SACRED AND SECULAR IN CHINA

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The organisers of this conference - and, I may add, the author of this paper - had difficulty in determining to which section it should belong. The problem it raises is one that I suspect concerns all of us, whatever our disciplinary allegiances, who work in the field of non-western cultures and religions. It may also be of increasing concern to students of our own tradition, especially in its more recent transformations. It is, in short, an absolutely fundamental methodological and hermeneutical problem in the study of religion.

1. The Problem Of The Definition Of Religion

The problem may be articulated in various ways. One way is to ask for *the definition of religion*. What precisely is it that we study? How can it be distinguished objectively, or even subjectively, from the non-religious or secular? I am sure that you all have had the experience I have had, that the pursuit of a substantive definition is a futile one; and that with the growth in knowledge of actual religions and their manifestations, initial conceptual clarity is lost or becomes irrelevant.

There are many classic ploys used to evade the issue. There is:

(a) the operational solution (beloved especially of sociologists):
We all *know* what a religion is, but can we recognise it when we see it, or at least know what people normally mean by 'religion'.

Then there is:

(b) the typological evasion:
Let's avoid the extreme or borderline cases, and concentrate on establishing a pattern of common, though not definitive or essential, features of religions. Such, for example, is Ninian Smart's six-dimensional grid employed so effectively in his *Religious Experience of Mankind.*

or –

(c) we invoke one of the myriad of *semantic ploys* which enable us to avoid the ever more embarassing term 'religion'.
We may, like the Chicago school, speak exclusively of 'religions' – of analogous but not necessarily strictly identical systems or groupings. Or, if we accept Wilfred Cantrell Smith's strictures in *The Meaning and End of Religion* on the *reification* of essentially personal beliefs and practices involved in the term 'religion', we might, to borrow the title of another of his books, speak of 'the *faiths* of other men'. Or again, we may use one of the many synonyms such as 'the sacred', 'ultimate commitment', etc. to escape what has become almost a pejorative term.

I hope I don't need to elaborate this point since I am reasonably certain from conversations and encounters with a variety of fellow-sufferers that the disease is a very widespread one. I am not proposing a remedy or even a full diagnosis. Here I simply present, in all its clinical horrors, the symptoms as they have emerged in a current line of investigation I have been pursuing into Chinese 'religion'. I offer it as a plea for help from more experienced practitioners, as much as a contribution to the treatment of the disease. I am also aware that it may turn out to be more a disease of the diagnostician than the patient. My excuse is simply that as a long-term student of Confucius I have a moral as well as an intellectual commitment to what the Master called the *rectification of names* and a belief, perhaps naive, that such a rectification is a necessary propaedeutic for any investigation.

My initiation into the problem began with work, still alas in progress, on the first major confrontation of western scholars and Chinese religions, the Jesuit mission to China of the late sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. My focus was the Jesuit interpretation of Confucianism, the attempt of several generations of highly educated, strongly motivated European scholars, belonging to a closely knit and self-conscious religious order, to understand a totally alien tradition, to interpret it for themselves and other Europeans, and to use its language and concepts to communicate their own tradition to the Chinese. It was, in many respects, a unique experiment. And it was also, on the whole, a failure.

Part of the failure, perhaps the largest part, was due to contingent causes – political, social and moral – best seen in the notorious 'Chinese Rites Controversy'. But part, also, as intellectual. To summarise, drastically and misleadingly, the Jesuit pioneers such as Matteo Ricci saw Confucianism as a natural theism which had become increasingly rationalised into a quasi-materialism. Hence Confucian rituals such as ancestor rites could be legitimately continued by Chinese converts to Christianity. They were in origin untainted by idolatry or superstition and, in contemporary practice, were purely social or, as they put it, 'political'. Their missionary opponents, on the other hand, claimed that the rites were clearly 'religious' and therefore necessarily, as non-Christian, also anti-Christian. This view was also frequently combined with the argument that the Neo-Confucians of the time were atheists. While the Jesuits detected the logical fallacy of idolatrous rites practised by atheists, they seemed unaware of the difficulties of their own position, namely, that the rites were both religious and purely social. They resolved the dilemma in practice on the personal level by living encounter with some of the finest representatives of the Chinese tradition[1]. I believe that their intuitive grasp of Chinese realities was a valid and an adequate one. What they lacked was a theological language to elaborate their intuitions. And when confronted by determined theological opponents they lapsed into oversimplification and eventually silence.

2. Eliade's Distinction Between the Sacred and the Profane

In tracing the Jesuit encounter with Confucianism, and then in attempting to teach undergraduate students the rudiments of Chinese religion, I turned to Mircea Eliade's phenomenological distinction between 'sacred and profane' as a way of avoiding the slippery term 'religion'. Here was, apparently, a method of avoiding essential definitions by focusing on what was accepted as 'sacred' by the members or practitioners of a religion. It would avoid the danger of Europo-centrism, of imposing Western values on Eastern facts. And if it implied subjectivity and realism, that was something that historians at least have learned to live with for decades. I found no repugnance in the notion that one man's 'sacred' may be another man's 'profane'.

The difficulty, an insuperable difficulty to my mind, in Eliade's approach, most fully developed in his *The Sacred and the Profane: the Nature of Religion*, lies in his analysis of the phenomenology of the sacred. Basically it is on the notions of separation, difference and opposition that his analysis centres. *The sacred,* he tells us, *always manifests itself as a reality of a wholly different order from 'natural' realities.*[2]

> *From the most elementary hierophany – e.g., manifestation of the sacred in some ordinary object, a stone or a tree – to the supreme hierophany (which, for a Christian, is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ) there is no solution of continuity. In each case we are confronted by the same mysterious act – the manifestation of something of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our natural 'profane' world.*[3]

And as the analysis proceeds we are told that the 'sacred' is found or experienced in special and separate spaces, times, persons and things.

There are many features of Eliade's analysis that I find deeply satisfying and illuminating. By concentrating on the modalities of the sacred, on the hierophanies, a basis is found for comparison and for the development of higher order patterns or archetypes, without invoking the kind of mono-causal explanation patterns that gave 'Comparative Religion' such a justified bad name in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The insuperable difficulty posed by all these theories – totemism, animism, etc. – is that they are all, as Evans-Pritchard so elegantly demonstrates in *Theories of Primitive Religion,* 'just-so' stories, based on *a priori* theories, self-verifying and therefore ultimately indemonstrable.

But does Eliade avoid another criticism often levelled at the turn of the century theorists – the narrow range of their sources? Who today, for example, would have the arrogance to entitle a theoretical work on religion based almost entirely on primitive religions and, in the end, on one form (Australian aboriginal religion) and one tribe (the Aranda), 'Elementary Forms of the Religious Life'. His vast

output, including *Patterns in Comparative Religion, The Myth of the Eternal Return, The Quest, Yoga, Shamanism*, ranges widely in time and space but is concentrated on so-called 'primitive' and 'archaic' religions and *The Sacred and the Profane* especially so. He acknowledges that in terms of his definition of the sacred, modern Western man is 'irreligious' and 'desacralized', or at least that he is tending this way. The recovery of the sacred, which he strongly advocates, is posed in this and more recent works of Eliade, as a return to older forms of consciousness.

I do not want to pursue the more general problems raised by this last aspect of Eliade's conception of the sacred, except to observe that both on empirical and theoretical grounds I reject the 'secularisation' thesis of many social scientists. I am in fundamental agreement with Paul Tillich in theology, Peter Berger in sociology and John Bowker in whatever he does,[4] that to rely on the concept of 'secularisation' is an acknowledgment of the inadequacy of our conceptual tools for dealing with contemporary forms of awareness, rather than to identify an objective reality.

More specifically, however, I find Eliade's categories almost totally inapplicable to Chinese culture and religion. Eliade is aware of this, and defends himself with an ingenious but unsatisfactory two-fold rebuttal:

> (1) *In China, as in the West, the desacralization of nature is the work of a minority, especially of the literati;*
>
> (2) *nevertheless in China and in the entire Far East, the process of desacralization has never been carried to its final extreme. Even for the most sophisticated men of letters 'aesthetic contemplation' still retains an aura of religious prestige.*[5]

His counter example – the theory and practice of the miniature garden in China – hardly meets the objection that China stubbornly resists his theory. Firstly, like the Jesuits, his argument is that the literati (i.e. Confucian) lifestyle contains vestiges and echoes of archaic Chinese 'sacral' attitudes to nature. He does not demonstrate that such attitudes are consciously adopted, which surely he should do if his own criteria are to be met. This might be argued in some other cases than the one he cites, e.g. certain rituals of sacrifice and seasonal celebration, but even there it would be hard to exclude the possibility that the motivation was archaizing and traditionalistic rather than 'sacral' in his sense.

More seriously, he is not tackling the central problem of the religiousness of the Chinese literati, i.e. the possibility of sacredness in the Confucian world-view. He appears to claim that the dominant Chinese tradition, like the dominant modern Western spirit, is irremediably profane and desacralized; and, by implication, to be arguing that Chinese 'religion' is restricted to the peasants and uneducated. The sacred, in Eliade's view, can only appear on the fringes and in the interstices, as it were, of the Chinese Great Tradition.

3. Key Terms in the Chinese Tradition show it to be in Tension with an Eliade-style Analysis

A brief survey of some of the key terms of this tradition may illustrate the point I wish to make – that an Eliade-style analysis of the sacred in Chinese tradition, i.e. in terms of separate spheres of sacred and profane reality, can only produce a negative result. The Chinese simply do not (or did not) distinguish between 'religious' and 'secular' areas, activities or values.

If you look up 'religion' in a Chinese dictionary, you will find a term, *tsung chiao* meaning something like 'ancestral teaching'. But on closer examination, this proves to be very modern, in fact a borrowing from the Japanese. It does, however, provide a good point of entry into the Chinese value system because the two characters that make up the term have a resonance closely analogous to the Western 'religion'. *Tsung* immediately raises cultic associations, especially the central cult of the Confucian value system, that of the ancestors. And *chiao* means 'teaching', or perhaps more literally 'tradition', the handing over to a child or student of the teachings of the ancients. Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism —all are referred to as *chiao*: the *chiao* or tradition of the scholars or *ju*; of the *tao* or *Way*; and of *Fo* or Buddha.

Some authorities find in Chinese a terminological distinction analogous to our own 'religion'/'philosophy' distinction i.e. a distinction between the purely rational pursuit of truth and the admission of non-rational faith elements. They find this in the use of the term *chia* 'school' (literally 'family') as applied to Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Hence, when referring to the *Tao chiao* one means the religious sect founded by the Chang family in the second century A.D.; but the *Tao chia* refers to the philosophical school deriving from the *Tao te ching* and *Chuang-tzu*. Similarly the 'school' (*chia*) of the Scholars is Confucian philosophy; the *chiao* is the State Cult of Confucius. However, I have serious misgivings about this distinction. Admittedly, *chia* has more 'secular' connotations than *chiao*; it does imply rational discussion and elaboration, and it excludes, on the whole, cultic elements. But the terms are often used interchangeably. In some contexts, for example in Buddhism, our distinction between a 'religion' and its 'theology' would seem a more accurate rendering. And, in any case, this alleged distinction begs the question as to whether or not a *chiao*, a tradition, is a religion in China.

One thing is clear: neither Confucianism nor Taoism, and probably not Chinese Buddhism either, claim a divine revelation as the beginning of the tradition. All look to a Golden Age of Sages whose wisdom is embodied in their *ching* or 'classics'. A *ching* is not a revealed or verbally inerrant writing. Its status derives solely from its reception and acceptance by the ancients as embodying their highest values. It is, as its name suggests (*ching* literally is the 'warp' in weaving) an expression of the basic fabric or values of Chinese culture.

All three traditions, but especially the Confucian, are marked by their rationalism. As Max Weber says, *Confucianism is rationalist to such a far-going extent that it stands to the extreme boundary of what one might call a 'religious' ethic.*[6] And again, all three, but especially Confucianism, place great emphasis on man, on human relationships. If one must characterize Confucianism in a word, that word would have to be 'humanism'.

Nevertheless, *Confucian humanism* is not at all divorced from ultimate or sacred values. It is just that these are not seen as separate or separable from human realities. *Jen*, 'goodness' or 'love' - or 'humaneness' as I would translate it – is the key to desirable human behaviour according to Confucius. It is thoroughly man-centred. The Chinese character literally means the relationship of man to man ('man' and 'two'). Confucians disputed endlessly the question whether *jen* was innate or acquired, but they did not dispute that it was but part, the social or moral dimension, of a cosmic harmony.

There is considerable argument as to whether this harmony was seen as dependent upon what we would call a 'God' concept. My view, and I think it is the majority view today, is that for Confucius himself *t'ien*, 'Heaven', was still, as it had been in earlier Chinese religion, a personal god. More controversial is my contention that the key Neo-Confucian terms *ch'i* and *li* should not be interpreted as distinguishing 'matter' and rational but none the less material 'principle', but that they are functionally analogous in some (but not all respects) to the Western Matter/Spirit dichotomy. The controversy both about the materialism or agnosticism of Confucius and about the materialism of Neo-Confucianism, largely springs from a gross and misleading application of Western categories which would not occur to the Chinese themselves. When Chu Hsi, the twelfth century Neo-Confucian synthesiser, equated *li* with the *t'ien* of Confucius and the classics, he was not, I think, attempting to rationalise or demythologise the tradition, but to correlate his more sophisticated conception of the source and ground of cosmic harmony – physical, moral and spiritual – with the older conception.

Fundamentally, however, there is no great discrepancy between Confucius and the Neo-Confucians. Early and later Confucians all see human relationships as central, and *jen*, humaneness, as the proper and specific pursuit of *jen*, humanity. The alleged secularization of Confucianism is not so much a process of desacralization of the cosmos, as the development of a new interpretation, owing much to Buddhist metaphysics, of the mode in which sacred values are realised in human action. Herbert Fingarette in a recent study of Confucius[8] has characterised Confucius' perception of reality as 'the secular as sacred'. This seems to me just another way of saying that the categories themselves are inapplicable and that we must look further for an adequate conceptualization of Chinese religiosity.

Before pursuing that line, however, I would like to read two highly characteristic Confucian statements, one presenting the moral dimension, the other the cosmic dimension of Confucian religiosity.

The first is from Confucius himself, and might be summed up as his spiritual autobiography.

> The Master said, *at fifteen I was intent on learning. At thirty, I was firm. At forty, I had my doubts. At fifty, I knew the decrees of Heaven. At sixty, my ears were attentive. At seventy I could follow my heart's desire without doing what was not right.*[9]

The second is the 'Western Inscription' written on the wall of his study by Chang Tsai (1021–1077), one of the founders of Neo-Confucianism.

> *Heaven is my father and earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I finds an intimate place in their midst. Therefore that which extends throughout the Universe I regard as my body and that which directs the Universe I consider my nature.*
> *All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions . . . . .*
> *In life I follow and serve Heaven and earth. In death I will be at peace.*[10]

Any definition of religion which cannot embrace these attitudes is to my mind radically deficient, and I would regard them as touchstones for any attempt to characterize 'religion' in general.

4. Peter Berger's View: Religion as a Variety of World-Construction

To those of you familiar with the work of Peter Berger, the conclusion I am approaching may seem to be his: that religion is a variety of world-construction, of 'pouring meaning' into reality.[11] Thus for Berger:

> *Religion is the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established. Put differently, religion is cosmicization in a sacred mode. By sacred is meant here a quality of mysterious and awesome power, other than man and yet related to him, which is believed to reside in certain objects of experience.*[12]

To a large extent I agree. 'Religion' should not be reified. It is not some*thing* to be distinguished from other things or objects, but rather a particular way of interpreting reality, of perceiving significance or value in our experience. The Chinese – and the Gospel – analogy of the Way is significant here. It is a way of interpreting and ordering our experience, and a way of responding to that perceived order.

Where I am unhappy with Berger's solution is the stress on what he calls 'cultural facticity'[13] the projective and perhaps arbitrary aspects of this particular form of world-construction. Is any world, however constructed, 'sacred'? Berger has in *The Social Reality of Religion* made some advance on Thomas Luckmann's 'invisible religion' argument by specifying that *religious* world-construction must involve a reference to a 'sacred cosmos' which he then defines in

rather Eliade-like terms of otherness and location 'in certain objects of experience'. But once again, we are thrust into the dilemma of locating the sacred. If the cosmos is sacred, then *all* experience may, at least in principle, be sacred, and the Confucian would be the religious man *par excellence*. And this would nullify the specification of the sacred in terms of experiences of 'mysterious and awesome power . . believed to reside in certain objects of experience.'

Berger himself recognized the inadequacies of his formulation in his later work, *A Rumour of Angels*. In the first place he acknowledged that the dialectic of individual and society (the proper concern of sociology) did not exhaust the dialectical possibilities: that the individual may be responding to a real other 'out there' or beyond his social experience. And further, and most importantly for our purposes, that there may be a better formulation of that other than in terms of the 'sacred'.

> *I would suggest that theological thought seek out what might be called 'signals of transcendence' within the empirically given human situation . . What does this mean? By signals of transcendence, I mean phenomena that are to be found within the domain of our 'natural' reality but that appear to point beyond that reality.*[14]

5. "Transcendence" as an Ultimate Criterion of the Religious

Is 'transcendence' the key we have been seeking? It certainly appears promising. It encompasses the traditional imagery of 'beyond', 'other', 'difference'. It emphasises a particular mode of perception or interpretation which is open to the possibility of the objective reality of the 'sacred' other, while not necessarily affirming it. It also enables the making of crucial distinctions between value systems. Thus a system which had all or many of the characteristics of a religion, e.g. rituals, sacred texts, saints and prophets, all-embracing claims, but failed the transcendence test would be ruled out as a true religion, although still, no doubt, a valuable point of comparison. Or again, it may be the basis for useful distinctions between variant modes of transcendence. In the last case, Huston Smith's distinction between psychological and ontological transcendence[15] seems a particularly fruitful line of investigation, but a more detailed and delicate discrimination still is desirable. For example, the transcendent must be conceivable in terms of immanence if it is adequately to categorize religious experience.

My thinking on this issue is still very tentative, but I have been encouraged by some experimental essays in the interpretation of Chinese religion. This approach avoids the classic difficulties posed by some kinds of apparently non-theistic Buddhism and its Neo-Confucian analogues. Transcendence – and ontological transcendence – is certainly in evidence both in their metaphysics and their practices. The Taoist conception of the Tao as ineffable and unnameable is shot through with transcendence. Confucius in the very statements often invoked as evidence for his irreligion, e.g. his 'distancing' of the spirits,[16] may be seen as proclaiming transcendence.

6. Transcendence and the Question of Maoism as a Religion

But perhaps the most effective demonstration of the value of the concept of transcendence as an ultimate criterion for distinguishing the religious from the secular, is its applicability to various forms of Communism. I would like to conclude this paper by a brief sketch of the way it served me in an article I wrote recently on 'Maoism as a Religion' as a fine cutting-tool for the analysis of the religious dimensions of Chinese communism.

There is no need to elaborate the oft-told traveller's tale of the overt religiosity of Chinese communism. It is the frame of reference that springs so readily to the mind of a Western observer, especially one from an orthodox or evangelical Christian background. The cult-images, 'hymns', sacred books, enthusiastic and self-sacrificing personal commitment, evangelical zeal, conversion experiences and totalistic world-view are clearly at least analogous to our normal expectations of a great world religion. Even if we, as I think we should, dismiss as ironic and mischievous Mao Tse-tung's occasional conversational references to God[17], there are still 'rumours of angels' in his standard works. For example, in his parable 'The Foolish Old Man who Removed the Mountains', God[18] sends two 'angels'[19] to remove the mountains. Mao's own gloss on this passage gives it an orthodox Marxist moral:

> *Today, two big mountains lie like a dead weight on the Chinese people. One is imperialism, the other is feudalism. The Chinese Communist Party has long made up its mind to dig them up. We must persevere and work unceasingly, and we, too, will touch God's heart. Our God is no other than the masses of the Chinese people. If they stand up and dig together with us, why can't these two mountains be cleared away.*[20]

Can a God who is ultimately nothing but 'the masses of the Chinese people' provide the dimension of transcendence necessary to distinguish Maoism as a religion from some sort of pseudo or *ersatz* religion? Mao himself is 'the red, red sun in the hearts of the people'[21] not a transcendent being, above and remote from the people – a prophet perhaps, but no god.

Yet some doubt remains in my mind. Ninian Smart, the only professional historian of religion to my knowledge to tackle the question of Maoism as a religion[22] concludes ambiguously:

> *It is true that typically religions involve reference to the transcendent or supernatural, and yet Mao's doctrines are this-worldly. Still, there is a certain transcendence of the empirical in the flavour of his teachings.*[23]

At this point, Huston Smith's distinction between psychological and ontological transcendence may help us to appreciate the nature of this elusive 'certain transcendence of the empirical' in Maoism. The

strongest element of transcendence in Chinese Communist theory and practice is undoubtedly *psychological* – the transcendence of egotism and individual self-seeking, the losing of oneself in the masses; and also a transcendence of the present, a future hope.[24]

But is there any trace of *ontological* transcendence? Even here, I am not certain whether Chinese Marxism, as distinct from Russian or Western European Marxism, should be excluded. Once again we may dismiss the many playful allusions in Mao's writings and reported conversations[25] as substantial evidence, and focus on evidence for non-materialist thinking in Maoism. It is, indeed, as Smart says, merely a 'flavour', but I believe it is there. For all his professed materialism, Mao does seem to emphasise what we would call spiritual values like reflection, self-examination, consciousness, integrity. Perhaps this is compatible with orthodox Marxism, but, as has often been noted, Mao's brand of 'revolutionary romanticism'[26] is very voluntaristic, and involves an understanding of human nature and action that exalts will and understanding above the limitations of matter. *The People's Daily* for 28 May 1966 is authentically Maoist when it editorialises:

> *About the relation of spirit and matter (one must say) that matter is primary and spirit is secondary. But this is said only about the genesis of thought, when matter comes first, then spirit. It is not true about the strength of the two. The strength of the spirit is much greater than that of matter . . . Once the masses seize the correct thoughts of the advanced class, then this becomes a great material force . . Therefore we must pay great attention to ideological work. The Thoughts of Mao Tse-tung is the sun in our hearts, is the root of our life, is the source of all our strength. Through this, man becomes unselfish, daring, intelligent, able to do everything; he is not conquered by any difficulty and can conquer every enemy. The Thoughts of Mao Tse-tung transforms man's ideology, transforms the Fatherland. Through this the oppressed people of the world will rise.*[27]

This apparent deviation from historical materialism is open to a variety of interpretations. It might be regarded as a genuine unresolved contradiction at the heart of Maoism. Others see it as part of Mao's 'Chineseness': the legacy of Confucian moralism[28] and the Chinese peasant rebellion tradition. Others, again, have seen it as a psychological device, using the rhetoric of 'immortality' to arouse the consciousness of the masses. The psychiatrist, Robert Jay Lifton, seems to be arguing the last case,[29] although he is ambiguous as to whether it is a conscious ploy on Mao's part, or springs from the depths of his complex personality.[30] He writes of the Cultural Revolution:

Much of what has taken place in China recently can be understood as a quest for revolutionary immortality. By revolutionary immortality I mean a shared sense of participating in permanent revolutionary fermentation and of transcending individual death by 'living on' indefinitely within this continuing revolution.[31]

Later, Lifton insists that Mao has always associated the revolutionary's attitude towards death with 'a mode of transcendence'.[32] But is it a 'mode', an ontological reality, or a rhetorical device? Just as Smart imputes transcendence to the 'flavour' of Mao's teaching, so ultimately, Lifton appears to regard it as belonging to the communication, not the substance of Maoism:

Underneath the assumption of oppression being worse than death is a characteristically Maoist 'tone of transcendence', a message to the revolutionary which seems to say that death does not really exist for him; he has absolutely nothing to fear.[33]

Nevertheless, it is such a constant theme in Mao's writings and actions, so consonant with his revolutionary experiences such as the 1927 debacle, the Long March, and the Anti-Japanese War, that I do not believe it is purely rhetorical or tactical. Outside the framework of Marxist orthodoxy it may be, but none the less authentically Maoist for that.

7. Conclusion

I do not want to pursue the analysis any further here,[34] but simply to make an observation of a general and concluding nature. The systematic application of the criterion of transcendence proved much more useful than any other single concept when attempting to elucidate the 'religious' features of a specific and crucial borderline case (and, after all, these are the ones that cause most methodological difficulty, not the mainstream religions). It applies equally to doctrines and motivation or behaviour. It does not prejudice theological issues or questions of absolute validity, and is compatible with, or complementary to, most social science methodologies. Should we, then, rephrase the religious or secular/sacred or profane question to read:

Does this sytem, belief, action involve an element of transcendence? And, if so, how?

Notes

[1] See P.A. Rule, 'The Confucian Interpretation of the Jesuits' in *Papers on Far Eastern History*, September 6, 1972, pp.1-61.

[2] *The Sacred and the Profane*, New York, 1961, p.10.

[3] *Ibid.*, p.11.

[4] See his *The Sense of God: Sociological, Anthropological and Psychological Approaches to the Origin of the Sense of God*, Oxford, 1973.

[5] *The Sacred and the Profane*, p.152.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp.152-5.

[7] 'The Social Psychology of the World Religions' in H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber*, New York, 1946, p.293.

[8] *Confucius — The Secular as Sacred*, New York, 1972.

[9] *Analects*, 2.4.

[10] W.T. de Bary *et al.*, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, New York, 1964, I, pp.469f.

[11] *The Social Reality of Religion*, London, 1969, p.28.

[12] *Ibid.*, p.26.

[13] *Ibid.*, p.10.

[14] *A Rumour of Angels*, London, 1970, p.70.

[15] *There seem to be two routes to human fulfilment, psychological and ontological. The former accepts more or less the standard views of reality and seeks psychological resolution within these limits; when successful the result is either Immanence or this-worldly Transcendence, the difference being that in the latter fulfilment derives from something specifiable, a loved one, hope, a cause, or whatever. Ontological Transcendence, for its part, accepts the permanence of psychological tensions that cannot be resolved within reality as normally conceived, and so presses the possibility that reality includes surprising corridors of worth that eludes ordinary eyes.* (From H.W. Richardson and D.R. Cutler, *Transcendence*, Boston, 1969, p.16).

[16] *Analects*, 6.20.

[17] e.g. as quoted by Edgar Snow in *The Long Revolution*, New York, 1973, pp.219-220; and in S. Schram, *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed*, Penguin, 1974, p.220.

[18] *Shant-ti*, the ancient Chinese High God in the original (*Mao Tse-tung hsuan-chi*, Peking, 1966, p.1102).

[19] *Shen* or 'spirits' (*ibid.*).

[20] Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, III, Peking, 1965, p.323.

[21] See a perceptive analysis of this metaphor in F. Wakeman, *History and Will*, Berkeley, 1973, Ch.2, 'The Red Sun'.

[22] In his *Mao*, London, 1974.

[23] *Ibid.*, p.84.

[24] Interestingly, this is the major point of convergence between Christianity and Marxism emerging from the otherwise sterile 'dialogue'.

[25] e.g. Mao's poem, 'The Immortals'; and references to 'seeing Marx' in the next life (Schram, *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed,* p.154).

[26] S. Schram, *Mao Tse-tung,* Penguin, 1966,pp.298-294.

[27] Quoted in 'Marxism Revised', *China News Analysis,* No.635, p.7.

[28] See D. Nivison, 'Communist Ethics and Chinese Tradition' in *Journal of Asian Studies,* XVI, 1956-7, p.51ff.

[29] *Revolutionary Immortality,* Penguin, 1970.

[30] 'The revolutionary denies theology as such, but embraces a secular utopia through images closely related to the spiritual conquest of death and even to an afterlife (*ibid.,* p.22).

[31] *Ibid.,* pp.20-21.

[32] *Ibid.,* pp.65-66.

[33] *Ibid.,* p.68.

[34] For a more detailed analysis, and further general comments on Maoism as a religion, see my contribution 'Is Maoism open to the transcendent?' in the Symposium *The New China: A Catholic Response,* New York: Paulist Press, 1977.