

In his paper entitled "'Ki' Thought of the Orient," Professor Hang Nyong Lee attempts to show that the notion of ki, or ch'i in Chinese, is basic to our understanding of human life and history on a global scale. Accordingly in the first seven chapters of his essay, Prof. Lee elaborates the notion of ki in detail. He, then, proceeds in the eighth chapter to point out the "Significance of 'Ki' Thought in Modern Times." In the final chapter, Prof. Lee presents his understanding of the history of the world in terms of a "'Ki'-istic Conception of History as a Hypothesis."

1. Professor Lee's conception of Ki

Professor Lee maintains that a European language cannot be employed to translate the term Ki so as to communicate full implications of the concept. Even the widely accepted English term "energy" is not adequate to cover the original meaning of ki: for, the term "energy" conveys "only the material phenomena" and fails to encompass the original meaning of Ki as indicating both "spiritual and material phenomena" (p. 3).

In my understanding, Prof. Lee holds the view that the notion of Ki cannot be appropriately understood by dualistic categories in the West, such as, matter and spirit, man and nature, or creator and the created. I believe, this understanding can be supported by Prof. Lee's following ideas.

- 1) Prof. Lee's etymological analysis of the Chinese term Ki shows that the term consists of two parts, which symbolizes the "flow (movement) of air," and representing the air pervading fully in "the eight directions," i.e., the entire universe. He maintains that the "flow of air" means a "spiritual phenomena" whereas the air pervading the universe indicates material phenomena; hence, the notion of ki is not dualistic but "monistic," or "dualistically monistic." (cf. pp. 3-4)
- 2) Furthermore, Prof. Lee regards Ki as "the ultimate being and the origin of the universe" (p.4). Hence, the dualistic bifurcation between the cosmogonic ultimate, or the creator, and the created, or the manifested phenomena, both material and spiritual, can no longer be maintained.
- 3) Prof. Lee also considers Ki as the "most important factor in determining geomantic conditions" (p. 12), or the world of nature in which man lives as a part of the pervading flow or movement of Ki. This means that the dualism of man and nature cannot be maintained. (See also the notion of Ki as climatic condition on p. 16.)

2. The Eighth Chapter, "The Significance of 'Ki' Thought in Modern Times"

This chapter is basic to Prof. Lee's thesis. According to Prof. Lee, Ki thought is "a positive logic admitting the co-existence of yin and yang"

as "mutually complimentary" forces, in contrast to "today's way of thinking" which he characterizes as "dialectic," or "a negative logic starting from the conflict between two opposites." Prof. Lee attempts to understand "the creation and development of the universe" in terms of the mutual cooperation of the Ki of yin and yang. He states: "The creation and the development of the universe is more indebted to the principle of the mutually complementary cooperation of both "Ki"s of yin and yang than to the negative dialectics based on the Conflict Theory" (p. 19).

Professor Lee also maintains that the concept of Ki as the mutually complementary and cooperative forces of yin and yang can provide us with more inclusive and synthetic views of human existence and history than those of Hegel and Marx. To quote Prof. Lee:

Both Hegel's spiritualistic conception of history and Karl Marx's materialistic conception of history consider only one aspect of the Ki-istic conception of history and intend to deduct the whole through one aspect. We can obtain the true meaning of the history of the world by considering these two conceptions of history synthetically (pp. 27-28).

It is difficult to fully summarize Prof. Lee's contention in the final, ninth chapter. However, it is easier for me to understand his view if I replace Hegel's idea of the "Absolute Spirit" realizing itself in and through the family, state, and world, with Prof. Lee's Ki-istic conception of history, or Ki realizing itself in different climatic regions of the Orient or Confucian culture, the Middle Region or Islamic, and the West or Christian.

3. My major comment

My major comment on Prof. Lee's paper is in the form of a question and concerns the notion of Ki as "energy." Prof. Lee maintains that the term "energy" conveys "only the material phenomena" and fails to convey the original meaning of Ki as indicating both "spiritual and material" phenomena (p. 3). However, the concept of energy can be taken as referring to both spiritual and material phenomena, can't it? I believe, this view can be supported by so-called psycho-somatic phenomena, which is explained by the hypothetical concepts of Freudian "libido" or Jung's "psychic energy." Moreover, if Ki is in constant "wavelike" movement (p. 24), as Prof. Lee maintains, we can conceive of it, then, as a field. Were this so, the concept of Ki is not to be understood as substance but as a field, pattern, or process and can be comprehended in the context of modern physics as well as Hinduism, Buddhism, or Taoism, as demonstrated by Fritjof Capra in his The Tao of Physics.