doctor must be very famous?

Liang: Yes, quite famous.

Alitto: What illness did he treat Chairman Mao for?

Liang: He can be considered as serving Mao, and now Ye Jianying, as a medical consultant. Most of the medical advisors were physicians of Western medicine. There were several Western-style doctors and one Chinese-style doctor, and that was him. This doctor's surname is Yue, Doctor Yue [Meizhong].

Alitto: Aside from insomnia, have you had any relatively...

Liang: I have no illnesses.

Alitto: You mean in your entire life?

Liang: I've had illness in the past, but none these days.

Alitto: So you yourself had no...

Liang: No, none!

Alitto: In the past thirty odd years, what was the happiest, most satisfying day you had?

Liang: They were all about the same, about the same.

Alitto: So the most satisfying, the happiest, cheeriest...

Liang: About the same. The only difference was between those periods in which I was very busy and those in which I had more leisure.

Alitto: These questions all have to do with the countryside, the villages. Do you feel that your rural reconstruction plans and theories are useful or should be a reference in solving the problems that confront contemporary China? Have they been adopted or made reference to?

Liang: Of course, now everything is changed! Enormous changes have taken place in China's villages.

Alitto: That refers to what sort of changes? What differences are there with the rural situation 40 years ago?

Liang: Previously, the Chinese peasantry was extremely disorganized and scattered, with everyone looking out only for himself and his own family. There was no organization. Now after the Communist Party and Chairman Mao Zedong came, the peasantry was organized into first mutual aid organizations, then elementary cooperatives, then higher level cooperatives, and lastly the People's Communes. Before, there was nothing like these.

Before there was nothing like these. Now the peasantry is truly organized; the life they live is the collective life. First, if you had your land and I had my land—join all land together. This was a great change, extremely great change, quite unlike the previous peasant life. Previously, the Chinese farmers had a saying, "Three and a half *mu* of land and an ox." That is, if I

have these two things, I would sit on the heated brick bed, satisfied. Now it's completely different from that. Everything is completely organized. Economics and politics are joined together. The People's Commune is by no means purely an economic organization.

Alitto: There are many areas of similarity with your own plans in the old days.

Liang: Exactly. It's what I wanted to do but was unable to accomplish.

Alitto: You used to feel that political power itself was something bad. As soon as there was political power and government, the countryside would suffer and reap no benefits. You used the metaphor of the peasantry being a piece of bean curd. The government...

Liang: Wants to help the bean curd.⁵

Alitto: Now why did the Communist Party succeed? Because it had political power. You relied upon gradual "rationality" while at the same time carrying out your plan. The Communists first established a government and later used other methods.

Liang: I thought, and said, that to help the peasantry, one must both organize them—that is, create communal organizations—and also utilize science and technology. Both of these operations have already been carried out. There is no more disorganization among the peasants, because they do have communal organizations, and agriculture has been improved through technology. But there was one weakness. Before, in the past, there had often been too much interference from the leadership. They did everything by issuing orders. Now this fault has already been corrected. No longer [does the leadership] give orders without restraint or caution. This mistake is called "blind command," no more giving arbitrary and impractical orders. The peasants can now go their own way. The peasants themselves will strive for progress and improvement. Blind command must be avoided.⁶

Alitto: So, your original goals have been achieved.

Liang: What I wanted to do, now is already [accomplished].

...

Liang: ... I haven't paid much attention to this aspect.

⁵Mr. Liang's original argument had been that, inherently, the nature of any governmental authority was destructive to the natural social formations of society. This is why Liang's organs of rural reconstruction were designed to be schools, rather than government administrative offices. On the other hand, the People's Communes relied precisely upon the hard "iron hook" of raw governmental power for their existence, despite the myths at the time that the communes were created in response to the demands of the masses. Mr. Liang had had no direct contact with rural society (discounting the pro-forma tours that the PPCC organized), and so could only rely upon what the media told him. If he had been able to observe directly, I think, he would have found that the communes confirmed his worst fears about the nature of local governments in the countryside.

⁶Having done oral histories with hundreds of China's rural dwellers (I think that the word "peasant" is quite inappropriate), I would say that the average villager experienced the commune as a continuation of the same faults of "blind command" and "impractical orders."

- Alitto: You could say that there has been no great change. The promotion of modernization of agriculture... The labor power in the countryside is great; there are a lot of people. So, if rural agriculture is mechanized..., not much labor power will be needed. All of this labor power—What can be done to solve this problem? Do you have a view on this?
- Liang: No, I don't. I don't because a lot of current practical problems—especially those concerning problems of grass roots society—I have really not thought much about, and so I have no definite views. I feel that the path the government is following isn't bad. The Chinese authorities are also open-minded. To give an example, yesterday afternoon I attended a meeting, at which it was announced that Chairman Hua Guofeng, Deng Xiaoping, and many other vice premiers would withdraw from the State Council. They would withdraw to hold only their positions in the Party Politburo. They were originally in the Politburo, and now they were mainly in the Politburo, and no longer directly handle the affairs of the State Council; a new person assumes the office of the Premier of the State Council. It is Zhao Ziyang. He is younger than this group that is retiring. He was successful in Sichuan—a very large province—he played a major role and was successful, so he was asked to come administer the entire country. These are all very good, very good. Everyone in the Party is acting very cooperatively, very practically and realistically. There has been no scrambling for wealth and power. These are all very good, very good.
- Alitto: ...you went from the Rural Reconstruction Institute in Zouping to running a middle school in Beibei, Sichuan. Would you say that this represented a turn from rural reconstruction to cultural reconstruction?
- Liang: Far from it. In Sichuan, I couldn't do anything but manage a middle school. After the middle school, I founded an Academy of Arts, a higher-level school, but I ran it for less than a year, and then resigned. Within a year the entire country was liberated. Sichuan too was liberated. I came to Beijing to meet with Chairman Mao Zedong. He said to me, "This high-level academy of arts is not necessary to run, close it down. Assign the teachers and students to other schools. The middle school can stay in operation for another year. Next year, though, you hand over the middle school, too." Chairman Mao wanted control, and he went about it in a systematic and planned manner. He wanted to seize and control all the affairs of the entire country, but he went about it step by step.
- Alitto: Right. Mentioning this made me think of something else. I'm afraid that only in the 1950s was China really established, at least since the Taiping Kingdom in the Qing Dynasty straight through to 1950, only then was China [the modern nation] genuinely established.⁷ I think that this is Chairman

⁷I had meant to say that since the rise of the regional officials like Zeng Guofan, most of China and most governmental functions were not controlled by the government in Beijing. During the Republic, the same was true, even during the era of the National Government in Nanjing.

Mao's extremely great contribution, that is, he truly united the country. [Before] even though the country had been nominally united, in fact it had not been united.... What do you think the Chinese peasantry hopes most for?

Liang: Wouldn't that differ with the times?

Alitto: OK, say at present?

Liang: What he feels differs from time to time and the environment affects him. The problems he senses are different, so his requirements differ accordingly. You know, these days, I am quite distant from the countryside. So it is difficult for me to speak for the peasantry.

Alitto: In those years you were in several schools. In the 6th Provincial Middle School of Shandong, in the First Middle School of Guangdong, and also in the Mianren Academy of Arts of Beibei, Sichuan, you had carried out new education plans or...; in your view, in those years...

Chapter 11

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- Liang: ...So, his vision was high and far. So he was able to understand ancient Chinese things. That is to say, he understood Confucian and Daoist things. I have a little book called *An Outline of Eastern Learning*. This book discusses the three major schools of Eastern thought—Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism. I elucidate and explain in simple language the thought of these three schools. I also point out the similarities they share and the differences among them. This book must be considered as part of my writings. It's not that big. Well, that's all I have to say about that.
- Alitto: Mr. Liang, I didn't know about this book you mentioned. I mean, may I read it? You said that it wasn't too long.
- Liang: Right.
- Alitto: Is it possible to finish it within 5 or 6 hours?
- Liang: I don't know. Why? As you just said, as a foreigner reading Chinese, you can read, but not as fast as Chinese do.
- Alitto: For example, if I spend five or six hours this afternoon, could I finish it?
- Liang: I don't dare say. But I can lend you this book to read.
- Alitto: Thank you. Naturally I also want to read your great masterpiece *The Human Mind/Heart and Human Life*, but I know that it is too long and I couldn't finish it. I hope later I will have an opportunity to read it, and to translate it into English. Of course, before I translate it, I still must study Buddhism a bit more, because I am most lacking in these aspects. OK. Thank you. He mentioned three things in that essay by Zhou Shaoxian that I gave you to read yesterday. Matters that I was wrong about: the question of the colloquial and literary languages; the term "conservative"; and the question of being a sage. The first—colloquial language vs. literary language—can be said to have been a debate in bygone days. You never advocated the use of the literary language, right?
- Liang: Right. I think that the Colloquial Literature Movement launched by Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu in Beijing greatly liberated intellectual and academic circles. Liberation was good. So if we stuck with convention again

using the literary language to communicate thought and knowledge, that would be too passive, too... It would be a lot harder, and [too wasteful of the time and energies of] young people. So liberation was good. The Colloquial Literature Movement developed. No matter in what field of learning, everyone used the colloquial language. Now it is called “prose written in the vernacular.” That is, a colloquial style of the written language used in all fields of academic learning. I very much approve. This is progress. This is a kind of liberation. I’ll add some words. There were two figures who opposed the Colloquial Literature Movement. One was Lin Shu (Lin Qinnan). The other was Zhang Shizhao (Zhang Xingyan). They didn’t approve of colloquial literature. Their reasons were that there were some profound scholarship and thought that couldn’t be communicated in the colloquial language. This is not totally wrong. So how could this problem be solved? The solution is for literary men to write in the colloquial, but to quote the old books in literary Chinese, and then add explanation in the colloquial language. That way, the profound knowledge in the old books could still be communicated in a simple, straightforward way.

Alitto: But the average young person cannot understand literary Chinese now. (Liang: Right.) A large part of China’s cultural heritage is literary and historical works. One could say that, aside from the colloquial novels, the modern generation of young people are estranged from all literary works before May Fourth; a language barrier separates them. What should be done about this?

Liang: There is probably no solution to this problem. The only thing to do is to just let literary Chinese become a kind of special knowledge, necessary for some scholarship. It becomes a specialty, with a small number of people specializing in it. Most people don’t necessarily need to use it; it can only be this way.

Alitto: Both before and after the May Fourth Movement, there were people who still advocated using the classical language, for example, Mei Diguang and the *Critical Review* group (Liang: *Xueheng*). What was your view of them and their theories?

Liang: Naturally, they were a bit fogeyish, conservative. I remember in Nanjing there was a man named Wu Mi at Nanjing University, at the time also called Central University. Do you know which character this “mi” is?

Alitto: No, I don’t. Is it the *mi* of “secrete”?

Liang: *Mi*. [writing the character down]

Alitto: It is that Harvard professor who was¹...was it Diguang?

¹ I was going to refer to the famous Harvard professor Irving Babbitt, who, aside from Wu Mi, had several other Chinese students who were later important in Chinese letters, such as Liang Shiqiu (梁实秋).

Liang: It's Mei Guangdi.

Alitto: I inverted the order of the two characters.

Liang: Yes.

Alitto: There were Wu Mi and Mei Guangdi, and some others too. But the most important part was about them.

Liang: Right.

Alitto: So you say...

Liang: They couldn't stop this tidal current, the colloquial language. This current met the requirements of the majority of people, especially the requirements of the young.

Alitto: To return to the second question, which is that good scholarship can be considered conservative (Liang: Right.), the term "conservative" is extremely difficult to define. What, after all, can be considered "conservative"? In this book, I also discussed this question. My important question is: do you willingly accept or oppose the designation "conservative" that some Chinese and foreigners have applied to you?

Liang: Of course I'm not conservative.² From what I just said a moment ago, you can see that I'm not conservative.

Alitto: Yes. In my view you can be said to be a revolutionary. But in any case, only after you first explain what in the end one is conserving, can you say one is conservative. Why do I mention this? Because Zhou Shaoxian in that essay insists that you don't oppose people calling you conservative or a conservative.

The third question is more difficult to answer. I have been reading the written materials. Concerning my views of your beliefs and your personality, it is the same as with a lot of other historical personages. That is, a person who Westerners would say is sacred. In English it is "holy." No matter whether Buddhist or Confucian, in this concept of a sage there are areas of similarity. That is, someone going into a realm that transcends everything, and giving the folks the knowledge of that transcendent realm. (Liang: Right.) I say that in your innermost soul, not necessarily on the conscious level, possibly on the unconscious level, you felt that as a sage you would save humanity. I do not mean by any means that you have consciously anywhere said, "I am a sage." But this interpretation I came to is not made casually, but only after having read your works for a long time. Do you have any reaction to this?

Liang: To which question?

Alitto: The sage question. Can you be considered a sage?

Liang: From what I understand and what I think in my mind, a sage is not an ordinary person. The words and actions of a sage and those of others do not appear to be that different, but in reality the sage, his life-being and

² Before I published my biography of Liang, *The Last Confucian*, most foreign scholars who had even heard of him, considered him to be the very epitome of a "conservative," in all senses of the word.

personality go far beyond ordinary people. His life-being is different. His life-being completely tops that of an ordinary person. Before, in ancient times, it was Confucius; later I should recognize Wang Yangming. His life-being was thoroughly and completely higher than ours.

Alitto: You share many things with Wang Yangming. Like you, he first delved deeply into Buddhism, and then later left it. He also was, like you, a man of action who carried his ideas into practice in the real world. He wasn't a closeted scholar who just wrote and taught. So I think that you and he have a lot in common.

Liang: But Wang Yangming's life-being—his life was not that of an ordinary mortal's. He had already reached that stage whereby he was not an ordinary person. But I am still just an ordinary person.

Alitto: So you feel that you are still just an ordinary person?

Liang: An ordinary person. I'm possibly an ordinary person who is a bit different from other ordinary people. That is, it's as though I have seen something from afar. What do I get to see? I catch a glimpse from afar of Wang Yangming, and Confucius. Besides, I cannot see very clearly; it's as though I'm looking through a mist, and from a great distance in the mist I see what Confucius is all about, what Wang Yangming is all about. Viewing them at a great distance—my level [of understanding] is only to such a degree as this.

Alitto: But suppose Wang Yangming was right in front of us, and we asked him "Your honor Shouren, are you a sage?" He wouldn't...

Liang: He would not admit to it.

Alitto: So, when I ask you, you don't admit it either! You share with Wang Yangming in this aspect too.

Liang: I didn't share the difficult lot that Wang Yangming had to bear. His misfortunes were quite severe. I think he himself used the phrase "a thousand disasters and a hundred hardships" (myriad calamities and manifold difficulties). For example, he was sentenced to death at one point. I never was. He was sent to remote and underdeveloped Longchang in Guizhou. I never underwent that kind of suffering either.

Alitto: You also experienced suffering.

Liang: He had his term "Conscience."³ He invented this term "Conscience." He said that only in the midst of adversities and hardships does one know one's conscience. I didn't have this.

Alitto: Teacher Liang, you too endured much suffering.

Liang: Not nearly as much [as he].

³ Both Mencius's term "良心" and Wang Yangming's term "良知" are usually translated into English as "conscience" or "innate knowledge of the good," even though there are certain differences between the two concepts.

- Alitto: But that time you traveled behind the Japanese lines to inspect the situation in western Shandong, in that cave you also almost lost your life.⁴ (Liang: True, true.) I described it in some detail in the book. You came close to losing your life.
- Liang: That was still different. But physically I didn't suffer pain, serious physical pain, I suffered no pain. True, when traveling through the guerilla areas, sometimes I had nothing to eat. Sometimes temporarily we couldn't find food.
- Alitto: Sometimes it was also very cold, sometimes it snowed or rained, and you had no opportunity to dry your clothes. This kind of thing...
- Liang: This happened, but this is relatively ordinary.
- Alitto: In 1955–1956, when there was a criticism campaign launched against you, quite a lot of intellectuals,—naturally all included were in Hong Kong and Taiwan—revered you as a sage, which Chairman Mao also mentioned in his criticism of you, because you were still persistent in your views, even ...under a kind of intimidation. That can be counted as a kind of suffering, psychological distress. It was not as others...
- Liang: But compared to what Wang Yangming suffered, it was far, far less. I can use a term sometimes used in Buddhism—"to attain thorough and complete understanding" (Liang writes the two characters "*chewu*"). "*Che*" means thorough and complete. "*Chewu*" is when our life-being undergoes a great transformation. This kind of understanding is not of the [usual] "Aha, now I understand!" kind. Mr. Yangming had achieved this kind of enlightenment, and I have not. There were many important figures among Mr. Yangming's disciples. He gave them all advice and comments. Of course, because people's natural endowments were unequal—there was a difference in degree of natural intelligence—so some were on this end [of the spectrum] and some on that end. Some of his followers achieved more than others. So, there were a lot of his students who were famous and extraordinary.

⁴ This referred to an incident during Liang's 1939 trip back to Shandong behind enemy lines. At one point, he and his party were forced to march all night along dangerous mountain paths in a driving rain and complete darkness. (Torches would have attracted the notice of the Japanese.) Each person held on to the clothing of the person in front of them. The next morning they arrived in a village that was completely deserted. In a few moments, they discovered why. The Japanese had located the Chinese militia and set up heavy machine guns all around them. A furious battle commenced. Liang managed to escape with some militia into a nearby mountain cave, where they spent the night in clothing given to them by local peasants, as their traveling clothes made them easily spotted. The next morning the battle commenced as furiously as before, right outside the mouth of the cave, with artillery and airplanes joining the fray. The battle was so close that Liang could make out the binoculars and swords the Japanese officers carried. That afternoon a squad of Japanese were going right to the cave mouth, and those hiding inside thought that they were indeed done for. "All of us readied our pistols.... If they looked inside...we would have had to fight to the death." I thought of this incident precisely because it seems that it exceeded in severity any physical hardships and dangers Wang Yangming had encountered. Liang also did not mention that Wang, of course, was a high government official, and Liang took great pride in the fact that he had never been a government official.

Someone named Qian [Pingjiang], who was one of his students, later became very famous. He compiled Mr. Yangming's chronological biography. Originally, he was not a follower of his, and then later studied with him. There were many of Mr. Yangming's disciples who had been his students earlier than he had. They were fellow students, called "*tongmen*" in Chinese. Those who followed Mr. Yangming were all considered his seniors. Mr. Qian would listen to Mr. Yangming's teachings, and at the same time he would very humbly listen to what his senior fellow students had to say. Mr. Qian was extremely sincere and modest, always looking to progress in his understanding. But he always felt that he was inadequate. He himself said that he had not grasped the principles [of Wang's teachings]. He always earnestly and sincerely sought advice, listened to the teacher's lectures, consulted his fellow students. Everyone helped. The so-called non-awakening to the truth meant that he could make neither heads nor tails out of it. He didn't achieve enlightenment. He could not enter the gate.

Later, he went into a monastery to study meditation with a monk, "to practice solitude and quieting." Then he cloistered himself, having no contact with the outside world and in the monastery practiced solitude and silence. When he had achieved a profound state of quietude and emptiness, suddenly [what he experienced] was like seeing the sun from the midst of darkness. This was his "attaining thorough and complete understanding." So he hurriedly ran to ask his teacher, Mr. Yangming, about his experience of thorough and complete understanding. Mr. Yangming nodded his head. He said to Mr. Qian, "Yes, right, [you have attained enlightenment]. Don't tell anyone else about this. Don't help others [to do this]. In instructing others, don't tell them to practice solitude and quietude in this way. This would not necessarily be a good thing for them. Use my own words, that is 'extend or apply innate knowledge of the good into practice.' Don't tell other people to go practice meditation. Tell them to extend or apply their innate knowledge of the good into practice. That will cause no harm. If they go meditate, possible this will cause harm, it might not be the right thing for them to do." That is to say, this kind of learning of Mr. Yangming's had to be able to effect a "complete understanding" toward human life and life-being. Finally it must... But it must not be forced. You just do it this way, extending or applying their innate knowledge of the good into practice."

This extension of innate knowledge of the good calls for putting forth effort in society. Even though Qian went into a monastery to isolate himself, practiced the skill of meditation and in this way achieved complete enlightenment, Yangming still said: When you are helping and instructing another, do not tell him to follow this path of yours. It might easily result in problems. You still have him "extend his innate knowledge of the good into practice" and apply his efforts to society. Do not have him isolate himself from society, avoid complex environments, and go into a monastery.

That kind of way of hard work cannot help the average person. Do not advise the average person to go this path. What path should he go? That of applying his efforts to society. So, I very much admire Mr. Yangming. This way of his is completely right. He was completely right in keeping the interests of the average man in mind. This way, although a profound enlightenment would not be easy, a gradually attained enlightenment was possible. The way of putting it for the average man is to apply efforts to society, and to apply innate knowledge of the good into practice in society. There is a phrase in the *Classic of the Mean* which goes “to raise the way to its greatest height and brilliancy, so as to pursue the course of the Mean.”

Alitto: You used that phrase in your book *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*.

Liang: I want to continue this statement. I will tell a story of Master Wang Yangming. This story fully shows Mr. Yangming's philosophy, not intellectual knowledge, but his skill. What skill?

Alitto: “To attain thorough and complete understanding.”

Liang: His attaining of thorough and complete understanding. Mr. Yangming achieved, as the old saying goes, “familiarity with one's disposition.” This is an uncommon achievement. To truly understand one's own real nature is quite uncommon. Didn't I say that I saw as though through a mist at a great distance? This is a long way from “truly understanding one's own real nature.” But Master Yangming did achieve this. Master Yangming's life-being was on a far, far higher level than ours.

There are some other matters [that demonstrate this]. The Ming emperor in his time was a disaster, confused and muddle-headed. He was also surrounded by eunuchs. Master Yangming had already captured the rebel [Zhu] Chenhao in Jiangxi. But the emperor told Wang Yangming to release him because he wanted to capture the rebel himself! This emperor was a real joke, very muddle-headed. All of those advising him were eunuchs and slaves. Do you know about “palace eunuch” system of the Ming and Qing Dynasties? (Alitto: Oh, yes.) Their genitals were cut off. But the emperor believed and trusted the palace eunuchs, he was surrounded by them, and he did laughable things, such as releasing the already captured Chenhao so that he could come capture him himself. This was just nonsense, a joke. He himself led a great imperial expedition, with a lot of eunuchs and troops. Of course, this expedition was a large and stately affair, and so topped Wang Yangming. Wang also led troops and was a very high official. But when the emperor arrived, he outshone Wang. At the time this event took place in the public square there were many military officers who had followed the emperor there; they staged an archery contest to see who was the best shot. They thought that Wang Yangming was an effete intellectual, someone with only bookish knowledge, and wouldn't be much of an archer. They regarded him with some contempt. So, the target was set up and the archery contest commenced. Contrary to

expectations, Wang's first shot was a dead-center bull's eye! OK, a cheer rang out from the surrounding spectators. Wang took his second shot. Another bull's eye! The crowd acclaimed him. He took a third shot, with the same result. The military men watching the contest all cheered. Wang withered those eunuchs who had held him in contempt. They dared not harm him because he had won the people's hearts. Everyone had eyes and had seen he did have ability, and was not a common scholar-official. This turned the tables. If this hadn't happened, the emperor might have done something else foolish.

Now in this story, why was Master Yangming able to hit three bull's eyes in a row? It was ascribable to this: He was completely enlightened! He had achieved perfect enlightenment about life-existence. He was a sage. He was a sage, completely different from an ordinary mortal; he was not an ordinary human. That is, [he was] an extraordinary person. So his hitting three bull's eyes in a row was not by mere luck; it was a fundamental question that far exceeded mere chance. It was his comprehension of the truth, his attaining perfect self-understanding. He was far, far above ordinary people. He was no longer a common person. He was really something.

Mr. Yangming had attained sagehood, and was no longer an ordinary man, not a so-called mortal man, or a common man. Now if one says that I have some strong points, some area in which I am a cut above other intellectuals, then it is only that I am able to glimpse a little of this, however unclearly. In conclusion, my level of accomplishment is only this. To be immodest, my level is higher than that of an average person, for the average person hasn't even gotten a glimpse. But on the other hand, my level is not high enough, not as high as that of Wang Yangming.

Alitto: Aside from Wang Yangming, who else achieved this "familiarity with one's disposition"?

Liang: Speaking of ancient Chinese learning, in the past, for example during the Qing Dynasty, there were three schools of classical learning. One school was called the school of Han Learning. This school's focus was on texts, on philological evidence. They were interested in verifying the old texts or institutions. This was called textual research. There was another school called the school of Belles Lettres, e.g., the Tongcheng school, whose focus was also on books, and emphasized reading the old books. But in reality they were most interested in writing style, in writing in the ancient style of the Tang and Song Dynasties' masters Han Tuizhi (Han Yu) and Liu Zongyuan. So this school just wouldn't work either.

I've already mentioned two schools. The third school was that of Song and Ming learning—Neo-Confucianism. This scholarship proceeded upon this path [that I have been speaking about, pursuit of enlightenment and sagehood]. But in the two or three hundred years of the Qing Dynasty, the school produced no really outstanding men. Before the Qing, during the Yuan Dynasty, there had appeared no really able men in this school either. It was during the Song that the school produced great men, such as Lu

Xiangshan. Later people liked to use the term “Lu Wang” and this too was a school. Wang refers to Wang Yangming. In this school there were two exceptional men whose accomplishments were, relatively speaking, profound. In the Song, there was Yang Jian (Yang Cihu). The other, in the Ming, was Luo Rufang (Luo Jinxi). These were two Confucians of scholarly accomplishment and virtue. I very much admire these two men. The average Confucians, even though they talked Confucianism and revered Confucius, were all outsiders [to true Confucianism].

Alitto: And in the Republican era, were there...

Liang: At the end of the Qing Dynasty, a great change occurred, especially after the Opium War. The change took place when China, the superior empire of East Asia, felt the pressure of the European Powers. The Powers oppressed and bullied China, forcing it to open its doors and allow the establishment of treaty ports. It was as though China had been awakened from a dream. China then rushed to learn from the West, and so eased up on the path of traditional Chinese learning and scholarship, especially those kinds of traditional learning overly concerned with the [human] interior. They couldn't but ease up on this. There appeared no men of great talent in this area.

Alitto: You previously said that you very much dislike Kang Youwei. (Liang: Right!) Can you give your reasons in some detail?

Liang: Kang Youwei always cheated people. When he first started out, he was really extraordinary. He promoted and led the reform movement. That too was really something. At the time this must be considered great wisdom and foresight. Of course we respected and revered him for it. But later in his life he always cheated people. He lied continually, but at the same time he was as proud as a peacock, with an overweening opinion of himself. This sort of thing is just intolerable. We should say something here: “Everyone ought to be modest.” Seeing someone acting the way that Kang Youwei did, self-important and arrogant, always assuming that he was superior to everybody else, one knows that he was fundamentally no good.

Alitto: So in the realm of thought there was no...

Liang: His thought had its elements of creativeness. One of his books was *A Study of the False Classics of the Xin Period*. And there was that other book...⁵ Both of these works are extremely famous. But experts know that the things in these two books were stolen from another man, a Sichuanese named Liao Ping. Quite a bit of Kang Youwei's thought, his opinions, and especially his analysis of the classics, were plagiarized from Liao Ping. Others have all said this. He stole Liao Ping's stuff and published it under his own name.

Alitto: What do you think of his *The Great Harmony*?

⁵Referring to *Confucius as a Reformer* (《孔子改制考》), 1898.

Liang: To use unflattering terms, *The Great Harmony* is a kind of fantasy, a dream-like book fantasy, a dream of a future age full of various kinds of novelties and strange things, very different from the present. This is all wishful thinking and suppositions, appearing very novel. Naturally to think up this kind of day-dream and write about it is all right. Why all right? Because it breaks away from the narrow-minded conservatism of the herd. But utopian dreams expressing one's ideas about the future with an air of self-importance, as though they were absolutely great and wonderful things, are not, in my opinion, so wonderful. There is no great harm, however, in expressing such fantasies. So, it has its good side; doing away with the average person's conservatism, narrowness and parochialism is thought liberation of a kind. But it is certainly not very valuable, and can't be considered real knowledge and scholarship. I have, by the way, a copy of Kang's *The Great Harmony* on my bookshelf there.

Alitto: You mentioned in your book *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies* that you opposed this ideal thought.

Liang: I didn't really oppose it. In some of the classical books, especially the Liyun chapter of the *Classic of Rites*, there are some statements like "Thus men did not love their parents only, nor treat as children only their own sons" and "a public and common spirit governed all under the sky." That is the form human society will develop into some time in the future. I meant that people should not always place all of their hopes on the future and, in the process, minimize and ignore the present. This kind of psychology makes people unable to go all out concentrating on the present.

Alitto: As for Tan Sitong's *A Study of Humanity*, you...

Liang: Yes, I read it before.

Alitto: I think that you regarded it good when you were quite young. What do you think of the book now?

Liang: Truly great. The most important sentence in the whole book is "Break the Nets." Naturally, this was terrific. [This kind of approach can] break down prejudices, taking a broad and long view from the heights. Tan Sitong was a great man. We should recognize his greatness, but at the time [he wrote] his knowledge was spotty and haphazard. But this did not prevent him from being great. In general, he was wonderful.

Alitto: What other distinguished thinkers were there in the late Qing and Republican eras? Or what other important books that people, upon reviewing the 20th century, would regard as of comparatively permanent value?

Liang: Books of comparatively lasting value and books which were most useful in their own time were not the same. The most useful books in their own time were those like Wei Yuan's (Wei Moshen). Books whose the content and thought was of some permanent value would be ones like Huang Lizhou's *Waiting for the Dawn*. In the last decade of the Qing, when I was young, in my teens, people of revolutionary thought most loved *Waiting for the Dawn*. Democracy, Equality and Liberty were all in *Waiting for the Dawn*. To use today's parlance, Huang Lizhou was a "reactionary." He was very

enlightened. At the time he opposed the Qing Dynasty, and wanted revolution. The book was of great help. The Revolutionaries (of the late Qing) reprinted and distributed his writings for all to read. All of this happened when I was in my teens.

Kang Youwei's works also have their value, those of the early period. But the older he got the worse he got. I heard that in the later period he forged and plagiarized things. There were other affairs that I know about... For example, there were two cases. In the south side of the city of Xi'an in Shaanxi there was a monastery. I seem to remember it being called the Monastery of the Sleeping Dragon. There was an old edition of a Buddhist sutra, extremely valuable. Kang appropriated it for himself. At that time, transportation was very inconvenient. There was no railroad, only mule and horse carts. He loaded the valuable edition of the Buddhist Canon—many volumes, extremely heavy—into a cart, intending to take it away. He had already gone out of Xi'an's East Gate and was on the highway when Xi'an natives who had discovered the theft overtook him. They took the sutra from him and returned it to its place in the temple. How do I know about this incident? When I was nineteen or so, I went to Xi'an, and, as I liked to visit that temple, I got to learn about it.

There was another incident. In the early years of the Republic, there was a national assemblyman who was a big capitalist. In the late Qing, there was a kind of national bank called the Great Qing Bank. After the Qing court abdication, in the Republic of China, the bank's name was changed to the Bank of China. There was a director and a deputy director. The deputy director's name was Yu Fancheng. I was very friendly with Yu, and it was he who reported to me his encounters. Yu Fancheng was the deputy director of the Bank of China. Later he left the Bank of China, but he became a "private" banker-capitalist. When a person wanted to borrow a relatively large amount of money from the bank, he must first put up collateral to guarantee the loan. What was used for collateral? Some valuable object that was universally recognized as having great value, such as a famous great painting. Only after the old painting was deposited in the bank as collateral would the bank lend him the money, for instance 2,000 silver dollars. Kang Youwei knew that there was a certain famous painting securing a loan in the bank, and asked Mr. Yu to take it out so that he could view it. Of course, as it was such a celebrity as he, Yu took the painting out and hung it up for viewing. Kang praised it non-stop, sighing and exclaiming how excellent it was and so on. Then he asked Mr. Yu Fancheng if he could take it home to look at it slowly. Because Kang was such a well-known person, Mr. Yu felt that if he made such a request, he had no choice but to agree to let him take the painting home. He thought that perhaps Kang would look at it for two or three days and then bring it back. After three days, he went to Kang and asked for the painting back but Kang didn't give it back. After several more days he again went to Kang and

asked for the painting, but he still refused to give it to him, saying that he wanted to look at it some more. How many days had passed! This wouldn't do. Yu Fancheng thought to himself, "How could you want to take possession of it yourself?" So he went to Kang Youwei's house with a lot of people, and forcefully took the painting back. Yu himself told me about this incident.

So I knew about these two incidents, one in Xi'an, and one in Shanghai. In his later life his behavior was bad, especially [in the case of] his disciple, a student named Chen Huanzhang, who established a "Confucian church." He needed money (donations) to build a church on Xidan Street [in Beijing]. He set certain regulations. If you contributed five thousand silver dollars, you were so forth and so on, and if you contributed ten thousand, you were so forth and so on, so as to wheedle contributions out of people. That sort of thing was just awful! This was the worst kind of sordid vulgarity and ignoble philistinism that was utterly devoid of noble, lofty thought! So this was what Kang's student Chen Huanzhang was like.

Alitto: You yourself opposed the idea of a "Confucian religion"?

Liang: Right! Confucianism is not a religion.

Alitto: Also in your book *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, you opposed Buddhism of the time, saying, first, those people who were propagating Buddhism at the time were not good people, and second, what our China needed at present was not Buddhism. In the book you also brought up a point—that since the problems of the first and second paths had not yet been solved, Buddhism was out of the question. Yet you yourself throughout were a Buddhist. Your problems of the first and second paths had not yet been solved either. Isn't this a contradiction?

Liang: It was not only me as an individual. As far as I myself was concerned, I was inclined toward Buddhism, and wanted to study Buddhism. This was OK. If someone else as a private individual was this way, I would approve. I probably, moreover, could help him. But as far as broader society and China's requirements were concerned, this thing was not needed.

Alitto: Oh, this notion is that the individual and the whole of society were not the same.

Liang: They weren't the same. I would add one more point. At the time this kind of view was a bit extreme and one-sided. Why was it one-sided? It emphasized only the escapist religion side of Buddhism. Actually, it's not necessary to emphasize that aspect which negates and denies human life in order to propagate Buddhism. One can emphasize another aspect in developing it, and that is "Compassion and Mercy." In Buddhism there is a four-character phrase: "compassion, mercy and joyful giving" (*cibeixishe*). (Liang writes these four characters down for Alitto.) "Joyful" sometimes refers to "rejoicing in the welfare of others." "Giving" refers to the state of renunciation of everything, the opposite of covetousness. "Joyful giving" is to help people with their good desire, or good behavior.

So, Buddhism can be developed from this compassion and joyful giving aspect. You don't have to "leave the world" to be Buddhist. This way is fine too. At the time, I was looking at Buddhism too inflexibly. That is to say, if China at that time had internal disorders and civil war, and each person closeted themselves in their houses to chant sutras all day, the chaos would become even worse. [My meaning at the time was] don't be negative, don't renounce the world. Rather, bring "compassion, mercy and joyful giving" into play. [I wanted everybody to] go out and do something. To use Chairman Mao Zedong's terminology, I wanted everyone to "struggle." Struggle was necessary in order to turn the situation around and prevent the warlords from acting foolishly. The more everyone let things take their course and did nothing—that is, closed their doors—the worse the chaos would become. So, that was my meaning at the time.

Alitto: You proposed one of the Confucian virtues—resoluteness or firmness. Is this similar to the spirit of struggle?

Liang: Yes, they are similar in one way.

Alitto: So how about those people in the Republican period who promoted Buddhism—Abbot Taixu, Ouyang Jingwu, Yang Renshan—can you give an appraisal of these three?

Liang: Yang Renshan was the pioneer who created the Buddhist revival because, before him, Buddhist books and sutras were only in temples, and one could only read Buddhist scripture there. Yang Renshan founded the Jinling Scriptural Press. He printed and circulated Buddhist sutras so that everyone could read them. This good work of his was great. If he hadn't done this, who could go to a temple to read them? No one could read them. This Jinling Scriptural Press's merit was great indeed! Moreover, he took some disciples. He had a school called the Zhihuanjingshe. People who wanted to study Buddhism could go there.

Alitto: Did you know him yourself?

Liang: No. The difference in our ages was too great. He was of a much earlier generation. He was in the South, and I was in the North. I was too young. I never got to meet him. But people just a little older than I (in Buddhist circles) did meet him.

Alitto: How about Taixu?

Liang: Taixu was a monk. People criticized him, were dissatisfied with him. They said that he was a "political monk." He was extremely active and dynamic. He went to a place and wanted to think of ways to set up a Buddhist Institute. He went to Fujian and established a Buddhist Institute there. He went to Wuhan and established a Buddhist Institute there. He was very capable. He went to Sichuan. In Sichuan there was a mountain called Jinyunshan on which was a temple. This was run by Abbot Taixu. In this temple he ran an institute called the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Dogma Institute—the Chinese-Tibetan Buddhist Dogma Institute. This place was right above where I was running my middle school. So I often went to meet the monks there. There was a large photo, bigger than this one here,

hanging in the temple. In it were two people. One was Chiang Kai-shek, even in military uniform, and, at his side, was Taixu. So, as I just said, people called him the “political monk.” He had a lot of association with political power holders. The nickname “political monk,” of course, was a bit derisive. But in my opinion on the other hand, his getting close to those of political importance, was helpful in his promotion of Buddhism. Moreover, he was able to start academies and preach wherever he went [because of these connections]. He also liked to read a lot of Western article on science, and wrote articles himself. Very few monks were like this.

Alitto: In one of his essays, he mentions something you have in *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*. That is, that Einstein’s Theory of Relativity and Consciousness-Only Buddhism have similarities.

Liang: Right. He had read a bit.

Alitto: What about Ouyang Jingwu?

Liang: Ouyang Jingwu was different from Taixu. Taixu had a large circle of friends and was very active in society. But Master Ouyang never left the Buddhist Sutra Printing Institute. He once traveled to Yunnan because, I think, someone was contributing some money. He went to Kunming in Yunnan, and brought back two students.... I saw these two in the South, one was named Nie and the other Xu. I think that he was in Yunnan because Tang Jiyao was making a contribution. His Institute of Buddhist Studies had to rely on donations. One man contributed 4,000 silver dollars every year. This was Ye Gongchuo. Every year like clockwork, 4,000 silver dollars. Ouyang’s senior disciple, Mr. Lü, is still in Beijing, living at Tsinghua University. He doesn’t live there for academic reasons. He lives there because his son is a professor at Tsinghua, and he lives in his son’s house. He is slightly younger than I am, around 84 or 85. He is a very erudite man who knows a lot. He knows Tibetan and Sanskrit and Indian languages. He’s extremely learned.

Alitto: What is your view of the May Fourth Movement?

Liang: We have already talked about Chen Duxiu, Hu Shi and the Colloquial Literature Movement. Naturally, the influence of the May Fourth Movement on the following periods was tremendous. It created new historical currents, a whole new way of thought, and new ways of life. No longer were things confined to the old Chinese philosophy of life. Confucius began to be the object of criticism. Wasn’t there a slogan “Overthrow Confucius and Sons!”? This was unavoidable, because although Confucius wasn’t really a religious leader, succeeding generations of emperors had regarded him as a religious leader. So there were Confucian temples, and all the literati worshipped him. And so Confucius, who was not originally a religious figure, became [regarded as] one. They made him up to look like a religious figure. Especially in the later times, there was a term—“rules of propriety and status.” It was important to abide by the rules of propriety. It was important to have a hierarchical order according to social position and age. There were a great many rules. These rules and regulations helped the

ruling classes maintain themselves. The ruling classes made use of these “rules of propriety and status.” After much time had passed, at the time of the May Fourth Movement, a general repugnance arose against these old behavioral codes that helped the ruling class, and Confucius was involved. In actuality, the problems and responsibilities of society did not rest with Confucius. Society at large needed a code of behavior, and the ruling classes needed such codes even more. They [ruling classes] relied on these codes to support their rule. After much time had passed, the codes became ossified and rigid. People developed antipathy toward these ossified things. During the May Fourth era, when there was repugnance toward the ossified “rules of propriety and status,” Confucius was blamed for them.

Alitto: During the May Fourth era, many people blindly worshipped everything Western and wanted wholesale Westernization. Now look at the last year or two, there was also a bit...especially among the younger generation... it smacks of this [wholesale Westernization].⁶ What do you think of this?

Liang: This is a kind of natural tendency, right? Things have developed naturally into the situation today. There’s nothing to be surprised about. There is no need for rebuke. Actually, you could say that the foundations [of Chinese culture] cannot be shaken.⁷

⁶ It was at the time of the interviews that all things Western acquired a certain panache among the young, who highly prizes things like American jeans. (Ironically, almost all “American jeans” are now made in China, along with most other “American” products.) There was, for instance, a fad of wearing Hong Kong-made sunglasses with the brand sticker still on the lenses to prove they were an “authentic” foreign product.

⁷ From *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies* onward, Liang’s attitude toward preservation of Chinese culture was different from most other cultural conservatives in that he did not argue or try to persuade others of Chinese culture’s merits. Throughout his life, he seemed to have an unflappable self-confidence that, even though some of the outer accoutrements of traditional culture might be lost, there was no possibility that the core would disappear. He always stressed that the future world culture that would be a form of Chinese culture was going to come about, not because the world’s people were going to be “persuaded” of the superiority of Chinese culture, but because the “objective realities” in the evolving world would bring about an emergence of it by a process not dissimilar to biological evolution. Depending upon how one interprets *The Analects* 9.5 (《论语·子罕第九》, 五章), there might or might not be an irony in this. Liang had made allusion to this passage after he had escaped from the Japanese in Hong Kong at the end of 1941. In this passage, there is no question that Confucius expresses a cool self-confidence in the continuity of Chinese culture, and yet he (Confucius) might have a crucial role in this continuity: When Confucius was in jeopardy in Kuang, he said: ‘Since King Wen of the Zhou is now dead, doesn’t the mission of culture fall upon me? If Heaven were going to destroy this culture, a mortal like myself would not have been allowed to know about [this culture]. So, if Heaven is not going to destroy this culture, what can these Kuang men do to it?’ (子畏于匡, 曰: “文王既没, 文不在兹乎? 天之将丧斯文也, 后死者不得与于斯文也; 天之未丧斯文也, 匡人其如予何?”) When the Japanese invaded Hong Kong on December 25, 1941, Liang was there running the public organ of the predecessor to the Democratic League, the newspaper *Guangmingbao* (《光明报》). He stole out of Hong Kong into Guangdong and Guangxi. Upon reaching Wuzhou, he wrote a letter to his sons which was later published in the Guilin local newspaper *Strength* (《力报》) on January 27, 1942. It became widely known elsewhere later. See Hu Yinghan (胡应汉), “On Mr. Liang Shuming,” *Today’s World* (《今日日报》), Hong Kong, May 18, 1952.

Alitto: The foundation won't be shaken?

Liang: In reality the foundation cannot be shaken. There is nothing bad about it, nothing fearful, and nothing to be concerned about.

Alitto: ...[Older people] can't stand a lot of the young people's lifestyle practices and fads. You are more than twice my age. Let me explain more clearly about what kind of fads or lifestyle practices. In the United States, in the past ten or fifteen years, discipline among the youth is disappearing. Students in either primary schools or middle schools do not seem to be [serious about] going to school. [The school] seems like an agency that looks after children, not like a school. [Students] don't study hard, and do as they please, not careful with how they talk or what they wear. Clearly a new lifestyle has emerged. Narcotics and excessive drinking are part of it. There's often sexual contact [between students]. It appears that they have no sense of responsibility toward the nation. They feel that the nation owes them something, but that they owe nothing to the nation. Or, they feel that society owes them something, but they feel no sense of duty toward society. One could say that they've become selfish. We have a name for them, the "Me Generation" [English], that is, the generation that's all for the self. China, of course ... Right! Another point. They will do anything in order to keep up with fashions. They are quite vain. Now, of course, circumstances in China are vastly different; these bad phenomena haven't yet appeared. Yet it's very strange that three or four months ago, I heard that there's a certain faddish cast of mind—wearing dark glasses, and interest in the popular music of Hong Kong and Taiwan of China, Singapore, and Japan, or even of the United States and Europe. Do you say that this is just a fashion...that is, in the end it's difficult to say whether or not they really like [these things] or it's only because they have the feeling that they must keep up with trends... What opinion do you have on this, either in abstract or concrete terms?⁸

Liang: I don't have any opinions that are different from those of others. We all feel that this is bad, the elements of this lifestyle are bad. Some schools and teachers are able to straighten out [the students]. All the famous schools of Beijing are capable of correcting these trends. [The situation] is fundamentally better than that in 1966 [the period of the Cultural Revolution]. In 1966, students were running wild. Now it's calm. There is not much indulgence of foolish behavior. That behavior is now limited to one small part

⁸ As was the case throughout these interviews, I had no prepared questions, but this section was meant to elicit from Liang a culturally conservative response. My description of the post-1970s U.S. society was off the cuff, disorganized and inarticulate, and so failed to engage Mr. Liang on this point. I was always anxious to keep Mr. Liang talking. He often paused for some time between speaking, which I often interpreted as my failure to keep the conversation going. Therefore, it often appears in the transcript that I am interrupting him. In actuality, I was in constant fear that the conversation would stop.

[of the youth], street hooligans. Most schools are good. The primary and middle schools are actually better than they were in previous years.

Alitto: On both sides of the Taiwan Strait are Chinese. In the past 80 years the two sides have had different systems and different levels of achievement. After the war to the present, that is, these several decades after the War of Resistance was concluded, Taiwan has been part of China. It can be said that in these past 80 years, the direction of development and the system employed [in Taiwan] have been different from those in the mainland. And the two have had different degrees of success, especially in the most recent decades. Do you have any opinion on this phenomenon?

Liang: I can't say. The [Taiwan] situation should be divided into two periods. In one period, China ceded Taiwan to Japan, and Japan ruled Taiwan. That's one period. Later, Japan was defeated and Taiwan was returned to China. This was another period. Of course, these two periods are different.

Alitto: Yes, but there are some examples of similarities. That is, when the Japanese occupied Taiwan, they had some economic development. For instance, [they created] the railroad and farmers' associations. Agriculture was developed, and politics too. Taiwan used to be somewhat underdeveloped. After the Japanese occupied Taiwan, there had been some development. Of course, during the War of Resistance, Taiwan had great losses; a lot of places were bombed. Immediately after Chiang Kai-shek arrived, nothing remarkable happened [developmentally]. But, in the most recent fifteen or twenty years, it has developed very rapidly. Because my own friends...it's a complex issue...that is, a lot of Taiwanese don't like mainlanders. They feel that Taiwan is their place, not a place for mainlanders, so often [the two groups] are mutually socially alienated. But it cannot be denied that recently Taiwan has developed rapidly. Material life and standards of living are quite good. [Taiwan] is maybe five or six times wealthier than the mainland. Each family has modern electronic appliances, for example, color TV and radio. Many families have their own automobiles. It is more and more like Japan. I myself think, naturally, China will be united. But Taiwan's path and the mainland's circumstances have been different. The distance separating these two societies is great; lifestyles and the general atmosphere are different. Prevailing thought in society is also different. How do you think that this problem can be...

Liang: Of course this situation is not good. It's not favorable to China's unification, but I feel that at this time the Beijing authorities' policy is good. Aside from the hope to unite China nominally and formally, they have no other demands. They don't want to intervene in [Taiwan's] politics and economics. This attitude should be good and correct. It should be favorable to unification, favorable to [Taiwan's] unification with the mainland. But the time is not yet ripe. Once the general world situation changes, unification will be easy; it will be easy [for Taiwan] to return to China. It shouldn't be forced, but rather should wait for the time to ripen. The Beijing authorities do not intend to force it, but rather are waiting for the proper occasion to arise.

Alitto: What is the most pressing mission of the Chinese people at present?

Liang: Of course it is the Four Modernizations: to assimilate advanced science and technology, industry, and in this way bring them into China for China's use. And China is still based on agriculture. This can't be changed and won't change. After these elements have been absorbed, [China] can advance, and move forward.

Alitto: You still think that taking agriculture as the base is the best policy?

Liang: Yes.

Alitto: You just mentioned bringing in the most advanced science and technology. Of course, this is beneficial to China. Do you think it will also harm China?

Liang: These assimilations are to make up for China's own deficiencies; it seems it won't lead to any excesses. They are to make up for China's deficiencies. Now it seems that [China] is urgently thinking of ways to cooperate with foreign countries. It seems on large [joint] operations, Japan, which is in the neighborhood, Europe and America, which are relatively distant, are all able to help China after all.... Starting with economics, this is presently being carried out. Of course, carrying out this kind of thing depends upon a stable political situation. And the current political situation looks very optimistic. The present circumstances—whereby the power-holders willingly relinquish power, and ask Zhao Ziyang to be the premier—show the emergence of a new [political] atmosphere. It would have been bad if there [had been] political divisions and power struggles on the political stage.

Alitto: In the final analysis, how can it be guaranteed that a repeat of the tragedy of 1966 won't happen in the future? In the end what measures would prevent this kind of thing again....

Liang: I can't say what measures would work. But, judging from this present situation, if there are no power struggles in the future, and instead, everyone joins are not together in cooperation and the relatively young and capable [political leadership] are given chance to rise, this phenomenon is, of course, very good. Perhaps this is a kind of guarantee, and could make us optimistic.

Alitto: A last little question. When we discussed literature, I asked what books you read—books of literature, novels. You didn't mention Lao She. Lao She's novels are written in local Beijing dialect. I had thought that everyone who grew up in Beijing certainly....

Liang: I have read very little Lao She. I've read very little of Lao She's writings. But I knew him, and had contact with him. I knew him and had some contact with him. His wife's name was Hu Jieqing. I knew her too.

Alitto: Oh? How did you know them? That is to say, he is of the literary world, while you are...

Liang: Right. He had visited England, and later went to the U.S. We didn't meet while he was abroad. I first knew his wife, Hu Jieqing. Later, only after he had returned did I get to know him. It was when Chairman Mao was in Beijing that we began to have contact. I visited his home.

Alitto: Did you discuss Chinese literature with him?

Liang: No. I went to his house on a particular matter. What matter? My writing on Peng Yisun. I went to ask him [about Peng]. He said that he was too young, and hadn't been in time for that reform movement⁹ when Peng was in Beijing. So he didn't know very much. But when I asked this question, he was willing to put forth his views. He said that he himself didn't know much, but he thought that there were two people in the theatre world, Beijing Opera singers [who would]. One was old, over eighty, named Xiao Changhua, a senior Beijing Opera performer. When I visited Lao She, he himself was only 60-some. He told me, if you want to know more about Mr. Peng, you could go ask Xiao Changhua, because he was old—he was a senior Beijing Opera figure. The other was a bit younger than Xiao, but he also had a rich knowledge and experience of the past. This singer was named Hao Shouchen. [He said] you could go visit these two. He said that they were old acquaintances and he could make phone calls to introduce me, to tell them that Mr. Liang was going to visit them. Later, I did visit the two, all through Lao She's introduction.

Alitto: So was Mr. Peng Yisun intimately connected with Beijing Opera? Or...

Liang: He...I'll continue. I visited Xiao Changhua, who was very old. He told me that he himself had never met Mr. Peng, and had never been taught by him, but his senior fellow student, Xu Baofang, was a Beijing Opera performer of the *huadan* (the "vivacious young female" role type). He said that once Mr. Peng had invited the powers-that-be in the Beijing Opera world to a tea to discuss certain matters. He especially invited Xu Baofang, who I just mentioned. Xu performed the *huadan*, also called *xiaodan*. He [Peng] said that we sing opera singers should not lack self-confidence and self-respect. Our performances should have significance, educational significance, and benefit our audiences. Even if you perform the "vivacious young female" role, you should not lack self-esteem. Xiao's senior fellow student Xu Baofang returned [from the tea] and told him this. He himself didn't go. Xu told him this. This was what I got from interviewing Xiao Changhua. I [also] interviewed Hao Shouchen, on Lao She's recommendation. Hao Shouchen was a performer of Beijing Opera's painted-face role. I asked him, "What do you know about Mr. Peng?" He said he knew something.

⁹Peng was an active and prominent Beijing reformer, as well as a very close associate and friend of Liang's father. Peng's efforts focused on creating popular national consciousness through publications and through popular culture and education. He was in the forefront of reform in Beijing city during the last years of the Qing Dynasty.

Chapter 12

August 24, 1980

Alitto: ...I really feel that logically deducing the future situation possibly it will be like this [referring to Brave New World]. The basis of my way of thinking has a connection with this. Take China as an example. Before the Opium War, of course, China had a lot of weaknesses, but at least there was a standard for morality. Later, as you yourself said, regarding the Republican era, you wrote that in the 1920s and 1930s, the intellectuals (that is, “scholars”) had no shame. Previously at least in traditional society, they would not dare to struggle openly and brazenly for their own selfish reasons. Now, the surface standards no longer exist. So, I say that the biggest difference from the previous situation is that moral standards are no longer pure and absolute. Rather, they are relative... [China’s is not regarded] as the only moral standard in the world. Previously we felt that the difference between foreigners or Westerns and ourselves was that we could be considered comparatively human while they [foreigners] were not sufficiently mature, and still hadn’t become real humans. They had no morals, but we had morals. That is to say, humans had morals. In the Republican era, this already began to change. So, how can it be said that “the proper nature of the mind/heart” is what all human societies have in common?

Liang: I feel that the standards for right and wrong should not be sought in the external world. In *The Mencius*, he called it “pursuing righteousness and benevolence” and “walking the path of righteousness and benevolence.”¹ These two are different. The “pursuing of righteousness and benevolence” refers to what the ordinary social conventions and mores hold as benevolence and

¹ *The Mencius*, Lilou II, 19 (《孟子·离娄章句下》, 十九章). Mr. Liang makes a slight error in reversing the order of “benevolence” and “righteousness.” The original sentence: Mencius said, “That whereby man differs from the lower animals is but small. The mass of people cast it away, while superior men preserve it. Shun clearly understood the multitude of things, and closely observed the relations of humanity. He walked along the path of benevolence and righteousness; he did not need to pursue benevolence and righteousness.” 孟子曰:“人之所以异于禽兽者几希,庶民去之,君子存之。舜明于庶物,察于人伦,由仁义行,非行仁义也。”

righteousness, and what is good. Observing social conventions is “pursuing righteousness and benevolence.” Mencius held that that was not worth doing. He did not want people to “pursue righteousness and benevolence.” He wanted people to “walk the path of righteousness and benevolence.” That is, to go back to one’s self, to return to “one’s own proper nature of the mind/heart.” The more you seek it in the external world, the more bewildered and dazzled you become. Don’t look to the external world, look to yourself, ask it of yourself. In *The Mencius*, in particular, he said, “the calm air of the morning,” and “the restorative influence of the night is not sufficient to preserve the proper nature of the mind/heart.”² A Chinese proverb says, “Examine one’s conscience in the stillness of night.” When, in the stillness of night, in the middle of the night you wake up, you examine your conscience in the quiet. That is, you yourself ask questions of yourself. At this time it’s clear [what’s right and wrong].

Alitto: Ask oneself. The problem is that each person’s answer to the questions asked of oneself is the same or different. Or does “the proper nature of mind” have a common...?

Liang: That is to say, when in the stillness of night you awaken, you are not subject to external influences. So “examine one’s conscience in the stillness of night,” asking yourself: is this right? At this time, in Chinese it’s called the “Recovery of Conscience.” Chinese farmers have a saying...these two sentences are marvelous: “If you don’t owe taxes, you do not fear officials. If you have not ignored your conscience, you do not fear Heaven.” I think this saying is great. If I haven’t ignored my conscience and done anything bad, I do not fear Heaven. The first line, “If you don’t owe taxes, you do not fear officials.” Everyone must pay taxes. I’ve already paid my taxes, and so I don’t fear officials at all. This kind of society existed only in the old society of China; there is no such society outside of China. So, this thing “conscience,” the more you look externally, the less it exists.

Alitto: I agree. In all of your works, you emphasize this point. No matter whether you use the term “Benevolence” or “Conscience,” or “Rationality,” they are all one thing. So in this book [referring to *The Human Mind/Heart and Human Life*] you still have a similar thing. You call it “spirituality” or something like that. Actually the meaning is the same, right? Either the term you just used, “Conscience,” or the term “Benevolence,” or if you call it “Rationality,” it’s the same. As you just said that saying among the common folk existed only in Chinese society. It didn’t exist in other societies. So, if “Benevolence,” “Rationality,” and “Conscience” are things that humanity shares, why is it that historically they appear comparatively commonly in Chinese society?

Liang: This is because Chinese society is a loosely organized society.

²Referring to *The Mencius*, Gaozi I, 8 (《孟子·告子章句上》, 八章).

Alitto: I understand that. You mean that originally Western society, because of religion, was used to group organization.

Liang: Western society organized groups. People in general lived in a group. Previously, during the Middle Ages, the group overly constrained and repressed the individual. In modern society, capitalist society, the individual awakened to resist the group's excessive intervention and repression. This is the kind of change from ancient times to modern times. But this transformation didn't take place in Chinese society. China's old society lacked group organizations. At most it was family and lineage. In the past the emperors and rulers' best method was not to interfere with the affairs of the common people, the so-called "Laissez Faire" and "governance by non-interference." The more the government allowed people, the more it let people live their own lives, the better. In China for several thousand years, life was lived like this, a passive "live and let live" state, without any active governance. Society followed custom and convention, with the people living unorganized peaceful lives. Disorganization is more liable to lead to peace. Peace is more liable to lead to disorganization. To put it in another way, struggle is liable to lead to organization, and group organization is more likely to lead to struggle. So, old Chinese society lived disorganized and peaceful days, days that were passive and peaceful. So, the Chinese didn't know what a "nation" was. He only knew "Peace in All under Heaven." The "All under Heaven" had no boundaries. "Nation" had parameters. Relations between nations are adversarial, but there was no relationship with "All under Heaven." The Chinese always dreamed of "Peace in All under Heaven." He wanted to live a passive, peaceful life, and hoped that the imperial court and the government would not quite interfere with [his] affairs, and not be much concerned with [their] affairs. These circumstances did not exist in Europe.

Alitto: In modern European society these kinds of circumstances didn't exist, but in the Middle Ages, there was a Church—a Catholic Church. So although society had the habit of organization, the organizations were church organizations. But you can't say that it was struggles between organizations. Only in the 17th and 18th centuries were there nationalities, and only with nationalities came nations.

Liang: In a modern nation... Before, the aristocracy ruled the peasants [serfs]. The peasants were attached to the land. This is different from the Chinese peasantry of the past.

Alitto: Yes, these two societies were different. In general, I agree completely with the historical explanation you just articulated. I agree. My question is, your theory has always had a contradiction. If there is something that humanity possesses in common, how could it be a special product of China? I know, you just explained this from the background of societal development. I have felt always that this is a contradiction. As mentioned in my book, I think that the contradiction is: In the 1920s and 1930s, you advocated the restoration of China's inherent "Rationality" and "Benevolence." Only by

this restoration could the entire country be revived, be modernized and be able to absorb Western science and technology. Group organization could develop the things that China inherently possessed. Where is the contradiction? If we say the fundamental reason why China originally wasn't modernized, hadn't developed science and technology, and didn't have group organizations was because China had developed "Rationality," how suddenly could this "Rationality," originally an obstacle to modernization, no longer be an obstacle, but become a...?

Liang: It wasn't an obstacle. In the past, it wasn't an obstacle either.

Alitto: So in the past it wasn't an obstacle?

Liang: It was that the path of societal development was different.

Alitto: Alright, then why was the path different?

Liang: What does this "different path" refer to? In remote antiquity a person's life could not be separated from the group. People formed groups. The more ancient it went, the smaller the scope of the group was. Each group had two aspects. One was consanguinity, and one was locality. In brief, beginning in remote antiquity, life was lived in a group. One aspect was family, and the other was a group that transcended family. In China's societal development, the particular emphasis was on the aspect of family. In foreign countries the emphasis was on the group. Initially, these were both group and family. One developed to emphasize this aspect, and the other to emphasize that aspect. Each had its own inclination. It's a religious issue when a group of people go astray and need to be pulled back. Religion helps people form group organizations, and Confucianism helps people emphasize lineages and families, and family ethics. The two are separated in this way. Kin organizations emphasize "the degree of consanguinity and the principle of seniority," paying attention to this concept. Moreover, this concept is extended into society at large. So in the emperor-subject relationship, the emperor is called the "Father-Emperor." The emperor refers to his subjects as "newborn babies (*chizi*)."¹ This term "*chi*" is the color red, because newborn babies have red kin. So, being influenced by Confucianism, these emotions of familial affection are extended into society. The emperor is "father," the teacher is also "father." Students of the same teacher are "brothers of the same master." Good friends are the equivalent of brothers. Affection was thought highly of. Affection transcends vital interests.

Alitto: I still want to ask why this division occurred in remote antiquity. In the final analysis, what was the cause?

Liang: I don't know. There were respective inclinations [in the two societies] to develop this and that aspect. Why was it? There were conditions that supported in this or that direction. The conditions [in the two societies] were different.

Alitto: This seems to be different from the way you put it in *The Essence of Chinese Culture*. In that book, you wrote that it was the Confucian viewpoint. That is, China originally did have a religion. China was originally a clan society, in the Shang Dynasty. After the Zhou, Confucianism

destroyed it. The “scholars” awoke. In accordance with Confucian thought, it substituted pure ethics for religion. The old religion could be said to no longer exist. Of course, among the common folk there were still relatively superstitious religions, but [formal] religion no longer existed. From what I understood, it was only at this time in the religious realm that the two societies had their respective inclinations... You now locate this phenomenon earlier in time. You still don’t know the reason.

Liang: That is to say, each society developed on its own path, and each had its respective inclinations.

Alitto: What’s the reason? You said that certain conditions were a reason. What were these conditions?

Liang: We can’t say at present. But there were in any case reasons that can be looked into and studied. Our knowledge is limited.

Alitto: Did not you discuss this question in your several books? That is, the question of Chinese and Western societies developing in different directions.

Liang: Probably I did.

Alitto: Right, you did. Can you talk about the fundamental difference between this book (referring to *The Human Mind/Heart and Human Life*) and *The Essence of Chinese Culture*?

Liang: There is no difference.

Alitto: No difference?

Liang: No difference.

Alitto: Can it be said to be a development of *The Essence of Chinese Culture* in...?

Liang: Right, in viewpoint and ideas, there is no difference.

Alitto: What do the terms “the (mundane) world” and “to escape the world” mean?

Liang: “The world” refers to our ordinary lives. So, “to escape the world” refers to an attitude that life in this world is delusion and confusion, a negation toward life. The Indians were quite strange. In ancient India, not only Buddhism was like this; it was universal. An attitude of taking life as delusion and confusion and of negation toward human life was common. This was different from the Confucian affirmation of life.

Alitto: So the theory you are articulating, that is negation of human life, a questioning of human life....

Liang: I want to add something. What is the world? The world is the cycle of birth and death. To escape the world is to escape the cycle, to transcend the cycle. This Indian thought was truly brilliant. These ideas were very strange. Not only Buddhism, but all [other religions] held this view, and all negated human life, believing that life was delusion and confusion, which was not what we wanted. What did this line of thought want? It wanted to escape the cycle of birth and death. This way of thinking is quite strange. It sought to escape the cycle of birth and death. Really strange. To escape the world is not to be born or die.

Alitto: What does this mean: “the future life in society will become an art”? You say that Mr. Cai Yuanpei originally had advocated... (Liang: Replacement of religion by art.) So what you are saying here, the aesthetization of human life, and Mr. Cai Yuanpei’s....

- Liang: Mr. Cai had an ideal, a program. I imagine that in the future this ideal and program will become fact.
- Alitto: As said in your earliest book—*Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*—in the future the ceremony and music of Confucius would perform this function. This can be said to be a continuing development and explication of your original idea. As for the question of the decline of religion, because of the process of rationalization, it can be said that religion in modern societies is disappearing.
- Liang: It has lost influence.
- Alitto: Is this because of intellect, or...
- Liang: Intellect has had great influence.
- Alitto: Science is intellect.
- Liang: It's been greatly influenced by science.
- Alitto: This does resemble Mr. Cai Yuanpei's advocacy years ago of "replacing religion by aesthetic education." This was what Mr. Cai Yuanpei had said originally.
- Liang: It was an ideal of his.
- Alitto: You think that this will be realized in the future, that it will become fact?
- Liang: I'll add something here. Mr. Cai's was a subjective appeal. I am talking about future factual trends. I'm talking objectively.
- Alitto: Yes, you are analyzing objective facts and real circumstances.
- Liang: Development in that direction.
- Alitto: This [book manuscript] is very interesting. Too bad I don't have time to really read it. That friend of yours named Zhao has a copy. He will still be in Hong Kong for six months, and then later go to the U.S. So probably in the future I'll have an opportunity to read it. (Liang: Right.) That is to say, you can still let me borrow it to read. (Liang: Right.) OK.
- Liang: You've given me a lot of name cards. I can give one to Zhao.
- Alitto: He still doesn't know where he will be living in the U.S.?
- Liang: No. Probably it hasn't been decided on yet.
- Alitto: Not decided yet. He's going to study or to...
- Liang: He's going to do research.
- Alitto: Is he going to a university or other...
- Liang: He didn't say. Originally he said that he would return in July or August. He hasn't come yet.
- Alitto: So I generally know now...but there are still some questions. For example, previously I had interviewed people who knew you in the old days. In Hong Kong, Wang Shaoshang, Hu Yinghan, Tang Junyi. In Taiwan there were some others who had worked in Zouping, Shandong. Zhou Shaoxian was one of them. They all said that you very seldom or basically never joked, smiled, or laughed. Every time they saw you, you had a stern expression, and never laughed. But meeting you this time, I feel that you have a great sense of humor, and often laugh. Is it possible that you had a turning point in your life? Is it that you changed, or that those friends didn't know you well enough, or the occasions in which they saw you were limited? Have you undergone a great change?

Liang: No.

Alitto: You've been this way from the time you were young?

Liang: I can't say "since I was young." To other people it seemed that I always had a serious expression on my face.

Alitto: There's another way to put it. It's because "the superior man never jests." They all respected you greatly. They felt that a superior man was like that, with a serious expression. Even to the extent that my wife...of course she has never met you, but looking at some photographs of you, felt that you were certainly an extremely stern person. So, you, Oh! I'm sorry. I interrupted you. Please continue. What I just asked was whether or not you were this way from the time you were young. You said that you weren't and that people saw you as stern.

Liang: That's one aspect. I was influenced by Indian thought, or no, it can't be put this way. It would appear that I myself am passive, and yet I am not passive. I've already said, when I was in my teens I wanted to become a monk, that is, to maintain an attitude of negation of life. Initially I really didn't understand Confucianism. It so happened that my father didn't have me read Confucius' books. So when I read Confucius' book, it had a sense of novelty for me. Right at the beginning he says, those phrases, "Isn't it delightful, isn't it also a joy." In *The Analects*, throughout you see that word "joy" again and again, such as "The person of Supreme Virtue delights in mountains," "The wise man delights in water." This character of "joy" is seen often in his book. In the entire book the word "suffering" does not appear. Doesn't Confucius say: "The wise are free from perplexities; the bold from fear; and the virtuous from anxiety,"³ "The mean man is always full of distress (*qiqi*), the superior man..."⁴ I can't recite it all from memory. The "*qi*" character means that one's state of mind is unhappy. The superior man is very happy. This is the opposite of Indian Buddhist thought.

Alitto: There's another tradition in Confucianism which I often mentioned in the book. You and your father had a sense of duty toward society. That can be said to be an extremely serious, solemn thing. So, although the superior man is often "joyful," this sense of duty is an extremely serious thing.

Liang: Right.

Alitto: I had thought that possibly after you were twenty or thirty you still didn't have a sense of humor. Actually, this was not the case. For example when you were talking with others, or friends, such as we are doing now, you were always this way, often laughing.

Liang: A casual thing.

Alitto: Don't you yourself feel that you have a sense of humor?

Liang: This assessment, as to whether I do or not, probably should be made by others.

³ *The Analects* 9.29 (《论语·子罕第九》, 二十九章).

⁴ *The Analects* 7.37 (《论语·述而第七》, 三十七章).

- Alitto: Of course, possibly I asked the wrong people. Quite a few people I asked said: Mr. Liang never joked or laughed; only when he was together with his children did he smile, but not with others.
- Liang: I'll add something. There's a traditional saying, especially among the Neo-Confucians, "Search for the joy of Confucius and Yan Hui."⁵
- Alitto: You just mentioned an issue that possibly I had wrong in the book. You said that even before the Republican Revolution, you wanted to become monk, and not necessarily only after the revolution did you have this desire?
- Liang: I wanted to become a monk very early. I really wanted to be a monk.
- Alitto: So, if it was like this, why did you have a spiritual crisis only after the Republican Revolution? That is to say, you intended to commit suicide. If you already had this desire to become a monk, why did you actively participate in the Revolution?
- Liang: There is no conflict between the two. Why no conflict? I often say, throughout my life, two great problems have occupied my mind. One is the problem of China, the practical problems of the Chinese nation, and social problems. The problem of the nation is that China was weak and in danger of subjugation, and the suffering in society. This is a problem that often occupied my mind. But another problem exceeds it by far, the problem of doubts and depression of human life, so as to negate life. Throughout it has been these two problems; sometimes one would be dominant, and sometimes the other.
- Alitto: In my understanding of your thought, these two problems were often integrated into one, that is, were often related. For example, in my understanding of your book *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, the problem of human life is related to Chinese culture and China's revival. In that book you said that you were going to start a movement, but didn't say clearly what movement. I seem to remember that the last sentence was: Let me first see what Confucian life is like, and later I'll start a movement. It turned out [the movement] was to give lectures to some students within a group, which was related to human life, and also related to the methods used by rural reconstruction, being a method by itself.
- Liang: At the time of [writing] *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, there was no rural reconstruction. But I did say that I wanted to integrate the Song-Ming Dynasties, Neo-Confucian practice of lecturing into a modern social movement, to combine the two into one whole. I said that.
- Alitto: Right, but when I analyzed your thought, actually I took that thread further back to when you and your friends had what might be called an informal lecturing group. That is, there was a continuation of the tradition of mutual encouragement and criticism [within the group]. It was a Chinese tradition...This thread was naturally related to "lecturing" and *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*. Coming to the time of rural

⁵ This is a saying from Cheng Yi's (程颐) commentary on *The Analects*.

reconstruction, it was the same theory. The [rural] schools you ran often used this method, so it formed a continuing line [running through the middle school study group and the “lecturing” mentioned in *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*]. This was what I concluded from my analysis. So the problem of human life and the problem of China were often one thing, or at least were closely connected.

...

Liang: This book of mine (referring to *The Human Mind/Heart and Human Life*) was hand-copied by others. It was copied into three volumes—one, two, three; because the manuscript was so long, one volume was insufficient. So, in order to complete it, it was bound into three successive volumes. The hand-copied manuscript is presently not in my hands. I’ve told you it’s with a Mr. Zhao. He took it to Jilin Normal University. He said that he would return it in July or August. It is already the end of August, but he hasn’t come yet. So this copy I don’t have. I do still have the original that I myself wrote in my own hand with a writing brush. It is in the room.... If you would like to take a look at the original manuscript, I could get it out of the cabinet for you.

Alitto: Oh, thank you. Of course this would be good. I would like to take a look at it. Could you tell me the book’s area of emphasis?

Liang: I’m too old, and my brain doesn’t work as well as before.

Alitto: You are too modest. You look extremely good, very spirited.

Liang: It’s in fact that way. So, I will go get it and you can take a look. At the very least, you can look at the table of contents—Chaps. 1 and 2.

Alitto: Yes, yes. The table of contents. OK. Probably...

Liang: You can infer the contents.

Alitto: And then I can use it to ask you questions. All right.

[Alitto looks at Liang’s original hand-written manuscript.]⁶

Alitto: Your concept is that the ability to plan is a part of the human heart/mind. (Liang: An aspect.) Oh, an aspect. What you wrote before...

Liang: If we want to describe and explain the mind/heart, first we must explain its “subjective initiative” or its self-conscious autonomy, its consciousness. They are equally the same. This is a property of humanity, its most important property.

Alitto: Does this concept of autonomy or self-activeness have something to do with the will?

Liang: Of course the will is included within it. It has subjective initiative, flexibility, and lastly, the ability to plan. So, in order to explain the ability to plan, I had to use all this verbiage.

Alitto: In your book *The Essence of Chinese Culture*, you made a basic distinction between “intellect” and “rationality.” Now [in this book] you have expanded

⁶For a minute or two, I was just glancing rapidly over the first sections of the manuscript. As this was the original, written in Liang’s own hand, I did not want to shuffle through the pages any more than I had to, so began to ask questions before I understood the contents very well.

into three elements: subjective initiative, flexibility, and the ability to plan. The first two probably are subsumed under “rationality.” The ability to plan is probably part of intellect. Is there this distinction? Probably the ability to plan is in reference to relatively abstract calculations for the future...

Liang: You just now used two terms, rationality and intellect. How would you distinguish between the two?

Alitto: I would still use the same distinction you made in your book *The Essence of Chinese Culture*. For example, when a man does a mathematical problem, the part of his mind that does the calculating is his intellect. The technique is intellect. And the part of him that wants to get the right answer or not—the moral aspect—is rationality.

Liang: Yes, that’s about right.

Alitto: So I thought that you would have developed the concept you used before and asked this question. Now [in this new book] you have divided it into three basic aspects: subjective initiative, flexibility, and the ability to plan, the last of which is the most complex. I also know that in this book it seems you use quite a bit of material on the most recent scientific research. In this section in which you analyze the mind/heart, you also make use of the most recent science, and psychology too. Which psychological school do you think is the most correct?

Liang: In foreign psychology, for example, I remember one psychologist named McDougall, who liked to talk about instinct.

Alitto: That was someone quite popular when you were writing *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*. Later, he wasn’t as popular.

Liang: He enumerated a great many kinds of instinct. The Englishman Russell wrote a book called, as I recall, “Construction...” [referring to Russell’s *Principles of Social Reconstruction*], right? He divided humanity into three kinds, one was called the possessive impulse and another the creative impulse. But there is a third kind, called spirituality. I originally quoted this in *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, but disagreed with his three-way division. I said... one was intellectual, one was instinct. Originally I saw it this way. I only understood later after the publication of “Trend toward Diversification”⁷ that his third entity called “spirituality” actually referred to something; it wasn’t just empty talk. I accepted his trichotomy, not the dichotomy [of intellect and instinct].

I’ll explain another point. Originally I also had this dichotomy. I didn’t understand the spirituality. I felt that it wasn’t necessary; I felt that an intellect and an instinct were sufficient. Why? Because I subsumed morality into instinct. Later I understood that this was not so, not correct. Why?

⁷ From the context, it is clear that “Trend toward Diversification,” or “The Pluralism Trend,” or “Trend toward Pluralism” (多元化趋势) is the name of a publication by Russell, because “published” follows the reference. I, however, could find no publications by Russell with a title that resembles this. Perhaps Mr. Liang read a Chinese translation with such a title, or misremembered the title, but I do not know to which publication this title refers.

Because instinct is also an instrument for life; it is a backup instrument. Now, intellect is also an instrument, a backup instrument. The entity of spirituality is higher than these two. So at that point I understood Russell's trichotomy and thought it correct. Religion, for instance. You can't explain it as intellect or as instinct. Religion and morality are something higher than either instinct or intellect. That is what Russell called "spirituality." Later I accepted Russell's statement.

Alitto: In your last published book *The Essence of Chinese Culture*, you held that rationality... Russell's "spirituality" is "rationality." That is, decisions of a moral nature are made by rationality. So, isn't Russell's rationality relatively close to this view?

Liang: He called it spirituality.

Alitto: Spirituality. Right. Probably you discuss similar concepts by other thinkers in this book [*The Human Mind/Heart and Human Life*]; the expression might be different, but the meaning is about the same—the ability to make moral decisions. The Catholic thinker Cardinal Newman's "illative sense" means about the same thing. Mohandas Gandhi also had his own way of putting it, not dissimilar to yours. But your own distinction between intellect and rationality... The 19th century English poet—you could say the English thinker—Samuel Taylor Coleridge... He made this distinction—between reason and rationality. His and your definition of rationality and intellect are about the same. Are there similar concepts from thinkers of other cultures or nationalities that can be compared to Russell's spirituality or your flexibility?⁸

Liang: I remember that there was an American psychologist, a very early one, who wrote a very big book on psychology. He was very early. That man's name was... A very big book. Later, he wrote an abbreviated version of that big book of his.

Alitto: I don't know. What school was he? Was he pre-Behaviorist?

Liang: Very early, pre-Behaviorist. He was a very famous psychologist.

Alitto: James? Was it William James? (Liang: Yes, William James.) He wrote a lot of books.

Liang: At first he didn't understand religion very well. Later, he did understand, and so understood what Russell was calling the "spiritual" nature of humans. Russell had ascribed both morality and religion to this "spiritual" nature. These two things could not be explained by either intellect or instinct. Both of these are instruments to be used, and techniques. There is something that transcends both of these and this is the unique property of human beings.

⁸Liang's term may be translated in various ways, such as "sagacious spirituality," or "soulfulness." The Chinese term is used in various ways which, depending on the context, might be rendered into various English terms. The term can mean, for example, "flexibility." In English, of course, this makes no etymological sense, but in Chinese it does.

- Alitto: Why humans are human. (Liang: Right.) In your book *The Essence of Chinese Culture* you wrote that what makes humans human is “rationality.” In Chinese culture, it was very early and very well developed, while in Western culture it was less developed, but intellect was well developed. (Liang: Yes, that’s right.) So, is this concept of yours—flexibility (what Russell called “spirituality” in English) similar to what you represented as “rationality” prior to this time? Or does the new concept differ from what you called rationality? That is, is it rationality that makes humans human?
- Liang: My brain isn’t working too well today. I can’t even articulate my own old ideas. I can’t express what I have in mind right now.
- Alitto: Probably I remember [what you have in mind]. I read your book several times. As to...
- Liang: There’s a lot that I have in my mind, but I can’t express it clearly. So why don’t you take a look at the table of contents so that you can get an idea of what the book is about.
- Alitto: For example, in one section of Chap. 7—making a comparison between will and instinct, which is more important? How would you answer such a question, will or instinct?
- Liang: You can’t say which is more important.
- Alitto: Which is “even more” important?
- Liang: Both are important, but their functions are different. For example, the hand, leg and foot are all important, but their functions are different.
- Alitto: Both are important. OK. Isn’t your analysis of the difference between rationality and intellect about the same as in your book *The Essence of Chinese Culture*?
- Liang: I don’t think that there is anything wrong or incorrect in my book *The Essence of Chinese Culture*, and it can represent my basic theory.
- Alitto: ...There are many chapters in this new book that discuss the relationship between the mind and body. In your book *The Essence of Chinese Culture*, you didn’t touch upon this. Could you give a very brief summary of what your ideas are on this relationship?
- Liang: The mind/heart transcends the body. From the standpoint of physical existence, your body and my body are separate and not in communication. When I eat, your hunger is not satisfied. But the mind/heart transcends the body. So the relationship between minds/hearts can be described with these eight characters: the first four are *haowuxiangyu* (mutual communication of likes and dislikes). [The other four characters are *tongyangxiangguan* (sufferings are interrelated).—compiler] What I like, what you like—likes and dislikes can be communicated. “Likes and dislikes” include moral judgment. So, I think that this kind of action or this kind of person is good. You also recognize it as good. So Likes and dislikes can be communicated, meaning “mutual understanding.”
- Alitto: “Mutual communication of likes and dislikes.” Does this mean that there is an absolute, objective standard in people’s psychology? Can it be stated that way? Telepathy between human minds/hearts? So, are you saying that

no matter in what era and in what culture, humans' reactions to a certain phenomenon are the same? That is to say, this behavior is bad, that behavior is good. Right?

Liang: People, as far as the fundamental definition goes...

Alitto: Which is the most fundamental?

Liang: There are differences in the social customs and habits of each society, and differences in time and place. In terms of space, that society and this society are far apart. There's also a difference in time. Societies in different ages are also different. Societies in different places and times differ; they have their own social customs and usages. An individual person is often influenced by the customs, habits and social usages of his society. And so because of this, the situation that "I am right and you are wrong" occurs. But there are certain fundamentals that are the same. Very basic ones. For example, every society dislikes and loathes lying, right? For a lot of things, due to their different social customs and habits, what this particular place or society recognizes as good is not so regarded in that place or society; or, today it is regarded as good, but the ancients held it to be bad.

Alitto: We discussed this problem. In the end, is there...

...

Alitto: Lying is wrong. (Liang: Everyone dislikes it.) This is an absolute moral standard. Let me think...

Liang: You can give an example.

Alitto: All right, let's discuss your specific example then. What is the source of this universal aversion to lying? Is it a knowledge with which humans are born?

Liang: Lying is purposeful, interested action; only because of that did lying take place.

Alitto: This explanation won't work. Lying sometimes is not necessarily a purposeful action. That is to say, situations in which lying is done out of good intentions.

Liang: Good intentions are also purposeful.

Alitto: Good intentions are also purposeful. Oh, right. Isn't the truth...the truth is also purposeful?

Liang: Whatever is in my mind I speak, frankly. This is disinterested.

Alitto: Interested action...

Liang: Purposeful action is always tortuous. Purposeless action is straight and direct.

Alitto: As you just said, there are temporal and spatial differences among all societies' social customs and habits. The goals of purposefulness will also be different. So doesn't that count as moral behavior being different?

Liang: Of course, they are different. There are different moralities in different eras and different societies. Each society has its own morality. Therefore, in reality this isn't true morality; they are just customs and usages.

Alitto: They are just customs and usages? What is the source of true morality?

Liang: True morality (Alitto: Absolute truth.) is conscious awareness and self-discipline. (Mr. Liang writes the four characters: *zijuezhiliu*—conscious

awareness and self-discipline.) Usually, the majority of people in society follow others; they just follow the society's social customs and habits. Those whose vital force is great may not follow customs. He is capable of great conscious awareness and self-discipline. So he may choose to act in a certain way following his own self-conscious decision regardless of the opposition, and the ridicule and taunts of others. Revolutionaries are able to do this. The ordinary person does not make revolution. Revolution is always foresighted.

Alitto: This revolution is what Marx discusses as a revolution. The masses take action out of their own self-interest, out of their own material interests.

Liang: But revolutions don't happen often. Of course those revolutionary leaders who take the lead cannot separate from the masses but they can transcend and lead the masses. They have foresight. Their creative power is great. The average person...

Alitto: There is still a fundamental problem. What in the end is the goal of society's evolution? What path does it follow? According to what principles does it develop? You say that revolutionaries are foresighted. Where does their understanding of their standards and goals come from?

Liang: We can't lay down a general rule because it is different at different times, places and environments.

Alitto: I mean, if there was an eternal unchanging truth...

Liang: No. There is no objectively existing eternal unchanging truth.

Alitto: But you stated that although each individual person's body is independent and unconnected, as [the example you gave previously] "when you eat, my hunger is not satisfied." You say that the mind is still...

Liang: Likes and dislikes mutually communicate.

Alitto: Why do they mutually communicate?

Liang: Mutual Communication means that I understand you, and you understand me. This is called mutual communication.

Alitto: But why? Why does mutual communication exist? That is to say, human nature has aspects that are shared. Each individual person has...

Liang: It is what Mencius said: human minds/hearts are the same.⁹

⁹ This is a reference to *The Mencius*: "Men's mouths agree in having the same relishes; their ears agree in enjoying the same sounds; their eyes agree in recognizing the same beauty—shall their minds alone be without that which they similarly approve? What is it then of which they similarly approve? It is, I say, the principles of our nature, and the determinations of righteousness. The sages only apprehended beforehand that of which my mind approves along with other men. Therefore the principles of our nature and the determinations of righteousness are agreeable to my mind, just as the flesh of grass and grain-fed animals is agreeable to my mouth." (口之于味也, 有同者焉; 耳之于声也, 有同听焉; 目之于色也, 有同美焉。至于心, 独无所同然乎? 心之所同然者何也? 谓理也, 义也。圣人先得我心之所同然耳。故理义之悦我心, 犹刍豢之悦我口。) In the end, Liang's insistence of the existence of a universal morality comes back to this argument by Mencius. As I noted above, it is not dissimilar to his first pronouncement on the subject in *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, in which he claims a universal moral sense rooted in human biology (à la Kropotkin).

- Alitto: But humans have developed through evolution. Humans of today and humans of ten thousand years ago are different. Humans today will also be different from humans ten thousand years from now. But where is the common property [the basis of humanity]? Where does it come from?
- Liang: The common property is that they are living things. All have life; if they have life, they all have likes and dislikes. The closer dislikes and likes are to the corporeal, the easier it is for them to be different. Smoking, for example. You like to smoke and I do not. That is, those likes and dislikes that are close to the corporal (physiology) are easy to differ. An individual person...
- Alitto: Which likes and dislikes are comparatively similar?
- Liang: Those transcending the corporeal.¹⁰
- Alitto: Those in the mind?
- Liang: Transcending the corporeal, transcending the corporeal. Just like the example of lying that I just mentioned. Lying is an example.
- Alitto: Possibly there are societies in which lying is not considered wrong.
- Liang: That is a question of social customs and habits. I admit that there is that kind of society, but that [acceptance of lying] is part of the social customs and habits of society. Social customs and habits are different from conscience. Social customs and habits make the humans of different ages and different places different from one another. Social customs and habits are this way.
- Alitto: For example, in the West quite a few people feel that, fundamentally, conscience doesn't exist. Then what are humans? They are created by society. Human nature is society's creation. Especially in the women's liberation movement, they feel that there is no basic difference between men and women. In fact, there is a distinction, but that is because men control society, with the result that females are raised specifically to become what they are. Males are raised differently. But there is no distinction between consciences. This is one way of explaining the difference.
- Liang: This is a difference between the innate and the acquired.
- Alitto: They mean that there are no innate differences, aside from the differences of corpulence, height—naturally the genitals are different, the reproductive system is different—they say that aside from that there is no great difference. That is to say, there are no inherent qualities. I don't agree. You don't agree. But the reasons are that there is no [common universal] conscience. Sooner

¹⁰ Of course, the opposite argument might be made as well: The closer to the corporeal, the less chance of individuation. Animals' corporeally based likes and dislikes are far more similar to each other than humans' likes and dislikes are to each other. Likes and dislikes more deeply rooted in physiology (simple pleasure and pain) can be argued to be more similar. Liang argues that those common properties that are rooted in the corporeal provide for more individuation. He says that likes and dislikes arising from intellect, ratiocination and calculation are more likely to be similar. Of course, if he is locating the source of universal morality in human biology (as he did much earlier in *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*), this argument makes some sense. It was why the Anarchist Kropotkin appealed to him so much, and why in the same book he equated instinct with intuition.

or later modern societies...will have no standard. The process of rationalization breaks down the basis upon which standards rest. What you have just articulated and what you held previously are about the same. But in the current situation of the Western society, and especially in the future situation, standards of morality—standards for good and bad—are disappearing. Starting from the 18th century Enlightenment to the present, our standards become fewer and fewer, more and more relativised; relativised moral standards are the equivalent of being absent.

Liang: This is all peripheral, not fundamental. It still comes back to that statement by Mencius, that people's minds/hearts are "the same." The sage knows beforehand the similitude of our minds/hearts.

Alitto: Yes, yes. I understand this. But in modernized societies—no matter where—everyone has [their own] way of looking at things. A concrete example would be sex. Ten or fifteen years ago we felt that homosexuality was abnormal. It's different now. The [American] Psychological Association proclaimed three years ago that we now do not think that homosexuality is abnormal. It is normal. It is not a sickness. It is just different from the majority. According to the nature of humanity...this is the so called... ["Natural Law"] with Catholicism. There is the "Natural Law" tradition. That is to say, there are standards that are derived from nature. Nature includes humans. It is "Natural Law." It could be said that this concept is disappearing, increasingly. Everything is relative. The problem lies here. My own viewpoint is relatively pessimistic. You are still optimistic. (Liang: Yeah. I'm still optimistic.) You feel that human society is still progressing. I feel that there is no pure and absolute progress. In one respect there is an advance, but in actuality, simultaneously in another respect there is a retreat. There is no pure improvement. Using intellect to solve material problems since the 18th century in Western Europe people have made rapid advances in science and technology. At the same time social morality is more and more relative, even as far as—someone has conjectured, and I think it quite terrible... Talking about sexual relations, the problem of sexual difference, isn't social equality one value in modernization process? Everyone wants equality. From the French Revolution to the present, no matter in what society, at the very least there is a demand for nominal equality. Are men and women equal? The biggest inequality is that women must bear children, but men can't bear children. Moreover, science and technology has advanced to what degree? Human fetuses could be artificially made. [In the novel] they are manufactured in a factory-like agency run by the state. So what comes from this? No family, and sexual relations become a kind of entertainment. There is no standard of sexual morality and no foundation for morality in general. That is one example.

I had mentioned previously a book by Aldous Huxley (in English), called *Brave New World*. It describes such a state of affairs. In that society, even those needs that are related to instinct are not met with natural means, but by artificial means. For example, it appears that humans need a spiritual

anchor, otherwise they can't live. In a society that has reached the state of affairs just described, of course there is no religion, but they use a religion substitute.¹¹ This is described in *Brave New World*. The leaders of the society, the few of them, they want to maintain social order, but there is no common moral standard, so to achieve their goals they use other methods such as Behaviorism. They cultivate a kind of psychology in children from when they are small. They also control the natural physical endowments—in the factory that produces humans, they control the procedures and methods.

...There is a kind of ceremony called "Orgy Porgy" [in English], a very strange name. It is a ceremony that has the form of a religious ritual. In your *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, you advocate using Confucius' rites and music. They... [The ceremony] is describing a situation in the future—it is a form...the thing has no significance—that people still treat as a religion, or at least it is a tool that performs the function of religion. Other natural needs... No matter what, humans must die. This is unavoidable. You also say that after the first path and the second path are completed, and societies reach a point whereby material life is very good, and spiritual life is also good, there still remain the two problems of death and of change. At that time Buddhism will have resurgence. Am I right in saying this?

Liang: In general, yes. I was explaining the root of Buddhism, how it came about. Because it discovered that life was an illusion, a kind of muddle-headedness. Muddle-headed in what way? In holding on to the illusion of existence.

Alitto: In their muddle-headedness people will seek to solve the problem of the first path, i.e., the material problem, and then that of the second path, which is the interior psychological problem. Is that so?

Liang: No, not "interior." It is the problem of relationships between people.

¹¹ This section is disjointed and confusing because of its spontaneous nature and because of my imperfect command of Chinese. I certainly had not planned to bring up the subject before I did so. While discussing the question of values with Mr. Liang, it suddenly struck me that Huxley's disutopia was the most "modernized" of societies, a logical terminus of efficiency as supreme value. The mastermind of modern efficiency, Henry Ford, is, after all, the chief deity of the society. I thought that it would clarify the idea of contemporary consumerist society, based on similar assumptions that happiness is equated with sensual pleasure, and every desire must be gratified at the moment of its inception. I had thought that Liang would understand, even though my presentation was semi-coherent and unsystematic, that the shift in emphasis "from truth and beauty to comfort and happiness" is precisely the transition taking place in post-modern societies around the world. Unconsciously, I was probably assuming that Liang and Huxley's visions of the good society shared much. The latter stated in the "Forward" to *Brave New World* that a better society would be where "economics would be decentralist and Henry Georgian, politics Kropotkinesque and cooperative." This statement certainly would have described the good society produced by rural reconstruction perfectly. Moreover, Huxley's idea of the non-attached man, not committed to the usual—fame, social position, political power, art—is almost Bodhisattva-like in that he puts an end to pain not only in himself but also to such pain as he might inflict on others. He is a good man happy in his goodness. (Huxley did involve himself in "Eastern mysticism" that included Buddhism.)

Alitto: Right. The relationships between people, but relationships have an effect on the interior condition.

Liang: The second problem encountered is how to have people peacefully get along with one another.

Alitto: Right. This means the society is peaceful and cooperative.

Liang: This is a problem at a secondary position. [When other problems] recede a bit, and this problem of human relationships reveal itself.

Alitto: Yes. What I mean is, after both the problems of material life, and of human relationships have been solved, there still remains the most intractable of problems in human life—continuous change and death. So, facing these kinds of facts, humanity moves toward Buddhism. However, if we suppose that society does evolve to that point, to that degree [as mentioned], other technological ways of solving the problems of consciousness, of change and death would be available. One way is through drugs. (Liang: Drugs?) Hallucinogens, that is, a kind of narcotic, you might say. I remember that in this novel I mentioned (*Brave New World*), it described that a person even slightly feeling a lack of something would take a drug, the effect of which was like getting a bit drunk, and then he would not think more [of the lack]. After you went through that period of difficulty, you wouldn't think again of this difficulty. When the problem arose again, you could simply take this drug, this hallucinogen. When someone was about to die—all humans fear death—they were trained from childhood, using behaviorist methods,¹² (Liang: Behaviorism.)¹³ not to fear death. When the person himself was going to die, several kinds of methods could be used. All were different and developed with technology. Drugs were one, and others were used. In any case...

...

Liang: You don't understand Chinese. I will now teach Chinese to you. You don't understand mathematics. I will now teach mathematics to you. Or physics, or chemistry. It's as though the teacher and school are there to peddle knowledge. The teacher provides no guidance or emotional support for the student as a human being. So [modern education] lacks this. In the past I emphasized making friends with the youth, helping him with how to walk through his life's path, the direction of his entire life and his life problems. So, if the student has any problems, any difficulties, including any troubles in his family, or if in his thought he has any confusions or doubts that he cannot solve, the teacher should help him with these matters. Help him do what? Help him walk the correct life path. In reality, this kind of help includes everything. If he has some psychological problems, if he is

¹² The method used in *Brave New World* was "desensitization," a behaviorist conditioning technique.

¹³ Liang had always been extremely interested in Pavlovian psychology, and in fact had asked Mao to send him to the Soviet Union to study it.

depressed, the teacher should act like a friend, encourage him to talk about it, and see how much we can help.

Alitto: What about the situation now? Is this kind of relatively all-inclusive education still needed? Do today's schools emphasize even more merely selling knowledge to students?

Liang: I'm not too familiar with the situation in schools nowadays.

Alitto: Around 30 years ago you wrote, "If humankind cannot live and exist together peacefully, then it won't exist at all." That is, it will completely destroy itself. So, today these two paths, unless the various countries and peoples get along relatively well, otherwise...

Liang: It is due to modern weapons. Their capacity to kill and destroy is too great. Because they are so destructive, it forces us not to dare launch war, and not to casually fight a war. War means destruction. How to live together in peace is the principle that the modern era should stress. It was what I meant.

Alitto: In these thirty years, the whole of humankind has been living under the shadow of nuclear war. Some predict that if a nuclear war should occur, humans over the entire planet would be exterminated. Do you think the humankind would survive or not?

Liang: Complete extermination would not be all that easy, even if the killing power of nuclear weapons was great. Killing ten thousand, several tens of thousands, or a million, even ten million does not mean complete extermination. Complete extermination is out of the question. It won't happen. This is one aspect of it. There is another aspect. Such a mightily destructive weapon, a force, probably would not be lightly used.

I'll give my assessment, my estimate. If the U.S. and the Soviet Union had a conflict, they would undergo serious internal problems. A war between the U.S. and the Soviet Union will not last for very long. I'm afraid that after it is started, the Soviet Union would put into motion its own inherent problems. It would collapse. The U.S. would also have problems. This is my view on the matter.

Alitto: In the final analysis, what kind of internal problems?

Liang: Each of these societies has their own problems. Isn't the Soviet regime extremely oppressive? There are a lot of minorities who have been severely oppressed. So, when it collapses, class and ethnic nationalities problems will appear.

Alitto: Some also say that as soon as a nuclear war happens, as soon as a bomb explodes, the radiation from inside...

Liang: Right. Its influence would be great and spread far.

Alitto: Yes. Even to the extent that every place on the entire globe would have some radiation pollution. Some say that genes would also be affected. It would have a great influence on all humans over the entire globe.

Liang: Right.

Alitto: In the last 100 years, when was China's greatest suffering?

Liang: In my opinion the greatest suffering was the previous period.

Alitto: Oh, 100 years ago.

Liang: No, not 100 years ago, but the first half of the past century when imperialists invaded China, and set off internal wars. The emperor was overthrown, so there was no emperor. In other words, it created many emperors. So the greatest suffering resulted from fratricidal wars.

Alitto: You just mentioned that there were no more emperors. I have an opinion on this too. That is, for more than four thousand years there had been emperors, different from the ancient emperors in the West or Middle East. Emperors in China joined together government and religion. That is to say, in the ancient Middle East, such as Egypt or the other oldest countries, this clergy... The cultural crisis has not yet passed. A new, day-to-day, most fundamental value judgment has not been established. It seems that it has changed with the era. Politically it's already not as chaotic as during the Republic, but the most fundamental—that is to say, supposing that culture is the equivalent of the basic value judgments—what is good and what is bad—then I'm afraid that China is in the midst of a [cultural] crisis. In another ten or twenty years, the standards will change. Then it will be the same situation as in Western countries. Of course, in these last 200-some years, there has been a cultural crisis. Most recently it has become somewhat critical. We've come to [a period when] morality is disappearing. Well, this kind of crisis, no matter in China or the West, still exists. I am basically talking about a fundamental problem, that is "crisis." I don't know if I've stated this clearly, but perhaps you already have a general idea of it. Do you have any views on this question?

Liang: I think that this problem is one whose time has come. Now in this present age it is inevitable. But possibly things will gradually get better. Leaving aside the rest of the world and speaking only of China, things are already better than before. Aren't there two slogans now—one is "democracy," and the other is "rule by law." These two things are being vigorously promoted right now. In regard to the latter, gradually it is being established. It's no longer as chaotic as before. No longer is there a lack of standards. No longer is one individual's power so unlimited and arbitrary.

Alitto: I understand what you mean. The most important thing is that the political situation has stabilized. But that refers only to the political level—the crisis of legitimacy. But below that is a deeper level of...

Liang: For example, democracy must be carried out in fact, in actual practice, not just a slogan. At present democracy is being manifest in practice, in actual fact, much more than before. In the factories, workshop directors are commonly elected. Previously, the party committee member always held the directorship. This is no longer the case. Now the workers could elect the workshop director themselves. This is speaking only of the situation in the factories. As far as the peasants are concerned, the communes are also moving in this direction. So, democracy is no longer a completely empty word; it is no longer just a slogan.

At the same time attention is being paid to the ideal of rule by law. No individual is permitted to act arbitrarily with his political power. That time is now past. Now collective leadership is being stressed. This is much better than the way things were in Chairman Mao's time. In the past, Chairman Mao Zedong's authority was too great, and his position was overly dominant, so this caused much damage and disasters, especially during the ten-year period of the Cultural Revolution, when things were very chaotic. Mao Zedong had at one time said that "Revolution is not like writing an essay, or doing embroidery." He saw chaos as a very good thing. That was his attitude.

Alitto: Yes, it could be considered to be that way. But could the Cultural Revolution be considered a real revolution? That is to say, did it have any target?

Liang: It was called smashing the "Four Olds."

Alitto: So the "Four Olds" could be considered...

Liang: The target.

Alitto: But you indicated in the 1920s and 1930s, China's modern problem was that a new society had not been established and the old society had already been destroyed. During the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s, however, it wasn't this way; it was still a transition period at that time? So there was no target. The "Four Olds" could be said to have been already smashed. If you want to smash them again...

Liang: "Smashing the Four Olds" were Mao's words.

Alitto: Yes, yes. I know. I think that you yourself...

Liang: My own opinion is that, as soon as the Qing Dynasty fell, China was embroiled in strife brought about by warlords. There was no right or wrong to speak of. It was completely a period of turmoil, a temporary state of affairs. This state of affairs was unavoidable, because the old system of loyalty to the lord had been repudiated. No one recognized the situation as good, or right, or as it should be. Actually, the warlords themselves also repudiated the situation. They themselves also said that warlords were a scourge.

Alitto: Right. The warlords would often condemn each other. One would say to another, "You are a warlord." The other would say, "You are a warlord." Whoever was called a warlord would not recognize [himself as such].

Liang: Although it was unavoidable, it was temporary and it would pass. The condition wouldn't go on indefinitely. It would pass. This situation is now over. The dismemberment of China into satraps, with local territorial power-holders is gone. Now the entire country is united and stable.

Alitto: But do the Chinese people now all have a common standard of morality? Do all of them deeply believe without question in a standard of right and wrong, a standard for value judgments?

Liang: I'm afraid not.

Alitto: That's what I meant. In the West there is none either. ...

...

Liang: ...I am not qualified as a person of learning. Why? The intellectual foundation of an authentic scholar of China's traditional learning is a mastery of

the written language and literature. I haven't paid much attention to the written language which is the foundation of ancient books. I have not read China's ancient books. When I was small I didn't read the Chinese classics. Therefore, I really lack a background in traditional Chinese scholarship. On the other side, in modern science, I don't qualify either, because my foreign languages skills are lacking. When I say science, I refer to the natural sciences. When I was in middle school, I studied a bit of science, but it was very superficial. So my foreign learning falls short too. So speaking from these two areas, I am completely unqualified to be a man of learning.

My area of strength is that I like to think. Therefore, if someone calls me a thinker, I won't decline [the designation]. A thinker and a scholar are different. The scholar knows a lot of things; he has absorbed a lot; in knowing more and seeing more, naturally there is some element of creativity; without creativity, one can't absorb anything. But a thinker is different from a scholar in that, although he also knows some things, his power of creativeness is greater than his power of absorption. Of course if he doesn't master a great amount of knowledge, he can't be a thinker. So, I admit that I am a thinker, not a scholar. My thought also has a source of inspiration, and that is Buddhism. So that is what I want to say about myself. I'm not a scholar, but a thinker, and my greatest intellectual inspiration and stimulation has come from Buddhism.¹⁴

¹⁴ Throughout his life, Mr. Liang refused to accept the designation "scholar." Ironically, the word "scholar" (学者) appears in almost everything published about him in Chinese. I think that he did this, not out of modesty. On the other hand, the title "thinker" he always readily accepted (along with "Confucian," "Buddhist," "Marxist," and so on). In English, of course, there is no comparison between the two designations. Only one scholar or academic in perhaps hundreds of thousands would merit the title "thinker." To me, though, even the term "thinker" does not begin to do him justice. Perhaps alone in the twentieth century, he had two exceedingly rare qualities. He was both a genuine thinker and a man of action, and his actions were always determined by what he thought.

Chapter 13

August 25, 1980

Alitto: ...Another definition is more abstract, that is the process of “rationalization.”¹ That is, all social organizations and processes take efficiency as their standard of value. As the process of modernization proceeds, morality is less and less capable of functioning and serving as a norm because the only norm is efficiency. [All other values are based upon it.] This is also one of the definitions of modernization. There is another definition of modernization that has to do with economic growth and the GNP. But this is more difficult to discuss, because it is in the realm of economics. As I

¹I refer here, in a very general way, to Max Weber’s use of the term “rationalization” or “intellectualization” (exactly as in the Chinese “理智化”). In Weber’s theory, intellectualization produced modern scientific and technological knowledge; in his book *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, Liang states precisely this same theory. That is, one of the two strongly developed aspects of Western civilization is “intellect” (理智), while Chinese civilization developed “intuition.” Western intellect produces modern science and technology. Along with intellectualization/rationalization, Weber’s vision of the process of modernization was centered on “calculation.” (Modern capitalism and bureaucracy are based on the assumption that all things can be mastered by calculation, i.e., the intellect). Weber’s implied definition of modernization, at least in my reading, was that it entailed a process whereby all social and economic institutions and processes were made more efficient for the overall end of world mastery. Value-oriented organizations and processes transform into goal-oriented institutions and actions. Thus, the supreme value becomes efficiency, that is, “means.” I agree with certain Postmodern critics of modernization who see this process as the heart of the modern problem. Lyotard, for example, terms efficiency (maximum output for minimum input) “performativity,” and ascribes to it much of the evil in human life.

All this efficiency and calculability in political, social, and economic spheres was not possible without a change of values in ethics, religion, psychology, and culture. The ethos of efficiency (rationality) penetrates into every aspect of life. Each area of human activity has different values and ultimate ends, the overall result being that there are a plurality of values and of metanarratives that all seek to answer the same perennial human questions that religion and ethical systems once focused on. The ultimate irony (among many ironies) of the process is that the “means” become universal, while “ends” are fragmented and relativised. This situation itself, then, destroys all ultimate ends and goals. It might be described as the “slow death of God.” The only universal values are those biologically based, having to do with survival. Needless to say, I myself do not subscribe

previously discussed with you, I feel my own viewpoint and standpoint is more pessimistic than yours. I myself think that modernization is a process whereby human nature is gradually lost.

Liang: What is modernization?

Alitto: It is a process that makes humanity lose its human nature.

Liang: Oh my!

Alitto: Yesterday and the day before we did speak about this. First, because morality is relativised, the morality of any society, no matter what society, is different from that of other societies; there is no absolute morality. No absolute morality is the equivalent of no morality, because morality has been relativised. During these past three hundred years in the West, moral norms have been disappearing. The only norm is efficiency. Or, as far as an individual life is concerned, the demands that emanate from corporeal needs: these are the demands that are common to all societies. The only shared universal aspects are those that emanate from their corporeal needs. On the other hand, shared moral standards are disappearing. Of course, the historical background of Chinese society is different. Throughout history, the Chinese governmental and moral authorities have often been integrated. Buddhism includes... The most recent European, American and Japanese societies can also prove this. They will continue to pay a price for modernization. This price is part of a human's nature. No advancement comes without a price. All of the conveniences of material life, the capacities for high efficiency, control, and the conquest of nature also bring with them some disadvantages. In general terms, it is moral loss. Let's take the family as an example. The concept of family in the West has become weaker and weaker, more and more... If kin relations are one kind of moral relationship, then this kind of relationship has become weaker and weaker through time. The only relationship left is that of the society's fundamental unit, the individual—the individual and the state, the individual and government. This kind of process is not limited to Europe and America. You can also see it in Japan. Many parts of Japan's original culture have already died out, or soon will... For example, traditional Japanese theatre is called "*Neng*" (Noh). It still exists, but it exists because the state protects it. "*Neng*" has become "museumified"; it is no longer alive. So, although

to the "Eurocentric" and teleological elements in Weber's theory, which sees Western civilization's unique achievement as modern rationality, a rationality that was destined to spread around the world. Some of his disciples, such as Talcot Parsons, later developed the teleological aspect of his theory to an absurd degree. Weber himself insisted that he was merely describing a situation he observed. He is "guilty," however, of extreme Eurocentrism, in that he saw the process of rationalization/modernization as a unique Western product that would eventually be imported by every society on earth. I myself view the process itself as one that is universally human, not necessarily tied to the geographic area where it first occurred. One hundred years ago, however, it was indeed universally held, most certainly by almost all Chinese intellectuals, to have come about because of certain features of Western civilization, and which endowed Europe with its huge capacity for ruthless world mastery.

there are many things that still seem to live, they have already been made into “museum pieces.”² Now, the Chinese developmental path is different because of its unique position in history as a culture that has continuously existed for over four thousand years. This is something that exists only in China. My pessimistic view is that China will follow other countries. In the course of time, there will come a time when it too will pay the price for modernization. What is your reaction to what I have said?

Liang: As you know, I’m comparatively optimistic. I feel that the changes will not be great. If you say there will be change, or destruction, then the change and destruction started long before. It started since the end of the Qing Dynasty, even more so in Beijing after Chairman Mao’s founding of the nation. I’ll give an example. Before, it was Old China. It liked and maintained the extended family. If the grandfather was still alive, the grandchildren could not start their own households. If one did, everyone would sneer at them. They would be lacking in decorum if they acted that way. But now everything is fragmented. Now it’s changed into the nuclear family. There is no more extended family. Everyone sets up their own households and lives by himself or herself. Before, dividing into separate households included dividing the property. Now the importance of property in New China has reduced greatly. No one has great family property. But everyone can have a salary, especially women who previously willingly stayed at home. Now female comrades are able to participate in society and are able to come out and work, and have their own income. This is a very great change.

Alitto: If one projects this process into the future, then there may be no family, even to the extent that, as I talked about yesterday, the child will not be born of parents, but be born in a factory-like setting using technology. Of course it is not possible now to reach that point, but by logical inference, even if an individual... To put it another way, at present Europe and America—I think, I’m not too clear about the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe—are post-modern societies. The only rules that people respect are the legal ones. We are now in a society that pays attention to law and individual rights. People act solely in their individual self interest, the result of which is that the entire society is fractured. There is no ethical bond between people. My own opinion—and the one in the book—is that the rural reconstruction plan—which was used even by Mao during the War of Resistance in Yan’an—was aimed partly at preserving morality, and partly at modernization. The situation could be seen as “having one’s

² That is, for reasons of national pride, certain aspects of the culture are preserved, even though those aspects are no longer part of the mainstream of daily society. Another phenomenon related to this is the commercialization of culture. The No drama of Japan is something that almost no one can appreciate, but the Japanese state protected it from the market forces that would have destroyed it. In Europe, a major object of museumification is Christianity, in that the people and governments take great pride in the magnificent churches, and also profit from the tourism these structures attract, but the churches no longer have a central place in the daily life of the people as they once did.

cake and eating it too”—one keeps the advantages while discarding the disadvantages. Those bad parts would be avoided. The disastrous results that came about by modernization in other societies were to be avoided. The advantages, the good parts were to be retained. That is to say, I myself feel that there is a contradiction involved. One cannot have one’s cake and eat it too [getting the good results while avoiding the bad results]. In my view, your plan in the old days, and Mao’s own, could be said to have tried to have the cake and eat it too. It tried to avoid the disastrous results of European and American modernization while retaining the advantages of European and American modernization. Do you feel that this is possible at present, to have one’s cake and eat it too?

Liang: I think it is relatively possible. Assuming that China can be said to have national character and national spirit, the Chinese will still be the Chinese. Even though modernization has already produced great change or great destruction, China will still retain the spirit and flavor of the Chinese people.

Alitto: If we suppose that there is only one standard—efficiency, and all societies are organized for efficiency, no matter which society, e.g., American society, each society in different countries will become increasingly similar. This will happen because efficiency is an objective standard while spirit is a subjective standard. The Tokyo of one hundred years ago and the New York of one hundred years ago were very different. Today’s Tokyo and today’s New York are quite similar. So, your feeling that Chinese can preserve their original spirit is optimistic.

Liang: As I just said, if a great many Chinese customs and usages and etiquette have been destroyed, they were destroyed long before. Comparing the end of the Qing Dynasty with the early years of the Republic, there had already been a great change. Now there is even more change, and even more destruction. But no matter what destruction, the Chinese are still Chinese. China still has Chinese flavors, Chinese customs and Chinese habits.

Alitto: How can these customs, habits and flavors be preserved?

Liang: Let’s put it this way. That they can’t be preserved is because from very early on they couldn’t be preserved; this is not a phenomenon of the present. But if you mention preservation, what has been preserved has been preserved straight through to the present.

Alitto: Alright, preserved until today, but how about tomorrow? 100 years from now? This is difficult to say. You and Chairman Mao have something in common. You both dislike the big city, Westernized big cities such as Shanghai. Could we say this?

Liang: But you can’t be so sweeping. A lot of Shanghai’s habits and customs are not good, but you can’t say the whole of Shanghai’s customs and habits are bad. You can’t say that.

Alitto: I mean the special characteristics of Shanghai in bygone times, in the 1930s. It was the most Westernized city in China. Can we say that?

Liang: It was commercialized.

Alitto: Westernized or commercialized—in fact these two terms are similar. (Liang: Right.) Because a part of modernization is commercialization. The only relationship between people is an economic one, not an ethical one. To put it another way, the stronger legal relationships become, the weaker ethical and emotional relations become. So, Shanghai in the 1930s can be said to have been the most Westernized and most commercialized place in China, right? Could it be said this way? (Liang: You could say it that way.) I know that although in the old days you and Mao had not specifically said that Shanghai was bad, at least we Westerners think that Chairman Mao felt that. We study your thought and have the same concept. That is, you and he had the same attitude toward Westernization and commercialization. You two were both optimistically believing that one could have the benefits of Westernization and commercialization while simultaneously avoiding the disadvantages it brought. One disadvantage was the formation of classes, where the difference between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie became obvious. In Chinese traditional society, even though there were classes in the countryside, they were not very obvious; class division was rather more diffuse, very difficult [to make a clear distinction]...especially because of kin relationships. It was somewhat vague as to how many people were included in a family, and who was included. But it was different in the big city. This was a very explicit difference.

Liang: I want to add a word. As far as I understand, because China is so big, the customs and usages of each locale are different. I would like to bring up a question. What question? One that I was preparing to talk about, the problem of landlord and peasant. As far as the entire country was concerned, it was very different. In some places, landlords and peasants were two classes, as though the landlords were aristocrats, the respectable people, while the peasants were coolies. But some places were completely different. I'm familiar with two places—one is Zouping County, Shandong, where I worked, and another is Ding County, where Yan Yangchu worked. There was an American educated friend named Li Jinghan who carried out social survey in Ding County. In Zouping if we mentioned the term "tenant farmer," the Zoupingese were unaccustomed to it, and would not understand. Why? Because practically every single farmer in Zouping County had a little land. He would cultivate the land of someone who had a lot of land. The person with a lot of land was the landlord. The landlord would give him an amount of land and ask him to farm it. Their relationship was one of equality, not one marked by two classes. Thus, they didn't use the term "tenant." In Zouping they didn't have the term. In Ding County, the tenant farmer would farm the land of the landlord. After farming it, he and the landlord would share the harvest. Some shared half and half, and there was also a 60/40 split. In short, at the time of the harvest, the tenant would hand over to the landlord his share. At that time, the landlord had to treat them; the landlord would have to have those farmers who worked his land sit down to a banquet. The landlord would have to toast them. This was

something that was virtually unknown in other places. How could such a thing happen? Because, China really is big. The customs and habits of each place are different. I know that Zouping and Ding Counties were this way, but other places were different. For example, I heard of, but didn't personally witness, the customs of a place in Shandong called Zhucheng. Zhucheng had always produced great officials. Later a famous calligrapher named Liu Shian was from the Liu family of Zhucheng which had big officials generation after generation. There the tenant-landlord relationship was virtually one of slave and master. Overall, China is very big, with each place having its own customs and habits, so one can't generalize.

Alitto: Right, right. So, don't you think that modernization causes people's good nature to disappear, that is, it makes relations between people obdurate and cold? Don't you think that people's desires run wild and morality becomes bankrupt because of the processes that modernization brings with it?

Liang: As I just said, if it brings on [such costs], it's not just today. It's been bringing these for a long time now. But no matter how much inevitable damage, there is still something not damaged. Even if these things will change in the future, these changes cannot necessarily be called destructive.

Alitto: The mechanization of human life, naturally aside from its conveniences, such as the mechanization of agriculture and technology, has caused people to become half machine, to live in an unbalanced manner. Can this be considered a crisis of modernization? (Liang: A crisis.) Oh, you admit this?

Liang: Of course I admit this.

Alitto: So what is the best way of avoiding it? What way is there to avoid these disastrous results?

Liang: Perhaps the state will pay attention to it in education. This "education" does not necessarily mean formal schooling. Of course schools are included in the "education" I mentioned. For instance, in primary school, teaching students to be polite, how to help people, how to take care of one another...

Alitto: You feel that the power of education is great?

Liang: Of course, especially primary school education. Education is very useful.

Alitto: Suppose there was a person who, from the time he was small, felt that his life, his everything was for his own sake, not for the group (no matter what kind of group), but for his individual benefit, how would you persuade him to [act] for the benefit of the group...

Liang: Persuasion is not the way.

Alitto: Then what method should we use?

Liang: Persuasion is no good. The way lies in inculcating [good habits and civilized behavior]. ...[Persuasion] is a stupid method. Talking reason is something on the conscious level. The power of speech is small. Changing a person must come from the sphere outside of speech. The method must be outside words and talks.

Alitto: That is nurturing a custom. I remember that in the past, during your rural reconstruction work, this phrase was used—"to create a new custom and

atmosphere.” In the old days the method was “lecturing” (preaching). Lecturing was used in the Song and Ming Dynasties in education. I’ll say it again. In the old days when you were at Peking University, you already had great interest in “lecturing,” the kind of Chinese traditional lecturing.³ You felt this might possibly function as a unit⁴ for a social movement, or perhaps...

Liang: I combined into a single entity the Song-Ming Confucian custom of preaching and a modern social movement. I had mentioned this previously.

Alitto: In the countryside you advocated the method of the “Rural Covenant” to...

Liang: The “Rural Covenant” that I mentioned was “The Lü Family Rural Covenant.”⁵

Alitto: One could say that even the “Rural Covenant” was related to “lecturing,” and thus was similar in some respects. (Liang: Yes.) Those were the methods used by Chairman Mao, especially during the War of Resistance. Actually even after the victory they were still used. The study group resembled this in that there was mutual encouragement, mutual criticism, and mutual study, towards continual betterment. As far as the present situation is concerned, do you feel that these methods are still useful? That is, in order to avoid the drawbacks of modernization, can methods like the “Rural Covenant,” the study group, lecturing function, and so forth, avoid the untoward aspects that modernization would bring?

Liang: I should mention that the study group that Chairman Mao promoted and what I just talked about were completely different things. Chairman Mao promoted thought reform, which right down to the present we are still carrying out. Chairman Mao had concerns of his own. A thought reform movement and the work we put into the villages, the training of primary school students are two completely different things.

Alitto: Why do you say they are different?

Liang: Because what he was doing was thought reform. In our People’s Political Consultative Conference, the [standing] committee members had a study group. He said that we must eradicate non-proletarian thought. This, and what we were just talking about nurturing new common practices

³Western languages have no real equivalent for this term, in the sense that Liang used it. In Chinese tradition, academic activities “learning,” study, and teaching have a morality component. This term, especially in times past, had connotations of preaching and moral suasion. That is why I termed it “preachery.” It might even be termed “giving a sermon.”

⁴The use of the word “unit” was a slip of the tongue. I meant that it might function as a method in a social movement.

⁵This institution, a rural community-action, mutual-aid, and mutual moral exhortation unit, was created by Lü Dajun (吕大钧) and his brother Lü Dalin (吕大临) in 1076. They drew inspiration from the *Rites of Zhou* (《周礼》) and the *Book of Rites* (《礼记》). Both giants of Neo-Confucian thought, Zhuxi and Wang Yangming found the idea attractive and constructed their own versions. Liang took up this institution because of its anti-bureaucratic, voluntary nature; it was to promote voluntary community action and initiative through moral suasion.

and customs among the society and the primary school students, are completely different. His was thought reform.

Alitto: I know how to put it. From the Westerners' standpoint, we feel that these two phenomena are similar. Our standpoint is here [motioning to a place at a distance]. These two phenomena are comparatively similar, and are connected with Chinese tradition. Confucianism has always carried the belief that the power of education is very great, that it can create a new person. In English, there is a term "human environment." You will imperceptibly be infected by the spirit of the people who are around you every day. It can even influence morally. This is a fundamental view and principle of Confucianism. So we Westerners see that there are still a lot of similarities between the two. I said this in my book. Naturally, looking at this from your standpoint, things are not like that at all. I can understand this.

Bringing up this book, I want to ask, looking at it basically, whether there are any other mistakes, other factual errors in it. The first question... The very last paragraph of the book can be said to describe you in your 70s and 80s. Your friends, rivals and others of the old days are already gone by then. At that time, Hu Shi, Zhou Enlai, Li Jishen, Li Zongren and Chairman Mao all have passed away. I wrote that although you were not a favorite of modern society, nor were you a household name, you were a good "Old Age," as we say in English, which means that you had grandchildren, and your health was good, and you were able to maintain your original self-respect and pride. This was good, right? [I wrote that] possibly Mr. Liang took a walk alone by Jishuitan, that place of his father's there. Possibly he looked at the base of the stone tablet [that memorialized his father]—that stone tablet is no longer there—and possibly looked at Jishuitan, which now is a swimming place for children, but at least... When I came here in 1973, I didn't have the opportunity to see you. I did go look at Jishuitan. The last sentence of my book is, "Under these circumstances, what would be his thoughts?" So the last sentence is a question addressed to the reader after he had read the book and looked at your life, "What do you [reader] think were his thoughts?" Now I have an opportunity to ask you.

Liang: I didn't understand your question.

Alitto: Oh, yes. I wrote in the last sentence "What would be his thoughts [in English]," that is to say, you are of great age, your friends from the old days have passed away, but you still retain your self-respect, and you have grandchildren. If you took a walk by Jishuitan, what would you think of ?

Liang: What reflections would I have?

Alitto: Not limited by any thing. What reflections do you have looking back on your whole life?

Liang: But I must say now, I've heard that that place has been completely transformed, completely transformed. It has been changed beyond recognition. I heard that. I've not gone to see myself. Others have told me.

Alitto: When I went there in 1973, they had dug an extremely deep something or another. It was very deep. Was it for the subway?...

Liang: Completely changed.

Alitto: Completely changed. That is to say, in these most recent years, were you still living by Deshengmen? Before you moved here, were you living there?

Liang: I had already moved...oh my...changed places several times.

Alitto: Oh, you had changed places several times?

Liang: Now Jishuitan has changed completely. I didn't go to see it, but my second son went to look. He returned to tell me that it was completely changed, changed beyond recognition. He couldn't find it. He described it to me this way.

Alitto: Oh. Supposing you were there taking a walk, and thinking about everything in the past, what reflections would you have?

Liang: I wouldn't have any. Let me tell you this. You understand me. I am a Buddhist. Buddhists view everything very flatly. There are no important problems, nothing is of consequence. In my case, I have always made my mood as flat and dull as possible; the duller, the better. My life was also like this. For example, I drink plain water, not tea. I feel that tea is a bit of a stimulant and so I feel that it is better not to drink tea. Just plain boiled water is fine. My diet is light. I don't eat meat and things that people regard as delicious; moreover, I eat very little. I pay no attention to taste and flavor. A state in which all aspects of life are dull and flat is best for me. So, if you ask me what reflections I have, I have nothing. (Alitto: Alright.) I want to add something. Probably this extraordinary dullness has something to do with my longevity.

Alitto: You've been this way since your teens, or...

Liang: Of course not.

Alitto: So when did you reach this state, the level of transcendence over everything?

Liang: Probably in my old age. Before old age is reached, it's difficult to be able to be like this. Although I had those other habits earlier, habits such as a vegetarian diet. I haven't eaten any meat for 70 years.

Alitto: Right. That is a long-standing habit.

Liang: The older I got the more I was able to maintain a flat, calm state.

Alitto: My book makes you out to be the most exemplary, archetypical Confucian of the modern era, or at least, of the 20th century. You just told me that you were a Buddhist all along. Of course, in *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*, you wrote "Although at present I can say that I do not advocate Buddhism but advocate Confucianism, I myself now can be considered a Confucian."⁶ But you also said that the erroneous attachment...

Liang: The errors of adhering to the belief in the reality of the ego and of things.

⁶This is a confusing error on my part because of a slip of the tongue. It should be "can be considered a Buddhist."

- Alitto: Right. You said unless one...these two attachments... I've forgotten what word you used.
- Liang: It's called "to refute," to refute the two attachments.
- Alitto: If one does not refute false tenets, one will not reach the truth. I know that you are still a Buddhist, but your life was a model life in the Confucian tradition. Because of this, I used a title like this. Actually, the title does not have this meaning. I used it only because in English it sounds good and relatively catchy.
- Liang: I think that this book title is still good. Why is it good? Because it is comparatively appropriate. To call me a Confucian is more appropriate than calling me a Buddhist. For the purpose of making everyone understand it is comparatively suitable.
- Alitto: You just said that only after reaching old age did you reach this state or realm of extraordinary transcendence. Was your interest in Buddhism somewhat increased in your old age?
- Liang: It was the same all along.
- Alitto: Completely the same, without a bit of change?
- Liang: No. I believe myself to be a Buddhist, but [to make] the majority of people in society, people in general [understand], it is better, as you said, to say I am a Confucian. I am willing to accept this [title] of yours.
- Alitto: It is possible that there was probably a profound and large mistake. Of course, I didn't have the opportunity to meet you, and didn't have the face to face opportunity to understand your mentality to any degree. From the written materials and from your friends in Hong Kong and Taiwan or others who knew you, I felt that your psychology could be explained this way. After the Republican Revolution, you attempted suicide twice, and had a spiritual crisis; I took that period to be the turning point of your entire life. That is to say, after you went through that period, your direction, everything about you could be said to have been fixed.
- Liang: I gradually stabilized.
- Alitto: Looking at this from the present point of time, what do you think that period was like?
- Liang: Then and now are very different. I was only in my teens at the time.
- Alitto: At that age, people of all societies, not just China, have a fundamental, in English, "Identity." In Chinese, it means "who they recognize or believe themselves to be," what sort of person they recognize themselves to be.⁷ Only after reaching that age does an identity crisis occur, so I termed your spiritual crisis of that period an "Identity Crisis." There was an old American psychologist, about your age, who was teaching at Harvard. He used psychoanalytic methods to study historical figures. He wrote a book on Gandhi, and one about the German medieval figure Luther. (Liang: Lude?) Lude [in Chinese]. In any case I used part of his methodology to

⁷ The Chinese term is "认同" (*rentong*), but I don't think it was in use much during the 1970s. At least I had not heard of it.

study you. He felt that the most important part of a life was the "Identity Crisis," which often took place in the late teens.

Liang: It was right at that time.

Alitto: I read the written materials only. They were important, but written materials were not life. What do you feel about my using this method of analysis?

Liang: There is nothing that I disagree with. Let me add a word. In my late teens and twenties, when I attempted suicide, it seemed as though I loathed myself. Moreover, my knowledge was insufficient. What didn't I know? I thought that suicide was the end. Later I understood that suicide would not be an end. It's by no means the case that after death there is nothing. Death isn't that way. Thus, my attempt at suicide was ineffective, mistaken and confused. Only later did I understand. I didn't understand this at the time. At the time I only had the feeling of self-loathing.

Alitto: Actually I read all the publications about that period of your life. There were actually many differences in what was written. One of the views was similar to the one that you just stated, the one about self-loathing. Another was that your ideals and standards were too high. You felt that you couldn't meet them. Although you felt that others were not good, and didn't meet your standards, you also discovered that you were not up to your own standards and so you fought within yourself. There's another... In any case I have two questions. If you don't want to answer, don't. I feel that it is extremely difficult to ask...

Liang: Go ahead.

Alitto: The first: You said you attempted suicide twice. In which ways did you attempt it, drowning yourself in a river, or using a gun...

Liang: I wanted to drown myself in a river.

Alitto: Drown yourself in a river. The first time was in Nanjing. You wrote this. Was the second time in Nanjing or in another place?

Liang: The first time was in Beijing.

Alitto: The first time was in Beijing. Alright. The second question is more difficult to ask. I feel that your explanations concerning that time are many and different. They are not contradictory. They are all very reasonable. Looking at them now, I think they are all reasonable. But you have never mentioned your father. You already had a conflict with your father over the Republican Revolution. Using Westerners' psychoanalytic methods, in Chinese society, to have this kind of conflict with a father was an extremely serious affair.

Liang: I want to explain this. The conflict was not large. I mentioned it in books. At that time, I had already participated in the revolution, to overthrow the Qing Dynasty, but my father was still an official in the Qing court. My father knew it, but did not lose his temper, and in this way he reproached me. It wasn't like that. He said, "In a family such as ours, it's not good to do this," but he didn't interfere with me in any fashion.

Alitto: Yes, but after the Republican Revolution succeeded, or no, before it succeeded, he had suspected that institutions like representative assemblies wouldn't work.

Liang: He didn't suspect that this institution wouldn't work. Originally he had always placed great hope in the National Assembly. But, when the National Assembly met, especially the lower house... There were two houses, an upper house and a lower house. The speaker and deputy speaker of the upper house were elected very quickly. The lower house met for a month and still hadn't produced a speaker. One of the house members had been making trouble, so after a month they still hadn't elected a speaker. My father was disappointed. He had thought that the National Assembly consisted of the most outstanding figures of the entire nation. But when he saw the disturbances, fights, and the members cursing each other in the National Assembly, he was disappointed.⁸

⁸ After this tape ended, Mr. Liang and I continued to discuss this question for about half an hour. Throughout these interviews, right until the last few minutes, he never mentioned his father, and only toward the end did I venture to ask him directly. Yet Mr. Liang's father was clearly the single most important factor in his life and the single most important influence on him. Liang Ji's suicide in November 1918 attracted national attention. My own interpretation of Liang Shuming's actions in the period following the event was that the suicide was perhaps the single most important factor that drove him toward a public persona and a private identity as a Confucian. Liang Ji said he committed suicide for the Confucian virtue of loyalty and to inspire the young people to act on the principles to which they were committed. During this conversation, Liang said that he would not dispute my thesis, and again made the ambiguous comment that he made about the book in general, "There is nothing that I disagree with."