Putting One's Self in Perspective:
The "discovery" of Chinese philosophy in Malebranche, Leibniz and Wolff

David Rathbone B.Sc. M.Sc. M.A. Ph.D.
University of Melbourne, Australia.
dara@unimelb.edu.au

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From the earliest studies in the 1920s of Merkel,[i] of Franke,[ii] and of Latourette[iii], through the publications of Pinot[iv] in the 1930s and of Rowbotham[v] and of Lach[vi] in the 1940s, to the studies of Needham,[vii] of Cary-Elwes[viii] and of Cronin[ix] in the '50s, to the works of Grimm,[x] of Ho[xi] and of Krahl[xii] in the '60s, and of of Roy,[xiii] of Bernard[xiv] and of Zempliner[xv] in the '70s, through the extensive works in the '80s of Mungello,[xvi] of Widmaier,[xvii] of Young,[xviii] of Cook & Rosemont,[xix] of Liu[xx] and of Graham,[xxi] to the publications of Ching & Oxtoby[xxii] and of Chen[xxiii] in the '90s, to the recent publications by Ribas,[xxiv] Swetz,[xxv] Ryan,[xxvi] and Perkins,[xxvii] not a single decade has gone by in the past century when thinkers have not rediscovered for themselves Leibniz's correspondence with Jesuits in China, and explored each in their own way the significance of his role in Europe's discovery of China in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In this paper, I aim to contribute to this still-growing body of literature through a comparative reading of four short works : Ricci's *The True Meaning of The Lord of Heaven* of 1591, Malebranche's *Dialogue Between a Christian Philosopher and a Chinese Philosopher* of 1708, Leibniz's *Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese* of 1714, and Wolff's *Discourse on the Practical Philosophy of the Chinese* of 1721. These compact works exemplify the tangle of insights and confusions characteristic of the earliest European attempts to understand Chinese philosophy, and to instigate a cross-cultural philosophical dialogue, an attempt which was eventually to collapse into the derogatory attitudes of Kant [xxviii] and of Hegel,[xxix] but which in Leibniz and in Wolff still drove a much more optimistic, humble and cosmopolitan impulse.

1. Historical Introduction.

By 1400, famous Medieval travelers such as Prester John and Marco Polo had firmly established in the European imagination a mythical location called "Cathay," located somewhere across the Eastern horizon, concerning which the most fabulous of tales proliferated. Arabic trade routes

through the Middle East had existed since antiquity, and stories were traded along with spices, gems and silk, embellished with each re-telling until fact and fiction became indistinguishable. These garbled snippets did little to challenge the prevailing Eurocentric teleological presumption that history had revolved around the Mediterranean, the focus having gradually rotated counter-clockwise from Ancient Egypt, to the Semitic lands of Judea, to the Classical locus of Greece, then on to Rome, and then finally arriving at its goal: the Christendom of Western Europe. All else was assumed to be a spin-off of one sort or another: errant siblings of Cain or lost sons of Noah who had strayed deep into Africa, India, and the frigid Northern lands.

The dimensions of the world known to Europe were raised by an order of magnitude during the course of the fifteenth century, due largely to Portuguese nautical advances. It is perhaps fitting that it was a Chinese invention which played a crucial role in this innovation: the compass, which had found its way to Europe via the Arabic world.[xxx] With its help, Portuguese ships made their tentative way down the West coast of Africa, Bartholomew Dias rounding the Cape of Good Hope in 1488, thereby opening a trade route with India which bypassed Arabic mediation. Vasco da Gama first sailed all the way to India in 1497/8, the first of his three voyages of discovery to that region, at around the same time that Christopher Columbus was testing his own theory, a fascinating blend of scientific calculation and prophetic inspiration, that India could be reached more easily by sailing westward.[xxxi] But Columbus underestimated the Earth's circumference by half, and the "West Indies" which he discovered in 1492 and returned to three more times before he died, were not so close to India as he imagined, nor the indigenous inhabitants the "Indians" he took them to be, estimating the river Ganges to be a mere ten days sailing further West, and that he was "next to Cathay."

Both DaGama and Columbus imagined that they were close to completing the world map and filling in what they took to be the final details of the whole, when in fact they were on the verge of discovering that Europe's vision of the whole had concealed a hole harboring no less detail than did the entirety of the old world then known to Europe. The Pacific Islands, the Americas, China, South-East Asia, Australasia; all these regions were populated by peoples no less numerous and no less diverse than those of the entire old world itself. That sobering realization was compounded by the revelation that a literate culture even more ancient than European culture, with its own traditions and customs, religions and philosophies existed in China. That revelation can be said to have begun in earnest in 1513, when the Portuguese first explored the south-eastern Chinese coast, after setting out from the

base which da Gama had established in India, and to have culminated in the reception of the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci at the Emperor's Palace in Peking some eighty years later. This revelation then ramified through the absorption of Ricci's discoveries in Europe during the subsequent century.

So to imagine that Europe and China suddenly 'met' on that day in 1513 when Portuguese ships sailed into the port city of Macao is an oversimplification of that event. On the one hand, an intermittent migration of "Far Western Barbarians" (as the Chinese referred to Westerners) had for centuries filtered through the formidable natural wall of mountains to the west, if not the artificial one to the north. A Jewish tribe would appear to have somehow made the journey in the second century B.C., and David Harris has discovered the remains of a Roman colony dating from the first century B.C.[xxxii] Buddhism had found its way from India in the first century A.D., and by the sixth, had permeated many aspects of Chinese culture, interacting with the indigenous Taoist and Confucian practices, although not without friction.[xxxiii] Islam, Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism were all imported by Persian traders along the silk route during the T'ang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.). Nestorian Christians from Syria also made their way to China during the seventh and eighth centuries, although their presence was lessened by the fall of the T'ang Dynasty, and the ensuing century of chaos during the ephemeral "Five Dynasties" period (907-960 A.D.).[xxxiv]

The ascendancy of the Mongol *Khans* (from Ghengis to Khubliai) dominated Asia in the thirteenth century, establishing an empire that stretched from Korea to Poland and from Persia to Russia, eventually toppling the Sung Dynasty (960-1271) and inaugurating the Yüan Dynasty of Khubliai Kahn and his descendants (1271-1368). It was via Mongol trade routes that the Italian merchant brothers Maffeo and Nicolo Polo made their journey to China in 1260-69, and so they knew the country by the Mongol name *KaiTai* (transliterated "Cathay"), and its capital as *Cambaluc*, as did Marco, Nicolo's famous son, when he set out in 1271. Franciscan missionaries had also traveled to China in the thirteenth century via the same route under the leadership of John of Montecorvino.[xxxv] For almost a century, the Franciscan mission to Cathay flourished, and although more missionaries died *en route* than ever actually reached China, their influence during the Yüan Dynasty was not insubstantial. But the breakup of the Mongol Empire, which led to the closure of their trade routes, coincided with the arrival of the Black Death in Europe, and this avenue of contact thus ceased, leaving the remaining Franciscans stranded in China. When the Ming Dynasty arose in 1368, all Mongols were expelled and a long period of isolation and xenophobia began in China. It was thus not until 1513 that this semi-

legendary Kingdom of Cathay, and the trading ports known second-hand through the peoples of Burma and India as the “Chin” (from the Chin Dynasty which ruled from 1115-1234), were realized to be one and the same country, referred to as *Sina* in Latin and "China"in the vernacular, although the Chinese themselves had never used, nor even known, any of these names for themselves.[xxxvi]

So although the Portuguese sailors were not exactly finding something utterly unknown when they “discovered” China in 1513, on the other hand, any real meeting of China and Europe was still almost a century away in 1513. China had been closed to foreigners of any kind since the start of the Ming Dynasty (1368), and although the Portuguese were permitted to establish a trading post at Maccao, interaction with the Chinese was initially minimal. It was the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) who first began to appreciate the extent and difficulty of this task. His predecessor Francis Xavier (1506-1552), founder of the Jesuits, had been sent by Rome in 1540 to “evangelize the East Indies,”[xxxvii] and although Xavier managed to spend four very productive years in Japan where he established a thriving church, he died of a fever on the island of Sangchwan in December 1552, awaiting official permission to enter the Chinese mainland, a permission he would never have succeeded in gaining, for his inability to speak Chinese formed an insuperable barrier.

The Jesuit Society was established in 1540, and so was barely 20 years old when it founded a school in Ricci's home town of Macerata in 1559, to which the 7 year old Ricci was sent as a pupil. His innate capacity for languages equipped him well for a missionary vocation: a native Italian, he learnt Latin and Greek quickly, and studied the memory techniques of Raymond Lull, a method which was later to stand him in good stead in China. Inspired by stories of Francis Xavier’s exciting life, Ricci applied to become a missionary in the far East as soon as he was old enough. As the far East mission fell under the province of Portugal, Ricci was sent there in 1577 at the age of 25, where he distinguished himself by the speed with which he learnt Portuguese. In 1578 he was chosen to leave for China, and sailed to Goa in India via the Cape of Good Hope. By the time Ricci arrived in Maccao in August 1582, about 1,000 of the population of around 10,000 were Portuguese sailors, many of whom had married Chinese wives. The mission there consisted of five Jesuit priests, none of whom knew Chinese adequately, and none of whom had been allowed to travel into the mainland. It was immediately apparent to Ricci that his first step must be to learn to speak, read and write the Chinese language, to which daunting task he diligently applied himself. A mere twelve months later he was communicating well enough to be able to negotiate permission with the Chinese authorities to relocate

the 200 or so kilometers up the Western river at the mouth of which Macao stood, to the town of Shiuhing, thus becoming the first European to enter China for over 200 years.[xxxviii]

Soon after this relocation, two important sets of distinctions became apparent to Ricci. The first was the difference between Cantonese and Mandarin; the second, the differences between Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. In order to distinguish themselves as "holy men," the Jesuits in Macao had shaved their heads and adopted orange robes in imitation of Buddhist monks, the closest role, they thought, to their concept of a priest in their new cultural context.[xxxix] However, it soon dawned on Ricci that Buddhist monks held a very low social status in China, and were considered to be of dubious moral character. Much closer to the European conception of the dignity and vocation of a Christian priest, he came to realize, were the Confucian literati, the scholars, scribes, and moral paragons of Chinese culture, whose wisdom was measured not by lack of, but rather by length of, beard and hair. To his dismay, he also realized that the language of the literati, Mandarin, was very different indeed to the Cantonese dialect he had worked so hard to learn. It is a mark of Ricci's intelligence that in the time it took him to grow a long beard, he had acquired a large Mandarin vocabulary, a wardrobe of dignified black silk gowns, and a thorough knowledge of the Confucian classics, translating the *Four Books* into Latin in 1594. Apart from his considerable personal capabilities (and especially his powers of memory), Ricci employed three main devices in his attempts to construct a bridge between himself and the Chinese Mandarins: these were maps, clocks, and paintings.[xl]

2. Three New Ways To See the Whole: Maps, Clocks and Paintings.

Chinese cartography of the sixteenth century, like its European counterpart, was locally sophisticated but globally vague. The Chinese world map of that time revealed an extensive and detailed geographical knowledge as far as India, but quickly petered out into vague and speculative contours further to the West, a region confidently assumed by the Chinese to be inhabited by none but the most degraded of barbarians. Likewise, the best European maps before 1500 accurately detailed the East coast of the Bay of Bengal, but were more or less sheer guess-work beyond the Malay peninsula.[xli] Ricci realized that by joining these two, he could present a map that would fascinate the Chinese no less than the Europeans. Ever since leaving Goa, Ricci had carefully charted his voyage, taking sextant readings which had enabled him to revise and complete the atlases he had carried with him. And so in 1584, Ricci drew up what was at that time the most complete map of the world in existence, employing a sinusoidal projection with a prime meridian of 170 degrees east in order to bring China to its center (Ricci knew and understood Mercator's projection method). He included all

European place names in Chinese, especially pointing out Italy as his own home in order to impress upon the Mandarins just how far he had come in order to allay the fear he perceived that he might be an advance scout of an invading army, hardly likely when his home base was so mind-bogglingly distant.

The map was an immediate success, and proved instrumental in Ricci obtaining permission to travel north along the Kan River to the southern capital, Nanking, where he first arrived in 1595, but he was denied the right to reside there until 1599. It was there, in 1600, that Ricci produced a second edition of his world map, double the size of the first and employing this time instead a circular rather than sinusoidal projection. Again, that map was an instant success, and it was soon thereafter that Ricci was finally permitted to travel north along the Imperial Canal to Peking, site of the Emperor's palace, and the meeting place of heaven and earth according to Chinese belief. There Ricci became good friends with Lǐ Chih-tsao, a leading Chinese geographer and author of the Chinese world atlas Ricci had first seen in 1585. At the request of Lǐ Chih-tsao, Ricci published a third edition of his map. A monumental work in six panels, some two meters high, Ricci this time reverted to a sinusoidal projection, taking the whole of 1601 to complete its construction, adding astronomical information, as well as much detail concerning each country and its inhabitants.[xlii]

If the world map helped shift the Chinese conception of space from a local to a global level, something similar could be said for the clock in regard to time. Although the Chinese had for centuries employed sand-clocks and water-clocks to measure limited intervals of time, a mechanical clock which ran day and night, measuring not a local event in an otherwise vaguely conceived whole of time, but rather, time itself as a whole, was to them a marvel. In Shiuhing, where he first lived while learning Mandarin, Ricci built a large clock with a single hour-hand into the face of the dwelling he was permitted to erect for himself, with a bell which stuck the hour, to the delight of the entire town. He also constructed sun-dials, and cast metal globes of the world, both of which delighted the Chinese, earning him respect in Chinese eyes, as well as contributing to the overall process of the mutual expansion of horizons that was taking place, both for the foreigner as well as for the astonished locals.[xliii]

When Ricci finally arrived in Peking in 1599, of all the gifts he presented to the Emperor, it was the clock which met with the greatest approval. In fact, that clock can without exaggeration be said to have saved Ricci's life. For during this initial reception in Peking, the caste of Eunuchs, which surrounded the Emperor and his many wives like a bureaucratic shield (and who thus wielded

enormous power, more often than not in conflict with the caste of the Mandarins) took a disliking to this presumptuous foreigner, and very nearly had him executed. The Mandarins advised Ricci to flee, but he was caught before he could leave, and put under arrest. Execution seemed inevitable, until suddenly an Imperial Reprieve was mysteriously issued. When Ricci later made inquiries he discovered "the Emperor suddenly remembered 'Certain foreigners wanted to present His Majesty with a striking clock'. Petulantly he asked, 'Why don't they give me that striking clock?'"[xliv] And so not only was Ricci's life spared, but his entrée to Imperial favor was in fact established.

The timepiece was indeed an imposing device, standing in a large wooden case on four columns carved with flowers and dragons, lacquered and gilt with gold Chinese characters designating the hours, and hands fashioned in the shape of the two halves of an eagle's beak. When the clock soon ran down, Ricci was summoned angrily to the palace. When he explained that the clock required regular maintenance, four mathematicians of the Imperial College were appointed as his pupils for three days to learn the secrets of the strange machine. Soon the clock was ticking and chiming once again, and the Emperor was so pleased that Ricci was granted land in Peking, and the four mathematicians promoted to the prestigious status of the new post Imperial Keepers of the Clock.[xlv]

The third pillar of the bridge Ricci tried to build between West and East was the painting. Unlike the map and the clock, however, European paintings were viewed by the Chinese with some alarm, and a good deal of suspicion. The European emphasis on perspective and shading which yielded representational realism, techniques so highly developed in the Italian Renaissance culminating in Italy at this time, contrasted strongly with Chinese artistic conventions of proportion, harmony, symbolism and minimalism. Among the presents which the Jesuits offered the Emperor along with the clock were two portraits, one of Christ, and another of the Virgin Mary. When shown to the Emperor, he is reported to have cried out in astonishment "This is a living idol" and had the portrait immediately removed from his apartments. The picture of the Virgin Mary he sent to the Empress Mother, who likewise took fright at the picture's lifelike appearance, and had it put in storage so as not to have to look at it. Like the prism which appeared to have trapped a rainbow, the portraits seemed somehow to have frozen and captured a person, and were thus perceived to be surrounded by more than a hint of sorcery. Similarly, when once having his belongings searched aboard a river-barge, two small Crucifixes were found in a trunk of Ricci's, with life-like figures of Christ nailed to them, complete with red paint around the nail heads in his hands and feet and around the sword wound in Jesus' side. Surely these gruesome objects were magic fetishes of evil purpose, reasoned the eunuch Ma T'ang who

was conducting the search. Ricci tried to explain that these were actually a sort of representation of the divinity which he worshiped, which only worsened things in the Eunuch's eyes. A Mandarin intervened and was more tolerant, but nevertheless later commented to Ricci "All the same, it is cruel and improper to keep representations of such a scene."[xlvi]

Despite his unease concerning the portraits, the Emperor was so pleased with the chiming clock that he was curious to know what these strange foreigners looked like. But the Emperor was completely reclusive, and for decades had deigned to come face to face with no one apart from his wives, parents, and eunuchs. To bring the Jesuits themselves into his presence was unthinkable, and so the Emperor gave orders that their portraits should be painted for him. Ricci and the Spanish missionary Pantoja sat for an Imperial artist for several days, until the portraits were finished. Upon seeing the results, they were speechless, for neither man recognized themselves in the pictures at all, although the artist seemed pleased with his work. As was the Emperor, who saw immediately that the men were "Hoeihoei" (Persians). He then desired to know how their royalty dressed, and in what kind of dwellings they lived, so the Jesuits sent an engraving showing the Pope along with various dignitaries dressed in ceremonial garments. When he saw it, the Emperor was puzzled, and complained that the figures were shadowy, small and indistinct. His artists were instructed to make an enlargement and improvement of the scene, which they did, adding color, and eliminating all shading and perspective, and the Emperor was suitably impressed with the result.

These discrepancies in artistic perception presaged deeper religious and philosophical incommensurabilities in Rome, which were to come eventually to undo the entire mission which Ricci had worked so hard to pioneer. The Jesuits were reliant upon the support of Rome to send new missionaries and supplies, Ricci requesting that the Society send astronomers and mathematicians, for he was convinced that European scientific knowledge was the way to win Chinese converts. But by this time, Dominican and Franciscan friars had also made their way to China to see first hand the work that the Jesuits were doing. What they saw shocked them: Jesuits that seemed to have been altogether Sinified, and Chinese "converts" still practicing Confucian rites of burial and ancestor-worship. in the Chinese language. Christian identity seemed to them to be being wholly compromised, the method of proselytism favored by the Dominicans and Franciscans being to march through the streets holding up large crucifixes, preaching through interpreters, and insisting that converts should learn to speak the language of the missionaries and not vice-versa.[xlvii]

3. The Rites Controversy and Matteo Ricci's *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*.

Thus began the Rites Controversy, which raged in Rome throughout the seventeenth century, Jesuits arguing the case for accommodation of Confucian rites in the lives of converts, Dominicans and Franciscans the case against. In support of their cause, the Jesuits began the annual publication in Europe of letters from Jesuits in China in French translation, together with translations of selections from Chinese literature, under the title of *Letters édifiantes et curieuses*. In this way the Jesuits became pioneers not only in introducing Europe to China, but also in bringing knowledge of Chinese philosophy to Europe.[xlviii] Influential Europeans were sought by the Jesuits to support and to further their cause in China. Thus it was that Malebranche and Leibniz were both eventually drawn in to this debate (Malebranche contra Jesuit, Leibniz pro). Or to put it another way, thus it was that some consideration of Chinese philosophy was drawn into philosophical circles in Europe in the opening decades of the eighteenth century. In fact, by the time Malebranche wrote his *Dialogue* in 1708, the rites controversy itself had been settled within the Catholic Church in favor of the Dominican and Franciscan opposition to the Jesuits, as finally decreed by Pope Clement XI in November 1704,[xlix] and the Jesuit mission in China had collapsed. But its ramifications in Europe were by then just beginning, as a wave of Orientalism spread throughout Europe, instigated in large part through the Jesuit publication of the series *Letters édifiantes et curieuses*.

In addition to these letters, Malebranche and Leibniz both sought to comprehend the Chinese mind through Matteo Ricci's dialogue *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven.*[1] Ricci had published this dialogue in 1596 in Mandarin in China, and it then subsequently circulated in Latin translation in Europe throughout the seventeenth century. Leibniz mentions China in passing as early as 1666 in his work *De Arte Combinatoria*, and had been following whatever literature on China he could find with growing interest since 1669.[li] Although Edward Said maintains in *Orientalism* that Leibniz was a mere "abstract humanist,"[lii] and Cook and Rosemont challenged the case for direct influence of Chinese philosophy upon Leibniz in their 1981 article, "The Pre-Established Harmony Between Leibniz and Chinese Thought,"[liii] both Said, and even Cook and Rosemont underestimate Leibniz. As Mungello says of Leibniz, "He was probably aware of every significant work on China produced in Europe in the seventeenth century" (pp.6-7). Leibniz's orientalism was in fact as thoroughly grounded in the available accounts of discovery and interaction as it could possibly have been at the time, and was for Leibniz no abstract matter of mere humanism, but rather an astonishing confirmation of his holistic convictions.

For here were a people unfolding reason in their own entirely different way, altogether independently of Europe.

Needham points out that "all the essentials of [Leibniz's] system were worked out in the *Discourse on Metaphysics* (written in the winter of 1685-86), the terminology of monads alone being missing."[liv] This being so, and given also that Leibniz's interest in China dates back to at least 1669, and also given that the *Monadology* was sent as a letter to Nicholas Remond in 1714, at which time Leibniz was deeply immersed in his attempts to comprehend Chinese philosophy, it seems likely that it was from his studies of the East that Leibniz drew at least the inspiration for his master metaphor of the Monadology: the image of the Net of Indra in which each spherical node mirrors the location of all the others in a unique way, and so is a lens focusing the play of identity and difference from one particular perspective. The whole of appearance is focused in each monad from a unique perspective and represents the whole in its own way, just as every other node in the net must also in its own way. The internality of each node is nothing other than the externality of all the other nodes. This is the meaning of the "no windows" clause: no substance passes between monads: they only represent the whole to themselves with a decreasing clarity which nevertheless converges infinitesimally upon a determinate consciousness.

The image of Indra's net is found in the 3rd century scriptures of the *Avatamsaka Sutra* ("Flower Garland Sutra"), of the Mahayana Buddhist school in India, which found its way to China via the Chinese *Hua-yen* school of Buddhism between the 6th and 8th century renamed the *Hua-yen Ching* ("Flowery Splendor Scripture"[lv]). Its teaching revolves around what it calls the "Ten Profound Theories," each of which agree with Leibniz's philosophy in a striking manner. (1) The "Theory of Simultaneous Completeness and Mutual Correspondance" entails that the entire universe arises all at once, just as Leibniz says of the monads. According to *Hua-yen* Buddhism, all dharmas are universal, and in their static aspect, represent the "thusness of the void." Again, this echoes Leibniz's solution to the conflict between the metaphysical imperative to de-substantialize nothingness, and the religious imperative to make it into what the world was created out of - namely, to make "nothingness" empty actuality still permeated by possibility. (2) The "Theory of the Mutual Compatibility and Difference of the One and the Many," which agrees with Leibniz's account of the containment of all monads within God's absolute unity which nevertheless does not destroy the monad's individual identity. (3) The "Theory of the Mutual Completion of the Hidden and the Manifested," agrees with Leibniz's account of the mutual supplementation offered one another by natural and revealed theology. (4) The "Theory of

the Realm of Indra's Net" is explicitly adopted by Leibniz, and the holistic conception of the "Golden Lion" reflects (5) the "Theory of the Full Possession by the Storehouses of the Faculties of Purity and Mixture," in which every strand of the lions hair contains not only the whole lion but also unlimited lions, is in parallel to Leibniz's account of phenomena in the space-time continuum allowing objects to be infinitely divisible and for drops of water under the microscope to contain whole worlds of creatures.

The (6) "Theory of the Dharmas Mutually Identified While Self-existent" explains the distributive nature of the holistic relationship between the organs of a body, mirrored by Leibniz's account of the organic interrelation of simple monads to form more complex compound monads without the existence of "windows." The (7) "Theory of the Small and Minute Being Compatible Along with Peaceful Existence" is closely akin to the thought at the root of infinitesimal calculus; and the (8) "Theory of the Distinct Existence of Seperate Dharmas in the Ten Periods" answers to Leibniz's theory of time as the form of appearance, whose existence is relative and not an attribute of substance. The (9) "Theory of the Skillful Completion Through the Evolution of the Mind-Only" explains the compatibility of the appearance of self and the unity of the One (Mind), just as does Leibniz's holistic account of the fact that we are all different substantial aspects of one and the same God; and the (10) "Theory of the Manifestation of the Doctrine with Reference to Facts and the Fostering of Understanding Thereby" even harmonizes with the mysterious relation between natural theology and revealed theology posited by Leibniz. Given that, as Needham points out, “the monads were the first appearance of organisms upon the stage of occidental philosophy,”[lvi] this remarkable agreement between each of the ten "Theories" of the *Flower Garland Ching* and the main tenets of Leibniz's metaphysics indicates a significant connection between China and the West at the birth of modern biology on a conceptual if not practical level.[lvii] It is also remarkable that this influence actually comes from Chinese Buddhism of the *Hua-yen* school, and neither from Confucianism nor Taoism, although Leibniz hardly understood these distinctions.

Leibniz had met Claudio Grimaldi SJ (1638-1712) in Rome in 1689 while he was on a visit home to Rome from his post in China. Grimaldi had been in China since 1669, where he had been favored in the court of emperor K'ang-hsi, and was a close associate of Ferdinand Verbiest (1623-88), a Jesuit who under Ricci's guidance had achieved great influence in the Chinese court, being appointed tutor to the young emperor, and later as astronomer and mathematician to the court. It was largely through Grimaldi that Leibniz made connections with the Jesuits in China, most importantly with Joachim Bouvet SJ

(1656-1730), who had arrived in China in 1688. Through his correspondence with Bouvet, consisting of 15 letters written between 1697 and 1707, and through the writings of Nicholas Longobardi (1565-1655) and Antoine Sainte-Marie (1602-1669),[lviii] Leibniz was informed of as much as Europe knew of China at the beginning of the eighteenth century, even publishing his own pamphlet entitled *Latest News From China* in 1699, a selection from the Jesuit's letters with a preface by himself, so that "the most cultivated and distant peoples [can] stretch out their arms to each other." Leibniz goes on to suggest that, given "the condition of our [European] affairs, slipping as we are into ever greater corruption, [it] seems to be such that we need missionaries from the Chinese who might teach us the use and practice of natural religion, just as we have sent them teachers of revealed theology."[lix] And one of the central tenets of this revealed theology was the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, a doctrine which it was assumed could only be taught to the Chinese once the very notion of "nothing" was revealed to their highly rational but still unsaved minds. However, on the one hand what exactly this word "nothing" named had in fact been a matter of contention in the West, and on the other, the idea was not so foreign to the Chinese as the Christians assumed. Ever since Parmenides' (fragment six[lx]), a substantialist and a nominalist interpretation of the concept of "nothing" had in fact been struggling with each other in the Western mind, and this dialogue inadvertently bring this struggle out into the open, .

Ricci's dialogue consists of a discussion between a Western Scholar and a Chinese Scholar, in which Ricci is primarily concerned to uncover what he believed to be the kernel of natural theology at the root of Confucianism, and to demonstrate its compatibility with reason on the one hand, and with the monotheism at the core of Christianity on the other. The Jesuit compatibilists believed that the ancient Chinese terms such as *shang-ti* ("King-on-high") and *t'ien* ("Heaven") were suitable indigenous equivalents to translate the Christian word "God." In contrast, their Dominican, Franciscan, and Augustinian opponents argued that both Confucian rites and Chinese terminology were fundamentally pagan in character, and incompatible with Christian faith. The anti-accomodationists thus maintained not only that converts had to desist from traditional rituals if they were to become baptized Christians, but also that Chinese neologisms had to be invented to signify Christian concepts (eg *t'ien-chu*, "Ruler of heaven"). Thus Ricci's first challenge had been to find a word to translate the Latin *Deus*. *Tien* is a dangerous choice, because it means "heavens" in an impersonal, locative sense no less than "heaven" in a religious or personalized sense.[lxi] For this reason, he creates the compound *Tien-chu*, "lord of heaven" in order to both ensure its personal nature, as well as its distinction from *Shang-ti*, "lord on high," a popular Taoist deity. Thus he says:

> The Lord of Heaven [*Tien-chu*] transcends all categories … and has no form or sound. … If one wishes to give some indication as to his nature, one can find no better way to do so than by employing words like "not" and "lack," because if one uses words like "is" and "has" one will err by too great a margin. (§55)

This invocation of negative theology is, however, quickly distinguished by Ricci from Taoism's concept of *Wu* (usually translated "non-being") and Buddhism's concept of *K'ung* (usually translated "emptiness"), maintaining that these are both "totally at variance with the doctrine concerning the Lord of Heaven" (§67). Ricci instead aligned Christian teaching with the Confucian concepts of *Li*, *Ch'i*, and *T'ai-chi*. Ricci says regarding *Wu* and *K'ung*:

> When we come to speak of the source of all phenomena we are clearly speaking of that, the value of which is beyond all comparison. How then can one employ despicable [words like] 'voidness' and 'nothingness' to represent it? Moreover, one cannot give to another what one does not have oneself. This is an obvious principle. What is now called 'voidness' and 'nothingness' possesses absolutely nothing of its own. How then can it give nature and form to something else and thereby cause it to come into being? A thing must genuinely exist before it can be said to exist. What does not genuinely exist does not exist. If the source of all things were not real or did not exist then the things produced by it would naturally also not exist. Even the holiest among all people on earth would not be able to make nothing a being. How can things which are essentially nothing or void employ their voidness and nothingness to cause all things to come into being and to continue in existence? If we look at things in terms of their causes, we must conclude that since these causes are called 'voidness' and 'nothingness', they cannot be the active, formal, material and final causes of things; and since this is so, of what use are they to things? (§72)

Thus the Christian God, who is not Being, is nevertheless not to be confused with nothingness: "The difference between something that is formless and nothingness is as great as that between heaven and earth" (§76) His God, Ricci says, is neither a being nor a nothing, but different to both.

4. Malebranche's *Dialogue Between a Christian Philosopher and a Chinese Philosopher.*

Malebranche composed his *Dialogue Between a Christian Philosopher and a Chinese Philosopher* in 1708. In this late work Malebranche reiterates what he had stated in the first of his *Dialogues on Metaphysics and Religion*,[lxii] itself a restatement of what he had said in *The Search After Truth*[lxiii] – that nothingness has no properties, and is perceived neither sensibly nor intelligibly. The monistic Malebranche clearly maintains that the substantive concept of nothing is a metaphysical misunderstanding of the logical function of negation. Negation is clearly defined only within a limited range. Its logical specificity depends entirely upon its applicability to a valid predicate. Variables are

defined only by restricting them to a domain and a range of possible instantiation: outside of this range, the functional relationship may not obtain. Thus “not green” is a well-defined indeterminate negation, i.e. is either true or false (with only a little fuzziness) applied to most material objects, but it is not well-defined if applied, say, to ideas, distances, feelings or dreams. And like "not green" the logical operation of negation itself must be of limited domain to be well defined, for some things have no opposite. The application of the operation of negation to being as a whole is not well defined.

This is one of the most fundamental points of disagreement between Malebranche and Leibniz. For Leibniz, nothing is indeed the logical opposite of being: this is one of the core dogmas of Christian revelation, that God made the world *ex nihilo*. In fact on Leibniz's monadological understanding, God created the whole of being all at once,[lxiv] – this much Leibniz does accept from Parmenides (fragment 8 lines 5-10), that being is holistic: an all or nothing affair, in which the entire cosmos must exist if any part of it exists. But Leibniz's creationism disagrees with Parmenides. As Parmenides says, being itself cannot be created – out of what? Leibniz's answer “nothing” is precisely the one Parmenides proscribes as a possible concept. Leibniz's understanding of being is encapsulated in his maxim "substance does not appear," and its corollary, that appearances are not substantial. For Leibniz, spirit (or mind) is being. The monad is a simple atom of spiritual (or mental) substance which mirrors the infinite whole of all monads in its own unique way. A monad in isolation can be neither created nor destroyed. And monads “have no windows,” by which Leibniz means that there is no flow or transference of substance between monads.

Thus Leibniz is Platonic about evil: it is not a positive principle, but rather the disintegration of organization. He does not deny that the Devil exists, but he is not conceived in Gnostic fashion as the other half of an ontological pair with God, as a kind of anti-substance, but rather as a morally corrupt Angel. According to Leibniz Angels are more perfect compound substances than we mortals, but they are still creatures. They do not age, and so do not *have* to die, but nor are they infallible, and so may meet accidental or degenerate demises. Thus for Leibniz evil needs “no more explanation than cold and darkness.”[lxv] Like nothingness itself, it is a privation or disintegration of actuality, but not a destruction of possibility, for essences cannot be destroyed. Nothingness conceived as the opposite of being is thus for Leibniz empty possibility pregnant with essence. The eternal nature of essence decides the structure of necessity. Leibniz distinguishes three sorts or levels of necessity, each regulating its own manifold of possibility: moral necessity (the necessity of doing the right thing), physical necessity (laws of physics), and metaphysical necessity (truths of reason). The first and last

but not the second of these constrain God's mind, whereas we are constrained by all three.[lxvi] Nothingness means nothing *actual,* but includes metaphysical *possibility* which in itself is indestructible. The absence of instantiation does not alter metaphysical necessity which governs possibility, by which even God was constrained when he created the monads. This is the real meaning of the *ex nihilo* doctrine: that God actualized something that was possible – and not just any old something, but the *best* something possible (as demanded by moral necessity).

For Malebranche, this is to give nothingness properties, which is for him a fundamental metaphysical error:

> It is certain that nothingness or the false is not perceptible or intelligible. To see nothing is not to see; to think of nothing is not to think. It is impossible to perceive a falsehood, a relation of equality, for example, between two-plus-two and five; for this or any like relation that does not exist can be believed, but certainly cannot be perceived because nothingness is not perceptible. Properly speaking, this is the first principle of all our knowledge.[lxvii]

This is linked by Malebranche no less than by Parmenides to the thought Parmenides expressed in fragment 3: *to gar auto noein estin te kai einai* : "for what can be thought, can be." Non-entites are inconceivable, and the conceivable is always possible if not actual:

> For if the circle I perceived were nothing, in thinking of it I would be thinking of nothing. Thus, I would be thinking and not thinking at the same time. Yet the circle I perceive has properties that no other figure has. Therefore this circle exists while I am thinking of it, because nothingness has no properties and one nothingness cannot be different from another nothingness.[lxviii]

Ignoring the fact that being indiscernible from other nothingnesses sounds perilously close to a property, the point is that Malebranche is attempting to make of nothing *a way of thinking*, not a thing thought about. Indeed, it is a contradictory way of thought: "not thinking" - a kind of limit to thinking, which like the horizon ever approaches but beyond which we cannot go. This recognition is key to a kind of Parmenidean insight:

> Because people regard as nothing the ideas that they have of things, they give the created world much more reality than it has. They do not doubt the existence of objects, and they attribute many qualities to them that they do not have. But they do not even think of the reality of their ideas... Ideas have an eternal and necessary existence, and the corporeal world exists only because it pleased God to create it." [lxix]

So “nothing” *is* for Malebranche an idea, but an extremely minimal one. It is not an idea of an entity or an object: "nothing" has no properties, but describes only the possibility *that thought can stop*. Creation *ex nihilo* thus really means for Malebranche the idea: *thought once began.* In so far as thought is actually a “vision in God” of ideas, then creation *ex nihilo* is the "recognition in God" of the idea of finitude, which includes the ideas of each and every one of us mortals being born, living, and dying. *That we are created as finite* is the real content of revelation for Malebranche.

This is a problematic doctrine, for it seems to imply we have finite souls, all of which are part of God, who is indiscernible from Being itself: i.e. a kind of pantheism.[lxx] Malebranche was at pains to avoid this interpretation of his thought, and this motivation added zeal to his condemnations of Spinoza. As he entered the rites controversy, he sided with the Dominican opposition to the assimilation of Confucian and Toaist rites in Chinese converts by making his protagonist argue against a Chinese pantheist. But Malebranche's own equation of God and being is explicit and clear in his *Dialogues*: “God and being or the infinite are but the same thing” :

> Everything finite can be seen in the infinite which contains their intelligible ideas. But the infinite can be seen only in itself. For nothing finite can represent the infinite. If we think of God, he must exist. A particular being, although known, is able not to exist. Its essence can be seen without its existence, its idea without the thing itself. However, the essence of the infinite cannot be seen without its existence, the idea of being without being. For being has no idea that represents it. It has no archetype containing all its intelligible reality. It is its own archetype and it contains in itself the archetype of all beings. Thus you can easily see that this proposition 'There is a God' is by itself the clearest of all propositions affirming the existence of something, and that it is even as certain as 'I think therefore I am'. Moreover, you see what God is, since God and being or the infinite are but the same thing.[lxxi]

So although Malebranche is more Parmenidean than is Leibniz on the question of the ontological status of nothingness, he is utterly un-Parmenidean in his equation of being and infinitude (for whom both being and transcendence are conceived as finite), and thus Parmenides' crucial insight into the finitude of being eludes Malbranche. Malebranche was understandably sensitive about being labeled a Pantheist, an ex-communicable heresy, and this anxiety was no doubt involved in his attacks on Spinoza's system, and in his choice of Spinoza as the thinker behind the mask of “The Chinese Philosopher” in his *Dialogue Between a Christian Philosopher and a Chinese Philosopher.*

Malebranche was only reluctantly drawn in to the rites affair, when he was vacationing at the home of Remond de Montmort in early 1707. There he met and became good friends with the Bishop

of Lionne, recently returned to France from China where he had spent the previous twenty years. The Bishop explained to Malebranche that Confucianism was an atheism akin to Spinoza's (whose pantheism was typically referred to as "atheism" in the seventeenth century), and entreated Malebranche to compose a brief dialogue which would be of use to the missionaries in the field in their attempts to proselytize amongst the Chinese literati. Malebranche wrote the work that summer, and it began to circulate widely in manuscript copies. It was immediately percieved to be an attempt to enter the rites debate on the side of the Dominican incompatiblists against the Jesuit accomodationists, and a bitter debate ensued. Certain Jesuits even went so far as to solicit the Holy Office to have Malebranche's works placed on the Index of proscribed works. This debate distressed Malebranche greatly, and he adamantly refused to publish the dialogue, lest the argument should worsen still further. However in July 1708 after the publication of inaccurate reviews inputing to Malebranche positions he did not hold, he recanted, and published the dialogue, including a preface rebutting objections. These responses to objections continued on from his debates with Arnauld, and so rather than repeating the arguments, he also published that correspondence in 1709.[lxxii]

The Arnauld-Malebranche debate had begun with the publication of a critical review of *The Search After Truth* by Arnauld in 1668, and continued over forty years. The persistent theme of Arnauld's was that Malebranche's philosophy was really no different to Spinoza's pantheism. Malebranche shared the Dominican's anxiety that the Jesuits were compromising truth in their zeal to convert the world, so when the Bishop of Lionne told him that Confucianism was a kind of Spinozism, a charge against which Malebranche had been defending himself for decades, it seemed that Malebranche was especially well qualified to be able to convince the Confucian literati of the errors of their ways. To Malebranche, Spinozism was an unholy alliance of theism and materialism which, by making extension part of God's essence, reduced God to matter, and us also. This same doctrine was detected by Arnauld[lxxiii] in the concept of "intelligible extension" introduced by Malebranche in the reply to the second objection to the tenth of his *Elucidations of the Search after Truth*.

The question is *what more* to extension there is than its representation. For Malebranche, we experience material objects because God "contains bodies within Him in an intelligible way,"[lxxiv] but he insists this is not the pantheism of "*le miserable Spinoza.*"[lxxv] In the ninth of his *Christian and Metaphysical Meditations* of 1683 he even calls philosophers maintaining that matter is uncreated and eternal "stupid and ridiculous" for denying the power of God to create something from nothing. Malebranche thus rolls two questionable understandings (a doubtful one of Spinoza, and an inadequate

one of Confucianism) into the one character of “the Chinese Philosopher,” largely in order to distinguish in Europe his own thought from what he takes to be the common error at the root of both Confucianism and Spinozism, which themselves are all-too-hastily confounded, while at the same time teaching the fundamentals of his own theory of "vision in God" to thinkers in China. The Confucianism that Malebranche learned imperfectly through the Bishop of Lionne was in fact largely the Neo-Confucianism of Chu Hsi, whose grand synthesis ca. 1200 A.D. still dominated the intellectual climate of the Confucian *literati* when Ricci arrived in the late fifteenth century, not unlike the way in which Aquinas still dominated the European university of the time.

Malebranche has his Chinese philosopher open the dialogue with a request to be told who this *Tien Chu* (“Lord of Heaven”) is, whom he has heard the far-western foreigners have come so far to proclaim to the Middle Kingdom. Although I have emphasized Malebranche's lack of real understanding of Chinese philosophy and his personal agenda with Arnauld concerning his own alleged Spinozism, it must nevertheless also be recognized that Malebranche is indeed making a serious effort to be respectful to the intelligence of the Chinese Thinker from the outset. The echoes of the great synthesis of Chu Hsi are clear if unacknowledged, and thus it was that his system first began to come to the attention of Western Philosophers with these words:

> We accept only matter and *Li*, that Supreme Truth, Wisdom and Justice which subsists eternally in matter, which forms and arranges it in this marvelous order which we see, and which also enlightens this portion of purified and organized matter of which we are composed. For it is necessarily in this Supreme Truth, to which all men are united, some more and some less, that they see the truths and eternal laws which are the bonds of all societies.[lxxvi]

Malebranche's hasty assimilation of the *Lǐ – Ch'i* distinction to the Western form – matter dichotomy is clearly a preparation to “reveal” that *Lǐ* is alive, a person of absolute power who in fact rules the Chinese, although they do not know it clearly enough, for they are an unwitting part of the whole of “all men,.” Malebranche essentially extends the excluded Chinese philosopher a letter of introduction to this person. This “reference” to God must also include the idea that it must be taken up freely by the individual thinker, but before the mysteries of grace and salvation can be introduced, the conceptual groundwork must be laid; first, the dialectical demolition of the materialistic atheism Malebranche presumes the Confucian philosopher to hold, and then the first step in revelation, the introduction of the concept of nothingness to prepare the way for the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*.

In order to proclaim his God, Malebranche has his Christian philosopher appeal to an assumption that the Chinese in some sense or other must "see the whole," no matter how distorted such perception may be:

> The God which we proclaim to you is that same whose idea is imprinted in you and in all men. But for want of attention to it, they do not recognize at all what it is and strangely disfigure it. That is why God, in order for us to revive his idea, has declared to us through his prophet, that he is *He Who Is* ; that is to say, the Being who contains in his essence all there is of reality or of perfection in all beings, the Being infinite in every sense, in a word, *Being*. [lxxvii]

The intent of Malebranche is twofold. On the one hand to prevent the obvious assumption that this "Lord of Heaven" is merely a human or supernatural person, he must identify him with Being as a whole. But to prevent this identification from removing any actual personality, he appeals to *Lǐ* as "Justice" and "Wisdom" while emphasizing also the use of personal pronouns, and denying immediately that this is actually comprehensible "to any finite mind." To further compound the distinct impression that Malebranche is deliberately trying to confuse his intended Chinese audience, he states the metaphysical alliance of infinitude and nothingness characterizing the Christian conception of transcendence:

> He [God] embraces within himself, in a manner incomprehensible to any finite mind, all perfections, everything that is truly real in all beings, both created and possible. He even contains within himself whatever reality or perfection there is in matter, the least and most imperfect of beings; but without its imperfections, its limitation, its non-being; for there is no non-being in Being, no limitation of any kind in the infinite. My hand is not my head, my chair, my room nor my mind or yours. [*sic*] The mind embraces, so to speak, an infinity of non-beings, the non-beings of all those things which it itself is not. But in the infinitely perfect Being there is nothing of non-being. Our God is everything that he is wherever he is; and he is everywhere. Do not attempt to comprehend how this is so. [lxxviii]

But Malebranche was wrong in assuming that "non-being" would be a mysterious and baffling notion to the Chinese, and that the thought of creation *ex nihilo* would confound their "natural" reason. We only need read verse 40 of the *Tao* to realize that:

> Reversion is the action of the Tao
> Weakness is the function of the Tao
> All things in the world come from being
> And being comes from non-being. [lxxix]

Without prejudging the interpretation of the Taoist notion of non-being [*Wu*] in its relation to either Malebranche's nominalist or to Leibniz's essentialist concepts of nothing, I simply note that the grounds for dialogue were actually far stronger and more extensive than Malebranche realized, due to his

assumption that “nothing” was a matter of revelation rather than reason, and so something which the unsaved could never have considered. But in so far as Lao-Tzu's way of nature resonates with the philosophy of Yin and Yang,[lxxx] this resonance actually forms an interesting contrast to the thought-structure of Parmenides' *Peri Phusis*. The import of *Tao* verse 40 would seem to be that being and non-being form an inextricable mixture in patterns of alternation which we call all things." This is in fact a third definition of "nothing" alternative to Leibniz's “empty possibility” (which is closer perhaps to the Buddhist's *K'ung*) and Malebranche's "property-less abstraction": an infinite shadow of possible but non-actual existence intertwined with being, *not being* any particular thing but always involved in making particular things stand out as what they are.

Malebranche had little if any comprehension of the differences between Lao Tzu's way of nature and Confucius's way of culture. The Chinese sage was effectively being offered a place in Western culture as a *curious student*. As the dialogue progresses, the Chinese philosopher rehearses a standard repertoire of objections to Malebranche's philosophy from a materialist/atheistic perspective. One senses that this mask of otherness was a kind of alibi for rehearsing these opinions on paper, too heretical otherwise to be published. Their eventual refutation in the dialogue thus not only stages the triumph of Christianity over materialistic atheism (and indirectly over Judaism via Spinoza), but also symbolizes the intellectual annexation of the orient as an errant relative whom it was enlightenment Europe's historical mission to welcome back into the human race with the good news that God had chosen Europe to reveal to them his plan. From the enlightened angle of contemporary cultural perspectivism this may well seem a presumptuous cultural chauvinism, made all the more insidious by its self-understanding as a generosity. But seen in its historical context, this dialogue is in fact unusually respectful, and indicative of the newly emerging imperative to transcend medieval territorialism and develop a sense of global citizenship unfolding on either side of the Himalayas.

The dialog form enables Malebranche to contain the expression of the unconscious anxieties he has concerning his own system. His fundamental anxiety is that the imagination, which he described in the first of his *Dialogues on Metaphysics and Religion* as a fool who plays jests on the mind along the lines of the Medieval harlequin or court jester, has played the greatest prank of all upon the mind: that what the imaginary Chinese Philosopher says is in fact true: Christians believe in “*an imaginary God.*”[lxxxi] Malebranche has his Christian Philosopher respond to his Chinese Philosopher: “I am trying to disabuse you by human reasonings. But do not believe that our faith depends on them. It is based on divine authority and proportioned to the capacity of all men.” Ultimately, Malebranche has no

stronger argument than this *petitio principi*. As the piece progresses, its dialogic form degenerates, and the condescending Christian Philosopher is soon delivering a series of short lectures interspersed with conveniently brief and apposite prompts from the obsequious Chinese Philosopher. The literary pretext wears thin, and we see what is going on just beneath the surface of this dialogue: Malebranche is reigning in the renegade Jesuit missionaries through instructing them in the niceties of his own philosophy. Clearly the instruction is aimed at them more so than at the Chinese themselves, who remain largely invisible to Malebranche. So although it is a self-conscious and contrived performance aimed at demonstrating the superiority of Christian thought, the *Dialogue* is also an unconscious enactment of the anxiety that the proselytizer will be proselytized, the converter converted, and the imperialist realize that colonization also alters the colonist irreversibly. The unconscious anxiety is that in stating Christian dogma to too intelligent an other, it will be suddenly realized that Christian dogma itself is flawed.[lxxxii]

5. Leibniz's *Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese.*

It was only after Malebranche's death in 1715 that Leibniz went ahead and responded to his *Dialogue* in the form of an extensive letter to Malebranche's friend Nicholas Remond, written late in 1715 and early 1716. Leibniz pleads for an attempt to achieve a genuine appraisal of the philosophy of the Chinese, and warns against recently published misinterpretations, not mentioning by name but clearly enough indicating Malebranche. Leibniz had been in correspondence with Remond for some years: in fact his *Monadology* was also written in the form of a letter to Remond in 1714. In January 1716 he wrote to say that he was putting the finishing touches on another short work of interest, his *Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese,* which he had "written in response to the books you sent me on Chinese thought."[lxxxiii] But Leibniz's health was failing, and the letter still remained unsent at the time of Leiniz's death on November 14th 1716.

It is significant that the *Discourse* opens with this reference to the texts Remond had sent, which were the first attempts at translations of the classics of Chinese philosophy. Leibniz is thus demonstrating that he is not basing his discussion on second-hand reports, but rather recognizing that what makes the Chinese tradition so important is that it is a literate history and set of textual traditions which must themselves be studied. His respect is stated immediately: "I am inclined to believe that the [Chinese] writers, especially the ancient ones, make much sense,"[lxxxiv] even as he enters obliquely into the anti-scholastic contra-pedantic polemic which saw him nicknamed *Lövenix* ("believer in nothing")

by the schismatic pietists who resisted his schemes of unification and resented his idealism: “It is comparable to the Christians, who are not always obliged to follow the meaning which the Scholastics and later commentators have given to Scripture, the Church Fathers or the ancient law.”[lxxxv] Leibniz dives straight into the rites controversy and makes his allegiance immediately clear. Longobardi, successor to Ricci, had attempted to argue against Ricci's accomodationist style, maintaining that the Confucian "antiquated festivals" were no longer taken seriously by the Mandarin ruling elite in China in any case. Leibniz notes to the contrary that the literature he had received made it clear that even the Emperor himself revered the ancient customs. Ricci was clearly right, thinks Leibniz, and he encourages Martinius to maintain his opposition to the incompatiblists. We cannot overestimate the subtlety with which Leibniz, the consummate diplomat as well as the ardent idealist, packs connotations into his words when he writes: “One should therefore profit from so great an authority [as the Chinese classics]. It is the proper way of correcting quite subtly, without appearing to do so, those who have strayed from the truth and even from their own antiquity.”

Leibniz approaches the Chinese classics with one overarching question in mind: do the Chinese recognize spiritual substances? “Upon reflection” he says they do, but not as detachable from matter. Certainly, much superstition is met with in Chinese religion, just as in European. In neither case should it be confused with the metaphysical clarity of the ancients. Indeed the antiquity of the Chinese classics is reckoned by Leibniz to be 3,000 years. In a dual gesture of excess modesty to the Chinese and forthright hostility to those who called him *Lövenix*, he states: “It would be highly foolish and presumptuous on our part, having newly compared with them, and scarcely out of barbarism, to want to condemn such an ancient doctrine simply because it does not appear to agree at first glance with our ordinary scholastic notions.”[lxxxvi] Leibniz complains of the lack of a complete and accurate translation of the classics, and looks forward to the day when this would not be so, and begins his account.

Taking *Lǐ* to mean "reason,"[lxxxvii] he notes that being and substance are also Chinese synonyms for *Lǐ*: “infinite, eternal, uncreated, incorruptible.” Leibniz thus interprets *Lǐ* as "principle" in both a physical and a moral sense. “The Chinese also call their *Lǐ* a globe or *circle*,” Leibniz continues, “and I believe that this agrees with our way of speaking, since we speak of God as being a sphere or a circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.”[lxxxviii] Exposing the inadequacies of Longobardi's translation of *Lǐ* as Aristotle's "prime matter," Leibniz clearly thinks it might also be translated “God,” although he is careful to distinguish himself from Malebranche's quasi-pantheism:

> During the time of the Scholastics, there was a certain David of Dinant who held that God was the prime matter of things. One could say the same of Spinoza who appeared to hold that creatures are only modes of God [i.e. modifications of the substance of God]. But prime matter in the sense of these authors is not a purely passive thing, for it contains in itself the active principle. It could be that some Chinese had similar ideas, but one cannot thus simply accuse their whole school of such ideas. [lxxxix]

Much better says Leibniz to follow Ricci's lead, and to speak as if *Lǐ* was like the God of the pseudo-Dionysus, which cannot be positively named, but only indicted indirectly through a process of negations. This is in part to capture the meaning of *Lǐ,* reported by Longobardi, as "grand void" or "immense capacity." "But they also call it the *sovereign plenitude* because it fills all and leaves nothing empty. It is extended within and without the universe." Leibniz probably never stopped to wonder if Longobardi had projected his own understanding upon the Chinese when he used the word "universe." For while on the one hand, along with Malebranche, Leibniz erroneously assumes that creation *ex nihilo* and the concept of "nothing" would have to be revealed to the Chinese by God, he also shares the no less erroneous assumption that the Chinese shared the same concept of the whole, because this is "natural" and "obvious."

The standard idiom to refer to "everything" in the Chinese classics is "the ten thousand things." Thus in Lao Tzu verse 42 I cited above:

> The *Tao* gave birth to the One
> The One gave birth to the two
> The two gave birth to the three
> And the three gave birth to the *wan-wu*
> Everything carries the *yin* and embraces the *yang*
> and through blending of the *ch'i* they achieve harmony

Wan-wu is literally translated as "the ten thousand things," which as Hendricks points out is "a collective designation in Chinese for the various genera and species of living things - the varieties of plants, animals, insects and so forth (though on occasion the term might refer to inorganic phenomena as well),"[xc] and so is sometimes translated as "Heaven and Earth." But this is not quite a positive concept of the whole, so much as a concept of inclusion not bound to any specific limit - and so still only a thought of negation. Actually, at least three themes in ancient Chinese thought lend themselves to being interpreted as a positive intuition of "the whole": *Tao* as the mutual inter-production of being and non-being in Lao Tzu; Confucius' stream in *Analects* 9:16 "It passes on like this, never ceasing day or night!" (especially as interpreted by Chu Hsi); and change itself taken as a whole in the *I Ching.* But these details eluded Leibniz's understanding, for he was too carried away by his own enthusiasm and

too quick to assume he understood the differences with which he was confronted. Here we see one of orientalism's pitfalls clearly demarcated at the very moment of its birth.

The extent to which Leibniz's laudable enthusiasm exceeded his actual understanding of the Chinese people and their languages can be seen clearly in a curious document from 1697, *Das Geheimnis des Schöpfung* ("The Secret of Creation"). The piece is a New Year's letter Leibniz presented to his patron, Rudolphus Augustus, Duke of Brunswick-Luenburg-Wolfenbuettel in 1697,[xci] in which he proposes the coining of a medallion with the image of Rudolphus on one side, and an exemplification of his newly discovered binary mathematics, which he calls an *Imagio Creationis* on the other. The unity of obverse and reverse on the coin is, says Leibniz, an image of creation, which consisted of the separation of being (unity as represented by the number 1) from nothingness ("*ex nihilo*) (as represented by the number 0), the one/zero pair thus forming the basis of the binary arithmetic itself, which is thereby a mental "image of creation." And as confirmation of the universal significance of his new binary arithmetic, a version of it, says Leibniz, is to be found in the *I Ching*. Leibniz had no access to the traditional commentary that accompanies the text of the trigrams nor any idea of its existence, in which, it is explained that in Taoism, Earth corresponds to the number 2, and Heaven to the number 3, the number 1 being considered "too simple to alter" – the Chinese, like the ancient Greeks having no concept of the number zero.[xcii] Further, the broken and unbroken lines of the *I Ching* are actually interpreted as "yes" and "no" as answers to decisions to be made, and historically reflect the distinction between light and dark. Thus "yin" and "yang" represent differences within being, and not in fact the distinction between "being" and "nothing" as Leibniz assumes, although this does somewhat depend upon one's interpretation of the ontological status of "darkness." Nevertheless, Leibniz correctly recognized in the diagram of the trigrams sent by the Jesuits a representation which *could* be interpreted as a "system" for counting in binary up to 111,111 (= decimal 64), and that further, the systematic transformation of trigrams involved in consulting the *I Ching* could be interpreted as a *kind* of expression of specific calculations in binary arithmetic.

Just as Leibniz mistakenly assumes the "numbers" for heaven and earth to be one and zero in Taoist thought, he also inadvertently inverts the trigrams. But the Chinese in fact spatialized heaven as "down" and earth as "up," a reversal of the Western convention which must be interpreted as metaphysically significant.[xciii] What Leibniz says reveals a lack of appreciation of this primary difference between Taoist and Christian thought. As a result, Leibniz's "interpretation" is a purely formal observation regarding the external possibility of taking hexagrams as decimal notation, and is in no way

an actual appreciation of the contents of the *I Ching*. We see Leibniz's enthusiasm overcoming his reason when he speculates that binary arithmetic could yield "the true and lost meaning" of the *I Ching*, and claims that the hexagrams encrypt the "lost music of China" and that Fu Hsi (the *I Ching* 's legendary author) was in touch with, if not identical to, Hermes Trismagestis, Zoroastor, and Javan a son of Noah.[xciv] Despite these far-fetched speculations, Leibniz in this document indicates a question that has been a metaphysical point of great difficulty ever since Parmenides forbade the philosopher from thinking the thought that "nothing is." As a Christian, Leibniz must afford the concept "nothing" enough significance to explain the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* as demanded by Christian orthodoxy, but as a metaphysician, not so much that his ontology splits along Gnostic lines to include the negative being of "darkness" conceived as a substance, rather than the mere negative phenomenon of the absence of light. The doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is, says Leibniz, "one of the high points of the Christian faith, which agrees least with the philosophers and is not easy to impart to pagans."[xcv] It agrees least with philosophers because it is most difficult to square with the principle of sufficient reason (that everything must have a reason). But as we have seen, the Chinese we not at all unfamiliar with this concept, and the metaphysical conundrum surrounding it.

Leibniz was not actually the first mathematician to consider binary arithmetic, for Thomas Harriot had also already done so before his death in 1621. As in the case of infinitesimal calculus, Leibniz made his discovery independently of, but in parallel with English research. In 1679, Leibniz wrote "It is the greatest remedy for the mind if a few thoughts can be found from which infinite others arise in order, just as from the assumption of a few numbers, from one to ten, all the other numbers can be derived in order."[xcvi] Although a system of decimal arithmetic naturally seems to those who have grown up with it to be simplest, involving only ten numerals from which an infinite order can be generated, Leibniz realized that a binary arithmetic using a mere two numerals was able to do exactly the same thing. He maintains that in this discovery he had found "the origin of numbers" in the simplest difference: the difference between being and nothing. This system "requires no improvement, since one sees its innermost ground and original condition in so far as a continual rule of alternating progression is at hand, by the strength of which one can write down [the numbers] as much as one wishes, without recourse to calculation, and without the help of memory."[xcvii]

Leibniz's understanding of concepts and their inter-relation as a hierarchy of compounding complexity grounded upon a set of *simple* concepts which are clear and distinct in and of themselves is a precursor of today's formal system generated out of axioms through rules of inference: "All thoughts are

resolved into those which are conceived through themselves. If nothing is conceived through itself, nothing will be conceived at all." In *Of an Organum or Ars Magna of Thinking*, Leibniz argues that the simples must be both plural and minimal (i.e. binary), "for nature usually does as many things as possible with the smallest possible number of assumptions, that is, it operates in the simplest way."[xcviii] By this reasoning, Leibniz argues that his newly invented binary arithmetic is more fundamental an approach to number than decimal arithmetic, for it has fewer (indeed the minimum possible) simple concepts defining its operation. At the same time, he gives his binary innovation a theological interpretation, for he continues "It may be that there is only one thing which is conceived through itself, namely God himself, and besides this there is nothing," going on to equate God with the number one as "pure being" (pure simplicity as being pure and simple, a close approach to the pantheistic equation of God and Being that earned Spinoza the label "atheist"), and zero with nothingness, or privation, which supplies no substantive definition (in compliance in this instance with Parmenides' stricture on substantializing the idea of "nothing"). Leibniz gets out of this quandary by saying that privation is the "natural reason" notion of nothing, and the substantialist notion implied by both the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* and by the ontotheological interpretation of binary arithmetic is available only through divine revelation.

Leibniz's way out is thus to take it on faith that the simple must be unitary, but maintaining that the demonstration of this is beyond our power and we thus perceive basic oppositions: "Since, however it is not in our power to demonstrate the possibility of things in a perfectly *a priori* way, that is to analyze them into God and nothing, it will be sufficient for us to reduce their immense multitude to a few, whose possibility can either be supposed and postulated, or proved by experience." The question in Leibniz's own terms is thus *do we have an adequate idea of conceptual simplicity*? The principle of identity is supposed to ensure that this is so, for no more simple concepts can be found, but it can only be found along with the complementary principle of sufficient reason. For God these are the same principle, but for us they are two. Thus Leibniz thinks all reality can be generated out of the mere binary opposition of being/nothing. However, as the *I Ching* explicitly realizes, and Leibniz tacitly assumes without realizing, any binary sequence requires not two but three "positions": not just an alteration of two distinct symbols, but also an ordering which keeps track of the sequence of these signs, the "help of memory" that Leibniz denied above and yet affirms not three pages later in the same letter when he says "Writing [a binary series] would be easy, since one need only write out 0 and 1 in a certain order, (so to speak) from memory, faster and even faster, as one does when copying"[xcix] - the "help of memory" being in his case *writing* the digits 0 and 1 in a line which makes the correct succession "at hand."

With the advent of the digital computer in the last fifty years, Leibniz could hardly have dreamed what advancements would become possible once his binary arithmetic was applied to the reconstruction of the very calculating machine that he himself had built on Pascal's prototype.[c] Leibniz expanded Pascal's machine (which employed a design of interconnecting rotating wheels marked with decimal digits to perform addition and subtraction), to include the operations of multiplication and division. But it never occurred to Leibniz that a computing machine built on *binary* principles would be an advancement upon the one he had constructed on a decimal basis. That realization had to await the discovery of the electric current. For the animal with ten fingers, simplicity came in bundles of ten, and that assumption was unwittingly projected upon the world, but as a mechanical principle, distinguishing ten digits is a needless complexity, setting severe practical limits upon physical construction. Thus what *seemed* simple (counting on base ten) turned out to be needlessly complicated, and what *seemed* complex (the invention of an obscure new form of arithmetic involving only one and zero) turned out to be the simplification which proved crucial to the invention of the digital electronic computer. As Leibniz says, "when one sees things according to perspective from the right point, then symmetry will show itself."[ci] From this realization, Leibniz says it follows that "any lack of order that one fancies to see in the work of God only appears to be such," forgetting that any argument for the relativity of order holds symmetrically for a relativity of simplicity, and so his conclusion appeals to an absolute simplicity which remains undefined.

Rebutting Longobardi's suggestion that the prevalence of the Chinese doctrine "all things are one" is proof of their pantheism, Leibniz mentions Parmenides in an interesting way. That this doctrine need not be equated with pantheism is shown, says Leibniz, by Parmenides, who, *pace* Plato's misunderstanding of him, is not a pantheist. Leibniz does not elaborate, but it seems he was thinking of Parmenides when he spoke of a pre-established harmony between orient and occident. For that such a harmony must be there to find is a consequence of his metaphysics. A disconnected branch of humanity cannot be found according to Leibniz's metaphysics, only a branch whose connection has not yet been discovered, for material history is only a symbol of the real story of substance, which does not happen in time. Concerning the vision of the whole, Chinese astronomers, says Leibniz, "were more nearly accurate than they realized." Indirectly, and without knowing it, Leibniz is referring to the Taoism of Huai-Nan Tzu (ca. 180 - 122 B.C.), whose "Centrifugal Cosmogony" formulates the thought of a finite whole: "Before heaven and earth took shape, there was only undifferentiated formlessness. Therefore it was called the great beginning. Tao originated from vacuity and vacuity produced the universe (*yü-chou*)" (note the etymology of *yü-chou* as *yü* "space" and *chou* "time"). Huai-Nan Tzu's

organic holism is clear when he says: “Heaven, earth, infinite space, and infinite time are the body of one person, and the space within the six cardinal points is the form of one man.”[cii]

No doubt Leibniz refers also to the echoes he has read of the spirit expressed in the two competing cosmologies of the Han period: the *Hun t'ien* or “ecliptical heavens” of Chang Heng (78-139 A.D.), and the competing *Kai t'ien* or “equitorial heavens” theory. In the former, the heavens are conceived of as an egg, the yolk of which is the Earth; and in the latter, as reported in the later *Chin shu* (IIA:1b), the heavens are thought of as an umbrella, and the earth an inverted dish. The accuracy or otherwise of these images is less significant than the imperative to see the whole which they each express. Huai-Nan Tzu's ancient Chinese “macrocosm-microcosm” version of Taoism is undeniably pantheistic in some if not all the senses of the word. In denying that such pantheism was there to be found in ancient Chinese thought, Leibniz was inadvertently confessing one of his greatest anxieties concerning his own 'microcosm-macrocosm' theory of pre-established harmony: that it led, despite his own intentions and denials, to pantheism in the form of the doctrine that God *had* to create the world as his "body," for this was the only way for him to apprehend himself. Nevertheless, he still must have *chosen* to create it. Leibniz would certainly not allow that God made the world by chance or accident, for there is in his divinity nothing of contingency. Nothing happens without a reason, and God *must* have had a reason for creating the world.

Despite the systematic distortions caused by his excess of hermeneutic enthusiasm, Leibniz remains fundamentally positive towards the reorientation of the occident which the Jesuits had begun, and against which the Dominicans and Franciscans had reacted. In a sense, the anti-accomodationists were “superficial out of profundity” as Nietzsche says of the Greeks in *The Birth of Tragedy.* They reacted against seeing Christian missionaries in Chinese robes wearing their hair long in plaits. For the Jesuits who followed Ricci, these were superficial matters, and their adoption a mere matter of manners, and nothing but showing respect to win the converts' trust. But the anti-accomodationists disagreed on holistic grounds: the inner and the outer, the religious and the ceremonial, being and appearance: these were inseparable and moreover expressed one another. To assimilate to Chinese customs was to run a real risk that the evangelism would backfire, and the missionary be converted unawares to pagan ways of thought. The outer transformation of the convert was symbolic of their inner transformation, and a spiritual truth without a symbol remains permanently dubious.

Even more dubious to the religious authorities was the wave of *Schwärmerei* sweeping Europe in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, which we now refer to as the birth of the phenomenon of orientalism. Not only the Vatican but also the Lutheran pietists in Prussia viewed with alarm this growing trend to celebrate and imitate Chinese fashions, furnishings and ideas. They (correctly enough) perceived that the spiritual superiority of the West might thereby come under question, and the Christian tradition itself appear *arbitrary,* when placed alongside an exotic alternative which could also claim a venerable antiquity. The Christian way should not be seen as one option among others for either the Catholic or the Lutheran Churches, but as the only way: "none come to the father but through me" says Jesus. Having failed so hopelessly in his project to reunite European Christendom's catholic and protestant halves, Leibniz nevertheless inadvertently succeeds in uniting them in enmity of him. Leibniz was aware that his creation of this polemic document in his last year of life would be a provocation to those schismatic pietists on all sides who had long resisted his schemes of re-unification of the ever-fragmenting Christian church, and an encouragement to "Father Martinius and those who are of his opinion, [who] have done wisely to follow the advice of Father Ricci and other great men." And another to take up this encouragement was Leibniz's student, Christian Wolff (1679-1754), the contributer of the fourth and final instance in our small genre, his *Discourse on the Practical Philosophy of the Chinese* of 1721.

6. Wolff 's *Discourse on the Practical Philosophy of the Chinese*.

Wolff brought all the intellectual discipline and systematic rigor which Leibniz had lacked (or rather, shunned) to bear upon Leibniz's philosophical insights. His conviction in the power of human reason to attain certainty in metaphysics and natural theology unaided by revelation made him not only the pietists natural enemy, but also a leading figure of the German enlightenment. So it is that he was not only Leibniz's systematizer,[ciii] but also the writer of the text-books on metaphysics from which the young Kant taught his students, a professor of both metaphysics and mathematics.

> I could see with penetration the perfection of the entire universe. Thereupon I reflected upon how free acts are oriented to the perfection of the microcosm. The universe, I have understood, is not different from the microcosm, which is prescribed through natural law according to a unanimous agreement. The same orientation that strives for the perfection of the microcosm also strives for the perfection of the macrocosm.[civ]

In continuing Leibniz's polemic in his *Discourse on the Practical Philosophy of the Chinese* in 1721, Wolff is re-affirming Leibniz's defiant stance against the Pietists, although tactfully backing away from

natural theology, and considering practical philosophy instead. To no avail, for unlike Leibniz, Wolff was an employee of the Prussian State, and the Prussian Emperor Frederick William was sympathetic to the Pietists. Upon delivering his *Discourse*, Wolff was dismissed from his post, and in fact banished from Prussia altogether on pain of execution.[cv] Wolff fled to Marburg, and when some time later a spurious edition of the lecture appeared in print sarcastically claiming to be "Printed in Rome after examination by and with permission of the Holy Office of the Inquisiton" (an anti-Catholic slur on Wolff by an anonymous Halle pietist, reminiscent of the rumors which had prompted Malebranche to publish his *Dialogue*), Wolf published the *Discourse* himself in Frankfurt in 1726 with a new foreword and extensive notes rather than have forgeries circulate. Wolff was eventually recalled to Halle in 1740, and Frederick II awarded him a title to make amends for his father having banished him before Wolf died there in 1754.

In his systematizing tendencies, Wolff can be seen attempting to work an assimilation of the *gravitas* of Aristotelian scholasticism to the insights of the new mechanical philosophy and its mathematical insights. Through Leibniz, Wolff had cut his metaphysical teeth on the *Metaphysical Debates* of Suarez (1614). Etienne Gilson explains the importance of this work clearly in his brilliant work *Being and Some Philosophers*:

> These *Metaphysicae Disputationes* occupy a very peculiar place in the history of philosophy. As *disputationes*, they still belong in the Middle Ages. Suarez has kept the medieval habit of never settling a philosophical dispute without first relating, comparing and criticizing the most famous opinions expressed by his predecessors on the difficulty at hand. On the other hand, the *Disputationes* of Suarez already resemble a modern philosophical work, not only in that they are purely philosophical in their content, but also because they break away from the order, or disorder, of the Aristotelian *Metaphysics*. As Suarez himself says, not far from the beginning of the book, the subject matter of the *Disputationes* is not the text of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, but the very things (*res ipsas*) with which metaphysical knowledge is concerned.[cvi]

Wolff thus occupies an important mediating position between the new "mechanical philosophers" following Descartes, and the intellectually degenerate scholastics which Descartes had simply rejected altogether. The schoolmen's excessive veneration of Aristotle and absolute submission to the authority of the church left them uncritically beholden to textual traditions, unable to engage with that tradition's actual content in a rational manner. This meant that none of the significant thinkers between Descartes and Leibniz on either side of the Channel were university professors, and little of significance in European philosophy occurred within the university between 1500 and 1700. Wolff adapts the arcane

scholastic rigor and re-infuses it with real philosophical content through the mediation he works between mathematics and metaphysics, keeping in mind that he was a professor of both disciplines.

One vital metaphysical issue emerges out of medieval philosophy through the plethora of scholastic distractions: what exactly is the difference between essence and existence? In creating the world, does God first create all possible essences, and then, in a second act, pick out a determinate subset as actual? This is a variation on the Platonic theme of separable forms. The form contains infinitely many possible empirical instantiations, but what is its status when it has none? Is instantiation essential? The ontological separation of essence and existence immediately raises the problem of their connection, while their ontological equation leads in the direction of Spinoza's pantheism. According to Thomists, existence is a supplement added to real essence yielding the being of actual essence. But Suarez disagrees with Aquinas and denies that existence is anything added to essence to make it actual: "Essence can be but actual or possible, and the only difference between the two conditions is that what is actual *is*, whereas what is only possible is not."[cvii] By thus pushing this dichotomy up one level, Suarez would seem to have bifurcated being into possible being and actual being. Existence is only the supreme mark of reality. But unactualized essences remain real, unmarked by matter but patiently potent.

Here we see in embryo the issue that grew through Wolff's formal ontology, to Kant's denial that existence is a real predicate, to Heidegger's final equation of existence and appearance in his existential ontology. But we also see how this one great medieval issue is an echo of Parmenides' claim, repudiated by Plato, that the imperative to appear cannot be denied. For Suarez as for Parmenides, existence is not an option exercised by errant reason who really ought to have stayed at home in heaven but has somehow lamentably become embroiled in a worldly entanglement. For Suarez as for Parmenides, existence is not an "option" at all, but a metaphysical imperative that must be satisfied. "Existence, he [Suarez] says, is a formal constituent of actual essence, as personality is a formal and intrinsic constituent of the person."[cviii] Existence as constituent can be either revealed or concealed, depending on whether the entity is actual or possible, but the merely possible is not inexistent, but rather only implicitly existent. Explicit existence and implicit existence are modulations of all essences, which exist for Suarez as ideas in the mind of God. The creation was not the two-stage affair Thomists take it to be. Essences cannot be without existence: being is as a whole ("All at once or not at all" as Parmenides says). It is a metaphysical mistake of the first order to think that there was first "pure" possibility without actual existence. As Gilson points out, Thomists are guilty of begging the

question from Suarez's point of view: “When he asks them: 'How can you know what existence is?', they answer by positing the distinction of essence and existence as a condition for such knowledge. But how can we distinguish essence from existence, unless we already know what what existence is?”[cix]

Wolff's rational cosmopolitanism leads him to make a statement in the initial version of the *Discourse* which was to the Pietistic ears of 1721 scandalously relativistic: “the Chinese have the same respect for him [Confucius] that the Jews have for Moses, the Turks have for Muhammad, and, indeed, that we have for Jesus Christ.”[cx] In the second edition of 1726, this one sentence has no less than four long explanatory footnotes, in which Wolff tries to diffuse the specter of relativity haunting him. First he says that the Chinese are really more like living ancient Greeks, then he denies he is taking sides in the rites controversy: “This question can hardly be decided without our being eyewitnesses of what is happening in China.”[cxi] In his 1726 footnotes, Jews, Moslems and Chinese alike are all recast as “miserable peoples [who] do not know the redeemer of the world and the order of eternal salvation.”[cxii] But these harsh words were to appease the Pietists only. It was really as academics that Wolff admired the Chinese, and no higher praise could come from Wolff:

> Many people will perhaps find it no great misfortune that the depth of Chinese scholarship should be so inaccessible while we can find enough in our own philosophical schools of what is superior. But this is an ill-considered decision. I know nothing that may be compared to the Chinese principles of morals and politics when these are accorded attentive consideration rather than superficial review. There are perhaps some defects of method in the writings of Confucius, and the veneer of European eloquence is lacking in them. But if one seizes their general principles and discerns in them the goal, which is to direct the microcosm to the macrocosm, to regulate the government of earth by principles as solid and immutable as those of the government of heaven, one will find the most profound views, and the results of the most sublime meditation.[cxiii]

The existence of the Chinese had to be an instance of the same essence the European instantiated, although not yet redeemed and saved by divine grace, which is “the operation of the supreme Being on our soul, by which the understanding is illuminated and the will is sanctified.”[cxiv] The pagan has an essence but that essence is fallen, not into existence, but into forgetfulness of the fact that it itself is an image of the divine, a microcosm whose salvation is to realize its own alignment with the macrocosm:

> Essence is the first quality that one conceives in a thing, and from it the reason of other qualities that are inherent there, may be attained. An essence only instructs us about what is or can necessarily be found in the subject. The reason for the existence of other things, not a necessary result of essence, is derived from nature or active force, which has its own particular rules, according to which it is modified. All the possible movements of the body, for example, depend on its structure, which makes up its essence. To understand how an actual movement occurs, however, one must pay

> attention to the reason of the rules of the movement, which modifies the natures or strengths of things. It is the same with the mind and with its faculties, which are directed in different ways by laws of logic and by moral laws.[cxv]

Wolff here summarizes the upshot of his *Ontologia* of 1729, the work through which the very word "ontology" came to be used to designate what Aristotle had called "first philosophy": the study of being *qua* being.[cxvi] Wolff, the great synthesizer, aimed to unite science and philosophy through bringing scientific methodology to bear on metaphysics in order to inaugurate, as the extensive full title of the work puts it, a *philosophia prima sive ontologia methodo scietifica pertractata ua omnis cognitionis humanae principia continentur* : "first philosophy, or ontology, treated after a scientific method and containing the principles of all human knowledge." Wolff's project to re-establish metaphysics as the primary discipline at the core of the university proceeds by first taking the science of being *qua* being as fundamental ontology. This science of being is the specification of the nature of essence. Gilson summarizes Wolff's doctrine succinctly[cxvii]: "Essence is what is conceived as being in the first place and, without it, being cannot be." This conception is the original apprehension of possibility. Being is what *can* exist; essence is *how* it does it. "He who understands that an *A* is being because it exists will as easily understand that, if *A* exists, it is because it can exist. Possibility then is the very root of existence, and this is why the possibles are commonly called beings ... their being has nothing to do with actual existence; it is, though a merely possible being, yet a being." The essence is the properties essential to the entity's definition. These are the entity's essential attributes. Along with these attributes, the essence also includes the entity's modes: "ulterior determinations which are neither determined by the essence nor contradictory with it."

In considering what Wolff says about the practical philosophy of the Chinese, it is important to bear in mind the unanswerable questions which, under Wolff's essentialism, *must* be answered. What is the essence of being Chinese? Of being European? Of being human? These essences are supposed to be decided in advance in the event of creation, which designated the manifold of possibility for each kind of entity, deciding its attributes. These attributes are held quite separately from the modes in which the entity can enter into interaction with other entities: "The essence then is for any being the sufficient reason for the actual presence of its attributes, and of the possible presence of its modes." But what if I cannot actually know what I am until I enter into relationship with other entities? Do I alter myself in any essential way by altering my understanding of *who I am for others?* This is what the Pietists and anti-accomodationist Catholics alike intuitively perceived: that cultural interaction is at least potentially an ontological event, able to alter my essence. Wolff attempts to externalize existence

by maintaining that its cause always lays outside the possible itself. An entity's possibility decides nothing about its existence (except for the very different case of God, whose essence is supposed to include existence, but whose essence is also necessary, unlike our created essences which are made by God's volition, and therefore contingent). This is the meaning of Wolff's doctrine that existence is the *complement* of possibility: "The sufficient reason for the actual existence of any finite being is never to be found in that being itself; it is always to be found in another one."[cxviii] In other words, nothing can create itself, and relation is essential.

Certainly Wolff seemed very mindful of what changes might result from his own actions of providing a complementary *Dialogue on Practical Philosophy of the Chinese* to supplement if not supplant Leibniz's *Dialogue on the Natural Theology of the Chinese,* although apparently not mindful enough, for it gave his pietistic enemies enough ammunition to have him dismissed from Halle University and exiled from Prussia. For although Wolff denies what Leibniz allows – that the Chinese do not in fact *have* a natural theology at all – he nevertheless praises their practical philosophy, for "the principles of Chinese wisdom are in full accord with our own."[cxix] This is Wolff's tactic: to back away from Leibniz's suggestion that the Chinese could conceivably have any thing to teach the West *spiritually*, in order to to establish respect for their *worldly* achievements. In an exaggerated attempt to keep his claims about China as modest as possible, Wolff, while denying that he is taking sides in the rites controversy at all, undercuts the very first premise of the anti-accomodationist position, namely, the assumption that there was *any* religion going on in China at all. Indeed, their moral system is flawed as well, for perfection is its naive aim, and so disappointment its continual lot. The "fraternal bond" of forgiveness which relativizes action to the human state's limited perfection was "indistinct" to the Chinese:

> To understand this fraternal bond properly, it is necessary to have a distinct idea of perfection in general and a general idea of the universe, what I call 'transcendental cosmology', and join it to the knowledge of natural theology. The Chinese lack this idea of perfection in general as well as knowledge of what relates to transcendental cosmology, and they knew nothing of natural theology. Thus it was not possible for them to explain clearly how and why all free acts are associated with one another.[cxx]

Put simply, Wolff is saying that the Chinese cannot *see the whole* (or, in his terminology, lack a transcendental cosmology), and so suffer from an oriental severity due to this absence of "the broad view," lacking the central Christian virtue of forgiveness.

None of this is based on any real understanding of Chinese thought, but rather epitomizes the presumptuous attitude of Western academia which Wolff was instrumental in defining as at the core of the university: that Europe's mission is to *judge* the world and everything in it. Wolff's most famous student, Immanuel Kant, can be interpreted as devoting his entire elaborate system to limiting, analyzing, organizing and extending the mind's *power to judge.* In so doing, Kant constructs a model of the mind which achieves a clarification so profound that it can be said to have defined the epoch of modernity. The vicissitudes of German idealism in Kant's wake – Hegel's obsessive systemization of essence and demotion of existence to mere appearance on the one hand, and Nietzsche's suspicion of system and re-assertion of existence over essence, demoting essence to mere appearance, on the other – thus set the scene for the eruption of phenomenology *as ontology* in the twentieth century.

It is well known that Kant was awoken from his "dogmatic slumbers" – and by this he meant from the metaphysics of Wolff – by the alarming philosophy of Hume. But the Scottish wake-up call was not the only challenging voice of dissent to which Kant paid heed. No less significant in their own way were the figures of the French Enlightenment: Rousseau, certainly, but more importantly in this context, Voltaire. Voltaire stands in the eighteenth century for two radical metaphysical doctrines: on the one hand, deism,[cxxi] and on the other, necessary creation. God exists eternally, but not as a person for Voltaire. He could even be called a mystic: "We have no adequate idea of divinity; we creep from conjecture to conjecture, from likelihood to probability, but we have few certainties."[cxxii] In so far as God is the cause of the world, it is not itself a part of God, and Voltaire argues against pantheism no less than against atheism. But a cause makes no sense without its effect, and Voltaire maintains that God makes no sense without the creation. This denial of the metaphysical coherence of spontaneity applies to the individual as well, reducing freedom to a species of ignorance: [cxxiii]

> When we have motives, our will is determined by them. And these motives are always the the final result of the understanding or of instinct ... Everything has its cause, therefore your will has one ... We must admit that one can hardly reply to the objections against liberty except by a vague eloquence; a sad theme about which the wise man fears even to think. There is only one consoling reflection, namely that whatever system one embraces, by whatever fatalism one believes our actions to be determined, one will always act *as though* one were free.[cxxiv]

Here we see the nascent metaphysics of *as if* , which is extended and elaborated by Kant into the central platform of his critical metaphysics. Not only must we act *as if* we are free, we need also to think *as if* God were personal and *as if* we apprehended the cosmic totality. We can and inevitably must think *as if* we see the whole, all the while aware that this is in fact an illusion.

7. Coda: Voltaire on Wolff, China and the Church.

In his *Philosophical Dictionary*, Voltaire (1764) also includes a brief entry on China, in which he says the following:

> The celebrated Wolff, professor of mathematics at the university of Halle one day delivered a fine oration in praise of Chinese philosophy; he praised that ancient species of men who differ from us in their beard, their eyes, their nose, their ears, and their arguments; he praised, I say, the Chinese for worshiping a supreme God and loving virtue ... Wolff, I must tell you, attracted to Halle a thousand students from every nation. There was in the same university a professor of theology named Lange, who attracted nobody; in despair at freezing to death alone in his lecture hall, he quite reasonably decided to ruin the professor of mathematics; following the custom of his kind, he promptly accused him of not believing in God. Some European writers who had never been to China had claimed that the government of Peking was atheistic; Wolff had praised the philosophers of Peking, hence Wolff was an atheist. Envy and hatred never constructed a better syllogism.[cxxv]

This passage is interesting for several reasons. On the one hand, Voltaire conflates the attitudes of Leibniz and of Wolff to Chinese religion, for although Leibniz certainly says that the Chinese had a natural theology, Wolff, as has been seen, denied that this was so, calling the Chinese atheists. Secondly, Longobardi and Saint-Marie, far from being the armchair travelers Voltaire calls them, had spent almost 20 years together in China. A third point brings these two into focus. Voltaire's account of Wolff's persecution locates the source of his troubles in the *ressentiment* of a single individual. Voltaire's recounting of it reveals his own aim clearly enough: to oppose Christian theologians and clergy and expose the unconscious hypocrisy which they succeed in concealing even (or rather, especially) from themselves.

Qua rationalists, Leibniz, Wolff and Voltaire all in fact agree that they find within themselves a natural theology entirely consonant with reason and utterly free from inner conflict. This natural theology (which strictly speaking should be called a natural '*de*ology') is entirely bound by the principle of sufficient reason, and as such cannot include creation *ex nihilo*, nor the notion that divinity is a personality. Leibniz unhesitatingly allows revelation as the source of these supplements, essential to Christianity, and to Christian Europe's understanding of its mission in the world. Voltaire unhesitatingly disallows these “additions” to reason's mandates, and vehemently resists the notion that this supplement of revelation can be compatible with a rational philosophy. Wolff attempts to steer the middle course,

attempting to appease both sides in this debate through a retreat into endlessly abstract metaphysical sophistication. But Voltaire is alone in appealing for *observation without passing judgment* :

> Why do we presume, on this side of the world, to argue bitterly, amid torrents of insults, over whether there were or were not fourteen princes before Fo-hi, emperor of China, and whether this Fo-hi lived three thousand or two thousand nine hundred years before our common era? I'd like to see two Irishmen take it into their heads to quarrel in Dublin over who, in the twelfth century, was the owner of the lands I occupy [in France] today. Isn't it obvious that they must ask me, who has the archives in his own hands? In my opinion, the same thing is true of the first emperors of China: we must refer to the tribunals of the country.[cxxvi]

This appeal for intellectual modesty is no minor matter, and can without exaggeration be described as a call for the re-orientation of the occident. But to describe this re-orientation as a simple *influence* of Chinese philosophy flowing into the Western mind would be to both overrate the understanding any of these early philosophical proto-Sinologists actually had, while at the same time to underrate the extent to which these struggles between philosophy and religion were endemic to Western thought itself.

Earlier I used a theatrical metaphor to describe this discovery of Chinese philosophy by the West in the eighteenth century as the entry of the new character of the Chinese Sage onto the stage of Western philosophy. But this metaphor now needs to be complimented by another, for Chinese philosophy itself can also be described as the stage upon which these philosophers of Europe were sublimating the debates which had been repressed for centuries in Europe. The multitude of projections, confusions and misunderstandings were also an oblique way for Europe to address its own inner conflicts, which according to each of these thinkers' common rationalistic assumption that reason has no inner discord *could not be ultimate*, and yet refused to resolve itself. Nothing is clearer than the fact that the struggle to *be the authority* was as great a motivating force behind these debates as the “pure” desire simply to *see* the whole of humanity and describe it with fidelity to the phenomena themselves. The discovery of Chinese philosophy by Leibniz and Wolff was a mixture of insights and misunderstandings, and despite eventually backsliding into the armchair orientialism of Kant and Hegel, constitute a remarkable attempt to rise above the reactionary parochialism they encountered all around them, and to forge links that we continue to develop today.

[i] Merkel, R.F., *G.W. von Leibniz und die China-Mission: eine Untersuchung ueber die Anfänge der protestantischen Mission* (München: Beck, 1920); and *Leibniz und China* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1952).
[ii] Franke, Otto, "Leibniz und China" *Zietschrift der Deutschen Morgenlaendischen Gesellschaft* 7(1928) pp. 155-178.
[iii] Latourette, K.S., *A History Of Christian Missions in China* (New York: Macmillan, 1929).
[iv] Pinot, V., *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France 1640-1740* (Paris: 1932, reprinted Geneve: Stakine Reprints, 1971).
[v] Rowbotham, A. H., *Missionary and Mandarin: the Jesuits at the Court of China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942).
[vi] Lach, D. F., "Leibniz and China" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 6(1945)436-455.
[vii] Needham, J., *Science and Civilization in China 7* vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956). and *Chinese Astronomy and the Jesuit Mission* (London: The China Society,1958).
[viii] Cary-Elwes, C., *China and the Cross: Studies in Missionary History* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957).
[ix] Cronin, V., *The Wise Man from the West* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1955).
[x] Grimm, T., "China und das Chinabild von Leibniz," pp. 38-61 in U.W. Bargenda and J. Bluehdorn eds. *Systemprinzip und Veilheit der Wissenschaften* Studia Leibnitiana Sonderheft 1 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1969).
[xi] Ho, J., *Quellenuntersuchung zur Chinakenntnis bei Leibniz und Wolff* (Hong Kong: Lai Hing & Co., 1962).
[xii] Krahl, J., *China Missions in Crisis* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1964).
[xiii] Roy, O., *Leibniz et la Chine* (Paris: Vrin, 1972).
[xiv] Bernard, H., *Matteo Ricci's Scientific Contribution to China* (Westport: Hyperion Press, 1973).
[xv] Zempliner, A., "Gedanken über die erste deutsche Übersetzung von Leibniz' Abhandlung über die chinesische Philosophie" *Studentia Leibnizia* 2(1970)223-231.
[xvi] Mungello, D. E., "Leibniz' Interpretation of Neo-Confucianism" *Philosophy East and West* 21(1971)3-22; *Leibniz and Confucianism: the Search for Accord* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1977); *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985); "The Seventeenth-Century Jesuit Translation Project of the Confucian *Four Books*" in Ronan and Bonnie eds.; *The Chinese Rites Controversy: its History and Meaning* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1994); *The Forgotten Christians of Hangzhou* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).
[xvii] Widmaier, R., *Die Rolle der chinesischen Schrift in Leibniz' Zeichentheorie* Studia Leibnitiana Supplementary Volume 24 (Wiebaden: F. Steiner, 1983); and ed., *Leibniz Korrespondiert mit China* (Fankfurt: Klostermann, 1990).
[xviii] Young, J. D., *East-West Synthesis: Matteo Ricci and Confucianism* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Center of Asian Studies, 1980) and *Confucianism and Christianity: the First Encounter* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 1983).
[xix] Cook, D.J. & H. Rosemont, "The Pre-Established Harmony between Leibniz and Chinese Thought" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 42(1981)253-267.
[xx] Liu, M-W., "The Harmonius Universe of Fu-tsang and Leibniz: a comparative study" *Philosophy East and West* 32(1982)61-76.
[xxi] Graham, E. D., "The 'Imaginative Geography' of China" in *Reflections on Orientalism* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Asian Studies Center, 1983).
[xxii] Ching, J., "What is Confucian Spirituality?" in *Confucianism: the Dynamics of Tradition* ed. Irene Eber (New York: MacMillan, 1986); Ching, J. and W. Oxtoby eds., *Moral Enlightenment: Leibniz and Wolff on China* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1992); and *Discovering China* (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 1992).
[xxiii] Chen, M., "Ferdinand Verbiest and the Geographical Works by Jesuits in Chinese 584-1674" in John J. Witek ed. *Fedinand Verbiest (1623-1688): Jesuit, Missionary, Scientist, Engineer and Diplomat*

(Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1994).
[xxiv] Ribas, Albert "Leibniz' Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese and the Leibniz-Clarke Controversy" *Philosophy East & West*, 53(2003)64 -86.
[xxv] "Leibniz, the Yijing, and the Religious Conversion of the Chinese" by Frank J. Swetz, *Mathematics Magazine*, Vol. 76, No. 4 (Oct., 2003), pp. 276-291.
[xxvi] "Leibniz' Binary System and Shao Yong's "Yijing"," James A. Ryan *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Jan., 1996), pp. 59-90.
[xxvii] Perkins, F., *Leibniz and China: A Commerce of Light*, (Cambridge University Press, 2004).
[xxviii] Who said in The End of All Things that Taoism was a "monstrosity" because it taught that the highest good consisted "*im Nichts*," and that Chinese philosophers "strive in dark rooms with eyes closed to experience and contemplate their nihility." Beck edition p.79.
[xxix] Who relegates Taoism to the most primitive stage in the development of philosophy because "the heaven of the Chinese is something totally empty" (*Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* ed. Hodgeson p.238), and who considers himself qualified to denigrate the Chinese system of writing as inferior to European ones despite not actually knowing the language - I especially want to draw attention to the unconscious irony involved in Hegel's assertion that "the Chinese are too proud to learn anything from Europeans" (*Philosophy of History* p.137 Dover edn.), and in his presumption to have understood "the character of the Chinese people in its various aspects" ibid. p.138.
[xxx] Needham, vol.4 pp.229-334. The Englishman Alexander Neckham mentions the use of magnetized needles by sailors in ch. 98 of *De naturis rerum* (c. 1187). The first treatise devoted to the subject was Epistola de Magnete, written by the Frenchman Petrus Peregrinus de Maricourt in 1269. Chaucer mentions the compass in Treatise on the Astrolabe (1391), by which time its use had become widespread in European navigation. See also Perkins *op cit* p.137 n56.
[xxxi] Columbus, a reformed pirate, based his calculations on his studies of the works of Ptolemy, Marco Polo, Pierre D'Ailly and the apocryphal biblical second book of Esdras. He proposed his ideas to the King of Portugal in 1484, but was rejected and so took them to the King and Queen of Spain, who, after much vacillation finally accepted them and financed the expedition in 1492.
[xxxii] Torrance, *China's First Missionaries: Ancient Israelites* (1937); David Harris, *Black Horse Odyssey* (1991).
[xxxiii] such as the closure of all Buddhist monasteries in 844 A.D. See Overmyer, pp.43-8.
[xxxiv] LaTourette, p.52. The Nestorian monument was erected 781AD, and specifies that the first Nestorian arrived in the capital in 635AD. (LaTourette, p.53.) Cf. Overmyer, p.55; also Saeki *The Nestorian Monument and Relics in China.*
[xxxv] LaTourette, pp.66-71. John had spent over 30 years in Peking when he died there around 1330.
[xxxvi] Cronin p. 256. The Chinese called their land "The Middle Kingdom," emphasizing exactly the very same congenital cultural ego-centrism as had the Anglo-Saxons when they called their land "Middle-Earth."
[xxxvii] Cronin p. 13; Cf. Lancashire *et al.* pp. 3-4.
[xxxviii] Cronin p. 33. For an English translation of Ricci's journals see L.J.Gallagher tr. *China in the Sixteenth Century: the Journals of Matteo Ricci.*
[xxxix] Ricci was basing this approach on the earlier experiences of missionaries in Japan. But Buddhist monks were much more highly esteemed in Japan than in China: see Cronin p. 59.
[xl] The prism also came in for considerable use in impressing the Chinese, glass being unknown in China at the time, translucent waxed paper being used for windows. However, the conceptual role of this "box in which a rainbow was trapped" was minimal, for Europe itself had no real understanding of the phenomenon of refraction until Newton "procured me a Triangular glafs-Prifme, to try therewith the celebrated Phaenomena of Colours" in 1666, as he reported in the paper of February 19, 1671 which launched his career. See I.B.Cohen ed. Isaac Newton's Papers and Letters on Natural Philosophy p. 47.

[xli] "While Europe believed Paradise lay in furthest Asia, China, under Buddhist influence, thought it lay towards the West." (Cronin, p. 71) Cronin paints a vivid picture of this scene on p.73: "One day [in 1585], as an experiment, Ricci exhibited an up-to-date Flemish map of the world he had brought from Macao. It showed Europe, the Eastern and Western coastlines of North America, the full extent of South America, the outline of Africa, India, Indonesia, Japan; the Kwangtung coastline and, to the north-west, Cathay as described by Marco Polo … Their Chinese visitors were puzzled. Some thought the map a strange painting, others a Taoist charm. When Ricci explained what it was, they refused absolutely to believe him. 'Surely you are mistaken', they protested, 'we have our own maps bearing no relation to this'. One of the Mandarins sent a servant home to fetch an Atlas and, when it arrived, spread the parchment out on the table. This time it was the missionaries' turn to be astonished. There could be no mistake about the heading: 'Picture of All Under Heaven', but practically the entire sheet was occupied by the fifteen provinces … Into the right-hand corner Korea and Japan were squeezed; at the bottom, on the same line as Cambodia, stretched the islands of Borneo, Sumatra and Java; to the West lay India with Arabia underneath it … A legend in the north-west corner mentioned that nine barbarian countries lay eastwards, eight to the south, six in the west and five to the north. All the [28] foreign countries put together were smaller than a minor province of the Middle Kingdom." See also Foss "Jesuit Cartography," and Chen "Geographical Works by Jesuits in Chinese."

[xlii] See Cronin p.151 & p.196.

[xliii] Cronin pp84-85. Ricci's time in Shiuhing was not, however, without friction, for the xenophobia of some of the less well educated elements of the town led to vandalism and false charges at times, although Ricci successfully defended himself during the subsequent trial and won compensation. See Cronin pp. 62-68. Ricci's cause was greatly aided by the degree of literacy of the Chinese, who had been printing books since at least the tenth century, a process not much more than a century old in Europe at that time. The sixth of the ten Taoist hells is reserved for those who have been disrespectful to books.

[xliv] Cronin p. 166. Actually, Ricci and co. presented the Emperor with two clocks: I have simplified my account slightly in the interest of brevity. See Cronin chapter 9 for full details.

[xlv] Cronin pp. 174-5. When the Emperor's mother heard of the clock, she demanded that it be brought to her. The Emperor, afraid of having his pride and joy taken from him, waited until it ran down again to comply with her wishes. The Emperor's mother soon tired of this impressive but silent and apparently useless piece of furniture, and sent it back to her son, saying she couldn't understand what all the fuss had been about. The emperor then had the clock wound up again, and harmony was re-established at the meeting-place of Heaven and Earth.

[xlvi] Cronin p. 161-2.

[xlvii] Cronin p. 279-80. But compare the more sympathetic account of Cummins, "Two Missionary Methods": "The mendicants are shown as reactionaries, as 'medievals' in a Renaissance world, as rough intruders into an area where delicate diplomacy was needed … But this simple view is not historically tenable, for the Friars were not rigid stereotypes, and their story is more complex than is usually believed" (p.33).

[xlviii] See especially Mungello ed.

[xlix] The controversy had a checkered history, with a series of Popes issuing contradictory decrees until Clement XI's verdict in 1704: Innocent X condemned Confucian ceremonies in 1645; Alexander VII condoned them in 1656; Clement IX re-condemned, 1669; Innocent XI condemned Taoism in 1684. For details see Minamiki, and also Mungello ed.

[l] Translated with introduction and notes by D. Lancashire et al; re. status in China see Cronin p. 282.

[li] Major early treatises on China were G.Spizel, *De re literaria Sinensium*, 1660; A.Kircher S.J. *China monumentis qua sacris qua profpundis illustrata*, 1667; and *Conficius Sinarum Philosophus* 1687 edited by Phillipe Couplet SJ, the first translation of several Chinese philosophical classics, including the Analects, Great Learning and Doctrine of the Mean. A copy of this book is to be found preserved in

Leibniz' personal library in Hanover, along with more than fifty other works on China and Asia.
[lii] Edward Said *Orientalism* p.125.
[liii] *Journal of the History of Ideas* 42(1981) pp.253-267. Franklin agrees with Cook and Rosemont - see *Commerce of Light* p. 169.
[liv] Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, vol. 2 p.504 note g.
[lv] See Chan *Source-Book* chapter 25, pp. 406-424 and Bary, Chan & Watson *Sources of Chinese Tradition* vol. I pp.328-333.
[lvi] Ibid. vol. 2 p.499. The extensive history of Western adoptions of Chinese inventions through Islamic and Mongol mediation is explored in fascinating depth by Needham in his encyclopedic seven volume work.
[lvii] Certainly as Rosemont and Cook point out in their article "The Pre-Established Harmony Between Leibniz and Chinese Thought" Leibniz did not compare Longobardi and Santamaria with his other sources without at least rudimentary Chinese. But I cannot agree that this "reduces markedly the possibility that evidence will be forthcoming that he was influenced philosophically by it" (p.261). In his introduction to his translations of *The Great Learning* and *Mean in Action* (1943, pp. 12-18), E.R. Hughs had maintained that Leibniz' doctrines of "simple substance" and "pre-established harmony" were influenced by his reading of Confucius. Joseph Needham maintains in *Science and Civilization in China* (1956, v2 note p.504) that Leibniz had formed these central ideas of his system by 1686, and as the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* anthology was first published in 1687, any ascription of direct formative influence is an probably over-estimation of Leibniz' knowledge of Chinese thought in 1686. (See also Mungello pp. 13 and p.56.). But as pointed out above, Leibniz had in fact been exposed to various tenets of Confucianism and Taoism through many other sources as early as 1669, albeit in a confused manner. So I cannot agree with what Franklin says on page 169 of *Leibniz and China*: "we can rely on no example of Leibniz "synthesizing" anything from Chinese philosophy into his own," and suggest rather that this mis-judgment indicates Perkin's paucity of historical depth.
[lviii] Longobardi arrived in China in 1597, and worked with Ricci, who appointed him as his successor before his death, although when Ricci died he attacked the compatibilist position. He pubished *Traite sur quelques points de la religion des chinois* in 1703. Sainte-Marie arrived in China in 1633. He was a Franciscian, and a persistant critic of Jesuit position of compatibilism. His *Traite sur quelques points importants de la mission de la Chine* was written in Spanish in 1668 but it was in a French translation of 1701 that it circulated most widely: Leibniz was sent a copy of this along with Longobardi's book in 1715 by Nicholas Reymond, although he knew of its existence as earlier. See Mungello pp. 4-5.
[lix] Preface to Novissima Sinica in Cook & Rosemont p. 45.
[lx] *Khren to legein te noein t'eon emmenai: esti gar einai, meden d'ouk estin: ta s'ego phrazesthai anōga* which I translate "You must say and think that Being Is. For to be is, but not to be is not. You must think this over."
[lxi] Lancashire et al p.34; Cronin p. 56.
[lxii] Nicholas Malebranche, *Dialogues on Metaphysics and Religion* tr. D. Scott, ed. N. Jolley p.6.
[lxiii] Nicholas Malebranche, *The Search After Truth* T.M. Lennon tr.&ed., Book 3 Part 2 (p.218) and Book 4 Chapter 11 (p.320).
[lxiv] Leibniz *Monadology* §6: "the existence of Monads can begin or end only all at once, that is to say, the Monad can begin only through creation and end through annihilation." (Open Court edition p.251)
[lxv] *Ibid.* §153 p. 219. See also §§265-279, pp. 289-297.
[lxvi] Perkins emphasizes this subtle and important point, often missed: "God cannot simply do anything: he must at least follow the necessities of divine understanding, including rules of compossibility." (*Commerce of Light* p.59). However despite Perkins' philosophical acumen, he is trapped back in to anachronism when he reduces his understanding of the Jesuits' world-historical mission to the dimensions of his own chat with a Chinese peasant whom he could not understand very well: "I suspect the first Jesuits who entered China established communication in just this way" (p. 204). Ricci's

brilliant use of maps, clocks and paintings does not fit the back-packer paradigm of the tourist, and likening the two experiences is more misleading than it is enlightening.

[lxvii] *Search* p.320

[lxviii] Dialogue One, p.8.

[lxix] Dialogue One, p.9.

[lxx] Malebranche says "This would be true if ideas of creatures were modifications of his substance, but the infinite being is incapable of modifications." *Search*, Lennon ed. p.625.

[lxxi] Dialogue Two p. 23

[lxxii] A collection of articles on this much neglected thinker is Kremer ed. *The Great Arnauld And Some Of His Philosophical Corresponents*. See also Steven Nadler "Choosing a Theodicy: the Leibniz-Malebranche-Arnauld Connection" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 55(1994)573-589.

[lxxiii] *Book of true and false ideas*, chapter 15.

[lxxiv] "Elucidations" in *Search* p.624. Thus Iorio's introduction to the *Dialogue Between...* pp.19-20: "There are two species of extension , intelligible and material. The former is eternal, immense, necessary. It is the immensity of God both as participable by creatures (corporeal bodies) and as representative of an immense matter. It is the intelligible idea of an infinity of possible worlds. Intelligible extension is what we contemplate whenever we think of the infinite. Material extension, on the other hand, is the matter of which the world is composed; it is invisible and unable to act on out minds. It is contingent, limited and created ... This is the error of Spinoza, confusing the idea of things created by God with the things themselves, or, intelligible extension with material extension."

[lxxv] Iorio cites Malebranches letter to Mairan, 29 Sep 1713 in which he admits his reading of Spinoza was cursory, and cites French authorities (p. 36 note 31) seriously doubting he had read him at all.

[lxxvi] Malebranche, *Dialogue Between a Christian Philosopher and a Chinese Philosopher on the Existence and Nature of God*, tr. Dominick Iorio p.65.

[lxxvii] *Ibid.*

[lxxviii] Ibid. p. 66.

[lxxix] Wing-Tsit Chan, *Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy* p.160. Compare also verses 11 and 1.

[lxxx]Thus Lao Tzu verse 42:

> Tao produced the One
> The One produced the two
> The two produced the three
> And the three produced everything
> Everything carries the yin and embraces the yang
> and through the blending of the *ch'i* they achieve harmony.

[lxxxi] Malebranche, *Dialogue* p.82

[lxxxii] The Chinese Philosopher is of course eventually won over. By the end of the dialogue he has accepted that *Lǐ* is a personal power and not a merely impersonal force or principle: "I acknowledge with you that the *Lǐ* necessarily knows what he does, and even that he wills it..." But his big sticking point is creation *ex nihilo*, which ironically enough Malebranche rebuts with the point made in Lao Tzu verse 40, which he takes from his own *Search After Truth* Book Three Part Two Chapter Three (p.222): "nothingness and being can succeed one another." This is all really just a pretext for ending the dialogue with a brief monologue on the validity of Malebranche's own doctrine of intelligible extension. Bayle's further situation of Spinoza as "oriental" is futher explored by Thijs Weststeijn in "Spinoza sinicus: An Asian Paragraph in the History of the Radical Enlightenment" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 68(2007) pp. 537-561.

[lxxxiii] Leibniz *Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese* in Cook & Rosemont eds. *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: Writing on China* p.75. Cf. Introduction p.33. The books sent by Remond were Longobardi's Religion Treatise and Santa-Maria's Mission Treatise. Both works argued that Chinese systems of thought were atheistic and that conversion should mean total rejection of Chinese customs

and adoption of Christian religious observances alone. Remond asked Leibniz's opinion of these works. For a good description of the broader Remond-Leibniz correspondence see Emily Grosholz, "Plato and Leibniz against the Materialists."

[lxxxiv] Cook & Rosemont ed. p. 75.

[lxxxv] *ibid.*

[lxxxvi] Leibniz, Discourse p.78

[lxxxvii] *Lǐ* also means the noun "grain" (in wood or stone) or "texture," as well as the verbs "to manage" or "to run," as well as the abstract noun "organization." It also the word for "science" in general but especially physics. It can also mean "reason," "logic," or "truth." But it can also mean both "to tidy up" and even "to have a hair-cut."

[lxxxviii] An obvious reference to Cusanus. Rosemont and Cook trace this image still further, to the *Liber XXIV philosphorum* prop. 2 of pseudo-Hermes Trismagistes, which, like pseudo-Dionysus, is a neo-Platonic early-Medieval forgery purporting to be written, in this case, by Pythagoras, Moses and the Egyptian Heremes, who were thus supposed to be one and the same person, "thrice great" (i.e. Tris-magistes).

[lxxxix] Leibniz, Discourse, p.86.

[xc] see *Tao-Te Ching* Henricks ed. p.106, and Henricks' introduction p.xviii

[xci] Ching and Oxtoby pp.70-76, cf. Mungello, p.44

[xcii] Boyer, C, *History of Mathematics*; and *The I Ching, or Book of Changes* translated into English by C.F. Baynes. See *Shuo Kua* (Discussion of the Trigrams, eighth wing), chapter one: "In ancient times the holy sages made the Book of Changes thus: they invented the yarrow-stalk oracle in order to lend aid in a mysterious way to the light of the gods. To heaven they assigned the number three and to Earth the number two; and from these they computed the other numbers." Traditional commentary explains: "Earth is the derived principle, therefore the number two is assigned to it. Heaven is the ultimate unity, yet it includes the Earth within itself, and is therefore assigned the number three. The number one could not be used, as it is too abstract and rigid and does not include the idea of the manifold." (Wilhelm edition, p.262-3).

[xciii] Mungello surprisingly also underestimates the importance of this difference : "Bouvet and Leibniz diverged from traditional transformation of the diagrams, which changes from the bottom upward ... this probably represents more a sign of flexibility of the system than ignorance of Chinese tradition." (p.51) The symbolism of this orientation is however an important asymmetry, and the assumption of its invariance a significant impediment in an actual comprehension of Taoist metaphysics.

[xciv] See Genesis 6:10; this had in fact been first suggested by Kepler (see Ching and Oxtoby p.68). While Bouvet tends to give this "evidence" a literal interpretation re prehistoric origins necessary for a belief in an Adamic source of the human race, such a conviction in shared origins takes on a more abstract form in Leibniz, who thinks that the hexagrams demonstrate the universality of natural reason.

[xcv] Leibniz, "Secret of Creation" in Ching and Oxtoby p.72.

[xcvi] Leibniz, "Of an Organum or Ars Magna of Thinking" in Parkinson ed. pp.1-4.

[xcvii] Ibid. Compare *Theodicy* §242: "It should be no cause for astonishment that I endeavor to elucidate these things by comparisons taken from pure mathematics, where everything proceeds in order, and where it is possible to fathom them by a close contemplation which grants us an enjoyment, so to speak, of the vision of the ideas of God."

[xcviii] *Ars Magna* pp. 1-2

[xcix] Leibniz, *Secret of Creation*, Ching and Oxtoby p.75.

[c] Mungello, p.3.

[ci] "Secret" Ching & Oxtoby, p. 72.

[cii] Wing-Tsit Chan, Sourcebook.... pp.307-8.

[ciii] C.I. Gerhardt (ed.) *Briefwechsel zwischen Leibniz und Christian Wolff 1704-1716* (Halle, 1860; reprinted Hildesheim: Olms, 1963).

[civ]Wolff, *Discourse on the Practical Philosohy of the Chinese* (1721), foreword to 1726 edition.
[cv] Copleston *History of Philosophy* vol.5 p.106.
[cvi] Suarez, *Metaph. Disp*., disp. II, Prooemium, vol.1 p.31, in E. Gilson *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1952) p.97.
[cvii] Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* p.101.
[cviii] *Ibid.* p.102.
[cix] *Ibid.* p.105.
[cx] Wolff, *Discourse on the Practical Philosophy of the Chinese*, reprinted in Ching and Oxtoby *Moral Enlightenment: Leibniz and Wolff on China* §8 pp.155-6
[cxi] *Ibid*. p.155 n.21
[cxii] *Ibid*. p.156 n.24
[cxiii] *Ibid*. §10 p.157 n.27
[cxiv] *Ibid.* §13 p.159 n.33
[cxv] *Ibid.* §12 n.31
[cxvi] The *Oxford English Dictionary* credits Jean Le Clerc with coining the term "ontologie" in French in 1692; Gilson credits J.Clauberg in his work *Elementa philosophiae sive Ontosophiae* of 1647. But it was only with Wolff's title of 1729 that the term entered general learned vocabulary.
[cxvii] Gilson *op. cit*. pp. 115 - 6.
[cxviii] "*Hinc existentiam definio per complementum possibilitatis,*" as cited by Gilson p.118 who points out the connection to Duns Scotus's existential "mode."
[cxix] Wolff, *Discourse* §13 p.161.
[cxx] *Ibid.* §39 n.80 p.178 Ironic enough, given that Chinese has three words for brother: younger brother, middle brother and older brother. Wolff seems to have been even less aware of Taoism than even Leibniz.
[cxxi] Although Voltaire actually used the term *théisme* to describe his beliefs, he is nevertheless the clearest exponent of the position which Pascal called *déisme*: the rejection of revelation and the defense of monotheism on solely rational grounds. The terms 'deism' and 'theism' were used quite loosely until the nineteenth century.
[cxxii] Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*, entry for "God – Gods."
[cxxiii] Freedom for Voltaire is "nothing but the power of doing what I want to do." The freedom is in the action, and not in the will, which is necessarily beholden to the understanding. Thus Voltaire no less than Leibniz (whose optimism he satirizes in his *Candide*, and with whom he is typically contrasted) also denies that chance has any place in metaphysics: "we have invented this word [chance] to express the known effect of any unknown cause." Voltaire, *The Ignorant Philosopher*, ch. 13.
[cxxiv] Voltaire, *The Philosophy of Newton* I, 4.
[cxxv] Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*, "Of China" Basic Books ed. vol. I p.167.
[cxxvi] Voltaire *Philosophical Dictionary* , entry for "China."