

MY CHINESE DREAM

Bridging East and West
Hopes, Challenges and Opportunities



KIN SHEUNG CHIARETTO YAN

Foreword by Piero Coda and Edmund Kwok



Yan gives the reader a fresco that outlines with decisive coordinates of *kairós*, which resonates through the prism of his living experience committed to the Gospel and sprouting from the womb of the Chinese culture so that it may shine in all its beauty in the rainbow of unity.

Piero Coda, theologian, Secretary General of the Pontifical International Theological Commission

Pope Francis encourages a culture of encounter, committed to fraternity for peace. He repeatedly expresses his love for the Chinese people and culture. This book reflects well the Holy Father's thoughts on "encounter." Yan's personal encounter invites readers to a "voyage of discovery" to the unknown and to discover, after all, we can be a gift to one another and appreciate each other's positive values, paving pathways to fraternity and peace.

Antonio Spadaro, S.J.
Editor in Chief, *La Civiltà Cattolica*

Yan's dream of harmonious relationships echoes the Confucian saying, "heaven and humans are united as one" (天人合一). His research is rooted in Chinese wisdom, Catholic teaching, and contemporary Chinese contributions to human development. He is opening doors to way of avoiding dangerous violent conflicts among humans that will destroy nature.

Thomas McGuire
Board Chair of the U.S.-China Catholic Association

The world risks exploding today if it does not find ways of dialogue. This book broadens our gaze, seeking values that unite beyond divergent thinking, and indicates common issues that call for collaboration in the spheres of ecology, politics, economy, culture and religion. It indicates an alternative route to conflicts in an original and concrete way.

Agostino Giovagnoli
historian, Community of Sant'Egidio

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CLARETIAN PUBLICATIONS
Macao, China



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by

Kin Sheung Chiaretto Yan



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My Chinese Dream:
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Author: Kin Sheung Chiaretto Yan
Cover design: James Chen
& calligraphy: Raphael Lin
Layout artist: Louis Ma
Publication Director: Fr Jijo Kandamkulathy, CMF

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Publication: Claretian Publications Limited
Address: Macao PostBox 1608
Email: cpmacau@gmail.com
Web: www.lerenbooks.com



Claretian Publications Limited is a pastoral endeavor of the Claretian Missionaries to promote the renewal of Christian spirituality rooted in the Word of God and the living tradition of the Church in response to the needs, challenges and pastoral demands of our times.



CLARET
PUBLISHING GROUP

Bangalore | Barcelona | Buenos Aires | Chennai |
Colombo | Macao | Madrid | Manila | São Paulo | Yaounde

Printed by Tipografia Welfare Lda, Macau China
First Edition, March 2023
ISBN 978-99965-56-53-1

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	vii
FOREWORD	ix
PREFACE	1
INTRODUCTION	5
Why do I write this book?	5
Review of a theological foundation for dialogue.....	6
The principle of the Revelation	6
The Gospel message is for all cultures.....	7
The Trinitarian logic favors today China-Christianity dialogue.....	8
This Trinitarian vision is also the heart of the “charism of unity”	10
Review on the culture of unity and the culture of harmony.....	11
Some open questions	14
Methodology.....	15
CHAPTER ONE: Dialectic of harmony in dialogue with Trinitarian relationship	17
Harmony in Chinese culture.....	18
Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, complementary to one another.....	18
Ultimate reality of the Dao, mysterious and ineffable	19
Humble and intuitive nature of Chinese philosophy.....	20
Dialectic of simplicity.....	22
Trinitarian relationship.....	24
The imprint of “one” and “three” in all things	24
The prologue of the Gospel of John and experiences of some saints.....	27
Jesus Christ and Trinitarian relationship.....	30
Trinitarian relationship from an anthropomorphic point of view.....	32
Possible contribution of Chinese dialectic of harmony to Trinitarian theology	33
The second axial age and effort of inculturation	33
Understanding the Trinity from the perspective of Chinese culture.....	36
The contribution of Chinese thoughts to Trinitarian relationships.....	38
Some living examples and conclusion.....	41

CHAPTER TWO: Ecological civilization and integral ecology	43
The relationship between human beings and nature in Chinese culture	45
The relationship between human beings and nature in the Daoist school of thought	46
The relationship between human beings and nature in Confucianism	48
The relationship between human beings and nature in Chinese Buddhism	50
The relationship between human beings and nature from the Catholic perspective	51
The creation account in Genesis	51
Person-nature relationship in the light of original sin and the “New” Adam	53
What has gone wrong?	54
The impact of human dominion over nature	54
Pollution and some related problems in China	58
Relational paradigm	60
Relational paradigm from the Chinese perspective	60
Relational paradigm from the Christian perspective	62
Anthropocentrism of Christ	65
“Integral ecology” in relation to “ecological civilization”	67
“Integral ecology” in <i>Laudato Si’</i>	67
Initiatives on “integral ecology”	70
“Ecological civilization” in the speech of Xi Jinping	73
Initiatives on “ecological civilization”	75
Some reflections	79
CHAPTER THREE: Fraternity and Social Friendship	83
The ideas of fraternity, brotherhood, and universal love in Chinese culture	84
From the “fraternity” motto to “universal love” in the Chinese language	84
<i>Ren’ai</i> (仁爱) from the Confucian tradition	86
<i>Jian’ai</i> (兼爱) of the Mohist tradition	87
The forgotten principle	89
<i>Bo’ai</i> (博爱), universal love	90
<i>Youshan</i> (友善), concrete expression nurtured by fine Chinese tradition	92
The ideas of brotherhood in Christianity	93

Brotherhood from the Old Testament	94
In the New Testament: friends and brothers	94
Jesus saves not only single persons but also the relationship	95
Brotherhood in the history of Christianity	97
Brotherhood as a political category	97
Human fraternity for peace and living together as proposed by Pope Francis ..	98
A significant testimony and a pact of fraternity today	98
Main points of Pope Francis's address and commitment in Abu Dhabi	99
Some concrete actions as commitment	100
Fraternity instead of clash: relevancy in Christianity, Islam and China	102
Gradual approach of extending fraternity to others	102
Maintaining unity in diversity nourished with dialogue	103
The importance of relationships and reciprocity	104
No violence can be justified in the name of religion	105
Education	105
True justice and universal love	106
Concrete actions and paths of fraternity for peace are necessary	108
<i>Fratelli Tutti</i> on fraternity and social friendship consonant to Chinese culture ..	108
Promoting the moral good of <i>agathosyne</i> , <i>benevolentia</i> and <i>ren'ai</i> (仁爱) ..	109
From the love within the same nation to the hearts embracing foreigners ..	110
Freedom without fraternity is contradictory	111
A better kind of politics: love of all loves	113
CHAPTER FOUR: Poverty alleviation and a new model of economy	115
Poverty alleviation in China	116
From a historical perspective	116
Economic reform factors	118
Achievements in the poverty alleviation with economic reform effort	119
Paradoxes	122
Can China's poverty alleviation be a contribution to a new economic paradigm?	123
Relationship between developed and less developed regions	124
New economic system with Asian values	125
Endogenous development: meritocracy and wise governance	126

The threat of materialism, spiritual poverty, and the culture of indifference ..	127
Spiritual poverty	127
Pressure on the youth.....	128
Catholic social services, a witness to spiritual poverty alleviation	130
Catholic social services	130
Witnesses contributing to spiritual poverty alleviation.....	131
Simple lifestyle consonant with Asian values and with the spirit of the EoF ..	134
Simple lifestyle advocated by Pope Francis and a Chinese example	134
Economy of Francesco (EoF) and economic paradigm shift	136
The Chinese economic model with its cultural root and future trajectory ..	142
CHAPTER FIVE: Freedom of religion and the golden rule of reciprocity	145
Dialogue between the Holy See and Chinese authorities	146
Inculturation and/or sinicization	149
Culture of encounter between Christianity and China.....	151
Moral courage beyond trauma	156
How Catholics navigate changes in China	156
Testimonies of facing challenges with moral courage	159
Ultimate analysis and positive notes.....	161
Mary, mother of hope and tenderness	164
CONCLUSION.....	165
Some articulating points of this book	165
Summary of each chapter	169
Thoughts and after thoughts to conclude	176
A Postscript	178
Our lady of the knots in Munich.....	178
The light house at the Bund of Shanghai.....	179
The unfinished bird in Beijing	179
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	181

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With grateful heart, I thank Piero Coda and Bernhard Callebaut, advisers at the Sophia University Institute (Istituto Universitario Sophia IUS) for my dissertation, which has become the present book. I am thankful for the IUS environment, as a center of research and education, at the same time, a school of life, a meeting place between experience and thought, where different cultures and academic disciplines come together in a strongly relational context, one that seeks to base the interactions between people (among peoples from all over the world) on wisdom and as a gift for one another.

I am privileged to have two distinguished professors to write the FORWARD: Piero Coda (from the West) and Edmund Kwok (from the East), a foretaste of what's to come in the book.

A special thanks for the support of Thomas McGuire, who proof-read and helped edit the book. I also thank Chun Boc Tay, Roberto Catalano, Philipp Hu, Sergio Rondinara, Anthonio Baggio, Luigino Bruni, Benedetto Gui for their invaluable insights during my conversations with them in the course of writing this book.

FOREWORD

Today the future of humanity can no longer be thought without China, as if this had ever been possible. A civilization that is present on the stage of history as an example of arrogant and extraordinary human performance for all to see. Not only because of its population size and the relevance of its millenary civilization, but also because of the irrepressible and vital creativity that it currently manifests. China has put the Western world on the defensive, in terms of political and economic strategy, often pushing it to adopt the ancient and now unthinkable dialectical model of the “clash of civilizations.”

And yet, another path is now ideally possible and realistic, a path of “the culture of encounter.” Pope Francis defines the culture of encounter as the budding of a civilization marked by constructive encounter between different cultures that embraces all of humanity. This prophetic path will only succeed not without great difficulty. It is the sprouting of a civilization, in the shared experience, from the bowels of what is most authentically human that has been generated and kept, in the breath of the Spirit of God, by different cultures, purified of their dross and deviations

and open to each other in reciprocity in the search for truth, the common good, in the practice of justice, and fraternity.

The path of culture of encounter is a viable way, in truth, not discovered today. The encounter between Chinese culture and the message of the Gospel of Christ was, for one example, the bright and promising strategy followed by Matteo Ricci. And is also the strategy which, with the prudent exercise of patience and perseverance, marks the ongoing process of official relations between the Catholic Church and the People's Republic of China.

The proposal outlined in the pages of this suggestive and timely book by Kin Sheung Charetto Yan moves convincingly and in a well-argued way from this perspective. The author defines it as a "dream": in the sense that it is an ideal gaze nourished by hope. And yet not a simple utopia, because it draws, on the one hand, from the promised advent of the Kingdom of God, a kingdom of justice and peace among all peoples. This promise became the leaven of history with the Gospel of Jesus; and which, on the other hand, is grafted into the seeds of expectation and hope present in all cultures and that have taken shape in the great civilizations.

It is a matter of bringing together the understanding of these two realities: the Gospel of God in Jesus and the cultures of humanity. This involves discerning what is most proper and universal in the Gospel, with respect to what has been its inculturation in the West: with its unmissable gains, but also its particularity that calls for enrichment and integration. Isn't this, ultimately, the beating heart of the Christian message: the unity of love that arises from the free encounter of one with the other? Rightly, then, Charetto Yan grasps in the message of a God who is Love, therefore, Unity in the Trinity, the horizon within which the historical significance of the Gospel is effectively inscribed in today's humanity. The specific "culture of unity" in the freedom that emanates from it, at the service of promoting an enriching diversity in reciprocity, is capable of capturing the deepest demands and the promises that are present in the "culture of harmony" born from the Chinese genius.

Therefore, it is not only a question of looking at Chinese culture as a providential and necessary factor of integration and

rebalancing of the dominant culture in the West today: as, for example, François Julien cleverly proposes to do. Yan looks into the bowels of Christianity to grasp what is vital today and what cultural tradition has nourished it up to now with mixed success, over the course of the centuries. So that the encounter with the living heart of Chinese culture, can be the encounter between two living realities: indeed, with the mutual support and fertilization of two living branches of the single trunk of God's history with humanity.

In the Christian sphere, Yan grasps two great signs of this path which, despite everything that seems to say the opposite, is opening up in hearts, minds, and initiatives: First of all, in the wake of the magisterium of the Second Vatican Council, which presents the Church as the sign and instrument of union with God and of the unity of all mankind starting from the Gospel of Jesus, the works of Pope Francis programmatically expressed in the light of the spiritual impulse of *Evangelii Gaudium*, and on a sociocultural level, in *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti*. Then, at the same time, Yan incorporates insights of the evangelical performance arising from the impulse of the charism of unity from Jesus' prayer to the Father: "may all be one", as interpreted in the thought and work of Chiara Lubich and the Focolare Movement.

The fresco, documented and timely, and at the same time agile and fresh, that the author offers us, sketches the decisive coordinates of this kairós. He reads and expresses its main resonances and original declinations through the prism of the experience of a son of China who lives with passion and responsibility the joy and commitment of making what is most proper to the Gospel sprout from the womb of the Chinese culture. That it may shine, in all its beauty, this indispensable and shining color in the rainbow of unity.

Piero Coda
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* * *

In *Fratelli Tutti*, where Pope Francis depicts vividly the threat to our contemporary time with “dark clouds over a closed world”, he first describes the reality of “shattered dreams”. While “for decades, it seemed that the world had learned a lesson from its many wars and disasters and was slowly moving towards various forms of integration” in fact “ancient conflicts thought long buried are breaking out anew while instances of a myopic, extremist, resentful and aggressive nationalism are on the rise” (No. 10-11).

Chiaretto is now boldly presenting his dream with broad strokes of movement between the ideas, concepts and phenomena of Chinese and Christian civilizations. Raising the curtain on his dream(s) in the Preface of the book, he outlines his basic approach: “I am inviting readers to consider two questions at the back of my mind which guide me during my writing: Why I choose to write about this topic? What is new that I want to share?” He continues thus: “Unlike natural sciences where empirical evidence can be measured, my approach is mostly experiential, first person, dealing with the ‘subject’ directly, but it has also come from the privilege of frank, candid and open exchanges with friends from different nationalities and political persuasions.”

In his 28 years of service in China, Chiaretto has also tried to realize his dream in his own ways. Separately we have developed different understandings of Chinese and Christian civilizations. As a professional academic trained in comparative and intercultural studies of Chinese and European civilizations, I have looked closely at how the two civilizations may be compared. In a recent article on the interreligious dialogue between Confucianism and Christianity concerning the theology of mission, I traced the evolution of the dialogue from the 1950s and 1960s to the World Congress of Philosophy in Beijing in 2019, which adopted one of the main axioms of Confucianism as its theme. My concluding remarks from that review were that “from a macro-historical perspective, one can see how the intellectual community of both China and Cultural China has been reshaping and designing a new paradigm for dialogue with the West. On this note, one may further extend the application of the themes of contextualization

and methodology to the intellectual movement that has reshaped world history in the last two centuries, which in turn, may reveal the deeper significance of these two themes.”¹

The themes of contextualization and methodology are relevant to a fuller understanding and appreciation of the work of Chiaretto who takes a macro approach reflecting on the two age-old civilizations. He adopts a transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach bringing together areas of theology, philosophy, ecology, politics, economics, and cultural-religious dialogue. Each of these areas offers an immense treasure of specialized knowledge and deep analysis.

Lastly, Chiaretto’s effort of macro analysis creates an important perspective for understanding Pope Francis’ pontificate. In my guest edited special issue of *Fratelli Tutti* in *Tripod*, to which Chiaretto and I both contributed, I interpreted Pope Francis’ pontificate as an evolving spiritual and ecclesiological mapping of the global church. Taking this as a cornerstone and guiding stick, I described how “Pope Francis’s new theological and ecclesiological vision may reconstruct a new paradigm for intercultural and interreligious dialogue in which the Chinese cultural tradition may interact with Christianity under the polyhedral model and integral human development. This envisions an integral approach to reflect on the local and global significance of the encyclical.”² Chiaretto’s book shows, on the one hand the potential paths of culture of encounter and dialogue, and on the other hand, the need to treat such culture with appropriate recognition of the uniqueness of different civilizations, in this case, Chinese and Christian.

The scope of Chiaretto’s knowledge spreads widely and his ability to bring different topics and areas into encounter and interdisciplinary dialogue provides the reader with broad understanding of the intercultural and interreligious dialogue between Chinese and Christian civilization, past, present and future. A convincing illustration of microhistory, his book demonstrates

1 Edmund Kwok, “Review of *Confucianism and Christianity: Dialogue on the Theology of Mission*, edited by Edmund Kee-Fook Chia,” in *Tripod*, Hong Kong: Holy Spirit Study Centre, No. 200, Spring 22, p. 209-217.

2 Edmund Kwok, “Epilogue: From Fraternity to Integrality – An Integral Reflection on *Fratelli Tutti*,” in *Intercultural and Interreligious Reflection on Fratelli Tutti*, edited by Edmund Kwok, in *Tripod*, Hong Kong: Holy Spirit Study Centre, 2022, p. 209-236.

positively the motto of Sima Qian, the Great Historian of China, a motto which has guided me in my decades of historical studies, “to explore the relationship between the Way of Heaven and the Way of Man, have a thorough understanding of the course of historical development and the changes therein, expound my own opinion of events of the past and present my own system of analysis.” (究天人之際，通古今之變，成一家之言。)

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PREFACE

I dream a world of fewer wars and conflicts, less hunger and indifference, the reduction of poverty, and greed. I dream a world of more fraternity, with new relationships of understanding, trust and respect between persons and among nations. We have developed speed, technology and businesses that give abundance, but have left us in need of friendship. Social media and instant information have left us more alienated and feeling lonely. More than wealth, we need sharing of goods. More than technocracy, we need human heartedness. More than competition, we need collaboration. More than wit, we need tenderness. Without these values we will turn violent, but with them, the gift of peace bestowed, we can hope again. I dream of respectful dialogues among people of different cultures, faiths and convictions, recognizing that diversity in harmony can be a gift for one another. I dream of a world, a common home for all, for generations to come, with fresh air to breath, and for young people to travel freely for exchanges, and appreciation of each other's history, culture, art and literature.

As a follower of the Focolare Movement founded by Chiara Lubich in 1943, I believe in the charism of unity, building a united world beyond all borders. To understand better and appreciate this

book, I am inviting readers to consider two questions at the back of my mind which guide me during my writing: Why I choose to write about this topic? What is new that I want to share?

I was born in China, raised in Hong Kong, spent long years abroad, particularly in Italy where I did my philosophical and theological studies, including my first doctoral degree at the Gregorian University in Rome and my second doctorate at the Sophia University Institute in Florence, Italy.

I have been living in China for 28 years, with the advantage of first-hand experiences from a Chinese perspective, and with regular visits overseas. Despite the travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic in past years, I was able to visit the USA and Europe. I was invited to participate in a series of conferences on China with the background of the ongoing tension between China and the USA, with unimaginable consequences not just for the two countries, but for the whole world, should there be a miscalculation on either side.

From my participation in the conferences, I was more convinced than before of the lack of understanding and bias of each side towards the other, all conditioned by the propaganda, either state-sponsored or the so-called “free press” with a “hidden agenda.” To a great extent, this attitude holds true between the East and the West. Sad to say, even people of goodwill who promote solidarity fall into this “trap.”

There is an ongoing “strategic competition” between China and the U.S. The “strategic ambiguity” of the U.S. diplomacy is now clear. China should be “contained” at all costs, hence, trade and technological war, military alliances to isolate China, not to mention the narratives, true or false, pervasive in the western media, to cast China in a bad light.

China, on the other hand, continues to carry the historical baggage of “hundred years of humiliation” caused by western powers about which people in the West know very little if anything. Until the opening up policy was implemented, the usual mantra in the West was that the Chinese people are “brainwashed”, like elsewhere where “brainwashing” takes other more elegant forms, mass media being one of them, not to mention PR firms and lobbyists. Now

with the opening up policy, millions of Chinese tourists “invade the whole world,” that is prior to the pandemic, they know the West better than the West knows the East. This new-found knowledge is nevertheless not free from the old mindset.

With the increasing tensions between China and the West, the USA in particular, the byproduct is a sharp rise in nationalism, especially among the Chinese youth. It’s a “shot in the arm” for the “national rejuvenation” campaign espoused by President Xi Jinping, with an even wider support at the grassroots. At this critical and dangerous point in time, with so much at stake for the whole world, a new and mutual knowledge is badly needed, truly a necessity.

This book intends to be a humble contribution to facilitate readers in both the West and China to know each other in the most important issues at stake, a new knowledge that has consequential geo-political implications. Unlike natural sciences where empirical evidence can be measured, my approach is mostly experiential, first person, dealing with the “subject” directly, but it has also come from the privilege of frank, candid and open exchanges with friends from different nationalities and political persuasions.

I have opted to focus my attention on the two oldest and existing institutions in my exposition: the Catholic Church and Chinese culture whose relationship can well be the game-changer. A precautionary note: pondering the intercultural and interreligious relationship of these major institutions inevitably risks making broad statements generally accepted by the academic and religious communities, with due respect for contrasting or polarizing opinions. Due to the breadth of the study, there are times that I may be repetitive. I beg to raise *Repetita iuvant*, a core Athenian concept picked up by the Romans, who turned it into a proverb: “*repetitio mater studiorum*,” or “repetition is the mother of all learning”. The apparent repetition serves to clarify the analytical complexity basic to this genre of study.

It is commonly stated that the 2008 Beijing Olympics signaled a “coming out” party for China. Two years later, China hosted another international event, the 2010 Shanghai Expo, gaining recognition again as a country committed to exchanges and friendship. The

Beijing Horticultural Expo 2019, in which the Holy See had a pavilion despite China and the Vatican having no diplomatic relations. Beijing did it again quite successfully with the 2022 Winter Olympics. In spite of these “successes,” if the Chinese leadership invites and receives the Holy Father, it will really be a cherished event, not only for Chinese Catholics or Catholics worldwide, but a celebrated event, “a real surprise” in the history of the world.

For those who are interested at Christianity in China, the purpose of this book is to inform and empower engaged readers who may find here and there topics that may make you wonder: How to engage in a fruitful exchange about Chinese wisdom and Christian theology? How can Christians and all people of good will work together for the flourishing of our common home? Why should we learn to appreciate more profoundly each other’s civilizations? How can we have better politics and international relations for world peace? What can be learned from the Chinese experience of economic development and poverty alleviation? How urban migration and demographic changes affect the life of the Catholic communities? What are today’s Chinese young people looking for? What are the challenges for the clergy and for the formation of the laity? What challenges does the church in China face in sinicization, inculturation and interculturality? Why is it important to engage China in Sino-Christian dialogue today? Where is China-Vatican dialogue now and where is it going?

It is my sincere hope that this book may offer a small contribution toward helping to realize the testament of Jesus: “That all may be one” (Jn 17:21). And at the same time, China can be closer to fulfilling the dream it has had since the dawn of its civilization, “that under the sky we are one family.”

INTRODUCTION

Why do I write this book?

It is a continuation of a previous one entitled, *Evangelization in China, challenges and prospects*, a doctoral dissertation ten years ago, at the Gregorian Pontifical University. The novelty of this present research is broader, taking an integral approach, dialoguing on values between Christianity, represented by the Catholic Church, and China, in five fields: philosophy, ecology, politics, economy and cultural-religious dialogue.

My dissertation ten years ago was timely, for there was talk of excommunicating some bishops in the Church in China, without exaggeration, a danger of a third Great Schism, while my thesis emphasized dialogue instead. With the election of Pope Francis, the scenario changed making possible re-opening dialogue, and an historical agreement with China in 2018 on the nomination Chinese bishops.

The present research is mainly about dialogue between the Catholic Church and China. It is essential to know the present context, where this relationship is being articulated. For this reason,

it is necessary to explore the broader dimensions of East-West in general, and China-U.S. relations in particular. At the present time the policy of the U.S. to contain China is more than obvious, with military and economic alliances all motivated by geopolitics. Underneath what is obvious, there are countless hidden initiatives to undermine the rise of China. The 2019-2021 social movement and unrest in Hong Kong. and the present Russian-Ukraine war point to the fact that the world is facing challenges with dangerous times ahead. The cold war may very well turn into a hot one.

For me, these dialogues are not two-term but three-term relationships with the Gospel message on top. My point of departure is the conviction that the Revelation is a light that enters into all cultures. Inculturation of the Gospel message took place in the West, now at this propitious time after Vatican II, it is taking place with eastern culture, with Chinese culture as my emphasis.

Another novelty of this research, it is transdisciplinary, with the charism of unity as the conducting line throughout, connecting the five fields and disciplines, therefore interdisciplinary.¹

Review of a theological foundation for dialogue

The principle of the Revelation

The Vatican II affirmed that the Revelation *per se* is an event that God communicates to men, present in all religious and cultural traditions of all humanity, which reached its full manifestation in Jesus Christ, on the basis of the tradition of the people of Israel, where Jesus is the Word of God made flesh.² It teaches that “those religious truths which are by their nature accessible to human reason can be known by all men with ease, with solid certitude and with no trace of error, even in this present state of the human

1 Pope Francis emphasizes that the fundamental criteria for a renewal of ecclesiastical studies are to experience the Church as a mystery rooted in the Trinity and of living together, to engage in wide-ranging dialogue at 360 degrees and, in inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary approaches carried out with wisdom and creativity in the light of Revelation, according to the vital intellectual principle of the unity in difference of knowledge and respect for its multiple, correlated and convergent expressions. Cf. Francis, *Veritatis Gaudium*, apostolic constitution ecclesiastical universities and faculties (Vatican City, January 29, 2018), 4.

2 Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Vatican City, 1965, 4

race.”³ This means that, from the theological and cultural point of view, the Revelation is the point of reference for all cultures, whether they are Greek and Latin cultures of the West in which Christianity has already been inculturated in the first centuries, or other cultures of the East such as Chinese and Indian for example, that the Christian faith is inculturating.

The relationship between East and West is not a two-term but a three-term relationship. The Revelation is the beginning, which is somehow the criterion of discernment and evaluation of the different inculturations, even between East and West. The Revelation is also the source of this dynamism and the bridge. Therefore, it is not simply a direct relationship between the East and the West.

The approach to the transcendence of the Revelation, which has been manifested historically, goes to the Scriptures. The Old Testament is originally written in Hebrew; the New Testament, in Greek, which carries the novelty of the Revelation. It is conditioned by the culture and language through which it is expressed. When we receive the Revelation through a mediation, we also need to have a direct contact somehow with Jesus. We always have to compare and consult with the sources. The mediating culture is a means to arrive at the source, and is not absolute. It is a mistake for the West to make its interpretation absolute.

The Gospel message is for all cultures

The reality of Revelation is expressed, which means capturing, knowing, and expressing the presence of God within a culture. The reality of Revelation is expressed but the expressions are not exhaustive because the reality is something bigger. For example, the Christian dogma is formulated in Greek terms in the fourth century, and the whole Church still recites it today. However, the significance of the reality of this formulation is something greater, and people of other cultures, such as Chinese, Indians or Africans, can grasp meanings and richness that did not come up in the Western world.

3 Ibid., 6.

Again, this is a relationship not of two, but of three. The reference point is always the Revelation. Inculturation in the Greek world is not the only one. There can be other inculturations as the one in India. In the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, John Paul II dedicated a chapter to the question of the relationship between the Revelation and the various cultures. He gives some criteria: “No one culture can ever become the criterion of judgement, much less the ultimate criterion of truth with regard to God’s Revelation. The Gospel is not opposed to any culture,” He continues:

On the contrary, the message which believers bring to the world and to cultures is a genuine liberation from all the disorders caused by sin and is, at the same time, a call to the fullness of truth. Cultures are not only not diminished by this encounter; rather, they are prompted to open themselves to the newness of the Gospel’s truth and to be stirred by this truth to develop in new ways.⁴

It happened in China with the case of Matteo Ricci. He intuited that Christianity should be inculturated and can be expressed in the language and culture of the Chinese, but the Rites Controversy⁵ hampered the effort. Now the Church has enriched her conscience in a sense with inculturation.

The Trinitarian logic favors today China-Christianity dialogue

Today, what favors a greater possibility of inculturation of Christianity and of the Revelation in the thought and practice of the Chinese traditions is the evolution of the Christian theology of God understood as Trinity. In the early centuries of Christianity, particularly in the 4th and 5th centuries, when the dogmas were formulated in councils such as Nicaea, Constantinople, and Chalcedon, the Trinitarian nature of God was affirmed, the Christian concept speaks about one God in three divine Persons.

4 Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, encyclical on the relationship between faith and reason, Vatican, 1998, 71.

5 The Chinese Rites controversy was a dispute among missionaries over the religiosity of Confucianism and Chinese rituals of honoring family ancestors during the 17th and 18th centuries. The Jesuits argued that these Chinese rites were compatible with Christianity and should thus be tolerated, but the Dominicans and Franciscans disagreed and reported the issue to Rome. Rome banned Chinese Catholics from the rites, consequentially Christian missions were banned and suffered set back in China.

It is a great reality with regards God, but the impact on the world of these insights remained rather limited. Although great thinkers such as Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas said there is an image of the Trinity in the world, but this insight did not emerge as a strong living reality in social relationships.⁶ As Piero Coda, head of the International Theological Commission, points out that the lack of a strong living image of the Trinity produced a radical crisis in the course of modernity, especially in Europe. There was a conflictual separation of philosophy (reason and freedom) and theology (faith and tradition).⁷ Meanwhile, propitiated by the discovery of the positive ontological meaning of creation by virtue of the Word made flesh, new and promising forms of knowledge (natural, humanistic, and social sciences) stood out, but on the cultural scenario also appears the religious wisdom of the East.⁸

In the 20th century the Trinitarian logic emerged with force in the Catholic Church, thanks to the renewed relationship with the traditions of the Orthodox Church. It emerged that the Trinity is the grammar of all reality, not only of the mystery of God, but also of the creation, the world, and of man. This becomes a new point of departure for a renovation of Christian thinking. Certain classical interpretations of Greek metaphysics, which emphasized substance and separation of God from the world, had become stiff and were not able to grasp the novelty. Coda points out that through great theologians like Karl Rahner, H. U. von Balthasar, and the Second Vatican Council, the promise of a new thought with a Trinitarian perspective set in.⁹ This Trinitarian vision is more dynamic and relational, closer to the Chinese traditional thought, especially to

6 In the Middle Ages, on the basis of giving new meaning to the "sense of Being/being" with attempt at synthesizing and reciprocally enriching the Patristics, and the philosophical research of Greek origin (Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus, handed down also through the mediation of Islamic culture), the experience of the Gospel in the journey of the Church lived in a decisive way by Francis of Assisi, and transmitted by theological intelligence of Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventura. And yet the concept of the Trinity has failed to generate that place of experiencing and of thinking beyond the gains propitiated by the matrix of Greek metaphysics, although reshaped in its encounter with the intelligence of the Revelation. One can say that the great Trinitarian theology of those centuries was not entirely able to mark, at its root and in all its anthropological expressions, it did not emerge beyond the exercise of thought. See P. Coda et al, *Manifesto, Dizionario dinamico di Ontologia Trinitaria*, Roma: Città Nuova, 2021, 141-147.

7 Ibid., 153-156.

8 P. Coda et al, *Manifesto, Dizionario dinamico di Ontologia Trinitaria*, Roma: Città Nuova, 2021, 149-150.

9 Ibid., 188-189.

the theme of harmony. Today, there are more propitious conditions for this dialogue of the Chinese thought with the Revelation, and with the tradition of theological thought of the West.¹⁰

*This Trinitarian vision is also
the heart of the “charism of unity”*

The Twentieth Century saw new movements and communities rise within the Catholic Church, each with its own specificities. One of them known as the Focolare Movement, gives particular attention to the unity of the human family as contained in Jesus’ Testament: “May they all be one.” Throughout the history of the Movement, members have tried to incarnate the “charism of unity,” contributing to the efforts of the Catholic Church for unity. Pope Francis describes this charism with the following words:

The charism of unity is a providential stimulus and a powerful support for experiencing this evangelical mystic of “the we,” that is, walking together in the history of the men and women of our time as of one heart and soul, discovering and loving concretely those members of one another. Jesus prayed to the Father for this: “that they may all be one as you and I are one,” and in himself he showed us the way, up to the complete gift of all in the abyssal emptying of the cross.¹¹

The dynamic rhythm of the Trinitarian vision at the heart of the charism of unity is open to dialogue with all cultures. Openness to dialogue makes possible response to profound needs in every culture. If the Trinitarian vision expressed partakes only of Western culture, it would be difficult for a Chinese person to find a connection to it. The charism of unity explores the Trinitarian light in different disciplines, a light before all disciplinary mediations that

10 The conditions for propitious dialogue with Chinese tradition and culture are shown by many studies conducted and is a path for further deepening and exploration. See P. Coda, *Il logos e il nulla. Trinità religioni mistica*, Città Nuova, Roma, 2003, Part III; P. Coda, *La rivelazione e il segreto del Nulla (The Revelation and the secret of Nothingness)*, Lectio Magistralis on the occasion of the conferment of an Honorary Doctorate in interreligious dialogue at the Dharma Drum University, Taiwan 2019; Hu P. K. T., “The creation of the universe from nothingness by Laozi from the perspective of Nothingness in the Christian tradition,” *Sophia*, XIII, 1, 2021, 75-92; D. Mitchell – J.A. Wiseman, *Transforming suffering. Reflections on finding peace in troubled times*, New York: Lantern Books, 2010.

11 Pope Francis, *Address at the Pastoral Visit to Loppiano, the international center of the Focolare Movement*, May 10, 2018.

illuminates all, and therefore is trans-disciplinary and universal. At the same time, it is also inter-disciplinary because it relates disciplines, various areas of human knowledges and activities, to each other. The charism of unity will be the leitmotif in this research.

Review on the culture of unity and the culture of harmony

Due to historical circumstances, after Matteo Ricci, it seems that there is still much to be done in dialogue between Christianity and Chinese culture. This research investigates the possibility of dialogue between Chinese and Christian culture concentrating more on cultural roots and the recent developments in the relational prospects of Trinitarian ontology in the West.

Some of the most valuable insights and explications of Trinitarian relationship I adopt here are inspired by the charism of Chiara Lubich, who proposed the “culture of unity” and the mystery of love, “Jesus crucified and forsaken,” which could be a pivotal key to reading the Chinese reality and provide original insights.

Unity basically sums up the whole Chinese culture, though the Chinese love to use the term “harmony” rather than “unity”; harmony of relations between people as emphasized in Confucianism, and harmony between man and nature as emphasized in Daoism. To achieve this harmony of relationships, Confucianism stresses the importance of one’s role so as to regulate one’s relationships in the family, and in society as a consequence, a vision that correspond in some way to the idea of little pieces of stone in a mosaic. Daoism instead, emphasizes the relationship of man with the Dao, and therefore unity with the fundamental nature of the universe. The two systems of thought, complementary to one another, are the fundamentals of the Chinese culture, aiming at the total harmony, a cosmic unity, fruit of the interplay between Yin and Yang, the two vital forces of the universe. Archbishop Angelo Fernandes of India said: “The fundamental similarity between the Christian tradition

and the Confucian concept of harmony could serve as a common ground for significant and fruitful dialogue.”¹²

On the general theme of “Theology of Dialogue,” the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference (FABC) issued back in 1988 a document entitled “Theology of Harmony”¹³ by highlighting precisely the importance of the concept of harmony in interreligious dialogue. It issued several documents in this regard: “Religions in the service of universal harmony” (1988) and under the central theme “Working together in harmony in the world today,” the Federation has made a series of comparisons and detailed studies between Christianity and some major religions on the concept of harmony: with Islam in 1992, with Buddhism in 1994 and with Hinduism in 1995. This emphasis now encompasses humankind’s right relationship with nature and, ecology.

Jim Gallagher, in his book on the story of the Focolare Movement and its founder, “A Woman’s Work” describes it this way: “The Ideal was to build unity, or maybe a better way to describe it would be the word ‘harmony’”¹⁴ In synthesis, unity means harmony of relationships. What Pope Francis said in response to Eugenio Scalfari in 2013 is striking in as far as relationships are concerned: “I would not speak about ‘absolute’ truths, even for believers, in the sense that absolute is that which is disconnected and bereft of all relationship. Truth, according to the Christian faith, is the love of God for us in Jesus Christ. Therefore, truth is a relationship.”¹⁵

It could also be said that “relationship” is at the heart of Asian cultures. A concept that follows is “reciprocity,” who is the other for me and how to behave between persons. Just think of the famous

12 The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) has organized a serious Christian-Daoist Colloquiums with different themes “Seeking the Truth Together” in 2016 at Taipei, “Christian and Daoist Ethics in Dialogue” in 2018 in Singapore, and “Cultivating a Harmonious Society through Interreligious Dialogue” in Hong Kong meanwhile postponed indefinitely due to COVID-19 pandemic. There is an earnest effort to dialogue on the concept of harmony between Christianity and Chinese culture, and it is pertinent to start with Daoism. As for Confucianism, it is often characterized as a system of social and ethical philosophy rather than a religion; however, Confucianism was built on an ancient religious foundation and values that greatly influenced the way of life of Chinese people from ancient time until nowadays.

13 Cf. FABC, *Theology of Dialogue*, paper of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, Tagaytay City, Philippines, 1988.

14 Jim Gallagher, *A Woman’s Work*, London, 1998, 21

15 Pope Francis, *Letter to a non-believer*, Pope Francis responds to Dr. Eugenio Scalfari, journalist of the Italian newspaper “la Repubblica,” Vatican, 4 September 2013.

Golden Rule “Do not do to others what you would not want done to you.” It was Confucius who expressed it verbatim as we find it in the Gospel while in other religions there is something similar but with different words. Tu Weiming, Chinese Confucian scholar, worked together with Hans Küng and Leonard Swidler to advocate the Golden Rule and interreligious dialogue, culminating later in the organization of the last World Congress of Philosophy in Beijing in 2019 with the conference theme grounded in Confucianism.¹⁶

As some economists forecast China is to become the world’s largest economy in the short future. Nevertheless, it faces great challenges at home and abroad in fields such as politics, economy as well as in social and environmental issues. Since the time of Ricci, Chinese society, despite official caution, has never been as open to Christianity as it is today. There is much interest in the study of Christianity in the Chinese context particularly oriented to social aspect.

The present research reads Chinese narratives in the light of the culture of unity from different perspectives: politics aimed at fraternity, economy aimed at happiness and technological development oriented towards a sustainable environment. Each area presents possible contributions to fulfilling the “Chinese dream.” Needless to say, I will not repeat the usual notions, positive or negative, right or wrong, that are favorite topics of the western media, but take an active attitude in dialogue rather than being pessimistic and passive.

Jesus prays for unity, “that all may be one” (Jn 17: 21). However, the idea of a united world is not foreign to the Chinese, though the Chinese love to use the term “harmony” rather than “unity”. Confucius, 500 years before Christ, said, “under the sky we are one family.” He did not speak of a nation, a people or a particular race, but always used the term “under the sky” (*tianxia*) which means the entire human race.

Another related main idea in Confucianism is the notion of being “harmonious while diversified (*he er butong*和而不同),” that is, diversity in unity. This concept recognizes that although people

¹⁶ Edmund Kwok, “Humanism of The Third Generation Confucianism (儒学第三期的人文精神)” in *Anthology of Celebrative Essays of Mr. Tu Weiming’s 80th Birthday*, ed. by Chen Lai, Beijing: People’s Press, 2019, 601-3.

have differences in opinions, interests, preferences, profiles and so on, they need first keep peace, and live in harmony with each other while keeping their diversity.

It is noticeable that there are common values between East and West but with distinct characteristics. China emphasizes that the pursuit of these values or goals is a gradual process, without instant solutions. The Chinese policy makers are keen to maintain social stability while introducing reforms in different fields in ways that are compatible with existing national conditions. This is an important part of the collective Chinese psyche: do anything to avoid chaos (*luan* 亂) as experienced during the political campaigns of the “Great Leap Forward” (1958-1960) and the infamous “Cultural Revolution” (1966-1976).

Some open questions

The Chinese dream is an open concept and can be said to be the common aspirations of the Chinese people to have a better tomorrow, to revive their culture so as to gain its rightful place in the world and in history. At this historical time with the present stage of socio-cultural development, China is receptive and proposes to pursue core values such as harmony, friendship, civility, prosperity, justice, freedom, equality, and fraternity.

This research aims to encourage East-West as well as China-Christianity dialogue, to facilitate Holy See-China relationships, to promote understandings rather than prejudices, and the consciousness that diversity is richness, with the objective of securing world peace. Starting a process, as Pope Francis says, is more important than occupying spaces or achieving short term goals. More specifically, this investigation attempts to answer the following questions: Is the Chinese culture compatible with the Gospel? In the spirit of inculturation, how can we dialogue between the culture of unity in Christianity and the culture of harmony in China? What could the Christian contributions be to China and in turn China to the world in the fields of politics, economics and ecology and world peace? Do the core values of the Chinese dream as defined by Xi Jinping correspond to my aspiration as a Chinese Christian?

Methodology

The present investigation will be concentrated on some core values of the Chinese dream: “harmony” as an overall value for dialogue and world peace, the value of “fraternity and social friendship” for the field of politics, “prosperity and alleviation of poverty” in the field of economics. China is also giving much attention to the so-called “ecologic civilization,” this book will also touch on issues of ecology, as well as “social justice and religious freedom.”

The desire of recent pontiffs to bring about a rapprochement with China has been consistent. In order to deepen the understanding of social phenomena in China, it is necessary to approach them from several complementary disciplinary directions and analytical frameworks: philosophy, ecology, politics, and economics.

Pope Francis emphasizes in *Veritatis Gaudium* that fundamental criteria for a renewal of ecclesiastical studies are to experience Church as “a mystery rooted in the Trinity” and of living together, to engage in “wide-ranging dialogue” at 360 degrees, and an “inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary¹⁷ (trans-disciplinary) approaches carried out with wisdom and creativity in the light of Revelation,” according to “the vital intellectual principle of the unity in difference of knowledge and respect for its multiple, correlated and convergent expressions.”¹⁸

Since the 1920’s, philosophy, politics and economics (PPE) as a combined degree has long been offered in Oxford University, and in recent decades has been multiplied in other universities worldwide. These courses produce a significant number of notable graduates, but the multidisciplinary approach leads to mostly generalists over specialists. The present research methodology attempts to employ not only an interdisciplinary, but also a trans-disciplinary approach to confront contrasting situations and conflicting issues in a value-based dialogue between Christianity and Chinese culture.

17 While the term “cross-disciplinary” is used in the English edition of the apostolic constitution, the term “trans-disciplinary” is used in the original Italian edition. In some cases, the two terms may be interchangeable, but I prefer to use the term “trans-disciplinary” in the present dissertation, for I am about to speak of a charisma that enters into all disciplines.

18 Pope Francis, *Veritatis Gaudium*, apostolic constitution on ecclesiastical universities and faculties, January 29, 2018, 4.

This research is designed in such a way that value-based dialogue is a method for resolving conflicts and crises by building trust and commitment between big institutions with great history and contemporary relevance, such as the universal Church and China, between Christianity and Chinese culture. This approach has not been emphasized enough in the contemporary world political context. Pope Francis in his encyclicals *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti* encourages the view of the human and ecological crisis through an integral approach, as a way to work together for world peace.

This research starts from a historical and cultural perspective. In the later part it is more analytical and critical of social phenomena. My approach starts from mostly experiential, first person, dealing with the “subject” directly, and then confront it with experts and studies of the subject matter. The first chapter deals with trinitarian relationship in Christianity and the dialectics of harmony in Chinese culture. The philosophical tools of chapter one will be used as a leitmotif and pivotal point to provide real insights and tackle other categories in the following chapters of different disciplinary fields: ecology, politics, economics, and religions. It consists of five chapters and a conclusion with the sharing of some thoughts.

Chapter One

Dialectic of harmony in dialogue with Trinitarian relationship

While Matteo Ricci inaugurated a fruitful dialogue between Christianity and Confucianism, today dialogue has to take into account the whole of Chinese culture, namely Confucianism, Daoism and Chinese Buddhism, including the influence of Western ideology such as Marxism or socialism with Chinese characteristics. Church Father such as St. Augustine of Hippo made contributions to theology coming from his profound experience of God and from the encounter between Christianity and Latin culture that has its roots in Greek philosophy. In this chapter, I attempt to read the mystery of the Trinity with categories of Chinese thought. Chiara Lubich developed a spirituality centered on “Jesus abandoned, the key of unity.”¹ This central figure of the forsaken Jesus in the Trinity is pivotal to the understanding of the dialectic relationship of love within the Trinity and of God with man and the world. I find the Daoist concepts of the dialectic of harmony containing many elements helpful for the understanding of the Trinitarian relationship. This will also serve as a key for the dialogue in the field of politics, economics and ecology to be explored in the following chapters.

1 Chiara Lubich, *Unity and Jesus Forsaken*, New York: New City Press, 1985, 37.

The Jubilee Year of 2000 was celebrated worldwide, and Beijing's Millennium Tower was built for the occasion. In the center of this millennium monument, there is a circular mural decorated with multicolored stone carvings and a huge relief featuring five thousand years of Chinese cultural history. Among many great figures in Chinese history, Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), who introduced the West and Christianity to China and promoted cultural exchange,² is recognized for his unique contribution to China. In 2010, the Catholic Diocese of Shanghai also initiated the cause of beatification for Xu Guangqi (1552–1633), the great Catholic scientist and chancellor of China. The beatification of Xu together with Ricci would be a gratifying event in China and very significant for the Church, considering how their lives have been intertwined. As an outstanding representative of the Western culture of his times, Ricci inaugurated a fruitful dialogue between Christianity and Confucianism. While the Church today affirms the correctness of Ricci's attitude and approach to China, this dialogue today must also consider the whole of Chinese culture. To this precise task, I attempt to contribute in this research.

Harmony in Chinese culture

Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, complementary to one another

A prominent theme of Chinese culture is the desire for total harmony and cosmic unity, a result of the interplay between the *yin* and the *yang*, which are the two vital forces of the universe. Harmony between heaven and earth is also a basic theme of Chinese culture, and is the foundation of much religious activity. To achieve this harmony of relationships, Confucianism stresses the importance of one's role in relationships in the family, and in society as a consequence. Daoism emphasizes the relationship of

² Ricci published with his collaborators many works in Chinese among which are the *Treatise on Friendship*, *Ten Paradoxes*, the first six volumes of *Elements of Euclid*, the *Handbook of Epictetus*, and the great *Map of World*, and a short *Catechism*. The most enduring works of all, *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, a synthesis of traditional Chinese thoughts and the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. Cf. Matteo Ricci - E. J. Malatesta ed., *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, Taipei: Ricci Institute, 1985. Other sources of his life and works can be found in Matteo Ricci - P. M. d'Elia - *al.*, ed., *Fonti Ricciani*, 3 Vols., Roma: Libreria dello Stato, 1942-49.

the human with the *Dao*, and the relationship between humanity and the cosmos. The neo-Confucianist, Zhang Zai, of the Song Dynasty (960-1279) stressed that heaven and humanity are one³.

Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism have unceasingly enriched one another in the course of Chinese history and cultural tradition. For most Chinese, the three schools of thought are complementary and contribute to the happiness and the harmony of daily life. The mainstream belief of the Chinese down the ages was Confucianism, a humanistic political and moral philosophy with focus on present-worldliness. It is complemented by the otherworldliness of Daoism. Furthermore, the lack of emphasis on transcendence in Confucianism left space for later developments. When Buddhism arrived in China by way of India, with a more precise religious view and spirituality, it supplemented this lack. Daoism with its metaphysical elements interacted readily with Buddhism. In later developments, the Buddha was deified in some Mahayana sects. China thereupon promoted Mahayana Buddhism, which then spread to Korea, Japan, and Vietnam.

Ultimate reality of the Dao, mysterious and ineffable

In the opening chapter of *Daodejing* (the Book of *Dao* and *De*), it states: "The *Dao* that can be defined is not the constant *Dao* (道); the name that can be named is not the constant name."⁴ In this same chapter two other terms *miao* (妙) and *xuan* (玄) were employed to express the mysterious nature of the *Dao* though they are translated as subtle and profound respectively⁵. In another

3 Zhang Zai (1020-1077) in his work *Western Inscription* (西铭) stressed the unity of heaven (天), earth (地) and all beings. Heaven and humanity are one. All people are brothers and sisters because every- one is birthed by heaven.

4 The translations of the *Dao De Jing* in this paper are mine, after consulting several recent translations including: Joseph H. Wong, "Logos and Tao: Johannine Christology and a Taoist perspective," *Path*, Pontificia Academia Theologica, Vol. 2, 2003; Chan Wing-Tsit, ed., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 136-176. In the translation of the first two verses of *Dao De Jing* here, Joseph Wong used the term "the constant *Dao*" while Wing-Tsit instead translated as "the eternal *Dao*."

5 Chan Wing-Tsit indicated that the translation of *miao* could be "mystery" but Wang Bi preferred "subtlety." Chan Wing-Tsit, ed., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton University Press, p. 139.

chapter, Laozi gives three attributes of the *Dao*, the invisible, the inaudible and the formless.⁶

Chinese philosophy, in a way, contrasts with philosophy in the West. Philosophy in the West focuses more on ontology, with emphasis on study of “being,” in order to grasp reality, and give it a name. On the other hand, Chinese thought is often viewed from the phenomenological perspective concentrated more on social issues, although metaphysical issues have also been touched on since ancient times. As suggested in the opening remark of *Daodejing*, the *Dao* can neither be described nor given a name (非常道、非常名), one may start with observation first without giving it a specific name, in order to avoid giving a limited description of the phenomena and of the guiding principles.

Where do we come from? Who are we? Where are we going? These are the basic questions in life. To the Chinese, God is beyond the rational understanding of man. We use the term *laisheng* (来生) to refer to the afterlife, ultimate reality, and the transcendent. So God is, above all, a mystery. In this mindset, theology as a science of God actually surprises the Chinese mind. In fact, there are still arguments on whether Confucianism and Daoism are religions or not, but for many Chinese, religion, philosophy and culture are seen as one.

Precisely since God’s identity is seen as unknown, Daoism and especially Confucianism focused on humanity and the world around it, and therefore developed a sophisticated ethical and social system. One may say that both are moral and ethical systems. Yet they are also religious in nature, though not explicitly, because they teach a way of life here and now. However, this way of life is oriented towards fulfilling humanity’s role in the cosmos, and heaven is intended as the destination of the human journey.

Humble and intuitive nature of Chinese philosophy

Confucius was once asked what he thought of life after death, and his reply was explicit: “We do not know the mysteries even of this

6 *Dao De Jing*, Chapter 14: We look at it and so not see it; Its name is The Invisible. We listen to it and do not hear it; Its name is The Inaudible. We touch it and do not find it; Its name is The Subtle (formless). These three cannot be further inquired into (unfathomable), And hence merge into one. Cf: Chan Wing-Tsit, ed., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*.

life; how can we know about the future life?”⁷ A quote of Laozi in the *Daodejing* goes like this: “He who knows does not speak; he who speaks does not know.”⁸ The knowledge here refers to knowing the transcendent that is indescribable and ineffable.

When a person says “I see,” in English, it means “I understand.” In Chinese, the expression for understanding is “*ming*” (明). The term means to be illuminated, that is, to be given the light to understand. As Carmine di Sante writes, in Greek culture the emphasis is on actively “seeing” while the Jewish Christian tradition instead is on “listening” [to the words of God].⁹ It is interesting to note that in Chinese, one has to be illuminated (*ming*), that is, one must first have the light to see in order to understand. This shows a basic attitude of receptiveness and humility in the understanding of reality. One cannot “see” or “understand” only by using the senses or reason, one has to be illuminated.

The following sentence appears twice in the *Daodejing*: “To know the constant (*chang* 常) [*Dao*] is called enlightenment (*ming* 明).” This means that enlightenment derives from knowing the underlining constant principle or the principle of changes, the eternal *Dao* that is the source of true enlightenment. In the humility of not knowing through one’s own efforts, there can arise an intuition of the *Dao*. In chapter six, Laozi makes use of metaphors to indicate the features of an intuition of the *Dao*: “It is called the root of heaven and earth” (是谓天地之根). One can gain an intuition of the *Dao* by silently observing all things in their rising from and returning to their root. From this humble intuition, the *Dao* is understood as the ultimate principle of the universe, the source and destination of everything: “It is continuous, and seems to always exist. Use it and you will never wear it out” (绵绵呵！其若存！用之不堇).¹⁰ As far as time is concerned, one understands

7 Ji Lu asked about serving the gods and spirits. Confucius replied: “You are not able to serve man well. How can you talk about serving gods and spirits?” Ji Lu asked again: “May I ask about death?” Confucius replied: “You do not understand even life. How can you understand death?” See James J. Legge (ed. & trans.), *The Analects by Confucius*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893, Book 11.

8 *Daodejing*, chapter 56.

9 Carmine di Sante, *Responsabilità, L'io-per-l'altro*, Roma: Edizioni Lavoro-Esperienze, 1996, 11-44.

10 *Daodejing*, Chapter 6.

that the *Dao* is eternal. From the perspective of space, the *Dao* is everywhere and its effects are endless.

Dialectic of simplicity

Looking deeper into this continuity, chapter 16 of *Daodejing* says: “Expand to extreme vacuity” (致虚极) and “Contract to utmost quietude” (守静笃). There is a continuous dynamic, from vacuity (*xu* 虚) through extreme expansion while quietude (*jing* 静) contract to the utmost, which presents a dialectic way of understanding. Chapter two begins with these verses:

When people of the world all know beauty as beauty, there arises the recognition of ugliness (天下皆知美之为美，恶已). When they all know the good as good, there arises the recognition of evil (皆知善，斯不善矣). Therefore, being (you 有) and nothingness (wu 无) “give relational existence” (有无之相生也). Difficult (*nan*) and easy (*yi*) complete each other; long (*chang*) and short (*duan*) contrast each other; high (*gao*) and low (*di*) distinguish each other; voice (*sheng*) and tone (*yin*) harmonize with each other; front (*qian*) and back (*hou*) follow each other.

In all these verses, the pairs of opposites, such as being and nothingness, difficult and easy, long and short, high and low, voice and tone, front and back, arise in a dialectic of harmony. It is the method of *yin* and *yang*.

In this way, Laozi described the relationship of interdependence (connection and functioning) of all things in the world, affirming the harmonizing, eternal, and universal principle. As Chan Wing-Tsit has pointed out, with a humble intuition of this interrelated process of the changing cosmos, Laozi explicated the superiority of non-action (*wu-wei*) over action and the idea of teaching without words.¹¹ This does not mean to be passive, but to be an active subject without forcing nature. Ren Jiyu writes that, like exemplary persons, it means to make a change without forcing the situation.

¹¹ Chan indicated that in this passage of *Daodejing*, Laozi actually anticipated the Buddhist tradition of silent transmission of the mystic doctrine, especially in the Zen School. Cf. Chan, 140.

One is always in harmony while contributing to that harmony. This dialectical principle guides people in their social life.¹²

The dialectical principle of Laozi is distinctively different from the dialectical method of Hegel. Western logic, codified in the rigid laws of scholastic argumentation, is based on the principle of contradiction and operated by means of subtle distinctions aimed to prove the invalidity of adverse positions. The Chinese tradition instead aims not to refute but to reconcile contradictions. Opposites are the two extremes of the one truth. Different points of view are not mutually exclusive. Reasoning above and beyond concrete realities is considered futile argumentation based on abstract concepts.

Hegel gave this example: "The bud disappears as the blossom bursts forth, and one could say that the former is refuted by the latter. In the same way, the fruit declares the blossom to be a false existence of the plant. These forms do not only differ, they also displace each other because they are incompatible."¹³ He saw the progressive development of an organic whole by way of the dialectical method. A thesis gives rise to its reaction, an antithesis, which contradicts or negates the thesis, and the tension between the two is resolved by means of a synthesis. While the Hegelian method is based on refutation and displacement, Laozi's method is based on a dialectical principle of change that blends the contrasts such that they achieve a state of balance in a harmonious way. One refutes contradictions while the other reconciles contradictions. According to Laozi, the created universe carries the pervading principles of the yin and the yang; through their union it reaches harmony (this passage of *Daodejing* chapter 42 will be further explained and elaborated later). There are many examples in the

12 Ren Jiyu, "The dialectic of simplicity" (老子的朴素辩证法思想), *Teaching and Research* (教学与研究), Issue 2, 1962, 17-18.

13 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit: Volume 1*, trans. J. B. Baillie, New York: Cosimo Classics, 2005, 68.

Chinese classics of this dialectical method,¹⁴ which may be called the “dialectic of harmony.”

Trinitarian relationship

The imprint of “one” and “three” in all things

How might one interpret the following Daoist passage “All things under heaven come from being (*you*); Being (*you*) comes from non-being (*wu*)” (天下万物生于有，有生于无)?¹⁵ First of all, the concept of *you* and *wu* is to be understood in term of their *you-wu* dialectic co-relation. In fact, they have been translated as “being” and “non-being,” “presence” and “absence,” “with” and “without,” as in the case of *you-ming* (with name) and *wu-ming* (without name).

According to Chen Guying,¹⁶ there have been various interpretations of the following verse in the beginning chapter of the *Daodejing*. For Wang Bi (226–249),¹⁷ *Wu-ming* and *you-ming* mean “without name” and “with name,” respectively. Therefore, the verse goes: “The nameless is the origin of heaven and earth; the named is the mother of ten thousand things (无名天地之始; 有名万物之母).” For Wang Anshi (1021-1086)¹⁸ instead, *ming* is used as a verb “to name,” and *wu* and *you* are nouns which mean “non-being” and “being.” Therefore, the verse would go like this:

14 Another example of dialectic of harmony and simplicity in the following passage in the Book of Changes (Cf. “Appended remarks,” Bk. II, Ch.5 in Chen Guying (陈鼓应), *The translation and review of Laozi* (老子注译及评介), Hong Kong: Chunghua Book (中华书局), 2012, 268): “After the Sun goes, the moon comes. After the moon goes, the sun comes. The sun and the moon push each other in their course and thus light appears. After the winter goes, the summer comes. After the summer goes, the winter comes. The winter and the summer push each other and thus the year is completed. To go means to contract and to come means to expand. Contraction and expansion act on each other and thus advantages are produced. The looper caterpillar coils itself up in order to stretch. Dragons and snakes hibernate (contract) in order to stretch out (expand). Investigate the principles of things and refinement until we enter into their spirit, for then their application can be extended, and utilize that application and secure personal peace, for then our virtue will be exalted. What goes beyond this is something we can hardly know. To investigate spirit to the utmost and to understand transformation is the height of virtue.”

15 *Daodejing*, chapter 40.

16 Cf. Chen Guying (陈鼓应), *The translation and review of Laozi* (老子注译及评介), Hong Kong: Chunghua Book (中华书局), 2012, 90.

17 Wang Bi (王弼) regarded as one of the most important interpreters of the *Daodejing* before the discovery of the Mawangdui manuscript in 1973. Cf. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2013.

18 Wang Anshi (王安石) was a Song dynasty (960-1279) scholar and politician who made interpretations to the philosophical Laozi commentaries.

“Non-being names the origin of heaven and earth; being names the mother of ten thousand things.”

Contemporary scholars such as Feng Youlan¹⁹ have the following explanation about the terms *you* and *wu*: The *you* in the verse “all things under heaven come from *you*” (天下万物生于有) refers to something material and to physical things: “the materiality of being.” The *wu* in the verse “*you* comes from *wu*,” (有生于无) refers to something immaterial and metaphysical, “nothingness,” which is close to if not identical to “pure act without form and matter.” The *you* and *wu* referred to here, in chapter 40, have the same meaning as those of chapter one, where *you-ming* (with-name) is the mother of all things, and *wu-ming* (nameless) is the origin of heaven and earth. However, the *you-wu* in chapter one and chapter 40 is different from that of chapter two, where it states: “*you* and *wu* (being and non-being) therefore give rise to each other” (有无之相生也). This passage expresses the mutual relation of *you-wu* as the twofold aspect of *Dao*. The co-relation of this *you-wu* is like that of *yin-yang*. This *you-wu* refers to the transcendent and metaphysical *Dao*.

However, the *Daodejing* does not stop with this duality. Rather, Laozi discusses a third dimension that surpasses simple duality. This third dimension is *sheng* (生). According to Chinese tradition, the term *sheng* has the following meanings: to generate or to arise (生长), to form (生来, 形成), to transform (生化, 化生), or to manifest (显生, 展示). Given this third element, one might analyze Chapter 42 of the *Daodejing* verse by verse in the following way:

Dao manifests itself as One (道生一): Dao is being One, absoluteness, and unity.

One becomes two (一生二): one composed of two, non-uniformity within unity. Dao by itself contains the yin and yang, therefore two.

Two becomes three (二生三): the third is the relation between the two. The third is the qi, the flow and the vital force, and there are the vital forces of yin and of yang.

19 Feng Youlan (冯友兰), Chinese Edition, *Collection of Discussions on the Philosophy of Laozi* (老子哲学讨论集), Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company (中华书局), 1959, 41.

Three generates the ten thousand things (三生万物): relation within and without. These three factors interact to reach an appropriate state, and all things are generated in this state. The ten thousand things carry the yin and embrace the yang (万物负阴而抱阳): all things carry the imprint of yin and yang.

Blending of their qi achieves he (冲气以为和): qi is the vital force, and he means harmony as well as totality.

Laozi used “one” as a numerical representation of the *Dao* as the absolute. “Two” refers to *yin* and *yang*, the two that the *Dao* contains. The *qi* of the *yin* and of the *yang* is contained in the one *Dao*, and *qi* is the relationship between the two in the one, making *qi* the third. The final verse of the paragraph says: “The ten thousand things carry the *yin* and embrace the *yang*, the blending of their *qi* achieves harmony” (万物负阴而抱阳，冲气以为和). Therefore, we can say that *qi* is the vital force of the two: yin and yang. The equilibrium of the two achieves harmony. *Yin-yang* is also a process of harmonization that ensures a constant, dynamic balance of all things.²⁰ The interaction of the *qi* of *yin* and *yang* establishes *he* (harmony), so it gives birth to all things in the cosmos. Harmony is the relationship of “mutually transforming” (相互相生) of *yin* and *yang* in the one *Dao*. It generates new and harmonious life that includes all things. All things have the imprint of “one,” and “three.”

Here, Daoism provides a terrain for comparison and we find seeds for dialogue with the Christians concerning the Trinitarian relationship. For example, in his encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis writes about the “divine principle” of the Trinity and the relationship between creatures: “For Christians, believing in one God who is Trinitarian communion suggests that the Trinity has left its mark on all creation.” Humans going out from themselves enter into relationships, “to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures. In this way, they make their own the Trinitarian dynamism that God imprinted in them when they were created. Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a

20 Robin R. Wang, *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2006.

spirituality of a global solidarity that flows from the mystery of the Trinity.”²¹

The prologue of the Gospel of John and experiences of some saints

Before attempting to read the mystery of Trinitarian relationships through categories of Chinese thought and, in particular, in light of the Daoist vision outlined above, one must first examine some verses from the Prologue of the Gospel of John, written originally in Greek:

- 1: 1 In the beginning was the Word (λόγος): the Word was with (προς) God and the Word was God.
- 1: 2-3 Through him all things came into being (γίγνομαι), not one thing came into being (γίγνομαι) except through (δια) him.
- 1: 14 And (καί) the Word became flesh (σὰρξ ἐγένετο), he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that he has from the Father as only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.
- 1: 18 No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.

In these verses, the term λόγος (*Logos*)²² in Greek and *Dabar* in Hebrew is translated as “the Word” and has the meaning of “words” and “expressions.” The term προς (*pros*) is translated as “with” or “towards” as in the phrase “was towards God” (*pros ton theon*). It indicates dynamism imprinted in the verb “to be.” Therefore, it means that the Word is always directed towards someone, living and creating relationship; the Being of the Word is movement so to speak. The Word is not only God but is with God and always dynamically toward God. The terms γίγνομαι (*gignomai*), translated “came into being,” and δια (*dia*), translated as “through” as in

21 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, encyclical letter on care for our common home, Vatican, 24 May 2015, 238-240.

22 Although the Gospel of John has been transmitted to us in Greek, John the Evangelist, being a Jew, wrote in Greek using the term *Logos* but was also thinking of the Hebrew term *Dabar*. Anna Pelli affirmed that the philosophical *logos* in the Greek tradition was insufficient to express the reality of the universal *Logos* of God became man in history. A richer meaning was then taken over by Christianity. Cf. Anna Pelli, *Verità e dialogo: la dinamica relazionale del conoscere*, manuscript, Florence: Sophia University Institute 2013-2014, 18-19; Giustino, *Apology*, 2, 13, 4.

the verse “all things came into being through him,” shows that the Word was not only God and with and toward God but also played creative and ordering role in forming the creation of all things. The phrase “in the beginning” means that the Word was with God eternally from the perspective of time. As the renowned exegete Rudolf Schnackenburg has pointed out, the term *καί* (*kai*) indicates a moment when and where the Word “became flesh” (*εγένετο egeneto*), which the Word until then had not been.²³ The phrase “he lived among us” indicates that the Word entered in time, space, and human history through Jesus Christ.

The opening verses of the prologue of the John’s Gospel powerfully express the eternal relationship between God and the Word, the reality of God in God (you in me and I in you). They also present the Word as the focus, the converging point, where God made the otherness of Him come to be. The two verses 14 and 18 that follow point out to us that the Word showed us God. The Word glorified God and vice versa. The only Son (the Word) has manifested God and opened his relationship with God to us.

This calls to mind an episode of the Old Testament. “I Am that I Am” was the response God used when Moses asked for his name (Ex 3: 14).²⁴ It is very difficult to translate this verse of the Bible. It is Revelation of the ineffable name of God. That God alone IS. God’s self-revelation has been promised from above as people strive to know God. According to Piero Coda, through this giving of “I Am,” of the IS, God enters time and space and creates a relation: “‘I Am’ is the name of God which can be translated as ‘I am always with you.’”²⁵ In the Prologue, God’s Word is not just spoken as it was to Moses, but in Jesus it entered into human history to be with us concretely, forever. At the end of John’s Gospel, the Holy Spirit

23 Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Johannine Epistle: A Commentary*, New York: Crossroad, 1992, 267; Cf. Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, 142.

24 See Exodus 3: 14: Moses said to God, “Who am I to go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” “I shall be with you,” God said, “and this is the sign by which you will know that I was the one who sent you. After you have led the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.” Moses then said to God, “Look, if I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is his name?’ what am I to tell them?” God said to Moses, “I am he who is.” And he said, “This is what you are to say to the Israelites, ‘I am has sent me to you.’”

25 Piero Coda, *La Trinità, quando il racconto di Dio diventa il racconto dell'uomo*, Rome: Marcianum Press, 2015, 16-21.

is given to bind all to God and together in harmony. The One gives Two, and Two gives Three—the very Three that binds in love One and Two.

In his autobiography, *The Confessions*, Augustine described his encounter with God: “When I first knew thee, thou didst lift me up (*et vestrum sollevasti*). And thou didst cry to me from afar, ‘I am that I am (*Ego sum qui sum*).’ And I heard this, as things are heard in the heart, and there was no room for doubt.”²⁶ Coda affirms that, for Augustine, therefore, it is not just with human effort that one can grasp and understand who God is; rather it is God who lowered himself to elevate people to a “being with” God.²⁷ The first move to tell the Being of God is not from bottom up, for this attempt is always out of reach, but from top down.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux too found the “elevator” for which she was searching: “It is your arms, Jesus, which are the lift to carry me to heaven, and so there is no need for me to grow up. In fact, just the opposite: I must stay little and become less and less.”²⁸ The “little way” of St. Thérèse is centered on the infinite mercy of God and recognizes that everything is a grace and Providence is in control from moment to moment when one embraces the will of God. She observed, “Jesus is doing all in me, and I am doing nothing.” Since everything is a grace, she came to realize that God has no need of one’s works. However, the “little way” is not an invitation to do nothing. One has to prove one’s love by works, but works without love count for nothing.

This is very much in tune with Laozi’s concept of *wu-wei* (non-doing). It refers to the cultivation of the highest state of being in non-doing. It is a kind of paradoxical “action of non-action”. A kind of “going with the flow” characterized by living in harmony with the ultimate nature (*ziran*) in response to the world surrounding us. A practical example is what athletes experience when they do something so often that its movements are natural and no thought

26 Augustine, *Confessions*, VII, 10:16.

27 Piero Coda observes that the expression “when I first knew thee” indicates a precise event and a living experience for St. Augustine, wherein he emphasized that God “elevated him” to see who God IS - precisely that Being that Augustine could well see in a strong ontological sense. See Piero Coda, *Sul luogo della Trinità. Rileggendo il De Trinitate di Agostino*, Roma: Città Nuova, 2008, 30-31.

28 Thérèse of Lisieux, *The Story of a Soul*, New York: Double Day, 2001, 113.

is needed to act correctly in the right time and place. It is simply done effortlessly, cleanly and in harmony with everything around it. However, it requires endless practice beforehand.

In comparison to the concept of *wu-wei*, there are religious traditions wherein one experiences union with God (mysticism) after long period of mortification (asceticism). In Christian terms, one could call it a state of grace where one is in full disposition to the gifts of God and partakes in the divine nature of God.

Jesus Christ and Trinitarian relationship

As mentioned above, the Word is the converging focus in the creation of all things. The Word is also said to be “life” and “light” and is incarnated as Jesus. As narrated later in the *Gospel of John*, when the hour had come before leaving this world, Jesus prayed to the Father: “I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one” (Jn 17:22). One might interpret this priestly prayer of Jesus on three levels.

First, there is the level of the relationship of love between Jesus and the Father: “All I have is yours and all you have is mine” (Jn 17:10). It is this relationship of total giving that makes God Father and Jesus Son. Jesus doing the will of God becomes truly the Son, and God letting the Son fulfill his plan becomes truly the Father. Second, there is the level of Jesus’s prayer to the Father: “Keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us” (Jn 17:11). This prayer refers to the relationship among Christians of total giving that is one of unity and love. Third, there is the level of Jesus’s prayer for his disciples: “May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me” (Jn 17:21). Only by witnessing this relationship

of unity and communion among Christians can others²⁹ believe in the message of love brought by Jesus.

During the Last Supper, Jesus gave the disciples a new commandment: "Love one another, as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15:12–13). In the Gospel of Matthew, at the climax of his passion, echoing Psalm 22, Jesus cried out: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (27:46). And he passed away. The veil of the temple is said to have split in two from top to bottom. This action is reminiscent of the scene of Jesus's baptism when the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descended as a dove upon Jesus.³⁰ Indeed, Scripture states that in seeing this total self-emptying lived by Jesus on the cross, a centurion standing in front of him came to believe in the message of love of Jesus's death and said, "Indeed this man was the son of God" (Mk 15:34–39).

With a strong spiritual experience that occurred in 1944, Chiara Lubich intuited that there is a strong relationship between the abandonment of Jesus on the cross and the prayer of Jesus to the Father that all men be one. The story of Jesus' death on the cross, in loneliness and abandonment, is a profound story of love between the Son and the Father. In this story the cry of abandonment is paradoxically the apex of unity between Jesus and his God.³¹ Chiara then started a way of life, which became a worldwide movement committed to living a spirituality of unity.

I find the following passage of Lubich about the Trinitarian relationship and the dialectic of love very inspiring in relation to the above:

29 As an additional note here, Donald Mitchell, a professor of comparative religion, finds that there is a mutual indwelling relationship that echoes Chinese Huayan Buddhism. See Donald W. Mitchell, "Dazzling darkness, Buddhism and Chiara Lubich's mystical writings," *Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture*, Vol. 6, No. 2, October 2017, 6–13. Huayan Buddhism is a school of Buddhism that flourished in China in the 7th century CE. It teaches that not only is Buddha-nature with its Nirvanic essence within all beings, but also all beings exist such that they "mutually penetrate" each other and "mutually indwell" in each other. The metaphor used by Master Fazang is a mirror containing the reflections of other mirrors. Although further comparison could be interesting, I do not want to delve into Buddhism here that may divert from the main content of this section.

30 Cf. Gospel of Mark 1: 10.

31 Gerard Rosse, *il grido del crocifisso, approccio biblico*, manuscript, Florence: Istituto Universitario Sophia, 2010, 45.

Three form the Trinity, yet they are one, because love is and is not at the same time. Even when love is not, it is, because it is love. In fact, if I renounce a particular possession of mine and give it away (I deprive myself of it; it is not) out of love, I have love, therefore it is.³²

Lubich emphasizes that it is more important “to be love” than to be “doing things for love.” One may think, for example, of someone believing to be doing³³ a great service to a sick friend, while the friend finds the service annoying.

Trinitarian relationship from an anthropomorphic point of view

How can this life of self-emptying and self-giving love be lived by people? The relationship of “love” necessitates at least two parties. Piero Coda provides an insightful definition of the Trinitarian relationship: “I am if you are; I am so that you would be.”³⁴ That is, I am my true self only in relation to you, and you are your true self, if I am who I am. My fulfillment is the condition for your fulfillment, and vice versa. I find the reason of my existence in relation to the other, and in relation to me the other finds the reason of his or her existence. Again, as in the relationship between the Father and the Son, a father is a father because he has a son. The son is a son because of the father. The identity of the two arises in a mutually dependent relationship. It is not a dialectical relationship of negating or denying the other but of fulfilling each other in this relationship.

The relationship between Jesus and God the Father is such: the Son felt abandoned by the Father and died on the cross. At that moment he fully identified with all humankind in their suffering existence, thus he accomplished the will of the Father. At the same time, the Father glorified the Son. Between the Father and the Son

32 Judith M. Povilus, *United in His Name. Jesus in our Midst in the experience and thought of Chiara Lubich*, New York: New City Press 1992, 66.

33 It calls to my mind the dialectic of harmony in Daoism with regard to one of the most important concepts in Daoism, “doing” and “non-doing” (*wu-wei*), which emphasizes the importance of being rather than doing. In other words, being is in non-doing. I will elaborate more in detail the concept of *wu-wei* in later parts of this research.

34 Piero Coda, “Trinitarian Ontology,” lecture, Sophia University Institute, Figline and Incisa Valdarno, Italy, March 11, 2014.

is the relationship of “love,” the Holy Spirit. The forsaken Jesus completely emptied himself (*kenosis*) to be one with humankind through kenotic love. When he totally denied himself in a loving relationship with humankind, he fulfilled his identity as the Son of God. This brought about a universal Trinitarian relation with all humankind, namely, the Word of God that created the world re-creates humanity and the cosmos in the Son.

Given this vision, how should Christians look at and relate to the world and society? Paul said: “Who has ever known the mind of the Lord? But we are those who have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16). The “mind of Christ” present in the Christian sees and knows the world through its essence: Love and Unity. It is as if the pupil of the eye of a Christian allows the Light and Love from the mind of Christ to enter within, enabling him or her to be a source of “intuitiveness” and “harmony.” While Christians see the negative things around themselves, they are moved from within to seek unity and harmony through the love also found within. This is the source of the “humility” of Christianity and its service to humanity, society, and the cosmos. This attitude brings about positive energy in the world.

Possible contribution of Chinese dialectic of harmony to Trinitarian theology

The second axial age and effort of inculturation

In *The Origin and Goal of History* Karl Jaspers pioneered the idea of the Axial Age (800 to 200 BCE).³⁵ According to him human history has gone through four ages: the Neolithic age, the age of the earliest civilizations, the axial age, and the modern age. The so-called axial age is “pivotal” characterizing the period in which new ways of thinking appeared. Many of the great philosophers and religious leaders flourished at roughly the same time, as if something parallel was happening in the world. People were unaware that similar or complimentary ideas were being developed simultaneously. In Greece there were Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle; in China, Confucius, Laozi, and Mozi; in India, the Upanishads and the Buddha; and Palestine witnessed several of

35 Karl Jaspers, *Origin and Goal of History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953, 1-27.

the greatest prophets. People became conscious of themselves, their limitations and their potential. Their view of the world and their position in the world changed. They sought the supremely and eternally “real” that lay beyond the world of the senses, and in so doing they created what Jasper called “fundamental ideas” that have defined the modern age through the centuries. Since the 1900s, scholars such as Ewert Cousins and Karen Armstrong say that the gaze of human beings has shifted in such a way that one might call this the Second Axial Period, which could likewise shape the horizon of consciousness for future centuries.³⁶ This consciousness is global, collective, interreligious, dialogical, experiential, and ecological.

Globalization has become a reality for the first time in history, and awareness of climate change has birthed the ecological movement, which continues to grow. In the Catholic Church, Pope Francis has written the encyclicals *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti* for the whole world. Because of Vatican II and the work of Saint John Paul II, the Catholic Church, with its universal apostolic nature, has been engaging in the process of interreligious dialogue and inculturation. Vatican II has also called for all people in the Church to experience “sanctity.” The lay movements in the Church today are taking spirituality and the experiential dimension of religion beyond the walls of convents and monasteries to the people. This change is not just individual but collective, since the Church sees its role today as caring for all humanity, bringing harmony among the rich diversity of humankind with its many cultures and religions.

Just as the Church Fathers expressed the content of the Jewish Christian religion in the Greek and Roman cultural context, in the past century, people have tried to present the message of the Gospels from the milieu and perspective of Chinese culture. The well-known jurist and philosopher John Wu Ching-hsiung (吴经熊) attempted to translate the Prologue of the Gospel of John using the term *Dao*. The Shanghai diocese made similar efforts through their translations. They translated the original term “Logos” as *Dao*. Therefore, in the Prologue we read: “In the beginning was the *Dao*: the *Dao* was with God and the *Dao* was God.” (太初有道，道在天主，道就是天主) and “The *Dao* became flesh, he lived

36 Ewert Cousins, *Christ of the 21st Century*, New York: Continuum Publishing, 1998, 7-10.

among us” (道成人身，寓居我们中间). More classical Chinese expressions were also employed in the translation. Today, the expression of incarnation, “The *Dao* became flesh” (道成肉身), is often employed in translations by Protestant Christian churches. However, in the Catholic translation of the text, the expression “the Word” (圣言) is considered more prudent, until we fully understand the connotation of the word *Dao* in Chinese culture.

Since people today live in a cross-cultural environment, when carrying out the project of inculturation it is important to understand different articulations and categories of thinking in the East and the West. What method should Asian scholars use to approach Christian studies given the realities of our present age? First, as the philosopher Jacques Maritain said, one should begin with an “existential epistemology.”³⁷ That is, one needs to start with the actual religious experience of the encounter with Jesus Christ. Second, one should use “phenomenology” to comprehend the profound nature of the experience of Jesus Christ. These two steps are important to both the West and the East in considering the words of important religious texts.

Third, relationality is critical for both the Christian Trinitarian viewpoint and the Chinese cultural viewpoint, but with different emphases. In the West, for example, relationship with others is emphasized as I-thou. The approach is to define who I am and my relationship with others ontologically. In the East, the emphasis is on my relationship with the whole, I with the totality. The relationship between the self and another person is seen in the larger context of the True Self and Totality. Fourth, for the West, careful analysis is important in defining the realities discussed in a text as a basis for living. In the East, it is more important to intuit the realities presented in the text as a basis for living. By drawing on both similarities and differences and by combining the

37 Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2015.

strengths of East and West, one might discover new hermeneutics in textual interpretation.³⁸

Understanding the Trinity from the perspective of Chinese culture

In Chinese culture, the concepts of *Dao*, *de* and *qi*, and *he* (harmony) have rich connotations. To interpret and understand the Trinitarian relationship from the perspective of a “dialectic of harmony,” I propose the following interpretations:

- i. This is an interpretation of the relationship between the Word and God with the principle of the dialectic of harmony. The relationship could be expressed in these phrases of *Daodejing* : “Being and non-being give rise to each other” (有无相生)³⁹ and they are in a “reciprocally transforming” (相互相生) relationship. God exists in eternity. God is the Trinity, three united as one. In Daoist cosmology, “*Dao* generates one” (道生一) means *Dao* is being one, the absolute.
- ii. Two of the Persons in the Trinity are God the Father and Christ the Son. In an expression of the *Daodejing* , two comes from one or “one generates two” (一生二),⁴⁰ in which the two are yin and yang or wu and you. God eternally generates the Son in total giving, making God Father. The Son completely empties himself (kenosis), making him the eternal manifestation (epiphaneia) of the Father.
- iii. The third Person of the Trinity is the relationship of love, the Holy Spirit (pneuma). It could be expressed by the Chinese term *qi* insofar as “the blending of the *qi* of yin and the *qi* of yang achieves the *qi* of harmony” (冲气以为和).

38 This project is larger than what I am attempting here. However, in searching for a new hermeneutics, I would refer to the Italian theologian Piero Coda who writes about “Teor-etica.” See Piero Coda, *Il logos e il nulla. Trinità religioni mistica*, Roma: Città Nuova, 2003, 28-29; 109-112; 133-136. In Italian “teor-etica” means theory and ethics; there is a continuous circle from intelligence to experience, and vice versa. Ontology, as Coda sees it, is never an abstract intelligence but always at the same time practical, because moving knowledge moved freedom, and moving freedom moved knowledge.

39 *Daodejing* , 42 (the translation and interpretation of these passages of Chapter 42 of *Daodejing* is mine).

40 Ibid.

Qi is the flow and the relationship of love, of harmony, and of mutual giving. Mutual giving of the “two becomes three” (二生三).

- iv. This relationship of love is imprinted in all things, as shown in the statement “The three generates the ten thousand things. The ten thousand things carry the yin and embrace the yang, and through the blending of their qi they achieve harmony” (三生万物，负阴而抱阳，冲气以为和). In Chinese culture, the generating principle of all things is based on the two elements of yin and yang, and the third element that is symbolized by the qi. All things generated are the result of the blending of the qi to achieve harmony within the Totality.

I do not mean that certain ideas found in the *Daodejing* express Christian concepts of the Trinity, but it is necessary to express Christian thoughts from a Chinese perspective just as the early Church Fathers did in the Greek and Roman cultural context. Inculturation is a process that requires time and patience. Vatican II affirms that culture is a human creation and needs to be “cleansed, raised up and perfected.”⁴¹ If only more Chinese Christians would put into practice the gospel message, in the process, their faith expressions would gradually be accepted.

In the final analysis, the early Church Fathers did use Greek language and philosophy to express Christian thought. To describe the relationship within the “Trinity,” they used the term *perichoresis*. It means “dancing around,” (flowing) freely, obeying the movement of one another. In Trinitarian language it refers to the dynamic mutual indwelling among the three Persons. I think the concepts of “yin-yang harmonizing” and “mutually transforming” (相互相生) might appropriately interpret the Trinitarian relationship. From the early Church Fathers to recent times, *perichoresis* has been applied in three contexts: the relationship between the divine nature and the human nature of Jesus Christ, the relationship among the three Persons of the Trinity, and other interpersonal relationships and God’s presence in human affairs. In this last meaning, we see a link to the human relations and society that is

⁴¹ Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium*, Vatican, 1964. 17.

so important in Chinese culture, wherein all things and actions are generated by the flowing and harmonizing of the vital energy (*qi*) of *yin* and *yang*.

The contribution of Chinese thoughts to Trinitarian relationships

To “do” theology in the context of Chinese culture,⁴² it could be helpful, as we have seen, to translate the term “*Logos*” as “*Dao*” and to use the expression “the *Dao* became flesh” (道成肉身). However, “*Logos*” simply translated as “*Dao*” might not be enough. The relationship between *Dao* and *De* should also be explored, since in Chinese culture the two are linked, both in the texts of Daoism and in the Chinese way of thought. As a matter of fact, *Daodejing* literally means the Book of *Dao* and *De*. What does this connection between *Dao* and *De* contribute to our understanding of the relationship between God and the Word?

Contemporary scholars such as Philip Ivanhoe and Roger Ames point out that the Daoist concept of *de* has been “severely undervalued,” both in later commentary and in present understandings of Daoism.⁴³ An understanding of *de* is indispensable for a full appreciation of the philosophy presented in the text.⁴⁴ The word *De* itself can be translated as either “Virtue” or “Power.” In the text of the *Daodejing*, there is a distinction between the expressions of upper *De* and the lower *De*. According to Laozi, Upper *De* is a power and virtue fully in accordance with the spirit of the *Dao*. Laozi also uses the expression Supreme *De* (玄德), Great *De* (孔德) and Constant *De* (常德) to express the infinite nature of the Upper *De*. The Upper *De* has a metaphysical

42 Theological studies are not limited to the aspect of gaining knowledge and of understanding with the head; they require living practices and understanding with the heart. See Yong Lina, “Research on theological education in the Church of China (扎根中国文化放眼全球--探索中国教会的神学教育)”, *Conference Paper* 社会变迁中的宗教研究与宗教教育, November 18-19, 2014, 25.

43 Roger T. Ames, “Putting the *Te* Back into Taoism,” in *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought*, edited by J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames, Albany: Suny Press, 1989, 123. Wade-Giles Romanization of Chinese terms (“*te*”; “*tao*”) in the article have been altered to pinyin (“*de*”; “*dao*”) for consistency.

44 Philip J. Ivanhoe, “The Concept of *de* (“Virtue”) in the *Laozi*,” in *Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the Laozi*, edited by Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Philip J. Ivanhoe, Albany: Suny Press, 1999, 239.

meaning that is foundational for the refined ethical meaning in the sense that for Laozi the Upper *De* emphasizes the ideas of “return to the nature” and *wu-wei* (无为, non-action). The lower *De*, on the other hand, has a purely ethical meaning that is close to the moral teachings of Confucianism, even paying attention to the concept of propriety (*li* 礼).

Catholic scholar Bernard Li Chien-Chiu writes that while in Confucianism *Dao* signifies the way of heaven or humans, in Daoism it acquires a metaphysical meaning. *Dao* is the ultimate reality as well as the first principle underlying form, substance, being, and change.⁴⁵ Therefore the connotation of *Dao* in Daoism is different from its connotation in Confucianism. It is the same with *De*, whose connotation in Daoism is different from its connotation in Confucianism. So, how should the relationship between *Dao* and Upper *De* be understood in Daoism?

Laozi said: “The all-embracing quality of the Great *De* is alone derived from the *Dao*” (孔德之容，惟道是从). The Great *De* comes from the *Dao*. It is the power and virtue of the *Dao*, and follows only the *Dao* in all its actions.⁴⁶ This means that the Great *De* is the embodiment of the spirit of the *Dao* and the concretization of the *Dao* itself. That is, *Dao* in itself is invisible, and *De* manifests its power and the nature of its action. With the term *De*, Laozi expresses how the *Dao* takes up power and virtue in creative action and how it returns to the original natural state.

The term *De* as expressed in the *Daodejing* connotes the manifestation of the *Dao*, whereby it takes up human factors such as virtue and yet returns to the original natural state. “In this natural state,” Ding Yuanzhi writes, “*you* and *wu*, with and without, being and non-being, *Dao* and *De* are interrelated.”⁴⁷ Here we see that the ontological natures of the *Dao* and of the upper *De* are defined in relational terms, rather than in singular terms, as entities in themselves. They have to be analyzed as relational structures,

45 Bernard Chien-Chiu Li, “Dao-Logos: Lao Zi and Philo”, *Euntes Docente*, 1/Anno LXII, Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1. 2009, 143.

46 *Daodejing*, 21

47 Ding Yuanzhi (丁原植), *Guodianzhujian interpretation and research on Laozi* (郭店竹简老子释析与研究), Taipei: Wanjuanlou Publishing (万卷楼图书有限公司), 1999, 144.

as expressed in the *I Jing* (Book of Changes): “What is called the *Dao* is in the metaphysical realm while the actualization is in the physical realm” (形而上者谓之道，形而下者谓之器)⁴⁸. Also, Daoist scholar Chen Kuying writes that when *Dao* is in the state of potentiality and not actuality, it is not perceivable by the senses. When the metaphysical *Dao* concretizes itself at the human level, it is called the *De*. Laozi made use of the development of the body and its functions to explain the relationship between *Dao* and *De*. *Dao* in its original state is formless and its manifestation is the *De*.⁴⁹

With reference to some attempts mentioned earlier, if we simply use the term *Dao* for *Logos* to explain the relationship between the Word and God, it would not be enough. I suggest that the term *De*, especially with emphasis on its metaphysical meaning, could be used in the place of *Logos*. That is, to reflect on *De* in the place of *Logos* and *Dao* in the place of God. From the perspective of Trinitarian relationship, one might make use of the relationship between *Dao* and *De* or *You and Wu* to interpret the relationship between God and the Word. I argue that this would be more comprehensive and appropriate.

It is a modest spur to induce scholars in this field to ponder on the mystery of the Trinity from the point of view of relationality. It is also an invitation for Chinese Christians to live the Gospel so that life experiences become genuine expressions of faith and authentically Chinese. In this regard, it seems that the Chinese dialectical relationship of harmony will make a valuable contribution to Christian theology as it develops in China. The benefit will not only be theological but would also have ethical and social benefits for the development of Chinese culture today.

In conclusion, the concept of non-action in Daoism is understood in Chinese culture in relation to the concept of “making a difference” in Confucianism. Confucianism and Daoism are complementary and in constant interaction in a dialectic of harmony. The cultures of East and West can also have a dialectical relationship that is not conflicting. By the inculturation of Christianity in China, and

48 See *I Jing* (易经·系辞).

49 Chen Guying (陈鼓应), *The interpretation and translation Laozi today* (老子今注今译), Beijing: Beijing Commercial Press (北京商务印书馆), 2006.

understanding Trinitarian theology in light of Chinese categories of thought, this relationship can be transformed into a dialectic of harmony for the benefit and enrichment of both East and West.

Some living examples and conclusion

As mentioned before, Christ gave himself completely to fulfill the plan of God the Father. In this way Christ becomes truly himself in his own identity. Throughout Chinese history there has been many well-respected figures such as Yue Fei (岳飞, 1103-1142), Wen Tianxiang (文天祥, 1236-1283), and Xu Guangqi (徐光启, 1562-1633), just to mention a few, who were exemplary and inspirational to the people for generations. They were able “to lay down one’s own life for a just cause” (舍生取义),⁵⁰ fulfilling the spirit of “sacrificing one’s own self for the good of the bigger Self” (牺牲小我成全大我).

The *Gita*, a book of Hindu scriptures that reportedly influenced Mahatma Gandhi’s life, is a narrative of a dialogue between prince Arjuna and the charioteer Lord Krishna in front of a battlefield in ancient India. Krishna counseled Arjuna how to defuse the crisis, to fulfill his duty as a warrior and establish Dharma, and not looking at the result of going to war or not, to be or not to be fighting his enemy. It explores the relations between Atman and Brahman, between the I and the totality, the relationship between the self and the greater self, between the soul and God.

During Xi Jinping’s state visit to the UK at the end of 2015, the president of China cited Shakespeare’s famous quote, which caused much delight in the local population. He said: “To be or not to be, that is the question. This line from Hamlet has left a lasting impression on me.” Such a line has become a world classic, not simply because it describes the dilemma of Hamlet in front of the abrupt death of his father, the throne usurped by his uncle who married his mother. It is a state of mental torment, a matter of choice between to risk or to give up, to act or not to act. More importantly, it is a greater question about the meaning of life and the values of human existence. The question is about to be or not

50 “So, I like life, and I also like righteousness. If I cannot keep the two together, I will let life go, and choose righteousness.” in Mencius (孟子), “Gaozi I” (告子上), 10. See James Legge (ed. & trans.), *The Works of Mencius*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895.

to be, being or non-being, *you* or *wu*, the love of total giving or total emptying. These universal values whether to the East or to the West always strike a chord and bring about resonance.

The great scientist Albert Einstein, in an unedited letter to his daughter Lieserl which was published two decades after his death, said: "When I proposed the theory of relativity, very few understood me, and what I will reveal now to transmit to mankind will also collide with the misunderstanding and prejudice in the world." He continued, "There is an extremely powerful force that, so far, science has not found a formal explanation to. It is a force that includes and governs all others, and is even behind any phenomenon operating in the universe and has not yet been identified by us. This universal force is LOVE."⁵¹

51 In the late 1980s, Lieserl, the daughter of the famous genius, donated 1,400 letters, written by Albert Einstein, to the Hebrew University, with orders not to publish their contents until two decades after his death. This is one of them, for Lieserl Einstein. See R. Manjunath, *Understanding the Universe: Quarks, Leptons and the Big Bang*, Bangalore, 2020, 191.

CHAPTER TWO

Ecological civilization and integral ecology

In this chapter, I will investigate the relationship between humankind and nature from the perspective of Chinese culture and Christian theology. Empirical data have shown humankind's negative effects on the environment, which is causing worldwide concern for the eco-system. My experience at the Beijing Expo 2019 put me in direct contact with two perspectives, "integral ecology" as proposed by the Catholic Church and "ecological civilization" by China. This research seeks advancing a relational paradigm to address the root cause of the crisis.

In 2019, the Pontifical Council for Culture of the Holy See assigned me to be coordinator of the Holy See Pavilion in Beijing at the International Horticultural Exhibition (Beijing Expo 2019) held from April 29 to October 9 of the same year. It was a once in a lifetime experience. There are no diplomatic relations between China and the Holy See, this was the first time the Holy See participated successfully in such a high-level international event in China. It was based on a subtle relationship, the situation being delicate, the presence symbolic, the event all the more significant.

The Beijing Expo 2019, theme "Live Green, Live Better," aimed to promote respect for nature and a better life in harmony with

nature. The Holy See Pavilion highlighted the theme contained in the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* of Pope Francis "on care for our common home." It was a very appropriate platform for cultural exchange especially in a country like China, officially atheist, where the religiously unaffiliated represent the largest share of the population. During the 162-days run of the Expo, the Holy See Pavilion featured the Vatican Gardens by recreating their lawns, fountains, trees and winding stairs in an area of 200 square meters. It received an estimated four million visitors from all walks of life and background. Most of the visitors were from China but also many from abroad. There were two significant works of art among other displays presented in the pavilion.

One work exhibited is an installation of a 500-years-old gilded olive tree bearing a quotation from Pope Francis' Encyclical: "Whether believers or not, we are agreed today that the earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone" (LS 93). A similar message reverberated in the speech of President Xi Jinping at the opening ceremony of the Expo, he said: "All humans live in a community with a shared future in the face of eco-environmental challenges. Only through collaboration can we effectively tackle global environmental issues and achieve the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals."¹

Another art work among the exhibits was an 18th century painting by Peter Wenzel, "Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden." The painting, freezes the moment, capturing the act of Eve handing the forbidden fruit to Adam when they are about to fall into temptation symbolized by a snake that lurks nearby. This scene from *Genesis* captures the earthly paradise the way God intended it to be before the fall of humans. It shows how humans and animals lived together in harmony. The painting conveys the harmonious relationships in creation between human beings, man and woman, between nature and humankind, and between God and human beings.

World leaders nowadays have to realize and to reach a consensus that the world is our common home and, that we have

¹ Cf. Xi Jinping, "Highlights of Xi's speech at Beijing Horticultural Expo opening ceremony," *China Global Television Network (CGTN)*, April 28, 2019. Retrieved from <https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d674e774d7a4d34457a6333566d54/index.html>.

a shared responsibility to tackle environmental issues together so as to safeguard the future for generations to come. In this chapter, I would like to investigate how to retrieve the original significance of the relationship between nature and humankind from the Christian perspective as well as from that of Chinese culture. The damaging effects of human activities on the environment in the last few decades has almost reached a point of no return, with the potential collapse of the eco-system. What has gone wrong and what is the rightful relationship between humans and nature? I will also explore with some concrete examples or initiatives to reverse this trend and work towards an ecological civilization.

The relationship between human beings and nature in Chinese culture

As mentioned before, a prominent theme of Chinese culture is the desire for harmony. The lack of emphasis on transcendence in Confucianism however left space for later developments of Daoism and Buddhism. When Buddhism arrived in China by way of India, with a more precise religious view and spirituality, it supplemented this void. In fact, the Buddha was immediately deified in Chinese popular religion. China thereupon adhered to Mahayana Buddhism, which then spread to Korea, Japan, and Vietnam.² In the Chinese cultural tradition, Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism have unceasingly enriched one another. They are complementary in a sense, and the three schools of thought have expressed important concepts on ecology and nature.

The Chinese term *ziran* (自然) means nature, but also means naturalness. Naturalness refers to the primordial state of things, unaffected by the various meanings imposed on it by human beings. We may look at it from three perspectives. In daily language, the term *ziran* refers to the physical world, which is independent of human interference, as opposed to human society. In philosophy, the concept of *ziran*, “naturalness,” is different from that of nature in the ordinary sense. It is a natural state of man and of society, which is nevertheless connected to the Dao.

2 Yan Kin Sheung Chiaretto, *Evangelization in China: Challenges and Prospects*, New York: Orbis Books, 2014, 4-5.

In political philosophy, “naturalness” specifically applies to the natural state enjoyed by ordinary people free from the intervention of government supervision and artificial codes of behavior. Daoist political philosophy holds that in governance a monarch should conform to the natural state of the people.³

There are three expressions that are quite representative of traditional Chinese thoughts on the relationship between human beings and nature: a Confucian expression *tianren heyi* (天人合一) heaven and humans are united as one, a Daoist expression *dao fa ziran* (道法自然) *Dao* follows self-so, and a Buddhist expression *zhongsheng pingdeng* (众生平等) all sentient beings are equal. Although these three expressions are not exhaustive in explaining the original concepts, they are particularly significant representations in articulating the relationship between human beings and nature in Chinese culture.

The relationship between human beings and nature in the Daoist school of thought

The expression “*Dao* follows self-so” (*dao fa ziran* 道法自然) means that *Dao* operates in accordance with natural conditions of all things. The meaning is deep and hard to express in simple English terms; it means the *Dao* develops itself naturally. This idea first appeared in the book of *Daodejing*, according to which “nature” or “naturalness” means the natural state of things. *Dao* creates and nurtures everything, yet it does not command anything.⁴ Laozi said in the famous lines of the 25th chapter of the *Daodejing*:

Man patterns himself on the operation of the earth (ren fa di 人法地);
 the earth patterns itself on the operation of heaven (di fa tian 地法天);
 heaven patterns itself on the operation of *Dao* (tian fa dao 天法道);

3 Key Concepts in Chinese Thought and Culture website, 1999-2019, <http://chinesethought.cn/EN>.

4 See Laozi, *Daodejing* chapter 51 verses: “It is *Dao* that gives them life. It is *De* that nurse them... *Dao* gives them life but does not take possession of them.”

Dao patterns itself on the laws of “self-so” (dao fa ziran 道法自然).⁵

According to Hans-Georg Moeller, the notion of *ziran* and the notion of *dao* are closely connected. While human beings act according to the laws of earth, heaven, and the *dao*, each tending towards a higher level, the notion *ziran* breaks this quasi-causal pattern: the *dao* operates simply “self-so”; there is no ultimate cause, “immovable mover” or divine demiurge behind it.⁶ For me, not only the notions of *ziran* and *dao* are closely connected, the last line actually describes the *Dao* as self-so (as *ziran*), naturalness. *Ziran* literally means self-so, and simply describes the *Dao*. The *Dao* is self-so, therefore is the final cause, and the “immovable mover” in the terminology of Aristotle and subsequently of Aquinas.

In order to grasp the holistic meaning of the *Daodejing* passage above, it is not a matter of making many levels of division, humans, earth, heaven, the *dao*, and the *ziran*, but to distinguish the realm of human artifacts and that of the *Dao*. *Ziran* can be taken as a description of the *Dao*. What is important is to understand the proper relationship between human beings and the *Dao*. Human beings follow and observe the laws of the earth (natural sciences), and the laws of heaven (metaphysics). They all follow the *Dao*, the principle of everything, the law of all laws. The proper relationship between human beings and the *Dao* implies the harmonious relationship among human beings, the nature and the *Dao* as such.

The relationship between the *Dao* and natural things, in political philosophy, implies that the rulers in their relationship with the people should follow the natural requirements of the *Dao*, which places limits on their power, and governs by means of non-interference to allow the people and affairs to take their own natural course.

5 Laozi, *Daodejing* chapter 25 (老子·二十五章), translation taken from the *Key Concepts in Chinese Thought and Culture*.

6 Cf. Hans-Georg Moeller, “Basic aspects of daoist philosophy,” *International Communication of Chinese Culture*, Vol 2, 2015, 105; See also R. T. Ames - D. Hall, *Anticipating China. Thinking through the narratives of Chinese and Western Culture*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995, 184.

The relationship between human beings and nature in Confucianism

The expression “heaven and man are united as one” (tianren heyi 天人合一)⁷ represents a world outlook and a way of thinking in Confucianism although it may have a different meaning in Daoism as I have just elaborated above, depending on a different understanding of heaven and man. In Confucianism, the expression holds that heaven, human beings and nature are interconnected. This world outlook emphasizes the integration and inherent relationship between human beings and nature. It highlights the fundamental significance of nature to man or human affairs, and describes the endeavor made by human beings to pursue life, order, and values through interaction with nature.

This concept expressed in different ways in history. Mencius (372-289 BC), often described as the second Confucian sage, believed that through mental reflection one could gain understanding of human nature and heaven, emphasizing the unity of mind, human nature, and heaven. Dong Zhongshu (179-104 BC) said, “In terms of integration of categories, heaven and man are one.”⁸ Therefore, heaven and human beings are of the same category, sharing the same vital energy, or sharing the same principles. Later on, Confucian scholars of the Song Dynasty sought to connect the principles of heaven, human nature, and the human mind. The Neo-Confucian scholar Zhang Zai (1020-1077) in his famous work “Western Inscription” (*Xi Ming*), states:

Heaven is my father, and earth is my mother,
and even such a small creature
as I find an intimate place in their midst.
Therefore, that which fills the universe I regard as my body
and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature.
All people are my brothers and sisters,
and all things are my companions.

7 Cf. Zhang Zai (张载), *Enlightenment Through Confucian Teachings* (正蒙·乾称篇), translation taken from the *Key Concepts in Chinese Thought and Culture*.

8 Dong Zhongshu (董仲舒), “Luxuriant Gems,” *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (春秋繁露·阴阳义), translation taken from the *Key Concepts in Chinese Thought and Culture*.

乾称父，坤称母；予兹藐焉，乃混然中处。
 故天地之塞，吾其体；天地之帅，吾其性。
 民，吾同胞；物，吾与也。⁹

According to him, a Confucian scholar is sincere because of his understanding, and he achieves understanding because of his sincerity. That is why heaven and human beings are united as one. One can become a sage through studies, and master heaven's law without losing understanding of human law.¹⁰

In an article on Confucianism, Panchiu Lai explains that human beings, heaven and earth form a trio as one. Human beings and heaven are not only united in the virtue of *ren*, but also in their activities on earth in the universe.¹¹ *The Doctrine of Mean (Zhong Yong)* in Chapter 22 highlights the Confucian conception of the relationship between human beings and nature, and the duty humans have towards nature. It states:

Only those who are absolutely sincere can fully develop their nature. If they can fully develop their nature, they can then fully develop the nature of others. If they can fully develop the nature of others, they can then fully develop the nature of things. If they can fully develop the nature of things, they can then assist in the transforming and nourishing process of Heaven and Earth. If they can assist in the transforming and nourishing process of Heaven and Earth, they can thus form a trio with Heaven and Earth.¹²

The *Zhong Yong* further suggests that human beings, including human morality and spirituality, can and should play an active role in the process of achieving harmony in nature and the ultimate cosmic harmony. The way of Heaven is embedded in the way of humanity. Therefore, with reference to the idea presented in the

9 Chan Wing-tsit, *Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, 497.

10 Zhang Zai, *Enlightenment Through Confucian Teachings* (正蒙·乾称篇). See *Key Concepts in Chinese Thought and Culture*, https://chinesethought.cn/EN/shuyu_show.aspx?shuyu_id=2299.

11 Lai Panchiu, "God of Life and Ecological Theology - A Chinese Christian Perspective," *Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 65, Issue 1, March 2013, 67-82.

12 Chan Wing-tsit, *Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, 107-108.

Zhong Yong, according to Oliver Leaman, human beings are like co-creators of the cosmos.¹³

The relationship between human beings and nature in Chinese Buddhism

From the Buddhist perspective, there is the expression “equality for all sentient beings” (*zhongsheng pingdeng* 众生平等). The Sanskrit term “sama” is translated in Chinese as *pingdeng* (平等), which means the same level with no difference. As a fundamental concept of Buddhism, it originally meant that there was no difference between the various castes. Buddhism then adapted to the Chinese conditions called Mahayana Buddhism with different schools developed.

Buddhism arrived in north China from India in first century CE, had a strong influence, and was established in the whole of China after a few centuries. The Tiantai school emphasized the skillful guidance (*upaya*) and the teachings contained in the Lotus Sutra, showing how the Buddha adapted his teaching to the abilities of his hearers, different periods of Buddha’s life produced different messages for different audiences. The most characteristic view is that everything already possesses Buddha nature, so enlightenment is a matter of rediscovering what we already are.¹⁴

Another school of Mahayana Buddhism is called the Chan Buddhism (禅宗) or Zen in Japanese. Master Huineng (惠能, 638-713), the sixth Patriarch of Chan Buddhism said, “As far as their essence is concerned, there is no difference between all sentient beings. They are all buddhas,”¹⁵ which means they all share the same Buddha nature. It teaches that enlightenment is achieved only through meditation and insight, and not from reason. It promotes principles of beauty, simplicity and profundity, finding meaning of life in ordinary things. A Song Dynasty poet Liu Kezhuang (1187-1269) said, “I have universal love and equal respect for all,

13 Panchiu Lai, “God of Life and Ecological Theology - A Chinese Christian Perspective.”

14 Oliver Leaman, *Key Concepts in Eastern Philosophy*, New York: Routledge, 1999, 45-47.

15 Hui Neng (惠能), *Teachings of Sakyamuni Master Huineng, the Sixth Patriarch of Zen Buddhism*, translation taken from the *Key Concepts in Chinese Thought and Culture*.

irrespective of closeness of relationship. I recite freely all ancient melodies, without constraint.”¹⁶

Buddhism stresses the value of equality in several respects, of which the most important one is equality for all sentient beings. While the Western concept of equality in modern times is more about having the same opportunities and rights in social relations and activities as member of society, the Buddhist concept of *pingdeng* is generally considered to mean equality for all living things.

To summarize synthetically, the characteristic views of Chinese traditional culture on ecology and on the relationship between human beings and nature are:

- i. Heaven, human beings and earth are interconnected.
- ii. There is an inherent relationship between human beings and nature, and human beings are an integral part of nature.
- iii. There are two approaches in life. Confucianism emphasizes on human endeavor making a change through social interaction, and interaction with nature, while Daoism emphasizes less interference with nature.
- iv. The balance is to follow the law of nature. One has to pursue life, order, and values. There is equality in all living things, and one needs to respect all living things.

The relationship between human beings and nature from the Catholic perspective

The creation account in Genesis

From the Christian perspective the relationship between humankind and nature is described in the story of creation in the Bible. God made humans in His image and likeness. He blessed Adam and Eve and said to them: “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth” (Gn 1:26-28).

¹⁶ Liu Kezhuang (刘克庄), The tenth poem, *Ten Six-character-per-line Poem* (七十八咏六言十首), the English translation of the poem is mine.

God entrusted two basic tasks to the human race. One is to fill the earth and to “subdue” it, which is to take possession of the God-given territory and multiply. The other task is to “have dominion” over all living things with God’s blessing, as human beings are made in the image and likeness of God. They are to act on behalf of God to manage all living things. After the creation of man and woman, “God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good” (Gn 1:31). God was very pleased and human beings were given the task of cultivating the earth garden. “The Lord God then took the man and settled him in the Garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it” (Gn 2:15). Humans are meant to be stewards of the earth.

Therefore, the relationship between human beings and nature is that of stewardship, based on the opening chapters of Genesis, in particular Genesis 1:26-28, 31, 2:15.¹⁷ God has given them this task with dignity, being uniquely created in the image and likeness of God, to take care of the earth and all living things. God blessed them. It is their unique relationship with God that gives meaning to this relationship of stewardship towards nature.

However, it is important to note that this original plan of God in the creation account happened before Adam and Eve had fallen into temptation. According to the *Genesis* narrative, God forbids them to eat fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The serpent tempted Eve to eat fruit from the forbidden tree, which she shared with Adam. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they became immediately ashamed of their nakedness (Gn 3:17). Humans had gone astray from the original plan of God and were shut out from the state of innocence. Subsequently, God expelled them from the Garden of Eden. They had to labor and plow the ground in order to make a living, and must return to the ground out of which they were made. Meaning they would have to die (Gn 3:19).

¹⁷ Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Ecology*, London: DLT, 2010, 11-12.

Person-nature relationship in the light of original sin and the “New” Adam

Getting back to the painting “Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden” displayed at the Holy See Pavilion at the Beijing Expo 2019, all relationships were harmonious before the Fall of human beings. In the moment immediately after this harmonious scene, Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. They then started to pass off the responsibility to one another (Gn 3:6-13). The three fundamental intertwined vital relationships of human life with God, with neighbor, and with the earth had been broken. According to the Bible, this rupture is sin. Humans presumably took the place of God refusing to acknowledge the limitations of being creatures, as pointed out in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, this distorted the original human mandate to “have dominion” over the earth (Gn 1:28) and to “till it and keep it” (Gn 2:15) as stewards. As a consequence, the originally harmonious relationship between human beings and nature became conflictual (Gn 3:17-19), (LS 66).

The view that humanity was distinct from nature and had a God-given right to use and exploit nature for human benefit is seen nowadays as a wrong interpretation of the *Genesis* verses. As a matter of fact, the exploitation of nature to the point of damaging the environment can be interpreted as the consequence of the human condition of original sin.

The main structure of the Holy See Pavilion is a monolith designed in such a way as to resemble a baptismal fountain. The monolith contains the Garden of Eden painting. At the background of the painting, one can see a winding river, which *Genesis* figuratively alludes to as the “source of life.” As narrated in *Genesis* and depicted in the painting, the river breaks into four and waters the rest of the earth. Correspondingly, four strips of water cascade down the curtain wall of the monolith in the form of a cross as inscribed on top giving it symbolic meaning. There is also something special on the golden frame of the painting of the Garden of Eden. A layer of soil sample purposely taken from the Garden of Gethsemane is applied over the entire frame. It is to recall the passion of Jesus. The connection between the Garden

of Gethsemane and the Garden of Eden intends to symbolize that, through the disobedience of Adam, many were made sinners and will die; with the passion and obedience of Christ to the point of dying on the cross, many will be made righteous and will be brought to life (Rom 5:19, 1 Cor 15:21-22). The symbolism is that, through baptism, a person is cleansed of the original sin. Jesus, the New Adam, with his death and resurrection, brings human beings back in union with God, which is according to the original design, that all relationships are harmonious. God the Father gave us a great blessing choosing us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we might be holy and blameless before him (Ep 1:3-6).

Regarding the New Adam, Paul compares the first Adam seen at the origin of humanity as he is in his present condition of mortality and under Sin (Rom 5:12); therefore, a human condition that awaits a fulfillment according to God's final plan. And this fulfillment took place in Jesus Christ, in his death and resurrection. For this reason, Paul calls him the second Adam (Rom 5:14), that is, the origin of saved humanity, of the "new creation" that brings the humanity of the first Adam to its fulfillment, to the definitive (eschatological) salvation that can be lived already in the present, as believer, even if the fullness of time is still in the future: it is said: the "already" in the "not-yet" of the present time. Just as Adam is the origin of the present humanity, Jesus is at the origin of the new humanity.

What has gone wrong?

The impact of human dominion over nature

In the pre-industrial context when Genesis was written, humans had no idea how modern science and technology would develop and affect the planet earth. People at that time were more concerned about the danger from wild animals and about the threat being posed by nature. The attempt to domesticate animals and to harness nature was therefore a matter of human survival.

It was not until the Age of Enlightenment, at the beginning of the 17th century that the human vocation depicted in the opening chapters of *Genesis* began to be interpreted in a new way. Among thinkers who gave birth to the dawn of the Modern Era, Francis

Bacon held that the aim of scientific knowledge is not simply to know the secrets of nature, but to conquer and subdue it. Scientific knowledge amounted to power; modern technology geared to bend nature for human advantage. In his work *New Atlantis*, Bacon advocated the founding of research institutions and a scientific elite to systematically extend humans nascent dominion over nature, according to Marvin Perry.¹⁸ And René Descartes affirmed that the human person is the master and owner of nature and justified this sovereignty on the basis of the rational uniqueness of humans over other living things. Upon the advent of scientific knowledge and technological developments, humans took the role of domination and control over nature.

It is precisely the human spirit in Western civilization in recent centuries that has experienced the scientific revolution, the Enlightenment, and the industrial revolution. However, the optimism of the Enlightenment shattered in the 20th century. The horrors of the two world wars and the Holocaust made people painfully aware that humans were capable of terrible evil as well as good. The idea seemed idealistic and naïve of humanity moving progressively towards a better world. The *Genesis* account certainly had influenced Christian views of humanity's attitudes towards nature. However, the question is: does Christianity lead its members to care for the environment or is Christianity to blame for the present environmental degradation?

A historian, Lynn White, among others who hold similar views,¹⁹ criticized the Christian worldview based on biblical creation story that supports and encourages humanity's aggressive project to dominate and exploit nature. In his provocative article "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis" published in 1967, he raised two points: Christianity insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends; it is possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.²⁰

18 Marvin Perry, *Western civilization: a brief history*, Boston: Wadsworth/Cengage, 2013, 243.

19 Cf. C. Amery, *Das Ende der Vorsehung. Die gnadenlosen Folgen des Christentums*, Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1972; U. Galimberti, *Psyche and techne, The man in the age of technology*, Feltrinelli, Milan, 1999, 294-295.

20 Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis," *Science*, 155, 1967, 1205.

People had previously believed that spirits lived in objects such as trees and so thought that nature was sacred. Christianity instead established a dualism of man and nature. Humanity came to be seen as uniquely made in the image of God and as having “dominion” or control over all the creatures of the earth. According to White, Christianity is “the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen.”²¹ He concludes that the modern technological conquest of nature has led to the present environmental crisis and Christianity should bear a huge burden of guilt.²²

Nevertheless, over the years, the comprehension and the way of interpreting biblical texts has changed. The attitude could also change according to the context. While White accused Christianity, another biblical scholar Claus Westermann²³ argued that this “dominion” should be seen as stewardship. Rather than exploitation, it is more like a caring and responsible attitude. The *Genesis* verses are seen as the kingly role involving care rather than exploitation. According to the ancient view, the king is responsible for those he rules. His rule serves the prosperity and wellbeing of his subjects. God settled Adam in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it. “To cultivate” is also the same verb that the Bible uses for the cult or the worship priests offer to God in the temple. Under the old covenant, priests would offer animal sacrifices as a gesture of atonement for sin, an offering back to God of the good things of His creation.

Today, there are basically two approaches to ethical reflection on the relationship between human beings and nature: the anthropocentric position that put humans at the center of consideration and the physiocentric position that focuses on preserving nature independent from human interests. While some critics blame Christianity of being anthropocentric, being human-centered, in exploiting nature, causing the present-day environmental crisis, Sergio Rondinara distinguishes between cowboy ethics and moderate anthropocentrism.²⁴

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid., 1206.

23 Claus Westermann, *Genesis*, trans. David E. Orton, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988, 11.

24 Sergio Rondinara, “Custodire ciò che è salvato” in Paolo Carloti - Mario Toso, *Per un umanesimo degno dell'amore: Il Compendio della Dottrina Sociale della Chiesa*, Roma, 2005, 434.

Cowboy ethics puts absolute primacy of human beings over nature, characterized by “strong anthropocentrism.” Nature possesses no intrinsic value of its own but only economic value attributed by humans to satisfy their own needs. In this case, human intervention in nature is considered as something morally indifferent. On the other hand, “moderate anthropocentrism” considers positively the ability of humans to transform the natural world. Nature, with the capacity to bring advantages to human society, has the value to nourish, to provide laboratory information and educational meaning to human beings. Ultimately, it considers the origin of nature as part of God’s creation.²⁵

Instead of considering a human being as the subject in a Descartes’ model and nature as the object in the sphere of the non-humans, Rondinara considers that nature should be taken as the totality of the physical world including human beings. There is a recursive relationship between person and nature mutually dependent on one another. In this way, human beings are still at the center of creation, as men and women are made in the image and likeness of God. He suggests a shift from a subject-object dualism to a relational paradigm of humans, nature, and God.²⁶ Person-nature is a recursive relationship, in the sense that God is lord of nature, and humans have a ministerial role of stewardship in nature.²⁷

In recent decades, the scale and consequences of humanity’s impact on the natural world have become increasingly apparent. The optimism about human progress has been severely challenged; the question now is whether humanity can act with sufficient speed to limit the negative consequences of industrial pollution and global warming. There is an amplified and defused distortion of social economic systems inspired by the technocratic paradigm.

Therefore, in the ultimate analysis, nature is not to be treated as an object to be utilized by human beings. The fault is not

25 Cf. John Passmore, *Man ‘s responsibility for nature: ecological problems and western tradition*, New York, 1974; Kristian Shrader Freccette, *Environmental Ethics*, Pacific Grove 1981; Brian Norton, *Why preserve natural variety?* Princeton, 1991.

26 Sergio Rondinara, “Relazione persona-natura. Il recupero dei significati,” N. 224, *Nuova Umanità*, 2016, 47-59.

27 Cf. International Theological Commission, *Communion and stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*,” Rome, 2002, 73.

scientific development or industrialization *per se*, but the lack of rightful relationship between God and human beings. Therefore, with an appropriate relationship among human beings, nature and God, humans would have a great sense of amazement in front of nature as God's creation.

Pollution and some related problems in China

In the case of China, putting blind faith in science, technology and economic development without deepening reflections on the profound relationship between human beings and nature also creates problems. For the purpose of this study, I take a closer look at China that has many pressing issues, new and old, to resolve, relating to the environment. I take up here two of them, air pollution and food waste. The rapid economic growth of China since the 1980s has resulted in increased pollution; air pollution is just one aspect of the broader topic of environmental issues.

Rapid urbanization, building of infrastructure, increasing heavy traffic, all contribute to emissions, and China is highly dependent on coal use for power generation. Industrialization has brought about pollution and major health concerns. A respected CCTV host and investigative reporter, Chai Jing, produced a self-financed documentary on China's environmental problems that shocked the nation in 2015. The film reached 200 million viewers in just four days until it was pulled offline, sparking widespread discussion about environment policy in China.²⁸ Many industrial cities in China paid the high price for pollution. Pictures of smoggy Beijing are famous just as once were the misty capitals of London and Milan. Government officials and urban elites breathe the same air as the general public. China is committed to comply with the Paris climate agreement taking big steps to reduce coal use, double down national energy mix, and embrace natural gas, but gas supply and price depends much on geopolitics with big powers like Russia and the US, to which a warm winter for many Chinese depend.

Nevertheless, careful observers note that on this issue of air pollution, China used to dominate the top spots for the most-polluted

28 Nicola Persico, "Fighting pollution: What China can learn from Britain," *Fortune Magazine*, March 10, 2015.

cities in the world, but since a clean-air policy was implemented in 2013, pollution has steadily decreased across China.²⁹ The gradual completion of the China–Russia East-Route Natural Gas pipeline in 2020, and the Central Asia–China Gas Pipeline in 2015 also helped ease China’s dependency on fuel.

The other pressing issue is food waste. With growing affluence, food waste has become a worrying issue in China. So much so that the government has initiated what it calls the “Empty Your Plate Campaign (光盘行动) 2.0.” In 2013, the government launched the “Empty Your Plate Campaign,” which aimed at putting an end to officials’ extravagant feasts and receptions. The second version instead is calling for the public to stop wasting food. Experts say the world indeed faces a food shortage as the aftermath of the pandemics, but for China, the real threat to food security does not come from natural disasters such as epidemic or floods, but more from food wastage.

Global Times gives a detail report³⁰ on this issue. “Food wastage is shocking and distressing. It is necessary to further enhance public awareness of the issue, amid the fallout from the pandemic,” said President Xi. He launched this “Empty Your Plate Campaign,” and encouraged fostering a social environment where waste is shameful and cultivating the habit of thriftiness. It makes me think of how Pope Francis has been calling for this consciousness that “wasting food is like stealing from the poor.”

In June 2020, the United Nations warned that the world is on the verge of the worst food crisis in 50 years. The world’s top three grain exporters, US, Brazil and India, are also the three most affected countries by COVID-19. A third of the world’s food is wasted every year, with about 1.3 billion tons still edible. At least 820 million of the world’s 7.6 billion people are suffering from starvation, said CCTV in a Weibo post, citing UN data. It was once reported that food wasted in China was enough to feed 200 million people a year.

29 Zhang Qiang et al., “Drivers of improved PM2.5 air quality in China from 2013 to 2017,” *The Proceedings of National Academy of Science (PNAS)*, December 3, 2019. Retrieved from <https://pnas.org/content/116/49/24463>.

30 Wang Qi, “China launches Clean Plate Campaign 2.0 as Xi calls for end to food wastage,” *Global Times*, August 12, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://globaltimes.cn/content/1197577.shtml>.

Food security education is important as well as the guidance in forming rational consumption habits, which is crucial to reducing food wastage and ensuring food security. President Xi also gave specific requirements for reducing waste in schools and promoting students' awareness and practices. There is more awareness on this issue as the Global Times cited the example of a waitress saying: "We remind our guests when they order too much food."

Policies during the pandemic, which encouraged separate meals and reduced dining out have been helpful and positive on one hand. Ordering food and groceries by apps on phones or online has become part of daily life since. Shopping online has grown tremendously and transformed people's life in China. However, it generates another pressing issue that is the excessive use of plastic for home delivery packaging. Packing material waste poses another threat to the environment. It is another pressing issue. China's efforts to care for the environment, while forceful, may not be swift and efficient enough to resolve all pressing issues. The earth is our common home, we have valuable lessons to learn from one another.

Relational paradigm

What is the attitude towards the relationship between human beings and nature?

Relational paradigm from the Chinese perspective

In regard to dialogue of Catholicism with other religions, Stratford Caldecott speaks of "asking the right questions" on fundamental realities, recognizing different religions have different concerns.³¹ My emphasis is on those fundamental questions rooted in early civilizations coming from Judeo-Christian, Indian and Chinese traditions. Turning further back to the Axial Age concept by Karl Jasper mentioned in the previous chapter when roughly at the same time more than two-thousand years ago around the world, the great intellectual, philosophical, and religious systems that

31 Cf. Stratford Caldecott, *Catholicism and other Religions: Introducing Interfaith Dialogue*, London: Catholic Truth Society, 2009, 27-29.

came to shape subsequent human society and culture emerged. They came up with “fundamental ideas” towards speculation about the fate of humanity, the meaning and principles of life, and about human beings’ relationship with the cosmos, and also in response to questions of ultimate concern such as: What are we? Where are we going? What is the absolute or ultimate reality? What attitude towards the relationship between human beings and nature?

For the Judeo-Christian tradition, the ultimate reality is God who created heaven and earth and who shaped the destiny of all people. For the Hindu-Buddhist tradition, the ultimate concern is reaching the state of total liberation, the *Moksha* or the *Nirvana*. For the Chinese tradition, the ultimate reality is the *Dao*, the principle and the way of ultimate reality, of the universe, and of human life.³²

In the beginning of this chapter, I gave the example of the often-quoted verses in *Daodejing* Chapter 25. The expression *ziran* is not to be misquoted to mean the physical world of nature or even mother nature as superior to the *Dao*. This would elevate nature to such a point of giving rise to animist religions based on the veneration of natural phenomena or objects of nature. There are two distinctive realms. One is the realm of human beings. The other is the realm of the *Dao*, which is the ultimate reality, mysterious, indescribable and perfect.

Fung Yulan (1895-1990) explained that Daoism considered the *Dao* and nature to be perfect while Mohism sought to improve on nature because it valued utility, logic and definition of things. During the Warring States period, there was rivalry between Confucianists and Mohists, the two schools of thought. Confucianism, which emphasized virtues and humanism, overshadowed Mohism that had been ignored and then forgotten for almost 2,000 years. Otherwise, according to Fung, China would not have lagged behind

32 According to H. Smith, there are three meanings or levels of *Dao*. The *Dao*, as “the way of ultimate reality,” has a religious dimension. As “the way of the universe,” it is the law governing the universe, the driving power in all nature, the ordering principle behind all life, and in the midst of life. As “the way of human life,” it is the norm guiding the behavior of humans who are enhanced to live well and properly in relationships. Cf. H. Smith, *The world’s religions*, San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991, 108-09, 206.

in scientific development since Mohists aspired to conquer nature, similar to the Baconian conception and attitude towards nature.³³

The *Daodejing* Chapter 25 starts with human beings, at the center of attention, who follow the laws of heaven and earth, and the *Dao*. While in the realm of the ultimate reality, the *Dao* is self-so. It would be a distorted interpretation to describe the *Dao* as following the physical world of nature as the highest order, giving rise to some sort of worship of nature. Instead, human beings should ultimately live according to the *Dao*. Humans with all humility still have an essential role in their relationship with the *Dao* and nature.

Apart from the *Daodejing* text, at the beginning of this chapter, I also quoted from Confucian and Buddhist texts that the Confucian expression of “heaven and man are united as one” emphasized the oneness of humankind and the natural world, and the Buddhist expression of “equality for all sentient beings” emphasized the equality in all living things and the need to respect all living things. There is a humanistic and anthropological approach, given the attitude of humility and respect towards nature and in front of the mystery of the *Dao* in Chinese culture. It is a continuous seeking for harmony in the relationship among human beings, nature and the ultimate reality of the *Dao* as emphasized in the Chinese cultural tradition.

Relational paradigm from the Christian perspective

It is necessary to place a biblical text in its original historical context. The interpretation is influenced by the concerns of the age in which the interpreter lived. Today, as never before, the environmental issue presents itself as a privileged locus where faith is directly addressed, and where “we are invited to give the reasons for our hope.”³⁴ The title of Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’* is taken from the canticle of St. Francis ‘Praise be to you’, echoing and developing the Psalm that speaks of all living

33 Cf. Fung Yulan, “Why China Has No Science,” *International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 1922, 237-263; See also E. J. Machle, *Nature and Heaven in the Xunzi: A Study of the Tian Lun*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.

34 Cf. 1 Pet 3, 15.; See Sergio Rondinara, “Relazione persona-natura. Il recupero dei significati,” N. 224, *Nuova Umanità*, 2016.

things as sharing a common kinship and joining together in praise of God and for His wonderful creation (Psalm 148). The Canticle of brother sun, and sister moon.

Genesis was written at a time when the Jews were suffering. “When the biblical account of Creation was written, the people of Israel were not going through happy days... There was no more homeland, no temple, no social and religious life, nothing,” said Pope Francis in his catechetical instruction about prayer. “Yet, starting from this story of Creation, someone begins to find reasons for thanksgiving, to praise God for their existence.”³⁵ Human beings are infinitely small when compared to the size of the universe. There is the feeling of amazement in front of nature, as Pope Francis says, “the relationship with God is the greatness of man: his enthronement. By nature, we are almost nothing, small but by vocation, by call we are the children of the great King!”³⁶ This contemplation leads the person who prays to wonder: “What is man?” Despite humanity’s frailty, said the Pope, “the human being is the only creature aware of such a profusion of beauty.”

The consequences of the Fall of Adam and Eve was losing their immortality, having to work for one’s food, undergoing pain in childbirth, and banishment from the Garden of Eden. “Cursed is the ground because of you! In toil you shall eat its yield all the days of your life... For you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Gn 3:17-18). “You shall return to dust” here means man is now mortal and the punishment affects also the man’s relationship to the ground, meaning the relationship with nature.

Just imagine that there a celebration. Someone prepared a bicycle for you as a gift, Ren Andao gave this example in an article.³⁷ However, because it was stolen before it was given. The bike is now a stolen good.

Because of the Fall of Adam and Eve, they are no longer in the “I-Thou” relationship with God, but in an “I-It” relationship,

35 Pope Francis, “Catechism on prayer,” *General Audience at the Library of the Apostolic Palace*, Vatican, May 20, 2020.

36 Ibid.

37 Ren Andao, “A Christian between Tien and humans (天人之际的基督徒),” *Fountains Periodical (心泉)*, Issue No. 95, Taipei, 2018.

using a concept coined by Martin Buber.³⁸ When the first man and woman betrayed this I-Thou relationship with God of trust and free gift, the element of sin took over to establish an I-It relationship. The “It” is the forbidden fruit. At the beginning humans were at a situation of receiving the gift of God. However, when humans picked the forbidden fruit and ate it, they detached themselves from God and took possession of it. From that moment on humans see others, even God, as an object. The I-Thou becomes an I-It relationship. However, God always maintains a giving-receiving relationship, as subjects. Even though humans become mortal, God wants this dynamic and dialogical relationship with humans, just like the relationships among the Persons in the Holy Trinity.

What is the relationship between God and humans after the event of Jesus’ coming on earth? Even when they fell, God never gave up on them. God is the creator and redeemer of humans. “I have called you by name: you are mine.” He is with humans always for He said, “I, the Lord, am your God, the Holy One,” He is the savior “because you are precious in my eyes and honored, and I love you.” He does not give up on them, all are called by name, he said, “I created for my glory; I formed them, made them” (Is 43: 1-7).

Chiara Lubich, with her charism of unity, intuitively understands that Christ crucified and risen leads all men and women in the participation of the “new creation.”³⁹ The cry of Jesus, the crucified God, awakens in her a unique understanding and experience of His mystery. Jesus’ abysmal suffering gives light and meaning to every human

38 Buber characterizes “I-Thou” relations as “dialogical” and “I-It” relations as “monological.” The I-Thou relationship is between authentic beings, without objectification. I meet you as you are, and you meet me as who I am. An “I-Thou” relation participates in the dynamic, living process of a “other” while an “I-It” relation experiences a detached thing, fixed in space and time. The I-It encounter is the opposite in that we relate to another as object, completely outside of ourselves. Cf. Sarah Scott, “Martin Buber (1878–1965),” *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, June 9, 2020, <https://iep.utm.edu/>; See also Maurice S. Friedman, “Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue,” *The Religion online*, June 9, 2020, <https://religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-12-the-eternal-thou>.

39 Cf. Piero Coda, “Creation in Christ and the New Creation in the Mysticism of Chiara Lubich,” *Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Article 3, 2016. Coda explains in the text in Chiara Lubich that “Jesus, out of love for the Father and for human beings, feeling himself detached from the Father, out of love “loses” the divine link making him one with the Father, namely, the Holy Spirit. But in this very way not only does he find this link again in himself (in the event of the resurrection where his humanity is also glorified by the Spirit) but he also makes human beings participate in it. Thus, thanks to the gift of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Forsaken makes creation participate in the Being of the Creator.”

suffering and reveals the secret to uniting all people to God and to one another. In her book *The Cry of Jesus Crucified and Forsaken*, written as a love song to Jesus dying and forsaken on the cross, she defines the forsaken Jesus as “the open window” between God and humans. As Cardinal Paul Poupard comments: “Father, may they all be one’ is the prayer of Christ but also the invocation with which Chiara closes her book and opens the dawn of the third millennium to hope.”⁴⁰ Poupard wishes that whoever reads the book will make this prayer their own, addressing their love letter to the crucified Lord.

God is the Trinity because the Father gives everything to the Son without reservation, and Jesus gives everything back to the Father without reservation, fulfilling the will of the Father. In this process of giving and receiving, life is generated. It is the Holy Spirit, the bond of love, life of God. Life refers to the exchange of giving and receiving, a subject-to-subject encounter.

As explained in the previous chapter on Trinitarian relationship, the cry of Jesus crucified and forsaken is the climax of Jesus’ passion. The Trinitarian relationship is from God, not something abstract but a living encounter with humans. Jesus, the New Adam, by dying on the cross being forsaken, makes a gift of divine love to humanity, redeems all humans from the fall of the first Adam, and leads them back to a relationship of communion with God. Jesus takes upon himself in the abandonment the whole of humankind and reveals the law of love, that is, the gift of self to the other. In this act, he restores the distorted relationship of humans with nature, and among themselves.

Anthropocentrism of Christ

One may say that the Daoists are the first ecologists because of their concept of being in harmony with nature, blending in with the environment, therefore, do no harm to nature. In the West, in a similar manner the non-anthropocentric position, which includes biocentrism and ecocentrism, are focused on preserving nature regardless of human interests. All entities in nature have intrinsic

40 Chiara Lubich, *The Cry: Jesus crucified and forsaken*, New York: New City Press, 2001. Foreword by Cardinal Paul Poupard, president emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Culture.

value. Consequentially, everything that maintains the ecosystems is morally correct and anything that could harm them is not. According to the Deep Ecology Movement, each individual is also related to other individuals and non-sentient natural entities. For ethical considerations there is no clear demarcation nor clear boundary between humans and the environment, as Rondinara pointed out.⁴¹

The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (CSDC) not only keeps a distance from distorted anthropocentric positions but also from physio-centrism:

A correct understanding of the environment prevents the utilitarian reduction of nature to a mere object to be manipulated and exploited. At the same time, it must not absolutize nature and place it above the dignity of the human person himself. In this latter case, one can go so far as to divinize nature or the earth.⁴²

Although the CSDC did not affirm specifically the kind of Christian environmental ethics regarding person-nature relationship, it cannot be simply considered as a moderately anthropocentric one, but an anthropocentrism characterized by the responsibility of the human person for his actions towards the natural habitat. As Rondinara emphasized and concluded, it is an “anthropocentrism of Christ.”⁴³

As Paul says, “whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Cor 5:17). We are therefore new creatures, not only because we were redeemed from the situation of non-love in which sin had relegated us, but because we are now filled with the Spirit of God, and become the leaven of unity for the entire creation, composed of various expressions of human life (social, political, scientific, and economic) but also of peoples and cultures. Through our work and actions, we prepare for the fulfillment of the cosmos (Rm 8:19-

41 Sergio Rondinara, “Custodire ciò che è salvato,” 434-436.

42 Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004, 463; See also Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 37, 1991, 840.

43 Sergio Rondinara, “Custodire ciò che è salvato,” 437.

21).⁴⁴ This anthropocentrism of Christ is indeed revolutionary and continues to guide the social teaching of the Catholic Church.

Pope Francis in his encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* invites human persons to experience an ecological conversion, where they seek to live in harmony with nature rather than dominate it. He encourages them to develop with an integral approach a spirituality of global solidarity taking into account all relationships. Even if humans make mistakes and go astray, yet there is hope. "All it takes is one good person to restore hope! The biblical tradition clearly shows that this renewal entails recovering and respecting the rhythms inscribed in nature by the hand of the Creator" (LS 71). God does not abandon humans; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created them. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building a common home.

Are Christian teachings and the Chinese traditions compatible on the question of the relationship between human beings and nature? By taking up human responsibility and positive elements in Chinese culture mentioned above, such as the harmonious relationship of human beings with the *Dao*, with nature, and with other fellow human beings, not only are they not contradictory, Chinese traditions could be in consonant with Christian teachings.

“Integral ecology” in relation to “ecological civilization”

“Integral ecology” in Laudato Si'

The unbridled exploitation of nature by humankind has negative effects on the environment and the damage to the earth in recent times has almost reached a point of no return, the collapse of the eco-system. Judeo-Christian thinking has been accused of encouraging the negative effects on the environment, and as a consequence, Western civilization in general has brought humanity to the present situation. However, this is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Catholic Church.

Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted the Scriptures. With the encyclical *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis gives this message:

44 Ibid., 436-437.

“We are not God. The earth was here before us and it has been given to us. ...nowadays we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God’s image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures.” It is a distorted interpretation. The biblical texts tell us to “till and keep” the garden of the world (cf. Gn 2:15). ‘Tilling’ refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while ‘keeping’ means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. The Holy Father emphasizes relationships, respect and responsibility towards nature as a way of caring for the needs of future generations. In the encyclical he says:

This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature. Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations (LS 67).

The Pope uses the story of Cain’s murder of Abel to illustrate the connection between justice for people and justice for the environment. God asks Cain: “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground” (Gn 4:11). Through this story, God is telling humans: Listen to the cry of the earth, as much as you listen to the cry of your poor brothers and sisters. This encyclical has an ecological as well as a social dimension. This narrative in a way reflects the human root of the ecological crisis.

The message of the encyclical *Laudato Si’* is like a wake-up call for the whole of humanity, to believers and non-believers, that the earth is our common home, and we are responsible for it and for future generations. Pope Francis gives a fresh analysis of the present situation to make people aware of the destruction that humans are rendering to the environment and other fellow human beings.

The deterioration of the environment affects every aspect of human life. Technological products “create a framework which ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities along the lines dictated by the interests of certain powerful groups” (LS 107).

Laudato Si' is not just an encyclical about ecology, green consciousness or social works for the poor. The Holy Father assumes the term ecology in the sense of the ecosystem: "Everything is in relation to one another," "everything is interrelated," and "everything is interconnected."

"Integral ecology" is the focus and the perspective on which the encyclical is based. G. Costa and P. Foglizzo say, "Integral ecology is an approach to all complex systems, the understanding of which requires focusing on the relationship of the individual parts to each other and to the whole."⁴⁵ It is making ecology interact in its various dimensions: environmental ecology, economic ecology, socio-cultural ecology, and human ecology.

Pope Francis affirms, "A strategy for real change calls for rethinking processes in their entirety, for it is not enough to include a few superficial ecological considerations while failing to question the logic which underlies present-day culture" (LS 197).

To illustrate some important points raised in *Laudato Si'*,⁴⁶ the Holy Father indicates dialogue as the indispensable way to face the urgent challenges. He calls for an "integral ecology" with concrete lines of actions. "Interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan" (LS 164). He also calls for a "global ecological conversion," (LS 5) which will bring about an "ecological spirituality" (LS 217), and to change a self-centered lifestyle, getting rid of a throwaway culture, to have an impact on society (LS 208). It is also a matter of "ecological education and spirituality" for the present and future generations (LS 202-245). Religions must enter into "dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity" (LS 201).

Pope Francis challenges "the values of rampant consumerism, unrestrained faith in technology, blind pursuit of profits, political shortsightedness and the economic inequalities that force the world's poor to bear the brunt of an imbalanced ecosystem."

45 G. Costa - P. Foglizzo, "L'ecologia integrale," *Aggiornamenti Sociali*, August - September 2015. Retrieved from <https://aggiornamentisociali.it/articoli/l-ecologia-integrale>.

46 Kevin Cotter, "The best 2-page summary of *Laudato Si'*," *Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM)*, August 11, 2016. Retrieved from <https://catholicclimatemovement.global/whats-the-best-2-page-summary-youve-seen-of-laudato-si>.

Initiatives on “integral ecology”

Pope Francis speaks of an “integral ecology” as inspired by St. Francis of Assisi who is called to care for all that exists and to call all creatures “brothers” and “sisters,” and to commune with them, inviting them “to praise the Lord, and to approach nature and the environment with openness to awe and wonder” (LS 11). St. Francis speaks of the natural world in kinship terms: “brother sun and sister moon; brother wind and sister water.”⁴⁷ It is a call for an ecological conversion, where one seeks to live in harmony with nature rather than to dominate it. So as to ensure that all benefit equally from the earth’s resources, including future generations. It is an invitation to change concretely and collectively our personal attitude and lifestyle, responding to the cry of the earth and the cry of our brothers and sisters in society so as to promote a “culture of care.”

At a grassroots level, for Catholics, even the simple act receiving communion at mass could acquire a new awareness. To accomplish the renewal of the cosmos, Chiara Lubich believes that Jesus also expects the cooperation of man, and Jesus who dies and rises again is certainly the real cause of the transformation for the cosmos. Paul tells us through our sufferings we complete “what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions” (Col 1:24), and that nature waits “for the revealing of the children of God” (Rom 8:19). In a conference on the theme of the Eucharists, she says:

The Eucharist redeems and makes us God. We, dying, compete with Christ in the transformation of the cosmos; in fact, nature is almost a continuation of the body of Jesus because he, by incarnating himself, assumed human nature, in which all creation flows.⁴⁸

In fact, some Orthodox theologians highlight the idea of humans as the priest of creation, offering it to God.⁴⁹

47 *Canticle of the Creatures*, in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, New York-London-Manila, 1999, 113-114.

48 Chiara Lubich, *Lubich’s talk to members of the Focolare*, October 10, 1976, in Rocca di Papa, Italy; See Chiara Lubich, “A transforming power,” *Living City*, April 2015, 21.

49 J. Zizioulas, “Priest of Creation,” in R. J. Berry (ed.), *Environmental Stewardship: Critical Perspectives, Past and Present*, London: T&T Clark, 2006, 273-290.

Pope Francis speaks of integral ecology, ecological conversion and dialogue. How can Chinese Christians be a resource and, how can Christians worldwide act? The ecological crisis is another face of Jesus Forsaken. Moved by the spirituality of unity, and the love for this forsaken Jesus as the secret to fulfill the testament of Jesus “that all may be one,” the Focolare Movement has some initiatives and experiences to share in this field.

The Focolare Movement is an active partner of the Global Catholic Climate Movement and collaborates with associations, organizations, institutions, movements of different Churches and various religions, and cultures for the care of the planet. A global network of people who are passionate about caring for the planet.

On the 5th anniversary of the encyclical on the environment, Pope Francis proclaimed a “Special Year of *Laudato Si’*” to develop the encyclical on ecology, till the “*Laudato Si’* Week”⁵⁰ from May 16 to 25, 2021. The Focolare’s “Youth for a United World” launched a new campaign for the year 2021-2022: #daretocare for people and planet, which proposes “ecological conversion” through initiatives that involve associations, organizations, institutions but also through our simple everyday actions, to break the cycle of violence, *exploitation* and selfishness so typical of the culture of waste.

For example, the EcoOne⁵¹ is an international cultural initiative promoted by the Focolare Movement with a network of teachers, academics, researchers and professionals who work in environmental sciences. They strive to enrich their scientific knowledge with a profound humanistic interpretation of contemporary ecological problems. Together with other organizational partners, who pursue the goal of “universal destination of goods” and closer

50 In the “*Laudato Si’* Week” of 2021, there are webinars and testimonies to encourage dialogue, the exchange of views and to propose concrete actions for the planet. The theme “For we know that things can change” (LS 13) to shed light on the hope around the world that something can still be done to turn things around, and to showcase the transformative impact of *Laudato Si’* on global education. Program includes the “Songs for Creation” festival, the Global Day of Action and the launch of the “*Laudato Si’* Platform of Initiatives.” Leaders from around the world and world-renowned speakers and authors together with more than a billion people come together to celebrate the conclusion of the “Special Year *Laudato Si’*.” See Lorenzo Russo, “*Laudato Si’* Week 2021,” Focolare Movement official website, May 16, 2021. Retrieved from <https://focolare.org/en/news/2021/05/16/settimana-laudato-si-2021>.

51 EcoONE, “Who we are,” *ecoone.org*, September 28, 2016. Retrieved from <http://ecoone.org/en/who-we-are.html>.

interdependence between countries, EcoOne strives to introduce and foster these principles into environmental issues in social, political, and economic sectors. The EcoOne showcases projects that promote ecologically based ideas and studies.

As one of their projects in response to the call of Pope Francis to entail changes in lifestyles, the EarthCube, is a motivational tool based on a lifestyle aimed at supporting a healthy and sustainable planet. Members are encouraged to roll the cube like a dice, read the message that faces up, and find a way how to live it. The six messages on the dice are: we are all connected, everything is a gift, only what is needed, discover amazing things, smile on the world, and now is the time. Quite a few members of the Movement, kids and adults, try to practice this each day, and share the results and encourage others to adopt this practice, with the purpose of encouraging a relationship-centered and action-oriented response to the needs of the environment.

Steven Kezanutima is a Burundian youth living in Kenya. He and his friends in 2018 initiated a project, called Birthday tree planting, as a concrete response to the invitation of *Laudato si'* to help protect the earth, our common home. The idea is to plant a tree or trees on your birthday. The motto is: Cutting cake and planting trees, a new tradition to celebrate their birthdays. This project evolved to become a learning experience for children by accompanying the growth of the tree, to taste the fruit of the care for nature and appreciate its beauty. Some also came up with the idea of planting fruit trees and medicinal trees to multiply the goals. This choice of medicinal trees came up in 2020 when the pandemic was hitting the world. While African societies have forgotten the use of medicinal plants, these initiatives have contributed to research and discoveries that could help cure and prevent diseases.⁵²

Ecological conversion is rooted in a spiritual conversion, leading to increasing ecological awareness and changing lifestyle for the present and especially for future generations. Contemplating that everything on earth is in a relationship of love with everything, an

52 Amministrazione del Patrimonio della Sede Apostolica, *Laudato si' Reader An Alliance of Care for Our Common Home*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 2021. Retrieved from <https://humandevlopment.va/content/dam/sviluppoumano/news/2021-news/laudatosireader/Laudato-si-Reader.pdf>.

authentic spirituality and ecological action can flow. At these times the cries of the poor and the earth are increasing intensely. It is also very important to dialogue with both the millennial spiritual wisdom (taking into account the example in the case of China in the present study) and the postmodern one, which leads to a more complete and grateful gaze towards nature and one another.

On the occasion of the 50th Earth Day celebrated on April 22, 2020, Pope Francis reiterated the need for “ecological conversion” that can find expression in concrete actions. As a single and interdependent family, we require a common plan in order to avert the threats to our common home.” He emphasized the importance of cooperation as an international community for the protection of our common home, urging those in positions of leadership to guide the preparations for the two international Conferences of great importance in 2021: the UN biodiversity conference (COP15) in Kunming, China, and the UN climate change conference (COP26) in Glasgow, Great Britain.⁵³

The world scenario needs urgent action to protect our common home; at the same time, it must be said that in past decades, rich countries have already outsourced their CO2 emissions and polluting industries to developing countries. As the Holy Father calls our attention to important conventions, listening the experiences in different parts of world and fostering collaboration will certainly impact the future of the earth and humanity.

“Ecological civilization” in the speech of Xi Jinping

In the opening ceremony of the Beijing International Horticultural on April 28, 2019, President Xi Jinping spoke on the theme of “Working Together for a Green and Better Future for All” to 900 delegates, including foreign leaders and special envoys from 11 countries, international exhibitors and horticulture experts. Present among them were Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi president of the Pontifical Council for Culture and secretary bishop Mons. Paul Tighe.

⁵³ Pope Francis, *General audience in occasion of the 50th Earth Day*, Library of the Apostolic Palace, Vatican, April 22, 2020.

I find there is consonance in the speech with the spirit of *Laudato Si'*. Xi spoke of the earth in need of a balanced ecological system and China's effort of accelerating her pace in the construction of an "ecological civilization". He emphasizes in particular that "all humans live in a community with a shared future" in the face of eco-environmental challenges, and only through collaboration can we effectively tackle global environmental issues."⁵⁴

With regard to the relationship between humans and nature, he observes that across the history of human civilizations, "the rise or fall of a society is dependent on its relationship with nature." He also acknowledges that "industrialization, while generating unprecedented material wealth, has incurred serious damage to mother nature... Nature punishes those who exploit and plunder it brutally, and rewards those who use and protect it carefully."

He sees the necessity of pursuing economic prosperity through sustainable development, and calls it "green development" and talks of promoting "a simpler, greener and low-carbon lifestyle." He advocates the value of green development that "reveres and cares for nature" by raising people's "awareness of environmental issues," injecting "ecological conservation into every aspect of social life." The approach is "integral."

With regard to science, he suggests "scientific policies" with meticulous scientific research pursued to create a "harmonious ecosystem" following the laws of nature. "Human wisdom" is essential for ecological conservation to sustaining the dynamism of earth, "our common homeland."

He promises that China is ready to "work with all other countries" and "only together" with concerted effort can we effectively address climate change, marine pollution, biological conservation and other global environmental issues and achieve the "United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." He also spoke of the responsibility towards future generations. Every generation has its

54 Cf. "Highlights of Xi's speech at Beijing Horticultural Expo opening ceremony," *China Global Television Network (CGTN)*, April 28, 2019. Retrieved from <https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d674e774d7a4d34457a6333566d54/index.html>.

own mission. “Our efforts to conserve the eco-system will benefit not only this generation, but many more to come.”⁵⁵

There are many convergent points with the spirit of *Laudato Si'* such as an integral approach to face ecological issues taking into account of the needs of society, the economy, the earth as our common home, the need of concerted effort from all countries, the need of changing to a simpler lifestyle, and the concern for future generations.

Besides these converging points, however there is one major point of difference. That is the concept of nature as God's creation. While Xi speaks of respect for the environment in harmony with nature *per se*, the Christian viewpoint looks at nature, with respect, as God's creation. As a consequence, the attitude also changes towards science, nature, economy, society, and other fellow human beings. For example, Christians respect nature out of love for God generally and as a consequence thereof, both believers and non-believers have to rely on good faith of human wisdom, for a correct attitude towards science in ecological conservation, sustenance of nature, and in creating a harmonious ecosystem. At the end, as Pope Francis says: “Whether believers or not, we are agreed today that the earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone” (LS 93), and live up to this mission.

Initiatives on “ecological civilization”

China abandoned a lot of spiritual resource in her tradition, lost “respect for the heaven and awe for the Dao”, and “harmony with difference” (和而不同),⁵⁶ according to Professor Wang Zhihe. In his book *Second Enlightenment*, he criticizes the blind worship of science and reason, abandoning values in traditional culture. Instead, he suggests a third way or a middle way in search of new ideas to meet the needs of Chinese society, to overcome the dichotomy between urban and rural, modern and traditional,

55 Cf. “Xi Jinping's Keynote Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the International Horticultural Exhibition 2019 (Edited Excerpt),” *Beijing Review*, September 3, 2019. Retrieved from http://bjreview.com/Beijing_Review_and_Kings_College_London_Joint_Translation_Project/2019/201909/t20190903_800177587.html.

56 Wang Zhihe – Fan Meijun, “Hope lies in change,” in J.B. Cobb – I. Castuera (eds.), *For our Common Home: Process-Relational Response to Laudato Si'*, Minnesota, 2015, 341.

East and West.⁵⁷ He criticizes the sole pursuit of economic growth, but advocates for people to revalue their own traditional ecological wisdom, finding local solutions appropriate to the local circumstances.

I have written in my previous book on Chinese youth,⁵⁸ that they used to think in a big city one could get big money and a better civil life while those living in the countryside are losers. At present, there are many contradictions in the dual urban and rural system. To solve those contradictions, it is often argued within China that urbanization is the key issue. However, urbanization does not necessarily mean expanding cities, but also developing towns in rural areas. Therefore, an integrated urban and rural development is important.

In a big city, there is a bigger market, but bigger competition as well. Wang encourages young people to explore possibilities in smaller cities or towns, citing some inspiring experiences of some well-educated youth returning to the countryside. For example, Ms. Zhen Bin who created the Pohan rural community covering two towns, 43 villages with 3,865 members of whom some are university graduates. They foster organic and ecological agriculture instead of chemical fertilizers, and they are quite successful in this endeavor.

Wang, in his book, also narrates the revolutionary experience of a well-educated girl who, instead of having a lavish banquet for her wedding like in many Chinese families, proposed to her bridegroom a visit to a home for the aged and an orphanage, as events for a truly meaningful wedding. On another note, he puts emphasis on the recent change in the evaluation of performance by local governments, whereby promotions are no longer based on the GDP growth, but on the happiness index. He also points out that the countryside, in times of financial crisis, has acted as a buffer zone, for one could always go back to his or her hometown in case of necessity, in order to survive with food and a means of living.

57 Wang Zhihe – Fan Meijun, *Second Enlightenment* (二次启蒙), Beijing, 2011, 478.

58 Yan Kin Sheung Chiaretto, *Seasons for Relationships: Youth in China and the Mission of the Church*, Macau, Macau: Claretian Publications, 2019, 17.

Liao Xiaoyi is a former professor in the Chinese Academy of Social Science, an environmental activist, and founder of Global Village Beijing NGO. In the aftermath of 2008 earthquake, she proposed a new sustainable living approach and founded many rural community projects called “LoHo Homelands” (short for Happiness and Harmony 乐和家园), in collaboration with provincial officials. She is also recipient of awards for contribution to conserving traditional culture and the ecosystem.

The LoHo homes are farmhouses made of bamboo plywood and several facilities for waste recycling and biomass production, thus creating new low-carbon villages. The NGO also provided support to develop eco-agriculture, eco-tourism and creative crafts achieved in consultation with the local communities. The model was much appreciated and she was asked to replicate it in her hometown.⁵⁹ The LoHo communities are consistent with constructive postmodernism and favor traditional Chinese cultural traditions in seeking harmony between body and mind, persons and groups. “Chinese-style environmental protection is a wisdom of operational technology,” says Liao. “There are still possibilities in China to establish a complex ecosystem composed of dwellings, industries, health-keeping, native culture, and self-consistency of the rural communities.”⁶⁰

While Liao rejoices at the encyclical *Laudato Si'* and finds many similarities with the “ecological civilization” that China is promoting in recent years, a preeminent American scholar on process philosophy, John Cobb⁶¹, believes that China has the conditions and stands a good chance of achieving an ecological civilization.

Cobb founded the Institute for the Postmodern Development in 2005 and with the help of Wang Zhihe, they coordinate 23 collaborative centers in China and organize annual conferences on ecological civilization. He also founded the Institute for Ecological

59 Cf. A. Moriggi, “Chinese Women at the Forefront of Environmental Activism: Wang Yongchen, Liao Xiaoyi and Tian Guirong,” *DEP (Deportate, Esuli e Profughe) Journal*, Issue 35, 2017, 206-227.

60 *Ibid.*, 152.

61 Cf.: J. B. Cobb – I. Castuera (eds.), *For our Common Home: Process-Relational Response to Laudato Si'*, Minnesota: Process Century Press, 2015, i-vi.

Civilization in 2015. He is committed to promoting ecological civilization and has been active in China.

In a recent book, *China and Ecological Civilization - John Cobb in conversation with Andre Vltchek*, Cobb says that since the policies changed, more people moved from cities to countryside than from countryside to cities for the first time in 2016. Development of villages has been emphasized along with the goal of ecological civilization. It is highly probable that this important shift in Chinese society will endure.⁶²

I can confirm this with the result of my research on Chinese youth, that this reverse trend is happening.⁶³ There is a movement toward smaller cities and towns where these new development areas offer more opportunity for the youth.

Cobb also sees that the “markets” and financial considerations in the future may play important but secondary role. He says that Chinese leaders did recognize that simply postponing the work for clear skies and a healthy environment would not work. The nation needed to work on economic growth and a healthy natural environment simultaneously. The central government began to evaluate the success of provincial governments by their achievements in these two distinct realms. Growth goals were set below what would be possible, so that it could be channeled in less environmentally harmful directions. Experiments with eco villages received encouragement.⁶⁴

It is a good sign that “ecological civilization” has already been written in the Chinese constitution. China built a solar energy office building of 75,000 square meters in Dezhou, Shandong Province, opened in November 2009, the world’s largest at that time, in preparation of the largest solar city there. High-speed trains recorded a total length of 37,900 kilometers at the end of 2020, almost double the length in 2015, according to the China State Railway Group. It is foreseen to develop further not only in term of

62 Ibid.

63 Yan Kin Sheung Charetto, *Seasons for Relationships: Youth in China and the Mission of the Church*, Macau: Claretian Publications, 2019, iv.

64 John Cobb - Andre Vltchek, *China and Ecological Civilization: John B. Cobb, Jr. in conversation with Andre Vltchek*, Kindle edition, 2019; Andre Vltchek, “China’s determined march towards the ecological civilization,” *Investig’Action*, May 12, 2019. Retrieved from <https://investigation.net/en/chinas-determined-march-towards-the-ecological-civilization>.

total length, but in environmental friendliness and interconnectivity within China and with neighboring countries pursuing the One Belt One Road Initiative (BRI).⁶⁵

Critic such as Richard Smith notes that China is by far the world's largest fossil fuel consumer, leading producer and consumer of steel, and the largest importer of lumber. He does not believe that China could maintain economic growth and can create ecological civilization at the same time.⁶⁶ Instead Jeremy Lent sees that China, when having arrived at the level of developed nations and regaining its status as world power, might redirect its vitality from continued consumerism into growing a life of quality for its people. It is like planting the seeds for the vision of an ecological civilization.

Some reflections

There are different forms of dialogue cross-cultural or interreligious alike. According to recent teachings of the Catholic church, there are, for example, the dialogue of life, where people strive to live in an open and neighborly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations; the dialogue of action, in which Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people; and the dialogue of sharing experiences, where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches.⁶⁷ The initiatives mentioned above whether in the name of integral ecology or ecological civilizations show the concern for our common home and for the good of humanity. They promise hope for the future.

Jeremy Lent sees that while Europeans have pursued a path based on a worldview driven by “conquering nature” that have since become global in scope, traditional Chinese culture was founded on a worldview of “harmony between human beings and

65 Cf. Andrew Benton, “China releases 2021-2035 transport plan,” *International Railway Journal (IRJ)*, May 11, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://railjournal.com/policy/china-releases-2021-2035-transport-plan>.

66 Cf. Richard Smith, “China’s drivers and planetary ecological collapse,” *Real-world Economics Review*, issue no. 82, 2017. Retrieved from: <http://paecon.net/PAEReview/issue82/Smith82.pdf>.

67 Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Dialogue and Proclamation*, Vatican, 1991, 42.

nature.” Early Chinese philosophers believed the purpose of life was to seek harmony.⁶⁸

Xi Jinping made a point at the US-hosted global climate summit on April 23, 2021 when he said: “To the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, developed countries should increase their ambitions on addressing climate issues, while helping less-developed nations speed up their shift to low carbon growth in financing, technology, and capacity building.”⁶⁹ In fact, it was a responsible commitment when Xi pledged at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2020 that China would reach peak carbon-dioxide emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060, which could cut global warming this century by 0.25°C.⁷⁰ This happened at the time when Trump had withdrawn from the Paris climate agreement. Fortunately, Biden now has the U.S.A. committed to the climate agreement again. Although President Xi did not attend the COP26 in person, he supports the formal pledges of real action by the Chinese government to achieve net zero emissions by 2060, and vows to halt new coal plants abroad. In a surprise announcement towards the end of the COP26 summit, China and the U.S., the world’s two biggest CO₂ emitters pledged to act in a joint declaration that they will “recall their firm commitment to work together” to achieve the 1.5°C temperature goal set out in the 2015 Paris Agreement, and agree to boost climate co-operation over the next decade.⁷¹

Another reason for nations to act with shared responsibility and a sense of unity is that developed countries have long been outsourcing their production emissions to China or other developing nations. Therefore, nations need to work together to foster a community of life for man and nature.

68 Jeremy Lent, “Can China really lead the way to an ‘ecological civilization’?” *ENSIA at the University of Minnesota’s Institute on the Environment*, August 29, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://ensia.com/voices/ecological-civilization>.

69 Catherine Wong – Sarah Zheng, “China and the US: united on climate action but divided on responsibility,” *South China Morning Post*, April 23, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3130788/they-pledged-work-together-china-and-us-disagree-division>.

70 Hector Pollitt, “Analysis: Going carbon neutral by 2060 ‘will make China richer’,” *Carbon Brief*, September 24, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://carbonbrief.org/analysis-going-carbon-neutral-by-2060-will-make-china-richer>.

71 BBC News, “COP26: China and U.S. agree to boost climate co-operation,” November 11, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://bbc.com/news/science-environment-59238869>.

As I quoted, at the beginning of this chapter, a poem of Chinese philosopher Zhang Zai of a thousand years ago: “Heaven is my father, and earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I find an intimate place in their midst. Therefore, that which fills the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions.”⁷² One may recover the significance from this profound recognition of interconnectedness of humans and the universe, rooted in the Confucian wisdom, that has passed down over the centuries. It also reminds me of the *Canticle of the Creatures* of Francis of Assisi. The cry of the earth today finds an echo in the cry of abandonment of Jesus to the Father on the cross. As Lubich said: “The cry of Jesus didn’t remain without an answer. He did not remain in the abyss of that infinite separation, but re-abandoned himself to the Father. In this way, he brought human beings back to communion with the Father.”⁷³ In him all relationships are reconciled: the communion of humans with God, the relationship between humans and nature, and the relationship among human beings, between East and West. In him, we may find the secret for overcoming all difficulties, transforming death to life, darkness to light, and reconciling East and West. Whether working towards an ecological civilization from the Chinese perspective or towards an integral ecology from the Christian perspective, my experience at the Beijing Expo proves that we can meet and collaborate well among peoples coming from different religions and cultures. We must therefore find ways through dialogue to walk together, making use of the reciprocal richness to build an ecological civilization, and to achieve a civilization of harmony and love.

72 Chan Wing-tsit, *Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, 497.

73 Chiara Lubich, “We answer to terrorism with the discovery of Jesus, perennial Easter,” *Interview on Holy Week with Zenit*, Rome, April 8, 2004.

CHAPTER THREE

Fraternity and Social Friendship

Brotherhood in the history of Christianity is intrinsic to a strong spiritual meaning of fraternity in Christ, and thus is manifested in sharing of goods in a community and helping the poor. It contributed to the abolition of slavery in society. As the motto of the French Revolution was liberty, equality and fraternity, the notion of fraternity¹ has since then become a political category. In a greater part of the 20th century however, the principles of freedom in liberalism or equality in socialism have been emphasized in one political system or another, but the triptych motto has not been taken altogether as a whole and “fraternity” has become a forgotten principle. The notion of “fraternity” was translated into Chinese as bo'ai (博爱 universal love) which, according to some scholars², is influenced by the concept of “agape” in Christianity. Recent studies of the history of Chinese philosophy show much interest in the teaching of jian'ai (兼爱 all-embracing love) of

1 The terms “fraternity” and “brotherhood” are synonyms and their uses in this research are interchangeable. The former indicates the quality of being brothers while the latter indicates the state of being brothers. I use the term fraternity here for has the same root with the French revolution motto “Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité.” However, the term “brotherhood” is more commonly used in English, it includes of course the concept of sisterhood so as to be politically correct today.

2 Renowned Chinese intellectuals at the turn of the 19th century were Sun Yatsen and Kang Youwei who diffused the Chinese term *bo'ai* for fraternity. I will quote them and other more recent scholars by and by in this chapter.

Mohism (墨家思想) also a forgotten principle, overshadowed by Confucianism³. By exploring the concept of fraternity in Chinese culture, I intend to explore its significance as a “relational” term, with special emphasis on relationships and reciprocity. In this chapter, I will also explore the relevance of the concept of fraternity in Chinese culture and in Christianity, especially after the signing of the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together and the proclamation of the encyclical Fratelli Tutti by Pope Francis.

The ideas of fraternity, brotherhood, and universal love in Chinese culture

There is a Chinese idiomatic expression “a relationship as close as one’s hands and feet” (手足之情) to describe deep friendship and brotherhood. The Bible also uses bone and flesh (Gn 2:23) to say husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies (Ep 5:28).

From the “fraternity” motto to “universal love” in the Chinese language

This notion of “fraternity” among the triptych motto of the French Revolution has been translated into Chinese as *bo’ai* (博爱 universal love). However, literally it should be translated as *xiongdi* (兄弟 brothers) or *shouzu* (手足 hands and feet). As a matter of fact, a Chinese scholar Gao Pengcheng points out that the French Revolution never mentioned the *bo’ai* motto.⁴ According to him, modern Chinese intellectuals such as Sun Yatsen (1866-1925) and Kang Youwei (1858-1927) were instrumental in influencing the translation of the term fraternity as *bo’ai*. It has a connotation more of universal brotherhood. In 1906 Sun and other revolutionaries

3 Much of Chinese philosophical traditions originates in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods (770~221 BCE), known as the era of “Hundred Schools of Thought”, when significant intellectual development saw the births of major branches of Chinese philosophy: Confucianism, Daoism, Legalism, and Mohism. Historically, there were disagreements between Confucians and Mohists especially during the time of Mencius (372-289 BC). In the later part of this chapter, I will elaborate on how the two schools of thought differ and can eventually be reconciled.

4 Gao Pengcheng, “The French Revolution never mentioned the motto of *bo’ai* (法国大革命从未提出博爱口号),” *Qinghai Social Science* (青海社会科学), Issue 2, 2014, 196-201.

formulated the Chinese United League's Revolutionary Strategy (中国同盟会革命方略), which states: "Everyone in the country has the spirit of *ziyou* (自由freedom), *pingdeng* (平等equality), and *bo'ai* (博爱universal love)."⁵ In the same year, Kang Youwei published a couple of articles about the French Revolution on New People's Daily (新民丛报) mentioning that "the political theory of the Revolution was very high that is in the name of *bo'ai* (博爱)."⁶

With the victory of Xinhai Revolution in 1911 overthrowing the Qing Dynasty, Sun became the founding father of the Republic of China. His use of *ziyou-pingdeng-bo'ai* gradually became the mainstream of discourse. Although Zhao Zhengping, another member of the United League, noticed that in the context of Colonialism of European countries towards Asia, the concept of "fraternity" they proclaimed was not that of *bo'ai* (博爱universal love) in China.⁷ Sun also once clarified that, in the original French Revolution motto, freedom-equality-fraternity, the meaning of the term fraternity is *xiongdi* (兄弟brothers) or *tongbao* (同胞compatriot). He found a certain narrowness in the term *xiongdi*. He said, "it is the livelihood and happiness of four hundred million people in China at stake." He vigorously promoted the *bo'ai* (universal love) thinking. Gradually, the term *xiongdi* was replaced with *bo'ai*. Although the term had not been widely used in China until that time, it was originally taken from Chinese classics. He considered the term very appropriate. Since then, the motto freedom-equality-fraternity in the Chinese language has been popularized as "*ziyou-pingdeng-bo'ai*."⁸

In the historical context, prior and after the fall of the Qing Dynasty, and the nation's repeated defeats by Western powers, there was a Chinese identity crisis. Many intellectuals including Sun and Kang attempted to adopt and integrate Western ideals

5 Sun Yatsen, "The Revolutionary Strategy of the Chinese Alliance (中国同盟会革命方略)," *The Complete Works of Sun Yatsen* (孙中山全集), Volume I, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company (中华书局), August 1981, 296.

6 See Kang Youwei, "The French Revolution (法国大革命记)," *Political Theory of Kang Youwei* (康有为政论集), Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1981, 590.

7 See Hou Sheng (Zhao Zhengping), "The Philosophy of Universal Love (博爱主义)," *Southern Newspaper* (南报), Issue No. 3, November 1910. For details, see also *Selected Works of the Ten Years before the Revolution of 1911* (辛亥革命前十年间时论选集), Volume 3, Hong Kong: Sanlian Bookstore, April 1960, 749-754.

8 Sun Yatsen, "Three People's Principles? Nationalism? Sixth Lecture" (March 16, 1924), *The Complete Works of Sun Yatsen*, Vol. 9, Zhonghua Book Company, 1986, 283.

into Chinese cultural values to develop a new cultural and national identity as a way to renew the country.⁹ While Kang looked upon the Confucian classics to find an answer to the Western challenge, Sun later converted to Christianity,¹⁰ and his concept of *bo'ai* was somehow influenced by the Christian concept of universal love.

Ren'ai (仁爱) from the Confucian tradition

To trace the development of the Chinese idea of universal brotherhood, there are three concepts of *ai* (爱 love) in the Chinese language and culture. It is necessary to distinguish these three concepts of loving relationship and universal love, namely *ren'ai* (仁爱), *jian'ai* (兼爱) and *bo'ai* (博爱).

First of all, *ren'ai*, a love that is defined by a Confucian term *ren* (仁). Confucius spoke very often about *ren* (human-heartedness).¹¹ The ideogram *ren* is composed of "person" (人) on the left and "two" (二) on the right (仁=人+二), indicating the relationship between two human beings. It has a rich connotation of benevolence, forgiveness, humanity, self-affirming and affirming of others in recognizing dignity in self and others.

The Confucian concept of *ren* (仁, human-heartedness) is related to other Confucian concepts of *yi* (义, righteousness), *li* (礼, propriety), and *zhi* (智, wisdom). *Yi* has been described as "a categorical imperative."¹² Later in Mencius relational ethics, *yi* is better defined as norms of "relational appropriateness." They are summarized in the concept of "propriety" (礼), which includes the "rectification of names" (正名) and the "five basic human relationships" (五伦) of parent-child, husband-wife, ruler-subject, between friends and between siblings. Names such as ruler, minister, father, son and brothers are names of social responsibilities" and each one must fulfill their responsibilities and duties accordingly.¹³ Names are like titles that describe an office

9 See Li Shi, *History of thoughts in the Qing Dynasty*; See also Werner Meissner, "China's Search for Cultural and National Identity from the Nineteenth Century to the Present," *China Perspectives*, Issue 68, 2006, 41-54.

10 Vincent Goossaert. "1898: The Beginning of the End for Chinese Religion?" *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 65, No. 2, Cambridge University Press, 2006, 311.

11 Fung YuLan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, New York, 1948, 69.

12 Ibid., 42.

13 Ibid.

and a responsibility. The connotation of “rectification of names” does not refer to the right or wrong of a deed or a person, but rather to his rightful relationship with others related to his role.

The practical form of *yi* (righteousness) is *ren* (human-heartedness). Human-heartedness emphasizes reciprocity and altruism. Reciprocity is well expressed in the Golden Rule or the ethics of reciprocity “Do not do to others what you would not want others to do to you.”¹⁴ Altruism is well expressed in another verse of the *Analects*: “Now the man of perfect virtue, wishing to build up himself as such, seeks to build up others as well; wishing to enhance himself, seeks also to enhance others” (夫仁者，己欲立而立人，己欲达而达人).¹⁵

Contemporary scholar Fung Yulan says that Confucianism’s love is based on the principle of gradation. According to Mencius, it is natural to love your kins more than others. However, such love should be extended until it includes distant members of society as well. “Honor the elderly and care for the young in other families as we do to those in our own” (老吾老以及人之老，幼吾幼以及人之幼).¹⁶ It is to practice the principle of *zhongshu* (忠恕 altruism). As mentioned before, that is equivalent to the practice *ren*, human-heartedness.¹⁷

Jian’ai (兼爱) of the Mohist tradition

Mozi, a Chinese philosopher who lived in the 5th century BCE in the generation immediately following Confucius, developed the concept of *jian’ai*. The term is usually translated into English as “universal love.” However contemporary scholars explain it in a variety of terms: all-embracing love,¹⁸ impartial concern¹⁹ or inclusive care.²⁰ The following is how Mozi presented his argument on *jian’ai*.

14 See W. Theodore de Bary, ed., “*Analects* 15:23,” *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, New York, 1960, See also *Analects* 12:2 (论语—颜渊篇第二章).

15 *Analects* 7:2

16 *Mencius* 1A7 (孟子·梁惠王上)

17 Fung, 72

18 *Ibid.*, 53-55

19 See Loy Hui-chieh, “Mozi,” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

20 Chris Fraser, “Mohism,” article in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2015.

Mozi first makes a distinction between partiality and universality by saying: a man holding to the principle of partiality would not care for his friend as himself, or others' parents as his own. A man of the principle of universality instead would care for his friends and their parents as his own. Mozi then asks which principle is right. He then uses his "tests of judgment" to determine the right principle. The tests are three: "its basis, its verifiability, and its applicability." A right principle should be based on the Will of Heaven and on the ancient sage-kings, verified by the senses of the common people, and applied by the government to see if it is beneficial to the country and the people. The third test is the standard he uses to determine all values.²¹

He uses this standard to prove the desirability of "universal love" by saying: If everyone regards the state of others as he regards his own, the cities of others as his own, the clans of others as his own, others are regarded like self and he would not assault others. Therefore, instead of harming the world, he benefits the world. If we make an investigation, could there be any benefit coming from detesting others and injuring others? The answer is no; benefits can only come from loving others and benefiting others. If we have to distinguish those loving and benefiting others, certainly they are not partial but universal. That being so, universal love is the source of the major benefits in the world, therefore universal love is right.²²

Mohists advocated undifferentiated universal love, which is Mozi's core teaching. The system of thought is transmitted to us in the work with Mozi's name in 15 volumes, each with two to seven chapters, including on *jian'ai* (兼爱, Universal Love), on *tianzhi* (天志, Will of Heaven), and on *feigong* (非攻, Condemnation of Offensive War). He was committed to the ideal of a harmonious social order and the welfare of "all under heaven." To support his argumentation, he taught the necessity for individual piety and

21 Fung, 53-54

22 The translation of this passage of Mozi is my own, but I also take reference from the following translations: W. P. Mei (trans), *Mozi 4C2 on Universal Love* (墨子卷四兼爱下2), *Chinese Text Project* online open-access digital library (诸子百家中国哲学书电子化计划), <https://ctext.org/mozi/book-4/ens>; See also Chris Fraser, "Book 16, 'Inclusive care' of Mozi" in the article "Mohism," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2015.

submission to the “will of heaven.”²³ He condemned unprovoked military aggression and advocated strong defense to avoid war.

Like Confucius, Mozi made it his task to advise rulers. However, his philosophy and the practice of love without distinction was in direct contrast and challenge to the Confucian moral ideal of benevolence or human-heartedness, which differentiated the special love for one’s parents and family. He deplored the Confucian emphasis on rites and ceremonies as a waste of government funds.

Confucians, in particular Mencius who lived after the time of Mozi, bitterly attacked the Mohist concept of undifferentiated love because Mohism challenged the dominant Confucian ideology. He said “Mozi’s principle of *jian’ai* amounts to making one’s father of no account. To have no father and no sovereign is to be like the birds and beasts.”²⁴

The forgotten principle

Mohism emphasized equality in loving others while Confucianism emphasized gradation. Confucius’ benevolence pays more attention to morality. Rulers favored Confucianism, which encouraged faithfulness and facilitated stability, rather than Mohism, which was not accepted and promoted. Mohism was not fully appreciated at the time and lost its influence since the Han Dynasty in the 3rd century BCE. The proposal of *jian’ai* was deemed unpractical.²⁵ Confucianism overshadowed Mohism and *jian’ai* became a forgotten principle.

In the historical period of Qin and Han dynasties, it was normal that rulers favored Confucians who came from the aristocratic spectrum of society and not Mohists recruited more from the common people to form the *youxia* (游侠 knight errants).²⁶ More recently, Chinese scholars have tried to rehabilitate Mozi as a

23 Although before Mozi there were already classic texts in China that spoke about the love of heaven for men, however it was Mozi who made the need to imitate Heaven and to love all to form the basis of his doctrine of universal love. See Philipp K.T. Hu, “La volontà del cielo nell’antica sapienza cinese introduzione, traduzione e commento dei capitoli 26-28 di Mozi,” *Nuova Umanità*, Numero 217, 2015, 65-89.

24 Mencius 3B9.

25 See Philipp K.T. Hu, 85.

26 See Fung, 50.

“philosopher of the people”²⁷, highlighting his rational-empirical approach to the world as well as his proletarian background.

While Mozi criticized the ceremonial duties of Confucianism, he did not criticize the Confucian central idea of *ren* (human-heartedness) and *yi* (righteousness). While he spoke of his central idea of *jian'ai*, he indeed also included the qualities of *ren* and *yi*. He encouraged frugality and going to the essential.

There were disagreements historically between Confucians and Mohists. However, it would be fair to say that Mohism was not unpractical; in fact, Mozi did care about the practical value of utility.²⁸ It would also be unfair to say that Confucians just encouraged reciprocating favors, but rather the main intent of Confucianism is reciprocity and altruism. It would also be fair to say that both Confucianism and Mohism have concerns over pragmatism and reciprocity, and in some aspects the two philosophies complement one another.

Bo'ai (博爱), *universal love*

In modern times, Mohism was given a fresh analysis. Sun Yatsen advocated “a spirit of common good under the sky or the world as a commonwealth shared by all” (天下为公).²⁹ He used “universal love” as one of the foundations for his idea of Chinese political theory³⁰ although he introduced the term *bo'ai* instead of *jian'ai*. *Bo* (博) in Chinese means broad, extensive or immense, therefore *bo'ai* means a love that is immense and extensive. Although the expression *bo'ai* has not been commonly and popularly used as the expression *ren* in Chinese classics, the expression could be traced in classic Chinese literature. The following are some citations:

27 See Huang Songkang, “The ultimate realization of the Confucian ideal universal harmony as seen by China’s revolutionary thinker Li Dazhao (1889-1927),” *Ultimate Reality and Meaning*, Vol. 9, Issue 3, 1986, 196; See also Henry Epps, *Ethics Vol. II: Universal Ethics and Morality*, 2012, 15-16.

28 Hao Changchi, “Is Mozi a utilitarian philosopher?” *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, Vol.1, Issue 3, 2006, 383.

29 Sun Yatsen quoted the citation “A public spirit will rule all under the sky when the great Way prevails” (大道之行也天下为公) from one of the Six Classics *Liji* (礼记·礼运) *the Book of rites* in ancient China.

30 One of the major legacies of Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925) was the creation of his political philosophy of the Three Principles of the People, including the rights of a people (*minquan*), the livelihood of the people (*minsheng*), and democracy (*minzu*).

Wise rulers in the past discovered that education could change people for the better, so they advocated *bo'ai* (先之以博爱), and consequently no people abandoned their parents. They taught people about morality and rules of conduct, and consequently they all acted accordingly (a quote from the *Classic of Filial Piety* by Confucius, 551–479 BCE).

The principles of a ruler should be to govern according to natural laws without unduly interfering. He should act with *bo'ai* (务在博爱), and to select the talented and upright for office (a quote from *Garden of Stories* by Liu Xiang 77-6 BCE).

Bo'ai is an expression of *ren* (博爱之谓仁), to practice it in a proper manner is righteousness, and the practice of both is to attain the Dao (a quote from *The Origins of Dao* by Han Yu, 768-824).

Although the term *bo'ai* has the meaning of broad and immense love for all in the ancient texts, it was an expression related to the concept of *ren* that is based on human relationships. The term applied basically to a concept of governance for love and benefit of the people. It also referred to a kind of social morality and personal integrity based on harmonious engagement with others, goodwill, and mutual help.

Intellectuals of the early 20th century Republican period like Kang Youwei, resilient advocate of Confucianism, or Sun Yatsen, who became Christian, in using the term *bo'ai*, they held great sensitivity for the Western perspective.³¹ From such perspective, or rather the Christian perspective, *bo'ai* is loving people as oneself, not just loving good people or people who are worthy of being benevolent, but even loving the enemy. Therefore, it has the idea of “universal love,” very similar to the concept of “agape” in Greek which the Christians adopted moving from the realm of human relationships to the supernatural realm.

Although the Confucian concept of love starts from kinship love with emphasis on faithfulness and forgiveness, it then extends to a more altruistic love of caring for the elderly and the young of others. Similarly, the Golden Rule of Confucius actually expresses

31 Vincent Goossaert, 311-314.

the same concept of the reciprocity almost with the same words as Jesus (Lk 3:31) five hundred years later as an expression of universal love.

In the final analysis, Mohists may have taken the positivist approach towards the reality of universal love, directly linking it to the Will of Heaven. Confucians instead may have taken the constructivist approach rationalizing the multiple realities of human nature in order to discover the underlying meaning of universal love. We have also seen universal love from the Christian perspective. A love that is ready to sacrifice oneself for the good of other. Mencius also says, “So, I like life, and I also like righteousness. If I cannot keep both, I will let go life, and choose righteousness (舍生取义).”³² Ultimately, in a religiously diverse, multicultural and pluralistic world we live in, it would be auspicious to take a pragmatist approach towards the reality of universal love and brotherhood taking into account relationships as a paradigm of the present research.

Youshan (友善), *concrete expression nurtured by fine Chinese tradition*

The Chinese fine traditional values have always emphasized the cultivation of virtues and gradually turned inside out. The values of friendliness and fraternity have been expanded in the practice of human relationship, to social relationship, and to that with nature. As mentioned, the concept of universal brotherhood in Chinese was enriched when encountering Western culture, in particular Christianity. In the official narrative of China’s leaders, while insisting on Marxist theory of historic analysis, the value of friendliness and fraternity are considered integral part of fine traditional Chinese culture and of the core socialist values.

In the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China Report delivered on October 18, 2017, Xi Jinping said, “Core socialist values and fine traditional Chinese culture are alive in the people’s hearts.”³³ He reiterated values quoted from Chinese

32 Mencius (孟子), “Gaozi I” (告子上), 10. See James Legge (ed. and trans), *The Works of Mencius*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895.

33 Xi Jinping, *the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China Report*, Beijing, October 18, 2017.

classics mentioned above on many occasions. As a matter of fact, he said that the core socialist values should be nurtured by fine traditional Chinese culture and should be down to earth.³⁴ One of the twelve socialist core values of the Chinese dream actively promoted recently in China is *yousan* (友善 friendship). As president Xi in a state visit to Great Britain in 2015 stressed: “In today’s world, no country can afford to pursue development with its door closed. One should open the door, warmly welcome friends and be hospitable to them.”³⁵ So this friendship does not apply only at the personal or social level, but also refers to relationships between nations.

The ideas of brotherhood in Christianity

Jesus called his disciples brothers after his Resurrection: “Go and tell my brethren” (Mt 28:10; Jn 20:17). “The disciples of Jesus are brothers not by nature, but by the gift of grace, because that adoptive filiation gains a real share in the life of the only Son, which was fully revealed in his Resurrection.”³⁶ According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, this filial relationship is fully revealed in the Resurrection. Christians have faith in Christ who is the Son of the Father, who is the first born among many brothers. It is striking to see in the New Testament repeats the terms brother, brotherhood, and brotherly love. Italian theologian Piero Coda indicates the Christian origin of the political notion of fraternity, “not referring to an ideal to achieve but to a reality acquired.” He notes how in the Gospels the root of fraternity is indicated in the universal fatherhood of God since the love of God, when received, becomes the most formidable agent of transformation in human existence and relationships with the other.³⁷

34 In this footnote, I just put the quotes only in Chinese that Xi quote Chinese classics for simplification sake: “天下为公”, “己欲立而立人,己欲达而达人”. “老吾老以及人之老, 幼吾幼以及人之幼”, “和而不同”. “己欲立而立人,己欲达而达人”. See Zhuo Xinping, “Responsibility of a scholar and future of religious studies (“士” 的担当与宗教学的未来),” *Chinese Culture Research* (中国文化研究), Issue No. 1, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://aisixiang.com/data/109310.html>.

35 Reuters, “Exclusive Q&A with Chinese President Xi Jinping,” *Reuters.com*, October 18, 2015.

36 Holy See archive, *Catholic Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Vatican, 1993, 654.

37 Piero Coda, *Il logos e il nulla: Trinità, religioni, mistica*, Roma, 2003, 337-338.

Brotherhood from the Old Testament

The profound identity of humankind, men and women, with the vocation of being brothers and sisters are well presented in *Genesis*. God created them “in his image and likeness” (Gn 1: 26). Fraternity is the Love of God that human beings can live amongst themselves. It is only due to linguistic limitation that the masculine expression of “fraternity”³⁸ is used. It means brotherhood and sisterhood, a relationship that includes both men and women.

According to the Old Testament, out of jealousy and sibling rivalries, Cain murdered his brother Abel. They are sons of Adam and Eve born after the Fall and continue their failure. This fratricide (Gn 4: 1-8) is a rejection of the vocation and identity, as brothers and sisters, mentioned above.

However, according to the Old Testament, the Covenant with Noah, Abraham and Moses started once again the history from the beginning. This Covenant of God with His people provides a premise and creates a human space into which the practice of the ideal of brotherhood becomes possible, where God has inscribed since the beginning of human history. In fact, it is written in the Psalms, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Ps 133: 1)

In the New Testament: friends and brothers

One finds passages in the Gospel, where Jesus calls his disciples “friends” such as: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jn 15: 12).

As the saying goes, you can choose your friends, but you cannot choose the family you were born into. Sibling relationships come by birth naturally as in a family, not by choice. However, once the disciples choose to follow Jesus, they become like brothers in the same family. Jesus describes the brotherly relationship with and among his followers saying: “One is your Teacher, and you are all

³⁸ There is no such problem in some other languages: Spanish, besides the word “Fraternidad,” has “hermano” and “hermana,” from which comes “Hermandad.” German, besides the word “Brüderlichkeit” from bruder (brother), can indicate both “bruder” and “schwester” (sister), by the plural “Geschwister” from which there is “Geschwisterlichkeit” (of brothers and sisters).

brothers” (Mt 23: 8); “Go and be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift” (Mt 5: 24); “For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (Mt 12: 50).

The meaning of this reference to “brothers” became more evident when Jesus revealed himself after the resurrection saying: “Go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God’” (Jn 20: 17). The followers of Jesus are not brothers and sisters by blood, but brethren in Christ as shown in the Letters of the Apostles such as John, Peter and Paul: “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death” (1 Jn 3: 14).

The life of the early Christian community testifies to brotherhood: “The community of believers were of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common... There was no needy person among them, for extra goods were put at the feet of the apostles and were distributed each according to needs” (Acts 4:32-35).

Jesus saves not only single persons but also the relationship

Pope Francis affirms “God, in Christ, redeems not only the individual person, but also the social relations existing between men.”³⁹ Jesus saves and loves humankind to the point of being cursed by the law of God. St. Paul says, “Christ ransomed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree’” (Gal 3:13). This is a direct reference to Deuteronomy: “anyone who is hanged on the tree is a curse of God” (Dt 21:23), for he should be buried outside the boundary in order not to defile the land the Lord has given. Jesus launches his cry of abandonment on the cross towards God in an extreme act of faith while being cut off from any relationship with the Father and with the brothers. By dying forsaken on the cross,

³⁹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium, apostolic exhortation on the proclamation of the gospel in today's world*, Vatican, November 24, 2013, 178.

rejected as an outcaste, Jesus cancelled the boundary between the chosen people and the gentile. He made the two peoples one.

As social and political consequences of fraternity, in the letter of Paul to the Galatians, he affirms that for Christians “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). The three marked separations of those times were the categories of race and culture, and social class, as well as the distinction of men and women.

The forsaken Jesus started from building fraternity with a preferential love for the poor and marginalized as indicated in “Blessed are the poor” (Mt 5:3) and “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). Christian fraternity helped abolish slavery, the difference of social class. Another distinguishing mark of Christians is “love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you.” (Lk 6:27, Mt 4:44) The forsaken Jesus overcomes once and for all the category of enemy with free determination. With his death and resurrection, Jesus restored the relationship after the Fall of Adam and Eve. The covenant with Israel is extended to all people (Gal 3:28).

The accomplished form of fraternity is in the reciprocal love of *agape* in Christ, in the history of Christian civilization, it presupposes freedom of the individual who is constitutively open and dedicated to dialogue with those committed in the search of real justice.⁴⁰ If Jesus came only to save single persons, affirms Piero Coda, it would be easy to postpone our yearnings in the hope of the life after death. Instead, it is significant that Christians are to take active part in the “coming of the kingdom” of God “already”, but at the same time “not yet” seeing it in its glory.

40 Piero Coda, “Per una fondazione teologica della categoria politica della fraternità” in Antonio M. Baggio, *il principio dimenticato: La fraternità nella riflessione politologica contemporanea*, Roma, 2007, 107-108.

Brotherhood in the history of Christianity

Early church father, Tertullian, tells what happened in the early days of Christianity when pagans were converted on seeing the love that reigned among Christians: "See how they love one another."⁴¹

The history of the Western world is deeply influenced by Christian culture. Christian brotherhood manifests in a vast spectrum of contents. It starts from the spiritual meaning of fraternity in Christ to the sharing of goods in a community and helping the poor. This help goes from simple alms giving to the duty of hospitality and care. Monastic fraternity presupposes co-habitation and sharing of goods as witnessed, among others, by St. Francis of Assisi and his fellow companions.

"In the name of fraternity, hospitals, hospices, and schools were built." As Antonio Baggio says, "especially in medieval and modern times, fraternity did not remain closed within a private realm but played a public role. It gave life to a complex world of social solidarity and care for those in need which preceded contemporary systems of welfare."⁴² It also contributed to the abolition of slavery in society.

Brotherhood as a political category

As the motto of the French revolution was liberty, equality and fraternity, the notion of fraternity has, since then, become a political category, together as three constitutive principles and ideals of a political prospect unseen before. However, according to historian Mona Ozouf, different from liberty and equality, fraternity belonged to another sphere, that of moral obligations rather than rights, and community rather than individuality. There were two forms of fraternity: one was identified with social link as a free pact, the other with religious link based on Christian brotherhood. There was a "partial" interpretation and "deficit" of political reflection in

41 Cf. Tertullian, *Apology*, Tertullian, *Apology*, trans. T.H. Bindley, 1890, 39, <https://tertullian.org>.

42 Antonio Baggio, "The Forgotten Principle: Fraternity in Its Public Dimension," *Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture*, Vol. 2, No. 2, October 2013, 36.

the conception of fraternity in front of the unresolved problems of democracy.⁴³

After this initial proclamation of the French Revolution, fraternity almost immediately disappears from the public scene. Without fraternity, freedom and equality were inserted into democratic systems; they became two almost antagonistic visions of the world. In a large part of the 20th century, however, the principles of freedom in liberalism or equality in socialism have been emphasized in one political system or another, the triptych motto has not been taken altogether as a whole and “fraternity” has been a forgotten principle. As Baggio says, the triptych “freedom, equality and fraternity” must be taken together like the three legs of a table in order to function.⁴⁴

Human fraternity for peace and living together as proposed by Pope Francis

A significant testimony and a pact of fraternity today

St. Francis of Assisi met the Sultan of Egypt al-Malik al-Kamil in 1219. Already two years before that, he sent his Franciscan brothers to the Holy Land. It was the time of the crusades when Christians and Muslims were enemies. At considerable risk, Francis engaged the Sultan in a peaceful dialogue. Not only did Sultan al Kamil not kill Francis, he secured for him and his companions safe return to the Christian camp with gifts of honor. He even told Francis: “To pray God for him, that God may reveal to him the law and the faith that is more pleasing to Him.”⁴⁵

With the backdrop of this 800th anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi meeting Sultan al-Kamil, Pope Francis made a historical three-day trip to the Arabian Peninsula to become the first pope to visit the birthplace of Islam. On February 4, 2019 in an interreligious meeting at the Founder’s Memorial in Abu Dhabi,

43 Mona Ozouf, “Liberté, égalité, fraternité stands for peace country and war”, in Pierre Nora (ed.), *Lieux de Mémoire*, Tome III, Quarto Gallimard, 1997, 53-89.

44 Antonio M. Baggio, *il principio dimenticato: la fraternità nella riflessione politica contemporanea*, Rome, 2007, 22.

45 The narrative is reported from Saint Bonaventure’s *Life of St. Francis* and from **Jacques de Vitry’s** *History of the Orient* in *St. Francis of Assisi, Omnibus of Sources*, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2008. Cf. Jack Wintz, “Franciscans and Muslims eight centuries of seeking God,” *Franciscan Media*, 2019

United Arab Emirates, he greeted the head of state, civil and religious dignitaries as well as the Diplomatic Corps. Together with Grand Imam Al-Tayyib of Egypt, the Holy Father signed a historical pledge of joint declaration on “Human Fraternity for World Peace and living together.” He delivered an address on the theme of human fraternity.⁴⁶

Main points of Pope Francis’s address and commitment in Abu Dhabi

Pope Francis started the address by saying that “I have come here as a brother seeking peace with the brethren. We are here to desire peace, to promote peace, to be instruments of peace”. The focus of the talk is on human brotherhood for peace. Seeking common ground with Islam in the narrative of Noah, Pope Francis made use of the allegory of fraternity as the Ark of Noah. To sail the stormy seas of the world today, we need to enter the ark of peace as a family. He stressed that no violence is justifiable in the name of the Merciful one. God is the Father of all, and therefore we all brothers and sisters, forming the great human family in the “harmony of diversity”.⁴⁷

There is the urgent task of “building bridges between peoples and cultures,” the Pope says, religions should help the human family to deepen the capacity for reconciliation and for the vision of hope, and offer “concrete paths of peace.” These paths are education and justice that are the two wings of the “dove of peace” in order for it to fly. The Holy Father used the metaphor of a dove that is the logo of the event.

Pope Francis emphasizes education for future generations, which is often influenced by false values fomented by hatred and prejudice. The education of reciprocity is important, knowing not only oneself but also the others and their cultural values. This generation will be held accountable for the outcome of the education of future generations.

46 Pope Francis, “Interreligious Meeting Address of His Holiness,” *Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to the United Arab Emirates*, Founder’s Memorial, Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019.

47 Pope Francis, “Interreligious general audience,” On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the promulgation of the conciliar declaration “*Nostra Aetate*,” Vatican, 28 October 2015.

The second wing of peace is justice. Justice should not be limited only to family members, compatriots, and believers of the same faith. True justice has to be universal. The world's religions should keep watch as sentinels of fraternity in the night of conflict, to remind people not to just profit from greed in satisfying immediate demands. They should stand on the side of the poor.

The enemy of fraternity is individualism, and also indifference, which does not care about the dignity of the stranger and the future of children. A purely utilitarian development cannot provide real and lasting progress. Only an integral and cohesive development provides a future worthy of the human person. This kind of development makes the desert to flourish.

The Holy Father ended the address emphasizing that the world's religions can help the seeds of peace to flourish. God is with those who seek peace. He then blessed those present. By the power of prayer and daily commitment to dialogue, we can oppose war, the monetization of relations, the desertification of altruism, and the gagging of the poor. By being together today, it is a message of trust, an encouragement to all people of good will.

Some concrete actions as commitment

The Introduction of the document on Human Fraternity signed by both the Pope and the Grand Imam affirms, "Faith leads a believer to see in the other a brother or sister to be supported and loved." It also invites "all persons who have faith in God and faith in human fraternity to unite and work together."⁴⁸

The document includes some basic concepts. It declares "the adoption of a culture of dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard". The Pope and the Grand Imam call on world leaders "to work strenuously to spread the culture of tolerance and of living together in peace." They also ask opinion makers "to rediscover the values of peace, justice, goodness, beauty, human fraternity and coexistence," and to promote these values everywhere. They

⁴⁸ Holy See Press Office, "Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together," signed by His Holiness Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahamad al-Tayyib, *Summary of the Bulletin*, Abu Dhabi, February 4. 2019.

also say that “terrorism is deplorable and threatens the security of people... but this is not due to religion, even when terrorists instrumentalize it. It is due, rather, to an accumulation of incorrect interpretations of religious texts and to policies linked to hunger, poverty, injustice, oppression and pride.” At the end, they ask that the document be studied and deepened, and then be applied concretely.

As a matter of fact, a multi-faith committee was formed in August 2019 for achieving the goals contained in the Document on *Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*. It has members from the UAE, Egypt, Spain and Italy. As concrete commitment, it came up with initiatives such as the proposal to the United Nations to define a date between February 3 and 5, to be proclaimed Day of Human Fraternity, and to invite representatives of other religions join the Committee.⁴⁹ This first meeting of the Higher Committee fell coincidentally on September 11, at the end of which, all participants, each prayed according to his own faith, for the victims of every act of terrorism.

The Pope hopes that similar initiatives may arise in other parts of the world, and in particularly with daily commitments. He says, “Although sadly evil, hatred and division often make news, there is a hidden sea of goodness that is growing and leads us to hope in dialogue, reciprocal knowledge and the possibility of building, together with the followers of other religions and all men and women of good will, a world of fraternity and peace.”⁵⁰ Another public event took place at the New York City Public Library on September 20, 2019, bringing together hundreds of people from different religious and cultural backgrounds.⁵¹

49 Holy See Press Office, “Press release No. B0685,” *Bollettino*, Vatican, September 11, 2019.

50 Holy See Press Office, “Declaration of the Director of the Holy See Press Office,” *Summary of the Bulletin*, Vatican, Aug 26, 2019.

51 Bernadette Mary Reis, “A celebration on human fraternity,” *Vatican News*, Sep 21, 2019.

Fraternity instead of clash: relevancy in Christianity, Islam and China

It is very significant that Pope Francis presented the address on Human fraternity for peace in a pact with Grand Imam Al-Tayyib. They represent Christianity and Islam, the two largest religions in the world with more than half of the world population.⁵² The pact between the Pope and the Grand Imam is meant to be a testimony of fraternity taking up the responsibility to become instruments of peace.

Analyzing the contents of the papal address, the concept of human fraternity is presented as a common platform for dialogue, not only among world religions, but also with all cultures and peoples in the world. To extend this dialogue with elements of the Chinese civilization, I have discerned some points mentioned by Pope Francis about human fraternity, which echo Chinese values. They may serve as a bridge for dialogue between Christianity and Chinese culture.

Gradual approach of extending fraternity to others

The point of departure of Pope Francis is the recognition that fraternity is at the root of our common humanity. All persons in the world are to live as brothers and sisters in the one human family. The faith in God is the starting point of this fraternity, but “the benevolent gaze of God includes each person in the human family.” This fraternity is destined to extend to people of all religions and cultures. The “spirit of fraternity,” as proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,⁵³ is a dynamic factor in social cohesion.

One of the signature lines of President Xi Jinping of China: “If the people have faith, the nation has hope, and the country

⁵² Christianity makes up 31.5% of the world's population and Islam 23.2%. See Pew Research Center, “The Global Religious Landscape,” *The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life*, 18 December 2012.

⁵³ “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” See *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Art. 1.

has strength.”⁵⁴ Though the faith that he refers to is the faith in an ideal, and not a religious belief. What he means is that people should remain steadfast to their ideal. In the Confucian tradition, the concept of fraternity starts within the family with the emphasis on benevolence (*ren*). Such love should then be extended until it includes distant members of society as well. “Honor the elderly and care for the young in other families as we do for those in our own” (*Mencius* 1A7).

Maintaining unity in diversity nourished with dialogue

As the Pope says, believers are called to commit themselves to the “equal dignity of all,” and to seek “fraternity in diversity.” There is an urgent task of “building bridges between peoples and cultures,” forming the great human family in the “harmony of diversity.”

Just as Jesus prays that all may be one (Jn 17:21), the idea of a united world under heaven is not extraneous to the Chinese. Confucius says “under the sky (*tianxia*) we are one family” (天下一家). One may argue that, in that epoch, “under the sky” referred to what was known to the Chinese, which they considered as the center of the world (middle kingdom). Confucius did not however speak of a nation, a people, or a particular race, but *tianxia* to mean the entire human race. The Chinese traditionally use the term “harmony” to express harmonious relationships between humans and nature in Daoism, and between human beings in Confucianism. Curiously, the use of the term “unity” is quite recent, linked more to the unity of the Country (the Republic) in contrast to the different warring kingdoms in the past. It is interesting to note that one of the two big slogans at the facade of the Forbidden City facing Tian-An-Men square reads “Long live the unity of all peoples of the world (世界人民大团结万岁)!” Harmony and unity may be quite similar or different depending on the context in which these two Chinese words are used.

Relating to this, another central idea in Confucianism is the notion of being “harmonious while diversified (*he er butong* 和而不同),” that is, very much in tune with what Pope Francis called

54 Xinhua News, “Xi Jinping: If the people have faith, the nation has hope, and the country has strength,” *Xinhuanet*, February 28, 2015.

“harmony of diversity.” It has an equivalent which is better known, “unity in diversity,” also the founding motto of modern Indonesia, meaning the Country’s numerous cultures and ethnicities living together in harmony. This concept recognizes that although people have differences in opinions, interests, preferences, profiles and so on, they should first keep peace, and live in harmony with each other while in their diversity. In this way, tolerance and integration are encouraged.

There is a certain “dialectic of harmony” in Chinese culture. As quoted in chapter one, Laozi says in the *Daodejing*: “When people of the world all know beauty as beauty, there arises the recognition of ugliness. When they all know the good as good, there arises the recognition of evil. Therefore, being and non-being give relational existence,⁵⁵ arising in a dialectic of harmony. Daoism emphasizes the superiority of non-action over action and the teaching without words but deeds, making a change without forcing the situation and aims at harmony. This principle of the dialectic of harmony guides people in their social life.⁵⁶

The importance of relationships and reciprocity

Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of relationships and reciprocity. There is no genuine self-knowledge without the other. He also asks for the “courage of otherness” looking after the human family through a daily and effective dialogue, keeping one’s own identity with full recognition of the other, and seeing in the other truly a brother or sister, a child of one’s own humanity.

When a disciple of Confucius asked him if there is any one word that could guide them through life, the master’s answer is *shu* (恕), which means reciprocity, mercy and forgiveness, “do not do to others what you would not want others to do to you.”⁵⁷ As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Chinese ideogram containing Confucian thoughts have rich connotations. Reciprocity and mutual responsibility are however at the core, and are applied to the so-called “five basic human relationships.” In these

55 *Daodejing* II, 1-2.

56 Ren Jiyu, “The dialectic of simplicity” (老子的朴素辩证法思想), *Teaching and Research* (教学与研究), 2, 1962, 17-18.

57 *Analects* 15:23

relationships the point is not just to differentiate the statuses but to establish responsibility between each other. Relationships are rectified according to one's role and responsibility towards the other.

These values of reciprocity and rectification of relationships in Chinese culture are applied to interpersonal relationships, in the family and in social relationships. China is applying these principles in the field of international relations, reference to responsibility in the whole of the world is not absent in public discourse and official narratives.

No violence can be justified in the name of religion

"No violence can be justified" against a brother or a sister in the name of religion. "Human fraternity requires of us, as representatives of the world's religions, the duty to reject every nuance approval of the word 'war'," says Pope Francis.

This element of nonviolence was advocated by Mozi already in the 4th-century-BCE China. He condemned unprovoked military aggression, and promoted strong defense to avoid war in his famous treaty called *Condemnation of Offensive War (feigong)*. He was committed to the ideal of a harmonious social order, teaching the necessity for individual piety and submission to the "Will of Heaven," which formed the basis of his core teaching on universal love (*jian'ai*).

Education

Pope Francis is aware that young people are surrounded by fake news, materialism, hatred and prejudice, so he encourages investing in education. "They need to learn to defend the rights of others with the same energy with which they defend their own rights."⁵⁸ It is noteworthy that in Chinese, individual human rights (人权) are closely associated with the rights of the people (民权). In the West, the emphasis is more on the individual rights while in the East, the rights of the people take precedence, as individual

⁵⁸ Pope Francis, "Interreligious Meeting Address of His Holiness," *Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to the United Arab Emirates, Founder's Memorial, Abu Dhabi*, 4 February 2019.

rights give way to common good. Education should form the young generation to strike the right balance with peaceful means, and never turn to violence which may degenerate into vandalism and social turmoil. He reminds us of the importance of reciprocity in education. One day, they will judge the previous generation well if they are given the foundation for creating “new encounters of civility.” The alternative is for the young people to be left with “mirages and the empty prospects of harmful conflicts of incivility.”

Chinese culture attaches great importance to education. Confucius was an educator who wanted to develop well-rounded men, *junzi* (君子), who would be useful to the state and to society. As Fung youlan points out, one major theme of Confucian teachings is harmony in society which became an ultimate concern. Confucianism teaches reciprocity and altruism.⁵⁹ This is why Confucius is venerated in China as the teacher for all ages.

True justice and universal love

Peace and justice are intrinsically related. “Peace dies when it is divorced from justice, but justice is false if it is not universal,” says the Holy Father, as mentioned earlier. “A justice addressed only to family members, compatriots, believers of the same faith is a limping justice; it is a disguised injustice!”

True justice has to be universal. In Chinese “justice” (*yi* 义) has the connotation of righteousness. What is right (just) is relative depending on your point of reference (for me, for the others, for the community...). In the Western mindset, what is right and just may be absolute, but in the East, there is more emphasis on relationships. What is right and just at times may not be clear cut, and relationships are to be promoted. Righteous interpersonal relationship in the Confucian tradition is based on the principle of gradation, but it also extends to include others in society with altruism, honor the elderly and care for the young in other families as your own. It is interesting to note that “justice” (*zhengyi* 正义) in the contemporary sense is now actively promoted in China as one of the twelve socialist core values of the Chinese dream; nevertheless, the traditional value of righteousness has to be

⁵⁹ Fung, 40.

considered. Testimonies are not lacking of those who were ready to sacrifice themselves, their careers, and even their life, for a just cause throughout Chinese history. This Confucian moral value exerts an attitude of positive living and the life guiding principles, which provide ideals and standards for people and encourage them to be loyal to country, filial to parents, respect elders and friendly to friends, fulfilling the spirit of sacrificing one's own self for the good of the bigger Self.

The Holy Father invited world religions to keep watch as "sentinels of fraternity in the night of conflict" and commit to stand against injustice and tragedies in the world. He called us to defend the least of our brothers and sisters and stand by the poor. "Together today is a message of trust, an encouragement to all people of good will."⁶⁰ The world's religions have the task of reminding people that "greed for profit renders the heart lifeless" and the current consumerist market system does not benefit encounter, dialogue, family, which are essential dimensions of life. Christians are called to fulfill the wish of Jesus "that all may be one." Believers are to be united in the name of the Merciful One. Universal brotherhood for peace is the common desire of all people of good will.

As I have shown, the ideas of *ren'ai* in Confucianism and *jian'ai* in Mohism are complementary to each other. Sun Yatsen integrated these ideas of love with fraternity inspired by the concept of universal brotherhood in Christianity and expressed it with the term *bo'ai* (博爱 universal love). He advocated "Under the sky a public spirit of common good" (天下为公) and used *bo'ai* as one of the foundations for his idea of Chinese political theory. The concept of *bo'ai* denotes a contemporary idea of universal brotherhood, taken from Confucian classics as well as from Christianity, is applicable to East and West.

60 Pope Francis, "Interreligious Meeting Address of His Holiness," *Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to the United Arab Emirates, Founder's Memorial, Abu Dhabi*, 4 February 2019.

*Concrete actions and paths of fraternity
for peace are necessary*

Jesus says that no one has greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. Christian fraternity demands that one is ready even to offer his life for the love of others. Mencius speaks of the spirit of letting go life for righteousness, sacrificing oneself for the greater good. Historically Mozi's proposal of *jian'ai* was doomed as unpractical and his idea of "universal love" was not fully understood and has been forgotten. Although ancient Chinese philosophers did argue about the origin of things, their concerns ultimately pointed to how society should be organized, how one should act. They were endowed with a strong sense of pragmatism.

The pragmatic expression of friendship wants good for others. It is an open invitation to find concrete ways to practice universal brotherhood. Pragmatic friendship is in sharp contrast of what we see around the world nowadays; all the more, concrete initiatives and daily commitments are urgently needed.

As the Holy Father says, "the miserable crudeness of war" in some countries is caused by the logic of armed power, the monetization of relations, the arming of borders, the raising of walls, the gagging of the poor. Let us oppose all this with the "sweet power of prayer" and "daily commitment" to dialogue, finding concrete paths of fraternity for peace. The joint declaration on Human Fraternity for World Peace at Abu Dhabi is a historical document that gives impetus to further concrete initiatives and encourages daily commitments. In order to practice fraternity and put it into concrete actions, the declaration has set an outline of a method, code of conduct and path, and invites further deepening of the document content.

***Fratelli Tutti* on fraternity and social friendship
consonant to Chinese culture**

When Pope Francis was elected pope, his very first gesture and words from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica was to invite the whole Church to embark on "a journey of fraternity." In a crucial moment, when the people and the world suffering in the midst of the

pandemic, he stood alone in front of the vast but empty St. Peter's Square to pray, urging the people to ease their fears through faith and fraternal love. The powerful image televised was imprinted in millions of minds throughout the world. This image had a strong impact also on the people in China. In front of the challenges of the world's ills and fractures, he issued the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, calling for change and action in a new vision of fraternity. His message and deeds have been consistent and clear, the world today needs human fraternity and social friendship. I find many expressions of Pope Francis very compatible with Chinese culture.

Promoting the moral good of agathosyne, benevolentia and ren'ai (仁爱)

In *Fratelli Tutti*, the Holy Father talks about promoting integral human development for seeking and pursuing the good of others and of the entire human family. To emphasize the meaning that he wanted to communicate to us, he uses two terms, one in Greek and the other in Latin.

He says, the New Testament uses the Greek word, *agathosyne*, to describe one fruit of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal 5:22). It means pursuit of the good, striving for excellence and what is best for others, not simply material wellbeing but growth in maturity and health. A similar expression exists in Latin, *benevolentia*. It is an attitude that "wills the good" of others. It indicates a yearning for goodness, an inclination towards all that is fine and excellent, a desire to fill the lives of others with what is beautiful, sublime and edifying. (FT 112).

Important to note that there are experiences and expressions in Chinese culture that reflect integral human development. I find these two terms used by Pope Francis very much in accord with the Confucian term *ren'ai* (仁爱), which has a rich connotation of benevolence, humanity, recognizing dignity in self and others. As a matter fact, in the official translation of the New Testament in Chinese, the term *ren'ai* is already used to indicate a benevolent and mutual relationship.

From the love within the same nation to the hearts embracing foreigners

Pope Francis in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* says that the ancient commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18), in earlier Jewish traditions, was usually understood as referring to relationships within the same nation. However, the hearts of the Jewish people were expanded to embrace foreigners as they themselves had once lived as foreigners in Egypt. The command “not to do to others what you would not want them to do to you” (Tob 4:15), Rabbi Hillel of the first century before Christ stated: “This is the entire Torah. Everything else is commentary.” In the New Testament, Hillel’s precept was expressed in positive terms: “In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets” (Mt 7:12).⁶¹

The Confucian saying, “do not do to others what you would not want others to do to you,” was expressed in a negative form, like Rabbi Hillel expressed it. The Confucian concept of love, *ren*, started from the family or kinship love, but then was developed and extended to a more altruistic love, caring for the elderly and the young of others. It is interesting to see in the history of China, that within China, there were different states and peoples coming into contact with one another. Confucianism emphasizes the concept of reciprocity and *tianxia* (under the sky). There is this development of love starting from within the family to that of whole world under the sky.

Pope Francis affirms that man is made for love, therefore he must go beyond the self towards others to find fuller existence. Love is capable of transcending borders of regions or countries. He says: “The ever-increasing number of interconnections and communications in today’s world makes us powerfully aware of the unity and common destiny of the nations” (FT 99). Concurrently, as a matter of fact in China, President Xi is promoting the initiative of building “a community of common destiny for mankind” outlining

61 Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, encyclical letter on fraternity and social friendship, Assisi, April 3, 2020, 59-60.

to the United Nation Assembly.⁶² This is becoming a mantra in Xi's rhetoric for two reasons. First of all, China condemns hegemony or a mono-polar world order dictated by military prowess. Second, there is a need of promoting a multipolar world order of fairness in which developing countries can emerge to attain their potential within a new economic system. In this way, China is coming out from its previous isolation and reviving the traditional cultural wisdom, as a Chinese saying goes all the people "within the four seas," which refers to the whole world, "we are all brothers" (四海之内皆兄弟).

Freedom without fraternity is contradictory

As I mentioned earlier, true justice has to be universal. The triptych motto has to be taken as a whole, freedom without fraternity is contradictory. The Holy Father denounces racism and radical individualism as viruses. He upholds "social friendship" and "universal fraternity" that promotes persons, human dignity and the common good. "To claim economic freedom while real conditions bar many people from actual access to it" is a contradictory doublespeak. He says that words like freedom, democracy or fraternity prove meaningless if our economic and social systems do not take care of the vulnerable, weak and untalented. (FT 110).

He emphasizes that the human person, with his or her inalienable rights, is by nature open to relationship. To limit the term "human rights" to individualistic rights is a misuse of the term. Unless the rights of each individual are harmoniously ordered to the greater good, those rights become a source of conflict and violence (FT 111).

We will go to the negative effects of unchecked freedom in liberal capitalism in the later chapters on economy, and freedom. With regard to the issue of excessive emphasis given to certain categories of rights, namely political and individual rights, many Asian nations stress the importance of a balance between the

62 See *Constitution of the Communist Party of China*, Revised and Adopted at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China on October 24, 2017; See also Xi Jinping, "Working Together to Build a Human Community with a Shared Future" Speech at the United Nations Office in Geneva, January 18, 2017, *On Building a Human Community with a Shared Future*, Beijing: Central Compilation and Translation Press, 2019, 427-440.

rights of individuals and the good of the community. Asian culture in general gives more importance to the community, in strong contrast with the West, which traditionally exalts the individual to a much greater degree. The most fundamental of rights after all is the right to life, for example in the material sense, the right to food and nutrition. For what does a person do with all his or her rights, even the noblest ones, if he or she is dying of hunger? If this right were officially recognized and promoted, perhaps rich nations would not waste incredible amounts of money and resources on armaments.

With emphatic condemnation of war, Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti* stresses solidarity to combat globalized indifference, “universal destination of goods” over the absolute right to private property (FT 111). In Chinese culture, which is more communitarian than individualistic, there is a concept not as well known in the West: “*minquan*” (民权, the rights of a people)⁶³ which stands alongside “*renquan*” (人权, the rights of a person). For decades, the Chinese government has strived to improve people’s livelihood. The white Paper issued by the State Council stated: “It bases the cause of human rights on the endeavors to solve the principal contradiction in Chinese society, focuses on people’s ever-growing needs for a better life.”⁶⁴

As a matter of fact, a central theme of Asian values is the priority of the community and the importance of its stability. Only the stability of individual components can ensure the harmony of the whole, and harmony is the highest value in Asia. Values or virtues being practiced and articulated are the sense of collectiveness rather than individualism, the ability to bear suffering and the sense of sacrifice for the greater good, the sense of respect for others, especially the elders and the authority, which leads people to be more obedient and cooperative.

63 *The Three Principles of the People* is a political philosophy by Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925), which includes the rights of a people (*minquan*), the livelihood of the people (*minsheng*), and democracy (*minzu*). He played an instrumental role in the overthrow of the Qing dynasty during the Xinhai Revolution, was the first provisional president when the Republic of China was founded in 1912, was a uniting figure in post-Imperial China, and remains unique among 20th century Chinese politicians for being widely revered among the people from both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

64 Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, “Seeking Happiness for People: 70 Years of Progress on Human Rights in China,” *White Paper issued by the State Council*, September 2019.

A better kind of politics: love of all loves

For Pope Francis, “better politics” is to work for the common good in service of the whole people, instead of just attracting popularity or consensus from voters, fomenting selfishness. He criticizes a politics subject to finance; politics should center on human dignity, with policies not just for the poor, but with and of the poor (FT 169)

He also emphasizes the important role of the United Nations for the family of nations, making use of negotiation, mediation and arbitration. A better kind of politics is working for the common good and human dignity, which includes eradication of poverty, protection of human rights, promotion of the force of law rather than the law of force. (FT 173-175)

Better politics means to secure work for the people to live a normal social life, and to develop a strategy for alleviating poverty by tackling, in a radical and integral way, problems of hunger, drugs, weapons, terrorism, social exclusion, sexual exploitation, slave labor, organized crime, organ and human trafficking. The Pope draws from social teaching of the Church, the perspective of solidarity and subsidiarity, and now with the emphasis on fraternity (FT 187-189)

How can this be a stimulus for ordinary Christians, western or Chinese? Antonio Baggio took the experience of the Focolare to illustrate how Chiara Lubich with her companions in the war-torn Italian city of Trent started living the gospel and helping the poor answered this question. They gradually formed a community that carried the sign of three basic elements needed to create the conditions of political life: liberty, equality and fraternity.⁶⁵ First, the free decision she and her companions made to love; second, to favor the poor who were helped with the goods of the more well-to-do, thus creating bonds of fraternity between the two groups; and third achieving equality through fraternity.

Lubich’s thought on fraternity grew in the context of the new social movement she was founding. She spoke about the forsaken Jesus as the model for politicians at the first congress in 2000 of

65 Antonio M. Baggio, “Love of All Loves: Politics and Fraternity in the Charismatic Vision of Chiara Lubich (Sophia University Institute), *Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture*, Vol. 2, No. 2, October 2013, 53–65.

the Movement for Unity in Politics. She sees Jesus as the model of a politician, not because he is the miracle worker who attracts and feeds the crowd, but because of the greatest love manifested in his abandonment. The forsaken Jesus is the one who embraces all divisions, defeats, and separations present in humanity; and he brings them all back to unity with God.⁶⁶

Politics is the love of all loves for Lubich, and she gives the following examples: “Politics seen as love creates and preserves those conditions that allow all other types of love to flourish: the love of young people who want to get married and who need a house and employment; the love of those who want to study and who need schools and books; the love of those who run their own business and who need roads and railways, clear and reliable laws.”⁶⁷

Lubich made a fundamental contribution to the rediscovery of fraternity, particularly during the last years of her public engagement. Baggio explains that there is a Trinitarian logic of fraternity in her early experience that is on one hand rooted in the religious background of the Christian faith. On the other hand, her proposal of politics as love of all loves grows in the social movements of the present political arena.

With this perspective, fraternity is relevant to all people in its universal human dimension, also outside of any religious affiliation. In this regard, I will explore in the next chapter the experience and effort of China on the themes of economics, governance, education, poverty alleviation, and the construction of infrastructure. Although it is a case study of non-religious efforts, it may offer an opportunity to inspire a new paradigm in economic development for the common good.

66 Chiara Lubich, “The Movement for Unity and a Politics of Communion,” *address to the International Conference of the Movement of Unity in Politics*, Castelgandolfo, June 9, 2000. See Chiara Lubich, *Essential Writings*, New York: New City Press, 2007, 240-244.

67 Chiara Lubich, “A United Europe for a United World,” *address to One Thousand Cities for Europe*, a conference for European mayors, Innsbruck, Austria, November, 9, 2001. See Chiara Lubich, *Essential Writings*, 254–255.

CHAPTER FOUR

Poverty alleviation and a new model of economy

Pope Francis has called for a change in the current economic paradigm, taking into account integral human development. With the current crisis of the pandemic, climate change, and global recession, China is one of the very few countries that registered a positive economic growth in the year 2020. With the sheer size of her economy and her own characteristics, China does not claim that her development model could be an example for other countries. However, there may be something that the China experience could inspire. As the Holy Father says, “there is a scandalous growth of poverty in broad sectors of society throughout our world. Faced with this scenario, we cannot remain passive, much less resigned.”¹ In this chapter, I would like to focus some points for consideration. Are there elements of the Chinese experience in poverty alleviation that could contribute to a new economic paradigm? I will also discuss issues of spiritual poverty, the dilemma of Catholic social service in China. Could there be a possibility of building a consensus view from the Chinese experiences and from that of Catholic teachings for a new model of economy?

1 Pope Francis, “Message on First World Day of the Poor,” Vatican, Nov. 19, 2017, 5.

This chapter starts with a historical analysis of different periods of China's experience from the last century to the present. It focuses on the economic transformation of China, the experience of poverty alleviation, and the characteristics of the economic development model. Sometimes newspaper titles indicate: This country is growing rich, but its citizens are still poor. How has China's development model contributed to the poverty alleviation? The poverty alleviation effort and economic development seem to go hand in hand. As the society becomes more prosperous and materialistic, there emerges a great need for spiritual poverty alleviation and an emphasis on social values as well. China, being an officially atheist country, the role of the Church in society is limited; nevertheless, the Church can still play a realistic role in contributing to spiritual poverty alleviation. I present here some concrete initiatives of the Catholic Church in China particularly in regard to social services, which contribute to social values by giving testimony of Christian charity, and the contribution made to a spiritual dimension of daily living.

During the past decades, as a developing country, the process of development in China has concentrated much effort on GDP growth. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the attention of the central government in recent years has shifted to the so-called Green GDP and provincial government performance based on measuring Gross Ecosystem Product (GEP) growth. Aside from poverty alleviation, China has also set new goals such as achieving an ecological civilization. It happens to be very timely and in tune with the environmental and social concerns presented in the encyclicals of Pope Francis and his call for a new paradigm of economic systems. This chapter will conclude with experiences and initiatives called Economy of Francesco and Economy of Communion.

Poverty alleviation in China

From a historical perspective

For those who have been to Shanghai or have seen at least images of it, they probably know The Bund (*Waitang* 外滩), the

historical waterfront of Shanghai. On the opposite side of the river, in contrast, is the ultra-modern Pudong, new area with skyscrapers and a bright, colorful skyline. Along the Bund is an array of buildings in colonial style architecture. At the southern end is a lighthouse built by the Jesuits more than a century ago. At the other end is the Monument to the People's Heroes, built to remember all the people who contributed to the rejuvenation of China in the last 200 years.

It always helps to look at China, even on topics such as poverty alleviation, from a historical perspective. China was in decline at the turn of the 19th century under the Qing Dynasty and was called the sick man of Asia. Looking at the timeline of China's last 100 years of modern history, three milestones of change can be traced from 1919 to the present day.

May 4, 1919 marked the beginning of the May Fourth Movement, inspired by a magazine called "New Youth" (*Xinqingnian* 新青年) and young Chinese intellectuals who wanted to renew China, a sociopolitical reform movement directed toward national independence, emancipation of the individual, and rebuilding society and culture. However, from the year 1919 to 1949, when the People's Republic of China was founded, it was a 30-year period characterized by turmoil, Japanese occupation and civil war. The period 1949 to 1979 was 30 years of emphasis on ideology, specifically the communist ideology. In period 1979 to 2009 was 30 years that inaugurated the open-door policy, characterized by the pursuit of reform and development.

After China held the Olympics 2008 in Beijing and the Universal Expo of Shanghai in 2010, more and more Chinese have gone abroad for studies or visits, a period characterized by more exchanges with the rest of the world. President Xi declared in 2020 that China had succeeded in the eradication of extreme poverty. Although the 30-year period ahead cannot yet be defined, in a 2021 article, President Xi stated the concrete objective of "common prosperity" aimed to promote high-quality economic growth, and to advance the goals of all citizens sharing the opportunity for wealth and

welfare.² Xi envisions China moving towards a “new era of building a community of shared future for mankind,” committed to meeting people’s aspiration for a better life.³

Economic reform factors

In the economic transformation of China, what was unique about the way of reforming its system that makes the experience interesting? Bert Hofman, a World Bank official, presented in his paper⁴ at a conference in Shanghai pinpointing six distinct factors of Chinese transformation: an experimental way, stability, gradual reform, decentralization and incentives, pragmatism and transitional institutions, institutionalization of reforms.

Experimental way: China applied a gradual, experimental way to reform its economic system especially at the early stage after Deng Xiao Ping announced the open-door policy in 1979. The economic conditions were simply different from Eastern Europe and Latin America.⁵

Stability: When central planning relaxed, competition among regions and their enterprises became possible, but the state and the ruling party remained intact throughout the reforms, so China could focus on the economic and social transition.

Gradual reform: The famous saying coined by Deng, “Crossing the river by feeling the stones” (摸着石头过河) became China’s

2 After 30 years of reform and opening up, much emphasis was put by the Chinese government on poverty alleviation to achieve eradication of extreme poverty by 2020. It becomes increasingly clear, especially emphasized by the recent article of President Xi, that the next objective of the nation is to achieve high-quality growth, represented by the acronym GROW: high-quality Growth, Redistribution of wealth, Opportunity for all citizens, and Welfare. See Xi Jinping, “To promote common prosperity on solid ground (扎实推动共同富裕),” *Qiushi Journal* (求是杂志) October 15, 2021. In recent years, there has been studies on future development path of China for the years to come., See for example also Q. Heng, “Navigating China’s Economic Development in the New Era: From High-Speed to High-Quality Growth,” *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2018, 177-192.

3 People’s Daily, “Build a new type of international relations and a community with a shared future for mankind,” Beijing, Oct 29, 2019.

4 Bert Hofman, “Reflections on forty years of China’s reforms,” *Keynote Speech at the Fudan University’s Fanhai School of International Finance*, Jan. 2018.

5 China was poor and predominantly a rural country at the onset of reforms. The Eastern Blocs were too dependent on the Soviet Union, and Latin American countries had comparative advantage only in one or two industries and are economically vulnerable. See B. Naughton, Barry, *Growing out of the Plan: Chinese Economic Reforms 1978–1993*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

mode of economic reform, implementing partial reforms in an experimental manner, often starting in a few regions and expanding them upon proven success. While four special economic zones of Shenzhen, Zhuhai, and Shantou in Guangdong Province, and Xiamen in Fujian Province were created in the southern coastal area in 1980. The Pudong New Area in Shanghai was opened to overseas investment only in 1990.

Decentralization and incentives: By decentralizing, China turned the country into a laboratory for reforms. Successful experiments were quickly adopted throughout the country. The fiscal reforms introduced in 1980, with high revenue retention rates for local governments, for example Guangzhou Province, had strong incentives to pursue growth and promote a market economy.

Pragmatism and transitional institutions: From a planned economy grew a “dual track” system allowing non-planned economy such as Township and Village Enterprise (TVE 乡镇企业) to emerge, which were taken over later by private and foreign investment enterprises with protection of property rights.

Institutionalization of reforms⁶: From the China Academy of Social Sciences a variety of think tanks were developed, Development Research Center (DRC) of the State Council, the Development and Reform Commission (DRC发改委), and the highly influential Systems Reform Commission (SRC).

Achievements in the poverty alleviation with economic reform effort

If the main topic under discussion is poverty alleviation, why speak of economic reform and development? It is precisely because economic development and poverty reduction are interconnected; they have to go hand in hand. China has been able to achieve poverty reduction goals by means of steady economic development. China has undergone tremendous change over the past four decades. The massive economy continued to grow at a fast pace with an average of 9.5 percent since the early 1980s, compared to world average of 2.9 percent annual global growth in the same period.

6 Cf. Chen Ling - Barry Naughton, “An institutionalized policy-making mechanism: China’s return to techno-industrial policy,” *Research Policy*, 45, 2016, 2138-52.

China has been putting into practice an age-old saying, "Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him how to fish and you feed himself for a lifetime." (授人以鱼不如授人以渔). Administered by a secular government, China has achieved remarkable development in a very short span of time. In poverty alleviation, President Xi reported⁷ at a conference on December 18, 2018.

China has lifted 740 million people out of poverty in the last 40 years, reducing the poverty headcount ratio by 94.4 percentage points. The World Bank data indicates it, as unprecedented, accounting for 70 percent of the world's total poverty reduction figure.⁸

The nation has built the world's largest social security system, with the basic old-age pension covering more than 900 million people and medical insurance covering over 1.3 billion people. The ratio of permanent urban residents in total population rose 40.6 percentage points to 58.52 percent during the period.

The country has maintained its social stability over a long period, making it one of the countries that provide the greatest sense of safety in the world.

According to some scholars, the remarkable economic progress can also be attributed to certain cultural factors: Chinese people are industrious and frugal with high saving ratio. Other factors include a large and educated workforce and a political system that allows the pursuit of reforms in the long-term interest of the country and the people.⁹

In addition to that, the rapid economic development has a significant impact on the quality of life of the people. The higher education system leads to technological advancement. High-speed

7 People's Daily, "Highlights of Xi's speech at a conference celebrating 40 years of reform, opening-up," Beijing, December 18, 2018.

8 Liu Xinyong – al., "China Focus: Reform, opening-up create new wonders in human history," *Xinhua Net*, December 17, 2018

9 See Xinhuanet, "China Focus: Reform, opening-up create new wonders in human history," *Xinhua News*, December 17, 2018. Two researchers: Tu Xinquan, a professor at the University of International Business and Economics in China, and Song Luzheng, another Shanghai-based researcher, point out some cultural factors behind China's economic reform success.

trains,¹⁰ mobile payments, the bike sharing system,¹¹ and online payment systems have changed the Chinese way of life.

A World Bank document¹² even suggested that China has found a poverty alleviation path with its own characteristics and the “Chinese experience” could be offered as poverty relief in other countries.

Two more aspects fast developing: One is Online Fundraising in China, and the other is Targeted Poverty Alleviation (精准扶贫). Online fundraising in the charity sector has been developing fast. China’s Charity Law went into effect in September 2016. Since then, the government has approved 11 online public fundraising platforms. During the first half of 2018, these platforms raised 980 million RMB for 10,103 projects of 992 charitable organizations.¹³ A large proportion of the funds raised went to well-known charitable organizations some with government background while grassroots charities also sought collaboration with them. The 9/9 Philanthropy Day launched by the Tencent Group in 2016 has now become China’s prime online fundraising annual event, like a National Charity Day.¹⁴

The Chinese government officially adopted the Targeted Poverty Alleviation Strategy (TPAS) in 2014. The government report urges local governments to take targeted measures at integrating resources to ensure that assistance reaches poverty-stricken villages and households. Village work teams were sent to targeted

10 China inaugurated its first high-speed train service of 120 km between Beijing and Tianjin shortly before the Olympics in 2008. This massive network is expected to reach 30,000 kilometers in 2020, equivalent to three fourth of the circumference around the Earth’s equator.

11 Inspiring is the success story of three university students, using the bicycle-sharing system, as they made a significant transition from a pastime to a big business venture. The convenience of shared bikes like Ofo and Mobike spread the inspiring idea of a “sharing economy.”

12 “Consensus Reached at the International Forum on Reform and Opening Up and Poverty Reduction in China,” International Forum on Reform and Opening Up and Poverty Reduction in China, jointly hosted by the Chinese Government and the World Bank Group, worldbank.org, November 5, 2018.

13 The government approved 11 online public fundraising platforms such as Tencent Charity (WeChat) and Taobao Charity (Alibaba). The two raised most fund because the multi-purpose App WeChat has 900 million daily users while Taobao has 600 million monthly users for its online shopping website (a portion of certain purchases automatically goes to charity).

14 A large proportion of the funds raised go to some well-known charitable organizations such as the China Charities Aid Foundation for Children with certain government background and the One Foundation founded by Jack Lee, a movie-star turned philanthropist. See Gabriel Corsetti, “An Analysis of Online Fundraising in China,” *China Development Brief*, August 31, 2018.

areas to analyze demand, make development plans and coordinate assistance resources. The government took measures such as encouraging banks to give micro-loans to farmers, setting up rural cooperatives allowing farmers to put together their resources to raise production. Statistics show that starting from 2012 an average of 1.3 million poor people cleared the poverty line per year. The country had set the goal of wiping out poverty and to become a moderately prosperous society by 2020 as an achieved goal.¹⁵

Paradoxes

Urban population in China has grown from 20 to almost 60 percent in the last 40 years.¹⁶ Half of its population has moved from the poverty-ridden rural areas to cities living a decent life. The controversial one-child policy was introduced in 1979, exactly the same year of the inauguration of the economic reform. The rationale was to reduce China's enormous population growth which was hard to feed. It brought about social consequences and challenges, such as problems of rural "left-behind" children and urban "single-child" families, resulting in an aging population as a whole. Since 2013, the controversial policy has gradually been relaxed. China is now stepping up measures, and incentives to encourage birth rate growth. Another paradox is the reverse trend happening among the youth: there is a movement toward smaller cities and towns, where new development offers more opportunities.

In Chapter two, I mentioned the environmental pollution issues in China brought about by industries, urbanization, traffic congestion, infrastructure building, and dependency on fossil fuels. The dependency of energy consumption on international geopolitics is a complex issue.

Competition led to rapid economic growth but created the problem of pollution, income disparity and other shortcomings. Many point out that the lifetime income of an average young worker

15 South China Morning Post, "Grinding poverty in China – is Xi Jinping's alleviation campaign making any difference?" March 25, 2018.

16 The urban population has grown from about 18.6% in 1979 to 57.9% in 2017. See "China – Urban population as a share of total population," *World Data Atlas*, 2018. Retrieved on April17: <https://knoema.com/atlas/China/Urban-population>.

will not be sufficient to purchase an apartment in big cities. Since 2020, the Chinese central government has started to evaluate local government performance in certain provinces, not by the GDP but by Gross Ecosystem Products (GEP) growth, or by the happiness index growth of the people. This truly is a shift of paradigm.

The success in poverty alleviation has also created paradoxes. My intention is to put the one-child policy, the industrial and rapid economic growth policies of the past in context, so as to understand the dilemmas to be solved. It is a reminder that timely corrective measures and continuous reform policies are always necessary, to anticipate, for example, the aging population, and pollution problems, before it is too late.

Can China's poverty alleviation be a contribution to a new economic paradigm?

As mentioned earlier, China has experienced gradual and continuous economic reform in the last 40 years in an experimental manner. The country is big and the size of its economy is huge. In fact, by GDP per-capita (cf. World Bank data), it is still considered a developing country. It has developed an economic model consonant to its own cultural characteristics and history maintaining a steady political system.¹⁷ Its development model may not be suitable for other countries; however, its experience could certainly offer inspiration and contribute to the reflection of a new economic paradigm for poverty alleviation.

Relationship between developed and less developed regions

Deng Xiaoping once famously said "to get rich is honorable." That unleashed tremendous potential for economic reform and

¹⁷ This can also describe Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia – countries that experienced economic growth with more autocratic or centralized systems of government. Political stability is an element of "Asian values" drawn from Confucian ethics, which I discuss in this book. This notion is part of the political philosophy practiced in many Asian countries, but has been criticized in the West as an excuse to justify undemocratic regimes. There are many proponents of Asian values among renowned personalities not only in political field such as Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore and Mahathir of Malaysia, but also in the economic and cultural fields as well.

the opening up of China. More significantly however, the second part of his quote was often left unnoticed. He said that we permit some people and some regions to become prosperous first, for the purpose of achieving common prosperity. Therefore, common prosperity is the key and the main objective.

It has been a long tradition for China to pair rich coastal provinces with poor ones in the western region to offer assistance for poverty relief. A program initiated in 1996 was upgraded in 2015 with precise policies and diversified measures to reduce poverty through industrial development, labor transfers, resettlements and ecological protection projects. Over the years, the World Bank started to offer loans to targeted provinces, such as Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and Shaanxi Province, according to a report on poverty alleviation, to support cooperation between farmers' cooperatives and agricultural enterprises and to develop the agricultural value chain.¹⁸

The Chinese experience of prosperous coastal provinces paired with and helping poor provinces in western China can be shared and proposed at the international level for the assistance and relationship between developed and developing countries. The transfer of clean technologies to developing countries is also the responsibility of developed countries, in order to solve the global environmental crisis and to safeguard our common home for humanity, as it is stressed in the *Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church*.¹⁹ The interprovincial experiences within China could be regarded as a reference, as some countries in the European Union such as Portugal, Spain, and Ireland also developed a similar policy.

In a recent symposium with business leaders, Xi Jinping launched a new "Go West" development plan to counter post-coronavirus geopolitical risks and obstacles posed by US-China decoupling, as reported in an article in the *South China Morning Post* (June 22, 2020).²⁰ The idea is to form a new development

18 R. C. Lu "Poverty Relief: Achievements in Five Years," *China Today*, July 3, 2017.

19 Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church*, Vatican, 2004, 475.

20 Frank Tang, "China launches new Go West development drive to counter post-coronavirus geopolitical risks," *South China Morning Post*, June 22, 2020.

pattern, a “dual circulation” strategy, with a domestic circulation (国内大循环) between the prosperous eastern China and the less-developed western China as the main body, and the domestic and international circulations mutually promote one another (国内国际双循环).

New economic system with Asian values

Pope Francis speaks of an integral approach to a new economic system, taking into account the relationship with the ecological system, social justice, respect for other cultures and fraternity. This new paradigm could integrate economic models from the “chopsticks cultural sphere” (筷子文化圈) with Confucian ethics and Asian values such as harmony, diligence, frugality and high-saving rate.

While Chinese scholar and environmental activist Liao Xiaoyi²¹ rejoices at the encyclical and finds many similarities with the “ecological civilization” that China has promoted in recent years. A preeminent American scholar of process philosophy, John Cobb²² believes that China has the conditions and stands a good chance of achieving an ecological civilization.

We have seen how China in the last few decades has attained remarkable achievement in poverty alleviation combining the practice of age-old wisdom and the Targeted Poverty Alleviation Strategy. Its efforts and realization of poverty alleviation offer hope for countries facing common challenges. Above all, China has demonstrated a development model that is consonant to its own culture, taking into consideration the local conditions and its present stage of developments, and the international environment.

21 Liao Xiaoyi, a former professor CASS, founder of Global Village Beijing NGO in the aftermath of 2008 earthquake, proposed a new sustainable living approach and founded many rural community projects called “Happiness and harmony” Homelands in collaboration with provincial officials. She is also recipient of awards for contribution to conserving traditional culture and the ecosystem. See A. Moriggi, “Chinese Women at the Forefront of Environmental Activism” *DEP Journal*, Issue 35, 2017, 206-227.

22 Cf. J. B. Cobb – I. Castuera (eds.), *For our Common Home: Process-Relational Response to Laudato Si'*, Minnesota: Process Century Press, 2015, i-vi.

*Endogenous development:
meritocracy and wise governance*

Last but not least, a crucial point in the China development model is her particular system of governance and the government's role in guiding sound policy for the common good of the country. Confucianism emphasizes meritocracy and wise governance. For example, at the beginning of the reform and opening up of China, there were two major factors: Active integration in the globalized industrial chain and division of labor. The gradual transition from the early 80s "three-plus-one trading mix" (encouraging production, processing and assembly for foreign orders combined with government subsidy)²³ to the current sound industrial system, China entered the WTO in 2001, and has benefited concretely from globalization.

Although economic development is dominated by market mechanisms, the government's role is essential in guiding industrial policies in certain key areas such as new energy, high-speed rail manufacturing, and electric vehicles. Without these industrial policies, China's economic development would be uneven, similar to some Latin American and Asian countries with comparative advantage only in one or two industries, and would be economically vulnerable. These factors are related to sound government industrial policy, and also a diligent and skillful workforce.

China's ability to seize the dividends of globalization is also directly related to her high talent pool. She has effectively invested in education (nine-year-free compulsory education, strong state subsidies for universities), in the ecological environment, and in poverty alleviation. The Chinese government leadership has the ability to take advantage of an "endogenous development" (development from within its culture). Over time the model has proven to outperform populist leaders coming from the so-called liberal democratic systems, which prove to be divisive for the people and the country.

23 Chen Xie, *The Other Side of the Global Imbalances: The Politics of Economic Reform in China Under the "New Normal,"* PhD dissertation in Politics, University of York, March 2018, 175-176.

China has clear policy programs, for example the four modernizations in the Deng Xiaoping era, and the “two centenaries” goals as proposed by Xi Jinping. China also has to confront the challenge of corruption especially in the process of transition from a planned to a market economy, and in a system where government officials are appointed with too much power. However, the leadership in recent years has proved to be steadfast in combating corruption, and national leaders selected by the Central Organization Department made the Chinese Communist Party, the ruling party, resilient and capable of governing. These internal strengths, apart from integrating with the global economy, led China to her current successes.

The threat of materialism, spiritual poverty, and the culture of indifference

Spiritual poverty

Relentless pursuit of economic development has created an abysmal spiritual vacuum in the Chinese people. As some scholars have pointed out, there is a great need not only of material but of spiritual poverty alleviation. Given their materialistic view of life, are the people happy? As society becomes more affluent because of economic development, the younger generation is exposed constantly to consumerism. The trend goes beyond the issues of leisure and free time, and is manifested in more malicious forms such as greed, envy, and the worship of money. Their voracious appetite has even become an annual ritual. Every November 11 since the year, or 11/11, steep discounts at e-commerce stores are offered. The date was chosen to represent singles, catering to a batch of lonesome people, to take advantage of the internet shopping holiday.

Incidents of selfishness and indifference such as the tragedy of little Yueyue,²⁴ food safety and corruption scandals in the early 2010s shocked the Chinese national conscience, and provoked

²⁴ A two-year-old girl hit by two vehicles and ignored by passers-by until a scavenger Chen Xianmei intervened, but the little girl eventually died at a hospital in Foshan on October 13, 2011. The images of the tragedy spread on the internet inflamed the minds of millions of bloggers who criticized the materialism and immorality of the Chinese society, still the witness of Xianmei promises some hopes.

much public outrage about rampant materialism and the immorality of contemporary Chinese society. Another way of escape from reality is to forget everything and enjoy the development of information technology and products of a modern economy.

Pressure on the youth

Chinese youth are under tremendous pressure. They have different kinds of challenges to face. They are under pressure in childhood to study and work hard to find a life partner and form a future family. The whole family or clan concentrates their efforts for the single child to pass the *gaokao* (university entrance exam), a tradition that can be traced back to the Confucian state exam during the Han Dynasty period (206 BCE – 200 CE). Moreover, parents pool their resources to help the young to choose a spouse.

College is a time for academic pursuits, independent thinking and seeking a meaning for life. Hua Hua of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS) conducted a survey targeting Christian student fellowships²⁵ found that, while there is intense competition, lack of mutual assistance and cooperative experience in the education system, some students become Christians because they find harmonious relationships and an atmosphere of greater solidarity within these groups. Besides this survey, I also interviewed Prof. Bao Leiping, a senior researcher of the Youth Research Center of the same Academy. In Chinese schools, students are still taught a mainly materialist conception of history according to the Marxist ideology.

According to the findings of Prof. Bao, youth in a metropolis like Beijing or Shanghai have already entered the post-materialist age as in developed countries, but she calls attention to characteristics different from those highlighted by American scholar Ronald Inglehart who coined the term “post-materialism.”²⁶ For her,

25 Hua Hua, “A survey on college students’ Christian belief – taking some Shanghai students as example,” *Youth Studies*, Vol. 1, Shanghai, 2008.

26 Post-materialist characteristics are the emphasis on self-expression and quality of life, environmental protection, freedom of speech, and gender equality. In contrast, the materialist characteristics are economic security and social order, with emphasis on traditional, cultural, and religious values, and authority of all kinds. The shift involves an intergenerational change of social norms from traditional values to those linked with individual wellbeing and self-expression. See Ronald Inglehart, “Post-materialism,” *Online Encyclopedia Britannica*, November 16, 2016.

Chinese youth do have their own opinions and self-expressions, but their outlook is not as liberal and individualistic as Inglehart characterized. They treasure stability but without blindly following things. To a certain extent, they still stick to traditional cultural norms on gender and family, respect for authority and for their parents. The role models for teenagers are not consumerist types, movie stars or singers, but productive types, such as Ma Yun (Jack Ma) and Ma Huateng (like Bill Gates or Steve Jobs, their counterparts in the U.S.).²⁷

Some years ago, Liang Zhi, a Ph.D. candidate of the elite university of Tsinghua, appeared on a TV program. On one hand he was boastful showing off his degrees in law, in communications and in management, and yet showing distress and seeking advice on what job to take. The TV host criticized this egoistic approach to career, and many netizens also afterwards expressed dismay for him.

Nevertheless, all is not lost. By contrast, there is an exceptional story that could inspire young people. There is this episode of three Peking University (PKU) students, by using the bicycle-sharing system, transformed a pass-time leisure to a big business venture. Common interest brought Zhang Siding, Dai Wei and Xue Dong together at the university's cycling association. A few years later, in 2014, one of them came up with the brilliant idea of converting their pastime activity into a long-term career, the "Ofo Bicycle." After primitive business plans, a consolidated experience of failures and new attempts, in 2015 they turned to a PKU alumnus who appreciated their idea of "riding the bike anytime and anywhere." They organized investment funding to launch the project for the whole PKU campus that same year. In the following year, despite setbacks, determination led them to enlarge the project to cover 500 campuses. The project continued to develop. With digital innovations, using a smartphone App to unlock bicycles, charging an average hourly rate of one Chinese Yuan (about 15 US cents) for each trip. The advantage is that people can dock their rented bikes anywhere at their desired destinations, and perhaps take another bike after a subway ride. Bike sharing has become easy,

27 Bao Leiping, "Youth idols in China since 1949 from the structural perspective," *Youth Research*, Vol. 1, 2009, 67-75.

cheap and efficient without having to own a bike. As of 2017, the Ofo Company operates over 10 million bikes in 180 cities and 13 countries; it is valued at USD 3 billion and has over 62.7 million monthly active users.²⁸ Eventually, Ofo did not survive the ferocious competition in the cruel world of business and finance. In 2019, it was replaced by other bike-sharing companies such as Hellobike backed by Alibaba in this game for giants.

However, with the convenient usage of the bike-sharing system combined with mobile payment app, the concept of “sharing economy” further developed in China. Above all, the idea of “shared economy” harnesses the concept of shared resources and is beneficial to economic development.²⁹

Catholic social services, a witness to spiritual poverty alleviation

Catholic social services

Catholics belong to a small minority group in China. Catholic charity projects are just a drop in a bucket in comparison to many big-scale government projects. However, when it is done out of love, it bears witness to one’s faith.

The year 2008 was a particular year for the Chinese nation as a whole. Many parts of South China were hit by snowstorms at the beginning of the year. Just a few months later, an earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale devastated the Wenchuan area in Sichuan Province.

Facing this disaster, in collaboration with local clergy and laity as well as receiving support from within China and abroad such as from Caritas, *Jinde* Charities immediately launched a series of responses such as donations, emergency relief, rescue efforts, and epidemic prevention services. It provided medical and commodity support in the relocation camps, as well as psychological counseling and reconstruction of social institutes in the aftermath. It was an occasion for Catholic organizations like *Jinde* to witness to Christian faith and charity. It joined hand in hand with civil

28 Tao Li, “Parents of Ofo’s bike user sue company for negligence after accident,” *South China Morning Post*, October 27, 2017.

29 Yan Kin Sheung Chigaretto, *Seasons for Relationships*, 26-27.

authorities and the Chinese people to work for the quake victims in their rehabilitation efforts and reconstruction projects.

Other social service centers of the Catholic Church are also present in Xi'an with an affiliate of *Jinde* Charity, and in Shanghai, with the "*Guanqi* Social Service Center." The *Guanqi* Social Service Center was set up in the Shanghai Diocese in 2005. Since then it has launched many projects and activities such as scholarships to support kindergartens, aid for orphanages and disabled people, elderly care, and migrants. Other dioceses also offer similar social service-oriented projects catering to the needs of the people.

Jinde Charities was founded in May 1997 in Shijiazhuang. It is the first non-profit organization (NPO) of the Chinese Catholic Church for social services, registered as *Jinde* Charities Foundation in 2011. In 2018 it became qualified as a foundation, with crowdfunding permits, to join the 9/9 Philanthropy Day for public fundraising for certain projects.

Witnesses contributing to spiritual poverty alleviation

In 2014, Pope Francis donated 50 thousand USD through *Jinde* in support of the victims at Ludian, Yunnan Province. Besides emergency aid and disaster relief, in recent years *Jinde* coordinates the Ricci Volunteer Program that trains students for short term volunteer work and to discover value for life through services. It also has engaged in activities such as offering scholarships to subsidize students in need, visiting poor families and caring for the elderly, providing fertilizer and seeds to farmers, holding health seminars, HIV Aids prevention, and other social development services and projects. It has been operating a home for the elderly since 2002. As a government official once commented, "with its service to society *Jinde* has built up a positive image of the Catholic Church."³⁰

In the past, there would always be people skeptical about philanthropic work for propaganda purposes, whether they came from the government or from the Church. During the peak of the coronavirus outbreak in China in early 2020, there were

30 UCANews, "First Catholic-run non-profit organization registered with Chinese government," August 3, 2006.

some concrete experiences reported about sister-nurses doing ambulance service, lay people following examples of clergy and even a bishop doing voluntary work at their living areas. A social media group was created by a few sisters from different dioceses including one from Wuhan, serving people in need of counseling in these difficult times. As a Chinese saying goes, “in a crisis there could also be an opportunity” (危中有机). Like a blessing in disguise, all these experiences give a sense of solidarity to the people.

Pope Francis in his message on last World Day of the Poor said, “We Christians are inspired by faith and by the imperative of charity, in humility offering our cooperation without seeking the limelight... the Spirit is the source of our actions that reveal God’s closeness... it is precisely the poor who can break through our indifference... The cry of the poor is also a cry of hope that reveals the certainty of future liberation.”³¹

American political scientist Samuel Huntington foresaw that while the age of ideology had ended, future conflicts in the world would be dominated by the clash of civilizations.³² Instead of speaking about “the clash of civilizations,” Pope Francis emphasizes “the culture of encounter.” He wrote in a letter and I quote: “It is time to combat the culture of indifference, that makes the need of building the culture of encounter ever more urgent. A fruitful encounter gives back to each person dignity as sons of God. If I do not look, if I do not stop, if I do not speak, I cannot make an encounter happen, and I cannot help build the culture of encounter. We must therefore find a way, through dialogue to walk together, making use of the reciprocal richness, historical and cultural, of our civilizations and build a common future of harmony.”³³ Pope Francis’ personal witness of humble lifestyle and reaching out to the poor has won the sympathy of the Chinese people, the trust of the authorities, and a historical agreement signed between the Holy See and China.

31 Pope Francis, “Message on World Day of the Poor,” Vatican, 18 Nov. 18, 2018

32 Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order*, New York, 1996.

33 Pope Francis, a personal letter in reply to Kin Sheung Charetto Yan’s letter with two books by Yan as gifts to the Holy Father, Nov. 27, 2018.

At this point, I would like to share a personal experience. In early 2018, I was surprised to have received an email from Szymon Holownia, a professor from Poland, who is also a journalist. He has two foundations and is running some charity projects in Zambia, Africa, for orphans, children with AIDS, Down syndrome, and human trafficking victims. He told me that he had found my book about China and the challenges and prospects of evangelization at the African airport of Johannesburg, and became interested. I provided him with some information about Catholic charity organizations mentioned in my book. A year later, I met him in person in Shanghai, learned that it was already his second visit to China, and together with Fr. Xue of Yahweh Caritas, they were opening a psychological intervention center in Hangzhou. Until a few years ago, China for Szymon was a reality so far away, difficult to understand. Now he is present here with concrete actions. As an age-old saying goes, "It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness" (与其诅咒黑暗不如点燃光明).

As far as I can tell, there are still difficulties in recent years. One major obstacle is the general skepticism of local government officials towards religious groups, suspicious of charitable organizations meant for propaganda purposes. Sustainable development for religious groups, such as Jinde, is difficult to achieve, because of fluctuating policy when Bureau chiefs, responsible for religions, terms expire. The attitude of the new chiefs may change and it takes time to adjust.

Simple lifestyle consonant with Asian values and with the spirit of the EoF

Simple lifestyle advocated by Pope Francis and a Chinese example

In his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis begins reflecting on universal fraternity and calls for a simple lifestyle inspired by St. Francis of Assisi. He ends with the prophetic image of Charles de Foucauld. Foucauld gave testimony of total surrender to God, identified with the least, and abandoned while living in the depths of the African desert. Pope Francis exhorts us to dream together as a single human family (FT 8) at the beginning and repeats at the

end of the encyclical that God inspires in each of us the dream that inspired Francis of Assisi and Charles de Foucauld to be a brother of every human being (*FT* 286-287). As Pope Francis highlighted other inspiring figures from other Christian denominations, religions and cultures such as Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu, and Mahatma Gandhi. His examples remind me of Tao Yuanming (365–427), an inspiring figure in Chinese history.

There is a Chinese proverb, “Refuse to bow for five bushels of grain (*buwei wudoumi zheyao* 不为五斗米折腰),” which means with dignity refuse to swallow one’s pride for a meager existence. Five bushels of grain refers to the historical salary of a low-ranking official. The quotation comes from Tao Yuanming, a famous poet and politician. As a young man, he was rather idealistic. He thought that if he served as an official and assisted the king, he could make the world a wonderful place. His dream was shattered when he witnessed the rampant corruption and the sordid dealings in court. Feeling disdain and contempt for worldly affairs, he resigned and retreated to the countryside. Apart from his many poems, Tao is best known today for his description of Peach Blossom Shangri-la (桃花源记). This short work with the intriguing depiction of a land hidden from the outside world. The name Peach Blossom Spring (*Tao Hua Yuan* 桃花源). has since become the standard Chinese term for utopia or paradise on earth.

Tao spent much of his life in simple living in the countryside. The following is one of his poems “Returning to Garden and Fields to Dwell” (*Gui Yuan Tian Ju* 归园田居):

I’ve loathed the madding crowd since I was a boy
 While hills and mountains have filled me with joy.
 By mistake I sought mundane careers
 And got entrapped in them for thirty years.
 Birds in the cage would long for wooded hills;
 Fish in the pond would yearn for flowing rills.
 So I reclaim the land in southern fields
 To suit my bent for reaping farmland yields.
 My farm contains a dozen mu of ground;
 My cottage has eight or nine rooms around.
 The elm and willow cover backside eaves
 While peach and plum trees shade my yard with leaves.
 The distant village dimly looms somewhere,

With smoke from chimneys drifting in the air.
 In silent country lanes a stray dog barks;
 Amid the mulberry trees cocks crow with larks.
 My house is free from worldly moil or gloom
 While ease and quiet permeate my private room.
 When I escape from bitter strife with men,
 I live a free and easy life again.³⁴

少无适俗韵，性本爱丘山。误落尘网中，一去十三年。
 羈鸟恋旧林，池鱼思故渊。开荒南野际，抱拙归园田。
 方宅十馀亩，草屋八九间。榆柳荫后檐，桃李罗堂前。
 暧暧远人村，依依墟里烟。狗吠深巷中，鸡鸣桑树颠。
 户庭无尘杂，虚室有余闲。久在樊笼里，复得返自然。

His poems show a longing for a return to nature, deprecating artificial limits or restrictions in interpersonal relationships, and the desire for a simple life. He shows perseverance and integrity in his poem, and has been regarded as the first Chinese poet associated with the Fields and Gardens poetry genre.³⁵

Economy of Francesco (EoF) and economic paradigm shift

Just as in *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis uses an integral approach in *Fratelli tutti*. For him, ecology, politics, the economy, and social problems of the poor are all interconnected. His encyclical *Fratelli tutti* builds on the parable of the Good Samaritan that shows how we have to be intimately involved with those in need who are near us. He explains how we must act at local levels very concretely, and work with others so that our fraternity radiates outwards to the ends of the earth.

The encyclical makes a clear distinction about people, populace, and populism. Pope Francis is very critical of leaders who use the common people for their own advantage instead of “being at the service of the people.”³⁶ The Encyclical also criticizes the

34 Translation taken from Poetry Translation of English Learning website kekenet.com. Retrieved from: <http://kekenet.com/kouyi/201503/363431.shtml>.

35 Burton Watson, *Chinese Lyricism: Shih Poetry from the Second to the Twelfth Century*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1971, 79.

36 Luigino Bruni, *Guida alla lettura dell'Enciclico Fratelli Tutti (Guide to Reading Fratelli Tutti)*, Milano, 2020, 14.

corruption of political systems, that often serve the interests of elites and privileged classes, and undermine the common good. He appeals for concern of the vulnerable, to the respect of human dignity, and to recognize the rights of migrants while working to avoid the injustices that cause migration in the first place. Above all, the political sphere should be a place of encounter, to work for the good of the people, and not a place to “hide behind a populism that exploits them demagogically, or a liberalism that serves the economic interests of the powerful (FT 155).

Pope Francis points out that neoliberalism simply reproduces itself by resorting to magic theories of ‘spillover’ or ‘trickle-down’ economy³⁷ which does not solve social problems such as inequality but gives rise to new forms of violence threatening the fabric of society. He adds that “the fragility of world systems in the face of the pandemic has demonstrated that not everything can be resolved by market freedom” (FT 168). The world therefore needs a new type of politics that promotes dialogue and solidarity, triggering a call for change of economic paradigm.

Subsequently, one month and a half after the signing of *Fratelli Tutti*, an international event “The Economy of Francesco” (EoF) was held in Assisi from 19-21 November 2020, featuring young economists and entrepreneurs from all over the world. In the event, many testimonies were shared. Particularly relevant and one of the main inspirational experiences that led to the EoF process is the initiative of Chiara Lubich, who called for an Economy of Communion (EoC) inaugurated 30 years ago in Brazil.

Pope Francis has publicly acknowledged and encouraged the EoC initiative by meeting its members gathered from all over the world in Rome.³⁸ Since the financial crisis of 2007-2008, popes have spoken openly about the crisis facing the global economy and the urgent need for an alternative economic system. In recent years, the Economy of Communion initiative has received official attention. Pope Benedict XVI in his social encyclical *Caritas in*

37 Spillover or trickle-down theory is the economic proposition that taxes on businesses and the wealthy in society should be reduced as a means to stimulate business investment in the short term and benefit society at large in the long term.

38 Pope Francis, “Address to Participants in the Meeting ‘Economy of Communion,’” sponsored by the Focolare Movement, Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, February 4, 2017.

Veritate refers explicitly to the kind of experiences the EoC brings about.³⁹

The EoC was established in 1991 by Chiara Lubich and the initiative expresses the “culture of giving” as opposed to the “culture of having”. The EoC originates from the Focolare Movement, whose spiritual identity is based on striving for communion (or unity) with others. This culture of giving involves a communion (or sharing) of goods among Focolare members as well as helping people who are not members of the movement. Hence the EoC can be described as the manifestation of the culture of giving in terms of economic activity. Entrepreneurs within the EoC consider it essential to make profits to ensure that their businesses remain viable and expand. They also consider it necessary to distribute their profits to those who are in need and to promote social development. Lubich elaborates on how profits are utilized in this economic model.

One part of these profits would be used to help the business grow; a second part would be used to help those who are in need, giving them the possibility of living a dignified life while looking for work or through offering them work in the business itself. Finally, a third part would be used to develop educational structures for the formation of men and women motivated by a “culture of giving.” The formation of “new people.” By new people, means business leaders, entrepreneurs, workers, and students with a new mentality of communion. Since without new people, it is not possible to build a new society.⁴⁰

The idea of the EoC came about when Lubich visited Brazil in 1991. She noticed, where she stayed, the enormous circle of slums (*favelas*) that seemed to her to be a “crown of thorns” around the city of São Paulo, a vibrant economic hub of Brazil. In her diary for May 15, 1991, Lubich reaffirmed that poverty constituted one of the biggest and most tragic problems on earth. She prayed to God for a new insight on how to act. A few days later, an idea emerged. She reasoned that it was not enough to exercise acts of charity,

39 Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, June 29, 2009, 39, 46.

40 Chiara Lubich, “The experience of the ‘Economy of Communion’: a proposal of economic action from the spirituality of unity,” in Luigino Bruni (ed.), *The Economy of Communion: Toward a Multi-Dimensional Economic Culture*, New York: New City Press. 2002. 15-16.

works of mercy, or the “communion of goods” between individual persons. She was addressing a group of entrepreneurs, people capable of managing profitable companies efficiently. The innovation she proposed was that the profits be put in common according to the three parts mentioned above. The actual amount to each of the three would depend on needs of the company. In this way, Lubich’s proposal addressed not only a social problem of the poor and the marginalized, but went directly to the heart of the question of economy.

Bernhard Callebaut recalls his conversation with a famous author on Theology of Liberation, Leonardo Boff, at Petropolis, Brazil in 1988, who is also a keen observer and participant of the life and project of Ecclesial Base Communities (CEB). Boff said that the cause for the relative lack of real impact of the Theology of Liberation and the CEBs on Brazilian society consisted in the fact that they did not engage the middle class.⁴¹

The dream that Chiara sought to realize is equality in the evangelical sense, where all are sons and daughters of God. It was for this end that the EoC was created, and the Latin American Church has made the “preferential option for the poor” at its heart. There was a big gap in Brazilian society between the rich and poor. Lubich saw a need not only to free the poor but also to free the rich, true liberty is found in real social relationships. As Callebaut points out that “her initiative brought together two functions of society: the economic and the social, symbolically represented by the figures of the entrepreneur and the poor.” He sees it as a “prophetic economy” in Max Weber terms, linking with the preferential option for the poor of the Latin American Church and the birth of new ecclesial movements.⁴²

Fratelli Tutti affirms the principle that the right to private property is secondary to the universal destination of goods. Luigino Bruni points out that the Church has always recalled this principle since the times of the early Church Fathers, the right to the private ownership of goods is subordinate to a more fundamental principle,

41 Bernhard Callebaut, “Economy of communion, a sociological inquiry on a contemporary charismatic inspiration in economic and social life,” *Claritas: Journal of Dialogue & Culture*, Vol. 1, No.1, March 2012, 80

42 *Ibid.*, 71-82

“the goods we possess are a gift.” This principle is rooted in a biblical humanism, where “the earth belongs to Yahweh” and we are only tenants of the land that is always promised and given.⁴³ Related to this priority, the Encyclical also speaks of the role of an entrepreneur:

Business activity is essentially “a noble vocation, directed to producing wealth and improving our world.” God encourages us to develop the talents he gave us, and he has made our universe one of immense potential. In God’s plan, each individual is called to promote his or her own development, and this includes finding the best economic and technological means of multiplying goods and increasing wealth. Business abilities, which are a gift from God, should always be clearly directed to the development of others and to eliminating poverty, especially through the creation of diversified work opportunities. (FT 123).

For Edmond Eh, the EoC is an alternative model of subsidiarity economics that addresses the weaknesses of both the market economy and the centralized economy. The advantages are, businesses under this model on one hand have to operate efficiently so as to survive and remain competitive in the context of the free market; on the other hand, these businesses are self-regulating by nature and do not require governmental interference in order to behave in an ethical manner. “On an Aristotelian analysis, businesses of the EoC practise *oikonomia* which promotes well-being for all instead of *chrematistike* which leads to the accumulation of private wealth.” He says: “It is a significant model of common good entrepreneurship that integrates spirituality with business practices in a manner that promotes fairness and solidarity for all.”⁴⁴

Since 1991, hundreds of enterprises have participated in the EoC initiatives in Brazil and worldwide. As Lubich intended, it has become not only a personal, but collective lifestyle, a culture called “culture of giving.” They are initiatives that do not oppose the free market system, but work in favor of the poor. It is a new

43 Luigino Bruni, *Guida alla lettura dell'Enciclico Fratelli Tutti (Guide to Reading Fratelli Tutti)*, Milano, 2020, 10-11.

44 Edmond Eh, “Aristotle, Lubich, and Ratzinger on a new economic paradigm,” *The Journal of the Macau Ricci Institute*, Issue 7, 2021.

way of thinking about business and social justice, and therefore to develop educational projects to foster a culture of giving. When Pope called for the event Economy of Francesco (EoF) with a new economic paradigm, there were already many entrepreneurs, academics and young people who could share their expertise and experiences.

Pope Francis on the First World Day of the Poor in 2017 described the world scenario of the scandalous growth of poverty in broad sectors of society and urged us not to remain passive and give up.⁴⁵ In his address to the participants of an “Economy of Communion” meeting in Rome, he says:

The principal ethical dilemma of capitalism is the creation of discarded people, then trying to hide them or make sure they are no longer seen. A serious form of poverty in a civilization is when it is no longer able to see its poor, who are first discarded and then hidden. The economy of communion, if it wants to be faithful to its charism, must not only care for the victims, but build a system where there are ever fewer victims, where possibly there may no longer be any.⁴⁶

For Stefano Zamagni, president of the Pontifical Academy of Social Science, to take on the many challenges in the economic field today, the mission of EoC is not to offer the possibility of fighting capitalism from a revolutionary perspective or to change the shape of market economy, but to humanize it. Therefore, the contribution of EoC is to emphasize human dignity and participation of employees in the objective, the decision making and the management of the enterprises in a civil economy, and to transform an enterprise from within, starting a process of change in its way of operating.⁴⁷

The encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* gives the theme of the parable of the good Samaritan, to describe the issue of human relationships, and comments on the account of creation of the world and of man. Cain kills his brother Abel and then hears God ask: “Where is your brother Abel?” Not answering God’s question, Cain asks, “Am I my

45 Pope Francis, “Message on First World Day of the Poor,” Vatican, Nov. 19, 2017.

46 Pope Francis, “Address to Participants in the Meeting ‘Economy of Communion,’” 2017.

47 Carlo Cefaloni, “Dialogando con Stefano Zamagni,” *Città Nuova magazine*, July 2021, 30-33.

brother's keeper?" (Gen 4:9). He thus declared he was not Abel's keeper. He committed fratricide because he was not a keeper. Luigino Bruni concludes his reading guide to the Encyclical with another beautiful account of what biblical brotherhood means.⁴⁸ Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still in good health? [...]" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence. Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you once sold on the road to Egypt," (Gn 45:3-4). While many are still unaware of the fratricide happening,⁴⁹ Pope Francis is making an appeal at the international level, going beyond race, creed, and national boundaries, going beyond the natural fraternity of blood, to that of the fraternity in the spirit.

The Chinese economic model with its cultural root and future trajectory

Pope Francis speaks on the relationship between politics and economy in the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, he favors universal common good, and the protection of weaker states. He underlines the role of the state while speaking about political love, and he says: "politics must not be subject to the economy, nor should the economy be subject to the dictates of an efficiency-driven paradigm of technocracy" (*FT* 177).

Benedict XVI when he was cardinal also spoke of the relationship between Church and economy, and the responsibility for the future of world economy.⁵⁰ The centralized economy is understood to be at the service of the community instead of profit-making while the market economy is understood to operate on the principles

48 Luigino Bruni, *Guida alla lettura dell'Enciclico Fratelli Tutti*, Milano, 2020, 19-21.

49 Some thoughtful analysts on human rights emphasize that the most fundamental of rights is the right to life, even in the material sense, for example the right to food and nutrition. For what does a person do with all the rights, even the noblest ones, if he or she is dying of hunger? If this right were officially recognized and promoted, perhaps rich nations would not waste incredible amounts of money and resources on armaments. Instead, there is an ongoing "fratricide" or a "silent genocide of the poor" in the name of a free market. "Silent genocide" is a phrase coined by Prof. Abdus Salam in "A Silent Genocide (Rich vs. Poor Nations)," address to "Facing the 21st Century: Threats and Promises" Conference, *UNESCO Courier*, May 1988, 27-28.

50 Joseph Ratzinger, "Church and Economy: Responsibility for the Future of the World Economy," *Communio: International Catholic Review*, 13, 1986, 199-204.

of efficiency instead of the principles of morality. It is believed that, in a centralized economy, market forces can be made to act justly due to state intervention, but it entails a form of determinism because it assumes that regulations are always designed to produce what is in the best interests for society at large. Ultimately, the market economy also fails because it entails another form of determinism when market forces are assumed to be intrinsically good and to always produce good outcomes. Therefore, a new economic paradigm that serves as a viable alternative to existing models must take into account both efficiency and ethics. For any economic system to be ethical, it must be guided towards the common good, and this emerging system must strike a balance between market economy and state intervention.

As mentioned above, China has developed an economic system in an experiential way throughout recent decades, state intervention has been important for the poverty alleviation effort in an efficient way. Needless to say, the relationship between central government and the provincial government is an important topic for discussion. The evaluation of the performance of local governments who are competing in the GDP output has been important for economic efficiency in the past. Nevertheless, it generates other problems such as corruption and pollution. I have mentioned the shift of the evaluation system to double down on green GDP and happiness index. The social teachings of the Church emphasize principles such as subsidiarity, solidarity and fraternity. For me, China is actually working out an economic system with values consonant to these principles, but perhaps without using the same terms.

At the very beginning of the Chinese economic reform, China was one of the poorest nations in the world, yet it has lifted 800 million people⁵¹ of its population out of poverty in recent decades. Out of the experience as a developing country, the Chinese people took advantage of economic development to raise people's living standard. China currently is assisting many African countries and other developing countries to build their infra-structure, bringing in capital, technological know-how, and manpower. Another form

51 While 2018 World Bank data indicated China has lifted 740 million people out of poverty in the past four decades, the United Nations reports the figure of up to 800 million in 2021. See United Nations News, *Economic Development*, March 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1087472>.

of colonization is how an international media put it? Or China, with its economic resources, is filling a vacuum in a continent that has been exploited and neglected for centuries? In the geo-political chess board, only time will tell of success or failure. One positive effect is that Western developed countries are now paying more attention to Africa offering aid as well, to counter China. Needless to say, it is highly important to use more of the local workforce to generate employment in the host countries. Chinese companies are learning how to collaborate with local governments and are often willing to adjust their policies, including restructuring of loans.

In recent times, there has been a lot of talk of competition, tension, conflict of interests, strategic rivalry in the China-US relations; ironically, the endogenous development and success of China in infrastructure building has perhaps motivated the Biden administration's new stimulus plan on infrastructure to boost the U.S. economy. It suggests, for better or for worse, we are all interconnected and interdependent. When will we ever learn?

CHAPTER FIVE

Freedom of religion and the golden rule of reciprocity

The issue of religious freedom affects Sino-Vatican relations. The Roman Catholic Church shares positive values with other cultures that provide common ground for dialogue. Pope Francis emphasizes a synodal church projecting outward towards a culture of encounter, working unceasingly for a fraternal dialogue of peace. Chinese President Xi Jinping urges his people to fulfill the Chinese dream, emphasizing the core values of harmony, friendship, civilization and rejuvenation of the nation. Could this dialogue on values contribute to the spiritual dimension of the Chinese civilization? Would normalization of relations between China and the Holy See benefit China and the Catholic Church, and contribute to world peace and harmony? The first part of this chapter tackles these issues and the second part explores how Catholics practice their faith and face challenges in a rapidly changing China, characterized by urbanization and migration. It also analyzes the mission of the Church in the present situation, the formation of the laity and the youth, and the testimonies of how Catholic communities are coping with social changes, the new religious policies, and pandemics.

There are two prevailing attitudes regarding the Sino-Vatican relationship and the situation of the Catholic Church in China: one is to engage actively in dialogue, while the other is skeptical about such efforts. Resistance to dialogue can arise from both the Chinese authorities and the Holy See. From the Catholic perspective, those who want to engage actively in dialogue generally take a step-by-step approach.¹ Those who are skeptical about dialogue reason as follows: unless there is complete freedom of religion in China, there can be no genuine dialogue. However, we need to ask first of all. What is complete freedom of religion and what does the Chinese Constitution say about religion?

Dialogue between the Holy See and Chinese authorities

Article 36 of the Chinese Constitution states: "Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief. No state organ, public organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion. *The state protects normal religious activities.*"² No one may make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the state. Religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination."³

In 2018 we celebrated the seventieth anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 18 of this declaration states, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes *freedom* to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, *to manifest his religion or belief* in teaching, practice, worship and observance."⁴

1 See, for example, John Cardinal Tong, "The Future of the Sino-Vatican Dialogue from an Ecclesiological Point of View," *Hong Kong Sunday Examiner*, February 4, 2017.

2 Emphasis in italics mine.

3 *Constitution of the People's Republic of China*, Article 36, adopted on December 4, 1982.

4 The UN General Assembly, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Paris, proclaimed on December 10, 1948 (emphasis in italics mine).

If we compare the two articles, we see that both include the freedom to practice and to manifest one's faith and the freedom to change one's religious belief (freedom of conversion). We also see a difference: the Chinese Constitution emphasizes protection and no foreign domination, while the UN declaration emphasizes the freedom to manifest one's religious belief. One focuses inward on protection, and the other focuses outward on manifestation. We may trace this divergence to cultural differences between East and West.

These cultural differences are evident in other universal moral teachings, such as the Golden Rule. This maxim refers to the ethics of reciprocity or reciprocal love, as expressed in a positive or a negative form. Variants of the Golden Rule can be found in many religions and cultures. For Western culture, it is mostly inspired by Jesus' words in the Gospels: "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Mt. 7:12; Lk 6:31). In China, the Rule reflects the wording Confucius gives it: "Do not do to others what you would not want others to do to you." The way of applying or expressing this concept, however, could vary culturally. In the realm of international affairs, for example, China often insists on a policy of not interfering in the internal affairs of others. In contrast, the foreign policy of the United States has often been that of putting pressure on other countries to accept its values and systems. Some Asians want to assert their cultural identity as a response and propose so-called Asian values. Contrary to what many people may think, modernization in Asia does not necessarily mean Westernization.

Another document addresses the meaning of religious freedom: "Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World: Recommendations for Conduct." This text was signed in 2011 by three major Christian bodies: the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), the World Council of Churches (WCC), and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). Despite the nuance of approaches between the Catholic and other Christian churches regarding evangelization, in this 2011 document they were able to come up with an integral approach balancing proclamation and dialogue. The study and consultation were unprecedented, and the subsequent signing of the document was historic, involving interfaith and intercultural, as

well as ecumenical, collaboration. Along with principles of service and love of neighbors as witness in multi-religious contexts, there is the principle that addresses freedom of religion and belief: “Religious freedom including the right to publicly profess, practice, *propagate* and change one’s religion flows from the very dignity of the human person which is grounded in the creation of all human beings in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gn 1:26). Thus, all human beings have *equal rights and responsibilities*. Where any religion is instrumentalized for political ends, or where religious persecution occurs, Christians are called to engage in a prophetic witness denouncing such actions.”⁵

In addition to the freedom to practice and to change one’s religion, the principle also includes a third element mentioned in the “Christian Witness” document, namely, the freedom to “propagate” one’s faith. This freedom is a basic human right but is balanced by certain responsibilities. Another important point is that “religion should not be instrumentalized for political ends,” a concern China has also voiced in China-Vatican relations.

It is interesting to note that the PCID of the Catholic Church signed this document, together with the WCC Program on Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation.⁶ While some Christian groups including, for example Pentecostals and evangelicals, stress that they have the mission to propagate their faith, the Catholic Church emphasizes that this mission best occurs in interreligious dialogue, that is, when all parties are open, and each person or each group has the right to manifest and to propagate its faith and culture, but in a respectful manner.

By clarifying these additional terms crucial for religious dialogue, the 2011 joint document not only represents a step forward for the relationship between the Catholic Church and other Christian churches but also provides relevant ground for China-Vatican rapprochement. As I mentioned earlier, regarding issues of

5 Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) – World Council of Churches (WCC) – World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), *Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World: Recommendations for Conduct*, finalized in Bangkok, January 2011 (emphasis in italics mine).

6 Indunil J. Kodithuwakku K., “Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World: Recommendations for Conduct; Thinking Back and Looking Ahead,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 37, 2013, 109–13.

religious freedom, the Chinese Constitution stresses the protection of its citizens from foreign influence rather than manifestation and propagation of faith. Very few people capture this subtle difference. While other churches simply stress propagation of their faith, the Catholic Church stresses on respectful proclamation in the spirit of dialogue. In my view, this position of the Catholic Church is more in accord with the Chinese situation.

Inculturation and/or sinicization

With regard to the two attitudes mentioned earlier, engaging actively in dialogue or skeptical retreat from dialogue, I opt for the former, for the simple reason that dialogue is a useful tool to bridge any gap or resolve any conflict. I do not personally think that China is doing enough to protect religious freedom. It is engaged in an ongoing process of opening up more and more. Why not facilitate this process through constructive dialogue? In order to define what complete freedom of religion is, we also must listen to the Chinese view and at the same time be open and committed to respectful dialogue. That is, true dialogue needs sincere participation from both sides.

Dialogue needs patience. The Chinese leadership may have other priorities. China is governed by “consensus building” of the collective leadership, with mechanisms of “check and balance.”

The Chinese concept of sinicization (i.e., integrating something to be in conformity with Chinese culture or expressing it with Chinese characteristics) is not contradictory to the Catholic concept of inculturation (i.e., a continuous process of the Church to proclaim the Gospel so that it enters into the cultures of the peoples without compromising the integrity of the Christian faith). Even in evangelization, there is a mutual influence between the evangelizing and the evangelized cultures (“interculturalism”⁷). The emphasis should be that the Catholic Church sees inculturation from a spiritual and religious perspective, while the Chinese authorities see sinicization of religions from the perspective of

⁷ The term “interculturalism” is first used by Chiara Lubich, “Conversation on Inculturation” at Nairobi in 1992. Cf. Kin Sheung Charetto Yan, *Evangelization in China: Challenges and Prospects*, New York: Orbis Books, 2014, 134-135.

administration and politics. Keeping in mind the different cultural perspectives and the separate spheres of competence, I believe that controversies and conflicts of interest can be resolved. I suggest that these two concepts (inculturation/interculturation and sinicization), if tackled well and effectively, are complementary, inasmuch as Christianity can spread in China without the century-old label of being a foreign religion, and on the side of China, its rise as a responsible world power would be welcomed by others while maintaining “socialism with Chinese characteristics in a new era.”⁸

Respectful dialogue means expressing one’s ideas freely and at the same time respecting the views of the other with openness. A related idea in Confucianism is the notion of being “harmonious while diversified,” that is, diversity (distinction) in unity. This concept recognizes that, although people have differences in opinions, interests, preferences, and profiles, they should first maintain peace. People should live in harmony with each other, even as they retain their diversity.

Chinese President Xi Jinping outlined new policies concerning religions in China today. On May 20, 2016, at the Central United Front Work Conference, he stressed that religious activities should (1) actively guide the respective religions to adapt to socialist society, (2) adhere to the principle of sinicization and promote the rule of law in religious activities, and (3) guide religions to promote economic development, social harmony, cultural prosperity, national unity, and the reunification of the motherland.⁹

What consequences will these policies bring about? This question is of particular interest to the Catholic Church in China, especially for the inculturation of the Christian faith in the Chinese context. China has gone through tremendous changes since its open-door policy in 1979. The leader of this change, Deng Xiaoping, coined the phrase “building socialism with Chinese characteristics.” By

8 The week-long Nineteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) concluded on October 24, 2017, during which the CPC Constitution was amended to include “Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era” as a new component of the party’s guide for action. See Xinhua News, October 24, 2017.

9 President Xi Jinping addressed a conference on religions that was held in Beijing April 22–23, 2016. Xi said that religious affairs carry “special importance” in the work of the CPC and the central government, and he promised to fully implement the party’s policy on religious freedom and help religions adapt to the socialist society, see *Global Times*, April 25, 2016.

putting this proposal into practice, enormous potential has been unleashed, and China has experienced unparalleled development.

An article on the editorial page of the *Global Times*, a major newspaper of the Chinese government, mentioned that there is a simple way to describe China's historical development.¹⁰ While the founding of the People's Republic relied on Marxism, the economic success depended on implementing reforms that opened China to the global economy. In this implementation, China accepted some modern Western ideologies for the sake of the nation, its people, and the revival of Chinese culture. However, new ideas must be verified through praxis. China is now defining the core values of the Chinese dream that the article suggests must be maintained while accepting modern Western influence. The West and its positive values, in my view, are deeply rooted in Christianity. As such, the future of China's integration of Western and Chinese culture will entail the integration of Christianity.

As mentioned earlier, Matteo Ricci pioneered a successful dialogue based on his vision of inculturating the Christian faith in China, just as the church fathers did centuries before in the encounter between the Gospel of Jesus Christ and Greco-Roman culture.¹¹ Today's dialogue is not limited to Confucianism as Ricci did, but should also take into account Daoism, Chinese Buddhism, and the recent developments of Chinese culture, including socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Culture of encounter between Christianity and China

I mentioned in Chapter one that Chinese culture emphasizes harmony and relationships with dialectical way of thinking. It has a disposition to approach the mystery of the Trinity, which is so essential to Christianity. An in-depth analysis of Daoist dialectics of harmony and Christian Trinitarian theology could contribute to the inculturation of the Christian faith in the Chinese context

10 Chen Ming (陈明), "The return of Confucianism in modern practice edification" (儒家回归还需在现代实践中重构) Editorial Page, *Global Times* (Chinese edition), March 21, 2016.

11 John Paul II, Speech, "Message to the Participants in the International Conference Commemorating the Fourth Centenary of the Arrival in Beijing of Father Matteo Ricci," Rome, October 24, 2001, 3.

in ways that could contribute to the Church and to the positive development of Chinese culture in today's world. In Chapter three, I made a comparison between the Chinese and the Christian concept of fraternity. These are underlying themes for dialogue. On the World Day of Peace 2014, Pope Francis gave an important message entitled "Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace"¹² and instituted a new form of dialogue of fraternity for peace. Other values of the Chinese dream are "prosperity" and "civilization," which correspond to the themes of "a healthy and caring economy for happiness" and an "integral ecology and full human development," as elaborated in Pope Francis's apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* and his encyclical *Laudato Si'*. Piero Coda summarizes the vision of Pope Francis for the emerging Church in four words: mercy, poverty, synodality, and encounter.¹³

Mercy: In Latin, mercy is signified by "*miser cordia*." This is two words combined, the Latin "*miseriae*" meaning misery and "*cordis*" heart. Pope Francis declared 2016 to be the Jubilee Year of Mercy. He encourages Catholics to have an open heart toward forgiving others, as God forgives each one of us.

Poverty: It brings about humility and goes towards the poor and the marginalized. The Church should not rely on aspects of wealth, human power and human instruments, but must be founded on the power of God.

Synodality: It comes from the Greek word "*synodus*," which means walking together and looking in the same direction. This characteristic is a way of being in the Church, as Pope Francis often repeats to us; it is seeing things and living from the standpoint of communion. "Broadly, it refers to the active participation of all the faithful in the life and mission of the Church."¹⁴

Encounter: We live in a culturally diverse world with many challenges, but there are also many opportunities. Indeed,

12 Pope Francis, "Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace: Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace," Vatican, January 1, 2014.

13 Radio Vatican, "Giubileo dei nunzi, Becciu: aperti al dialogo, forti nell'identità," interview with Angelo Becciu, Vatican's deputy secretary of state, ANSA News Agency, September 15, 2016.

14 Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, "Synodality and Primacy during the First Millennium: Towards a Common Understanding in Service to the Unity of the Church," Chieti, September 21, 2016, 3.

Christians are constantly challenged by the presence of people of other religions and cultures. The Christian identity lies at opening up to others, creating a relationship with those who are different. Encounter means opening up ourselves to dialogue with others who are different from us.

I would like to conclude this part on religious freedom, with regard to the situation of the Catholic Church in China, and the ongoing dialogue between China and the Holy See, suggesting some basic attitudes to be held. First, both sides want to continue the dialogue. Second, the Holy See wishes to maintain the unity of the Church and emphasizes reconciliation of the official and the underground communities of Chinese Catholics; likewise, the Chinese authorities would not like the abnormal situation of the Catholic Church continue to develop in China. Third, the Holy See has concern for the feelings and sentiments of the Catholics, whether they belong to the official or to the underground community. The Chinese authorities want Catholic believers to practice their faith within the boundary of the laws of the state. In the final analysis, the Holy See and the Chinese authorities have two different perspectives: one is religious and spiritual, the other, political and administrative. Both sides have different starting points, but the concrete result could coincide and be beneficial for both sides.

Lest the needed dialogue be threatened, ideological opposition is to be avoided between the official and the underground communities, between the Catholic Church in China and the universal Roman Catholic Church, and between the Catholic Church and the Chinese authorities or the Communist Party. Though at times the other side may seem tough or resolute, still the dialogue must continue. The normalization of relations between the Holy See and the People's Republic of China would certainly be helpful for the healthy development of the Catholic Church in China. Normalization would be beneficial for mutual enrichment, and have positive repercussions for the path of humanity toward a better future.

With regard to the Taiwan issue, there is a common misconception that the Holy See is opting between Taiwan or Mainland China in

the political front. The Holy See for decades has been seeking to normalize relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC), and to resume the post of Apostolic Nunciature in Beijing vacated since 1951. The ultimate goal of the Church is for the proclamation of faith, and taking care of its flock. When the PRC substituted the ROC (Republic of China with its government in Taiwan) as the sole representative of China in the United Nation in 1971, the head of the mission from the Holy See in Taiwan was downgraded to chargé d'affaires from the rank of nuncio that was equivalent to that of ambassador. Therefore, the diplomatic ranking of the Holy See mission in Taiwan will have no change, as far as the Church is concerned, no matter what changes take place in the relations between the Holy See and Mainland China. It is important not to be held hostage by politicizing the Taiwan issue.

As Christians, our dream is to fulfill the wish of Jesus and be united in our diversity. To achieve this goal, dialogue is necessary. Dialogue is not a means to an end but is a way of being in the world because it is the life of God, the Trinity. Trinity is relationship; it is infinite dialogue and total reciprocity. Not insignificantly, Jesus calls reciprocal love "his new commandment."

From the perception of the West, there is no religious freedom in China; yet it is guaranteed in the Chinese constitution. Why is there such a perception when in reality there is a revival of Buddhism and other traditional religions? In the past, there were more Catholics than Protestants; while now the protestants (all churches put together) have long overtaken the Catholics by a huge margin.¹⁵

Since the 19th century, Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant alike, has been associated with Western imperialism in the minds of Chinese people. The Chinese government, because of

15 According to the figures released by the State Council Information Office, Protestant Christians are 5 times more than Catholics with a total of 32 million Protestants and 6 million Catholics among the 200 million believers in China. Cf. The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, *China's Policies and Practices on Protecting Freedom of Religious Belief*, April 2018. The Pew Research Center statistics indicates that Protestants are even 6 times of Catholics with 58 million Protestants and 9 million Catholics in China. Cf. "Christians in China," *Forum on Religion & Public Life Global Christianity*, Pew Research Center, December 2011. Although the Pew Research Center reports a higher total number of Christians in general than the State Council Information Office of China, both statistics show that the Protestants are 5 to 6 times more than Catholics in China.

this perception, is cautious that religion, particularly Catholicism which is well organized at the international level, may become a political tool for foreign interference, just think of Tibet with Western support for Dalai Lama, or Xinjiang, wrong as it may be, which is associated with terrorism and separatism. This is something which, not only the government, but the ordinary people in their common psyche, will not tolerate. Think of the perceptions expressed in these sayings, “a Christian more a Chinese less” and now the “patriotic association.” Saint John Paul II appealed through Radio Veritas to the Chinese Catholics that there is “no opposition or incompatibility in being at the same time truly Christian and authentically Chinese.”¹⁶

Certainly, to ensure stability, the government is undoubtedly authoritarian, a price the people seem ready to pay. Interestingly, Singapore’s political structure could be a point of reference in this regard. This small Southeast Asian city-state with its “authoritarian modernism” became a major reference point for China. Although more than 75 percent of the population of Singapore are ethnic Chinese, it is a multi-racial and multi-religious society. Therefore, racial and religious harmony is vital for Singapore’s social cohesion.¹⁷ In China, likewise, besides the Han Chinese majority, there are 55 other ethnic minority groups present. Further discussion and comparison could be interesting, but it would be beyond the scope of the present research.

Moral courage beyond trauma

There have been many difficulties for Catholics living their faith in China in recent decades due to a complex social context and historical reasons. I would like to narrate from a spiritual perspective some concrete experiences of faith of Catholics in China.

16 Pope John Paul II, “Address to the Chinese Catholic community in Asia,” Manila, February 18, 1981, 3-4.

17 Cf. The Ministry of Home Affairs of Singapore, *Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act*, for Maintaining Racial and Religious Harmony, passed on 9 November 1990.

How Catholics navigate changes in China

The Church is missionary by nature. The Second Vatican Council shifted the attention from the Church itself to the interlocutor whom mission aims at.¹⁸ Therefore, let's take a look at the context of China, characterized by huge social mobility, and urban-rural dichotomy in last few decades.

China has experienced the biggest human migration and urbanization in human history, 50% of its population moved from poor rural areas to cities in the last 40 years. Social changes have been enormous, therefore also challenging. Although Catholics comprise only less than 1% of the Chinese population.¹⁹ Historically Catholic communities are mostly concentrated in some rural areas, the Church in China has to cope with these changes.

When China inaugurated the reform and opening-up policy in the 1980s, the Christian faith was mainly preserved and spread in rural areas. In the 90s, the trend of migrant workers entering cities emerged. There are distinct experiences of different groups in the last 20 years, I will speak about the importance of formation of the laity and the youth. In this research, I concentrate on three groups: first, students and youth; second, migrant families; and third, professionals and entrepreneur Christians.

Important accompaniment is needed according to different life stages and age groups. The laity and the youth have played an active role in evangelization and in the urban-rural mobility:

Teens, youth and students: Many teens and youth in the rural areas, have gone through the experience of the so-called "left-behind children"²⁰ they have faced problems, for example lack of communication with parents. Several dioceses in the northern province of Hebei, where about one fifth of the Catholic population is concentrated, have started an initiative called the 100-day formation program for the youth, boys and girls separately. The

18 Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world*, Vatican, 1965, 5.

19 The urban population has grown from about 18.6% in 1979 to 57.9% in 2017. See "China – Urban population as a share of total population," *World Data Atlas*, retrieved on April 17, 2018.

20 These are children left behind with their grandparents or relatives in the countryside while their parents work in the cities. It is a phenomenon due to the economic and social conditions of China especially from the 1980s to the 2000s. They are also called home-staying children.

program concentrates on human promotion, values, communication skill, and is offered to youth who are free from commitment, work, and studies for a while. It is a good opportunity to take a break from the usual highly competitive environment and discern a direction in life.

As for university or college students, it is an important time for academic pursuits; at the same time, independent thinking and seeking a meaning for life are important. The youth go to cities for their studies. In some provinces where traditional Catholics are concentrated such as Hebei, Sichuan, Shanxi, and Shaanxi, during holidays in their hometowns, they have Church activities like group sharing and exchanges, which result in a need for getting together during the school year. They meet at Sunday mass in the host city where they study. Little by little, faith and friendship groups are born spontaneously on their own initiatives, helped by the diocese of their origin, or by a priest dedicated to youth ministry in the host parish.

There is also a group called YCS (Young Catholic Students) that cares and pays particular attention to the needs of high school students. According to its guiding principle, the youth should animate themselves, although they have priests as spiritual directors. In the light of the Gospel, the teenagers accompany one another in the process of see-judge-act review of life, and benefit from this group experience. As they grow spiritually and in age, some feel the call to dedicate themselves to help the younger ones. Therefore, senior high school students will help junior student groups, and some will remain to animate the high school students even after entering college. The annual nationwide *Gaokao* (college entrance exam) is an important event in the life of a student, often under tremendous pressure. A college student of the group will be assigned, paired with and prays for the one taking the exam. This really offers great moral support one for the other.

Migrant families and professionals: As for adults, there are formation centers in many dioceses. Formation programs and activities are regularly held for specific groups such as pastoral workers, married couples, or professionals, such as teachers.

Programs help them witness the Gospel in their specific fields and environments. As for migrants in the cities, Bishop Jin Luxian in his Chinese New Year 2011 pastoral letter praised the experience of the faithful from Wenzhou residing in Shanghai. They are fervent Catholics active in Shanghai. Shanghai Diocese assigned a priest as their spiritual director. Jin encouraged parishes to dedicate pastoral care aimed at those coming from the countryside and other provinces. He said: "Let them experience that the Church is really a family and we are brothers and sisters."²¹ Some bigger dioceses, Xianxian, Handan, and Wenzhou also sent pastors to visit their faithful.

*Entrepreneur Christians*²²: The professionals and well-educated faithful are helpful in communicating with the government and society at large. Some laity form regular bible study groups. Still others, business people, try to offer Christian testimony in the business environment. There is an enterprise at Ninjin, Hebei, that employs several thousand workers. An "entrepreneur Christian," Mr. Geng and his whole family of fervent Catholics instill Christian spirit in the corporate culture and management. The employees are well treated with paid holidays. They can join wholesome activities organized by the company, working in a family atmosphere, and feeling happy. As a consequence, some are attracted to the Christian faith. When I visited his factory, Mr. Geng shared with me this experience: "Workers work in shifts, Christians were free to attend Sunday mass. At a certain point, we decided to let everybody free from work on Sunday. In front of workers present, he asked, did our production go down?" They exclaimed loudly: No!

Testimonies of facing challenges with moral courage

There is a new religious policy in China since March 1, 2022. All religions are under the supervision of the Central government while the general guidelines are implemented locally. According

21 Aloysius Jin, "Advancing with the Times," Chinese New Year 2011 pastoral letter, February 2, 2011.

22 Chinese scholars have started to call a type of "entrepreneur Christians" (*laoban jidutu*), emerging at economically developed coastal areas Cf. Cunfu Chen – Tianhai Huang, "The Emergence of a New Type of Christians in China Today." *Review of Religious Research*, Dec. 2001, p.83–200.

to the government, this policy is a response to the need: to avoid religious extremism on the one hand and to guarantee social stability on the other. Moreover, government does not want religions, because of their international affiliation, to be a pretext for foreign intervention, covert or overt. All religions are therefore conditioned by the prevailing political climate. This is more evident for Catholicism because of the distinction between the so-called official (patriotic) and the unofficial (underground) Church, which make it difficult for the Church to play a prophetic role in society as it should. This presents a main challenge. How can the Church play a more active role in society? Regarding this, I narrate some concrete experiences of how Catholics in China responded to these challenges in two areas, the new religious policies and restrictions, and the COVID-19 pandemic situation. At times the experiences were traumatic.

City-countryside exchange: Social changes and mobility present challenges particularly to the youth, but also create opportunities for them. A positive aspect of the urban-rural mobility is the exchange and reconciliation brought about in Catholic communities, especially among young people who are not burdened by the baggage of divisions of the past. They do not care about the distinction between the official and the underground Church. They go to the Church that is nearest or most convenient. Groups of laity spontaneously spring up in the local church in search of a modern-day relevant spirituality. Ecclesial communities with mature experience and spirituality can contribute in collaboration with local clergy in accompanying the youth.

There is the challenge of living with and gaining “space” under new religious regulations and restrictions: There are five religions officially recognized by the Chinese government: Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism. Despite this official recognition, all are obliged to observe government regulations. Some new regulations that have a significant impact are: Prohibition of the use of internet for religious propagation and limit of religious education for minors. As a consequence, some minor seminaries were closed. However, Bishop Yang of the National Seminary in Beijing once shared with me how he spoke out, in an official meeting with religious authorities, about minor

seminaries being the cradle of priestly vocation. As a fruit of friendly dialogue, an exception to the restriction was made; there are three minor seminaries still open in China. Genuine priestly vocations are nurtured and fostered, not only in a seminary, but also in a caring Christian community in the family and in parishes.

As mentioned earlier about Catholic social services, since the beginning of the outbreak of COVID-19, it has been touching to see testimonies of how some Catholic nuns volunteer their mobile clinic ambulances for emergency services. The bishop from Qiqihaer said that some clergy and Catholic faithful offered their service in their districts to the needy as volunteers alongside people without distinctions of belief.

Even the crisis of the pandemic could be a period of good harvest: Fr. Ren from Shanxi Province considered the pandemic a blessing in disguise. He said, “for a few months children didn’t have school and had to stay home in the villages in the countryside. I built some facilities for them to play and sometimes I had a chance to give them catechetical lessons.”

Outdoor activities like camping for children and teens: The Focolare community in Shanghai organized outdoor activities for the children and teens. They visited wetlands to see birds and appreciate nature. These nature visits are a good opportunity to speak to them about ecology, Francis of Assisi and the Pope’s encyclical *Laudato Si’*. At some points, Focolare members also initiated zoom evening prayer meetings with the children and their parents.

Power of prayer, Eucharistic adoration, and reflection: Even for adults, these are occasions for reflections; spend time with the family and with nature. Some priests and sisters also promote adoration of the blessed sacrament in their diocese. It helps them find inner peace and turn the tide of overemphasis on worldly pursuit, activism, and always being in a hurry.

Internet use for religious services online: Since March, 2022, the new “Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services” that forbid or limit religious online activity has taken effect. Online religious activities are disrupted, and WeChat public accounts blocked. In the past, these measures

somehow existed with no strict implementation. Now people continue to adapt to changes. For example, during the lockdown period in the spring of 2020, Pope Francis' mass celebrated in the Vatican in Santa Marta reached China. Thanks to the various WeChat platforms, Chinese Catholics were able to follow the live stream with Chinese translations. An App platform called "Catholic Assistant (天主教小助手)," was developed by a group of young volunteers, and was exceptionally successful in providing live transmissions of the Holy Father from Rome. It was supported by the Beijing diocese with consent granted by religious authority; it was the fruit of the moral courage of the youth group volunteers. Sad to say in August 2022, this group announced publicly that it could not continue this App service due to stricter internet-use regulations, but I am sure they will continue their service through other channels and in other ways. Again, it shows how Catholics are continuously challenged to find creative ways in preserving their faith and giving Christian testimonies in difficult, complex and changing situations.

Ultimate analysis and positive notes

There is continuity of the efforts of recent popes in the process of rapprochement between the Holy See and China, and they give special attention to China and Chinese Catholics. Saint John Paul II initiated, a spirit of Vatican II openness, a search for new language, new ardor, and new models for a new evangelization in mission land like China where Catholics are a small minority. The letter of Pope Benedict XVI formed a solid theological base for dialogue with China and encouraged reconciliation within the Catholic Church in China. Under the papacy of Pope Francis, with a humble spirit of reaching out to China, there are promising signs of normalization of relations, for the good and the development of the Church in China.

Just to cite a few illustrious facts that make history. First, by signing the "Provisional Agreement on the appointment of Bishops" on September 22, 2018, Chinese authorities recognized the role and involvement of the Pope in appointing bishops in China. Considering the Holy See as an authority from outside, this concession from

Chinese authorities is quite exceptional. Therefore, the agreement is indeed historic. Second, from April 29 to October 9, 2019, the Vatican participated in the International Horticultural Exhibition (Beijing Expo) with the Vatican Pavilion highlighting the theme contained in the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* of Pope Francis "on care for our common home." It is the first time the Holy See participated successfully, exhibiting for six months, in a high-level international event held in China under the official invitation of the Chinese government. Third, in addition to the Holy See Pavilion, the Vatican Museums held an exhibition entitled "Beauty Unites Us" at the Palace Museum in the Forbidden City for a month and a half from May to July 2019, exhibiting a collection of 78 Catholic and Chinese artifacts as signs of friendship and cultural exchange. The Expo and the exhibitions, which received millions of visitors, are very significant because the Chinese public had direct contact with the rich patrimony and contributions of the universal Catholic Church to humanity in history, art, culture, and values. On these occasions, the public had direct opportunity to get a perception of the Catholic Church in a very positive way. This direct contact helped dispel prejudice of the past, create acceptance, trust, and liking in the public, offering a favorable image of the Catholic Church in the eyes of the Chinese public.

From my observation, under the principle of subsidiarity of the social teaching of the Catholic Church, the normalizing and improving relations between China and the Holy See, at the higher level, is helping local Catholic communities in dealing with local authorities to settle issues and difficulties. In this way, Catholics can more readily give testimony, be leaven in society as good Christians and good citizens in the eyes of the general public.

As the Coronavirus outbreak came about in Wuhan in January 2020, little was known at the beginning. Many people were stunned by the drastic measures taken by the government. The city of Wuhan was locked down, together with other nearby areas of Hebei Province on January 23, and restrictions of travel were implemented. It was just two days before the Lunar New Year when the home visit travel season had just started. It is a long-held tradition for most Chinese people to reunite with their families during the Chinese New Year. With the advent of the efficient high-

speed railway systems in China, a total of three-billion passenger trips were expected during this Spring Festival season of the New Year. The movement of people during the Chinese New Year holiday season has been called the largest annual human migration in the world.

During the Lunar New Year of 2020, I was particularly touched by the Holy Father when he publicly sent his Lunar New Year greetings and blessings twice in a scroll to people in Asia. At the end of a General Audience, he said that “in the Far East and in various other parts of the world, many millions of men and women will celebrate the Lunar New Year. I send them my cordial greetings, wishing them in particular to be places of education in the virtues of welcome, wisdom, respect for each person and harmony with creation. I invite all to pray also for peace, dialogue and solidarity among nations: gifts which are so necessary in the world today.”²³ It is precisely this emphasis on the virtues that helped people endure the pandemic. Hopefully, when the pandemic is over and brought under control worldwide, people can resume traveling abroad. This festive period of the Lunar New Year can be, once again, an occasion to build bridges and promote mutual understanding among peoples, as the Pope earnestly invited us, to pray for the gifts of peace, dialogue and solidarity among nations that the world needs today.

The prolonged effect of the pandemic “brought to light not only our false securities, but also the inability of the world’s countries to work together,”²⁴ as the Holy Father pointed out. Nevertheless, the pandemic prompts us to rethink values of our life. I also observed that at the beginning of the outbreak of the COVID-19 in China, as far as I could tell within Catholic circles, we received much help and support from abroad. When the situation in China was more or less brought under control two months later, it had become a pandemic and the situation abroad got worse. Motivated by a non-Christian friend who wanted to donate 10 thousand sanitary masks to Italy, I personally got involved with

23 Pope Francis, “Special greetings,” *General audience*, Paul VI Audience Hall, Vatican, January 22, 2020.

24 Pope Francis, Message of His Holiness on the occasion of the plenary session of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Rome: Saint John Lateran, October 7, 2020

Jinde Charities and Yahve' Caritas in sending tens of thousands of sanitary masks and protective gear to Italy and other countries. I have witnessed that the power of love is even more contagious and goes beyond the distinction of creeds. It has been very encouraging. Also, as a professor of religious studies, I am aware that the Muslims would say, the original meaning of "holy war" is first and foremost the struggle within oneself against infidelity to God, rather than committing external act of violence in the face of adversities and challenges. As Christians we too are called to take up moral courage, continue to live our faith, and navigate changes in society with wisdom.

Mary, mother of hope and tenderness

It was a happy coincidence that on May 24, 2020, the feast day of Our Lady of Sheshan, so dear to Chinese Catholics, that Pope Francis also launched a year to live and reflect on *Laudato Si'*. He voiced his closeness to the Chinese faithful and their country. Pope Francis emphasized that the Chinese faithful are an "integral part" of the universal Church. He assures us of his love and the strong bond with the universal Church. Although there are difficulties, he encourages us "to be strong in faith and steadfast in fraternal union, joyful witnesses, promoters of charity and hope, and good citizens." With a special Apostolic Blessing, he prayed for "a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit," with the light and beauty of the Gospel "shining from within."²⁵

Apart from the culture of care, Pope Francis speaks so often of the tenderness of God. He is the creator of heaven and earth. We pray to God through Christ, under the loving gaze of Mary, Help of Christians and Patroness of China, that the Holy Spirit will guide the Church in China to be a living witness of the Gospel and to be promoters of charity and fraternal hope, and good citizenship.

25 Pope Francis, *Regina Caeli*, Vatican: Library of the Apostolic Palace, Vatican, May 24, 2020.

CONCLUSION

Everyone has a dream. There are also common dreams of a people. The aspiration, for example, the Chinese people have a dream to satisfy their need for a better life. The point of departure of the “Chinese dream” for the people and their leaders comes from a human or socio-political point of view. As for me, the Chinese dream needs a deeper spiritual dimension! A main theme of this book is no matter where we depart from, once we are on board, we will meet at some point. As a conclusion, I offer some points from this research for pondering, and suggest three images that may serve as inspirations.

Some articulating points of this book

Leitmotiv: Culture of Encounter. I have written this book in the spirit of the “culture of encounter,” intending to be faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church on inculturation. I go back to the primary source, Revelation, recognizing that the Gospel message is for all cultures, and informed by the Trinitarian logic as a guide to this Christianity-China dialogue. The Trinitarian vision, at the heart of Church doctrine, and the spirituality of the charism of

unity of Chiara Lubich, is the leitmotif throughout the different areas of this research.

Opportunity not to be missed. Pope Francis is committed to the culture of dialogue and encounter with China. He loves the Chinese people, and has always looked upon China as a land of great opportunities with profound culture and wisdom. In his message to Catholics in China and the universal church on September 6, 2018, he indicated that the signing of the Provisional Agreement between the Holy See and the Chinese authorities on nomination of bishops in China is for evangelization and pastoral purposes. He called for unity of the Catholic community to overcome the divisions of the past that have caused much suffering. He encourages “walking together” to build a common future of harmony. The Agreement set in place an element of cooperation between the state authorities and the Apostolic See to provide bishops for Catholics in China, for the first time since 1949. The Holy Father also invited the universal Church to accompany Catholics in China with fraternal friendship, as a way to integrate together into the universal church, which will be enriched by authentic Chinese spiritual and cultural treasures. He also invited the Chinese leaders to continue, with trust and farsightedness, the dialogue for greater friendship and avoid misunderstandings in order to build a future of peace and fraternity among peoples.²⁶

Inculturation = interculturality. Interculturality refers to the existence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialogue and mutual respect.²⁷

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, when head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, urged the bishops of Asia to regard the mission of the Church in Asia more in terms of “interculturality” instead of “inculturation.” He coined this new term and urged its use to express more precisely “the meeting of cultures” that takes place when the culture of Christian faith encounters

26 Pope Francis, *Message to the Catholics of China and the universal church*, Vatican, September 2018.

27 UNESCO, *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*, Article 4.8, Paris, October 20, 2005.

other cultures. “Inculturation” should no longer be used¹, because this word “presumes that a faith stripped of culture is transplanted into a religiously indifferent culture whereby two subjects, formally unknown to each other, meet and fuse.” He wanted to promote the encounter of cultures as reciprocal enrichment.

In the life of the Church, there are two interrelated issues: evangelization of cultures and that of the cultural understanding of the Gospel. It was in this context that Pope John Paul II said in 1982, “The synthesis between culture and faith is not only a requirement of culture, but also of faith... Faith that does not become culture is not fully accepted, nor entirely reflected upon, or faithfully experienced.”²

Saint John Paul II was convinced that Christianity would further uplift Chinese culture in its spiritual dimension and *vice versa*, that Chinese culture, with its human experiences, would greatly enrich the Church.³ As theologian Piero Rossano also said, “the Christian economy will not be known and developed in all its values until it has been conceived, interpreted and lived through the religious categories of all peoples.”⁴ John Paul II hoped that once the difficulties and misunderstandings will have been overcome, the dialogue will bring about a new encounter of reciprocal human and spiritual enrichment. Pope Benedict XVI's Letter to the Church in China invited the Chinese authority to overcome misunderstandings of the past and to establish concrete forms of communication, cooperation and open dialogue.

Vatican–China: an icebreaker. While the desire of recent pontiffs to bring about rapprochement with China has been continuous and consistent, the acceptance from Beijing that the Bishop of Rome has the final say in the appointment of bishops in China is truly unprecedented in recent Chinese history. Although some critics of the agreement worry that the Holy See is making too much of a concession to China, according some Chinese scholars,

1 The cardinal told 25 Asian bishops with whom he met in Hong Kong, March 2-6, 1993.

2 Pope John Paul II, “Speech to the participants of the national congress *Movimento Ecclesiale di Impegno Culturale*,” Rome, January 16, 1982.

3 John Paul II, “Message to participants of the International Conference Commemorating the Fourth Centenary of the Arrival in Beijing of Fr. Matteo Ricci,” Vatican, 24 October 2001, 7.

4 G. Osto, *La testimonianza del dialogo Piero Rossano tra Bibbia, religioni e cultura*, Rome, 2019, 3.

the agreement is truly historical and constitutes an even bigger concession on the part of the top leader in China.

ABC (Foundations) of Chinese culture. Confucianism is at the root of Chinese culture, which emphasizes benevolence, righteousness, and fraternal love. To cite some of the most representative ancient Chinese philosophers, Confucius spoke of “to be *ren*” that is a benevolent relationship among human beings (孔曰成仁), Mencius spoke of “choosing righteousness over one’s own life” (孟曰取义). Mozi spoke of “universal love” (兼爱), a forgotten principle for some time, but is making a return because of its contemporary relevance. Traditional culture in China is characterized by Confucian teaching, while Daoism plays a complementary role in Chinese cultural history. While Confucianism emphasizes making a change, Daoism stresses *wuwei*, letting nature take its own course. Laozi spoke of “being” and “non-being” generating one another (有无相生也) reciprocally transforming one another (相互相生) in a dialectic of harmony (充气而为和). These are just a few examples of elements in Chinese culture that illustrate a basis for dialogue and a contribution to world culture. My main objective is to discover more, and open reflections on the compatibility of Chinese culture with Christianity.

Trail blazers to bridges. By following the footpath of Matteo Ricci, respectful dialogue between East and West, between Christianity and Chinese culture is possible, and will bring about reciprocal enrichment that will be to the benefit of the whole human family.

In the five chapters of this book, I have demonstrated that there are many values in common though at times articulated in different ways, especially values such as harmony and unity, ecological civilization and integral ecology, fraternity and social friendship, poverty reduction and common prosperity in economy, and freedom of religious practice and reciprocity. As I mentioned at the beginning of this research, I did not intend to go into extensive analysis of each of the Chinese concepts selected for comparison because of the huge amount of studies that have been specifically carried out covering the long line of history in the evolving meanings of these concepts. For a broad framework of intercultural and interreligious study adopted in this research, I

remain committed to borrow the achieved results from professional scholars in Chinese history and philosophy.

Lastly, in order to help readers to catch an overall view of the key findings of the research, I came up with a summary of highlights from each chapter. These highlights are in no way exhaustive, but serve as a bridge to dialogue. The topics are worthy of extended reflection. It is a modest attempt to arouse resonance in other scholars to ponder these topics in a continuous process of further discussion and elaboration.

Summary of each chapter

Chapter one. Dialectic of harmony in dialogue with Trinitarian relationship

I distinguish between the dialectics of thesis-antithesis-synthesis of Hegel, the dialectics of love of Lubich and the dialectics of harmony of Laozi.⁵ Hegel's dialectics illustrated in the bud-blossom-fruit example, each former disappears and is refuted by the latter, is criticized. Marxism even justifies violence in the revolution in this dialogical process. While in Lubich's dialectics of love, Jesus is forsaken on the cross, instead of denying the Father, he lives a total self-denial in his *kenosis*, entrusting completely to the Will of the Father. In Laozi, there is a dialectics of harmony, with dao-de, yin-yang harmonizing, being-nothingness mutually generating (有无相生).

I conclude that the Chinese mindset of dialectics of harmony is in good disposition to understand Trinitarian relationships, rather than scholastic philosophy description of Trinity. Instead of just comparing the Logos with the *Dao* in the effort of inculturation, there needs to be a re-thinking of the relationship between Dao-De-harmony, and the love between Father and the Son in the Trinity.

Again, this dialogue and relational dialectics of harmony and reconciliation is the conducting line throughout the five chapters of this book.

5 Kin Sheung Chiaretto Yan, "Prolegomenon to Interreligious Dialogue in China: Daoism, the Trinitarian Relationship, and Christian Inculturation," *Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture* (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2017) Vol. 6, 43-44, 55.

Chapter two. Ecological civilization in dialogue with integral ecology

Daoism reminds us of our relationships in creation. Daoists, followers of Daoism, are the first ecologists because of their concept of being in harmony with nature, blending in with the environment, therefore, do no harm to the nature.

However, China has developed from a backward economy and industrialized in recent decades. The world knows well that the pollution was acute, but few are aware that air quality across China has improved in recent years due to countless and big scale green initiatives. China has the duty to share its experience with developing countries to strike a balance between economic development and environmental protection.

I had the privilege to serve as the coordinator of the Holy See Pavilion at the Beijing Expo 2019 on Horticulture, the theme of *Laudato Si'*, was well-presented with a painting of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and other artistic elements. As Pope Francis wrote in the encyclical, empirical data have shown humankind's negative effects on the environment. He stressed the need for an integral approach and concerted effort to combat this ecological crisis. In the Genesis account, humans are created in God's image, but a distorted interpretation gives humans absolute domination (*Gen 1:28*) over nature and other creatures.⁶ Rather than as the text indicates, they are to be caretakers (*Gen 2:15*) to glorify God with other creatures. Humans have disobeyed God. They have not only ruined the harmonious relationship between humans and God, but also between humans and nature, as well as human to human relationships. Instead of a distorted anthropocentric position, the Social Doctrine of the Church orients towards an "anthropocentrism of Christ."⁷ Jesus, the new Adam, through the Cross, restores these relationships.

6 Francis, *Laudato Si'*, encyclical letter on care for our common home (Vatican, 24 May 2015), 66.

7 Cf. Sergio Rondinara, "Custodire ciò che è salvato," ed. Paolo Carloiti, Mario Toso, *Per un umanesimo degno dell'amore: Il Compendio della Dottrina Sociale della Chiesa* (Roma, 2005), 437. See also Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004), 463.

Although with no concept or mention about God and creation, I found certain consonance with spirit of *Laudato Si'* in the inauguration at the Expo. President Xi emphasized human wisdom, scientific policies and research to create a harmonious ecosystem, following laws of nature, the earth, “our common homeland.” Nature punishes and rewards. The rise or fall of a society is dependent on its relationship with nature, industrialization generated material wealth, but damaged nature. All humans live in community with a shared future, need collaboration to tackle environmental issues, to have a balanced ecosystem, to accelerate an “ecological civilization,” to raise people’s awareness, to work together with other countries to achieve the United Nations sustainable development goals (SDGs). He also spoke of the responsibility towards future generations.⁸

Chapter three. Universal brotherhood, fraternity for peace and social friendship

In Chinese culture, the concept of fraternity and love is expressed in the following terms: *ren'ai* (仁爱), *jian'ai* (兼爱), and *bo'ai* (博爱). *Ren'ai* (仁=人+二) has a rich connotation of benevolence, forgiveness, humanity, and human-heartedness. *Jian'ai*, all-embracing love, introduced by Mozi immediately after the time of Confucius, but it was deemed too abstract and has become a forgotten principle. *Bo'ai* was influenced by the concept of “agape” in Christianity, introduced by Dr. Sun Yatsen, the founding father of modern China. With the inroads of Christianity and influence of Western ideas such as the motto of the French Revolution, the term taken from Chinese classics is made popular to express the idea of universal love and fraternity.

The relationship of fraternity is also expressed in an idiomatic expression “a relationship as close as one’s hands and feet.” In recent years, President Xi stresses that fine traditional Chinese culture, including values of *you'shan* (友善), friendliness and fraternity, are alive in the hearts of people. This friendship does

8 Cf. “Xi Jinping’s Keynote Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the International Horticultural Exhibition 2019 (Edited Excerpt),” *Beijing Review* (Beijing, September 3), 2019.

not apply only at the personal or social level, but also refers to relationships between nations.

In the history of Christianity, brotherhood is intrinsic to a strong spiritual meaning of fraternity in Christ, and thus manifests in sharing of goods in a community and helping the poor. It contributed to the abolition of slavery in society. As the motto of the French Revolution was liberty, equality and fraternity, the notion of fraternity has become a political category. In a great part of the 20th century, the principles of freedom in liberalism or equality in socialism have been emphasized in one political system or another, but the triptych motto has not been taken altogether as a whole and “fraternity” has become a forgotten principle.

Pope Francis signed a joint declaration “Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together” with Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb representing the Muslim world at Abu Dhabi in February 2019. The Holy Father has a gradual approach. The point of departure is the recognition that all persons in the world are to live as brothers and sisters in the one human family. Faith in God is the starting point of this fraternity, but the benevolent gaze of God includes each person in the human family. This fraternity is destined to extend to people of all religions and cultures.⁹

Consonant to the Confucian tradition, the concept of fraternity starts within the family with the emphasis on benevolence (*ren*). Such love should then be extended until it includes distant members of society as well. “Honor the elderly and care for the young in other families as we do to those in our own (老吾老以及人之老，幼吾幼以及人之幼)” (*Mencius* 1A7). This extension is also well expressed in another verse of the *Analects*: “Now the man of perfect virtue, wishing to build up himself as such, seeks to build up others as well; wishing to enhance himself, seeks also to enhance others” (己欲立而立人，己欲达而达人)” (*Analects* 7:2).

9 Pope Francis affirms that man is made for love, therefore he must go beyond the self towards others to find fuller existence. Love is capable of transcending borders of regions or countries. He says: “The ever-increasing number of interconnections and communications in today’s world makes us powerfully aware of the unity and common destiny of the nations.” Cf. Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, encyclical letter on fraternity and social friendship (Assisi, October 3, 2020), 96.

Chapter four. Poverty Alleviation and a new economic model

Poverty reduction: The success in poverty alleviation is the result of long-term planning and continuous effort typical of the Confucian spirit of making a change. State policies and guidance has been important for delivering results in poverty alleviation: (a) Targeted Poverty Alleviation (精准扶贫) strategy; (b) The Chinese experience of prosperous coastal provinces paired to help poor provinces in western China; (c) Putting into practice an age-old saying, “Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime” (授人以鱼不如授人以渔).

Endogenous development is a model of development from within its culture.¹⁰ It also means harnessing cultural values, particularly Asian and Confucian values, of being industrious, frugal and high-saving, emphasizing education, political stability and pursuing continuous reform, government competency, and improvement of people’s livelihood. China has worked out a development path in many aspects that are consonant with its own culture and adequate for its stage of development.

China experience can be a reference on one hand for developing countries, but on the other hand, for its sheer size and unique characteristics, may not be emulatable by others. Each country needs to find a model suitable for its conditions and its present stage of development. China has taken the road it calls “with Chinese characteristics.” The success depends internally on administering the country well, and externally adapting to the international environment.

Can the China experience provide a new paradigm for the world economy? The new economic reform of China is somehow in line with Pope Francis’ thoughts. As mentioned before, the Holy Father sees the crisis of the pandemics as an opportunity for radical changes in the economic system, and he emphasizes the culture of care. By caring, even the pandemic becomes a lesson for people at times of adversity to spend more time with the family. New policies

10 Yan Kin Sheung Charetto, “The China experience as contribution for a new economic paradigm, *The Journal of the Macau Ricci Institute* (Macau, Issue 7, May 2020), 91-95.

in China after all are for reducing social ills of materialism, too much competition and stress for Chinese kids, youth, and parents.

For the education of future generations towards a more sober lifestyle, there are exemplary testimonies from both East and West. While Pope Francis mentions in his encyclical *St. Francis of Assisi* (1181-1226), and Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916). I cite inspiring figures such as Zhang Zai (1020-1077), in his writings *Western Inscription* (西铭), highlights the unity of Heaven, Earth and all beings, Heaven and humanity are one. Another figure is Tao Yuanming (365–427) who abandoned his career in the capital and returned to his small town to live a sober life and has left his poems for generations to this day.

Chapter five. Freedom of religion and the golden rule of reciprocity

If we compare the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Constitution of the People's Republic of China on freedom of religion, we see that both include the freedom to practice and to manifest one's faith and the freedom to change one's religious belief (freedom of conversion).

However, while the United Nations Declaration emphasizes the freedom to manifest one's religious belief due to inherent human dignity and rights,¹¹ China emphasizes protection of the religions so that none is developed into fanaticism, extremism and that there is no foreign interference to use "religious freedom" as pretext to destabilize the course of development of the country.¹² One focuses on outward manifestation while the other focuses on protection. This subtle divergence is also reflected in the cultural differences between East and West. Both Jesus and Confucius spoke of the Golden Rule on reciprocity. Confucius used the passive form: "Do not do to others what you would not want others to do to you." From the point of view of ethics, it is more practical to establish

11 Cf.: United Nations General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (Paris: proclaimed on December 10, 1948), Preface, Art.18 & Art.26.

12 Cf.: National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, *Constitution of the People's Republic of China, Amendment at the First Session of the Thirteenth National People's Congress* (Beijing: adopted on March 11, 2018), Art. 33-38.

as a rule at least not to harm others while it is more demanding to establish reciprocal love as a rule.

Another very significant document on religious freedom, signed in 2011 by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, the World Council of Churches, and the World Evangelical Alliance, is called “Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World: Recommendations for Conduct.” Recommends for conduct, the right of freedom to promulgate one’s faith is also balanced by responsibilities. These responsibilities include not only the witness of service and love to neighbors in multi-religious contexts, but also that religion should not be instrumentalized for political ends.¹³ Therefore, it is a legitimate concern not to interfere in other countries internal affairs under the pretext of religion. It is interesting to note that this obstacle is not mentioned in recent years in the process of normalizing Holy See-China relations under the papacy of Pope Francis. China does raise this concern with the U.S. for interfering in other countries’ internal affairs under the pretext of religion.

While some Christian groups stress the mission to propagate their faith, the Catholic Church emphasizes that this mission best occurs in interreligious dialogue, that is, when all parties are open and each person or group has the right to manifest and to propagate its faith and culture in a respectful manner.

For the specific nature of the Church’s mission in the world, the Holy Father has repeated on numerous occasions that evangelization is not “proselytism,” and that the Church grows “by attraction” and “by witnesses.”

The Church is missionary by nature. Vatican II has shifted the Church’s attention from the object of faith to the greater discovery of the interlocutor to whom mission is aimed. Improved Holy See-China relations offer hope and emphasis on testimony of Catholics as good citizens, changing relationships with the government and the general public. Christians are called to be instruments of peace in times of “lights and shadows” in the course of human history. Catholics in China, small in number but aware of their historical

¹³ Cf.: Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, World Council of Churches, World Evangelical Alliance, *Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World: Recommendations for Conduct* (Bangkok: finalized in January 2011) 5.

responsibility, may change the landscape of the Catholic Church in due time.

Thoughts and after thoughts to conclude

I quote extensively Pope Francis and his Magisterium; on the other hand, I quote Chinese classics and Xi Jinping. Do they match? Sometimes they are incompatible, nevertheless there are points of convergence, at least on the theoretical level. Why not take advantage of them? China is contributing important Chinese values, on equal footing in the dialogue, with the West. The Catholic Church as mediator without a political nor economic interests can facilitate this process, to improve relations between China, the West, and ease U.S.-China tensions. After the signing and the renewal of the provisional agreement since 2018 between the Holy See and China regarding the appointment of bishops four years ago, the extension of the dialogue and consultations may continue, on other fronts with specific teams of experts and special commissions, to improve relations. This will require China to trust the Catholic Church and extend sincere gestures as Pope Francis has done.

After the 2019-2020 social unrest in Hong Kong, and Beijing's passing of National Security Law, in spite of political disputes, to end the chaos, some Hong Kong families are emigrating. There is also a great tension in the relationship between the two sides of the Strait of Taiwan. St. John Paul II spoke of the Diaspora of Overseas Chinese, who share the same cultural roots, and encouraging Catholic Chinese to live, suffer, pray, and be open to the plan of God and to discover the victorious love of Christ in history. He also stressed that Catholics in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau should be "Bridge Church" for they belong to the one Chinese people as a great unified reality. It is a "wonderful task."¹⁴ It is a challenge, if successful, may prove to be a game-changer. It is important to stress fraternity of blood, but more so, fraternity in the spirit, which is so much in need today for world peace.

¹⁴ John Paul II, To the Taiwan Bishops and the Chinese Diaspora, February 28, 1984. Edited by Wurth E. – Maheu B. A., *Papal documents related to China 1937-2005* (Hong Kong: Holy Spirit Study Centre, 2006), 262–66.

With the tension between the US and China ongoing and increasing, accusations, true or twisted, on the side of U.S. and its allies, a critical issue is the U.S. position on Taiwan's independence. Just one miscalculation could lead to hot war. In the present cold war, the US is seen as containing China with its economic and military alliances. War must be avoided at all costs as there will be no winners. While the U.S. emphasizes individual freedom, China emphasizes the collective interests of the state. On one side, there is the risk of individualism that make people indifferent to others' needs, forget about the common good, and even give rise to xenophobia. On the other side, there is a risk that the spirit of the state is overemphasized at the expense of respect for the dignity of an individual person. Both sides risk pursuing only ideological goals, the risk is to move onto a technocratic ideology with the sole interest of economic wellbeing and scientific advancement. There is the need for China to have an open dialogue with the West, assuming both sides are open to it. China can draw from the original inspiration of the culture of harmony in the Chinese tradition to promote its soft power to defuse tensions and promote mutual acceptance.

Before the outbreak of the pandemic, many Chinese were going abroad for visits and studies. More exchanges among young people and students will contribute to mutual understanding. In the education system in China, there is much stress of competition. Overemphasis on Science needs to be balanced by the Arts and Letters. The studies of Technology and Business should be complemented by Humanities. In the present research, I have quoted extensively from Chinese classics and poetry of Zhang Zai and Tao Yuanmin as well as biblical narratives that contain poetry and wise sayings. They are consistent with one another. Modern poetry should also be encouraged, as reflections lead to interiority and dialogue about transcendental reality. It is consistent with Chinese culture giving importance to forming an all-around person.

Based on my first-hand experiences, sincerity can touch people's heart. I believe that we can really engage in constructive dialogue if we are open to each other, without holding a biased or absolute attitude. There is a Trinitarian vision at the heart of the "charism of unity." Jesus prayed to the Father that "may they

all be one as you and I are one,” and he showed us the way in the emptying of himself on the cross, to reconcile humankind with God and among themselves. This Trinitarian dynamism of the Christian Revelation is open to dialogue with all cultures. There is something that corresponds to the profound needs, not only in Western culture but, in all cultures and, particularly for me as a Chinese.

A Postscript

I would like to add three inspiring images:

Our lady of the knots in Munich

Observing recent development of the Catholic church in China, there are certain knots to be unknotted. Among the five established religions officially recognized in China, Buddhism and Protestantism have grown rapidly in China amid a nationwide religious revival in recent decades. Catholicism is the only one not growing in numbers. Why is that so? Maybe it has fallen victim of politicizing, with controversies easily played up by the media. Maybe there should be more emphasis on reconciliation and mutual love among Catholics. Pope John Paul II appealed to the Chinese Catholic in China through Radio Veritas during his first visit to the Philippines that there is “no opposition or incompatibility in being at the same time truly Christian and authentically Chinese.”¹⁵ This appeal is repeated by his successors. Pope Francis emphasizes “the culture of encounter.” Rather than self-preservation of the Church, he encourages her to go out, offering testimony and dialogue. I remember paying a visit to a Church in Augsburg in Germany a few years ago. There, I saw the painting of Mary, Untier of Knots. I was told that Pope Francis saw that image while in Germany as a student and promoted her veneration in Latin America. Since then, I often pray that through the intercession of Mary, the witness of Pope Francis, and ours as authentic Catholics, that the knots surrounding the Church in China will gradually be untied.

15 Pope John Paul II, “Address to the Chinese Catholic community in Asia,” Manila, February 18, 1981, 3-4.

The light house at the Bund of Shanghai

I remember one casual evening in 1995, strolling and viewing from the Pudong the new area on the other side of the river. All lights on the Bund were turned off at 10 pm. I saw in the dim light a cross on top of the lighthouse. It made a strong impression on me. I was surprised to see a cross in the dim light, in a socialist country, officially atheist. The following morning, I found out that on top of the lighthouse, what I thought was a cross, was just a wind measuring instrument in the shape of a cross. I was also struck by the Monument to the People's Heroes on the other end of the Bund, for it was dedicated, not only to Communist revolutionaries, but to all persons who have contributed to the renewal of the Chinese nation in the last 200 years. China was called the "sick man of Asia" at the turn of the 19th century. China has lifted 800 million people out of poverty in recent decades. Nowadays, you will find more and more Chinese students and tourists everywhere in the world, at least until the start of the pandemic. Whether China can achieve its long-term goals is open to debate, but it surely has entered a "new era" and is committed to moving towards "building a community of shared future for mankind." The instrument on top of the lighthouse may not have been originally designed as a cross, but as for me, there is always a design in the loving plan of God, whether in a person's life, a country, or the whole of humanity.

The unfinished bird in Beijing

There was a subtle message in the design of the Holy See Pavilion in the Beijing Expo 2019. The environmental crisis humanity faces is seen in the light of the consequence of this Fall of man. Distancing himself from the original design God has, for creation and for humanity, ruined harmony in nature and relationships, but Jesus, the New Adam, with his death and resurrection, restores what was broken. God speaks to the hearts of men in many ways, as the wind measuring instrument on top of a lighthouse in the dark resembling a cross spoke to me strikingly 28 years ago. In the painting, Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, displayed during the Beijing Expo, among the many animals and birds depicted, there was a sketch of a small bird forgotten by the painter Peter Wenzel. During the

exhibition, we organized activities to let children participate in painting the “forgotten bird” on postcards, and on canvases. It was not only something educational for the children who participated in such a program, it was also very significant for parents, teachers, volunteers of the Expo who joined in the activities. I am convinced that, whatever we do, whether painting the forgotten bird, taking actions in lifestyle conversion for an integral ecology, praying for the wisdom in the dealing with climate change, constructing peace in our daily relationships is a contribution, adding colors and strokes to the “unfinished work,” the unfinished building bridges and dialogue.

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