

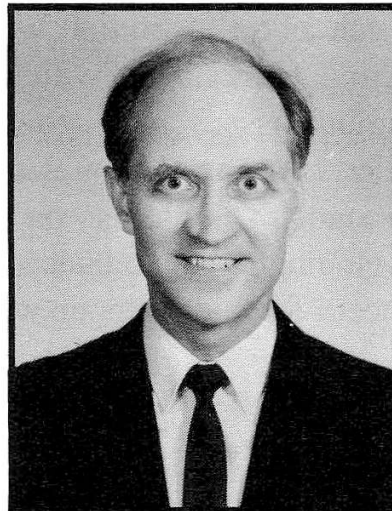
Theological Reflections on Yin Yang and Human Rights

by Jack Clancey

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Preamble

My roots are in the Catholic religion. As a young man I was brought up in a faith that was very conservative and afraid of the dynamic changes that had been taking place in the world for the last few centuries. Church leaders had withdrawn in fear from the new challenges raised by Protestant churches and by the radical new ways of looking at the world. There were also many new developments in science and new demands by ordinary people for rapid social change that began with the French Revolution, continued with the Mexican and Russian revolutions, and many anti-colonial struggles.



The world and its new array of problems was a place to be avoided; security was to be found in dependable old dogmas that had been developed centuries before.

The other influence, which I only became aware of later, was that the world was in the last stage of the colonial period in which the European culture, including its religions, was considered by many Catholics to be superior. The tendency was towards domination of the weak countries by strong countries, domination of smaller cultures by larger cultures, domination of women by men, domination of nature by human beings, etc.

Another influence in the world was Marxist-Leninism, which stated in clear terms that any social change could only come about by conflict, a conflict rooted in class struggle.

When I was in my 20's I became aware of radical changes taking place. The anti-colonial movement, which first bore fruit in South Asia, was sweeping across the world. Within the Catholic tradition, Vatican Council II, initiated by Pope John XXIII, turned the Catholic church towards dialogue with the world and other religions and encouraged believers to become involved in helping to create more just societies and a better world.

I present this short introduction to show how the Catholic church as an institution went through a radical change: from inward looking to dialogue with the world; from a primary concern with religious issues to a growing interest with the wider concerns of society. At various times all religious institutions move from placing too much emphasis on an inward looking approach towards developing a more balanced approach which places equal emphasis on concern for and dialogue with contemporary social problems.

Reflection on unrelated philosophical or theological approaches

This paper attempts to integrate reflections on a number of *prima facie* unrelated philosophical or theological approaches: Yin-Yang philosophy, Natural Law (especially the jurisprudential tension between natural law and positivism), and the relationship between religion and human rights. I will then try to weave these various strands together with a creative use of the Yin-Yang approach. This approach emphasizes the need for attaining ever new harmonies that result from ongoing dialogue between and among various opposing views. The emphasis is on the need for religions to support the development of human rights by initiating dialogue among religions and between religions and political institutions.

I think a world full of conflicts and ever rapid changes and on the threshold of a new era can benefit from the creative use of the insights of a range of Yin-Yang philosophers. Yin-Yang can contribute towards the development of a new approach to social change, including the place that human rights has to play in that change.

Yin Yang

Yin-Yang is not a religion, but a philosophy that has its roots in early Chinese world views. These world views were developed into a philosophy over the centuries with significant new concepts being added by Taoist philosophers and later, from the 11th century A.D., onwards, by Neo-Confucianist Philosophers.

The following quote gives a succinct description of the relationship between the forces of Yin and Yang and how their inter-action leads to and creates all that exists.

According to the yin-yang theory, the universe came to be as a result of the interactions between the two opposing universal forces of yin and yang. The existence of the universe is seen to reside in the tensions resulting from the universal force of non-being, or yin, and the universal force of being, or yang. Whatever is experienced simultaneously has being and lacks being; it comes into being and passes out of being. But this is just to say that it is being pulled between the forces of yin and yang. The changing world that is experienced - that is characterized as nature - can exist only when there is both being and non-being, for without being there is no coming-into-being, and without non-being there is no passing-out-of-being. Hence yin, the negative, and yang, the positive, are required as a source of nature. (Oriental Philosophies, John M. Koller, p.256).

This basic world view was taken one step further by Laozi who posited the existence of the Tao as the source of both Yin and Yang or being and non-being.

Prior to Lao Tzu the principles of yin and yang were known. They were regarded as opposites, and all the things in the world were considered to be the production of the interaction between yin and yang. But yin and yang, opposed as light and dark, cold and warm, being and non-being, etc., being opposite, could not of their own nature either produce themselves or interact with each other. A third something providing a basis and a context for the interaction of yin and yang was required. The great contribution of Lao Tzu was his recognition of Tao as the source of being and non-being - of yin and yang - and the function of Tao as the basis for the interaction of yin and yang. ...

As the absolutely first principle of existence, Tao is completely without characteristics. It is itself uncharacterized, being the very source of and condition of all characteristics. In this sense it is non-being. But it is not simply nothing, for it is the source of everything. It is prior to all the existing things, giving them life and function, constituting the oneness underlying all the diversity and multiplicity of the world. (Koller, pp. 287-288).

Laozi himself puts it this way:

The Tao that can be told of is not the eternal Tao;
 the name that can be named is not the eternal name.
 The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth;
 the named is the mother of all things

The importance of Tao lies in the recognition that there is something which is prior and anterior to the various particular things that exist in the world, something which gives unity to all the existing things and which determines the very existence and function of everything. What that something is cannot, of course, be said, for whatever can be talked about is limited and determined, for it is the very condition of limits and determinations. ...

The functioning of the Tao is eternal and recurrent, producing all things and directing their activities. ... The lesson the Taoists drew from nature is that when a thing reaches one extreme, it reverses and returns to the other extreme. (Koller p.290).

Zhou Dunyi helped to lay the foundations for Neo-Confucianism in the 11th century.

Describing the production of the yin and yang from the Great Ultimate, Chou Tun-i says, 'The Great Ultimate through movement generates yang. When its activity reaches its limit, it becomes tranquil. Through tranquility the Great Ultimate generates yin.' His explanation of how the yin and the yang are produced from the Great Ultimate leans heavily on the Taoist notion of 'reversal as the movement of Tao.' According to the Taoists, reality is the manifestation of the reversing of Tao, as it goes from one extreme back to the other. Thus he goes on to say, 'When tranquility reaches its limit, activity begins. So movement and tranquility alternate and become the root of each other, giving

rise to the distinction of yin and yang, and the two modes are thus established. (Koller p. 308).

So the new addition by the Neo-Confucianists is the existence of a Great Ultimate that underlies and permeates all that exists.

The key concept in the Reason school of Neo-Confucianism is that of the Great Ultimate (T'ai-chi). This Great Ultimate is the ultimate reality and underlies all existence. It is the reason or principle inherent in all activity and existence. Through activity it generates yang. Upon reaching its limit, activity becomes tranquil, and through tranquility the Great Ultimate generates yin.

When tranquility reaches its limit, activity begins, the one producing the other as its opposite. This reversal of opposites is a notion of Taoism, where it is held that reversal is the way of the Great Way, the Tao of the universe.

The Great Ultimate, which produces all things and determines their functions, is a combination of stuff (ch'i) and principle (li). The nature of things is the result of what they are and how they function. The stuff of which they are made is their matter, or ch'i and their function is their principle, or li. When ch'i and li are in harmony, things are in order and there is a grand harmony. Since the Great Ultimate represents a harmony of ch'i and li, order is the law of the universe (Koller, pp.259-260).

Before going on, let us look at the symbol that represents Yin-Yang. The circle is divided not by a straight line, but by a curved line, representing that there is not a fixed, rigid division between two opposites such as light and dark, past and present, male and female, etc. In addition, there is a small part of each opposite in the other. A Yin-Yang approach would for example ask: "Is there someone who is completely male without having any female characteristics?" or "Can there be a moment in any present situation without some part of the past somehow affecting it?"

A second characteristic is that in the process of change from one situation to the other, there is not a clear breakthrough from one stage to the other, but the change takes place more like a wave moving towards the other, with some part of the other inside its opposite. (Greek philosophy, among others, also came up with many answers to this problem of how individuals and the world changes while remaining the same and how things remain the same while they

change.) Think of the examples of the growth and maturity of individuals and the social/historical changes that take place in society.

(Change and Continuity; same yet different)

Is Basil the same person now that he was 30 years ago?

Yes and no.

Is Sri Lanka the same country that it was 30 years ago?

Yes and no.

Is Sri Lankan culture the same as it was 30 years ago?

Yes and No.

China? India? the world?

A third characteristic is that of the underlying principle which is the creative source of all that exists. The underlying principle also supports and nourishes the constantly changing beings in the universe as well as being the basic unifying factor or element that maintains the unity of all that exists.

A fourth characteristic is that of the harmony between the two opposites that results in a balance. This balance or harmony is not fixed but is constantly changing; there is a continuous creative tension between the two sides. According to Yin-Yang thinking, any tendency towards domination by one force will eventually lead to an increase by the opposite side, so as to attain a new balance between the two sides.

Natural Law Jurisprudence - the Positive Law vs Natural Law debate.

The natural law tradition, perhaps best articulated in its early stages by the Greeks, recognized that there is something beyond agreed social norms, something deeper than any given contemporary values. There is something more important than the specific laws decreed by a particular government that should govern the way people relate with one another. The basic approach of natural law philosophers was that by using their intellects all persons could come to know various rules and aspects of the natural law.

The natural law concept was further developed by the Stoics. According to Horowitz,

In Stoic thought, man is intimately linked to God through the substance of his soul that he shares with God. Containing within

himself a part of God, man contains within himself the law of nature, for God is the law of nature. ... At birth man has the faculty to reason, the ability to form common notions, the seeds of knowledge and the spark of divinity. These four possessions are really one - the special gift of God to man. This gift gives man not the full-blown knowledge of natural law, but the potentiality to attain this knowledge. The Stoic synthesis of the doctrine of natural law carries the conviction that natural law is knowable by men who develop their God-given faculties (Horowitz, "The Stoic Synthesis of natural Law" in the *History of Ideas*).

Another writer stressed that the Stoics "introduced a principle that proved to be the turning point in the history of ethical, political, and religious thought. To the Platonic and Aristotelian ideal of justice there was added an entirely new conception: 'the conception of the fundamental equality of man.'" (Cassirer, *The Myths of the State*).

Natural law was re-discovered by philosophers and theologians in Medieval Europe and applied creatively to some of the problems and questions of their day, with Thomas Aquinas among the most articulate advocates of this period.

However, the most significant contemporary breakthrough in the natural law tradition took place in Europe, during and at the end of World War II, as a response to the positive laws enacted in Nazi Germany. The International Covenant on Human Rights which is a direct product of this most recent development of natural law is based on the view that there exist basic rights rooted in natural law. Natural law and basic rights transcend the laws and power of any given state and government. Human beings do not have rights because they are given by and recognized by a government; all persons have rights because these rights are rooted in a natural law. Since these rights are rooted in natural law, no government can deprive any person or any group of human beings of their basic rights.

Relationship between these historical "schools" of natural law

Do the basic principles of natural law remain the same over the centuries or are do they somehow, even though they are basic, evolve as the result of a dialogical process that takes place in any

given historical period between the adherents of natural law and the concerns and problems of their society?

I would suggest that a creative interpretation and application of the Yin-Yang philosophical tradition could perhaps suggest how these principles and values remain the same, while they continue to evolve.

The basic approach of natural law is that human beings can use their reason to discover the laws of nature, to understand the implications they have for their lives, and to come to a better appreciation of how human beings can organize their society so as to be in harmony with the basic principles of natural law.

The Yin-Yang approach is quite similar. In the Yin-Yang world view, there is an underlying Great Ultimate or Dao which is the source of life and nature, as well as a unifying force of all that exists. This Great Ultimate is in nature and can be discovered by those who seek it.

Some would argue that according to the Yin-Yang philosophy there is never any real progress or development. There is, they would say, only a return to the previous balance that existed before one side exerted too much dominance over the other. I suggest that the Yin-Yang approach can be applied in a way that would enable people to refer to and build on previous historical experiences that attained a certain balance. People could address new and unique historical problems by adding their own knowledge and wisdom in a creative way so as to correct new imbalances and attain a new historical balance. This approach would not seek to return to the balance achieved in some particular "golden age". It would instead deal with new experiences, circumstances and problems in a way that would aim for the attainment of a new balance based on the new material and scientific conditions present in society. It would also be mindful of the new level of human awareness reflected in current political, social and economic consciousness.

By creatively trying to understand and improve oneself and the world, individuals and groups can not only learn to live according to the natural law and the Great Ultimate (and religious values and principles), but also add to their knowledge of what these are. The Greeks and Stoics and early Taoists were able to enunciate certain formulations which clearly articulated their understanding of these

laws and principle and values, not unlike the work their contemporaries did in many fields of science. For example, astronomy reached a very high level of understanding that could be attained through the naked eye, nightly observations, and mathematical formulations. The basic astronomical principles they developed were the basis of study and further research for the breakthroughs attained first by using increasingly larger telescopes and more recently by the Hubble Space Telescope.

Using this creative Yin-Yang approach, each new development in natural law is rooted in and flows from the insights articulated by earlier natural law exponents. These new insights are then added to and become part of the “new balance” of basic principles that later generations can draw on and creatively apply to the new problems of their own society.

Each new step taken by later generations, in their response to the questions and problems of their day, leads to a deeper understanding of and the further evolution of these basic principles, values and laws. In turn each step in the evolutionary process leads to the attainment of a new harmony. Future generations will then have a richer, better articulated presentation of the natural law to apply to their own new questions, problems, conflicts and social imbalances.

In short, the goal of this Yin-Yang “adapted approach” is not to keep these natural law principles, values, laws, etc. in a museum or a “safe place”. The goal is to recognize that they are relevant to and can be applied to issues facing people if they are seen not as fixed, absolute and never-changing answers to any problem, but rather are considered as principles, values, laws, etc. that can be adapted for the purpose of creative dialogue with contemporary problems.

Religion and Human Rights

For years statements issued by various meetings of Catholic Bishops always included a reference such as “Asia is the birth place and the cradle of all the world’s great religions.”

A former student upon hearing this statement remarked, “So what?” I must have looked a bit perplexed, so he added, “Religions did great things in the past when they responded to people and the needs of society. But what are they doing today? They confine

themselves to rituals and the concerns of the temples, churches and monasteries.”

Later, as I thought about what the student said I recalled the words of the prophet Amos, who quoted God as saying:

I hate and despise your feasts,
 I take no pleasure in your solemn festivals.
 When you offer me holocausts,
 I reject your oblations,
 and refuse to look at your sacrifices of fatted cattle.
 Let me have no more of your strumming on harps.
 But let justice flow like water, and integrity like an unfailling
 stream (Amos 5:21-24).

There is a dilemma here. If the values of religion are extremely important to our lives, why do so many people consider them irrelevant in terms of finding ways to deal with the problems of today's world?

Love, justice, peace, honesty, truth, dignity, fairness, etc. are values which flow from and are at the core of all religions. These values would appear to be not only invaluable for human life, but also necessary for the proper functioning of human and social relationships. Why then are religions, which embody in their traditions such important values, not able to respond in meaningful ways to many of the concerns and questions of people today?

I think that many of the religions are not unlike valuable bronze urns or pots that have been unearthed by archeologists. These bronze wares are deemed too valuable to be used in ordinary homes or restaurants, so they are placed in museums where they can be studied and admired by experts and interested people. The same is true for gold, silver and bronze coins that are discovered at some ancient site or a hole in some farmer's field. The coins will not buy you a bus ticket, but they will be eagerly sought after by coin collectors and museums who will put them away in a safe place to protect them or a well guarded museum cabinet for people to admire.

“So what? So what?”

Religions are all too often satisfied with preserving the customs, practices, prayers and rituals of the past, without asking about their relevance to contemporary problems. All too often religions have answers without first knowing what the question or

problem is. All too often the starting point of religious representatives is their own concerns. They do not start by listening to and entering into dialogue with people and societies facing new forms of old problems as well as new problems.

Religions have basic principles and values that they can and do offer to believers. A sociologist might note that there are many values and principles shared by all religions. Do religions have basic principles and values that don't change? Have these basic principles and values been influenced by or have they had any influence on the many changes that have taken place in the world over several millennia? What is the relationship between these basic principles and the constant changes that are taking place in society and the new questions being asked?

What are Human Rights? Are Basic Human Rights also Basic Religious Rights?

One day during a visit to a Natural History Museum, a family with three young children made a whirlwind tour of the whole range of exhibits featured that month. For hours the parents had replied to questions such as:

“Were dinosaurs really that big?”

“Why are there no more dinosaurs today?”

“Did dinosaurs eat people?”

Late in the afternoon the family found themselves in a wing of the museum that contained exhibits related to the whole spectrum of human culture. One particular corridor contained life-sized scenes depicting the way peoples in different parts of the world conduct funeral services. In addition to burials, there were displays of an Indian funeral pyre, Egyptian mummies being laid in tombs, and an American Indian warrior being placed on a platform out in an open field high in the mountains.

The elder daughter had been silently listening to her parents reading the various explanations that accompanied each scene and then asked, “Daddy, why do people burn dead bodies, put them on platforms and do all those other things instead of burying them?”

The father explained that throughout history, people in different cultures had developed different ways of dealing with the dead bodies of their relatives and friends, but that for each culture, no

matter how it was celebrated, the funeral ceremony was a way for people to show their respect for a dead body that had recently been a living person. The funeral ceremony was a way for relatives and friends to say one last good-bye.

It is a universal practice to say good-bye to a deceased person, even though the forms, prayers, ceremonies, etc. vary greatly from culture to culture. Since this is such a universal practice, stretching throughout history and across cultures, can we say that it is rooted in some universal natural law?

Religions throughout the world are intimately involved in funeral services and celebrations. The right to a decent funeral that flows from a natural law could be categorized as not only a right that is natural to all human beings but can also be listed as a basic human right as well as a basic religious right.

In Sri Lanka, less than ten years ago, many families were deprived of this basic right to say good-bye. Government troops and officials carried out an official policy of making people “disappear.” The result was that relatives were never even sure if their brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, cousins, uncles, aunts, sons and daughters were dead, as most of the “disappeared” were. Relatives never had a chance to show their last respects and to say a formal, dignified good-bye.

What was the response of religious leaders when this basic human right, also a religious right, was violated? People asked why religious leaders kept silent when a whole group of school children “disappeared”?

But these “disappearances” did not only occur in Sri Lanka. Similar scenes were made part of human history by power hungry, insensitive politicians throughout the world. Fortunately we know of some religious persons who spoke up and condemned these disappearances, but all too often religious leaders remained silent or even perhaps added their support for government policies that allowed the disappearances to take place.

Thousands of years before Sri Lankans had to face this horrendous experience of not being able to hold a funeral for loved ones who were considered enemies of the state, a Greek dramatist presented a similar problem to his audiences. The dilemma faced by the main character was that she had to choose between supporting the

decree proclaimed by a new ruler or upholding some more basic natural law.

In the drama, *Antigone*, written by Sophocles more than 2,000 years ago, a dead body lay outside the city walls. Creon, the new king, had issued an edict that no one was to bury the body. Anyone who violated the edict would be stoned to death. Antigone, a young woman was in a dilemma as she stared at the body. The corpse was the body of her brother. Antigone was well aware of the universal practice and custom, rooted in some natural law that she considered higher than the edict issued by the king, which demanded that a dead person be given a proper burial rather than having his body devoured by dogs. She was forced to choose between providing a decent burial for her brother and obeying the laws of her uncle, the new king. She opted to perform the burial rites for her brother. Brought before the king Antigone explained:

... I did not rate
 Your proclamations for a thing so great
 As by their human strength to have overtrod
 The unwritten and undying laws of God:
 Not of today nor yesterday, the same
 Throughout all time they live; and whence they came
 None knoweth. How should I through any fear
 O proud men dare to break them and then bear
 God's judgment? ..."

As she is lead away to death, Antigone's last words are:

What wrongs I suffer - and from men like these -
 Because I am faithful to the laws of Heaven."

Antigone's brother, as with many of the "disappeared" in our world today, were denied a decent burial. I choose to start with this example of people being denied the basic right that all of us have to a proper funeral, because it is something intimately connected with religion. Though I have not done any serious research into anthropological studies on this point, I would venture to state that, except for those societies where religions were persecuted or forced to go underground for periods of time, throughout human history, funerals have always been celebrated using religious ceremonies, prayers and symbols. A funeral is a religious experience, a religious function, a religious right.

Yet some people, such as the political officials in Sri Lanka and the king in the Antigone story made this religious experience a political matter. Individuals are forced to choose between allegiance to a religious duty that is also an obedience of natural law or obeying the dictates of a political ruler.

Again I choose the funeral because it is so clearly religious. However there are many other basic human values which are also well within the scope of natural law and probably also well within the scope of religious concerns, but which are increasingly claimed by politicians as being in their realm.

In the perfect world of the Yin-Yang harmony, there is no clear cut division between religious values and political concerns. The line between the two is curved and there is a little bit of one within the other. There is a constant tension between the two sectors. There should also be a dialogue between them in regard to new questions brought up by social groups and new developments in society, such as those raised by science and scientists.

An unhealthy relationship occurs when one part of the circle allows itself to be dominated by the other, for then an imbalance and a disharmony result. When one part of the circle withdraws from the dialogue and the encounter, the creative tension is removed and there is no healthy development, for only one side dominates: no further progress is made. Progress only results from the healthy, creative dialogue between both sides of the circle, slowly evolving towards a new harmony. Without the tension and dialogue, a healthy harmony cannot be attained.

This approach can be applied to all social tensions: man-woman; humans-natural environment; majority groups-minority groups; etc. The focus here is only on human rights.

Is the extra-judicial killing of people a political issue or a religious issue? Is the torture of individuals a political issue or a religious issue? Is environmental degradation a political issue or a religious issue? A Yin-Yang approach would answer they are both religious and political issues. They are concerns of both natural law and positive law.

In the Yin-Yang approach I advocate, the goal of religions is not to take over a state and establish religious-based laws as has been done in some countries. In this Yin-Yang approach, the goal is not for

religions to hide away in churches and temples and mosques and leave these issues to politicians to decide. In this Yin-Yang approach, there is the need for a creative dialogue between politics and religion. Religions must recast and rekindle their principles and values and enter into dialogue with all sectors of society, including political leaders so as to ensure that they help to create a healthy harmony in society.

This Yin-Yang approach would encourage religions to maintain a healthy harmony in their own institutions by ensuring that there is a constant dialogue between their activist and contemplative traditions and experience. Neither contemplation alone, nor activity in society alone sums up the religious experience. Both are needed. The dialogue and tension between the two develops a healthy harmony.

To illustrate this point, allow me to share a short story about some secondary students I knew in Hong Kong 20 years ago. I had been meeting with these students on a regular basis for what we called action-reflection (or Think-Judge-Act) meetings. The students would discuss some particular problem they had at school (or home or a social problem) and then ask how the values of their faith could help them to decide on an action that could help to resolve the problem. After taking a certain action, these students would, when they next met, reflect on the implications that their new experience had on their faith and their personal values.

One day I received a call from one of the students in this group. He told me that they had seen a short news item about four families who were living on the sidewalk because they had been kicked out of their homes by a landlord. The students had visited the families and found out that a government official would not allow them to enter a temporary government shelter because he was not convinced they did not have homes of their own. (Capitalist Hong Kong had a law that the government must provide some kind of home for anyone who did not have one.) The students did some research and were convinced that these families did not have anywhere to go. They asked me to meet them at the sidewalk site. After I arrived there we talked to the families again and then made a plan to take them to a government temporary shelter. We hired a truck, loaded all their belongings on the truck and helped all four families to get aboard. When we arrived at the shelter, the night watchman refused to let the

people into the camp. While two students argued with the watchman, we found an empty hut, helped the people go in and get settled and then returned to tell the watchman we would be back the next morning to deal with the bureaucrats. The story ended later with the families being given government housing.

That night those students had melted down the precious urns and coins of faith that had been handed down to them and created new vessels and tools that allowed them to serve the needs of those four families. Many other people read the same news item and hundreds of other people walked by them for several days (including students from a nearby Catholic high school), but only that small group of students did something to help those families. Those students recognized the basic human rights these people had and helped those families attain a right to which they were entitled. On that first night in a government hut those four families no longer stared at the stars as they tried to fall asleep, but I'm sure they thought about and thanked those young students who, for whatever reason, came to help them. And I do know from what the students later shared in their reflection group that as a result of that experience, the values of their faith had been impressed more deeply into their minds and etched deeper into their hearts.

The administrators of the world's great religions have to spend so much time and effort taking care of their sociological institutions and preserving the traditions and memories of their faith, that they don't have enough energy and enthusiasm to dialogue with the world.

However, theologians, priests, monks, mullahs and ordinary believers can enter into a Yin-Yang dialogue with the world to see how the beautiful values and time-honored principles and morals of their religious traditions can be polished and recast to meet the needs of today and tomorrow.

Human rights, like the natural law, are not something static and absolute. Human rights are in the process of being articulated, clarified and developed. A better understanding of human rights can evolve from a Yin-Yang type dialogue among many groups - including those who are part of a religious tradition and members of religious institutions. Without the creative input from religious traditions, the Yin-Yang dialogical tension will be that much poorer.

Perhaps a first contribution of religions could be for all religions to enter into a Yin-Yang dialogue with one another on various aspects of human rights. For example could religions attain a common position on the rights of children; the rights of political detainees; the rights of women; the right not to be tortured, the right to food, etc. Could religions delve into their traditions and contribute to a needed dialogue on the Yin-Yang relationship between Rights and Responsibilities?

Religions don't have to give final answers and draw up strict rules by which people should live their lives. However, from a Yin-Yang perspective, religions can play a vital role by encouraging people to enter into dialogue with contemporary society and find ways of persuading people to use the many values of religions to deal with and resolve the problems of society. Specifically, in relation to human rights, religions can help to provide a creative atmosphere to remind, encourage, persuade, and at times demand that basic human values be recognized and respected by all.

From a Yin-yang perspective religions are not given a heavy burden to bear. Rather they are being issued an invitation to enter into a dialogue with all those who want to cooperate in the developmental process to ensure that all persons enjoy their basic human rights. □

