

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Good and God: The Enlightenment Projects in Europe and China

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**Abstract:** This paper will explore the following themes: (1) To argue that the concepts of Good and God belong to distinctly different discourses – the former to ethics or moral philosophy, the latter to religion; (2) There is no necessary logical link between Good and God; (3) Far from God logically preceding Good, it is Good which logically precedes God and guarantees its existence as a supernatural entity; (4) From above it follows that a society can be moral and not subscribe to a religion which postulates the existence of God as a supernatural entity; (5) Chinese history, its culture and its civilisation which have lasted and continues to endure for at least two and a half thousand years constitutes a refutation of the thesis that there can be no morality without religion and that a society resting solely on Good and not God could survive; (6) European Enlightenment which occurred in the 18th century is about dispensing with God and religion, ushering in secularism and humanism as an alternative philosophical foundation for society; (7) The Chinese has been secular and humanistic since the Spring and Autumn period when Kongzi and other philosophers lived and taught. This means that the Chinese Enlightenment Project has occurred, more than two thousand years before the European Enlightenment Project; (8) Furthermore, there is compelling circumstantial evidence that the Chinese Project could have played a role in the emergence of the European Project via the Jesuit route of knowledge transmission from the East to the West.

**Keywords:** Good, God, supernatural entity, religions (Abrahamic), morality, Chinese culture and civilisation, Chinese Enlightenment Project, European Enlightenment Project, secularism and humanism, Jesuits

## Abbreviations

**CCPT:** Classical Chinese Philosophy Tradition  
**DSWT:** Dominant Strand in Western Thinking  
**MWEP:** Modern Western Epistemic Paradigm  
**MWPT:** Modern Western Philosophy Tradition  
**WPT:** Western Philosophy Tradition

## 1 Introduction

First, some comments about the title of this paper which could be revealing about its contents as well as its aims and objectives. Its main title indicates that it is an attempt to explore a question which is both ancient and topical. In the Western Philosophy Tradition (WPT), it is as ancient as Socrates who in *The Euthyphro* was asked this very question, whether goodness is loved by the gods because it is good, or whether goodness is good because it is loved by the gods. Socrates favoured the former answer but obviously many others after him are not convinced. Indeed, a famous Russian novelist and thinker (Dostoyevsky 1821-1881) went even so far as to write in *The Brothers Karamazov*: “If God does not exist, everything is permitted”. (For a contemporary discussion of this continuing controversy, see Zuckerman 2008 and 2020 [1].) Its subtitle signals a discussion of the 18<sup>th</sup> century European Enlightenment Project and how it renders “invisible” the much earlier Chinese *Enlightenment* Project which had taken place by the Spring and Autumn period in Chinese history, and by doing so masks the real relationship between the two Projects.

This paper is intended to explore the following inter-related themes:

(1) The relationship between the concepts of Good and God, that the former belongs to philosophy and the latter to religion. Philosophy and theology are distinct domains of knowledge; how to be a good person is not identical to how to be a good practitioner of one's faith, although there may be some overlap in many contexts.

(2) As Western Thinking is closely connected with Christianity, there is then a dominant strand in Western Thinking (DSWT) which holds a tight relation between God, his commands on the one hand and morality on the other. Right actions are right just because God says so and wrong actions are wrong just because God does not endorse them. In other words, it maintains that the concept of Good makes no sense independent of the concept of God as it is a derivative of the latter notion; however, this paper argues to the contrary, namely, that the concept of God is parasitic upon that of Good.

(3) DSWT, in other words, implies that: (a) There can be no morality without religion; (b) No society could be founded on morality which is not backed by religion; (c) No society could persist for long or be an advanced civilisation without religion.

(4) The Enlightenment in the West which occurred in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to a limited extent undermined DSWT, although DSWT survives healthily, not so much in Europe today but in the USA – see the results of the Pew Research Center [2, 3] surveys conducted in 2008 and 2020 in different countries to ascertain peoples' views about the relation between religion and morality. Unfortunately, in both surveys, China does not appear on the list of countries surveyed. Sweden shows the highest percentage (90%) supporting the view that God is not needed to be moral while the USA came out with 54% in favour, and 45% rejecting it.

(5) However, the history of civilisation in the world shows that: (a) European Enlightenment was not the first and not the only one; (b) The ancient Chinese had their *Enlightenment* by the time of Kongzi (孔子)/Confucius (c 551-c 479 BCE), if not before; (c) The European Enlightenment was inspired by the Chinese *Enlightenment*; as Europe/the West failed to acknowledge the Chinese contribution, this amounts to what may be called Coloniality and its related notion of Invisibility (which will be raised in the detailed arguments in the body of the paper); (d) Chinese society has endured for at least two and a half thousand years as a secular, humanistic culture, and civilisation, thereby challenging and undermining DSWT.

(6) In exploring the intimately entwined themes outlined above, this contribution may, therefore, also be seen as an exercise in intercultural philosophy between WPT and CCPT (Classical Chinese Philosophy Tradition).

For the sake of clarity, this paper adopts the following editorial style of presentation:

- (1) God written as such refers to a supernatural entity (as found in the Abrahamic faiths).
- (2) Gods or god written as such refers to a mere physical representation of God as help to God's followers when they pray or meditate; as such they may be deemed to stand for supernatural entities (as found in Hinduism in the form of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva).
- (3) The Shang-dynasty god in Chinese history which though a supernatural entity was ill-defined and under-theorised.
- (4) *Gods* or *god* written as such in italics refer to non-supernatural entities as they are about historical personages deemed worthy of honour and respect because they led virtuous lives (as found in Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist temples in China).

Another matter falling under this heading of editorial style of presentation concerns the Enlightenment Project. As this paper is keen to distinguish between the European 18<sup>th</sup> century project and the Chinese Eastern Zhou dynasty project, the first is written as "European Enlightenment" and the second is italicised as "Chinese *Enlightenment*."

## 2 Does God logically precede Good or does Good logically precede God?

DSWT claims that God logically precedes Good, but it is wrong. Good necessarily precedes God, at least in the three great Abrahamic faiths (Jewish, Christian, and Muslim). These religions define their God in terms of a triad of attributes, namely, omnipotence (all-powerful), omniscience (all-knowing) and omnibenevolence (supremely good). God in these three major world religions is a supernatural entity, which transcends the natural world, but whose commands Humankind must obey. If God is defined as a supremely good being before He could be a

suitable object of human worship, then this implies that God's human worshippers must have a prior conception of what is good to select Him as the entity worthy of their adoration and worship.

Conduct the following thought experiment: would Jews, Christians and Muslims worship the Devil? Of course not, it would be bizarre if they did; the bizarre nature of the experiment drives home forcefully the logical point that while God stands for Goodness, the Devil stands for Evil. Only that entity which embodies Good, not the entity that embodies Evil could and would command the obedience of its worshippers. They adore God because He is Good; they do not first adore God and then discover Goodness in the Godhead. They adore Him first and foremost because they know that He is Good.

The story in the Old Testament of God, Abraham and Isaac illustrates this logical point very clearly. (The interpretation proffered here is different from more standard accounts associated with the famous one given by Kierkegaard (1813-1855), the 19<sup>th</sup> century theologian and existentialist philosopher (Perkins, 1981) [4]. I will be referring to Kierkegaard in the text of this paper in a later section.) According to Genesis 22, God commanded Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice to Himself. Abraham duly tied his son to an altar and was about to kill him when a messenger from God stopped Abraham from doing so. Abraham looked up and saw a ram which he then duly killed as sacrifice to God instead of Isaac. God's messenger was reported as saying to Abraham, "now I know you fear God". The narrative is often told to illustrate the supreme value of obedience to God's will because God is all-powerful and all-knowing, but as we have seen, He is also supremely Good. Such a deity, of course, would never command a follower to kill his own child as that would constitute not Good but Evil. A father killing his own son is "unnatural", no matter how powerful the entity doing the ordering. God who is supremely good would never really order such an evil deed. In the narrative, God was only testing Abraham's faith in Himself. Abraham passed the test brilliantly and God simultaneously revealed His Goodness for all to behold. It was never God's intention to order someone to kill his own son but to use the command to Abraham as an opportunity to demonstrate that God equals Good, and that Good equals God.

### 3 God and gods: God-made-man and man-made gods

Let us get a red herring out of the way. It is true that the Abrahamic faiths mentioned above did not take root in China despite many and different attempts to do so in the case of Christianity since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. All the same, one is not entitled to conclude that religion has no place in China – to do so is tantamount to saying that only Abrahamic faiths count as religions. Surely Buddhism is also a religion, and the Chinese did take to Buddhism since its arrival in China from India by the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE during the Eastern Han dynasty via the Silk Road. Today, some Chinese call themselves Buddhists if asked to name a faith they subscribe to. There are Buddhist temples in China with Buddhist monks praying and chanting. Furthermore, we know, too, there are Daoist temples with Daoist priests praying and chanting as well as Confucian temples in Beijing, Nanjing, and Shanghai, (the three must-visit cities in any tourist itinerary), not to mention the largest shrine of them all, the Kong Miao in Confucius's birthplace, Qufu in Shandong province with rites and rituals, today, performed by priests. (The Qufu Kong Miao was started soon after Kongzi's death in 5 BCE, although what we see of the architecture today dates mostly from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards.) Surely, one would, therefore, be wrong in concluding that Chinese lack religious faiths even though they might not in the main be of the Abrahamic faiths. (According to Statista (2018) [5], Muslims constitute 2% of the Chinese population or roughly 30 million; it does not give figures for Christians; according to Wikipedia – Christianity in China – the Chinese government in 2018 had declared that there were over 44 million in the country, although some international Christian organizations have given a higher estimate which, however, could be inflated.)

Not too fast. The Buddhist, the Daoist and the Confucian temples in China have not been built to adore and worship a supernatural entity called God or G-d as postulated by the Abrahamic faiths. Buddha was an Indian prince, born Siddhartha Gautama (c 563 – c 483 BCE, according to the "best" calculation of modern scholarship); he was such an extraordinary man and led such an exemplary life that he was called the Buddha (the enlightened one). Followers of Buddhism do not hold that a supreme deity called God exists, although they do believe in reincarnation and the

doctrine of karma. Their goal is to achieve enlightenment primarily through morality, meditation, to avoid self-indulgence but also self-denial (call this wisdom, if you like). Temple-going is an optional extra. Buddhist monks are expected, however, to be celibate.

Daoism is associated with a sage thinker called Laozi (老子). This version of his name is used as a term of respect by the Chinese, just as Confucius, another sage thinker, is called Kongzi (孔子). Laozi's real name is Li Dan (李聃) and is said to have lived in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Attributed to him as author is the canonical text called the *Daodejing* 《道德经》 or the *Laozi* 《老子》. However, some modern scholars are sceptical about the existence of both the man as well as his being the author of the canonical text, the *Daodejing* or the *Laozi*, even if he was not simply a legendary figure — see Chan 2018 [6] for a detailed account.

One must be very careful here with the term “Daoism” or “Daoist” which one uses in English when one talks about or refers to the *Laozi*. As we shall see, it is a treacherous term. In English, one may call people “Daoists” provided they share some ideas in common, while, perhaps, tacitly recognising at the same time important differences between various versions of “Daoist” thinking and practices under the broad umbrella “name” of “Daoism”. In English, it is meaningful to talk about “Protestantism”, but that term hides many differences amongst the numerous sects in that large branch of Christianity which defines itself against another big branch of the same religion called Catholicism. (All forms of Protestantism, despite the profound differences between them, reject the Church of Rome and the Pope as God's true representative on earth – for them, divine communication and instruction is *via* the Bible.) In English and some other languages, one can conveniently invoke the suffix “ism” to serve the purpose just outlined. However, in the Chinese language and Chinese culture, such an easy manoeuvre is not available. One can speak of “the Dao” (that is, the “Dao” which the *Laozi* talks about). One can speak of applying “the Dao” in attempts to understand different domains of theory and praxis, such as “the *dao* of rulership”, “the *dao* of the military” (as in Sunzi's the *Art of War* 《孙子兵法》), “the *dao* of medicine” and so forth. These specific kinds of *dao* are empirically grounded, but within the *philosophical-metaphysical framework* of the *Dao*. To prevent gross misunderstanding, one must, therefore, immediately distinguish in Chinese between two very different domains of theory and practice, between Daojia (道家) and Daojiao (道教); the former may be said to be Daoist philosophy, the latter is Daoist religion. What is the difference between *jia* (家) and *jiao* (教)? The latter is easily translated into English as “religion”; with the former, it is not so easy to find an easy direct English equivalent, but for the time being, let's translate it as “school”. Its meaning will become clearer when we look briefly at the distinction itself between *Daojia* and *Daojiao*.

The term *Daojia* was coined, it is said, by Sima Tan (司马谈) (ca 165-110 BCE), a historian of the Western Han dynasty, and used also by his son Sima Qian (司马迁) who completed the book already begun by his father, which came to be called the *Shiji* 《史记》, the *Historical Records*. In general, the term *jia*, translated as “School (of thought)” is commonly used in other cases – the Chinese talk of *Rujia* (儒家), the Confucian School, *Fajia* (法家), the Legalist School and so on. *Rujia* focuses on moral/social/political ideas; *Fajia*, unlike its rival, *Rujia*, focuses on using the law as the key concept and tool in governing society. That is why one can translate the term *jia* in these kinds of context as “philosophy”. *Rujia* is Confucian philosophy, *Fajia* is philosophy of law, and *Daojia* is Daoist philosophy. Their respective teachings differed fundamentally; nevertheless, they were all predicated upon ignoring the existence (or the relevance to their pre-occupation) of a transcendent being (God) whose commands were incorporated into their teachings. In other words, the validity of their teachings was not grounded in the supernatural; their teachings were naturalistic and/or humanistic in character, in contrast to a worldview which embraces the supernatural orientation. (For a more detailed discussion, see Lee 2017 [7], 27-33). In contrast, *Daojiao* has transformed Laozi into a god, whose statue sits upon an altar in a temple, surrounded by burning joss sticks.

The traditional account of *Daojiao* traced its formal foundation to the Eastern Han dynasty, several centuries after the first appearance of the *Laozi*, to someone known as Zhang Daoling (张道陵) who was born in 34 CE. His surname was Zhang, and his given name was Ling, but as he founded the Daoist religion, he became known later in history as Zhang Dao Ling. In its earliest days, this religion called itself the *Dao* of Five Bushels of Rice (五斗米道), as before admission, the would-be adherent must offer that amount of rice to the organisation, or the *Dao* of the Celestial Master (天师道), while claiming Laozi as its original teacher, and indeed, in the

end, as just mentioned, proclaiming him to be a god. Its basic texts therefore included the *Laozi* amongst others as these emerged following its foundation; this religion tended to emphasise an other-worldly detachment from reality, achieving immortality *via* the search for elixirs. Daoist religion, *Daojiao* has its own canonical text, called the *Correct Classic* 《正一經》. (For a detailed discussion in English about *Daojia* and *Daojiao*, see Robinet 2008 and 1997 [8,9]; note that Robinet has changed her mind between 1997 and 2008. In the later, though not the earlier account, she has acknowledged the distinction.)

It is said that Sima Tan in using the term *Daojia* and in his brief account about it did not mention the name of Laozi; neither did he refer to the text called the *Laozi*. Indeed, he did not mention the word *dao* at all, apart from it being part of the term *Daojia*. (Smith 2003 [10] explores Sima Tan's motive in creating the term "dao" in order to identify its referent in terms of a set of ideas, intended to appeal to the Han Emperor Wu, with Sima Tan himself as the paradigmatic "dao" thinker). However, the two Simas (father and son) would undoubtedly have meant that the *Laozi* belonged to *Daojia*. They also held that it was in two parts, one about *Dao* and the other about *de*, even if it is true that unlike contemporary scholars, they would have accepted the traditional account about the author who was called Laozi, Li Dan. Sima Tan's use of the term had come to be associated with the rational and the naturalistic found in the *Dao* of the *Laozi*. The rationalist/naturalistic tendency had begun as early as the Spring and Autumn period; no doubt, Sima Tan was continuing this orientation in Chinese thought, thereby excising what might smack of the supernatural and the superstitious.

It is, therefore, fair to observe that texts such as the *Laozi*, a *Daojia* text would be very different in character from say the *Correct Classic*, a *Daojiao* text. However, acknowledging their differences would not necessarily lead to a denial that *Daojiao* does share some common concepts between them. It is simply to say that one could distil from the *Daojia* set of texts a cluster of cosmological/*philosophical* concepts, which have formed the foundation of the naturalistic mode of thinking down the millennia, concepts which were not logically derived from the postulation of a supernatural entity called God.

Let us next look at the Confucian tradition of temples, priests, and rituals. There is no need, here, to labour an obvious point, that this phenomenon has nothing to do with a supernatural entity called God. Kongzi, unlike Laozi, has never been suspected of being a legendary rather than a real historical figure, although it is true that his dates of birth and death are not certain and are usually given as c 551-c 479 BCE.

We now need to confront the following problem: why do Buddhist, Daoist and Confucian temples exist in Chinese culture, since their founding fathers were historical figures who were sage thinkers, with people coming to bow before their images, burn incense and joss sticks in front of them? Here, we need to remind readers of a rough distinction between "men with book learning" and those without. The former category is about the literate and literary class who, in the main, constituted the class of the scholar-official – they were people who had been educated in the *Rujia* tradition of canonical texts. Those without book learning, generally, were illiterate which included most women (even the wives and daughters of distinguished men of learning), if not invariably all women. The former historically was a very small proportion of the populace. Indeed, at the time when the PRC was established in 1949, the literacy rate was only 15 to 25%. The adult (a person 15 years or above) literacy rate in China in 2018 is reported to be 96.84%.

The scholarly and the literate regarded Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism as philosophies, but appreciated that for most of their fellow human beings, temples served a social, cohesive function and were tolerant of them. (For a similar account of religion, concerning both its evolution and its endurance, see Dunbar 2022 [11]). So, a laid-back attitude developed: those who wanted to go to temples to light their joss sticks did so, those who did not have such an impulse, stayed away. There was none of the hell-fire outlook deeply embedded at least in Christianity, that Abrahamic faith which has shaped European/Western civilisation and still does despite the Enlightenment in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The people with "book learning" were fully aware that Buddha, Laozi and Kongzi were men-made *gods* (hence I italicise the term in this context). These men became elevated to become *gods* because they propagated (in my language, not that of the men with book learning historically in China) conceptions of the Good and led exemplary lives and so became worthy of being honoured and respected by their fellow human beings. One way of demonstrating honour and respect to them and their ideas would be to erect temples, with monks or priests to officiate

at certain rites and rituals. It necessarily follows that such *gods* are no supernatural entities who are all-knowing, all-powerful, and supremely good. In contrast, such *gods* were merely human beings who had through their own effort striven to and did achieve a certain admirable level of moral goodness. That is why Kongzi in the *Analects* 《论语》 focused on the concept of self-cultivation (自修).

These *gods*, therefore, belong to a different ontological category than the Abrahamic God of Christianity. The Christian God became Man to save Humankind. To make sense of this, Christian theology had to postulate the doctrine of the Trinity – God the father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This Christian God who is all-powerful, all-knowing, and supremely good not only has created Humankind but also a world in which his human creatures encounter and must endure Evil. The energy of Western intellectuals for about a thousand and five hundred years was expended on such conundrums, in attempts to make sense of them. They called it the problem of evil – how could God be omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent and yet there is evil in the world? They had failed despite their vast expenditure of effort, time, and energy. It was best to accept these conundrums as mysteries which, *ex hypothesi*, could not be solved. As a result, Kierkegaard abandoned the path of acquiring knowledge about God via Rationality and Objectivity as advocated by the Modern Western Philosophy Tradition (MWPT); instead, he advocated the leap of faith: “If I am capable of grasping God objectively, I do not believe, but precisely because I cannot do this I must believe.”

Feuerbach (1804-1872) a 19<sup>th</sup> century German philosopher, solved it another way. He postulated (in his 1841 *The Essence of Christianity*) that the Christian God is a human construct possessing all the attributes which Humankind lacks – omnipotence, omniscience and omnibenevolence. We, humans, then reify this being as God which stands for the human desire to overcome human limitations. However, in his writings after the period 1840s to 1850s, Feuerbach appeared to have looked at religion differently – see Harvey 1995 [12] for a discussion of this issue. In this way, Feuerbach is said to have deconstructed God in terms of anthropology. (It is not within the remit of this paper to assess whether Feuerbach was successful or not in this project. See Stewart (2020) [13] who argues that it is not successful.) This deconstruction entails that there is no God as a supernatural entity; there is only *god*, not made so much to Man’s image but made to the ideal image that Man would like to have of himself. (Marx both took over Feuerbach’s deconstruction of the Christian God but at the same time also took him to task for his abstract essentialism about human nature, and therefore, for not having gone far enough. This, too, is an issue outside the remit of this paper.) In other words, the Feuerbachian *god* is no different from those *gods* found in Buddhist, *Daojiao*, *Rujia* temples, except that the followers of the latter type of *gods* make no claim to their being supernatural entities; their followers know that they are no more than dead men who led exemplary lives, embodying their conception of the Good which they (the followers) are trying to emulate. These followers honour, respect these *gods* by putting up statues of them upon an altar and burning incense and joss sticks in the temples dedicated to them.

To prevent misunderstanding, we need to say a little about Hinduism, a religion which prevails in a country with possibly more than a billion followers. Hinduism has many statues and images, but these are not *gods*, but mere physical representations of God (a supernatural entity) intended to help its followers to focus on an aspect of prayer or meditation. Hinduism recognises one God represented by three different gods, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Brahma is the creator god, the eternal origin who is the cause and foundation of all existence. Vishnu is shown with having four arms and these represent his omnipotence and omnipresence and is responsible for the divine essence that pervades the Universe. Shiva is also called The Destroyer; this god destroys vices such as greed, lust, and anger as well as guards his followers against ignorance and illusion. He is at the same time responsible for rebirth and new life. To put things in a nutshell, Hinduism is committed to God as a supernatural entity though it differs from the Abrahamic expression of God in one important aspect: the Abrahamic faiths, in general, do not permit images of gods to represent aspects of God, whereas Hinduism does.

## 4 The Enlightenment: 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe

To understand the Enlightenment (1750s – 1890s), one must grasp what happened in Europe in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Thirty Years War, brutal and prolonged, took place between

1618-1648 in Western Europe, then on the cusp of the Age of Modernity. What today we call Germany appeared to have borne the brunt of the mayhem, as most of the battles appeared to have raged on its territory, resulting in roughly five million (including civilian) casualties. Like any extended war, this one was no exception to the rule: fighting, disorder and chaos, resulting in famine, pestilence, disease, death. Furthermore, in this case, genocide was also a component. This war should be understood at several levels – the merely political, with the Habsburg empire versus the rest of Europe; the religious, as it turned out that the Habsburg was by and large Catholic and the rest, by and large, Protestants; the political/religious which added complexity to the matter, as the French which were predominantly Catholic intervened not on behalf of the Catholic Habsburg but the Protestant Dutch. As a result of such unholy alliances, Catholics and Protestants slaughtered one another, Catholics slaughtered Catholics. This “unholy” war ended with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 which laid down, in the main, the boundaries of the various states which make up modern Western Europe today. The region took several decades to recover from the devastation (See Wilson 2009 [14]).

With the Peace of Westphalia, Europe was ready for change. Its elites realised that a new era must begin, no longer grounded in theology, in religious authorities, in deadly squabbles fuelled in part if not wholly by such a source. This then ushered in the age of secularism, the Age of Reason, or the Enlightenment. However, the Enlightenment was not a totally homogenous matter, as there were, for instance, the French Enlightenment, the German Enlightenment, the English Enlightenment, the Scottish Enlightenment, each differing somewhat from the other. This limited discussion is only briefly concerned with thinkers in the first two countries mentioned. In the French Enlightenment were the *philosophes* which included, for instance, Voltaire (1694-1778), Diderot (1713-84), D’Alembert (1717-83), Montesquieu (1689-1735), Rousseau (1712-72). In the German Enlightenment, a leading philosopher was Leibniz (1646-1716); his followers, the Leibnizians included Christian Wolff, a pupil of Leibniz (1679-1754), and Georg Bernhard Bilfinger, a pupil of Wolff (1693-1750).

As Kant (1724-1804) is considered in MWPT to be the philosopher at the heart of the Enlightenment, let us see how he defined the term. He devoted a whole essay in 1784 entitled “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” In the opening paragraph, he wrote:

*Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one’s own understanding without the guidance of another. This immaturity is self-incurred if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another. The motto of enlightenment is therefore: Sapere aude! Have courage to se your own understanding!*

He continued:

*...Thus only a few, by cultivating their own minds, have succeeded in freeing themselves from immaturity and in continuing boldly on their way.*

*...by the public use of one’s own reason I mean that use which anyone may make of it as a man of learning addressing the entire reading public.*

*...as a scholar he (namely, the clergyman) \* is completely free as well as obliged to impart to the public all his carefully considered, well-intentioned thoughts on the mistaken aspects of those doctrines, and to offer suggestions for a better arrangement of religious and ecclesiastical affairs.*

*...as a scholar addressing the real public (i.e. the world at large) through his writings, (he is) \* making public use of his reason. . .*

*If it is now asked whether we at present live in an enlightened age, the answer is: No, but we do live in an age of enlightenment. As things are at present, we still have a long way to go before men as a whole can be in a position (or can ever be put into a position) of using their own understanding confidently and well in religious matters, without outside guidance. But we do have distinct indications that the way is now being cleared for them to work freely in this direction, and that the obstacle to universal enlightenment, to man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity, are gradually becoming fewer.*

\* The round brackets and the text within them are not in the original text but inserted by this author.

Kant said he focussed on religion because “religious immaturity is the most pernicious and dishonourable variety of all” forms of self-incurred immaturity. In other words, he was against all forms of self-incurred immaturity. He exhorted us, humans, to use our own intellectual

powers to determine what we ought to believe and how we ought to act, without reliance on external authorities such as mere tradition, prejudice, superstition, myth, doctrines propagated by religious/theological authorities in the name of God, a supernatural entity.

## 5 Europe and China: Two-way transmission of knowledge

Did Europe pull itself up by its own bootstrap, so to speak, using only indigenous intellectual resources to do so? For Kant, and since Kant, the answer was and is yes – the Enlightenment was an all-European project, pure and simple. Is this historically, correct? No, as events and evidence during Kant’s own lifetime and the generation before (such as Leibniz) showed otherwise. But as we shall see, once Kant had pronounced on the matter, Western philosophical/intellectual history had been re-written to conform with the “all-European native model”. Kant in fact went so far as to declare that “Philosophy is not to be found in the Whole Orient”, which amounts to what may be called Coloniality, an embodiment of what I call Grand Intellectual Racism – see also Mignolo 2011, 2021 [15, 16]; van Norden 2017, 2021 [17, 18]; Koh and Lee [19] forthcoming.

If the Enlightenment did look elsewhere for new ideas and inspiration, where did these come from? Conveniently, here entered the Jesuits who began their intensive religious activities in India and China, with the real prize waiting in the capital of China, Peking (today called Beijing), the anticipated and fervently prayed for conversion of the Emperor of the Ming dynasty to Christianity/Catholicism – see Schönfeld 2006a [20], 72; Standaert 2002 [21]. Matteo Ricci (利瑪竇) (1552-1610) could be said to form the first wave of the Jesuit mission to China, gaining a foothold in the mainland of the Middle Kingdom in 1583 before eventually settling in the capital, Peking in 1601. He never left China to return to Europe – he stayed for nearly thirty years, and became an “honorary Chinese”, with the Chinese Emperor in the end granting him a plot in the capital city for his burial. This mission, beginning in earnest with Ricci’s arrival in 1601 lasted till the Qing Kangxi emperor (who reigned from 1661 to 1722) banned the Jesuits from China in 1721, in response to a decree of Pope Clement XI in 1704, which condemned the Chinese practice Europeans called “ancestor worship” as pagan and totally unacceptable to Christian, or at least Catholic beliefs. The period of contact lasted well over a hundred years, spanning the last four decades of the Ming dynasty (1364-1644) and into the first seventy years or so of Manchu Qing rule (1644-1911). The goal of such a mission is too well known to be rehearsed here, nor is it necessary to detail what the priests took with them to China, namely, Western scientific learning and gadgets to impress the emperor and other elites, to pave the way, ultimately, to accepting their real gift to the Chinese, namely, the Christian/Catholic religion.

However, what is not perhaps so well-known is that this intellectual exchange was not a one-way street, but a two-way transaction, as the Jesuit missionaries could be said to have started a university discipline which, today, is called sinology – the scholarly study of Chinese culture and civilisation. They sent letters back to Europe about Chinese society as they encountered it, as well as published matters pertaining to Chinese culture and civilisation, including its *science* and its *philosophy*. The most relevant to this study are listed below:

(1) Philippe Couplet (1622-93) was the editor of a volume comprising of the translation of three *Rujia* texts – *Analects*, *Daxue* 《大学》 (*Great Learning*) and *Zhongyong* 《中庸》 (*Doctrine of the Mean*) in 1687, called *Confucius sinarum philosophus* (*Confucius, the Chinese Philosopher* as rendered by this author) to which Couplet wrote a long introduction.

(2) François Noël (卫方济 1651-1729), published his *Philosophia sinica* (*Chinese Philosophy* as rendered by this author) in 1711 – a volume containing quotations of Chinese *philosophers* relating to their notion of “the Supreme Being”, their duties in family/social life, their understanding of the rites honouring their ancestors.

(3) Antoine Gaubil’s (1689-1759), Jean-Joseph-Marie Amiot’s (1718-93), and Pierre-Martial Cibot’s (1727-80): *Mémoires concernant l’histoire, les sciences, les arts, les moeurs, les usages des Chinois* (16 vols, Paris, 1776-1814). (English title as rendered by this author: *Collations and Discussion about the History, the Sciences, the Arts, the Customs and Practices of the Chinese*). These main authors together with others in their collections dealt with a wide range of topics and subjects covering music, literature, history, the *sciences*, *philosophy*, significantly using



Chinese primary sources in many cases.

(4) Jean-Baptiste du Halde (1674-1743): *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l'Empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise* (4 vols, Paris, 1735). (For English title and translation, see du Halde 1741.) Unlike the other Jesuits mentioned, du Halde never went to China. His work, left to posterity, though the most extensive on Chinese matters, was a work of extraction, collation and compilation based on the writings (either published or in manuscript) of twenty-seven fellow Jesuits (whose names he listed), who did live and work in China. (Camus (2007) [22] gives a succinct account of the works of Couplet and other Jesuits.)

(5) These volumes apart, another very significant source of information about the Chinese came from the letters written by the Jesuits and published by them in different editions from 1702 to 1776 – these were called *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*. (Title in English as translated by this author: *Edifying and Curious Letters*.) We must add straightaway that these were no mere tittle-tattle about the work of missionaries abroad, not only from China but all over the world – the Levant, India, South America and elsewhere. Its goal was to keep benefactors who contributed to the missionary activities informed about the societies they hoped to convert through their support. It enjoyed immense success, amongst the church officials, friends, and benefactors alike. Indeed, so good was the quality of the contents that du Halde, as already mentioned, the Jesuit who never left Paris, wrote his authoritative (at least considered as such by Western scholarship) study on China, based largely on such a source, the four-volume study mentioned above. So extraordinary was the quality of the scholarship that intellectuals outside the Church in Europe held them in extremely high regard – for instance, Voltaire and Montesquieu never tired of singing their praises for the information and knowledge they conveyed about the Orient. Indeed, Leibniz even said that the contribution from the mission in China should be considered a very important contribution to the Enlightenment and a constituent part of that project, for its objectivity, its precision and the extensive range of subjects covered. What was truly remarkable about Du Halde's work was that he included translations of actual Chinese texts, including essays written during the Song dynasty by scholars such as Sima Guang (司马光) (1019-1086). These translated texts turned out to influence literary figures, political activists as well as journalists, opinion-makers, the “commentariat” in the West, and in that way, influenced the course of political development in England and the USA, amongst others. Sima Guang oversaw compiling/writing (between 1066-1084) *Zizhi tongjian* 《资治通鉴》 *Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Governance*, a chronicle of Chinese history from 403 BCE to 959 CE, regarded as one of the best works, if not the finest, single historical work, in Chinese historiography. (See Powers (2018) [22] for some details about the impact of such translated texts and their key concepts in the development of Western political discourse and practice in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.) The importance of the availability of such texts in Du Halde's compilation to the elites in Western societies cannot be exaggerated.

Note that (1), (2), (5) would have been available to Leibniz, and (1)-(5) to the French *philosophes* and in Germany to those who lived after Leibniz including Kant [23].

In other words, there was a clear line of transmission from the Jesuits to Europe in general which would have been available to Kant; in particular, as he was a philosopher, it would be reasonable to assume that he would have been exposed to the understanding of *CPT* as transmitted by the Jesuits as well as to the mediation of Chinese ideas and concepts *via* the trio of German China-admirers, namely, Leibniz-Wolff-Bilfinger.

What was Europe's reception to ancient Chinese *philosophy*, *science*, literature and other cultural ideas, concepts, and practices? Again, one needs to divide Europe into the French *philosophes* and the German thinkers.

The French were keen to regard the Chinese as an attractive alternative model of society against which they could test their own ideas/hypotheses about the new Europe. What did they find so attractive in this alternative model? They found that Chinese society, at least at the level of high theory and amongst the elites, that is, the educated, had since the Zhou dynasty (1046-256 BCE) been secular; for them, too, secularism and human reason as the epistemological authority (not religious authority) went hand in hand. Hence, Chinese secular society beckoned like a beacon to the Europeans, especially the French; hence, too, the European Enlightenment conceived of secularism and Reason going hand in hand.

The French *philosophes* were all atheists, like their Chinese counterparts. However, the German philosophers and thinkers were more attached to theology – for instance, Leibniz was

neither an atheist nor doubter of the faith. Furthermore, religion in Germany had a stronger grip on people than in France – the form of Protestantism which was in the ascendancy in Prussia at that time was Pietism and its reach was extensive including academia. Certainly, the trio Leibniz-Wolff-Bilfinger did not devote their energies so much to secularism as to the pursuit of Chinese *philosophical* ideas in three other domains, namely, in the dynamic conception of Nature, in the “dialectics” (the harmonious *Wholism* of polar contrasts such as *yin* (阴) and *yang* (阳) through the concept of *Yinyang* (阴阳)), in Humanism/Reason. Leibniz was much preoccupied with the first two domains while Wolff and Bilfinger were with all three, though Bilfinger was the more systematic and sustained. The first had implications for science *via* the interface between philosophy and cosmology; the second had methodological implications for doing science and philosophy; the third concerned moral philosophy. (Amongst the French *philosophes*, Diderot came closest to Bilfinger except that for him his thinking was against the backdrop of his atheism.)

Kant [23] learned from Bilfinger to advance his own thinking in all three domains of his own philosophy, cosmology, science, and moral philosophy. (Lee (2021) [24], Chapter Eight explores the influence of Chinese moral ideas on Kant’s moral philosophy and Chapter Two Kant’s puzzling attitude to Chinese philosophy which is to be explained in terms of Kant’s racism.) In the very briefest of terms, one can say that Kant sided with Leibniz in accepting the Chinese conception of Nature as dynamic against the Cartesian and Newtonian one that Nature is static and mechanistic – to put things very simplistically, motion (except for Newton’s awkward business about gravitation) could be understood by the Billiard-ball Model, of one billiard ball hitting another billiard ball, thereby imparting motion to the second ball, with the chain reaction carrying on. Leibniz held that there was a live force (the term used today would be “energy”) in the universe against the dead force (momentum) advocated by the rival mechanistic view.

Kant began his career by siding with Leibniz but then ran into trouble, not as serious as that faced by Wolff and Bilfinger, but trouble, nevertheless. Wolff for his China-speech of 1721 was sacked from his university post at Halle in 1724, given 48 hours to quit Prussia on pain of death by hanging. When Wolff persisted in defending Chinese ideas (1726), he attracted more attacks. Eventually, he realised the only way to escape such relentless persecution was to recant, which he did, as he presumably felt he had no choice. (See Schönfeld (2006a) [20] and Fuchs (2006) [25]: “Asian accommodation over value, nature and law had become academically unacceptable”). Bilfinger, for his China-book of 1721, was also sacked from his university post at Tübingen, and had to leave, but was found a job by Wolff at the Academy at St Petersburg.

Kant [23] failed to get the equivalent of the MA degree as well as his post-doctoral qualification (*habilitation*) because the dynamic conception of Nature had implications unacceptable and unwelcome to Pietist theology, going against the Biblical account of God and His creation of the world including humans. As a result, he got nowhere trying for an academic appointment, never mind a chair in philosophy which he had been expecting to get with his numerous works. Kant had to disappear into the “wilderness” obtaining some humble living as assistant instructor and assistant librarian at Königsberg Castle, where he had plenty of time to mull over his failures to get to where he really wanted to go. In his nadir, so he said, he read an essay by Bilfinger, entitled “On Forces in a Moving body and Their Measure” (1728) in the Proceedings of the St Petersburg Academy, which showed him the way out of his intellectual impasse. He knew that he had to make peace with Newton and his mechanistic world view if he wanted to get a proper job, yet he was wedded to the Leibnizian/Chinese conception of dynamic Nature, so how could he please the former without compromising with the latter? Bilfinger showed the way, as Bilfinger in that essay, set out the Chinese “dialectics”, the harmony of polar contrasts. He eagerly grabbed hold of this lifeline thrown out to him by Bilfinger and the Chinese – with that magic wand, he reconciled the two and to boot, in so doing laid the foundations for physics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Einstein’s Special Theory of Relativity. However, in his public face, he praised Newton sky-high. He duly got his chair in metaphysics and logic and then entered his golden decade, the Critical Decade (1781-1790), from whence he was acclaimed either as the greatest Enlightenment philosopher or indeed, even the greatest philosopher of all times, out-shining Plato, and Aristotle. Yet strange to tell, after the Critical Decade, in the last ten years of his life, he returned to his pre-Critical days of the Leibnizian/Chinese conception of dynamic Nature. Hence, there was continuity rather than rupture between his first work, *Thoughts on the True Estimation of Living Forces* through the Critical works to his late work, *Opus Postumum*

(1785-1802; for details in the key notions of this work, see Edwards & Schönfeld 2006 [26]; Schönfeld 2006b [27]). If so, one could perhaps be justified in concluding that Kant was prepared to compromise his intellectual integrity to gain and retain a place in orthodox academia, by suppressing his deeply held conviction that Nature was dynamic, not static (contrary to what he wrote in his 1784 essay on the Enlightenment). In mitigation, one could say that he was just learning from the experience of Wolff and Bilfinger that capitulation to Newtonian mechanism and Pietist theology was the only way to avoid persecution and to secure academic survival.

## 6 The Chinese *Enlightenment* Project?

The preceding sections have briefly raised three inter-related topics:

- (1) Kant's own understanding of the notion of Enlightenment and the general European understanding of it.
- (2) The Jesuit route of the transmission of knowledge from East to West.
- (3) Kant's ridiculous Grand Intellectual Racism/Epistemic Racism/Coloniality masking the European reception to Chinese ideas and their impact on philosophers such as Leibniz and many others.

In the light of the above, we can next turn our attention to raising an intriguing question, namely, whether Chinese civilisation, too, had its own *Enlightenment* and if so, when did its *Enlightenment* occur in its history?

It would not be unfair to sum up Kant's understanding of the notion of Enlightenment as the rejection of all other avenues to knowledge traditionally acknowledged, especially via the religious route – Humankind's Rationality alone is to be relied on. This understanding implies either the outright rejection of the notion of God as a supernatural entity to guarantee human existence and knowledge or at least the irrelevance of the theological route to tell us what the world is and how we ought to live.

If we, today, were to apply the above to Chinese history, we would find it is obviously the case that the Chinese had very much earlier on in their history undertaken their own *Enlightenment* Project, so to speak. Its beginning could be dated to the Western Zhou dynasty (11<sup>th</sup> century-770BCE), although the lack of texts hampers scholarship in its ability to be more precise about the matter. However, that drawback no longer existed by the time of the Eastern Zhou dynasty (770-221 BCE). The Spring and Autumn (770-476 BCE) period saw a blossoming of philosophical/cosmological texts, and though some had been lost, many had survived.

Before the Zhou dynasty (c 16<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> century BCE), it was true that the Chinese believed in a sort of supernatural entity which for want of a better term may simply be called the Shang-dynasty-god – it is not the God found in the Abrahamic faiths nor the supernatural entity underpinning Hinduism. It was not well defined and not seriously theorised in the way the Abrahamic faiths and Hinduism have done in their religious and theological discourses. All the same, the Shang people did set up altars to worship and to perform rites and rituals to ensure that their conduct would conform to the will of such a supernatural entity. To this end, people in the Shang dynasty engaged in divination to discover the will of their god. As things turned out, their divination practices led in the main to the mature development of Chinese writing which was used to record the findings of divination exercises in a script we call, today, the Oracle Bone Script in English (甲骨文). The priest/scribe scratched out with a pin on polished turtle shells or the shoulder blades of ox the text of the consultation. Then these were heated with the heat producing cracks in them. The king, the priest/scribe would look at the cracks and interpret them. The king might on any one occasion want to know if it would be auspicious to march against an enemy, to go hunting, or even to get his sore gums or tooth ache sorted.

By the Spring and Autumn period, the Zhou elites in their texts had long made clear that a supernatural entity called the Shang-dynasty-god was neither possible nor relevant to the human project of organising society at any level, whether political, administrative, military, moral and spiritual, cultural, and aesthetic. The great texts of the Eastern Zhou dynasty (which also included the Warring States period 475-221 BCE) attributed to *Rujia* teaching (including the *Analects* and the *Mengzi* 《孟子》), the canonical *Daojia* text (the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi* 《庄子》), the various *Fajia* texts (including the *Book of Lord Shang* 《商君书》 by Shang Yang (商鞅) c390-338 BCE, the *Hanfeizi* 《韩非子》 by Han Fei (韩非) (c395-338 BCE), the utilitarian thinking of Mozi 《墨子》 (c470- c391 BCE) in the *Mozi* (墨子) show no signs of

deriving their thoughts from theological axioms or premises based on God as a supernatural entity.

Of all the philosophers mentioned above, Mozi was the only one who devoted some thought and space to religion. Hence, we must examine the matter a little more closely. All Zhou dynasty thinkers invoked the concept of *tian* (天), usually translated into English as “Heaven”. This Heaven, however, was not the Heaven of the Abrahamic faiths as *tian* did not exist outside Time and Space. It had nothing to do with the Abrahamic notion of God, the supernatural entity that created the world and Humankind to obey His commands and do His bidding. There was no afterlife where good deeds would be rewarded, and bad deeds punished for all eternity by God. The Chinese *tian* was this-worldly and approximated to what the term “nature” in English refers to, especially when *tian* was also used in conjunction with *di* (地) as *tiandi* (天地) – the Heavens above (the clouds, the sun, the moon, the sunlight, the rain, the snow, the fog, the mist, the wind) and Earth below (where mountains rise, rivers form and flow, trees, plants and animals grow and flourish, where the Sun shines sometimes so relentlessly that we, humans, must find shelter in the shade, in the forests and where at other times, it is so cold that the waters in rivers and wells would freeze and we, humans, must find refuge in some warm cave or shelter). Without *tian* where the Sun is and where sunlight comes from, we cannot live; without *di* where the soil is upon which the sunlight falls, we cannot live. This *tian* did not speak with the lips of priests about revealed truths from God. On the contrary, humans, must observe and study *tian* closely, learn to detect its daily and yearly rhythms and movements. If humans failed to be diligent in their observations and made mistakes, then they would suffer the consequences of their actions. If a ruler failed to observe diligently, failed to make provisions for droughts and people died from hunger and famine, the ruler would be blamed for bringing about bad consequences in their conduct. The Chinese who professed *tian* as their cosmological value believed that if they conformed to *tian*’s preferences, they would be rewarded, good consequences would ensue. In Mozi’s thinking and Chinese thinking in general, *tian* was no more than an embodiment of their understanding of nature, of cosmology being inextricably entwined with social (moral, political, cultural) norms to provide a coherent, philosophical framework within which humans could live and live well, which constituted the fundamental value of CCPT.

In other words, for the Chinese, humans must simply use their own reasoning faculty, given the type of consciousness they uniquely possessed, to arrive at truths in all these domains of theory and practice. In other words, to use Kant’s own words in his 1784 essay, the ancient Chinese had liberated themselves from “self-incurred immaturity” and had done so some two thousand and five hundred years before Kant who lived in the 18<sup>th</sup> century CE.

Mozi’s teachings did not endure despite earlier success when it enjoyed dominance in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE. His systemic exploration of consequentialism in CCPT was ousted by *Rujia* in the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE).

*Rujia* is a systematic exploration of value philosophy (moral/political/aesthetic/cultural domains) which became established in the early Han dynasty and has endured not only in China itself but also in the neighbouring countries which were and still are part of the Chinese-culture zone, such as Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. It has taken deep roots in the moral consciousness of the Chinese people and informed their attitudes and conduct towards Self and Others, whether the Others are one’s parents, one’s siblings, one’s children, one’s kith and kin, one’s community, one’s society, one’s country or Humankind outside one’s national boundaries – other things being equal, one should be benevolent (仁) towards others (or at least cause the least harm possible), live in harmony and peace (和平) with others.

As this is not the place to explore in detail the concept of morality in Chinese culture and civilisation, it suffices to remind readers of the four “thou shalt not” found in the *Analects*: what is not in conformity with the ritual code of correct/upright behaviour 礼, do not look, do not listen, do not say or repeat, do not do (非礼勿视, 非礼勿听, 非礼勿言, 非礼勿动). These exhortations embody the notion of respect for Others on the part of the Self. Furthermore, scholarship today also considers the character 仁 which is at the centre and core of the *Rujia* moral system to stand for “co-humanity”: the character has two components, one which is the radical (部首) (on the left) (亻), standing for humans and the other, on the right, for the number two (二). In other words, the notion involves one human being recognising and treating another as a fellow human being which, indeed, is nothing but a deep manifestation of the notion of respect for Others on the part of the Self.

## 7 Invisibility of the Chinese *Enlightenment* Project

Why does no-one in MWPT ever talk about the Chinese *Enlightenment* Project which took place about two thousand five hundred years ago during the Spring and Autumn period of Chinese history, and no-one much draws attention to the Jesuit route as a possible channel of transmission of knowledge and information from the East to the West? A short answer encapsulated in a nutshell is: Coloniality and Invisibility as an aspect of Coloniality.

What is the concept of Coloniality and its related notion of Invisibility? A very brief answer suffices here which lies in the following five inter-related theses:

(1) The Modern Western Epistemic Paradigm (MWEP) in MWPT is upheld either as the only system of knowledge or expression of Rationality in the world or that MWEP occupies the top of a hierarchy of knowledges while non-European systems of knowledges are dismissed as inferior, even as tittle-tattle or unintelligible gibberish.

(2) Historically, MWEP, in general, followed military might, show of force in one form or other, such as achieved under British Imperialism. This process of military strength and superiority led either in many cases to the establishment of formal colonies or in other cases informal colonies (China, being an instance of the latter).

(3) Under such circumstances, colonialism and Coloniality marched hand in hand.

(4) Even when empires, such as the British Empire, had been formally dismantled, MWEP may yet remain in the cultural perception of the former colonised Others. In other words, MWEP has been internalised by (some) non-Western Others.

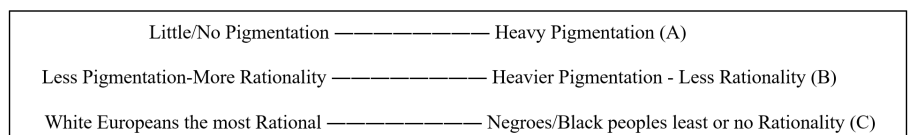
(5) As a result of the intimate link between Racism and Coloniality as enunciated by Kant (see Lee in Koh [19] and Lee forthcoming, Chapter Two for detailed arguments for this link), whole areas of enquiry such as the Chinese *Enlightenment* Project, have become invisible. It is fair to claim that Invisibility is part of Coloniality. Spelt out a little more, Invisibility involves upholding the following claims:

(a) The Enlightenment in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Europe is an expression of the highest form of Human Rationality; it is the emancipation of the human mind from the shackles which had been imposed on it by religious authorities in the name of God (a supernatural entity);

(b) Only the European/Western mind is capable of such heights as demonstrated in its successful struggle against the forces of darkness;

(c) The new knowledge obtained by the forces of light are therefore exclusive to members of the White-skinned peoples in the world;

(d) The theses so far set out could be encapsulated in a succinct form by superimposing Spectrum A on Spectrum B to create Spectrum C as shown in the Text box here;



(e) It follows from the above that the Chinese who are not White-skinned were/are not capable of that degree of Rationality of which Europeans can possess. They could not and cannot, therefore, have undertaken their own *Enlightenment* Project. Their *Enlightenment* Project, as a result, becomes Invisible.

## 8 Conclusion

(1) Although Chinese culture and civilisation is not simply built upon *Rujia* ideas alone, as it has also imbibed Buddhist thinking about the good life and the good person as well as the other great indigenous *Daojia* tradition, it remains true to say that *Rujia* stands out as the foremost contributor to the Chinese moral/social/cultural tradition.

(2) Furthermore, these three tributaries, without exception, are singularly and simply humanistic and secular in outlook and disposition. Their norms have nothing to do with the diktats of a supernatural entity called God; they are part of the *Enlightenment* Project in China. In other words, Chinese culture and civilisation constitute clear evidence to refute DSWT.

(3) However, to MWPT, since Kant who pioneered MWEP in which his Racism became part of MWEP (that is, Coloniality), the Chinese *Enlightenment* Project has become impossible and therefore, invisible.

(4) The Chinese *Enlightenment* Project also provides the clearest evidence that it is possible for a culture and civilisation to endure (for about two thousand and five hundred years and continuing) without invoking God as a supernatural entity and His commandments.

(5) This is because morality as a concept is independent of the concept of God or of god as a supernatural entity.

(6) Morality is concerned with Good (with questions such as “what does it mean to be a good person?”, “what is it to lead a good life?”, “how does one conform one’s conduct in accordance with what is Good?”).

(7) Furthermore, this exploration of the relationship between Good and God has shown that if God is worthy of the adoration and worship of His followers, He must be an entity which possesses the attribute of being supremely good. This is to say that Good logically precedes God and not that God logically precedes Good.

(8) This means that there is philosophical space for a culture and civilisation such as that of the Chinese to thrive and to endure – the Chinese lean on *tian*, but *tian*, as we have seen is not a concept embedded in theological discourse as understood by the Abrahamic and similar faiths but is a this-worldly concept, which human beings have constructed using their faculty of observation, their logic of reasoning (inductive and deductive) to explain the world of phenomena and their place in it in relationship to one another as well as to the other entities which also occupy the same earthly and cosmological space, whether these entities be biotic or abiotic in nature.

(9) Chinese culture and civilisation down the ages have set up altars and temples for people to come and pay their respects to great historical figures such as the Buddha, Kongzi and Laozi. In these temples, you would find a statue or image of these men who had led virtuous lives and who act as models for other fellow humans who come after them to emulate their exemplary conduct. These are really man-made *gods*. These historical personages were first men and after their death have been elevated as *gods* – in other words, here, too, it is obvious that their Goodness logically precedes their becoming *gods*. Ontologically and existentially these man-made *gods* are different from and should not be confused with God/god which are supernatural entities.

(10) In Chinese culture and civilisation, the “men of learning” simply have regarded great teachers of wisdom and morality such as the Buddha, Kongzi and Laozi as philosophers, while they concede that many people in society might prefer to respect them as man-made *gods* to be honoured in temples. The “men of learning” in the case of *Rujia*, since the early Han dynasty had seen fit in co-opting its core ideas as the cement to bind society via its emphasis on rites and rituals in support of the ruling class.

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