

*THE GRAND COMMONALITY*

In these excerpts from Kang's magnum opus, he first professes his humanitarian motivations and aspirations, combining the bodhisattva's unlimited compassion for the sufferings of humankind with the Neo-Confucian sense of a heroic vocation to save the world. His final messianic vision is of a world totally liberated from all limits and

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4. Early book on political and economic institutions that foreshadows Legalist doctrines. See ch. 7.

bounds, as if history and inevitable progress assured a millennial outcome. Although Kang himself opposed revolutionary violence, in the absence of any realistic process or structure his anarchistic “no hands” approach to a total solution of human ills lent itself to the illusions of a revolutionary idealism, echoed later by the founders of the Chinese Communist Party.

Having been born in the Age of Disorder, I have been struck by the sufferings [of this age], and I have wondered if there could be a way to save it. “Bewildered, I have pondered.” [The solution lies] only in following the Way of the Grand Commonality of Complete Peace-and-Equality. If we look at all the ways of saving the world through the ages, to discard the Way of Grand Commonality and yet to hope to save men from suffering and to gain their greatest happiness is next to impossible. The Way of the Grand Commonality is [the attainment of] utmost peace-and-equality, utmost justice, utmost humaneness, and the most perfect government. Even though there be [other] Ways, none can add to this. . . .

We see that the whole world is but a world of grief and misery, all the people of the whole world are but grieving and miserable people, and all the living beings of the whole world are but murdered beings. The azure Heaven and the round Earth are nothing but a great slaughter yard, a great prison.

Being that I was born on the earth, then mankind in the ten thousand countries of the earth are from the same womb but of different bodily types. Being that I have knowledge of them, then I have love (*qin*) for them. All that is finest and best of the former wisdom of India, Greece, Persia, Rome, and of present-day England, France, Germany, and America, I have lapped up and drunk, rested on, pillowed on; and my soul in dreams has fathomed it. With the most ancient and noted savants, famous scholars, and great men, I have likewise often joined hands.

Being that I am a creature of all the heavens, would it be better if I could abandon the world and the heavens, cut [myself] off from my kind, flee from the social relationships (*lun*), and be happy all by myself? Those whose perceptiveness and awareness are small, their loving-mind is also small; those whose perceptiveness and awareness are great, their humane heart-and-mind is also great. Boundless love goes with boundless perceptiveness.

But if we look at the miseries of life, [we see that] the sources of all suffering lie only in nine boundaries. What are the nine boundaries?

The first is called national boundaries: [this is] division by territorial frontiers and by tribes.

The second is called class boundaries: [this is] division by noble and base, by pure and impure.

The third is called racial boundaries: [this is] division by yellow, white, brown, and black [skin types].

The fourth is called gender boundaries: [this is] division by male and female.

The fifth is called familial boundaries: [that is] the private relationships of parent and child, husband and wife, elder and younger brother.

The sixth is called property boundaries: [this is] the private ownership of agriculture, industry, and commerce.

The seventh is called disorder boundaries: [this is] the existence of unequal, unthorough, dissimilar, and unjust laws.

The eighth is called species boundaries: [this is] the existence of a separation between man, and the birds, beasts, insects, and fish.

The ninth is called suffering boundaries: [this means,] by suffering, giving rise to suffering. The perpetuation [of suffering] is inexhaustible and endless — beyond conception.

(The remedy for suffering lies, therefore, in abolishing these nine boundaries. The following nine parts of the book thus deal in detail with each of the boundaries, with the substitution of the Grand Commonality of Complete Peace-and-Equality in their place.) . . .

### [The Historical Evolution of] Democracy, from Less to More, Presages One World

The progress of democracy from less to more is a natural principle. Hence after the United States had been established, a great revolution in laws took place, and other countries followed this. Thereupon constitutions were set up everywhere, republican[ism] flourished, communist theories appeared, and labor parties were started up every day. . . . Hence the arising of democracy, the flourishing of constitutions, the talk about unions and communism, all are the first signs (lit., sounds) of One World. As for constitutional monarchy, [since the monarch] is already powerless, it is just the same as a democratic [form of government]. Some day monarchy will certainly be abolished and discarded, and [all states] will only belong to the One World [government]. . . .

### If We Wish to Attain One World of Complete Peace-and-Equality, We Must Abolish the Family

Now, we desire that men's natures shall all become perfect, that men's characters shall all become equal, that men's bodies shall all be nurtured. [That state in which] men's characters are all developed, men's bodies are all hale, men's dispositions are all pacific and tolerant, and customs and morals are all beautiful, is what is called Complete Peace-and-Equality. But there is no means whereby to bring about this Way [and yet] to avoid abolishing the family. . . . To have the family and yet to wish to reach Complete Peace-and-Equality is to be afloat on a blocked-up stream, in a sealed-off harbor, and yet to wish to reach an open waterway. To wish to attain Complete Peace-and-Equality and yet to

have the family is like carrying earth to dredge a stream, or adding wood to put out a fire: the more done, the more the hindrance. Thus, if we wish to attain the beauty of complete equality, independence, and the perfection of [human] nature, it can [be done] only by abolishing the state, only by abolishing the family.

### The Abolition of Boundaries

In the Grand Commonality there will be no states, therefore there will be no severe military laws. There will be no rulers, and so there will be no cases of opposing the superior and creating rebellion. There will be no husbands and wives, and so there will be no fighting over sexual desire, no provisions against sexual immorality, no repressive regulations or bearing of grievances, no resentment or hatred, no divorces, no miseries of punishment and killing. There will be no family relationships, and so there will be no need to support [one's family members], no compulsion to do the right thing [by them], no wrangling over [property shares]. There will be no nobility, and so there will be no depending upon intimidation or coercion, no oppression, no grabbing, no intriguing for position, no toadying. There will be no private property, so there will be no litigation over fields and houses, over industry and commerce, or over production. There will be no burial of the dead, and so there will be no litigation over the cemetery. There will be no customs barriers, and so there will be no crimes of evasion and smuggling. There will be no class divisions, and so there will be no mistreatment or oppressive laws [on the part of the superior class], and their violation or opposition [by the inferior classes].

Aside from this, then, what crimes will still exist, what punishments will still exist? I think that in the time of the Grand Commonality, while there may be faults (or, mistakes), there cannot be sins (or, crimes). What will these faults be? In a job or in official position, there may be negligence or mistakes, or discourtesy or gossip. Through the influence of twenty years' schooling, conduct and customs will be excellent, human nature will have become perfected, and [men's] energies will also be abundant; with this, even faults and mistakes should just about be eliminated.

[Adapted from Thompson, *One World*, pp. 72, 74–75, 86, 253 — LGT]

*For the relevance of the above to the revolutionary and millenarian thinking that inspired the founding of the Chinese Communist movement, compare the foregoing with Li Dazhao's "The Victory of Bolshevism" (chapter 34).*