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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF A DUAL RELIGIOUS IDENTITY : CONFUCIAN CHRISTIAN IN JULIA CHING'S SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

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Abstract

This essay explores the spiritual journey of Julia Ching (1934-2001), a prominent sinologist who sought to reconcile her Catholic faith with Confucian philosophy. Raised in a Catholic tradition, Ching faced crises of faith that led her to abandon her nun identity and engage deeply with Eastern spiritual practices. This essay examines the fundamental theological and philosophical differences between Confucianism and Christianity, highlighting the inherent contradictions in attempting to maintain a dual religious identity. While Confucianism emphasizes moral philosophy and social harmony without a central divine figure, Christianity is rooted in the worship of one God and adherence to the teachings of Jesus Christ. This essay argues that the exclusive doctrines of Christianity and the ritual practices of Confucianism are ultimately incompatible, making it impossible to fully integrate these two traditions into a single religious identity. Julia Ching's experience thus illustrates the complexities and challenges of navigating multiple spiritual allegiances.

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Introduction:-

Julia Ching (1934-2001) was a Chinese sinologist who has made important contributions to the field of Chinese religious and philosophical research, and has built a cultural bridge between China and the West at a deeper level of philosophical thought. It is precisely because she has a strong religious background and rich religious experience that she has always focused on religion as the focus of her academic research. "Wang Yangming", "Zhu Xi's Religious Thoughts", "Confucianism and Christianity", "Chinese Religion and Christianity" are some of her works.

On October 15, 1934, Julia Ching was born in Shanghai. At that time, China was in a period of political turmoil, economic prosperity and cultural thriving, but also threatened by war. Julia spent her childhood and adolescence under the shadow of war and political change. As the situation of the Japanese invasion war changed, the family moved to Hong Kong in 1937 and returned to the Japanese-occupied area of Shanghai in 1941. In 1945, when Japan surrendered, they moved back to Hong Kong. Regarding her early life, Julia said:

And so it was, that birth and circumstances conspired to place me between two cultures, between East and West. After I grew up, my early quest took me to Western religion and its definition of meaning in life. But the later questioning of my own cultural identity led me to a further quest of meaning in the Eastern context. [Julia Ching. The Butterfly Healing: A Life between East and West, p.9.]

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The Western religion mentioned here is Catholicism, because Julia had been receiving Catholic education in Shanghai and Hong Kong. When she first moved to Hong Kong, she began to attend the kindergarten in a Catholic school. After returning to Shanghai, Julia successively studied in Fuchun Primary School, Zhongxi Girls' Middle School, and Catholic Aurora girl's School. After moving to Hong Kong again, she entered at the Sacred Heart Canossian College, the first girls' school in Hong Kong, formerly known as the Italian Convent School. Julia was baptized at the age of sixteen. At the age of 17, Julia left Hong Kong to the United States and studied at New Rochelle College in New York City, which was founded by the St. Ursula Congregation, while studying at New Rochelle College, Julia was influenced by her philosophy teacher Sister Hilda and decided to join the congregation, at the age of 20, she interrupted her studies and joined the religious order, taking the religious name Sister Agnes. Later, she resumed her studies and in 1958 obtained a bachelor's degree. In 1960, she obtained a master's degree from the Catholic University of America, Washington. In 1972, Julia left the Order of St. Ursula and officially began her academic career. She served as a professor at several well-known universities, including Columbia University, Yale University and the University of Toronto, and she also obtained a PHD from the Australian National University, her doctoral thesis topic is: To Acquire Wisdom: The Way of Wang Yang-ming, which was a masterpiece of more than 500 pages. In 1973, Julia went to Columbia University in the United States as a visiting associate professor of the East Asian Department, teaching Song and Ming Neo-Confucianism. In 1975, she went to Yale University in the United States to teach as an associate professor of the Department of Philosophy. In 1976, her doctoral dissertation was officially published by Columbia University Press. In 1977, Julia published a book in the field of religious dialogue, Confucianism and Christianity, which was the result of her many years of experience and reflection on Catholic faith and Confucian philosophy. During the five years she taught in the United States, she published more than ten academic papers in various international journals, demonstrating her profound attainments in Chinese philosophy, religious studies, and Sino-Western cultural exchanges, and showing a wide range of national influence. As a result, Julia emerged in the international Sinology community and contemporary neo-Confucianists. In 1978, Julia joined the University of Toronto. In 1981, she married Willard Oxtoby (1933-2003) who was a theologian and comparative religion professor at the University of Toronto. In October 26, 2001 Julia Ching died after a long battle with cancer.

Crisis if Faith and the Emerge of a New Religious Identity

Julia studied in a Catholic school since kindergarten, the three Catholic high schools that Julia attended were all excellent schools with significant social influence, emphasizing the quality of education and the comprehensive development of students. In particular, catholic schools attached importance to bilingual education in Chinese and English. Although the Order of St. Ursula is a religious order, the important purpose of this organization is that women devote themselves to missionary and educational work. Therefore, Julia not only had the opportunity to receive a complete undergraduate and master's education, but she was not confined to the monastery, but had the opportunity to study in Paris and Rome. It is precisely because the main mission of the Ursullines is to establish education and overseas missionary work that Julia was able to devote herself to education and return to China through this opportunity. This opportunity to re-discover Chinese culture also indirectly influenced her later development.

When Julia was baptized at the age of sixteen, she felt the negative attitude of her family. Her decision did not please her parents, which made Julia feel different from many people who were content with being human without adding any religious and denominational distinction.¹ Then, when she entered the Order of St. Ursula, Julia once again faced family pressure. She felt the call of religion and was very eager to continue the religious peace she had received as a student in the Catholic College. But her family had different expectations for her. They wanted her to help her younger siblings' higher education. This conflict between family and faith affected her, making her feel like a traitor to her family and culture. She regretted not witnessing the growth of her brothers and sisters and not meeting her family's expectations. All of this created an unresolved sense of guilt, and she even dreamed later that her younger brother Qin Jiacong said that she abandoned them when they needed her the most. This guilt troubled Julia for a long time. She described that she suffered from insomnia, night sweats, and eczema on her face and body during her first year as a nun.²

¹Julia Ching. *The Butterfly Healing: A Life between East and West*. p.21.

²Julia Ching. *The Butterfly Healing: A Life between East and West*. p.25, 38.

At this point it seems Julia forgot Jesus teachings like : “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” Matthew 10:34. , "Father will be divided against son and son against father; mother against daughter and daughter against mother; mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law." Luke 12:53 (NLT). Jesus is speaking about the divisions his teachings would create among families and within society due to the transformative nature of his message. He is emphasizing that following him may require difficult choices and could lead to conflict, as it challenges existing norms and relationships. Despite this, Jesus ultimately brings a deeper, spiritual peace to those who accept his teachings. She also didn't trust in God's words like : "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. "Matthew 11:28-30 ; "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him." James 1:12 ; “ I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." Philippians 4:13.

During the missionary work in Hualin , Julia had a new crisis of faith . She contracted cancer when she was only thirty-two years old. The first sign of cancer was a cyst on her breast. She discovered the cyst while bathing, but when she reported it to her superior nun, the older nun took no action to ensure timely medical treatment until she noticed that she was pale and green and losing weight rapidly, and then she sent her to Taipei for treatment and had a mastectomy. In 1972, Julia's breast cancer recurred and she had surgery again. The second operation made her begin to question her place in the religious order, she had doubts and uncertainties about her faith, and felt deep inner struggles, confusion, anxiety and uneasiness. She subconsciously felt that it was wrong to leave the convent when she was still young enough to get married. But at the same time, she felt that she did not feel fully comfortable between the convent or the career path.

The Bible acknowledges the reality of faith crises and provides examples of individuals who faced doubts and struggles, it offers encouragement through the stories of those who persevered, emphasizing that God is present and supportive even in times of questioning and difficulty, that He is with believers in their suffering, He understands their pain, He provides strength and peace to help them endure, and that the trials are temporary and part of God's plan to shape them and provide them with hope. For example:

Job experienced intense suffering and questioned God's justice, yet he maintained his faith, eventually finding deeper understanding and restoration (Job 1:20-22; Job 42:1-6), Many Psalms reflect deep emotional struggles and questions about God's presence and justice., Psalm 22 begins with a cry of abandonment but ends with trust in God's deliverance (Psalm 22:1, 22:24), Thomas questioned Jesus' resurrection until he saw and touched Jesus' wounds. Jesus responded gently, affirming the importance of faith (John 20:24-29), Peter's doubt during the stormy sea is met with Jesus' reassurance and encouragement to maintain faith (Matthew 14:28-31), James encourages believers to ask God for wisdom during trials and doubts, assuring them that God gives generously to those who seek.(James 1:5), Hebrews 11 highlights the faith of various biblical figures who persevered through trials, serving as examples of enduring faith, and in Mar k 9:24 a father with a troubled faith asks Jesus to help his unbelief, and Jesus responds to his plea, showing that God can work even with imperfect faith.

Julia abandoned her faith during her moments of crisis and temptations instead of looking for strengthened in the teachings of the Catholicism, in the sacred scriptures and advises of a spiritual leader. At the age of 38, Julia decided to leave the order.³After leaving the order she chose to study Chinese philosophy, she devoted herself to academic work and returned to her family .Her faith mentality was very different from when she converted to God at the age of sixteen. She no longer simply feels the call of God, but reflects on theology and philosophy from the perspective of cultural comparison and religious comparison.

Julia began to question herself whether God exists and reflected on whether she was too selfish in arguing that. She believed that we want to prove the existence of God to ensure that we have some kind of validity and value. Therefore, when her brother Frank questioned her faith, she said : "I struggle to believe in God, to have trust in God as a powerful and caring being,the way I struggle to regain my health." “ I still want to live , to continue to be useful to others.”⁴

³ Julia Ching.The Butterfly Healing: A Life between East and West. p.68.

⁴ Julia Ching. The Butterfly Healing: A Life between East and West. p.110-111.

Julia also tried many spiritual practices from all over the world throughout her life. This was done in order to cure illness and to explore faith. In the process of believing in Christ, Julia immersed herself in Catholic rituals and felt spiritually intoxicated. She not only "studied, evaluated, and critically appreciated many spiritual traditions"⁵, but she was also very sensitive to her own spiritual experiences, recording the details of her psychological activities and consciousness transformation in a religious context.

The following is a description of the various spiritual practices she has tried around the world:

1-Meditation combining Christianity and Buddhism

In 1970, while in Japan, Julia participated in a retreat organized by a Christian Zen Center, where they used Zen Buddhist techniques such as riddles (koans), which can help the mind achieve transcendence and even empty the mind and imagination.

The director was an elderly, gentle-looking German Jesuit priest and naturalized Japanese. During the retreat, they got up around 5 a.m. every day and went to bed at sunset. There were six fifty-minute sitting meditation sessions every day, sitting cross-legged, covered with an apron, sitting quietly on the tatami, facing a blank wall. At the beginning, take a few deep breaths, and the goal is to savor a silent revelation when the mind is liberated to reveal its true nature: Buddha nature (what makes Buddha what he is), or in the words of St. Paul of Christianity, "Christ in me." In between meditations, practitioners walked briskly or performed vigorous cleaning work, which was similar to the work of just entering the nun. They ate meals together, and everyone rinsed his or her own bowl after the meal and drank its content. Practitioners not only need to crawl to the priest's door on their knees, but also need to talk to him in a kneeling posture. This is not just a Catholic monastic custom, but also a discipline of Buddhism, which seems to be more strict. Julia likes the tranquility of meditation, but she was not used to sitting on tatami, which makes her feel tired and uncomfortable.⁶

Meditation

Meditation is a spiritual practice for focusing attention, relaxing the body and mind, and cultivating awareness. It originates from ancient Eastern traditions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism, but is now widely practiced around the world. Meditation calms the mind by deliberately directing attention and focusing on current physical sensations, breathing, emotions, or specific objects. This focus helps reduce distractions, worries, and stress, and cultivates inner peace and awareness.

Julia practices meditation regularly, and meditation helps her free her mind, release healing power, and lower her heart rate and metabolic rate. Julia describes her meditation experience under the guidance of a mystic who teaches meditation courses. She tried to visualize spiritual light in meditation, and during this process, she was able to feel the divinity in the light between her eyes. Then she tried to place herself in a "House of Self". For a long time, she meditated twice a day, which gave her life support, and she wanted to maintain her health in this way. Julia believes that meditation helps her perceive dreams, and she tries to explain her meditation experience with brain waves: her brain waves have high alpha waves, similar to the brain wave characteristics of Native American painters who paint in trance. "My beta brain waves sometimes tend to be agnostic, while my alpha waves are Zen and Taoist. But then, so often my religious imagination remains very Christian."⁷

However, Julia finds it difficult to feel her Christian liberation through meditation: "I want to believe in a loving God. My meditation is oriented in that direction, even if I follow various methods. But I often feel God is punishing me."⁸ She thinks this is because her private agreement with God has been broken.

"Because while in the order I did surrender myself to him. I even made a private pact with God. I told God he could do anything with me, that I was ready to suffer anything, provided he took care of my family. Maybe he took me literally. But I don't believe in making these pacts any more. Now, I want some of that sovereignty over myself back. I want my health

⁵Julia Ching. *The Butterfly Healing: A Life between East and West*. p.217

⁶Julia Ching. *The Butterfly Healing: A Life between East and West*. p.121-123.

⁷Julia Ching. *The Butterfly Healing: A Life between East and West*. p.133, see also 147.

⁸Julia Ching. *The Butterfly Healing: A Life between East and West*. p.133.

back."(Julia Ching. *The Butterfly Healing: A Life between East and West*. p.134.)

Prayer

"I prefer religions that offer deities to whom we can pray. I have not stopped praying for health and wholeness, which is what salvation meant in latin and what is all about. 'Lord, restore my health!' I repeat over and over to the God who has the healing power , who mayalso have many faces, whether it is Jesus, or the Buddha ,or the Kuan-yin Pusa." Julia Ching. *The Butterfly Healing: A Life between East and West*. p.153.

Julia`s prayer is a kind of salvation, praying for health and wholeness. For her, prayer is a way to communicate and seek help from the God who has the power of healing and may have many faces. She believes that the God in her her prayers may be diverse and come from different religious traditions. These are important figures representing mercy and salvation in different religious traditions.

Inner smile

Taoism has always focused on the body and the spirit. It is associated with longevity and even immortality. Julia has adopted a Taoist method recommended by modern instruction manuals called the inner smile. This is a practice related to visualization, which refers to the inner state or behavior of the mind and body, not just the facial expression. It represents a positive, relaxed, joyful and caring attitude, and it is used to enhance the body's energy and self-healing ability by directing the intention of smiling to different parts and organs of the body. This practice is very popular in the West.⁹Julia found that the inner smile can make an important difference . It is closely related to the thymus gland, and can increase its activity and strengthen the immune system. For Taoists, the thymus gland is the seat of love, enlightenment and life energy. The inner smile begins with the eyes and extends to the other senses and to the glands. The inner smile combines moral intruction with the exercises. Through the inner smile, Julia realized that her spirit and body had been in an antagonistic relationship for a long time. She had been fighting with her body, but ignored how to love herself and take care of her body.¹⁰The inner smile prepares people for meditation and altruistic life, cultivates love for oneself and others, and guides people to micro-circulation meditation. It reflects the Taoist understanding of body and spirit. Julia realized that she needed to explore a new relationship between the flesh and the spirit, establish a closer connection with her body, listen to the body's needs, and take positive actions to meet these needs instead of fighting or ignoring them.

Martial Arts

Julia has tried Tai Chi and Aikido.¹¹ Tai Chi is a traditional martial art and mind-body health system originating from China. It combines elements of martial arts, philosophy, medicine and internal cultivation, and is widely practiced and respected. Tai Chi is not only seen as a practical self-defense technique, but is also widely used for physical and mental health, health preservation and mindfulness practice. It is believed to help improve the body's flexibility, balance, coordination and endurance, while also helping to reduce stress, improve concentration and cultivate inner peace and tranquility. The practice of Tai Chi requires careful observation and focused mindfulness, so it is also seen as a form of meditation and mind-body adjustment. Aikido is a modern martial art and self-defense technique originating from Japan. It was founded by Morihei Ueshiba, and the basic concept is to defend oneself by harmoniously utilizing the opponent's strength and movements, rather than through confrontational methods. It emphasizes the transformation of the opponent's force into harmonious techniques by adjusting and redirecting his attack, so that the opponent is controlled or surrendered. In terms of spiritual practice, Aikido focuses on cultivating inner concentration, calmness and awareness. Through the practice of Aikido, learners learn to relax their minds, balance their emotions, and cultivate sensitivity to themselves and others. This inner concentration and awareness helps to improve self-awareness and self-control, enabling people to better cope with challenges and pressures, and enhance inner peace and tranquility. It enhances physical strength and flexibility, improves body coordination and posture through physical training and center control. This comprehensive practice can promote the unity of body and mind and overall health.

⁹MantakChia. *Taoist Ways to Transform Stress into Vitality: The Inner Smile, Six Healing Sounds*, Huntington, New York: Healing Tao Books.1986.

¹⁰Julia Ching. *The Butterfly Healing: A Life between East and West*. p.170.

¹¹Julia Ching. *The Butterfly Healing: A Life between East and West*. p.157-.

In addition, in the face of physical problems, Julia also tried bio-feedback therapy.¹²

Bio-feedback is a treatment method that monitors an individual's physiological indicators and feeds this information back to the individual to help them learn to self-regulate and control their own physiological state. It is based on a basic principle that individuals can change the body's physiological processes through awareness and training. Bio-feedback is often used to treat various diseases and symptoms related to physiological dysfunction, such as anxiety, stress, headaches, high blood pressure, insomnia, etc. It can help individuals strengthen their self-regulation ability and improve their physical health and psychological balance.

The spiritual methods that Julia experienced came from various religious traditions. The Catholic Church encourages activities that promote mental, physical, and spiritual well-being, as long as they are in line with Christian teachings, that don't conflict with Church doctrine and don't replace traditional Catholic spiritual practices.

The Church supports various forms of Christian meditation, such as lectio divina, which involves reading a passage from the Bible, meditating on it, praying about it, and then contemplating it. The goal is to encounter Christ through the text and to grow in one's relationship with God. In the convent, Julia was immersed in prayer and meditation like the lectio divina, but after leaving the order the meditation practiced by Julia involved elements that contradict the Christian beliefs, and also the prayer for Julia became diverse and from different religious traditions. She started to believe that there are important figures representing mercy and salvation in different religious traditions, She prays whether it is to Jesus, or the Buddha, or the Kuan-yin Pusa. The Catholicism explicitly forbids the worship of other gods, emphasizing that God alone is worthy of worship which is highlighted in the First Commandment: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7). Worshiping false gods or idols is condemned as a serious offense.

Dual religious citizenship - Confucian Christian

The practice of different spiritual methods represents Julia's transformation from monistic Catholic to hold a dual religious identity as a Confucian Christian

Confucian Christians refer to people who believe in Confucianism and Christianity at the same time. This identity means that the individual has integrated Confucian and Christian elements in faith and thought, and tried to integrate these two traditions.

In Asia today, many people have become Christians but have not stopped being Buddhists or Confucian believers. They do not think that religions are mutually exclusive. For example, many Japanese people frequently visit Buddhist and Shinto shrines throughout the year, pray there with others, and attend mass every Sunday, especially at Christmas and Easter. Some Korean Christians are still followers of Confucianism because in Korea, Confucianism is more powerful than Buddhism.

Julia integrated elements of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism into her faith and spiritual practice.

I myself am a Christian who remains attached to my Confucian ethics and Buddhist ideals of compassion. In fact, in my own sickness and recovery the meditation techniques I learned from Taoism and Buddhism continue to help me. Existentially, I continue to live and pray as a believer in God, whom I presume to be good. But even my manner of praying has become an East and Western counter. At the beginning of each session I am always very conscious my attention to a higher presence, forgetting myself and my ordinary anxieties of the fear and anxiety that accompanies my consciousness. But when I turn my attention to the higher existence, I derive a greater sense of inner peace. (Julia Ching. *The Butterfly Healing: A Life between East and West*. p.153.)

Where can I find the strength to keep fighting? Why is this happening to me? Who am I? Am I Chinese or American? Am I Catholic? Was I a nun?

¹²Julia Ching. *The Butterfly Healing: A Life between East and West*. p. 144.

Am I Confucian, Buddhist, or even Taoist? What do I believe in? Who do I believe in? I still consider myself a Christian, even a Catholic, but that I'm spiritually also a Taoist and a Buddhist, and even a Confucian. I am from the Orient, and sickness and the expectation of healing have spurred me to return home, culturally. (Julia Ching. *The Butterfly Healing: A Life between East and West*. p.211-212.)

Julia affirms her Christian identity, indicating that this identity occupies the most central position in her religious life, while Confucian ethics, Buddhist compassion, and Taoist meditation techniques all complement her religious life.

Confucianism and Catholicism

Confucius is considered to be the founder of the Confucian school. He lived in the Spring and Autumn Period of China (551 BC-479 BC) and developed a series of philosophical thoughts and ethical principles, which became the core of Confucianism. His thoughts emphasized the importance of benevolence, morality, education, and politics, shaped the core values of Confucianism, and his practice of etiquette also laid the foundation for the religious nature of Confucianism. The core values of Confucianism are:

Ren (仁): Benevolence or humaneness, which is the essence of a moral person.

Li (礼) : Ritual propriety or etiquette, which guides social behavior. It is a system of ritual and customs that help maintain order and harmony on society.

Xiao (孝) : Filial Piety, involves showing respect and care for one's parents and ancestors. This practice can be seen as a form of spiritual devotion, expressing gratitude and respect through actions and rituals.

Zhong (忠) : Loyalty, being faithful to one's friends, leaders and country.

Shu (恕) : Reciprocity, the principle of not imposing on others what you would not want for yourself.

Benevolence is a central virtue and is considered the highest moral quality, it embodies the idea of humaneness, empathy, kindness, and compassion in one's interaction with others. Its ultimate goal is to become the ideal person or junzi (君子 gentleman or superior person). Such person acts with integrity and moral uprightness, showing kindness and consideration in both public and private life. Cultivating Benevolence involves self-discipline, reflection and adherence to ethical principles. It is developed through practicing virtues like righteousness (Yi 义), propriety, wisdom (Zhi 智) and by fulfilling one's social roles and responsibilities with compassion.

Confucianism also emphasizes the importance of five key relationships in society: ruler and subject, father and son, elder brother and young brother, husband and wife, friend and friend. Among these five ethics, three are family relationships, and the other two are constructed on the family model.

According to sacred tradition, the Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Christ. The New Testament records Jesus' activities and teachings, His appointment of the twelve Apostles, and His instructions to them to continue His work. The Catholic Church teaches that the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, in an event known as Pentecost, signaled the beginning of the public ministry of the Church. It is based on the teachings of the Bible and the tradition of the Catholic Church. The Sacred scripture, is considered the inspired word of God and is a source of moral and spiritual guidance. It has 73 books which are divided in the old and new testaments. The core values of the Catholicism are:

The **theological virtues** which are gifts from God that enable believers to live a life of grace and to grow in their relationship with God.

Faith :

The importance of faith in the Holy Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, Jesus Christ and God the Holy Spirit), the teachings of Jesus Christ and salvation through faith in him. Belief in one God and trust in His promises is fundamental (Hebrews 11:6)

Love (Agape):

Emphasis on love for God and neighbor, which encompasses compassion, charity, and acts of kindness. It is the greatest of all virtues. It is unconditional love that seeks the good of others even at personal sacrifice.

Hope :

Is a confident expectation and trust in God's promises of eternal happiness and salvation and the grace of the Holy Spirit, sustained by faith and love, and expressed through prayers and good works. It helps people persevere through obstacles and trials in living out their Christian faith.

The **Cardinal Virtues** which are considered natural virtues because they can be understood and practiced by all people, regardless of their religious beliefs. They are: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance. These virtues are essential for leading a virtuous life and are cultivated through practice, reflection, prayer and the guidance of the church's teachings. They help Catholics to live in accordance with the moral law and to develop a strong moral character.

Sacraments:

Seven sacraments are vital to the spiritual life of the Catholic. They are: Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. Each sacrament is a means through which Catholics encounter and participate in the mysteries of faith, receiving God's grace to live a life in accordance with Christ's teachings.

The 10 Commandments:

1. I am the LORD your God; you shall not have strange gods before me. 2. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain. 3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day. 4. Honor your father and mother. 5. You shall not kill. 6. You shall not commit adultery. 7. You shall not steal. 8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. 10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

The 2 Great Commandments:

1. You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind". 2. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." These commandments guide ethical behavior and personal conduct.

Spiritual and corporal works of mercy:

The spiritual works involve instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, admonish the sinner, comfort the sorrow, forgive injuries, bear wrongs patiently, pray for the living and the dead. The corporal works involve feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, visit the imprisoned and bury the dead. In summary these works are commitment to social justice, serving others, and addressing the needs of the poor and marginalized.

The Beatitudes:

A set of teachings by Jesus Christ that are found in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 5:3-12) and are part of the Sermon on the Mount. They outline the attitudes and virtues that characterize the kingdom of heaven and are central to Catholic teachings on how to live a Christian life. They are: 1. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; 2. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted; 3. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth; 4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled; 5. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy; 6. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God; 7. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God; 8. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. These Beatitudes are seen as a guide to living a life that reflects the values of God's kingdom, it is not only promises of God but also a call to a life of virtue, selflessness, and devotion to God's Kingdom. They are seen as a blueprint for Christians living and are often meditated upon for spiritual growth and guidance.

God

In Confucianism, the concept of "God" is not central or defined. Confucianism is more focused on ethical principles, social harmony and proper conduct rather than a specific deity or theology. However, there are aspects of Confucianism that touch upon the divine or spiritual realm:

Tian (天):

The term "Tian" is often translated as "Heaven" and is considered a significant concept in Confucianism. It represents a moral force or cosmic order that influences human affairs and is the source of moral and ethical laws. It is seen as a guiding principle for ethical behavior and governance.

Shangdi (上帝):

This term, which can be translated as "Supreme Ruler" or "God," is used in ancient Chinese texts and is sometimes associated with the ruler's mandate to govern, given by Heaven.

Moral Order:

Confucianism posits that there is a moral order to the universe, which is reflected in the proper conduct of individuals and society. This order is often seen as divine or heavenly in nature. The emphasis is on living according to the moral order and harmony that Heaven represents, rather than worshipping deities. The focus is on human relationships, societal roles, and personal virtue.

Sage:

In Confucian thought, the ideal person is the "sage," It is an individual who has achieved a high level of moral and intellectual development and leads by example. The sage aligns with the moral order of Heaven and serves as a model for others. The most revered sage in Confucianism is Confucius himself, other figures in Confucian history have also been recognized as sages, such as Mencius and Xunzi. But the concept of sage is not limited to these historical figures, it is an ideal that individuals can strive for, embodying wisdom, virtue, and the importance of benevolent leadership.

Spiritual Development:

Personal spiritual development is seen as a lifelong process of self-cultivation and moral refinement, rather than a relationship with a specific divine being

Ancestor Worship:

Confucianism includes practices of ancestor veneration, which is a way of showing respect and continuity with one's lineage. While not directly related to a specific deity, it reflects a spiritual connection to one's ancestors.

Rituals and Ceremonies:

Confucian rituals and ceremonies, such as those performed for ancestors or at the imperial court, are expressions of respect and order but do not necessarily involve the worship of a personal God.

Religious Syncretism:

In practice, Confucianism has often coexisted with other religious beliefs, such as Taoism and Buddhism in China, and has absorbed elements from these traditions, including the veneration of various deities.

In summary, while Confucianism does not have a clear concept of a personal God, it does recognize a divine or spiritual aspect of existence, particularly in the form of Heaven and the moral order it represents. The focus, however, remains on human ethics and social responsibilities.

In Catholicism, God is Omniscience and Omnipotence which means that God is all-knowing, with access to all knowledge and understanding, and all-powerful, capable of doing anything that is not contrary to His nature. He is transcendent and immanent, meaning He is beyond the universe and its limitations, and immanent, meaning He is present in all things. The Catholic Church teaches that God created the universe out of love and that all creation is inherently good.

“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men

would seek him and perhaps reach out to him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being." Acts 17: 24-28

The Catholic Church holds a trinitarian view of God, which means that God is one in essence but exist as three distinct persons: The Father, the Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit. This concept is know as the Holy Trinity.

The Eucharist is the Real Presence of Christ. According to the Catholic Church, the Eucharist is not just a symbol of Jesus, but Jesus himself, and contains the whole spiritual good of the Church. Catholics believe that during Mass, the bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus through a process called "transubstantiation". This change occurs at the level of substance, or deepest reality, while the physical attributes of the bread and wine remain the same.

In Catholicism, God is to be worshiped and glorified by all creation, and the ultimate purpose of human life is to know, love, and serve God in this life and be happy with Him after death. It is explicitly forbids the worship of other gods, emphasizing that God alone is worthy of worship, and worshiping false gods or idols is condemned as a serious offense. Idols are considered mere creations of human hands and not worthy of worship. (Isaiah 44:9-20; Acts 17:29). The catholicism acknowledges the existence of other gods worshiped by various peoples but denies their divinity. These gods are often depicted as false or powerless compared to the true God (Psalm 96:5; 1 Corinthians 8:4).

Evil

In Confucianism, the concept of "evil" is not personified or a supernatural force. It is seen as a result of moral failings, such as the lack of benevolence (仁), righteousness (义), or propriety (礼). It is the antithesis of the virtues that Confucius and his followers advocated. Confucian thought emphasizes the importance of maintaining balance and harmony. Evil can be viewed as an imbalance or an extreme that disrupts the social order and the individual's moral development. The failure to cultivate oneself according to Confucian principles can lead to unethical behavior. Self-cultivation involves the development of moral character and the ability to discern and act according to what is right and good. Rituals in Confucianism serve to reinforce social bonds and express respect for others. Disregarding the importance of ritual can be seen as a form of evil, actions that disrupt the harmony of society, such as dishonesty or disrespect for one's superiors or elders, specially parents and rulers it is also considered as a form of evil.

While Confucianism places a strong emphasis on personal and collective moral responsibility, it also acknowledges that external factors can influence individuals toward evil. However, the focus remains on the individual's capacity to choose virtue over vice.

In summary, evil in Confucianism is primarily understood as the result of moral shortcomings and the failure to live up to the ethical standards set forth by Confucian teachings. The way to eliminate evil is the theory of self-cultivation, which is to cultivate the mind and cure evil, and it is through education, reflection, adherence to rituals, respect for social hierarchy, the pursue of a just and harmony society and practice that one can avoid evil and become a virtuous person.

The Catholic Church teaches that God created everything good, and Evil entered the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. This act of rebellion introduced sin and moral evil into the human experience (Genesis 3). Moral evil arises from human choices, actions and behaviors that contradict God's will, and result in harm or injustice such like lying, murder, and theft, while natural evil refers to suffering and disasters that are not directly caused by human actions but often seen as part of a fallen world.

The Bible teaches that humans have free will to choose between good and evil. The presence of evil in the world is partly attributed to human choices and the misuse of free will (Deuteronomy 30:19; Joshua 24:15) and also teaches that good can overcome evil, and Christians are called to respond to evil with love and kindness (Romans 12:21; Matthew 5:44).

Satan, also known as the Devil, is considered the embodiment of evil and the chief tempter of human souls. He is a fallen angel who rebelled against God and was cast out of heaven.

Demons are fallen angels who, like Satan, chose to rebel against God. They are considered malevolent spirits that seek to lead humans away from God and into sin. They are often associated with temptation, deceit, and possession. The Church teaches that these demons are real but their power is limited by God's sovereignty and that believers can resist their evil and temptation through faith, prayer, sacramental grace, and reliance on God's strength (James 4:7; Ephesians 6:11-13).

The Catholic Church has a formal ritual known as exorcism, which is performed by an authorized priest to expel demons or evil spirits from a person or place that is believed to be possessed. The Church also provides various means of protection against evil, including prayer, the sacraments, and the use of sacramentals such as holy water, blessed objects, and the sign of the cross.

Through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, God provides a means for overcoming evil and sin. Believers are offered forgiveness and new life, which includes victory over the power of evil (John 3:16; Colossians 2:13-15).

The catholicism asserts that God will ultimately judge evil and restore justice. This judgment is portrayed as a future event where God will defeat evil and establish righteousness (Revelation 20:11-15; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8).

In summary, the thatholicism provides a comprehensive view of evil, addressing its origins, nature, and the role of human choice. It also assures believers of God's ultimate justice and the redemptive power available through Jesus Christ.

Sin

In confucionism the concept of sin is not exactly like in many western religions, instead of being a transgression against a divine being, is more about transgressing moral and social norms, the focus is on individual's journey towards moral self-improvement and the cultivation of virtues that contribute to a harmonious society. The concept of sin is more about the process of recognizing, through self reflection, learning and correcting one's moral shortcoming, so that this individual can overcome their moral failings.

In Catholicism sin is any thought, word, or action that goes against the will of God. and His commandments, resulting in a rupture in the relationship between the individual and God. It encompasses both acts of wrongdoing and the condition of being in rebellion against God.

The catholicism distinguishes sins between original sin, the seven capital sins: mortal sin and venial sins.

Original Sin:

Originating from the story of Adam and Eve in Book of Genesis 3. their disobedience to God's command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is considered the first sin, which brought sin and death into the world. This concept highlights the inherited nature of sin that affects all humanity.

Seven Capital Sins:

Are considered vices or sins that are believed to be the root of all other sins. They are: Pride, Avarice, Wrath, Lust, Envy, Gluttony and Sloth

Mortal Sin:

Is a serious offense that destroys charity (love of God) in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law, turning the individual away from God and it can lead to spiritual death if not repented for. For a sin to be mortal, three conditions must be met: the act must be of grave matter, the person must have full knowledge that the act is wrong, and the person must give full consent to the act. Mortal sin results in the loss of sanctifying grace and requires sacramental confession and repentance for reconciliation with God.

Venial Sin:

While still serious, does not completely destroy charity but weakens, involve less serious matters or occur without full knowledge or deliberate consent but it can lead to mortal sin if not addressed. They still offend God and can weaken the soul's relationship with Him, but they are reparable through prayer, acts of charity, sincere repentance and confession, and God's grace.

Sin separates individuals from God and leads to spiritual and moral consequences. It wounds the individual's soul, disrupts relationships, and can lead to a cycle of sin that reinforces itself. In the Old Testament, sin often results in divine judgment and punishment. In the New Testament, Jesus is presented as the ultimate sacrifice for sin, offering redemption and forgiveness through his sacrifice. His death on the cross and resurrection provide a way for humanity to be redeemed from the sin and reconciled to God (John 3:16, 1 John 1:9, Romans 5:8).

The Catholic Church teaches that God's mercy is boundless, and there is always hope for forgiveness. Recognizing sin and seeking forgiveness is part of the process. This involves a sincere desire to turn away from sin and return to a right relationship with God.

"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ... If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:8-10

The Sacrament of Baptism is the first step in the forgiveness of sins, offering the forgiveness of all sins and the gift of new life in Christ, free from the stain of original sin. Through the sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession), sins are confessed to a priest, who, acting in the person of Christ, grants absolution, reconciliation with God and God's grace, which plays a vital role in overcoming sin and growing in holiness. It is the unmerited favor of God that helps individuals resist sin and live a life in accordance with God's will.

The Bible says that at the end of time, there will be a final judgement where individuals will be held accountable for their sins and rewarded or punished accordingly (Revelation 20:11-15). However, it also emphasizes the grace and mercy of God available to those who repent and believe in Jesus Christ.

Prayer

In Confucianism, the concept of "prayer" as it is commonly understood in theistic religions—direct communication with a deity—is not a central practice. Confucianism focuses on moral integrity, social harmony, and ritual propriety. Confucianism places significant importance on rituals (Li-禮) and ceremonies, which include offerings and respect for ancestors. While not exactly prayer, the practice of venerating ancestors involves offering respect and gratitude towards deceased ancestors. This can include rituals at family shrines or gravesites, which share similarities with the act of praying to or for someone. Confucianism also involves participation in communal rituals that are meant to reinforce social bonds and express respect for the social order. These rituals can have a spiritual dimension, even though they do not involve prayer to a God. Personal cultivation in Confucianism involves self-reflection and meditation on moral principles. This introspection can be compared to the contemplative aspect of prayer, where one seeks to improve oneself and align with ethical standards. Confucian thought also includes a sense of reverence for the natural world and the cosmos, which can be seen as a form of spiritual practice. This respect is often expressed through rituals and a harmonious way of living. During the Song Dynasty, Confucianism evolved to include more metaphysical elements, with some philosophers considering the cultivation of the mind and the understanding of the "Heavenly Principle" (Tian Li) as a form of spiritual pursuit.

In summary, while Confucianism does not have a tradition of prayer to a deity, it does encompass a variety of spiritual practices that emphasize moral development, social responsibility, and ritual propriety. These practices are intended to cultivate an individual's character and contribute to a harmonious society.

In Catholicism, prayer is a fundamental practice of faith, is a means of communicating with God, expressing praise, thanksgiving, confession, and requests (Philippians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). It deepens the relationship with God, allowing for intimacy and trust (Matthew 6:9-13; James 4:8). There are various forms and types of prayer :

Personal Prayer:

Individuals pray privately, speaking to God in their own words, silent contemplation, or the use of prayer books and other resources.

Liturgical Prayer:

Includes the communal prayers and rites of the Mass, such as the Eucharistic Prayer and the Liturgy of the Hours. It is structured and often includes responses from the congregation.

Devotional Prayer:

Includes prayers like the Rosary, which involves repeating specific prayers and meditating on the mysteries of Christ's life.

Structured Prayers:

Such as the Our Father (the Lord's Prayer which is a central prayer taught by Jesus himself, found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. it includes praise, petitions, and a request for forgiveness. (Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11:2-4). It is recited by Catholics around the world.), Hail Mary which is a prayer that honors the Virgin Mary, beginning with the angel's words to her at the Annunciation and followed by a petition, Glory Be also know as doxology which expresses praise to the Holy Trinity, and the act of Contrition which is a prayer of repentance, often said during the Sacrament of Reconciliation..

Prayer in the Spirit:

The New Testament also speaks of praying in the Holy Spirit, which may involve speaking in tongues or being guided by the Spirit in prayer. (Romans 8:26-27, 1 Corinthians 14)

Meditative prayers:

These include reading the Bible, sitting in silence, and Lectio Divina. Catholics can also meditate on the Gospels, holy icons, liturgical texts, spiritual writings, or creation.

Contemplative prayers :

These include entering silence and sitting in solitude. Catholics can also use mental prayer, which involves dialogue with God, meditating on his words, and contemplating him

Types of Prayer:

Adoration:

Praising and worshipping God for His greatness and attributes.

Confession:

Acknowledging sins and seeking forgiveness .

Thanksgiving:

Expressing gratitude for God's blessings and actions.

Petitions and Supplications:

Prayers can be requests for help or guidance, known as petitions, and pleas for mercy or favor, known as supplications.

Intercession:

When praying on behalf of the Church, the world, and individuals, asking God to bless or help them.

In summary, prayer in Catholicism is diverse and integral to both personal spirituality and communal worship serving as a vital means of deepening their relationship with God . It is an act of the moral virtue of religion, and it is a central theme in both the Old and New Testaments, emphasizing its importance in the life of a believer as a means of building a relationship with God, seeking guidance, resist temptationand expressing one's spiritual needs. Through prayer, Catholics seek to grow in holiness, understanding, and alignment with God's will. Prayers can be an adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication and intercession for others,expressing concern and love for the needs of the others.

Self Transcendence

In Confucianism, self-transcendence is primarily understood through the cultivation of virtue, moral development, and the pursuit of a harmonious life in relation to others and society. It is about transcending personal desires and ego through the cultivation, development and practice of the virtues of benevolence ,righteousness, propriety and wisdom fulfilling social roles with integrity, and contributing to social and cosmic harmony.

The idea of self-transcendence also relates to the Confucian belief in the unity of Heaven's mandate and human nature. It suggests that there is a deeper spiritual dimension to the ethical life, where one can connect with the ultimate reality through moral cultivation and self-perfection.

In Catholicism, self-transcendence is the process of rising above one's ego, personal desires, and limitations in order to unite more fully with God and align oneself with His will. It is modeled on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, believers are called to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Christ (Matthew 16:24). This involves surrendering one's will to God, embracing a lifelong journey of prayer, service, fasting, humility, acts of charity, forgiveness, compassion, sacrificial love, suffering when necessary, overcoming sin and personal vices, participation in the sacraments (especially the Eucharist and Confession), and cultivating a life of grace.

It is a process of becoming more holy, growing in virtue, and conforming to the image of Christ, seeking a deeper relationship with God.

Salvation

Confucianism lacks a concept that directly correspond to the Christian idea of Salvation by a divine Savior, salvation from sin and a detailed doctrine of an afterlife. Confucianism teaches that individuals achieve a form of fulfillment or "salvation" by realizing their highest potential through the cultivation of virtue and the proper execution of their social duties. This self-realization and alignment with moral principles lead to a well-lived life. It focuses more on the present life and how individuals can improve their moral character and contribute to the well-being of their communities.

In Catholicism, salvation is a gift from God, received through faith in Jesus Christ, whose death and resurrection provide the means for forgiveness and eternal life. Jesus is described as the way to salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12), His sacrificial death atones for sin, and His resurrection provides victory over death (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Jesus Christ has paid the price for human sins, and salvation comes through him alone. It is accessible through repentance, faith, the sacraments, which are seen as a free gift of God's grace.

The sacrament of baptism marks the beginning of the salvation process, often referred to as "initial justification." Through baptism, individuals spiritually rise from the dead and become children of God. After baptism, believers grow in their divine sonship through a process known as sanctification or ongoing justification. The other sacraments are also seen as indispensable in the journey of salvation. They are the visible signs of God's grace, serving as channels through which believers encounter and receive the saving work of Christ.

Salvation includes the promise of eternal life with God. Believers are assured of a future resurrection and eternal existence in the presence of God (John 10:28; Revelation 21:1-4),

After death, each person is judged by God. Those who die in a state of grace may go to Heaven, perhaps after a temporary stay in Purgatory, while those who die in unrepentant mortal sin go to Hell.

The Catholic Church also acknowledges that those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, but sincerely seek God and strive to do His will as known to them, may also attain to everlasting salvation.

Conclusion:-

While Julia Ching's life exemplifies a profound engagement with both Confucianism and Christianity, her journey ultimately underscores the inherent contradictions in attempting to fully embrace both traditions. Christianity, particularly Catholicism, is a monotheistic faith that demands exclusive devotion to one God, with doctrines that include salvation through Christ alone, the worship of God as the Holy Trinity, and a clear rejection of any form of idolatry or dual allegiance. Confucianism, on the other hand, is more a system of ethics and social philosophy, with practices like ancestor worship and a focus on moral cultivation that diverge significantly from Christian doctrine.

The core tenets of Christianity are incompatible with the pluralistic approach that allows for simultaneous adherence to another religious or philosophical system. The Christian faith's emphasis on the singularity of truth in Christ conflicts with the Confucian focus on social harmony and the integration of multiple spiritual practices. Thus, despite Julia Ching's efforts to harmonize these two systems of belief, her life demonstrates the difficulty—if not the

impossibility—of sustaining a true dual religious identity as both a Confucian and a Christian. The distinct and often conflicting demands of each tradition make it difficult to fully and authentically practice both without compromising the essential principles of one or the other.

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