Fan Chen's "Treatise on the Destructibility of the Spirit" and Its Buddhist Critics
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Source: *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Oct., 1987), pp. 402-428
Published by: University of Hawai'i Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/1399031
Accessed: 15-08-2017 06:58 UTC

Ming-Wood Liu Fan Chen's *Treatise on the Destructibility of the Spirit* and its Buddhist critics

Fan Chen's[a] (circa 450–circa 515) *Treatise on the Destructibility of the Spirit* (*Shen-mieh lun*[b], henceforth referred to as *Treatise*), which represents the climax in the heated dispute between Buddhists and non-Buddhists over the question of the immortality of the soul, is among the most controversial pieces of Chinese philosophical and antireligious literature.[1] For its strong anti-Buddhist sentiment, it created an immediate commotion on its first appearance, and no less a person than the Emperor Wu[c] (464–549) of the Liang dynasty[d] had felt obliged to defend his faith against its blunt attack and to rally the support of monks, nobles, and ministers to the refutation of its position. While it gradually fell into oblivion as the problem of the immortal spirit became no longer a central issue in Buddhist circles from the mid-sixth century onwards, discussion of it came into vogue once again in the 1950s, when the materialistic basis of its deliberation began to win recognition. From then on, it was universally acclaimed by Marxist historians as one of the masterpieces of Chinese materialistic writings, and was assigned a prominent place in almost every work on the development of Chinese thought and religion which came out of Mainland China.[2] Scholars of other political and intellectual persuasions, however, reacted to it differently, and in a recent Western article we find Fan Chen being faulted for misinterpreting the doctrine of causation, for being inappropriate and inaccurate in the use of analogy, and for being "superficial and shallow in learning."[3] This study is an attempt to approach the *Treatise* from a less partisan and more analytic standpoint. We shall try to present each of its central ideas as it is actually given in the text, and examine its meaning in the context of the essay's overall argument. And if we do not refrain from making appraisals, our judgments will be based on internal rather than external grounds, that is, on the consideration of consistency of thought and accomplishment of set objectives, rather than on its being a confirmation of our own philosophical position. To this end, we find it useful to examine some of the objections raised against the *Treatise* by its contemporary critics and Fan Chen's replies to them, for they bring into focus some of the irreconcilable differences which divided the two rival camps in the debate, and in this way help us to locate where the real significance and problem of Fan Chen arguments for the destructibility of the spirit lie.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE: *This article was completed during my tenure as visiting scholar at Harvard University, from 1985 to 1986. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the staff of the Harvard-Yenching Institute, especially to the Director, Professor Albert M. Craig, to the Assistant Director, Mr. Edward J. Baker, and to Miss Maureen Hanrahan for their warm hospitality and prompt assistance. I am particularly grateful to Professor Tu Wei-ming for kindly reading over this article and offering many valuable comments, and to Mr. Chi-wah Fong, my former student, for some of the ideas found in it. A special word of appreciation is also due to the Hsü Long-sing Research Fund administered by the University of Hong Kong for a grant which made this study possible.*

Philosophy East and West, volume 37, no. 4 (October 1987).

BACKGROUND OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE TREATISE

It is common knowledge that Buddhism teaches the doctrine of *anātman*, or no-self. Thus, in Early Buddhism, it was maintained that sentient beings are merely amalgamations of the five evanescent elements—matter, sensation, perception, predisposition, and consciousness—and there is no permanently and independently existing entity called the self to be found. While later Buddhists might make more elaborate analysis of these elements and even introduce into their systems of thought concepts which carry ostensive substantive connotation (the idea of *ālaya* of the Yogācārins is a good example), they unanimously adhered to this tenet of no-self as a canonical truth which allows of no questioning.

The fate of the doctrine of no-self took an unexpected turn in China. While most Chinese Buddhists from the T'ang dynasty[e] (that is, the seventh century) onwards were aware that the Buddha had preached the idea of no-self, this was not the case in the beginning years of the propagation of the religion in the country. Strongly attracted by the Buddhist teachings of retribution and transmigration, many early Chinese Buddhists speculated that there must be present in every sentient being an immutable "spirit" (*shen*[f]), which does not disappear at death, but continues to pass from one life to another, reaping the fruits of its former deeds. Thus, already in the early third century, we find that Mou Tzu[g], one of the first Chinese intellectuals converted to Buddhism, in defending the Buddhist concept of rebirth against critics, compared the body of the individual to leaves and roots and his spirit to seeds, and argued that even though the leaves and roots of a plant may wither and perish, its seeds will continue to live forever.[4] In the next three centuries, the idea of the indestructible spirit was generally regarded as a basic feature of the Buddhist religion, largely because it was taken as an indispensable element of the tenets of retribution and transmigration considered to be the backbone of the Buddhist world view; and controversy over the problem of the indestructible spirit often figured as part of a larger controversy over the feasibility of the teachings of *karman* and rebirth.[5] So, on the one hand, we have the anti-Buddhists, who thought that by denying the notion of permanent spirit, they would bring to nought the theories of retribution and transmigration and so exhibit the absurdity of the Buddhist picture of life, while on the other hand, we have the Buddhists, who came to the rescue of the concept of permanent spirit in their effort to uphold their beliefs of retribution and transmigration, which they treasured as the kernel of their religious heritage.[6] In their replies to the attacks of the anti-Buddhists, the Buddhists often attributed to the permanent spirit functions, which have little immediately to do with *karman* and rebirth but are commonly associated with the idea "spirit" in orthodox Chinese thought, such as being the origin of life, the source of thought and feeling, the subject of purposive actions, the object of ancestral worship and so forth; and they cited the indispensability of these functions as proof of the existence of their bearer.[7] Yet, it is important to keep in mind that the notion of indestructible spirit found its place in early Chinese Buddhist thought first and foremost as a component of the doctrines of retribution and transmigration; and consideration of its role in the explication of psychological and volitional phenomena and so forth came into the picture largely by way of association and for the sake of argument. In other words, the idea of indestructible spirit figured in early Chinese Buddhism primarily as a practical and religious idea, not as a theoretical and philosophical concept.

The historical background of the compilation of the *Treatise* exemplifies clearly the aforementioned attitude of the anti-Buddhists. According to Fan Chen's biographies in the *Ch'i shu*[h] and *Liang shu*[i], the composition of the *Treatise* was occasioned by a discourse between the Prince Hsiao Tzu-liang[j] (460–494) and Fan Chen on the question of retribution.[8] Knowing that Fan Chen did not believe in *karman*, the Prince demanded how he could in such a circumstance account for the differences between the high and the low, between the rich and the poor, and so forth in society. Fan Chen gave the following famous reply:

> Human lives are like flowers of the same tree. They grow on similar branches, and bloom on similar calyces. When blown by wind, they fall. Some brush against screens and curtains and fall on rugs and mats: some are stopped by fences and walls and drop by the side of lavatories. Those which fall on rugs and mats are [like] your Highness; those which drop by [the side of] lavatories are [like] my humble self. Even though the high and the low follow diverse paths, where does [the karmic law of] cause and effect come in?[9]

It is said that the Prince was deeply puzzled by this naturalistic and fatalistic interpretation of human destiny, and so Fan Chen retired and wrote the *Treatise* to further elaborate his stand. Thus, we can see that Fan Chen, like the anti-Buddhists of his time, took up the refutation of the concept of indestructible spirit mainly with an eye to the undermining of the theory of retribution.

Again, similar to his contemporary anti-Buddhists, Fan Chen saw his refutation of the tenets of *karman* and rebirth through the refutation of the concept of indestructible spirit as a powerful weapon against the Buddhist religion in general. The *Treatise* concludes with a vehement peroration of the harmfulness of Buddhism, which shows unmistakably that Fan Chen had no less than the denouncement of the entire Buddhist religion in view in composing the essay:

> Buddhism is detrimental to the government and *śramaṇas* are corrupting the common customs. [Like] violent wind and rising mist, they sweep over [the entire nation] without ceasing. Distressed by the harms it brings, I ponder how to rescue those who have been overwhelmed [by it].[10]

As Fan Chen perceived it, much of the pernicious influence of Buddhism has to do with its teachings of retribution and transmigration:

> It deceives the people with vague sayings, frightens them with the miseries of Avīci hell, entices them with bizarre statements, and delights them with the pleasures of Tuṣita heaven. As a consequence, ... all families abandon their

nearest and dearest, and all people terminate their line of descendants. So, the ranks [of the army] are deprived of soldiers, and government offices are emptied of clerks. Grains are used up to feed lazy vagrants, and materials are exhausted for the construction [of monasteries and images].[11]

In discrediting the notion of future rebirths as determined by past deeds by demonstrating the destructibility of the spirit, Fan Chen hoped to open the eyes of the populace to the absurdity of Buddhist thought and so check ascent its rapid in the country.

THE ARGUMENTS OF THE TREATISE

The *Treatise* is written in the form of a dialogue between an opponent of the thesis of the destructibility of the spirit and its defender, the latter apparently representing Fan Chen's own position.[12] It begins with the question:

Question: You maintain that the spirit is destructible. How do you know it to be destructible?[13]

Fan Chen lays down the central principle of the *Treatise* in his reply:

Answer: The spirit is the same as the body; the body is the same as the spirit. Thus, when the body exists, the spirit exists; when the body perishes, the spirit is destroyed.[14]

This argument has two premises:

1. The body and the spirit are one.

This is interpreted by Fan Chen as meaning:

2. The existence of the body is ontologically prior to the existence of the spirit.

These two premises, together with the commonly recognized fact that the body disintegrates on death, give the conclusion of the destructibility of the spirit which Fan Chen desires.

To further elucidate premises (1) and (2), Fan Chen introduces a pair of concepts: "substance" (*chih*[k]) and "function" (*yung*[l]):

Answer: The body is the substance of the spirit; the spirit is the function of the body. So, the body refers to the substance and the spirit refers to the function. Body and spirit can not be separated from each other.[15]

According to Fan Chen, what constitutes the "substance" of a human individual is his material body. As for the so called "spirit," it is merely the material body's "function," and can not exist apart from the physical frame. Fan Chen illustrates this contingency of the "function" spirit upon the "substance" body with the relation between the property "keenness" and the object "knife":

Answer: The spirit is to its substance [that is, the body] as keenness is to knife;[16] the body is to its function [that is, spirit] as knife is to keenness. The term "keenness" does not [denote] "knife"; the term "knife" does not [denote] "keenness". Nevertheless, apart from keenness, there is no knife; apart from knife, there is no keenness. We have never heard of keenness surviving the destruction of the knife. How can we allow that the spirit remains after the body has perished?[17]

Just as the function "keenness" vanishes with the destruction of the object "knife," the "function" spirit also does not remain once the "substance" body is gone.

The rest of the *Treatise* deals with a number of objections which may be raised against the two premises of the oneness of body and spirit and of the ontological dependence of the latter upon the former. The first has to do with consciousness, which is generally regarded as a peculiarity of the spirit:

Question: The substance of trees is devoid of consciousness, the substance of human beings is endowed with consciousness. As human beings have a substance [without consciousness] like trees while [humans] also possess consciousness different from trees, does it not [prove] that trees have [only] one [substance], while human beings have two?[18]

From the fact that human beings are endowed with consciousness, a trait which is not shared by material objects such as trees, the opponent concludes that there must exist in them two distinct substances: a nonconscious material substance like that of trees, and a conscious mental substance different from that of trees. Fan Chen retorts by maintaining that it is not necessary to postulate a separate mental substance, that is, the spirit, to account for the phenomenon of consciousness:

Answer: That is a strange way of putting it! If human beings had [one nonconscious] substance like [that of] trees constituting their bodies, and again [another] conscious [substance] different from [that of] trees forming their spirits, your argument might hold. In fact, the substance of human beings is a substance endowed with consciousness; the substance of trees is a substance devoid of consciousness. The substance of human beings is not the substance of trees; the substance of trees is not the substance of human beings. How can there be [in man one nonconscious] substance like [that of] trees, and then [another] conscious [substance] different from [that of] trees?[19]

In Fan Chen's opinion, it is not the case that man is made up of one nonconscious, material substance similar to that of trees forming his body, and another conscious, mental substance different from that of trees constituting his spirit. Rather, man's material substance, that is, his body, itself possesses the property of consciousness; and in this way is basically unlike the material substance of trees and can give rise to all sorts of intelligent behaviors.

The opponent is not convinced, and goes on to bring in the phenomenon of death to prove his point. It is an observable fact that at the time of death, man's physical body remains unchanged while his consciousness disappears. Does this not indicate that man does have two substances, one nonconscious and the other conscious, the former staying while the latter departs when death comes?

Fan Chen, consistent to his view that the bodily substance of man is in essence conscious, denies that man's physical body actually remains the same at death:

Answer: The dead possess a [nonconscious] substance like that of trees, but do not have a conscious [substance] different from that of trees; the living possess a conscious [substance] different from that of trees, but do not have a [nonconscious] substance like that of trees.... The body of the living is not [the same as] the body of the dead; the body of the dead is not [the same as] the body of the living; [the two] being dissimilar to the extreme. How can it ever happen that there be in the bodily form of the living the skeleton of the dead?[20]

As Fan Chen perceives it, death does not mean the divorcement of a conscious, mental substance "spirit" from a nonconscious, material substance "body," but rather the losing by the conscious, material substance "body" of its former essential property of being conscious and its transformation into an entirely new substance similar to that of trees in that it becomes totally devoid of the conscious feature. Thus, despite outward appearance to the contrary, Fan Chen can insist that "The body of the living is not the same as the body of the dead; the body of the dead is not the same as the body of the living; the two being dissimilar to the extreme."

The second objection is connected with the faculty of thought, likewise taken as pertaining specifically to the spirit in traditional Chinese thought:

Question: If the body is the same as the spirit, are such [bodily organs] as hands also [the same as] the spirit?

Answer: They all have their shares of the spirit.

Question: If they all have their shares of the spirit, the spirit is capable of thought, and so such [bodily organs] as hands should also be capable of thought.

Answer: [Bodily organs] such as hands have the sensations of pain and itching, and do not have the thoughts of right and wrong.

Question: With respect to sensation and thought, are they the same or different?

Answer: To sense is the same [spiritual function] as to think. When [a spiritual function is] superficial, it is sensation; when [it is] profound, it is thought.[21]

The opponent reasons that if the body is one with the spirit, every part of the body, including such organs as the hand, should exhibit features typical of the spirit. Now, since one of the most distinctive features of the spirit is its ability to think, such bodily organs as the hand should also be capable of thought, a conclusion which is, however, adamantly contradicted by fact.

Fan Chen's response shows that he concedes the opponent's point that the body, in being one with the spirit, should demonstrate in all its parts spiritual character, but he does not agree with the opponent's supposition that the spiritual character demonstrated has always to be "thought." Fan Chen conceives spiritual disposition as being of various degrees of depth. When it is profound, it constitutes thought; when it is superficial, it forms sensation. And it is the superficial, not the profound form of spiritual disposition, with which such bodily organs as the hand are associated.

Now, if Fan Chen is correct, "sensation" and "thought" would make up the shallow and deep ends of the spiritual spectrum. Given premise (2) that the spirit is ontologically dependent on the body, both ends should alike have their bodily bases. We have seen that Fan Chen ascribes "sensation" to such bodily organs as the hand. It remains for him to specify the bodily source of thought:

Question: If thoughts of right and wrong are not the concern of hands and feet, to what do they pertain?

Answer: Thoughts of right and wrong are governed by the heart organ.

Question: This heart organ is the heart which is one of the five viscera, isn't it?[22]

Answer: It is so.

Question: In what way are the five viscera different from each other that the heart alone has thoughts of right and wrong?

Answer: In what way also are the seven apertures different from each other that their functions are not the same?[23] What reasons are there?

Question: Thoughts are without location. How do we know that they are governed by the heart?

Answer: When our heart is sick, our thoughts become confused. In this way, we know that the heart is the root of thought.[24]

Fan Chen traces the bodily origin of thought to the heart, which in his opinion is none other that the heart organ constituting one of the five viscera. To support his view, he refers to the common experience of our thoughts getting confused when our hearts become sick, which strongly suggests that the operation of the former is dependent on the working of the latter.

The third objection concerns the moral and intellectual differences between the sage and the common man:

Question: The body of the sage is similar to the body of the common man, and yet there is the distinction of sages and common men. So, we know that body and spirit are different.[25]

We can analyze the opponent's objection as follows:

1. The sage and the common man are similar in their bodies.
2. The sage and the common man are dissimilar in intelligence and moral perfection.
3. The dissimilarities in intelligence and moral perfection between the sage and the common man can not be explained by appealing to their bodies (1, 2).
4. There must exist a spirit separated from the body to account for the intellectual and moral differences between the sage and the common man (3).

Fan Chen tackles the query by rejecting assumption (1):

Answer: Not at all. Pure gold glitters, while unwashed gold does not glitter. How could pure gold which glitters contain impurities which do not glitter? Likewise, how could the spirit of a sage reside in the [bodily] vessel of a common man? Nor would it ever happen that the spirit of a common man be lodged in the body of a sage. So, eight-colored eyebrows and eyes with double pupils were [respectively] the appearances of [Fang] Hsün[m] and [Chung] Hua[n], and dragon [-shaped] face and horse [-shaped] mouth were [respectively] the looks of Hsien [Yüan][o] and Kao [T'ao][p].[26] Such are the pecularities [of the sages] in outward form. The heart of Pi Kan[q] had seven openings placed side by side, and the gall bladder of Po Yo[r] was big as a fist.[27] Such are the speciality [of the sages] with respect to inner organs. So, we know that certain parts of [the bodies of] the sages are quite out of the ordinary. Not only is their way [of living] superior to that of the common folk, their bodies are also more excellent than those of all creatures. I find [your idea] that sages and common men are alike in their bodily forms difficult to accept.[28]

According to Fan Chen, sages in general possess certain extraordinary bodily features, some external such as eight-colored eyebrows and eyes with double pupils, and some internal such as a heart with seven holes and a gall bladder as big as a fist, which set them off from the average person. Their superiority in intellectual and moral achievement can therefore be explained by referring to these features, and there is absolutely no need to postulate a "spirit" to account for the situation.

To maintain that sages and common men possess distinct types of bodies which account for their intellectual and moral differences in turn leads to other perplexities. First, it is not uncommon to find people of very dissimilar intellectual and moral attainment sharing almost the identical physical appearances, and the opponent is quick to cite the well-known instances of the physical resemblances between Confucius (551–479 B.C.) and the scheming courtier Yang Huo[s], and between the saintly Emperor Shun[t] and the self-willed upstart Hsiang Chi[u] (232–202 B.C.) to support his thesis that with regard to the body, the sage and the common man are actually the same.[29] Second, if intelligence and moral aptitudes are based upon bodily factors, sages of similar high levels of intellectual and moral perfection should exhibit the same bodily features. But, as the opponent immediately points out: "Ch'iu[v] (Confucius) and Tan[w] differed in their looks, and [the emperors] T'ang[x] and Wen[y] were unlike in their appearances."[30]

Fan Chen approaches the first query by noting that the observed physical resemblances between sages and common men are merely apparent:

Alabaster is like jade, but it is not jade. Cranes resemble phoenixes, but they are not phoenixes. Such being the case with things, the same should [also] be true with people. Hsiang [Chi] and Yang [Huo] were like [Shun and Confucius] in [outward] appearance, but not in actual substance. As they can not match [Shun and Confucius] with respect to the heart organ, mere [similarities in] appearance are meaningless.[31]

To be a sage, one must have all the sage's requisite bodily characteristics, and Fan Chen mentions here specifically the sage's heart organ. Thus, despite their respective closeness in external appearances to Emperor Shun and Confucius, Hsiang Chi and Yang Huo remained in the rank and file of the common folk because they lacked the sage's heart organ. That Fan Chen considers the heart organ to be the root of intellectual and moral differences as well as the seat of thought is further attested by his answer to the second query:

Sages resemble [each other] with respect to their heart organs, but their [bodily] forms need not be the same;[32] just as horses may be of different kinds of coat and yet be equally fleetfooted, and jade stones may be of different colors and yet be alike beautiful....[33]

It is the heart organ alone which distiguishes the sage from the common man. So long as they have similar heart organs, sages may assume the most diverse external appearances and yet all be sages.

Finally, the ancestral cult and a belief in ghosts were orthodox customs in ancient China. So the problem arises as to how to make sense of these customs if nothing of the deceased, whether in the form of body or spirit, remains after death. To the question why the *Hsiao ching*[z], a Confucian classic, enjoins the construction of ancestral temples and the practice of ancestral offering, if the spirits of our forebears disintegrate together with their bodies at death, Fan Chen replies:

Answer: This is [simply] the way of instruction of the sages, with the aims of complying with the feelings of the filial and arousing the will of the indolent and the mean. This is what [the *I ching*[aa]] means by "spirituality and clarity [depend upon the right man]."[34]

Ancestral rituals, which perpetuate the memories of our forefathers, perform the very significant role of providing an avenue for our expression of affection for them, as well as fostering an attitude of zeal and a feeling of gratitude. And it is with these emotive and educative functions in mind, and not with the paying of homage to the surviving spirits of our forebears, that past sages encouraged the practice of ancestral worship.

As for past accounts of the activities of ghosts, Fan Chen's position is largely skeptical. When the opponent cites the narrations in the *Tso chuan*[ab] of the princes Po Yu[ac] and P'eng Sheng[ad], dressed in armor and assuming the form of a boar, respectively, returning after death to avenge themselves on their enemies,[35] to show that the dead continue to exist in the guise of ghosts, Fan Chen rejoins:

Answer: Demons are indiscernible and [it is hard to say whether] they exist or not. Many people have come to a violent end, and yet not all of them become ghosts. Why should P'eng Sheng and Po Yu be the only ones capable of doing so? Here was [perceived] a man [in armor] and there was [seen] a boar. They might not be the princes of [the states] of Ch'i[ae] and Cheng[af] [after all].[36]

If Fan Chen can dismiss the stories of Po Yu and P'eng Sheng as testimonies of popular superstitions and as not representing the actual belief of the author of the *Tso chuan*, then passages in the *I ching* which speak explicitly of ghosts and spirits are more difficult to brush away:

Question: The *I* [*ching*] says: "Through this, one comes to know the conditions of ghosts and spirits. In so far as a man resembles heaven and earth, he will not come into opposition with them." It also speaks of "a wagon full of ghosts." [37] What is the meaning of these sayings?[38]

Being a Confucian by upbringing, Fan Chen feels obliged to abide by the statements of the *I ching*, one of the most venerable of Confucian scriptures. So, he concedes, albeit reluctantly, that there are such beings as ghosts; but he proceeds to add that they pertain to an "invisible" realm totally separate from the "visible" realm of man, and are not the surviving spirits of the deceased. In this way, he finds it possible to acquiesce to the general belief in the existence of ghosts without compromising his thesis of the destructibility of the spirit:

Answer: There is [the category] bird and there is [the category] animal, this being the distinction of the flying and the walking; there is [the category] man and there is [the category] ghost, this being the distinction of the visible and the invisible. [But to say] that men become ghosts after death and ghosts turn into men after their destruction is something I do not understand.[39]

APPRAISAL OF THE ARGUMENTS OF THE TREATISE

After recapitulating the principal arguments of the *Treatise*, we are ready to give our appraisal of them. As proposed in the foreword, our appraisal will center on two considerations: first, the fulfillment of avowed objectives, and second, the internal consistency of thought. The *Treatise* was already the object of much controversy on its first appearance, and some of the critical remarks of its contemporaries, especially those of Hsiao Ch'en[ag] (478–529), Ts'ao Ssu-wen[ah], and the famous poet Shen Yüeh[ai] (441–513), are highly suggestive. They will be examined in some detail in the next section for the purpose of illustrating the points we raise in our assessment.

Fan Chen's ultimate objective in arguing against the concept of indestructible spirit, as we have noted in our exposition of the background of the *Treatise*, was to undermine the Buddhist teachings of *karman* and rebirth. Now, it has often been pointed out that the tenets of *karman* and rebirth are actually not predicated upon the idea of immortal soul, that Śākyamuni himself preached the non-existence of changeless selves, and that, as a consequence, Fan Ch'en's whole program of refuting the Buddhist doctrines of retribution and transmigration by calling into question the notion of permanent, self-subsistent spirit was misguided from the very beginning. While observations of this kind are admittedly not without ground, it remains an undeniable fact that most Buddhists of Fan Chen's time did think that their faith in *karman* and rebirth involved the notion of indestructible spirit, and they further conceived this spirit on the traditional Chinese model of a mental substance being at once the seat of life, the center of consciousness, the source of sensation and thought, and so forth. Thus, if Fan Chen succeeded in disproving the existence of such a spirit, he would certainly undermine their conviction in retribution and transmigration, and would do severe damage to the Buddhist course in China.

But even granted that the concept of indestructible spirit was central to the kind of Buddhism practiced by most of Fan Chen's contemporary believers, we still have to ask if Fan Chen offered solid reasons against its validity. Given the fact that the idea of indestructible spirit was taught by Chinese Buddhists as an essential element of the theories of *karman* and rebirth, the most direct and conclusive way of confuting it was evidently to demonstrate either (a) that the operation of *karman* and rebirth need not assume the existence of such a spirit, or (b) that there are actually no such things as *karman* and rebirth. Both approaches, however, were not open to Fan Chen: in the case of (a) because he did not believe in the reality of *karman* and rebirth, and in the case of (b) because the denial of the existence of indestructible spirit was envisaged by him as a step towards the denial of *karman* and rebirth, not vice versa. Another obvious procedure which Fan Chen could have taken was to show that the concept of indestructible spirit is logically inconsistent or contradicted by fact. That he likewise did not do. The *Treatise* has indeed dealt with a number of orthodox arguments for the presence in man of an imperishable spirit besides the perishable body (such as the need to assume an origin of life and so forth) and demonstrated the reasons offered to be inconclusive. Yet, inconclusiveness does not imply invalidity, not to say that valid ideas are very often entertained on invalid grounds. In short, we can find in the *Treatise* no definite proof that the Buddhist concept of indestructible spirit is inadmissible.

But if Fan Chen failed to refute the Buddhist concept of indestructible spirit directly by proving it to be wrong, did he succeed in refuting it indirectly by demonstrating its opposite concept, that is, the destructibility of the spirit, to be right? That, in fact, was the course which Fan Chen took. The *Treatise*, as can be seen from the preceding analysis, is essentially an attempt to establish the two premises of the oneness of body and spirit and of the ontological dependence of the latter upon the former, from which the conclusion of the destructibility of the spirit can be drawn. However, the manner in which Fan Chen sets about in the *Treatise* to establish the two premises is highly problematic. He has put forward hardly any logical and empirical evidence to support the two suppositions. Rather, he satisfies himself with merely examining a number of objections to which they are most likely to be subjected (such as in connection with the questions of conscious behavior, intellectual and moral aptitudes, ancestral worship, and so forth) in order to indicate that they are not real objections. Now, objections which can be raised against any statement are theoretically infinite, and one can never arrive at an absolute decision regarding the truth of an assertion by rejecting attempts to falsify it. Thus, the two premises remain largely hypotheses, and naturally, the same is the case with the conclusion of the destructibility of the soul which is based on them.

So, in falling short of refuting the concept of "indestructible spirit" both directly and indirectly, the *Treatise* can not satisfy our first requirement of "fulfillment of avowed objective." The situation is quite different, however, with regard to the second requirement of "internal consistency of thought." Starting from the two "materialistic" premises asserting the ontological primacy of the body over the spirit, Fan Chen steadfastly reduces all major mental phenomena to bodily functions. So, consciousness is made out to be an essential property of the body, the losing of which constitutes death. Sensation and thought are pictured as the functions of such external organs as the hands and of the internal organ, the heart, respectively. Differences in intellectual and moral endowments are traced back to divergences in bodily constitution, especially in the constitution of the heart. The significance of ancestral worship is seen in its educative efficacy, and ghosts are relegated to another realm of existence having nothing to do with the surviving souls of the dead. Indeed, with respect to oneness of purpose and acuteness of thought, the *Treatise* is among the most articulate, clear-sighted, and coherently reasoned pieces of ancient Chinese materialistic literature. From the perspective of the development of materialistic philosophy in China, it fully deserves the lavish acclaim it currently enjoys in the scholastic circles of Mainland China.

The foregoing are preliminary remarks, the full significance of which we shall try to bring out in what follows by reviewing some of the criticisms the *Treatise* received in its time and Fan Chen's responses to them.

CONTEMPORARY CRITICISMS AND FAN CHEN'S RESPONSES

The fact that Fan Chen pinned his thesis of the destructibility of the spirit on premises for which he had offered no positive evidences in support had already caught the attention of his contemporary Buddhist critics, notably Hsiao Ch'en, who commented:

> Now, in speaking of the oneness in substance of body and spirit, one should give proofs of their inseparability. But it is simply asserted: "The spirit is the same as the body; the body is the same as the spirit.... Body and spirit can not be separated from each other." Such [a way of] arguing is baseless, and is contrary [to the character of] a sound exposition.[40]

Under such a circumstance, the Buddhists' natural reaction was to stick fast to their own conception of the existence of a spiritual substance distinct from the bodily substance, so that the impermanence of the latter would not in any way affect the indestructibility of the former. This, in point of fact, was what Ts'ao Ssu-wen did when he quoted Fan Chen's proposition: "The spirit is the same as the body; the body is the same as the spirit. Thus, when the body exists, the spirit exists; when the body perishes, the spirit is also destroyed"—only to contravene it with the opposite claim of the separate existence of body and spirit in man:

> The body is not the same as the spirit; the spirit is not the same as the body. They come together to give rise to various functions; but coming together is not sameness.[41]

Unlike Fan Chen, who seldom offered positive proofs for his thesis of the oneness of body and spirit, the Buddhists often supported their belief in the separability of body and spirit by putting forward factual evidence, some of the most important of which we have already come across in our exposition of the *Treatise* as objections to Fan Chen's idea of a destructible soul. Another of the Buddhists' favorite kinds of factual evidence was appealed to by both Hsiao Ch'en and Ts'ao Ssu-wen when they presented the premise of the existence of two substances "body" and "spirit" as a rival theory to Fan Chen's premise of the existence of one bodily substance only, and that is connected with the phenomenon of the dream.[42] Now, when a person is dreaming, his body is unconscious, and yet his spirit continues to perceive and experience things. Is this not a clear indication that the spirit can function apart from the body? That the spirit is acting independently of the body in dreams appears all the more plausible if we consider the following facts:

1. In dreams, a person's spirit may undergo experiences which are contrary to the current state of his body. Thus, it is recorded that Ch'in Miu-kung[aj] and Chao Chien-tzu[ak] dreamed of themselves wandering off to the highest heaven and enjoying all its rare pleasures, when their bodies remained on earth and were suffering from the most severe sickness.[43]
2. In dreams, a person's spirit can perform all sorts of impossible feats, which his actual body can never execute, such as flying thousands of miles up into the sky, transforming itself into a butterfly, and so forth.

Fan Chen's rejoinder to this "dream" argument of the Buddhists confirms unequivocally our observation on the remarkable consistency of his thought. True to his original supposition of the ontological dependence of the spirit on the body, Fan Chen firmly rejects the suggestion that the spirit is functioning apart from the body in dreams, and points to the fact that people inevitably allude to their bodily states when reporting their dream experiences to demonstrate that the spirit is as much reliant on the body when it is in dream as when it is awake:

[As for the cases of] Chao Chien-tzu becoming the guest of the [One on] High and Ch'in Miu-kung soaring up to [the place of the Heavenly] Emperor [in their dreams], it is reported that their ears heard [the grand music of] the Central Sky, and their mouths even partook [food of] a hundred tastes.[44] In like manner, their bodies should have rested in huge [celestial] mansions, and their eyes should have been delighted [by the panoramic view of] high and low. They might even have worn embroidered [godly] raiments and controlled bridles [of heavenly horses huge] as dragons. So, we know that what the spirit [in dream] desires is not different from that of a person [who is awake]. With the four limbs and seven apertures,[45] [the dream-body] is in every part equivalent to the body [that is awake]. One bird can not go far and so birds do not fly unless in pairs. If the spirit is in need of nothing, why has it to rely on the body for its subsistence?[46]

By the spirit in dream being reliant on the body, Fan Chen does not mean that the spirit comes to be associated with another body distinct from the one which it is united with when it is awake. In fact, he cites the very impossibility of such a state of affairs as evidence against the second point rasied:

When you say that the spirit wanders as a butterfly [in dream],[47] do you mean that it actually becomes a flying insect? If so, when it dreams of becoming a cow, it would draw the carts of man; when it dreams of becoming a horse, it would be ridden by people; and at daybreak, there should be [discovered the corpses of] a dead cow and a dead horse. But why are such objects not found?... Dreams are illusory, and come out of nowhere. It is odd that you would take them as real. [Giving free rein to] our imagination at daytime, [our minds] roam all over sky and sea while [our bodies remain] seated. [As a consequence,] our spirits inside become confused, and falsely perceive [all kinds of] strange things [in sleep].[48]

If the spirit in dream really becomes a butterfly, a cow, a horse, and so forth, it would be able to perform all the acts proper to these creatures, such as wandering in the sky, drawing carts, riding people, and so forth. But such deeds are only possible through the body. Hence, there would exist the bodies of a butterfly, a cow, and so forth with which the spirit in dream performs its actions. But such bodies are nowhere to be found in the real world. This seems to suggest that the spirit does not in fact become a butterfly, a cow, and so forth in dream, and all those extraordinary feats it executes in the dream state are mere illusions. As for the cause of such illusions, Fan Chen imputes it to the delusive influence of the imagination, which confuses the mind and makes it fancy in sleep all sorts of strange happenings. To counter the first point raised, Fan Chen appeals to the deep concern the spirit feels for the welfare of the body in everyday life, without meeting the force of the objection to its face:

If it is as you suggest, the bodies [of Ch'in Miu-kung and Chao Chien-tzu] were sick without their spirits being sick. Then, when we are hurt and feel pain, our bodies would be in pain without our spirits feeling pain. When we are troubled and feel worried, our bodies would be worried without our spirits feeling worried. As [all] worries and pains are taken care of by the body, why should [the spirit] bother about things which are of no [concern to it at all]?[49]

The preceding exchange between Hsiao Ch'en and Ts'ao Ssu-wen on the one side and Fan Chen on the other repeats a pattern which characterizes a large part of the deliberation in the *Treatise*. First, we have the proponents of the idea of indestructible spirit alluding to some common experiences to support their thesis of the existence of two substances, body and spirit. Then we have Fan Chen criticizing the proofs offered, as well as giving an alternative explanation of the mentioned experiences from the perspective of his materialistic premise of the existence of one bodily substance only. While in rejecting his opponent's argument, Fan Chen does in this particular incidence go further than usual to show its mistake (in conceiving of the spirit as functioning apart from the body, by noting that dream experiences can be related only in bodily terms), he still has not put forward any concrete reason to support his own understanding (of dream experiences as products of false imagination). Thus, even if the opponents' interpretation of the experiences concerned is erroneous, the soundness of Fan Chen's own interpretation is still up in the air. Needless to say, the Fan Chen disclaimer, even if justified, has repudiated only one of the grounds for holding the premise of the existence of two substances. It has by no means shown that the premise itself is inadmissible.

We have seen how Fan Chen brings in the simile of knife and keenness to clarify the "substance" vis-à-vis "function" relation between body and spirit in the *Treatise*. On the one hand, the "function" spirit can not exist without the "substance" body, just as there is no keenness without knife; on the other hand, the "substance" body will not be the same "substance" without its spiritual "function," just as knife will no longer be knife without its keen property. Meant largely as an illustration and being entirely peripheral to the overall argument of the *Treatise*, this parallel that Fan Chen draws between the knife-keenness relation and the body-spirit relation has received much attention from commentators ancient and modern, so much so that any discussion of the essay would appear incomplete without a few words on the various criticisms it receives on this score.

One form of criticism stems from reading this parallel as an argument by analogy. In an argument by analogy, we compare two things, A and B: we find some resemblances, say X, Y, and Z, between them; and then we reason that since A has some further feature, it is most likely that B also has this same feature. Now, it has been pointed out by Shen Yüeh that not only do no such resemblances X, Y, and Z exist between the knife-keenness relation and the body-spirit relation, but there are actually many marked dissimilitudes:

1. A knife can be broken into two halves without losing its keenness, whereas a body can not be cut into two portions without being deprived of its spiritual disposition.
2. Keenness pertains to only one, and at most two, sides of a knife, whereas the influence of the spirit pervades the entire body of man.
3. Keenness, as the function of a knife, can cut all objects indiscriminately, whereas spirit, as the function of the body, assumes diverse noninterchangeable roles according to the part of the body through which it operates.[50]

The problem with this criticism is that it attributes to Fan Chen a step of reasoning which he never means to take. Fan Chen mentions the case of knife and keenness mainly to illustrate truths regarding the body-spirit relation which he obtains from his "materialistic" premises. He does not bother himself with comparing carefully all aspects of the knife-keenness relation with those of the body-spirit relation to establish a strict correspondence, for he does not have in mind the presenting of an argument by analogy in the first place. And to fault him for giving an invalid argument by analogy is to misplace the original purport of the simile.

More relevant and so more damaging is the allegation that the simile of knife and keeness does not represent those traits it sets out to exemplify, but can instead be borrowed to exemplify exactly the opposite traits:

1. Shen Yüeh observes that a knife can be remolded into a sword without the function of keenness being destroyed. So, keenness can exist in the absence of a knife. In the same manner, spirit can exist in the absence of the body.[51]
2. Hsiao Ch'en notes that a knife can turn blunt and still be considered a knife. So, knife and keeness can exist apart from each other. In the same manner, body and spirit can subsist each independent of the other.[52]

Different opinions have been expressed regarding the soundness of such criticisms.[53] The decision seems to hinge on how the words "knife" and "keenness" are understood. If we take "knife" here to mean any cutting instrument, and "keenness" the ability to cut in general, it is indeed hard to conceive of the ability to cut as existing apart from any cutting instrument,[54] and of any object deserving the name "cutting instrument" as being devoid of the ability to cut. Yet, if we take "knife" to indicate more specifically, say, a small cutting instrument with a handle, and "keenness," say, a high degree of sharpness, then it can certainly be argued that there can be keenness without knife and knife without keenness, for a high degree of sharpness can just as well be found in a large cutting instrument without a handle, and a short cutting instrument with a handle need not always have to be of a high degree of sharpness. Whatever the case may be, it should be remembered that what is at issue is only the cogency of a comparison; and even granting that the critics are right and that the parallel Fan Chen draws is misguided, this *alone* would not seriously impair the *Treatise*'s overall position. Also, the fact that the comparison can be turned into an illustration of the opposite conception of the separate existence of body and soul does not by any means show that his conception is well-founded, as the critics would like us to believe, for to offer an illustration and to give a proof are two different matters.

Our exposition so far reveals that the two parties in the dispute are actually arguing at cross purposes. First, we have the anti-Buddhist Fan Chen, who proposes the materialistic premises of the oneness of body and spirit and of the ontological dependence of the latter upon the former, from which he gets the conclusion of the destructibility of the spirit he desires. Then, we have the Buddhists, who produce the dualistic proposition of the separate existence of body and spirit to prove that the impermanence of the former would not entail the destructibility of the latter. To defend his materialistic presuppositions, Fan Chen sets about to demonstrate that all the common experiences brought in by the Buddhists to support their dualistic model, such as the phenomenon of the dream, can be construed in such a way as to be in line with his conception of the existence of one bodily substance only. The Buddhists in their turn hold firm to their original interpretations of these experiences, which they can do in full honesty, as Fan Chen's alternative accounts contain little if any definite evidence that their understanding is invalid. To illustrate his materialistic premises, Fan Chen puts forward the simile of knife and keenness. The Buddhists duly redefine this simile and transform it into an illustration of their own dualistic position.

Indeed, despite its heatedness and earnestness, the controversy has basically so little to do with factual consideration, and the intellectual frameworks of the two sides involved have so little in common, that the possibility of reaching any meaningful agreement seems to be foredoomed from the very beginning.

This antinomic character of the dispute becomes apparent once again over the questions of the source of consciousness and of the nature of death. We have perceived how Fan Chen rejects the Buddhist thesis of consciousness as the distinctive mark of a spiritual substance existing independent of the bodily substance, and proposes a different theory of consciousnesss being the bodily substance's essential attribute. We have also observed how Fan Chen repudiates the Buddhist notion of death as the divorcement of the spiritual substance from the bodily substance, and advocates instead the idea of death as the losing by the bodily substance of its conscious property. Yet, since Fan Chen has never given any definite proof that the views he renounces are mistaken, the Buddhists' response is again to reaffirm their original conceptions as against the alternative pictures suggested:

When the *Treatise* maintains that the substance of human beings is endowed with consciousness whereas the substance of trees is devoid of consciousness, is it not [out of the consideration] that human beings are aware of coolness and warmth, feel pains and itches, and live if nourished and die if harmed? But the same is true of trees. In spring, they grow; in autumn, they wither. When planted [in soil], they always thrive; when plucked out [from the ground], they always die. How can it be said that they are devoid of consciousness? *Now, the substance of human beings is like that of trees. When the spirit remains, the body abides; when the spirit departs, the body perishes.* When [the body] abides, [man is like] a prosperous tree; when [the body] perishes, [man is like] a withered tree. *How can you judge that it is not the spirit [in man] which knows, and maintain that it is his [bodily] substance that knows?* All beings know with their spirits, and never know with their [bodily] substance; just as plants and insects are by nature only sensible to [the alterations of] growth and decay and of life and death, while the consciousness of human beings [further] understand the differences of safety and danger and of advantages and disadvantages. How can it be maintained that it is not [the case] that man has [one nonconscious] substance like [that of] trees constituting his body, and another conscious [substance] different from [that of] trees forming his spirit? Thus, body and spirit are two [separate entities], and can be differentiated from each other.[55]

These remarks of Hsiao Ch'en amount largely to a reassertion of the Buddhist position that it is not the body but the spirit which is endowed with consciousness, and that death is the consequence of the separation of the latter from the former. To counter Fan Chen's contention that the bodily substance of men possesses consciousness and that it is this character which distinguishes it from the bodily substance of trees, Hsiao Ch'en has indeed come forward here with the rather novel idea that even material objects like trees likewise have consciousness, only that it is a lower form of consciousness restricted to the perceptions of growth and decay and of life and death, and incapable of further discerning the differences of safety and danger and of advantages and disadvantages, as can the consciousness of men. But that is merely to extend the compass of the spiritual realm. It does not provide any additional theoretical ground for the interpretation of the phenomena of consciousness and death based on the dualistic model.

Hsiao Ch'en's objections to Fan Chen's view of the relation between sensation, thought, and the body are more interesting, for they at least raise some concrete points of dissent:

1. On Fan Chen's admission that all parts of the body "have their shares of the spirit,"Hsiao Ch'en rejoins:

   The *Treatise* holds that body and spirit are not different and [bodily organs] such as hands have their shares of the spirit. In such case, the spirit would have as its substance the body; [as a consequence,] when the body is healthy, the spirit would be healthy, and when the body is wounded, the spirit would be impaired. But what is the spirit? It is the faculty of thought. Now, people may have their hands and legs broken and muscles and skin injured and yet their intellect still stays undisturbed. For instance, Sun Pin[al], having his legs amputated, became yet more skillful in military tactics;[56] and Lu Fou[am], being deprived of his hands, lived yet more in harmony with the Confucian path.[57] These are decisive proofs that the spirit exists apart from the body, and the body may become injured and the spirit [still] be unharmed.[58]

2. To Fan Chen's attribution of spiritual functions to such bodily organs as eyes and ears, Hsiao Ch'en enlists the following counter-evidences:

   If it is as held that mouth, nose, ear, and eye each has its share of the spirit, then when one eye suffers from an ailment, the spirit of sight would be destroyed and both eyes would become blind, and when one ear becomes sick, the spirit of audition would be injured and both ears would turn deaf. But such is not the case [in real life]. So we know that the spirit [has the bodily organs] as [its] apparatuses, and not as [its] substance.[59]

3. On Fan Chen's ascription of the function of thought to the heart organ in particular, Hsiao Ch'en retorts:

   Again, it is said that the heart [organ] is the source of thoughts and thoughts can not reside in other parts [of the body]. If [by other parts] are meant [such other bodily organs as] mouth, eye, ear, and nose, what is asserted is indeed true. If [by other parts] are meant the heart of other people, then it is not the case. Although ear, nose, [and so forth] together constitute the body, they can not mingle with each other, for their offices are not the same and their functions differ. [On the other hand,] even though other hearts pertain to other bodies, they can communicate with each other, for their spiritual make-ups are equally profound and their thoughts are alike efficacious. So, the *Shu ching*[an] avers, "Open your mind, and enrich my mind."[60]... The *Shin ching*[ao] states, "What other men have in their minds, I can measure by reflection."[61]... How can it be said that the feelings of A can not take up abode in B's figure, and the character of C can not reside in D's frame?[62]

The preceding refutations are indeed pertinent as objections, but it should be observed that they need not cause Fan Chen any real embarrassment.

Refutation (1) is based on the tacit assumption that the essence of the spirit is thought, an assumption which we have already encountered in the query of the interrogator in the *Treatise*.[63] So Hsiao Ch'en reasons that if body and spirit are indeed not different, as Fan Chen maintains, then when the body is injured, the spirit would also be injured. Now, as the essence of the spirit is thought, the injury of the spirit would mean the injury of the ability to think. Thus, if Fan Chen is right, when such bodily organs as hands and legs are wounded, the ability to think, that is, the intellect, would also be harmed. But that is clearly contradicted by experience. As a consequence, Fan Chen must be wrong in holding that body and spirit are not different.

What Fan Chen has to do in reply is to deny the tacit assumption, which he has already done in the *Treatise* when he has spoken of the spiritual faculty as spanning a wide spectrum, with "sensation" at the shallow end and "thought" at the deep end. He would admit that his thesis of the oneness of body and spirit entails their simultaneous injury, but he would disagree that the injury of the spirit necessarily involves the injury of the capacity to think. He would clarify that what type of spiritual functions are wounded depends on the particular bodily organ impaired. When hands and legs are hurt, only the sensations associated with them are affected. Since Fan Chen locates the seat of thought in the heart, he would further add that the ability to think is disturbed only when the heart organ is harmed. That Sun Pin and Lu Fou became all the more clever in their respective arts after losing their legs and hands is not at all inconceivable, for legs and hands are not those parts of the body having to do with the intellectual kind of spiritual activities.

The rationale of refutation (2) is not at all clear. It appears to stem from comprehending Fan Chen's statement that "all bodily organs have their shares of the spirit" as meaning that every *type* of bodily organ has its specific spirit, such as the eyes, the spirit of sight, the ears, the spirit of audition and so forth. Further, these spirits exist in such a way that when any portion of the *types* of bodily organs to which they are allied perishes, they will be annihilated also. Given these facts, it would indeed follow that "when one eye suffers from an ailment, the spirit of sight would be destroyed and both eyes would become blind, and when one ear becomes sick, the spirit of audition would be injured and both ears would turn deaf," and Hsiao Ch'en's objection would hold. The problem, of course, is that Fan Chen never intends his statement to be read that way; and that is all that he would need to point out to defend himself.

Refutation (3) concedes that a person's thoughts pertain only to his heart organ, and not to his other bodily organs such as the mouth, ear, and so forth. But it continues to argue that they can nevertheless pertain to the heart organs of other men, and cites the possibility of the sharing of thoughts and feelings between people to bear out its contention. The problem with this refutation is that it has confused the two senses of thought: thought as the faculty of intelligence, and thought as idea. When Fan Chen asserts that a person's thought pertains to his heart organ only, he has the faculty of intelligence in consideration. It being an obvious fact that people's faculties of intelligence can not be interchanged, Fan Chen thereby holds that each person's thought is confined to his specific heart organ. He does not mean to say that there can be no exchange of thought between people, when "thought" is understood in the sense of "idea." So, an attack against him for denying interpersonal communication in maintaining that people's thought pertains to their heart organs only is totally beside the mark.

On the question of the ground of sagehood, the exchange reverts once more to its regular antinomic pattern. We have already beheld in our analysis of the *Treatise* the Buddhist contention that the idea of an independently existing spirit is necessary to account for the moral and intellectual dissimilitudes between the sage and the common man, and Fan Chen's retort that all such dissimilitudes can be explained by referring solely to bodily differences. As customary, in proposing his alternative theory, Fan Chen has made no attempt to demonstrate the falsity of the opinion he dismisses. So, as usual, the Buddhists' response is simply to affirm anew their original view. Thus, Hsiao Ch'en begins his defence by flatly denying Fan Chen's suggestion that sages and common men are unlike in bodily constitution, and turns once again to the physical resemblances between Yang Huo and Confucius and between Hsiang Chi and Emperor Shun to carry his point:

The *Treatise* states, "How could the spirit of a sage reside in the [bodily] vessel of a common man? Nor would it ever happen that the spirit of a common man be lodged in the body of a sage." Now, [in their bodily vessels,] Yang Huo was like Confucius, and Hsiang Chi resembled Emperor Shun. These are instances of the spirit of the common man dwelling in the bodies of the sages.[64]

He stresses the absoluteness of their bodily likenesses as against Fan Chen's intimation of their superficiality:

[The cases of] alabaster and jade and of cranes and phoenixes can not serve as illustrations [of what we have in hand]. Alabaster is named in specific alabaster, and jade is named in particular jade. Cranes are referred to as "the wandering cranes," and phoenixes are called "the holy phoenixes." In appellation, they are diverse; in appearance, they are also dissimilar. But Shun had double pupils and Hsiang Yu also had double pupils. What we have [in their case] was not [two dissimilar things] alabaster and jade with two [dissimilar] names, but [eyes with] double pupils perceived to be alike.[65]

He further mentions the cases of legendary figures assuming the physical forms of animals to show that intellectual and moral excellences can not be affairs of the body:

Furthermore, there were [the instances of] Nü Kua[ap] with the body of a snake, and of Kao T'ao with the mouth of a horse.[66] The spirits of sages not only may enter the [bodily] vessels of common men, but also may reside in the bodies of reptiles and animals.[67]

While Fan Chen cites the example of speedy horses with coats of like color to prove that distinction in talent originates not from the external frame but from the heart organ, Hsiao Ch'en sees this as evidence that the body *as a whole* is irrelevant with respect to native abilities:

Now, horses with coats of like color may yet be nags or spirited steeds. Thus, [we know that] coat has nothing to do with the factor of speed, for the body is not the carrier of sageness.[68]

Debates on the meaning of ancestral worship and the existence of ghosts take this same antinomic line. We have seen in our review of the *Treatise* that the Buddhists take the survival of the spirits of the dead and their continuous existence as ghosts as the rationale for the practice of ancestral worship, whereas Fan Chen finds the significance of ancestral worship in its emotive and educative functions. In their rejoinder to Fan Chen's suggestion, the Buddhists have recourse once more to the authority of the Confucian classics and the examples of Confucian saints. So, Ts'ao Ssu-wen castigates Fan Chen's conception of the ancestral cult as personal prejudice contrary to the teaching of the Confucian sages, and quotes the words of the *Hsiao ching*:

The *Hsiao ching* says, "Formerly, the Duke of Chou sacrificed to Hou Chi[aq] and treated him as Heaven's equal. He made ancestral sacrifice to the Emperor Wen at the *ming-t'ang*[ar], and treated him as the Supreme Lord's equal."[69] If body and spirit were destroyed together [at death], what was there to be treated as Heaven's equal? What was there to be treated as the Supreme Lord's equal?[70]

To treat something nonexistent as the equal of Heaven is to deceive Heaven. To pay homage to something nonexistent in public is to deceive man. So, if Fan Chen is right, the Duke of Chou would have been guilty of deceiving both Heaven and man when making sacrifice to his forefathers and urging his subjects to follow suit. The same would have been true of Confucius when he made a point to offer his daily food, be it coarse rice or plain vegetable, to his forebears,[71] and of the author of the *Li chi*, who enjoins descendents to approach their ancestors with joy and to send them off with sadness during sacrifices.[72]

Fan Chen's answer to Ts'ao Ssu-wen, which has been passed down to us, testifies signally to that remarkable consistency of thought of his which we have previously noted. Fan Chen readily admits that it follows from his thesis of the destructibility of the spirit that ancestor worship is meaningless when considered apart from its social functions. Indeed, if men were all wise and virtuous, Confucian saints would not have preached the doing of homage to those who have died. But since this virtue is not the case in actual life, the sages had to resort to sacrifices to their ancestors as expedient "instructions" to cultivate the mind and guide the feelings of the ignorant and the untutored:

If people were all saints, there would be no instruction in the first place. The enacting of instructions is essentially for the sake of the common people. The common people's disposition is to esteem life and to scorn death. [If they think that] the deceased survives [in the form of] souls, there would develop in them the thought of respect; [if they know that] consciousness ceases with death, there would arise in them the attitude of irreverence. Knowing such to be the case, the saints thereby established [ancestral] temples, halls, altars, and platforms to promote their mind of sincerity, and set up [sacrificial] feasts and offerings to perpetuate their [emotion of] selflessness. . . . Thus, the loyal and the faithful have occasions to express their feelings, and the arrogant and the brutal have something to be afraid of. As a consequence, [beneficial] teachings radiate from above, and social customs become pure down below.[73]

Realizing that ordinary people "esteem life" and "scorn death," ancient sages set up ceremonies of ancestor worship and encouraged descendants to offer sacrifices to their deceased forebears with the aim of nourishing their "mind of sincerity" and promoting their "emotion of selflessness." In doing so, they were not endorsing the vulgar opinion of the survival of the dead in the form of souls. To the charge that if Fan Chen is correct Confucian sages would have been practicing deceit when they spoke of deceased ancestors as if living in promoting the worship of them, Fan Chen gives the following defence, which, ironically, is highly reminiscent of the Buddhist notion of "skillfulness" (*fang-pien*[as]):

The saints [, like the Tao[at]] manifest as benevolence but conceal their workings.[74] They comprehend the divine and understand the transformation [of things].[75] So, it is said that saints are equal to the duties of all positions, while the virtuous maintain the duties of their position [only].[76] How can we judge them [solely] by the expedient devices [they employ], and confine our view of them to their words [alone]? By deception is meant deeds which are harmful to common morals and lead to devious paths. If [what is concerned] can bring security to the ruler and peace to the ruled, improve customs and reform mores, [so that] the three luminary bodies [that is, the sun, moon, and stars] become bright above and the common people are happy below, what has it to do with deception?[77]

Deceit, as Fan Chen sees it, has the nature of "being harmful to common morals" and "leading to devious paths." But in instructing the common folk to pay homage to their dead ancestors, the sages "bring security to the ruler and peace to the ruled" as well as "improve customs and reform mores." Their way of guiding the nonenlightened according to their needs is a concrete sign of their great benevolence and infinite wisdom. How can it be labeled "deception?"

CONCLUSION

Fan Chen composed the *Treatise* with the aim of discrediting Buddhism by refuting its teachings of transmigration and retribution, and he approached his task by calling into question the concept of indestructible spirit, which he considered to be an indispensable element of the two teachings. We have observed that even if we concede that the idea of indestructible spirit is essential to the beliefs of rebirth and *karman*, as most Chinese Buddhists of Fan Chen's time were ready to do, Fan Chen still fell short of accomplishing his objective. This was not due to mere stubborn refusal to listen to reason on the Buddhists' part, but was largely because Fan Chen devoted himself, both in the *Treatise* and in his subsequent exchanges with his Buddhist opponents, chiefly to fencing off objections to his thesis of destructibility of the soul, instead of giving *positive* evidence against the notion of indestructible spirit which he set out to dismantle. So, we have to conclude that the great admiration for Fan Chen in Mainland China today as a critic of idealism, that is, the theory of the independent existence of the mental realm, is a bit unwarranted.

If our analysis demonstrates Fan Chen's limitation as a refuter of idealism, it also bears witness to his considerable achievement as an advocate of materialism, that is, the theory that mental phenomena are ultimately explicable in material terms. He postulated the two materialistic suppositions of the oneness of body and spirit and of the ontological dependence of the latter upon the former. He developed from them a picture of human existence which comprises the many aspects of consciousness, sensation, intelligence, life and death, and so forth—a picture which is at once concise, uniform, and highly persuasive by the standard of knowledge of his time. Readers familiar with Western literature on the subject of the immortal soul would not have failed to notice the ideas of such famous Western polemics against the concept of eternal spirit as the *De Rerum Natura* of Lucretius (circa 99–circa 55 B.C.) and the *Leviathan* of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) echoed in Fan Chen's arguments and presented in as convincing, sharp, and interesting a fashion. Indeed, not only as a materialistic tract, but also as an essay on the problems of body, mind, and death, the *Treatise* merits serious attention from historians of the philosophy of both East and West.

NOTES

1. The *Treatise* has long been lost as an independent work and has been passed down to us only in the form of citations included in the essay *Nan Shen-mieh-lun*[au] of Hsiao Ch'en[ag] (478–529) (included in Seng-yu[av] (445–518), ed., *Hung-ming chi*[aw]) and as a part of Fan Chen's biography in Yao Ssu-lien's[ax] (557–637) *Liang shu*[i]. These two versions disagree only in minor details, and as the *Hung-ming chi* is the earlier work, we shall base our discussion on its text. A complete translation of the *Treatise* can be found in Étienne Balazs, *Chinese Civilization and the Bureaucracy*, ed. Arthur Wright, trans. H. M. Wright (New Haven, Connecticut and London: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 266–276.

2. To appreciate the high regard in which the *Treatise* and its author are held in contemporary Chinese academic circles, see, for example, Ch'en Yüan-hui[ay], *Fan Chen ti wu-shen-lun ssu-hsiang*[az] (Wuhan[ba], 1957), pp. 41–43; Hou Wai-lu[bb] and others, *Chung-kuo ssu-hsiang t'ung-shih*[bc], vol. 3 (Peking, 1957), pp. 373–374; Jen Chi-yü[bd], ed., *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh shih*[be], vol. 2 (Peking, 1963), pp. 292–294; and Fang Li-t'ien[bf] and others, eds., *Chung-kuo ku-tai chu-ming che-hsüeh-chia p'ing-chuan*[bg], vol. 2 (Shantung[bh], 1980), pp. 483–485.

3. W. Pachow, "The Controversy over the Immortality of the Soul in Chinese Buddhism," *Journal of Oriental Studies* 16, nos. 1–2 (1978): 38.

4. Mou Tzu, *Li-hou lun*[bi], in Seng-yu, *Hung-ming chi* (Takakusu Jujirō[bj] and Watanabe Kaikyoku[bk], eds., *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*[bl], 85 vols. (Tokyo, 1924–1934), vol. 52, p. 3b; hereafter cited as T).

5. For details on the background and history of the debate on the question of the indestructibility of the soul between Buddhists and anit-Buddhists before Fan Chen, consult W. Pachow, "Controversy," pp. 27–32, 36–37; Whalen W. Lai "Beyond the Debate on 'The Immortality of the Soul': Recovering an Essay by Sheh Yüeh," *Journal of Oriental Studies* 19, no. 2 (1981): 139–145; Chu Po-k'un[bm], "Chin Nan-pei Ch'ao shih-ch'i wu-shen-lun che fan-tui Fo-chiao chung ling-hun pu-ssu hsin-yang ti tou-cheng[bn]," *Pei-ching Ta-hsüeh hsüeh-pao (jen-wen k'o-hsüeh*[bo]) (1957, no. 2): 29–45; Hou Wai-lu, *T'ung-shih*, pp. 361–372; T'ang Yung-t'ung[bp], *Han Wei Liang-Chin Nan-pei Ch'ao Fo-chiao shih*[bq], 2d ed. rev. (Peking, 1963), pp. 423–428; Lü Ch'eng[br], *Chung-kuo Fo-hsüeh yüan-liu lüeh-*

chiang[bs] (Peking, 1979), pp. 152–155; Tsuda Saukichi[bt], "Shimmetsu fumetsu no ronsō[bu]," in Tsuda Saukichi, *Shina Bukkyō no kenkyū*[bv] (Tokyo, 1957), pp. 160–181; Enokido Akira[bw], "Shimmetsu ronri no yurai[bx]," *Chūgoku tetsugaku* 5[by] (1967): 28–38; Kimura Senchō[bz], "Gōhō-setsu no juyō to shimmetsu fumetsu[ca], *Bukkyōgaku seminā*[cb] 20 (1974): 285–302; and Nitsugiri Jikai[cc], "Shin fumetsu ron to shūkyō shō[cd], *Ōtani gakuhō*[ce] 53, no. 4 (1974): 70–72.

6. For a translation of relevant documents in the dispute, consult Walter Liebenthal, "The Immortality of the Soul in Chinese Thought," *Monumenta Nipponica* 8, nos. 1–2 (1952): 327–397.

7. The term "spirit" (*shen*) is a legacy of the Chinese cultural milieu, and in borrowing it to explain the functioning of *karman* and rebirth, the Buddhists naturally took over as well the conventional Chinese understanding of the concept. For information concerning the traditional connotations of the term "spirit" in China, refer to Whalen W. Lai, "Beyond the Debate," pp. 141–144; Mou Chung-chien[cf], "Chung-kuo li-shih shang kuan-yü hsing-shen wen-t'i ti cheng-lun[cg]," in T'ang Ching-chao[ch], ed., *Chung-kuo wu-shen-lun ssu-hsiang lun-wen chi*[ci] (Chiangsu[cj], 1980), pp. 127–136; Wang Chü-chung[ck], "Lüeh-lun Sui-T'ang i-ch'ien hsiang-shen-kuan ti fa-chan[cl]," *She-hui k'o-hsüeh chi-k'an*[cm] 3 (1981): 25–30; and Tsuda Saukichi, "Shimmetsu," pp. 94–144.

8. Biographies of Fan Chen can be found in Yao Ssu-lien, *Liang shu* (Peking, 1973), pp. 664–671, and Li Yen-shao[cn], *Nan shih*[co] (Peking, 1975), pp. 1420–1422. For contemporary accounts, see Balazs, *Chinese Civilization*, pp. 256–260; Fang Li-t'ien, *P'ing-chüan*, pp. 449–455; and Matsuo Ryōkai[cp], "*Shimmetsu ron* shōkō[cq]," *Taishō Daigaku kenkyū kiyō*[cr] (1964): 132–135.

9. Yao Ssu-lien, *Liang shu*, p. 665.

10. *T*, vol. 52, p. 57b, ll. 15–16.

11. Ibid., p. 57b, ll. 21–26.

12. For analyses of the *Treatise* and accounts of Fan Chen's debates with the Buddhists, consult Balazs, *Chinese Civilization*, pp. 262–265; Aloysius Chang, "Fan Cheng and His 'Treatise on the Destruction of the Soul'," *Chinese Culture* 14, no. 4 (1973): 1–8; W. Pachow, "Controversy," pp. 33–35; Whalen W. Lai, "Beyond the Debate," pp. 146–148; Chu Po-k'un, "Chin Nan-pei Ch'ao shih-chi," pp. 45–60; Hou Wai-lu, *T'ung-shih*, pp. 381–398; Ch'en Yüan-hui, *Fan Chen*, pp. 9–40; Kuan Feng[cs], "Fan Chen t'ung Hsiao Ch'en kuan-yü 'hsing-shen pu-erh' ho 'hsing-shen fei-i' ti lun-cheng[ct]," *Kuang-ming jih-pao*[cu], 10 August 1962, p. 4; T'ang Yung-t'ung, *Fo-chiao shih*, pp. 470–473; Jen Chi-yü, *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh shih*, pp. 283–292; Fang Li-t'ien, *P'ing-chüan*, pp. 470–482; Lok Shou-ming[cv], "Fan Chen ti hsing-shen-kuan tsai jen-shih-shih shang ti ti-wei[cw]," in Chung-kuo She-hui K'o-hsüeh-yüan Che-hsüeh Yen-chiu-so[cx], ed., *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh-shih yen-chiu chi-k'an*[cy] 2 (1982): 349–375; Matsuo Ryōkai, "*Shimmetsu ron*," pp. 149–154; and Hachiya Kunio[cz], "Hanshin '*Shimmetsu ron*' no shisō ni tsuite[da]," *Tōyō Bunka Kenkyūjo kiyō*[db] 61(1973): 63–118.

13. *T*, vol. 52, p. 55a, l.10.

14. Ibid., p. 55a, ll.11–12.

15. Ibid., p. 55a, ll.16–17.

16. Some versions of the text read "blade" (*jen*[dc]) instead of "knife" (tao[dd]), and it has been argued that the relation between "body" and "spirit" as conceived by Fan Chen is more aptly illustrated by the relation between "blade" and "keenness" than by the relation between "knife" and "keenness," as "keenness" is an essential property of "blade," but not of "knife." On the other hand, we do sometimes talk of a blade turning blunt or of a blunt blade, which seems to indicate that in ordinary language, "keenness" is not necessary to the concept "blade," in the same manner as it is not necessary to the concept "knife."

17. *T*, vol. 52, p. 55b, ll.15–18.

18. Ibid., p. 55b, l.28c, l.1.

19. Ibid., p. 55c, ll.2–6.

20. Ibid., p. 55c, ll.14–18.

21. Ibid., p. 56a, l.25b, l.2.

22. The five viscera are: heart, liver, spleen, lungs, and kidneys.

23. The seven apertures are: two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, and mouth.

24. *T*, vol. 52, p. 56b, ll.9–16.

25. Ibid., p. 56c, ll.17–18.

26. Fang Hsün, Chung Hua, and Hsien Yüan are, respectively, the other names of Yao[de], Shun[t] and Huang-ti[df], legendary emperors in prehistoric China. Kao T'ao was allegedly one of leading

ministers of Shun in charge of the maintenance of law and order. Tales of their extraordinary appearances were already well-known in the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220), and references to them can be found in works of that time, such as Wang Ch'ung's[dg] (27–circa 104) *Lun-hen*[dh] (Shanghai, 1974), p. 36.

27. Pi Kan so enraged Emperor Chou[di], last ruler of the Shang dynasty[dj] (circa 1766–1125 B.C.), with his repeated reprimands concerning immorality that the latter had him put to death by tearing out his heart. Po Yo was the given name of Chiang Wei[dk] (202–264), a leading general of the State of Shu[dl] in the period of the Three Kingdoms (220–265). Anecdotes about their heart and gall bladder can be found in Ssu-ma Ch'ien[dm] (145–circa 86 B.C.), *Shih chi*[dn] (Peking, 1959), p. 108, and P'ei Sung-chih's[do] (372–451) commentary on the *San-kuo chih*[dp] (Peking, 1962), p. 1068.

28. *T*, vol. 52, p. 56c, ll. 19–26.

29. Ibid., p. 56c, ll.27–29. For references to the physical resemblances between Confucius and Yang Huo and between Emperor Shun and Hsiang Chi, refer to Ssu-ma Ch'ien, *Shi chi*, p. 1919 and p. 338.

30. Ibid., p. 57a, l.5. Ch'iu and Tan were the personal names of Confucius and the Duke of Chou[dq]. T'ang and Wen were the founders of the Shang dynasty and Chou dynasty[dr] (1122–256 B.C.), respectively.

31. *T*, vol. 52, p. 57a, ll.1–3.

32. The version of the *Liang shu* is used in rendering this sentence. The *Hung-ming chi*'s version reads, "Sages resemble each other for being alike in the sage-organs, but their organs need not be the same," which hardly makes sense.

33. *T*, vol. 52, p. 57a, ll.7–8.

34. Ibid., p. 57b, ll.12–13. For the quotation from the *I ching*, see Richard Wilhelm, trans., *The I Ching*, rendered into English by Cary F. Baynes (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), p. 349.

35. For detailed accounts of these incidences in the *Tso chuan*, see James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5 (reprint, Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 1960), pp. 81, 82, 613, and 618. Also see Balazs, *Chinese Civilization*, pp. 273–274 n. 39.

36. *T*, vol. 52, p. 57a, ll.16–18. Po Yu and P'eng Sheng were members of the ruling clans of the kingdoms of Cheng and Ch'i, respectively.

37. See Wilhelm, *I Ching*, pp. 316–317, and p. 161. Changes in the translation have been introduced.

38. *T*, vol. 52, p. 57a, ll.19–20.

39. Ibid., p. 57a, ll.21–23.

40. Ibid., p. 55a, ll.18–20.

41. Ibid., p. 58a, ll.17–18.

42. See ibid., pp. 55a–b and 58a–b.

43. For references to these incidences, see Ssu-ma Ch'ien, *Shih chi*, pp. 1786–1787.

44. See ibid., p. 1787.

45. See n. 23 preceding for a list of the seven apertures.

46. *T*, vol. 52, p. 58c, ll.9–14.

47. This refers to the famous butterfly dream of Chuang Chou[ds] (369–286 B.C.). Consult Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 49.

48. *T*, vol. 52, p. 58c, l.25–p.59a, l.7.

49. Ibid, p. 58c, ll.17–21.

50. See ibid., p. 254a.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid, p. 55b.

53. For some examples, see Jen Chi-yü, *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh shih* p. 287, and W. Pachow, "Controversy," pp. 34 and 35.

54. Unless we subscribe to the Platonic theory of the existence of a separate world of ideas.

55. *T*, vol. 52, p. 56a, ll.11–21.

56. See the biography of Sun Pin in Ssu-ma Chien, *Shih chi*, pp. 2162–2165.

57. See the biography of Lu Hou in Fang Hsüan-ling[dt] (578–648) and others, *Chin shu*[du] (Peking, 1974), p. 1256.

58. *T*, vol. 52, p. 56b, ll.25–29.
59. Ibid., p. 56c, ll.4–7.
60. See Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 3, p. 252.
61. See Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 4, p. 342.
62. *T*, vol. 52, p. 56c, ll.8–16.
63. Refer to n. 21 preceding.
64. *T*, vol. 52, p. 57a, ll.24–26.
65. Ibid., p. 57a, l.27–b, l.1.
66. Nü Kua was a legendary female ruler in prehistoric China. Reference to her snake-body can be found, for example, in Ts'ao Chih's[dv] (192–232) *Nü-kua tsan*[dw], in *Ts'ao chi ch'üan-p'ing*[dx] (Shanghai, 1933) vol. 2, p. 7. As for Kao T'ao's appearance, see n. 26 preceding.
67. *T*, vol. 52, p. 57b, ll.1–2.
68. Ibid., p. 57b, ll.8–9.
69. See Mary L. Makra, trans., *The Hsiao Ching* (New York: St. John's University Press, 1961), p. 19. Hou Chi was reputedly a minister of Emperor Shun in charge of agriculture and the founder of the house of Chou. Refer to Ssu-ma Ch'ien, *Shih chi*, pp. 111–112. The *ming-t'ang*, the "bright hall," was the part of the imperial residence where court and sacrificial ceremonies were held.
70. *T*, vol. 52, p. 58b, ll.7–9.
71. Ibid., p. 58b, ll.15–16. This practice by Confucius is recorded in the *Lun yü*[dy]. See Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 1, p. 233.
72. *T*, vol. 52, p. 58b, ll.16–17. See James Legge, trans., *The Li Ki*, in *The Sacred Books of the East*, ed. F. Max Müller, vol. 28 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), p. 210.
73. *T*, vol. 52, p. 59a, ll.19–26.
74. This is a reference to the *I ching*. See Wilhelm, *I Ching*, p. 321.
75. This is another quotation from the *I ching*. See ibid., p. 363.
76. This is a statement taken from the *Tso chuan*. See Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, pp. 386 and 388.
77. *T*, vol. 52, p. 59b, ll.12–16.

a 范縝
b 神滅論
c 武帝
d 梁朝
e 唐朝
f 神
g 牟子
h 齊書
i 梁書
j 蕭子良
k 質
l 用
m 放勛
n 重華
o 軒轅
p 皐陶
q 比干
r 伯約
s 陽貨
t 舜
u 項籍
v 丘
w 旦
x 湯
y 文
z 孝經
aa 易經
ab 左傳
ac 伯有
ad 彭生
ae 齊
af 鄭
ag 蕭琛
ah 曹思文
ai 沈約
aj 秦繆公
ak 趙簡子
al 孫臏
am 盧浮
an 書經
ao 詩經
ap 女媧
aq 后稷
ar 明堂
as 方便
at 道

[au] 難神滅論

[av] 僧祐

[aw] 弘明集

[ax] 姚思廉

[ay] 陳元暉

[az] 范縝的無神論思想

[ba] 武漢

[bb] 侯外廬

[bc] 中國思想通史

[bd] 任繼愈

[be] 中國哲學史

[bf] 方立天

[bg] 中國古代著名哲學家評傳

[bh] 山東

[bi] 理惑論

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[bv] シナ仏教の研究

[bw] 榎戸章

[bx] 神滅論理の由来

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[bz] 木村宣彰

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[cb] 仏教学セミナー

[cc] 三桐慈海

[cd] 神不滅論と宗教性

[ce] 大谷學報

[cf] 牟鍾鑒

[cg] 中國歷史上關於形神問題的爭論

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