

Centennial Vignettes in Homage to My Father¹

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Introduction

These vignettes, personal and intimate, anecdotal and idiosyncratic, and unequal in length I present in loving memory of a parent whose centennial we celebrate this year and whose presence in my life looms larger with the years. Regretfully, because of its already excessive length, I've not included vignettes directly related to my mother who will also be one-hundred years old in this last year of the millennium on October 19th. For her, I've planned something else. The stories and sketches hopefully are as enjoyable for you to read as they were for me to write.

In these vignettes I shall be calling my father, *dia-dia*, what we called him in and out of the home. *Dia-dia* is the Romanized pronunciation in the Shanghai-Ningpo dialect for *daddy*. In the more common Mandarin, it would be *dieh-dieh*. The Ningpo dialect is one we spoke at home with varying degrees of success and failure. I, being the youngest of thirteen and the most American, spoke it totteringly, with no structural backbone at all. Whenever I opened my mouth to attempt something intelligent in our beloved dialect, I was often the object of derision—which continues to this very day.

Our beloved *dia-dia* was a high-wire performer, with one foot on earth and the other in heaven. I do not doubt for a second it was his ambiguities and contradictions and his circus-like ability to hold on to both and to thrive from such polarities that made him the person he was. Scholar and man of vision, he was, in addition, all flesh and blood and solid earth to those privileged to have breathed the same air as he did.

In his nearly nine rich decades, he showed us the full spectrum of his humanity. Joy, enthusiasm and the simplicity of the child filled and marked his eighty-seven years. Yet, like all great men and women, he was also quite capable of profound sorrow and loneliness and, on occasion, some frightful anger. Through him, I became aware not only of the possibility but the *inner de-*

mand of fulfilling my own humanity. I came to know too the *necessity* of living in such a way that the powers within and without may be brought together to help unfold this promised fullness that comes naturally not so much in time but together with living the *life of faith*.

Our *dia-dia* left us numerous legacies, a clear indication of the depth and breadth of his existence. Yet, the one he himself might most want us to remember was perhaps his own careful attentiveness to *personal gifts* and the weighty responsibility that follows once we acknowledge their conviviality. For he believed that in our recognizing them, in living gratefully with such gifts, we come upon *meaning* and in face with divinity from whose hands such personal endowments are directly and freely granted.

These vignettes are a celebration of a man dearly loved and cherished and whose influence will gain greater strength in time. If our *dia-dia*'s books and writings are not in fashion today, this fact may speak more about ourselves and the times and our rather conventional and narrow preoccupations than it does the man himself. The century we have been a part of, decades of endlessly tragic and destructive experiments with social engineering and unprecedented technological innovations that have perhaps altered our lives forever, has been an era—despite the enormous fuss made of it—arguably neither of great intellectual nor spiritual depth and ferment.

Yet, our dear *dia-dia*—remembering that his life overlapped ours too and therefore, confined by similar limitations—was able to absorb and make use of the best of what he experienced and with which he came into contact. He savored and put into practice the cream of his own traditions and those of the West as well. And if he had any personal motives, perhaps it lay in his earnest efforts to salvage and to bring light to these dark times what we have carelessly and unconsciously discarded out of hand. His uncommon foresight was that he saw angelic and godlike elements in us even while we choose to grovel as earthbound creatures unaware of the presence of wings that take us skyward and beyond ourselves. Seeing the merely earthly and to fail to see the earth in all its plenitude is a warning he might give us were he with us now.

May we not also say he remains inaccessible and an enigma because collectively we ourselves have done much to obscure in us our own innate treasures of the mind and heart? For both the

disfiguring and mislaying of such treasures make it difficult to enter into the sort of intellectual and spiritual dialogue that an understanding of his life and ideas would demand. While his deep and broad scholarship will probably always remain a daunting task to anyone attempting to plumb the depths of the man and scholar, there is in addition an underlying difficult-to-get-at quality that the scholar, no matter how intellectually gifted, might still find impenetrable. That particular quality was the gift of *simplicity*, what Mencius, the immortal Confucian, called a *child-like heart* and Thérèse of Lisieux, the Carmelite saint, *the little way*. It guided his life and was reflected in nearly everything he wrote, including politics and the Law. That is the *hiddenness* without which there could be nothing but chaos and confusion. It is also something that a Harold Bloom, and many others like him for all their brilliance and quintessential knowledge, probably could never bring themselves to entertain, not to mention, fathom.

Simplicity—a virtue and state of being particularly rare among scholars and intellectuals—is that which finally defined him. My contention is that though a first-rate biographer and scholar might gain access into a good part of his life and makeup, the writer might still fail to see the *whole* person because of an inability to see the simplicity in the man. On the other hand, if you love simplicity and are childlike yet lack the wisdom of seeing the need for persistent intellectual nurturing which marked my father's life, you too might miss the man. For, being a great lover of Confucius and of Shakespeare and Dante and therefore of knowledge and learning in general, *dia-dia* was convinced it was only through the continuous flow of rich ideas that the spirit could do its best and most natural work in us. Three themes occupied his life: *nature, nurture and grace*.

To *dia-dia*'s credit, he had the intuition and deep animal sense to understand that these three basic elements had to fuse and work together in perfect balance and unity for knowledge to become whole and to complete the strict demands of rationality. In short, he believed that each component fueled and needed the others for its fulfillment. If he found the times disjointed, he saw the confusion the result of a narrowing, and even loss, of interest in our pursuing not so much the self—for which many of us have an obsession—but the *source* of the self. And this loss had deep connections with the obscuring of faith in the human person's interior self so that, in losing our way, we become strangers in our

own interior castles. Hence, whatever disjointedness we may find in the world is reflected in each individual's failure, first, to *see* and then coupled with the inability to acknowledge the fundamental mystery of one's own being and that which supports our being.

These simple vignettes, I believe, reflect my *dai-dia*'s particular way of *seeing*, a way of perception that was conditioned, as I suggest above, by a natural, innate simplicity. Further, they reflect the vision of a mystic who saw, tasted and loved all the myriad diversities that make up life but who could not, at the same time, help seeing things in their *primordial undifferentiated Oneness*.

Vignette #1: Educating a Son

Funny, isn't it, how certain notions are etched into one's life. First, they vaguely stand out as indistinct relief, then become veritable litanies, possibly leading later to profound prayers surfacing from deep within the heart. They come randomly into our lives, much like seeds do, a good number dying even at the moment they fall. Yet some, without much fuss, do take root, then the few that become seedling assume some significant space without our being aware they are there, quietly taking up residence in us.

Or, we could see these notions in musical terms that appear first as simple, hardly audible notes. With time, they assume a distinct and penetrating voice singing bars of music with a resonance quite beyond what one thinks the self is capable of containing and supporting. One might even suspect that the sound originates from a geography rather unearthly, overstepping the narrow scope of the self, surely beyond an ego that craves to be merely physically and emotionally nurtured and sated. The music abides in us quietly, encouraged by other voices within vying for the right to be present and heard as any other. And their struggle for permanence makes up the dramatic nature of each individual life.

Soon enough, melodies appear, at first, simple, then more complexly melodic, and, finally, polyphonic harmonies suffuse the whole self, the result of many voices brought together by some hidden energy, an *inexplicable* Center that somehow holds. As we live with them, they take on a shape and meaning quite of its own making. In fact, if we have graciously consented for them to reside in us, willed them to take root in our inmost hearts, they change and enrich us in surprising ways. And it seems the more con-

cealed they are and the less fuss we make of them, the more they bear the mark of *timelessness* and the deeper they penetrate us.

These are the different ways that I see *dia-dia*'s life and thought having touched our lives. In some unaccountable way, they have taken on the delicious fragrance of gardens and the recurring melodies of songs that continually remind us of some Home beyond home.

July, 1964. *Dia-dia* and I have just finished a simple lunch of chicken teriyaki at a tiny Japanese-Hawaiian cafeteria near the campus of the University of Hawaii in Honolulu. The unpretentious eatery is a little more than a hole-in-the-wall. Once out on the street in the stifling mid-day heat, we walk, struggling on a mild but continuous incline toward a newly built, twin-towered dormitory where many philosophers, including *dia-dia*, will consider home for the six-week summer international conference. In those weeks we would listen to and be in the privileged, no, truly still, *sacred* and enchanting, presence of such notables as D.T. Suzuki, T'ang Chun-I, Fang Thome and T.R.V. Murti from the East, and John Smith, Richard McKeon and William Ernest Hocking from the West. Being twenty-two, they were halcyon days for me, days of continuous intellectual and spiritual feasting, surely a crossroad in my young life, the closest I've ever come to being in the company of Olympian gods, of philosophers who were not yet afraid of philosophizing and who could not envision their enterprise separated from life.

My eyes are fixed in the direction we are heading. Irritated by the heat and the nondescript edifices before me, I complain on how empty-looking the whitewashed structures appear against the clear blue sky. *Dia-dia*, huffing and puffing and ordinarily not a complainer, answers with an audible sigh and a funny, favorite phrase, "Yes, don't I know it." At sixty-five and no longer young, he catches his breath, wipes sweat rolling down one of his cheeks onto his brightly-colored Hawaiian shirt, and says,

Whited sepulchers. Yes, that's what those empty-looking buildings remind me of—whited sepulchers—you know, *white-washed tombs*. Remember what Jesus in Matthew's Gospel calls the Pharisees and the hypocrites? You know, like the tombs, the Pharisees and the hypocrites are clean and unmarked on the outside, dressed in flowing robes, but on the inside they

carry nothing but decaying bones. You see, they were people wearing gorgeous garments to embellish their external selves so that they need never expose their empty selves. You see Christ could be very direct and frank in his use of language when he had a mind to be, when he wanted to make a point, to teach a lesson through a simple parable. He would have made a poor diplomat. Wouldn't have liked it at all. He said what came to his mind and didn't care what others thought of his words. He could be tactful, but he was apt to say what he had to say, often not weighing his words very carefully. But, *don't you see*, he was absolutely right about the Pharisees and people like them.

I want to say, "I see, indeed!" but being a deferent son, I hold my young, Asian-American tongue.

A spell of silence, then some small talk about how he has to get on with his paper, a formal presentation on "The status of the individual in the political and legal traditions of old and new China." We chitchat casually about matters of more immediate concern. Both of us are especially excited about our visit with Dr. Suzuki, the renowned ninety-four year-old Japanese Zen Master who had almost single-handedly brought Zen to the West. We had made arrangements to see him and his secretary, the very charming and lively Mihoko Okamura, in his hotel room off Waikiki Beach. Seemed somewhat comically incongruous to me, for nothing could be more commercial than the Waikiki section of Honolulu. Yet, on the other hand, isn't that the very charm of Zen itself to be thrown into the very heart of contradiction, in the horns of a dilemma?

Dr. Suzuki had promised to write a preface to *The Golden Age of Zen*, and *dia-dia* was now anticipating the visit with the same relish and excitement of a child dreaming of a double-dip creamy cone on a steamy summer day on Coney Island. Funny thing that neither of us ever again mentioned *whited sepulchers* or *whitewashed tombs* or Pharisees or hypocrites; yet, the seeds of what he said somehow take root in me, assuming an importance quite hidden at the time the little dialogue had occurred.

Thirty-five years later, I continue to be struck by this rather ordinary incident, a simple chitchat between father and son, on a typically hot mid-summer day in Honolulu when all one wanted to do was to laze around doing and thinking nothing special. Ev-

ery so often, especially since his passing in 1986, during mostly unguarded moments, the particular ambiance and feel of that ordinary day comes back to me with particular sharpness, sometimes with a shock, being more vivid than when it first occurred—if that is indeed possible. *Dia-dia's* high-pitched voice, in clear English tinged with his quaint Ningpo accent, is, as always, strong and direct. Particularly with the words, "*whited sepulcher*," I see clearly the nearly blinding rays of the Island sun reflecting off his glasses as he turns gently to me with a broad, toothy smile. And then there is the litany I hear, not exactly in the same words always and not always in his voice but sometimes in my own, "*You're no whitewashed tomb. Be yourself—for you cannot be anyone else!*"

Was it a warning? He had often told me how he disliked, as he put it, the "goody-goodies," people who in their *external* behavior appear to be paragons of virtue and piety, yet, *interiorly*, were running on empty. He was surely not by nature judgmental nor narrowly moralistic, but he had nearly unfailing antennae in spotting affectation and detecting people with half-baked scruples and ideas. For such people, he would say, unwittingly shrink their own minds and hearts in trying to be other than their true selves. They mislay their treasures, warping their capacity for humanity and compassion. He favored such words as "*mislaid*" or "*misplaced*" probably because he had seen his own past life—particularly in his late twenties and much of his thirties before the Hound of God grabbed him—in terms of dissipation of personal gifts. An incurable optimist, walking to the drumbeat of both Christ and Mencius, he knew no divinely bestowed human treasure could ever really be lost, only *mislaid*. The source of his belief, that nature and grace worked together in us and mostly *without our knowing it*. In his case, because the world was rarely too much with him and he was almost always open to grace, the really good things nearly always took him by surprise.

Along with his ability to detect affectation was his knack in spotting genuineness. It could be of people and things, or of books and writers of which he was expert, or ancient histories and traditions, what makes and doesn't make sense in the contemporary world. Even in the Roman Catholicism he embraced wholeheartedly in his late thirties, or, perhaps, even more so *because* he felt he was a latecomer to the religion, he put his natural constitution and sharp analytical mind to good use in unfailingly understanding the difference between the baby and the dirty water. He sim-

ply had an unmistakable feel in drawing the line between the authentic and the inauthentic, of what lasts and the merely culturally ephemeral. Because he profoundly cherished his newly found religion—though he liked to say *God and it had found him*—this was all the more reason why he felt a great responsibility in keeping a keen lookout for corrosive elements that he perceived attacking it from both within and without.

Our *dia-dia* could be strongly negative with others, even with my siblings. On the other hand, being the youngest, I was surely spoiled by both of my parents and some of my siblings. Particularly after the passing of my dear mother when I was in my teens, seeing that hard discipline had little effect on me, he was forced to alter his tactics. Poor *dia-dia* tried his best to serve as our mommy, too, and in playing this impossible dual role, he nonetheless managed to soften his ways, even to tamper his natural quick temper. He mellowed considerably and, though or, perhaps, because of being a man of constant sorrows in having lost his one true love, became a sweeter and more patient and tolerant person.

In fact, to such an extent that whenever he did admonish me, particularly during the years of my rather troubled young adulthood, he handled me very gently, with great caution. He never again resorted to hell fire and damnation and he put whatever former preachiness and moralistic tendencies, which had been his wont, aside, knowing that such ways simply did not work with me. Instead, he would advise in soft, affecting *maternal* tones:

Johnny, accentuate the positive both in yourself and in others. While it may be true that we will never be able to rid ourselves completely of our negative qualities, when we stress the positive, you naturally diminish the negative qualities in yourself and in others. By doing this, you allow natural goodness and other merits greater play for your personal growth. This is how you practice fairness. Then suddenly you will feel grace working palpably in you.

In allowing the new found gentleness to wash over him, his spirituality deepened remarkably in the last two decades of his life. He struggled always to put into practice the most profound and cherished ideas he wrote and believed in. And this struggle became most intense in the last decade of his life.

He was also, in being father and mother to me, becoming an excellent psychologist. He knew well the excessive critical bent of my character and did not want to encourage in me the argumentative nor the disagreeable, to allow such potentially pernicious influences to paralyze or infest my yet undeveloped self. He knew well also how easily I fell prey to casuistic ways. Besides, my narrow rationalistic tendencies made me ever ready to criticize others and, in so doing, hurt people irrevocably.

Once, in college, when I brought up the subject of entering the law profession as a possible future career, he somehow turned indifferent to the whole discussion. I did not know the reason for his sudden undisguised irritability towards such a conventional goal until some time later. While he did not give a definitive *no*, his lack of encouragement alone was, for me, enough to dampen treading such a path. One assumed any father would have been elated over a child following him into such a potentially lucrative trade. Not my daddy, though. Of course, he may have thought I lacked the intellectual equipment to be a success at it. On the other hand, he also understood all too well my budding, small-minded combative and manipulative spirit that he feared the practice of law might reinforce and bring to some deadly fruition and in time dominate my entire life and character.

Though this might sound ludicrous to a secular reader, yet, given the keen insight he had of me, my *dia-dia* might also have thought that my future success in the field would somehow endanger the loss of my immortal soul. For, you see, unlike other *paterfamilias*, he simply refused to place professional success very high in his scheme of values. He had himself gained such success and great fame early in life, and found it vain and sterile. He was proud of our achievements but never do I recall, except for brother Pete's call to the priesthood, his ever favoring one sibling over another because of the profession he or she was in.

Dia-dia was perhaps as fine a judge of character as a Thomas More, a lawyer himself and perhaps the one man he came close to worshipping. When I think of his lukewarm response to my study of the Law I am reminded of the story of Sir Thomas who, while Chancellor of England for Henry VIII, reproved Richard Rich for his ambitious ways. For Rich too had wanted to go into law, though likely as a steppingstone to a future political position. Instead, Sir Thomas seriously counseled Rich to remain simple, to be a teacher. Rich did not take More's warning to heart, later indeed assuming

More's old position as Chancellor of England and had a hand in More's subsequent beheading. I am of course not suggesting that I am in any way Richard Rich, but it does strike me as curious that one of the few movies *dia-dia* and I saw together was *A Man for All Seasons*, on the life of the great More. Another was "Becket."

Later, when I became a teacher, *dia-dia* was nearly beside himself with delight. He seemed to have wished all along that I take education as my calling. Frankly it is the only profession I have found genuine contentment in. As a teacher himself, he understood the limited degree to which one's cleverness could be extended before one's fraudulent ways are rudely exposed, if not by students, then surely by one's own conscience. Having been for a short time a practicing attorney himself, he did not see such safeguards in the ferocious dens that governed the practices of the legal profession. In fact, in *Beyond East and West*, we read that even before he had taken his first course at Michigan University's School of Law, he was more than aware of the overly materialistic bent of young American students of the Law. And that was 1919. He had no illusions about the actual profession as it is conventionally practiced, though he had a lifelong love of the philosophy of law; perhaps only because he knew the *source* from whence the law comes and returns and, broadly speaking, its potential as a *civilizing* tool for humankind. One of the chapters on the Law was "Law is My Idol."

Whited sepulcher. A warning? An admonishment? In reflection, I now see it as a gentle slap on a slowly-forming consciousness that he somehow knew was on the verge of awakening. How refreshing to have had a father who never spoke of the significance of being a professional success! He wanted nothing more from me than to be *myself*, to go down paths that would lead to the discovery of the true self, the self that God had mysteriously put on this earth even before the dawning of time. Perhaps his words were along the order of a Zen koan that helped place a young searching soul on some path leading to enlightenment. And the image of a whitewashed tomb, had it not in time evolved for me into a perfect metaphor, suggesting a truly important awakening: the rising from the dead from this fragile, passing earth?

And, is it not strange, my *dia-dia* himself might ask in wonderment, that even on this little planet, on this small piece of ground inhabited by countless unenlightened and laughably inept human beings such as ourselves, where we are given the chance to work

out our salvation and where we seem caught in the maelstrom of time, *eternity*—if we were only free enough to let our inmost hearts play *joyously* with time—yes, even *eternity*, may somehow shade imperceptibly into time and give us a welcomed glimpse into *whose* image we really are and for *whom* we were made? Lucky man, my sweet *dia-dia*. He found these answers in the midstream of his journey, unwaveringly followed its Path, and never for a moment thereafter regretted what he saw and tasted with relish. With the great Spanish mystic, Teresa of Avila, surely one of his favorite saints, he could say without a trace of irony, “Solo Dios basta”—“Only God suffices.”

Vignette #2: Progressive Education

My very lovable brother Stephen, our parents' tenth child and eighth boy and inimitable storyteller, tells the following anecdote which I shall do my best to reproduce, as if Steve himself were telling it. The reader must judge for itself whether it is apocryphal or not:

One day, Peter, Vincent and I (numbers 8, 9 and 10, respectively, in the family) received our monthly report cards. We were in our early teens in Rome. As usual, we went into our *dia-dia*'s study individually, one by one. Peter, being the senior of the three, felt privileged to go in first. In fact, he was beaming from ear to ear for, you see, after having struggled academically in China, he was now fast becoming the best student—at least, grade-wise—among us. He handed his report card to *dia-dia* and, when he saw all the A's, he said simply, not with much undue excitement, 'O, Peter, very good, keep it up.' Peter, as one might expect, walked away from the study a bit crestfallen, red-faced with his mouth in a pouting position.

Next, Vincent, with some justified fear, brought his grades in to show *dia-dia*. Unlike Peter, he was rarely an exceptional student not because he had less intelligence but because he could always find some daffy foolishness to occupy his broad imagination. For instance, one day with the help of a horse he was determined to trample all the flowers of Rome. He nearly succeeded and, had he not evoked diplomatic immunity—*dia-dia* at the time being Minister Plenipotentiary from the Republic of China to the Holy See—he might still be rotting in some cell today. He was not known as *buffoon* for nothing. When

dia-dia saw his report with all the C's, he reacted in nearly similar fashion as he had toward Peter's grades: 'O, Vincent, keep it up,' even adding a cheery 'very good.' Vincent heaved a great sigh of relief, beamed from ear to ear and did a less than perfect cartwheel, knocking over a few classics as he left the study.

Finally, being my turn, I walked in, not knowing exactly what to feel or to expect. For, unlike my brothers', my grades ran the entire spectrum from A to F. My father, after careful examination and with much nodding, looked up grinning and said, 'O, Stephen, my Stephen, wonderful, wonderful, how musical you are! Yes, yes, keep it up and you may yet have a future in music!' Little did he know at the time that Francis (number 7) was the real musician in the family!

In Steve's diverse telling of the above over time, I must confess I have never, for a second, believed that such an incident took place *exactly* as he said it did, particularly when it comes to Vincent's cartwheel. On the other hand, though, the tenth child might have embellished some of the facts (as all great storytellers are wont to do). The anecdote nevertheless does represent for me our *dia-dia's spirit*, his true *élan*. Is it any wonder, I now ask, that one so distinguished was never seriously considered for the position of his country's Minister of Education? Obviously, he was too far ahead of his time, and likely will always be

Vignette #3: The Tao of Education

I remember in the mid-70s in Taipei, at a private dinner in the presence of well-known educators, the discussion turned to educational reforms. One distinguished-looking lady, a principal at a famous private senior high school, spoke glowingly of her school's newly-instituted Parent-Teacher Association, an organization that long ago had become a significant part of educational institutions in the West. The PTA however was then an innovation in Taiwan. In such polite company, the well-coifed principal obviously expected support for her words. For, after all, the Republic of China was then still under martial law, not the kind of free-for-all democracy it has since evolved into. After listening courteously, *dia-dia* cleared his throat and began to give his take on the matter. It was not something they had expected to hear.

You know, I see what you are saying very well. On the surface, the PTA looks like a wonderful idea. No one can deny it is good for parents and teachers to talk to one another, even to become friends. And, surely there's no harm in teachers finding out the family background their students come from and so on and so forth. *But...*

I think I had sensed the coming of the "*But...*" and, with it, everyone's attention became riveted on our distinguished Chinese scholar, the Honorary President and head of the Ph.D. program in philosophy at the then College of Chinese Culture.

But, I beg to add some words on this important question. In the principle governing the Parent-Teacher Association we all think naturally how wonderful it is for parents and teachers to work together. And I agree with its importance. However, *in the spirit of justice*, there is one significant point we all seem to overlook. We fail to give enough attention to what *young students* feel about such an organization. In fact, the young don't have much of a choice in the matter, do they? *Don't you see*, at home, children already must contend with parental pressures. Then, at school, from early morning until late afternoon, they come under the strict control of teachers. Now, when two such authorities come together to set up an association with the intention of comparing notes, in fact, sometimes quite *intimate* notes, on our young people, don't you see the terrible *additional* pressure we are unconsciously inflicting on their lives?

I think the PTA, rather than being a help, just as often makes our children feel that parents and teachers are in a *conspiracy* against them, or are even being *spied against*. The better and well-behaved students may not feel the pressure too greatly. In fact, they probably welcome it. But surely it would surprise me if the great majority of the young do not have some negative feelings toward it. Frankly, it is a great wonder to me that *not more* of the young suffer psychological distress because of the kind of artificial society we have created for them. Don't you think we educators have now become too concerned with organization and control and collecting of all kinds of data on students? We have become so concerned with such things that we fail to give proper attention to the deeper needs of the young, particularly forgetting the importance of *letting them naturally grow in freedom*.

My daddy certainly had not intentionally meant to pour cold water onto an otherwise pleasant dinner party. By the time he finished, there were many red faces around him. No one present had expected an educator of his renown to make such statements on an institution that nearly everyone endorsed and thought a positive educational innovation. Though I did not feel it my place to support him, as I was his son and one of the younger people there, secretly, I felt considerable pride at his sympathetic and down-to-earth words. Without doubt, he was indeed the mystic many thought he was, but he also possessed a wonderful common sense that went so naturally with his mysticism. I thought too what unbounded faith he had in the young.

In seeing the PTA from his perspective, he was in fact suggesting that lasting educational reforms lay, first, in both parents and teachers recovering a basic understanding of their respective roles, and then having the courage to put them into practice. I believe his words merely reflected the spirit of a true and genuine *Confucian* for few ideas were more dear to him than the implementation of *cheng ming* ("the rectification of names"). On the other hand, in the way that he defended the independence and freedom of children and their innate ability to correct themselves without undue interference from either parents or teachers, he was being a true *Taoist* as well. But, like a true *Taoist*, he was no mere libertine. Rather, he disfavored extremes and excesses and regarded each person as a *sacred vessel* that, especially in the case of children with sensitive souls, ought not to be tampered nor meddled with but rather allowed to grow naturally into itself. In a sense, his attitude toward the PTA reflected in miniature the way he approached the law.

To his mind, the PTA was simply another of the countless meddlesome human institutions that, though possessed of noble principles and goals, in time, spoil and interfere with the natural processes of life. To him, such institutions excessively fussed over things and people that are often best left alone. Typically, our *dia-dia* was strongly in favor of preserving whatever was natural through moderate nurturing. He saw eye to eye with Aristotle who said, "Perfection is the enemy of the Good," and with Lao Tzu's common sense wisdom, "To be overgrown is to decay" (#55). Looking back, I believe what he said that evening simply reflected the proper proportionality of nature and nurture, of what constitutes authentic human existence. *Dia-dia* was rarely content with

anything short of the perfect balancing of these two basic elements of life. Here he not only mirrored the best in his own tradition but I believe of the West as well.

Years later, I was to find in Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay, "Education," the following words that nearly perfectly reflect his thinking on the education of the young:

I suffer whenever I see...a parent or senior imposing his opinion and way of thinking and being on a young soul to which they are totally unfit. Cannot we let people be themselves and enjoy life in their own way? You are trying to make that man another *you*. One's enough.

The secret of Education lies in respecting the pupil. It is not for you to choose what he shall know, what he shall do. It is chosen and foreordained, and he only holds the key to his own secret. By your tampering and thwarting and too much governing he may be hindered from his end and kept out of his own. Respect the child. Wait and see the new product of Nature. Nature loves analogies, but not repetitions. Respect the child. Be not too much his parent. Trespass not on his solitude.

It should not come as a surprise to anyone that the great Boston Brahmin was among *dia-dia*'s favorite writers, certainly the one American writer he turned to again and again for inspiration, as bosom brother, Lin Yutang had done too. To him, there was a good deal more of Lao Tzu in Emerson than many a Chinese Taoist. And I do not believe we would be too far wrong to say my daddy was China's Emerson.

Vignette #4: Filial Piety, Justice and the Sacred

Besides finding perfect comfort in being both a Confucian and a Taoist, *dia-dia* was also a defender of justice. This should not surprise anyone familiar with his juristic writings and his practices as a judge in the Shanghai courts. We are told in *Beyond East and West* that what made him most happy upon completing the initial draft of the Constitution of the Republic of China in the 1940s was that, though every other part of the draft was sharply criticized, some even coming under severe attack, the section on *human rights* remained basically intact. This fact is simply a part of the public record. As a son, however much I am interested in such matters, it

was his sense of fairness and equanimity as a father that strikes me at least equally as deep.

I had just turned nineteen, a typical American freshman with some fledgling interest in the intellectual life. Unlike children in other families, however, we had the benefit of our *dia-dia*'s extraordinary library. At times, to whet my curiosity, I would wander into his study—with or without him present, for he did not mind this at all—to browse his collection. He never regarded my presence bothersome or intrusive and he was quite happy whenever any of us children took interest in good books. Although they were in nearly every part of the house, even cluttering the walls of the dining room, his choicest volumes were stacked high everywhere in his study in seeming disorder. Uncanny therefore that he never had much trouble locating them when they were needed.

On this particular day when he was in his study, I noticed a thin, new book with a dark-green cover, a bilingual edition of *The Hsiao Ching, or, Book of Filial Piety*. Looking up from his desk, *dia-dia* noticed my interest.

"Ah, yes, that's a new translation from Hsieh Papa's (Hsueh Kwang-ch'ien, whose English name was Paul K.T. Sih) St. John's University Press. You might be interested in knowing that that little book has been so important to the Chinese that some scholars believe it's the basis of Chinese culture and ethics." *Dia-dia*'s sense of equanimity and breadth of learning was such that, whenever he spoke of anything Chinese, I do not ever recall his saying "our Chinese culture." He simply did not harbor any sense of racial or cultural superiority and was possibly the least chauvinistic person I knew. Later, while studying Chinese philosophy in Taiwan, I came under the tutelage of Professor Hsieh Yu-wei who indeed did regard *hsiao* as the basis from which all other virtues flowed. *Dia-dia* did not think so and, for that matter, neither did I, but that is altogether beside the point here.

"If you like, just take it and look through it yourself," he said. Then, coming towards me, he took the book in hand and flipped through its pages. He had already gone through it quite thoroughly, marking its pages with his characteristic red and blue underlining.

"Ah, yes, here it is." He had stopped on chapter 15. "Now, before you start in on the first chapter, I want you to spend time reading this chapter first." He handed me the book. He had stopped on the page with the chapter heading, "The Duty of Cor-

rection." I thought, well, it's about correction, something a nineteen-year-old wasn't particularly interested in. Must be on how parents ought to correct their children, I thought to myself. Nothing different from the conventional ideas I had had about filial piety up to that time. Then, the very next instant my eyes fell on words he had underlined in red. I read carefully: "Dare I ask if a son, by obeying all of his father's commands, can be called *filial*?" To which Confucius, perhaps irritated, answered, "What kind of talk is this? What kind of talk is this?" Living on the east coast and not far from New York City, I naturally imagined Confucius speaking these words with a nasal New York accent.

Again he took the book from my hands and told me to listen carefully while he read what he felt were wonderful and important words: "If a father had one son to reason with him, he would not be engulfed in moral wrong. Thus, in case of contemplated moral wrong, a son must never fail to warn his father against it; nor must a minister of state fail to perform a like service for his prince. In short, when there is question of moral wrong, there should be correction." Then, with his usual deep sigh, as if he were directing the following question to me personally, he read slowly, enunciating each syllable, "*How can you say that filiality consists in simply obeying a father?*"

As he did not particularly like the word "correction" in rendering the notion of *yu cheng*, he felt that the English word, "remonstrate" would have more fittingly conveyed the meaning.

While teaching in the Republic of China, I have brought up this incident on countless occasions to illustrate the broad, two-way dialogical ethics that I believe is inherent in classical Confucianism. I also cite it often to indicate my *dia-dia*'s eagerness in showing his son the true and broad responsibilities of children towards parents, as well as of subordinates towards their superiors, that genuine filial piety lies far deeper than mere obedience to one's superiors. Although he did not say it straightaway, I believe he pointed out that particular chapter and passage to me for he felt it illustrated a critical and central feature of Chinese ethics, that is, the dialogical intent as set forth by the ancients that, through the many centuries, has been conveniently and disingenuously forgotten by educators and others in positions of power and authority.

This particular incident captures well for me two important characteristics in my *dia-dia*'s life as man and thinker.

The first was his natural penchant for openness and objectivity, his steadfast insistence in getting to the heart of any matter, whether it be the Law or Zen or something of seeming insignificance to the untrained eye. As his child, I was often privy to seeing him reveal his thoughts and feelings to whomever he spoke and would listen to him. I cannot ever remember him compromising his position because of the person he was addressing. And the person talking seemed always *his true self*. Secondly, his maturing years—perhaps, from age thirty-five onward—found him increasingly concerned over the importance of *salvaging* basic cultural treasures of both East and West that he felt were being preempted and overtaken by the juggernaut of modernity and a too strong emphasis on technological development for its own sake.

The greatest fear he entertained was the thick encrustation he felt growing over much of ancient literatures that he always believed held irreplaceable cultural and spiritual traditions. He saw his true vocation not as a blind return to traditions but of recapturing our collective habit to see them as *living* truths needed more than ever by generations which have lost their roots. Unlike the many mystically-oriented who have little or no faith in technological progress, he typically walked the middle path and felt that technology itself could be put to good use if its progress could be directed not by blind forces but *illuminated* intelligence.

On the other hand, his wisdom informed him the only discerning guidance would come from a fully-grown humanity that knew well where our societies are heading and, most crucially, *why* they were heading that way. Being a well-known proponent of the Natural Law—to which he devoted several books—he was never able or willing to see the universe as indifferent. By the time he had passed on, it was obvious that the world, fixated on itself, was no longer asking the same basic and essential questions so dear to his own heart. He was never able to entertain the possibility of any world view that was not *eschatological* and *teleological*, that is, that did not have a beginning and a final purpose. Here, again, he was drawing inspiration from some of the richest classical traditions, East and West.

In this harshest of centuries, driven by a strikingly wanton pragmatism, ruthless social and political tyrannies of unimaginable tragic dimensions, and the ongoing absolutizing of an undirected whirlwind progress, my *dia-dia*'s life and writings can be seen as a conciliatory effort to combat such vastly impersonal and

dehumanizing forces. Recovery of humanity and all that was essential to making the person truly human and noble had to begin, for him, with *metanoia*, the moral and spiritual transformation of the self, the process of recovery in which each person is regarded not as a means toward some engineered social and political end but rather as a *sacred vessel*, holy and incorruptible in itself and conceived for no other purpose than to give glory to the Creator. His underlying message for us is that we are after all no mere trash bins containing the throwaway and the ephemeral but cisterns of unimaginable delicate beauty, each uniquely fired to contain sweet nectar from and for God.

To my *dia-dia*, whatsoever heavenly, because timeless, cannot undergo permanent loss; at worst, having become strangers to the habit of living in permanency and transcendence, we allow the empirical ego with its exhausting and interminable practical concerns to steer our lives. In the meantime, our timeless treasures, temporarily mislaid, are forgotten, and we lose our way. Although a man of countless earthly enthusiasms, *dia-dia* rarely allowed himself to be made drunk for long by the transient and impermanent, which, by themselves, he saw as dead bones worth nothing *intrinsically*. With Lao Tzu, his soul brother of twenty-five hundred years ago, he understood well what truly is permanent and priceless,

For a whirlwind does not last a whole morning,
Nor does a sudden shower last a whole day.

(故飄風不終朝,驟雨不終日.) (TTC, #23)

He was convinced the truly priceless could be found in the unbounded ranges of the universal human heart through which the Divine, *wholly free*, comes and goes according to its will. Life had taught him the difficult and cautionary lesson of not attributing excessive worth on anything other than what we each initially bring into the world. He believed in letting things simply *be*. What he did and wrote came from his heart unadorned and had the great value of being able to affect other hearts open and receptive to his own heart.

That is perhaps the reason why the specialist has never been able to understand fully either his life or writings. To the professionals—the legal experts, philosophers, educators, politicians, men and women of religion—while he certainly did not fail to address their expertise, breadth of knowledge and intellectual rea-

son and acumen, all of which he himself certainly possessed in fair abundance but secretly regarded more as chaff than kernel, in the end he appealed to their *whole persons* and therefore to their *silence, simplicity and solitude*. He had a marvelous sense of proportion—what the Greeks called moderation and temperance, and the Chinese, *chung yung*—quietly yet unfailingly informed whatever he did. The following translation, his own, from the last part of chapter 38 of the *Tao Teh Ching* could very well summarize the man:

Therefore, the full-grown man sets his heart upon the substance rather than the husk;
 Upon the fruit rather than the flower.
 Truly, he prefers what is within to what is without.

(是以大丈夫處其厚,不居其薄;

處其實,不居其華.故去彼取此.)

There was such a *oneness* about him that you had to take him complete or not at all. Despite being trained in the Law, he never mastered the scourge of the twentieth-century, *compartmentalization*, of learning to live split existences, of learning to be happy in self-imposed alienation. There was something wonderfully *organic and whole* about him; hence when you dissect the man, when you analyze him and his thought in minute detail, you somehow miss the mark, ending up with the *not quite*. This, despite the fact he himself was masterly in the art of analysis, which he learned at the foot of some of the greatest legal thinkers of the twentieth-century.

Despite being trained as a legal scholar, he never allowed his profession nor academic life to dictate his path or the way he saw reality. In fact, even in his approach to the law, he appeared far less interested in furthering its positivistic and evolutionary trends than in rediscovering its *spiritual* dimensions, its very roots and substance. Without them giving it support, he was convinced the law would degenerate into mere deadweight, becoming artificial and a gross manipulation of the truth. In his writings, be it on the law or otherwise, nothing is more evident than his deeply-held conviction that all truly productive human knowledge is anchored on a *hidden source* and carries with it the hope of self-discovery which, in turn, will help us return to that source. With Lao Tzu, he would have emphatically agreed that "To go far is to return."

Ultimately, it was the universal human heart informed steadily and *inflamed ecstatically* by the unquenchable fire of love that will bring us back to our True Home. In fact, in all this, we find him solidly secure in *The Great Learning*—one of the Four Books of the Confucian canon—where we are told that, in everything, there is a *beginning and an end*. Having been imbued with a solid traditional education, he was wholly versed in the Chinese classics, his childhood bible. Even as the buds of his Christianity bloomed into gorgeous flowers, the Chinese classics remained his ever constant and faithful guide.

Vignette #5: "Ad deum qui laetificat juventutem meam"
("To God who gives joy to my youth")

My parents' coming upon their Catholic faith is well-documented in my father's *The Science of Love, Beyond East and West* and *Huai Lan Chi (In Remembrance of Lan)*, and in the writings of Dr. Paul K.T. Sih, his beloved student and godson, particularly, *From Confucius to Christ*, and in *My Twenty Years With the Chinese* by the Reverend Nicholas Maestrini. It was the latter who first gave *dia-dia* intensive formal instructions in the doctrines of his new faith. I will not say anything about it here and only refer you to their books.

To speak of my daddy and mommy without addressing the question of the *source* of their joy would be a disservice to both. Though I do not presume to know in depth the answer to this question, yet the way they lived their lives leaves us with suggestive clues as to what motivated them.

As a teenager I first began to have some inkling as to what made their individual and marital lives so very special. What I treasure dearly was their having given me, both through daily example and words, a clear glimpse of the true nature of their piety. I began to have some deeper understanding of what held my parents' lives and our large family together. Somehow, I always saw their lives in spiritual terms and, therefore, as two lives on a continuous unbroken line progressing *upward* hand-in-hand. It was primarily in seeing such paradigms in my parents that throughout my life I have never taken any other kind of progress other than moral and spiritual progress with any degree of gravity. I believe my siblings unequivocally share this feeling with me.

From my early twenties, as I became more familiar with spiritual literature, to me, the most intimate of writings, the only couple whose piety I found comparable to that of my parents was Jacques and Raissa Maritain whom my parents had befriended in Rome. The French neo-Thomist was ambassador to Italy at the time my daddy was Republic of China's Minister to the Vatican. Later, the Maritains would carefully chronicle their rich lives in separate journals describing their spiritual journey.

During their comparatively short years together in New Jersey (1951-59), my parents attended daily Mass at a cozy and unpretentious chapel—Chapel of the Immaculate Conception—with a richly-designed interior on the South Orange campus of Seton Hall University. There, *dia-dia* first taught law and then Chinese studies. Each morning they would stroll, often hand-in-hand, on a steady up-hill from our home to the little church for the 8 a.m. services. Ordinarily, the walk took no more than seven to eight minutes, but given that my mommy had feet that were bound as a child and, later, at twelve or thirteen, unbound, by that time, structural damage had become irreversible. The short walk must have seemed for her similar to a daily trekking of the Stations of the Cross. Yet, she ventured back and forth stoically, rarely complaining. A common sight upon her return home was seeing her sitting meditatively in an old armchair ritualistically rubbing her sore contorted feet. To this day, it amazes me that I personally never heard her use her feet as an excuse to miss this daily sacred ritual. In fact, it was nearly always our dear mother who, through gentle prodding, got *dia-dia* out of bed whenever he was tempted to sleep in.

On the subject of Mass and Communion and faith in general, I remember certain simple yet profound notions that became deeply fixed in my mind. If the words are not faithful to the way they were first spoken, I do think they do at least capture their tone and spirit. What follows are composite ideas gleaned over many little conversations I had with *dia-dia* over several years.

You might wonder what is the sense of going to Mass each morning. Let me tell you that I literally thrill with joy just at the thought of such an overwhelming privilege! Do you know what is the first thing your mommy and I do the moment we get to the little chapel? We kneel before the altar of God *in total emptiness and silence*. Now, what do I mean by this? Simply

this. We come to God *empty-handed with loving and grateful hearts*. Since the Mass is a banquet, a joyous celebration of a meal, what better way to start the day than to *feast* with our Lord and to thank Him for this ever-healing nourishment?

We carry our worries and burdens daily to the altar and offer them to Him completely. He always knows what to do with them. And, with each new day, as we come to a deeper awareness as to what it means to be a disciple of Christ, we now see ourselves no more than instruments our loving Father has somehow chosen in his mercy, *for yet another day*, to do *his bidding, his chosen work on earth*. We come to him not with any great offerings of which, in and through ourselves, we have none and, if we did, they would *originally and forever* belong to him in the first place. Frankly, besides our love and sense of gratefulness he doesn't need any of the things we have or whatever else we could give him. You see, in offering our total selves to Him, we become *fully dead to the world* for the only thing we have then is an *empty self completely at his beck and call*.

As for myself, I am like a broken cistern full of cracks unable, by my own insignificant efforts, to seal the cracks nor to hold anything within me, yet in his mercy, *he pities my brokenness*, sealing those holes and making me *whole* again. Or, sometimes, I see myself as water held in a crude pot awaiting purification and, in his miraculous hands he not only purifies the water but also proceeds to change me into the finest of vintages! We are wholly grateful for the daily miracle that occurs within us. In my case, I say to myself, imagine, he can even make a decent man out of an unfit scoundrel like me!

When mommy and I approach the altar each new morning, when we offer our simple lives to him, we let *him* decide who and what will benefit from our respective work on earth. For in fact by approaching him in this simple, ingenuous way, truly like the children that we are face to face with our Father, the sometime laborious task of working for others he, without *our* knowing it, takes out of our hands. That is, it is *he who mercifully unburdens us*, and the question of what is and is not *efficacious* in what we say and do is no longer a concern at all. You cannot imagine what freedom he is capable of granting us, just for our asking. And, since God is both Father and Mother, how could he or she refuse any earnest requests? If

even our own mothers and fathers are touched by our pleadings, how could God—infinitely wiser than our own dear parents—not be touched by what we seek?

Don't you see, when we are still concerned about what will and will not benefit ourselves and others, when we are forever conscious of every little thing that occurs around us, we are not yet living in *simplicity* and *freedom*. I did not really understand the meaning of working and living only for the glory of Our Lord until I understood it to mean that only when we are detached from *both* success and failure can we truly give to others in a *selfless* way, can we truly live in joy and freedom. The secret is to try to live our lives without motives and only delight in the Lord. And, if we must live with some motive, then let it be in pleasing God who has given us everything. For when we please him, nothing else matters as he will take care of everything else. How could your mommy and daddy live our lives other than in inexplicable *joy*?! Even our burdens and sufferings are all given to us as *rare gifts* with a view towards attaining the greatest of all possible good, which of course is our *sanctification*, the only genuine goal worth pursuing.

Among all the many virtues, perhaps the one defining quality in *dia-dia*'s life was his commitment to his religious belief. He decisively lived his newly found faith to the bone, allowing nothing else, certainly no material concerns (of which, except for books, he found nothing that was ultimately *not* petty and ephemeral), to interfere with its proper work within his soul. The crowning deed of his life, beyond all the worldly achievements including his fine writings, lay in the inseparability of his intellectual life and his everyday existence. I think this was made possible only because, in the days following his religious conversion in his late thirties, he slowly but dramatically began to discover for himself that all words and deeds are forms of prayer, likened to sacred cables or offerings of praise to his Redeemer. Might we not say he had once for all embarked upon a way in which he saw his entire life as a fragile, easily-broken string of prayers serving as steps that he earnestly hoped, with the grace of God, might help him reach the Gates of Heaven? The secret of his simplicity lay in that his *life of reason* could not be perceived as separate from his *life of faith*, which is far more affective than rational. Reason and faith, like the fluid,

unlabored wings of a bird in jovial flight, existed in such nearly perfect symmetry that he was able to soar effortlessly into some uncharted reaches of his soul. What bliss such joy must have been to him as well as to my mommy!

Vignette #6: "What's in a Havana, Anyway?"

Sometimes our *dia-dia* was quite capable of using earthy humor and images in driving home a philosophical point. To me it was in the classroom that he appeared most at home, where he could leave his self-consciousness behind and simply be himself. Once, teaching a class on Zen Buddhism at Seton Hall during the mid 1960s in which I was present, there occurred, at least, to my untrained mind, a rather rich and heated debate among the clever and well-informed graduate students over some delicate point. Perhaps, it was on the great historical controversy of what is of greater meaning or authenticity, *sudden or gradual enlightenment*. Or it could have been over the question of whether it was possible to "*sit oneself into a Buddha*." It hardly matters now what had brought about the fierce and animated exchanges among the usually docile and polite classmates. It was after all a class on Zen, which was usually dominated by a good deal of meditative thought over cups of tea. Some students, in imitation of *dia-dia* and hoping to find enlightenment, had even brought along their own favorite tea.

Dia-dia, in his fine, dark-blue Chinese silk robe and with a long Cuban cigar dangling precariously from his mouth—quite an uncommon sight, indeed, of an Asian professor at an American university—sat both beaming and with a bemused look for much of the time the intellectual skirmishes were going on. If my memory serves me right, the distinguished professor allowed it to go on for a good fifteen to twenty minutes. Finally feeling a bit antsy and exhaling a large puff of smoke that shot up to partially hide his head, he held out his left arm, a bit cocked at the elbow, and, as the class slowly came to order, he said in a clear, loud voice, "Good! Good! Very good discussion, solid exchange, excellent ideas! You really went at each other quite fiercely, quite relentlessly! Almost like lawyers!"

You could see the students beaming, apparently flattered. A couple of moments passed as he noticed some shades of self-complacency setting in. He chuckled to himself. Seeing that the cigar was about to go out, he then poked his right hand into his robe

groping for some object. And, just as quickly, there appeared his shiny Ronson lighter, a proud gift with inscription from my sister Terry. He then struck it forcibly whereby a huge flame came up perfectly—as if he had practiced it a thousand times before—to meet the foul-smelling Havana. He took a few quick strong puffs, and without skipping a beat and in implacable rhythm, continued: “I enjoyed everything you said. Everything made sense. This is a very perceptive class and every student gave reasons that, as far as I could see, were airtight, no holes.”

Then, half-teasingly but carefully avoiding sarcasm, he said, “I can tell, being trained in the best schools in the West, you are Aristotelians, masters of logic and the syllogism. *But*,” and here his voice began to rise ever so slightly, “I have to confess one thing. Yes...yes. The main problem I see in the discussion is that everything really *did* make sense. You see, despite your fine arguments, heated verbal skirmishes, nothing you have said, indisputable as they stand, *has as much cosmic validity as a simple bowel movement.*” Except for a few scarcely audible and nervous snickers, near total silence greeted his words. Some embarrassing seconds followed. There was much squirming in seats, the mood quite in contrast to a few minutes earlier.

Puffing furiously now on his Havana, he first gave his characteristic slow, sweeping gaze at the entire class, chuckling impishly to himself as he did so, obviously delighted by the confusion his words had caused. Then, nodding and smiling through his scholarly spectacles from one perplexed student to another, he added, now even louder, “*Don't you see?!*” He had gently slapped the unassuming students on the face without their knowing it. And, at that second, who could have doubted that there had occurred instantaneously an imperceptible though sensational *spiritual bowel movement* rumbling through the stuffy campus?

On another occasion, this time in a class on the *Tao Teh Ching* of Lao Tzu at Columbia University, *dia-dia* asked a question to which, except for a few soft whispers, there was quite a different response—complete silence and dumbfoundness. Sipping tea from a small teapot and slowly glancing about the room from left to right, then from back to front, and seeing that there were no raised hands, my *dia-dia*’s eyes finally settled near the podium on a large German shepherd which a student had brought to class. The forbidding-looking creature was dozing away contentedly and had even been heard snoring intermittently. On that day he appeared

to look more like an attorney-at-law than a teacher, looking impeccable in his business suit. Pointing at the unwitting dog, he started to address the students. "Look at Lucky there, snoring away so contentedly." He called all German shepherds "Lucky" for my brother Stephen, an incurable lover of such fierce creatures, had had one in Rome that *dia-dia* did all he could to distance himself from. Like many a philosopher and poet, he did not take well to dogs because he was either fearful of them or he found them too obsequious to his liking. Naturally, he favored the independence of purring cats and would sometimes spend long intervals between studying enticing birds of all colors to break into song. He continued:

Look at Lucky, in a world of his own, *fully* unaware of what's going on! I can guarantee, in his unconscious bliss, he is practicing perfectly what each of you highly intelligent Ivy Leaguers ought to have mastered by now—the art of *wu-wei*! *Tao* goes in, around and through him *effortlessly*. No doors or windows and none of his senses bar or interfere with the *Way* of that docile, sleeping creature. He lives the *Way* without having any consciousness of it. Most of us—even if we know something of the presence of *Tao*—only know it consciously, by our meddling minds that can't leave things alone. Don't you see Lucky is obviously no *ordinary* scholar?!

His words were greeted by loud, spontaneous hand clapping and foot stomping—more a European than American habit—which rudely jerked the dog from his sleep. "Lucky," feeling and looking slightly irritated, gave a half-sleepy, perfunctory bark, looked around and weighed in his mind for an instant if the student display was worth losing sleep over. Then, seeming to think it wouldn't be worth his while and without much fuss, the big black and gray monster returned to his blissful, delicious dreams, letting the hippie-like human creatures sitting before him go on with their silly diversion. They may have regarded it as "fun" but Lucky, obviously correctly, considered it to be much ado about nothing.

Dia-dia has returned to Eternity, joining his friends like the Little Flower, Dr. Suzuki and Thomas Merton and, most of all, my dear mommy, but what a lovely day of wind and moon he meant to all of us!

Fu Jen Catholic University
May 22, 1999
(revised, Summer 2006)

1. Editor's note: These remarkable remembrances about John Wu by his son are important because they provide insight both into the man with whom Merton established a paradoxical son-father / father-son relationship and also give us a portrait of a remarkable father-scholar-believer who clearly radiated insight into the knowing of the Logos, hidden yet known through words and celebration of the *Void* embraced and pondered in a simplicity of oneness.

We are indebted for John Wu Jr.'s perceptive insights and appreciative of his willingness to let us publish these vignettes here. Clearly, they reveal facets of John Wu's complex mind, wit, faith and spirit in a love which is reflected in Thomas Merton's enthusiastic friendship with this modest model of leadership.