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Title: *The Spiritual Trouble: Modern Man's Dilemma*

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Abstract:

In some parts of the world, organized religions are declining and have been giving place to secularism, while in other parts, religions, which were suppressed in history, are reviving. In either case, awareness of spiritualism is growing. Many people would rather label themselves as “spiritual” than “religious.” Their path of self-cultivation, however, is more or less informed by sources of various religious teachings as well as prevailing narratives of the supernatural phenomena. This usually includes these scenarios: 1) a personal departure from atheism and secularism into religious influence on shaping a new identity, which is, for example, observed in contemporary Mainland Chinese society; 2) a shift in spiritual pursuit marked by a conversion to or a growing interest in a religion rooted in an alien culture, in order to make sense of self and the world; 3) a deviation from organized religions out of disappointment to metaphysics and the occult motivated by an intense curiosity to decipher fate and destiny. This book examines my and others' individual path and interrogates a new spiritual dilemma of modern man: Where are we going? What is the future of religions? How do we see the evolvement of the human civilization?

Author's bio:

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1. Rethinking Atheism: The Communist God

Living in North America, I have constantly heard people narrating their religious life—their baptism and birth certificates, their family’s religious background, their church and denominations. Christianity has been an integral part of their personal and social life and thus tied up to their self-identity, making themselves who they are, though society is becoming increasingly secular, and there has been a tendency for people to claim to be “spiritual” rather than “religious.” Still, spirituality is informed by a blend of religious teachings and humanistic experience, as people like to find words of wisdom by sages, many of whom are linked to a religious belief.

What about the PRC (People’s Republic of China), the homeland that I have left behind since I embarked on this new land? Born into the military with both parents being the (CCP) Chinese Communist Party members, I have been told that we are atheists, and that if we have a belief, then it is communism built on Marxism and Leninism. Karl Marx, the 19th century German philosopher who founded his theory, described religion as the “opium of the people,” since he believed that it was used by the ruling class as a tool to control the working classes by giving them false hope. He also viewed religion as a form of rebellion by the working classes when stuck in desperation. Lenin, Stalin, and Mao Zedong all interpreted religion in Marxist view as reactionary and thus all implemented state atheism.

This atheism, however, is not the concept we normally perceive, as it launched a new apotheosis while denying the established divinity. Personality cult reached its peak in the former Soviet Union in Stalin’s time. In the PRC, Mao was glorified to divine level during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), being compared to the “sun,” the “savior” of the Chinese people, and referred to in slogans as “a great mentor, a great leader, a great commander, and a great helmsman” (1966). People were wearing Mao suits, Mao badges, holding *Quotations from Chairman Mao* in political gatherings, and singing and dancing fanatically to worship Mao. Posters, busts, and statues of Mao could be seen everywhere from public spaces to each home. Growing up in the post-Mao’s era, I do remember the transitional period while Deng Xiaoping rose to power with his “reform and opening-up policy,” while Mao’s influence still remained in our social life. My memory has restored

scenes of people making a vow in their daily conversations “in the name of Chairman Mao” and describing the passing of someone holding an important position in the Party as “having crossed over to be with Marx.” There are more prominent scenes of people venerating communist martyrs as saints who sacrificed their lives for the “liberation” of the Chinese people from feudalism and foreign imperialism. Although it may be agreed that the Chinese people back then collectively did not have an official religion, it does not mean that they did not have a belief. In fact, their belief system, which was built on Mao cult, was essentially organized and operated in the same way as mainstream religions, for it controlled people’s minds and moral conduct with a sense of awe of the supreme power above, and guided people’s behaviors with its own doctrine and rites. While religions were banned, this new belief system added religious meaning to people’s secular lives.

2. Guanyin Oracles: The First Synchronistic Signs

Religion is not only “the opium of the people,” but also an asylum for those who suffer emotionally, mentally, and physically. In the PRC, where Mahayana Buddhism has been the most prominent religion in history as well as an integral part of the Chinese culture, the temples, either physical or mental, are the first-choice asylums for people. In my case, it is typically so because I know far more friends or relatives who believe in Buddhism than in other religions. And, very rarely have I heard of individuals seeking the Buddhist asylum out of joy, pride, and gratification in their prime. On the contrary, most of them turn to the Buddha when they fall into the low life. I had been completely irreligious until 2000, when my cousin, Kitty, who had been a practicing lay Buddhist for a few years, took me to a Buddhist temple in Chengde, a city in Hebei province situated in northeast Beijing known for the summer residence for the Qing emperors. I was then painstakingly trying to reconcile an intense relationship that had ended a few months before, and Kitty, who had just recovered from a 5-year relationship, told me that the Guanyin oracle lots at the Chengde Grand Buddha Temple might give me an answer about the outcome and thus would bring a closure to the anxiety and distress. She emphasized that the oracles at this temple were extremely “accurate.”

What we basically did at the temple was, first of all, concentrate on a question we wanted to ask; second, throw two little rocks three times on a plate for the monk standing next to us to determine if this was going to work or not; and third, the monk would hand you a cylinder with numbered sticks in it, and then you just pick one randomly and go get the oracle slip with the same number. The slip had a poem and explanation on it, and was classified as a “middle” oracle as opposed to “top” and “bottom”, indicating that it was neither good nor bad. The whole procedure was free and donations were optional. The oracle I received was titled *The Dutiful Son, Huang, Travels Ten Thousands of Miles to Find His Mother—*

*In the old days you dropped a needle while sailing,
Till now you have not ceased searching in the ocean.
If you want to find the needle you lost,
It would take forever and consume infinite energy.*

The oracle simply made me drop my jaw. The poem was referencing an ancient legend of a man named Huang Juejing losing his mother at age five in a flood and eventually finding her after 28 years of hard work. I understood that it just an archetypal pattern that described my then situation rather than retelling my story. The concise explanation that followed further pinpointed my then situation, “You still cannot get over a person or a thing that you want back,” and that to force something to happen is a waste of time. It concluded that this search would be futile, like “searching a needle in the depth of an ocean,” and that only if you let it go, should you find “a new world.”

Despite being impressed, still, I tried to convince me on the way back home that this oracle poem seemingly compatible with my situation for the moment was a mere coincidence. I thought to myself that maybe any randomly chosen oracle slip in the temple would have a poem that might sound “right” to the question seeker.

Six months later, however, something even more amazing occurred on the same spot and at the same temple. I took a colleague of mine there who was suffering from uncertainties in her career and love life. Following the same procedure, she drew an oracle that she described was “extremely accurate.” And I was concentrating on the same question as the last time, hoping to see if I could get a different answer this time about the status of that terminated relationship. Surprisingly, out of 100 oracle slips mixed randomly, this time I drew exactly same one!

The Dutiful Son, Huang, Travels Ten Thousands of Miles to Find His Mother

*In the old days you dropped a needle while sailing,
Till now you have not ceased searching in the ocean.
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The fact that I drew the same oracle slip for the same question seemed to convey to me that the continuing search would still be “futile” and thus my status remained the same as the last time. Let alone the unchanged status of the attempt to restore a terminated relationship, if this was another coincidence, then this one was just too coincidental, since the possibility of drawing the same lot out of a total of 100 after six months was extremely slim. I started to think that coincidences may not be what we normally perceived as “coincidences,” but may be connected to something supernatural beyond our cognition and comprehension. And if the meaningful coincidences are dismissed by mainstream science, then it helps me understand the mass appeal of religion because it turns the illusory happiness promised by its teachings into something more tangible and authentic at least in a world beyond the one where we are living in.

3. Beijing Psychic Encounter: Witnessing “Spirit Possession”

A couple of years after the Chengde Buddhist temple coincidences, I had what was perceived by many subsequent readers of mine to be a “psychic encounter,” until which I had been a 95% skeptic of the psychic stuff. The 5% believing part, I would say, came

from my spiritual potential that wishfully hoped there was some supernatural power in the universe adjudicating on all unprocessed injustices and regulating what man-made laws and rules failed to reach.

In April 2003, having healed with the passage of some more time, I had somehow recovered from the relationship sadly terminated back in 2000, but new bewilderment arose when I was standing at a crossroads. I had held a relatively stable position at a joint venture IT company in the CBD of Beijing for over three years without any prospective of career advancement, while a start-up private company specializing in medical technology approached me through the referral of Li Jing, a longtime friend of mine who had just been appointed one of their senior managers. They would like me to fill the vacancy of the company's prestigious Marketing Director. Seeing that that I was hesitant between a stable job with a predictable future and a private company during its startup, Li Jing and her friend, Sun Mei, recommended a 43 year-old woman they called "Teacher Zhu (pronounced Jew)" to me, who, as they described, was extremely talented in "fortunetelling." In order to convince me of Teacher Zhu's validity, Li Jing shared with me her recent visit. Around that time, Li, who had been divorced for years, was dating a man who had lived in Australia for seven years before returning to China. He told her that he had one adult daughter from a previous marriage. Feeling insecure about her relationship, Li Jing, through the referral of Sun Mei, visited Zhu for a reading. During the reading Zhu told Li that this man lived overseas for seven years, which amazed her. She then continued to say that he had two previous marriages, and had a two-year old son from the second one. Li thought that that was baloney, since she knew that he had only one previous relationship from which he had a daughter who was grown-up. She nevertheless confronted her boyfriend with Zhu's reading when she got home. He was shocked, too, and confessed that he did have a second marriage from which he had a son who was two years old. He concealed that part of his history only because he regarded it as a stupid mistake, which was not worth mentioning at all.

Albeit very much intrigued, no such detailed testimonials could turn me into a complete believer, and I decided to experience it by myself. I booked an appointment for April 13, 2003. Ms. Zhu was then giving readings at a plain-looking hotel. She was talking to a client in a room, while outside there was a line of a few people waiting patiently. (A few years later, that line was extended to over 70 people a day scattered holding a number each in a lounge, with the first few ones having arrived as early as around 3:00AM.) In another room, several middle-aged repeat clients were chatting about their "miraculous" experience with Ms. Zhu.

My turn came, and I entered the room. Ms. Zhu, plainly and neatly dressed, seemed very kind and humble. She apologized for not being educated enough to read my business card, and then asked for my date and time of birth by the Chinese lunar calendar. I tried to be quiet, as I did not want to reveal the slightest amount of personal information. She then named a few facts of my family and life, which was quite surprising. None of these things could have been told by Li Jing, as she did not know anything about the part of my life before we became friends. Further, Li Jing was not aware that I was going to meet with Ms. Zhu. Albeit impressed from the first minute, I was more concerned about my job

change than the facts that I already knew about myself, and she said, “Although you are not quite willing to change your job right now, I see you finally leave your current company, and the new company will become famous after you assume the post.”

Her predictions came into fruition within three months. During the time period from 2003 to 2005, I brought many friends and colleagues to her, who all became repeat clients. They needed a spiritual guidance, and I was curious about others’ testimonials. With nearly two decades of observations and a collection of volumes of testimonials, basically I can adventure to declare that any attempt to give her a psychiatric diagnosis can be dismissed.

As for how Ms. Zhu acquired such an unexplainable ability, this is what I heard: Years ago when she was around 30 and living in a village north of Beijing, she got ill, and became a lunatic, running around the village and talking to herself in words people could hardly understand. After the strange reaction had calmed down, she was found to acquire this unusual ability of seeing people’s past, present, and future. Before too long, she relocated to Beijing and started a new life with her talent. Her success was all accelerated by word of mouth, as she had never run any advertisements. Her family and close friends told me that she had this “Master Chang” with her all the time, who was a “snake spirit” that originated in the Changbai Mountain on the China-North Korea border. Sometimes, when specifically requested, Ms. Zhu could invite her “master” to “possess” her so she could transform into a different personality speaking, behaving, and talking like an old man from ancient times. I was present once with two friends of mine during one of her spirit possessions. She had to smoke or drink first, and within a couple of minutes, she seemed to enter into a hypnotic state, becoming a “he” and uttering sentences that perfectly rhyme. You may ask any questions you want, but he does not always understand modern vocabulary such as stock market, internet, and board of directors, nor will he give you a definite answer to certain questions, as in that situation free will interfere with progression leading to the outcome.

Religious texts often mention demonic possession and exorcism practiced by priests. In the New Testament, Jesus expelled evil spirits from persons several times. But apparently, the said “spirit”—if there is one—that is with Ms. Zhu all the time and that sometimes even “possess” her has never appeared to be “evil.” Given the heavy regulations in the PRC over religions, “feudal superstition,” and spiritual practices, Ms. Zhu’s business has never invited any trouble from the government. Up to now, she has had absolute freedom to travel to meet her clients, even abroad to the US and Canada a few times, where she has established a growing pool of clients. Her “master” does not seem “evil” also because she has been relaying “his” words of wisdom to people, offering emotional healing, hope and inner strength, and bringing a closure to incessant worries. It is because of her that many people have become more and more spiritual over the years. They have started to read spiritual books, talk about personal improvement, and build a more positive outlook of the world outside and the world inward.

4. Seeking Spiritual Guidance: Making Sense of Life

From coast to coast I have encountered many Chinese immigrants from the PRC who claim to have become a Christian. In Canada, while the number of Canadians identifying as Christians is declining, Chinese and other East Asian churches are growing, according to *The Global and Mail* (Xu, 2017). I see this phenomenon not only as a gesture to embrace the mainstream culture in Canada, but also as an outcome of a self-examination after so many years of living through a vacuum of faith as an communist-influenced atheist without self-direction. While European Canadians demonstrate a mixed attitude to this, as some welcoming them to integrate into their religious culture, and others laughing at them for stepping into their shoes, Mainland Chinese conversion from communist atheism and secularism to Christianity seems to foretell a larger revival of spiritualism.

From China to Canada, I have been approached by many people who preach to me in the hope that I could accept the religion that they believe—from Buddhism, Islam, to different variations or denominations of Christianity, and to the Bahá'í Faith. Each one claims that their belief is the best one, the one that makes the most sense of life and of the world where we live. I have awe of all legitimate religions, but I also have to remain an independent, critical, thinker. Over the years I do think that we cannot ignore the Buddhist concept of cause and effect, which explains what the Bible has failed to. I also believe that reincarnation is the one feasible remedy to unsolved injustices and unfulfilled wishes in this life. Is Buddhism an atheistic system of thought? I would say yes and no. Yes, because it does not believe in God as in the Bible, and it teaches us that every individual could achievement Buddhahood free of sufferings through self-salvation and self-cultivation. It also refuses to answer metaphysical questions such as who created the universe and whether or not the universe has an edge. No, if you redefine God not as that white-bearded old man Jesus calls Father sitting on a throne in heaven, but rather, a law of universe that runs all energy of which everything is made. And this law could be the cause and effect theory that transcends lives taught in Buddhism. There is no such thing as a personified God that is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent; rather, the law of universe is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, and unfortunately, the law is the law; it is not a humanized version, so it does not have any emotions. Many readers have asked me if I believe in God seeing I work extensively on spirituality. I do not think that there is a highly intelligent Creator in the universe. I think that I would rather stay as an agnostic.

If you believe in the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God, then I can assure you He can't solve any problems, as each individual holds liability for their own destiny. In the pre-Christian era, the ancient Greek philosopher, Epicurus (341-270BC), allegedly rejected the idea of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God with highly speculative logic, saying as in one variant of the many from disputable citation sources, 'Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil? Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?'

A few years ago in Waterloo, Ontario, where I was teaching, a Chinese international student was walking underneath trees in the pouring rain when the lightning hit her and took her life. Her professors and fellow students were shocked, and her parents totally

devastated. They would all ask one another, “Why her?” A pastor friend’s answer is, “Well, God loves her and that was just an early promotion to Heaven.”

A few more years back, the kind-hearted, soft-spoken, and optimistic Chinese student at Concordia University in Montreal, Lin Jun, was killed and dismembered by the psychopathic Luka Magnotta. Two individuals from two completely different paths who could have never intersected with each other if not for the online social media’s random connection, met to fulfill the lunatic’s fatal ambition. During a CBC interview, Lin’s parents appeared to be deeply traumatized. The father was speechless and the mother collapsed in tears. They didn’t understand why it would happen to their son, nor did thousands of Canadian netizens who expressed sympathy and sent over their condolences. If there is the omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent God, then where was He? If the sudden, unexpected, death of an innocent young person is interpreted as an early promotion to heaven, why would He let him be dismembered? There are too many questions that cannot be answered convincingly in the Bible. If there were any answers, they would all play with perverted logic or rhetoric tricks to fill up gaps in their own defense. Disappointed by unanswered questions and other issues, they turn to Asian religions, where they find such concepts of *karma*, *samsāra*, reincarnation, and *hetu-phala* or causality make much more sense of all those phenomena as previously seen ignored or observed by a non-existing or callous God.

If there is a “God” in Buddhism, then it must be *dharma*, whose core is the law of cause and effect. Every cause leads to an effect and every effect can be traced to its cause, though we are not able to see the entire sequence and dimensions due to our cognitive limitations. If one does not put cause and effect into consideration and believe that God is fair, then he probably has ignored that there is too much unfairness in the world people already take for granted. Imagine we all live on the same planet. On this side people in Vancouver, BC, Canada, are enjoying some of the freshest air and purest water in the world, while on the other side Chinese are fighting smog for decades without a clue of the exact cause and of an effective solution. Who created the earth does not matter; apparently, it is human activities that create the regional difference, since a nation has its own destiny as well as an individual does. We also interpret the wealthy and the impoverished, the happy and the hapless, the able-bodied and the disabled we see in our eyes as unfairness, while we do not realize that these are just a few shots we see in a long sequence with the cause and effect edited out. We also do not see personal gain leading to loss and congenital imperfection rewarded in other ways.

The universe does not have a God that rules everything. The one that dominates everything is not God, but the law of cause and effect. If we seek absolute fairness, only the law of cause and effect is fair to all. Of course, if we define the law of cause and effect as “God,” then “God” is fair but without human emotions. Some church people like to argue about this, but I see it a waste of time, as the definition of God remains a highly subjective topic.

All in all, the arguments about God are one of the reasons many people would label themselves as spiritual rather than religious. In my case, I do not want any religious or denominational labels, but nevertheless, I am a spiritual being.

5. Spiritualism: West Meets East

Throughout political upheavals, religions may disappear and reappear, but there has always been a belief—no matter it is set in communism, Mao cult or in personal gain and materialism—which motivates people to do what they are doing. Since Mao's era ended in 1976, the CCP has gradually become a mere ruling party rather than the representative of the communist ideology that dominated people's everyday life. Going through a struggle between retrospection and introspection of the belief during the transitional years, many people experienced the process of destructing older values and reconstructing new ones. And, as long as suffering exists and worsens, there is a need to seek a spiritual asylum, not pure religious. Under such circumstances, we have seen the rise of Buddhism and Christianity in the PRC, though they are under strict regulations (Briggs, 2011). Of course, Maoism is also recurring to a limited extent as an outcome of conflicts within the CCP leadership.

Here, I want to focus on spirituality as an East-meets-West process. Over the years I have encountered Westerners seeking enlightenment from Asian religions, philosophies, or spiritual practices such as Falun Gong, while Chinese who claim to have been atheists, CCP members, or Buddhists, convert themselves to Christianity. I have also observed highly spiritual individuals, regardless of their original background, drawn to a multitude of beliefs and rituals, from Christianity to Shamanism and to Asian religions, including but not limited to Mahayana Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Hinduism, and Daoism. Through in-depth interviews and extensive fieldwork, I have come to realize that this “grass-is-always-greener-on-the-other-side-of-the-hill” attitude reflects a disappointment in seeking answers in a given religion to make sense of life but to no avail.

Interestingly, there are also Chinese lay Buddhists who seek teachings in New Testament that complement what is lacking in Buddhism. One major reason is that the *karma* talk does not advance societal progress. Being logically linked to fatalism and pre-determinism, it eventually kills free will in the cradle, leading people to accept reality as it is. In 2012, I volunteered to visit an Asian family at a hospice, where the wife had died of cancer. Her last few months were basically spent at a Buddhist meditation centre surrounded by a group of warm-hearted lay Buddhists or meditation practitioners. But on and after the day she passed at the hospice, none of those Buddhist friends visited for fear of absorbing “bad energy.” There was also always a *karma* talk circulating among them when one has died unexpectedly. The volunteers who offered help around her deathbed were all associated with Christian charity; they obviously had a different view of death and dying. Another woman had a similar experience when her husband died of cancer at an American hospital, where they had flown all the way from China for the treatment. Buddhist friends who used to meditate with them told her to accept *karma*, while those who helped her at the hospital and with funeral affairs were a group of complete strangers from a nearby church. Deeply touched, she decided to be baptized in their church. There

is also another Chinese woman who has been a long-term devoted lay Buddhist telling me that she reads the Bible regularly where she could find answers to questions Buddhist sutras fail to answer. She goes to church once in a while, but refuses to renounce Buddhism, as she says, it is good to “have your finger in both pies,” and there is no need to “change the label.”

I want to bring critical attention to the commonality in the core between the two traditions rather than the superficial differences. We know that Buddhism, along with indigenous religions and ethics, has constructed Chinese material culture and shaped the Chinese mind. Through careful investigations of the Chinese perception of Christianity, earlier European scholars sought to draw analogies between the New Testament and Buddhism. Felix L. Oswald believes that the New Testament is “of East Indian origin,” as the Gospel accounts were “derived from Buddhism” (1891, 193), while other scholars disapprove, among them James T. Bixby, who believes that there are more essential differences than resemblances between the two including but not limited to the life trajectory of Jesus and the Buddha, the existence of a personal Supreme Being, their views of life and earthly satisfactions, the doctrines of reincarnation and the views on marriage (1891, 555).

I have, however, observed that many of the analogies, which have continued in the lay communities and scholarship up to this day and age, remain on a superficial level and largely ignore the subtleties between orality, literacy, and interpretations. For the same reason, during previous fieldwork, many Chinese who trendily convert from Buddhism to Christianity claim that they’ve found the New Testament historically “more convincing” than Mahayana Buddhist scriptures, as their faith is said to be built on “historic authenticity,” while others who accept both New Testament and Buddhistic teachings as the source of information for personal spiritual pursuit believe that Christianity and Buddhism “need each other”. The latter has been joined by a large number of Western Buddhist enthusiasts that I have interviewed accepting some of, if not all, Buddhistic concepts. They value the ideas of mindfulness and self-salvation, and try to find a connection between the two religions in supporting the allegation that Jesus studied Buddhism in India during his “lost years” (Prophet, 1987).

I also want to raise new questions and provide potential answers to the spiritual rebirth of modern man—“a fundamental change of attitude toward the values of life” (Baynes, 1933), a change in psychic evolution still going on as of today but struggling with various extremes of traditional theology, rationalism, and materialism. Modern man’s confusion has been prevailing everywhere and elsewhere about where our psychic life is heading. This is not only occurring in the Western world, which, according to Carl Jung, is “in a precarious situation” spiritually (Jung, 1933) and which has experienced “a shift away from traditional Church authority and toward personal inner working (Prophet, 1997). It also accompanies the transitional period in China, which is experiencing a “crisis of faith” as the result of “rapid economic growth” and the absence [in China] of a “shared belief system” (D’avolio, 2014).

I interpret the Chinese lay Buddhists' turning to Jesus for a spiritual complement as Buddhism's inadequate motivational power due to the lack of a real-life role model like Jesus. The appeal of Christianity lies in the fact that the narratives in the New Testament apparently do not attempt to idolize that carpenter of Nazareth in documenting his short lifetime, while the omnipotent, omnipresent, and omnibenevolent Lord Buddha or Bodhisattva Guanyin in Mahayana Buddhist texts sound too good to be true, with one being largely deified out of Siddhārtha Gotama, the founder of Buddhism, and one being a pure fictional goddess.

6. The Core of the Faith: Church “Miracles”

I have to confess that I visit churches as an admirer of Jesus. In my view, the main support of a spiritual belief is the belief in miracles in lived realities. If one has lost his belief in miracles, then he will very likely become more secular who only lives for the moment and for one lifetime. The most fascinating part of a miracle is our inability to verify it, and thus it can always be dismissed as a coincidence and wishful thinking. Not only have I collected some church-related “modern-day miracles,” I myself have experienced what some church people perceive as “modern-day miracles,” too.

In the summer of 2016, a friend of mine would like me to travel to Israel together. I had been there, and wouldn't mind revisiting the Promised Land, but I was hesitant over so many factors—expenses, altering schedules, and canceling appointments. Struggling in decision-making, I walked to the Bank of Montreal in my neighbourhood in Surrey, BC, to deposit a pay cheque. As soon as I entered the bank, I saw a man wearing a *kipa* sitting on a couch. I was surprised because I had never seen anyone wearing a *kipa* in Metro Vancouver. I thought that maybe I mistook a baseball hat for a *kipa*, so I looked more closely, and it was a *kipa*. I assumed it was a sign, so when I got back home, I booked my flight to Israel. I told this to my family physician. Originally from Montreal, he said that it was very interesting, because in Montreal you might see Jewish men wearing a *kipa*, but in Metro Vancouver it was extremely rare. A young, open-minded, and well-educated family medicine practitioner, he did not jump into the conclusion that it was a mere “everyday coincidence,” and appeared very much intrigued by my story.

Another meaningful coincidence that is beyond what we perceive as an “everyday coincidence” occurred when I was traveling to a church in Richmond, BC, by SkyTrain. Since it was a long commute, to pass time, I was listening to music on my iPad on my way. I had my large collection of songs and music playing randomly. However, when I just walked past the intersection next to the church, it started to play *Resurrection* from the Mel Gibson film, *The Passion of the Christ*. The melody accompanied me into the church. I shared the story with the pastor and his wife. Of course, they would consider it the working of the Holy Spirit. But one individual who stopped going to church long ago said that if my iPad played *Resurrection* without it in my collection, then he would accept it as a real “miracle.”

If the *Resurrection* incident could be explained in terms of chance, then who can explain my experience at the Sea of Galilee a few months later during my second trip to the

Promised Land? One day, around 5AM, upon knowing of my upcoming trip to Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee, and the Jordan River for baptism, a Chinese pastor living in Galilee referred to me by Pastor He's wife in Vancouver, sent me a message that during his prayer for me he received a message indicating that this trip was going to be "miraculous." He hoped that at the Church of Annunciation in Nazareth, I would be able to meet with Angel Gabriel, who would make me "believe in God as he did Virgin Mary," and that "more and more supernatural phenomena" were going to emerge in my life. I thanked his prayer but didn't take it seriously.

At the Church of Multiplication in Tabgha, I prayed and thanked Lord Jesus for feeding us, before we, a group of 16 tourists, temporarily gathered from all over the world, along with our Jewish tour guide and the elderly driver, proceeded to our lunch at Saint Peter's Restaurant on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

I had been to that restaurant before, and remembered how crowded it was, hosting one after another group of tourists and pilgrims from across the world all year around. Isolated from the outside world and heavily relying on transportation for food supplies, the meals and drinks were understandably pricey.

However, on the way to lunch, our tour guide announced that some mysterious "organization" had paid the meal for all of us. He asked us to "shut up" and not to tell or ask who it was.

At the restaurant, when we were finishing the lunch, the restaurant staff came to our table and confirmed that someone would take care of our bill. Our tour members didn't get it and said that it was "strange."

Then, after lunch, we moved on to the Jordan River, where I was baptized by a fellow traveler who claimed to be a minister from South Africa. He was traveling with his daughter and his nephew who were also baptized by him in the Jordan River.

On the way back to Jerusalem, I was like Detective Poirot trying to figure out who might have paid the bill for us 18 people, and why and what for this "organization" would have done that. None of us could offer a feasible explanation. Twenty-three U.S. dollars each for a total of 18 people would have exceeded what the tour guide and the driver were earning together for the day, and there were no known reasons they would cover their customers' bill. In addition, our tour guide was thrilled when I left him tips, so why would they give away a few hundred dollars for nothing while excitedly accepting 20 shekels? And none of the tour members seemed to have left any tips when getting off the bus. As for the travel agency, they organize so many tours each day, why would they treat our group only? Like I said, there were no known significant events to any of us in our group except for my Jordan River baptism following the lunch.

The whole story was just beyond our rationality, and my fellow traveler from Vancouver, BC, with whom I was sharing a hotel room, just couldn't stop talking about how weird

the whole thing was. But he wouldn't connect this to any modern-day miracles, though he acknowledged that it was really "strange" beyond rationality.

Of course my church friends all interpret this as "the working of the Holy Spirit," but again, some people would consider their interpretation to be "confirmation bias." I maintain that it does not matter whether or not it is or may be verified as a modern-day miracle; what matters is whether you perceive it as a modern-day miracle or an everyday incident that should be ignored and dismissed. Life remains the same in its totality, but mentality makes a difference in our perception of life. And when your attitude changes for the better, you open the door for more positive vibrations, just as is said in the Mahayana Buddhism's *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, "All *dharma*s are rooted in the heart (*yi qie fa cong xin xiang sheng*)."

7. The Spiritual Premise: Understanding the Law of Miraculous Coincidences

The Swiss analytical psychologist, Carl Jung(1875-1961), introduced the concept of "synchronicity," referring to meaningful coincidental occurrences between two events that seem to have no causal relationship. He also proposed the concept of "archetype," which was inspiring and influential to later scholars. With these interesting terms and concepts, among others, Jung became one of the greatest thinkers in the world in the 20th century.

Life is full of coincidences, but Carl Jung believes that there are no coincidences if understood in terms of pure chance. Overtime I have collected numerous oral accounts about synchronistic events in real life. Kou Lian, a former CCP member from the PRC and now a devoted churchgoer in Surrey, BC, Canada, has been running a personal blog documenting the modern-day miracles she has experienced since her conversion to Christianity. She interprets some seemingly coincidental occurrences as "prayers having answered" and thus "modern-day miracles." One example took place in the PRC. She and her friend boarded a train where the restroom did not provide toilet paper, and neither of them carried toilet paper. While her friend needed to go to the restroom urgently, she said a prayer to Lord Jesus, and all of a sudden, they discovered a roll of toilet paper on the sleeper, probably having been left by the previous passenger. Another example was more intriguing to me. An older couple, Mr. Jing and his wife, lost their dog a week ago, leaving them totally devastated. The wife even suffered from several suicidal attempts. Given the large population of the Chinese city and its flowing population, its subculture of eating dog meat, and its poor pet regulations, the odds of getting their lost furry friend back would be next to zero. Kou offered to say a prayer for Mr. Jing, asking the "Lord" to find their dog on the condition that "Mr. Jing would accept the Lord as his savior." She was not confident either afterwards, but still thanked the "Lord" for listening whatsoever. Surprisingly, the next day, Mr. Jing's wife called from a public market to report a piece of "breaking news." She was walking through the market when she found a butcher selling a dog that resembled theirs. The quiet dog started to bark like crazy and pounced on her as soon as he saw his owner. While the butcher claimed that he bought the dog from someone else, they reached an agreement that he would sell her dog back to her for RMB1,000. Since then Mr. Jing has become a believer of the Christ. Kou claims that if

this was a pure coincidence, then it must have been extremely rare. She would rather believe that it was a miracle. One of her other stories includes a “miracle” during her trans-American road trip with her daughter. During their trekking, her sneakers were worn out, so she prayed that the “Lord” would give her a new pair of shoes. Before too long, in a rest area by the highway, she saw a pair of almost brand-new running shoes laced together on top of a trashcan. She tried them on, and they were perfectly her size. She thought that it was another prayer having been answered, because road trip travellers in North America would unlikely leave nearly brand new personal belongings in public. They could simply throw them into their trunk for later use.

If these coincidences are interpreted as “miracles,” then we have to keep in mind that modern science is hesitant about such things. But if these coincidences are dismissed as miracles, then why don’t they occur to everyone on a daily basis? The problem lies in the fact that some coincidences are common ones that can pass unnoticed because they occur all the time, and some are worth giving a second thought. I assume that if there were really modern-day miracles, they must always wear a disguise as a coincidence. In other words, they should always be able to be explained on non-miracle grounds so it could keep the balance of believers and skeptics as it has always been. Opening the mind to such things is a spiritual process of increasing one’s sensitivities and selectively believing what otherwise cannot be proved “scientific”—the paranormal beyond the normal, and the supernatural beyond the natural.

What is the ultimate purpose of studying the dialectical relationship between miracles and coincidences? We are not talking about suffocation after a meal, but exploring how people communicate with the universe in navigating their destiny under the mystical “unity of nature and man” (*tian ren he yi*) as believed by ancient Chinese. The founder of parapsychology, Joseph Bank Rhine (1895-1980), concluded in his laboratory work that human psychology can influence the outcome of stochastic development, the so-called random development of affairs, which is Einstein’s “God’s dice.” He tried to prove that stochastic events could be changed in the subject’s desired direction.

This also explains why the people I met in the church are happy and happy, and I don’t see the negative people who are filled with grievances and blaming others for their negative energy. There is a friend who is sick all the year round, but it is also very clever. She is just the world. Everything has never been interpreted in a good direction. Although his methodology was controversial, it inspires me to reevaluate the ancient Chinese philosophy of the “unity of nature and man.”

In his lifetime Jung made thought-provoking commentary on Buddhism, Daoism (Taoism), *The Book of Changes (I-Ching)*, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, as well as Indian yoga. In his understanding, the Eastern mind is based on the reality of the mind, the mind is the main and unique condition of existence, and the cognition of the East is a fact of the psychic movement, not the result of philosophical reasoning (118, 2008). It is not news that Western scholars seek inspiration from ancient Eastern wisdom. The Austrian-born American physicist Fritjof Capra (1939-) stated in his book, *The Tao of Physics*, that there is a close relationship between modern physics and the Eastern

Buddhism (1975). Kant once categorized human cognitive ability into perceptual, intellectual, and rational. For a long time, Chinese scholars have suffered from the belief that traditional Chinese philosophy lacks Western-style intellectual thinking, and that most ancient Chinese thinkers' thoughts are expressed through primitive analogies (Yu, 2013, 48-54).

Concurring with Jung, I agree that the Chinese mentality has been undervalued and needs revitalizing. In rethinking the Chinese mind, I maintain that one additional category should be added to the three cognitive abilities, which is intuitivity built on the wisdom of the subconscious development dating back to ancient Chinese thoughts. In other words, ancient Chinese thinkers may lack intellectuality, but their rationality and intuitivity are closely connected. Modern quantum physics is constantly proving the ancient Chinese wisdom of spirituality: The discovery of theoretical physics shows that the universe is a harmonious unity, each element is interconnected and interwoven into a network, which is compatible with the essence of the Buddhist philosophy. And, the idea of synchronicity also corresponds to the ancient Chinese philosophy of harmony between man and nature.

Jung's synchronicity refers to "meaningful coincidences" between two or more events which seem to have acausal connection. He also believes that the meaning of the coincidences is constructed on one's subjective experience. The development of Jung's concept was inspired to some extent by the German Sinologist and the best translator of *The Book of Changes*, Richard Wilhelm (1876-1930). As early as 1930, the year when Wilhelm died, Jung used the concept of "synchronicity" in the commemoration of Wilhelm. In his lecture in London in 1935, he mentioned it again along with the ancient Chinese concept of *Dao (Tao)*. In 1951, Jung formally expounded his theory in a lecture at a conference in Switzerland. In 1952, this speech was revised and published together with the physicist Wolfgang Pauli's article, *The Interpretation of Nature and Psychology*, which officially proposed synchronicity, followed by several more revisions.

Jung believes that the "meaningful coincidences" cannot be explained by probability and thus cannot be simply reduced to a psychological phenomenon; it carries qualities that exist objectively, including three categories: First, activity in one's mind connected to the occurrence on the outside in the meantime; second, the extended meaning when our relationship with the world is seen in a larger picture; third, the search from within for the meaning of the connection which is validated at a later date. The synchronistic event is also consistent with the revelation of modern physics, which suggests a profound harmony between all forms of existence. He perceives synchronistic events that occur simultaneously as "revelation," while those connecting a state of mind with a later occurrence as "prophecy." I would interpret his point of view as dismissing meaningful coincidences as pure coincidences, but attributing them to some supernatural power.

I join him in that when a coincidence is way too "coincidental" or multiple coincidences occur to the same subject within a given timeframe of some meaning, it is even less convincing to explain using statistics and chance. Jung emphasizes that the synchronistic incident is inseparable from the subjective state of mind of the subject. At the time of the

synchronistic event, there is an interdependence between the objective events and the subjective state of the subject, which is reflected in the meaning.

In elaborating his concept on synchronicity, Jung repeatedly refers to the *Book of Changes*. He very much agrees that the rhetoric of the divination of the *Book of Changes* and the diviner's mood at that time have a meaningful implication. He believes that during divination, there is a synchronistic interaction between the diviner's psyche and the hexagram he receives, although there is no direct correlation between his psyche at the moment and throwing coins. Jung believes that the connection between synchronistic events is not the result of causality, but the acausal connecting principle (2010). The meaning of coincidence comes from the subjective experience of the individual. Only when the subjective consciousness is involved can the acausal connection between different things be displayed. In interpreting the concept of synchronicity along with its acausal connecting principle, Jung associates it with some of the findings of modern theoretical physics: While the law of causality is removed from the microphysical world, there is a common background between microphysics and psychology (1977, 538).

I agree with the concept of synchronicity and with its consistency with some of the discoveries of modern quantum physics. The universe is an organic body with all elements interacting with one another. No element can exist independent of the whole. I would question the "acausal" nature of Jung's synchronicity, as I think that the meaningful coincidences are not entirely the outcome of the intervention of individual subjective consciousness that shows its special meaning, and some events have objective qualities. To a large extent, independent of the intervention of subjective consciousness, behind the coincidence may be a law of causality that is not perceived by us in perceivable manners. Echoing the core idea of Buddhism is the law of cause and effect, determinism, which links all things to "cause and effect" is a proposition of philosophy popular in the 18th and 19th century. It believes that the occurrence of each event is based on the reasons for the previous decisions and is not based on the free will of the people (Van Inwagen, 1983). All movements in the universe follow certain rules, and certain causes must lead to certain results; certain results can also be traced back to the reasons of the past. Whether it is Newton or Einstein, their ideas are built within the theoretical framework of the law of cause and effect. It is because of causality that science has replaced ignorance and superstition, human civilization has also made great progress, and the world has opened a new era. I proposed the concept of "positive fatalism" in the article, *Comparing East and West Divination and Fortune Telling Psychology from an Intercultural Perspective*, intending to bring a closure to the longtime philosophical debate over determinism and libertarianism: There is an intersected area between them, which is, in the process of causing the cause, although the cause itself may be a result of a previous cause, the cause can be mixed to some extent with the intervention of free will (Dhawa, 2013, 221-228).

So, is Jung's "meaningful coincidences" or synchronistic events based on acausality? It appears that his conception of synchronicity and acausality is connected to his initial contact with *The Book of Changes*, as he learned about *The Book of Changes* from the Sinologist and the translator of text, and was surprised by the coincidence of the rhetoric

and the psyche of the subjects. In the preface to the English version of *The Book of Changes*, he points out that the Western-style thinking is based on the law of causality, while *The Book of Changes* reflects that Chinese thinking is more focused on the “coincidences” as perceived by Westerners, while the law of causality is ignored (2008, 215). In other words, the Western mind pays attention to rationality and reasoning, while the Chinese mind seems to demonstrate an acausal connecting principle. For him, however, *The Book of Changes* becomes the exchange of consciousness and unconsciousness, and the unconscious gives hints of mystery through numbers and symbols. There is no causal relationship between parallel events, and the only thing that can be recognized between them is the meaning of synchronicity and the nature of equivalence. That is to say, this meaningful coincidence should be based on a certain natural law, but Jung failed to see the causal connection. Therefore, the synchronistic event is considered an exceptional case in the law of nature of an orderly state of causality. The traces of causal connections are not found between parallel events, which is precisely the contingency feature of them. Jung believes that the only identifiable association between them is a common meaning, which is the nature of equivalence, so their existence is an exception in the law of nature. For this insight, I am proposing that there should be some kind of causal connection between synchronic events, because most of the causal laws in the truth of the universe cannot be grasped by our limited human perception. We are overly dependent on our senses, judgments, reasoning and experience, but the truth hides in the disguise of its appearance, let alone the subjective consciousness of rationality that will inevitably be interfered by their own subjective factors.

First of all, what is a “coincidence” and what is a “meaningful coincidence” need to be mapped. Although some synchronistic events are independent of individual subjective consciousness, whether all parallel events can be included in the coincidence category depends entirely on the subjective experience of the individual. For example, a driver driving a car comes to an intersection, he slows down, and the pedestrian crossing the road just happens to have an acquaintance of the driver. This seems to be a coincidence for the driver, but if the pedestrian is a complete stranger, then it is not a coincidence. If the pedestrian is an acquaintance of the driver, but walks in this area regularly, so the chance of running into him is high, and it may not be perceived as a coincidence for the any observer of this incident other than the driver. Some examples of coincidences as in the case of “talk of the evil and he comes” is perceived by Jung as meaningful, and yet in my view it is meaningless as it happens all the time and simply can be dismissed. As I have earlier discusses, I only focus on those meaning coincidences that are perceived by many as “miraculous,” those that do not favour a certain culture or a certain group of people.

Second, the law of causality is ubiquitous in the universe. Although we do not see any causality between parallel, synchronistic, events, there should be a connection that transcends time and space and goes beyond our perceptions because otherwise these two events would not have been paralleled, which means they should share a cause, unnoticed and undetectable, in their previous stage of the evolvement sequence. The development of quantum mechanics has also stimulated philosophical thinking about determinism and causalism, and also raises a new question: Does the interaction between the universe only

exist locally or remotely? From the synchronistic incident, the interaction of all things in the universe is not limited to one part, or the same time and space. There should be a long-range effect that transcends time and space beyond the scope of human perception, while everything's evolvment still follows the law of cause and effect.

Third, I use this concept to explain the possibility of divination. That is, all forms of divination result in a "revelation" brought up by the subjective experience. Understanding the rules and the interpretation translating the symbols into messages for reality is the vehicle to fathom the shared cause in between. If it appears methodically flawed, it may as well mean that it leaves room for free will, so determinism and free will complement each other and exist together; free will exists in the process of causality. This would mean that sometimes coincidences may reveal a certain degree of deviations.

Meeting the Good End: The Art of Dying and Death

In Carl Jung's words, "The spiritual climax is reached at the moment when life ends" (78, 1978).

In September 2017, the mother of Zhang Boli, a renowned Chinese pastor in the USA, passed away in sleep at the age of 91. One of the leaders of the Tian'anmen Square Protests in 1989, Zhang was on the Chinese Most Wanted list, before he finally managed to escape to the USA via Hong Kong. Later on, he converted to Christianity, studied theology, and became a pastor in 2000. He is currently living in the Washington, D.C. area and is leading a Chinese church. His mother converted to Christianity about 10 years before her death. During her last 10 years, she was said to be a devoted churchgoer and worshipper.

I have told many elderly friends about his mother's peaceful death at such an old age, and they are all envious. They all know that you don't have to be religious to die so peacefully and comfortably, but they all fear that you have to be a good person what deserves such a good end. This would mean to me that pondering over dying and death triggers our spiritual potential. Becoming elderly often times means more thoughts on the approaching dying and death sooner or later. People hear so many dramatic stories of other individuals' end and yet take it for granted how they have imagined or anticipated their own death will occur.

Over the years I have come to the conclusion that the ultimate goal of living this life is to have a good death at the end of the journey. What is considered good death? Dying at an old age, without pain, without a terminal disease, in sleep, sometimes with prior intuitive knowledge of or demonstrating consciously or unconsciously signs of the approaching death. As time passes by, I have learned of more and more deaths of relatives, friends, friends of friends. Two friends told me that they had relatives who died in their early 30s in sleep without any terminal disease. One was a muscular regular gym goer, and the other a fitness trainer. One friend died in his 80s, but the last three months were spent in unbearable pain and coma. A very dear friend of mine in Toronto died of extremely rare complications of a colonoscopy. We learned that only 3 out of every 100 thousand people

would die of such complications. She was only 49, and ten days before she passed, she “liked” my travelogue on social media. She left a cat, and a cute little apartment.

Death or tomorrow, we never know which one will come first. We aspire to be spiritual, we seek wisdom, enlightenment, and spiritual guidance, and we want self-growth and salvation. All these are aimed at brining a gratifying closure to this life one day. If this sounds important, then we should all prioritize our spiritual life while working hard to get all bills paid.

Training with a group of volunteers at the Burnaby Hospice Society brought us together with medical doctors, nurses, hospice managers, as well as spiritual teachers and healers. I have witnessed with my eyes that spirituality plays such a crucial part in helping the dying and their loved ones go through this transition. I feel that no matter how rational one claims to be, how scientific-minded one is trained to be, and how financially successful one is, at the end of the journey, they may all go through a process of confusion and a complex life review, organizing his thoughts, memories, regrets, and fulfillments, and figuring out a proper self-evaluation of his lifetime. People all celebrate the newborn, but we seldom talk about the preparation for our own as well as our loved ones’ death, which in many cultures is a taboo topic. Should people visit the dying at their deathbed? Should the dying allow them to visit? What do we write in the card when we visit patient who the doctor has announced has only a few weeks left? Why sometimes does a terminally ill patient gain energy and appetite all of a sudden? Why does a dying person wait for his loved ones to come until he closes his eyes? Why oftentimes do terminally ill patients seem to choose to die after Christmas? Why do some terminally ill patients invite pastors, Buddhist elders or a shaman to stay with them during the transition? In the deathbed, will the dying still thinking about their Louis Vuitton bags or Lamborghini cars that they once loved so much?

The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying praises the Tibetan tradition of providing spiritual care to the dying while criticizing the lack of such help in the “heartless” West (Sogyal Rinpoche, 1994, 209-222). Aside from the spiritual help at the deathbed, Tibetan Buddhist practice also provides after-death help, particularly during the 49 days after death with an emphasis on the first 21 days (299-318). It makes some sense to me that there might be a transitional period of time between new death—announced by a medical professional for example—and “full” death if we put into consideration the (im)possibility for a patient announced dead of being able to be resuscitated. It also makes sense when we presume the soul will never die and will transmigrate to another entity. That transmigration, known as reincarnation, may not occur immediately after one’s death, but may take some time of reorganizing and sequencing causes and effects. I understand that reincarnation may never be “scientifically” proved, and I also want to point out that the concept is denied largely because it is widely misinterpreted as a dead person living again. I still believe that everyone has only one life, but that “everyone,” which is tied up to many biological and socially constructed identities, is not the core of the entity that continues to carry a sense of self, which, in light of the law of the conservation of energy, should never run into non-existence.

In April 2011, when my father passed in sleep without any terminal illness, my friends in the Tibetan Buddhist circles in Beijing told me about the importance of having a Tibetan lama practicing spiritual service to the newly diseased, as this would help his soul navigate into a better direction and end up with a better reincarnation. My philosophy is that before you find yourself able to verify the effectiveness of such an intangible promise, you may simply do it first as long as it does not harm or does not cost you anything.

The problem is that spiritual vulnerabilities may turn into a weakness that could be used by others for personal gain. A seemingly compassionate lay Buddhist woman in Beijing contacted me recommending a “highly acclaimed” Rinpoche to me for such spiritual services as chanting and praying with a smoke offering particularly targeting the newly diseased. While I felt touched by her sincerity and persistence and was anxious to proceed with the arrangement, she added, “Oh, I shouldn’t forget to tell you. There is a fee for that.” I certainly understood that. It was against my personal principle to have people work for me for free. She then sent me a menu online, listing all the different levels of service packages, from basic ones to premium ones, and the rates went from RMB1,200 up to RMB3,000. Not only were her quoted prices significantly beyond my expectation, but also the idea of providing different spiritual services based on what one pays annoyed me. I searched online; neither this woman nor her Rinpoche seemed to be a scammer or a con artist, since their information in the public domain was all decent, consistent, and credible. There is no shortage of people like them making a living by providing spiritual guidance—from lamas, lay Buddhists, to psychic mediums, and the fact of the matter is that they may charge a surprisingly lot from vulnerable people. Oftentimes they dare to do so because they have established word of mouth being widely considered to be “the real deal” by those who have used their service. I thanked her politely, however, wondering how many people out there would go ahead under such a circumstance to make such extravagant payments.

Spiritual care for the dying and after-death turning into a business is like medical professionals having to sell their prescriptions, diagnosis, and treatment, in that profitability is linked to the degree of buyers’ vulnerabilities and urgency. If money can guarantee a good death, a peaceful after-death transition, and a desirable reincarnation, then there is nothing ethical or spiritual in it. In my view, one holds liability for his own closure and transition. Such services as chanting, praying, smoke and fire offerings are more for the living than for the dead. If dying and death are considered to be an art, then the artist is no one else.

Conclusion: The Spiritual Laws

Modern man is stuck in many dilemmas. He struggles between science and religion, between the declining religions and the rising secularism, between spiritualism and materialism, between their disappointment in his own religion and the curiosity for another. He also hesitates between the two labels: religious or spiritual?

Many choose the latter because it reflects a process of seeking knowledge and truth while keeping pace with the times. They agree to disagree, and they keep the spiritual progress to themselves.

Having learned much from many schools of teachings (instead of saying religions or spiritual practices), I have outlined the spiritual laws that are in fact taught in most texts—

Regarding the life of the vast majority of people, I have outlined the spiritual laws that may apply to nearly everyone. From a statistical point of view, most people are in line with the conditions described in these laws.

One tends to be lost, obdurate, and perverse when stuck in a sequence in his life, but will only awaken later on. The longer has passed, the more clear-minded will he become. Oftentimes, one suffers from the inability to get what he wants, but with time passing by, when what you wanted is handed to you, you realize that it is not important anymore.

Many people have this habitual thinking, in that he always assumes that those around them have a better life than his, and yet subconsciously hopes that others' life is not as good as his.

Some people are not afraid of self-inflicted setbacks, some people don't want any change in life for fear of taking risks, but it turns out that after each self-inflicted setback is a qualitative advancement.

Everyone has his destiny, and yet destiny is basically shaped by one's own words and deeds. Perception of good or bad destiny is highly subjective, so changing the mindset will change destiny.

Some opportunities are fleeting, and some require long-term maintenance. Many people become complacent when they one quick opportunity befalls, which may not be a good thing. The real opportunity sticks to one for being a good person, while his talent is secondary.

Life is like a bottle of wine. The volume that is contained in each bottle is inherently doomed. One will receive how much one has poured out to keep the bottle always full. The more one pours out, the more one will receive. If one keeps the bottle of wine and never drinks it, it will always be a bottle of wine. If one forcibly takes others' wine, then sooner or later he will have to give away more than his bottle of wine.

The reason why people are greedy is because they believe that they are still far away from the crematorium.

One's mentality influences one's judgment of people and things. Therefore, one's mentality is affecting one's destiny.

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