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THE UNITY OF THE VIRTUES IN ARISTOTLE AND CONFUCIUS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE
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By

Sang-Im Lee

Dissertation Committee:

James E. Tiles, Chairperson
Roger T. Ames
Kenneth Kipnis
Mark C. Murphy
Daniel Kwok

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ABSTRACT

The focus of the comparison of this dissertation is on how Aristotle and Confucius see the relationship between the various virtues. For the virtues in the doctrines of Aristotle and Confucius are not thought of as acting as separate and independent dispositions, but as an organic unity. Just as the human body cannot function well without the integration of all its parts, so a single virtue without the other virtues, or even a number of virtues which are not harmoniously integrated, cannot function well. This integration allows a fully virtuous person to respond well to context in a way that following antecedently given rules or principles cannot ensure.

In Aristotle and Confucius, we find different accounts of virtue and different lists of virtues, and as a consequence, the virtues are unified in different ways and with different focuses: for Aristotle, *phronesis* and for Confucius, *jen*. Furthermore, they have different conceptions of the goal and the method of achieving a unified set of virtues. Specifically, the unity of virtues are realized within different forms of relations, for Aristotle, *philia* (the focus is on the relationship between *friend* and *friend*) and for Confucius, *wu-lun* (the focus is on the relationship between *father* and *son*). The different views Aristotle and Confucius take of the virtues and how they are integrated reflect their different historical and cultural contexts. It is nevertheless possible to relate their views and identify functional correlates, for a further premise of this study is that all humans have common (biologically given) needs which give rise to basic social relations which are subsequently given different selective emphasis by different

(cultural) contexts.

By arguing first, that a sense of what is virtuous can guide action, and second, that virtues can be used to establish common standards of conduct across eras and cultures, the theme of the unity of the virtues shows that agent-based virtue theory is a viable ethical theory, and further as a consequence, examining functional analogies suggests how each tradition might be enriched by conversing with each other.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent times there have been two prevailing approaches to ethical theory, the teleological and deontological. In deciding how to act, the former concentrates on the consequences¹ of an action and the latter on the action itself. Utilitarianism (represented for example by Mill) is a teleological theory which regards maximizing happiness as the goal of action. "It is a theory that is disinterested as well as based on self-interest (insofar as we consider everyone's happiness and not just our own). It is theory about what is rational as well as what is right; it tells us both how to be happy and what we ought to do."² Utilitarianism weighs results rather than either principles or intentions. "So obedience to the utility principle is not nearly so essential to the evaluation of actions and particular rules as the *consequences* of those action and rules."³

As represented by Kant, the deontological approach to theory, grounds morality on duty, "...an action or a class of actions is justified by showing that it is *right*, not by showing that it has good consequences."⁴ The judgment of

¹ Consequentialist, however, seems too broad a term to be useful. It covers Dewey and Aristotle -- anyone, indeed who worries about the consequences of an action in terms of 'what sort of a person will this make me?' as well as those who are preoccupied with 'what is the bearing of my action on desirable states of affairs.'

² Robert C. Solomon, *Ethics: A Brief Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1984), 117.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 125.

right/wrong action depends on the good will of the agent rather than on luck or "inclination" (desires, emotions, moods, whim, inspiration, or sympathy)."⁵ Just as in utilitarianism the judgment of right/wrong depends on the consequences of the action rather than luck, inclination, etc. However, dissatisfied with apparently intractable problems in modern moral theory,⁶ a number of contemporary theorists in the West have reconsidered classical moral theory and attempted in various ways to revive "virtue theory." Thus Aristotle has taken a place alongside Kant and Mill as a representative of a viable way to undertake ethical theory.⁷ The recent revival of interest in virtue-ethics refocuses attention on standards for the moral assessment of character, rather than the standards for the moral assessment of action alone. It is concerned with the kind of persons we are or should be, rather than merely with what consequences we should realize, or what duties we should perform. Virtue ethics seeks to define the excellent person who acts well and serves as an example

⁵ Ibid., 126.

⁶ For example, the discontinuity of shared values in modern society, and the isolation of human beings from one another are symptomatic of the abandonment by modern moral theory of the concept of human nature, and of the attempt to describe comprehensive human goals. The failure of ideas of human nature and common human goals are not the only problems of contemporary morals, but I will not here survey all the failed projects. See MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

⁷ G. E. M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," in *Philosophy* 33 (1958), 1-19. Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978). Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue. Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. XIII, ed. Peter A. French, Theodore E. Uehling, Jr., Howard K. Wettstein (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988). *The Virtues: Contemporary Essays of Moral Character*, ed. Robert B. Kruschwitz and Robert C. Roberts (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1987).

to inspire others. Aristotle's virtue ethics is, however, teleological to the extent that what it answers to is judged by a conception of flourishing life. "There is a teleological aspect in aretaic ethics [virtue-based system], but it is different from the kind usually found in utilitarianism, which asks what sort of action will maximize happiness or utility. The aretaic concept of teleology focuses, rather, on the *goal* of life: living well and achieving excellence."⁸

By relying on virtuous character for the guidance of action, virtue theory seems to offer flexibility in confronting different contexts rather than relying on rigid rules for guiding actions.⁹ Indeed virtue theory claims that the conception of a virtuous person is able to provide guidance for action, since it is able to be sensitive to different contexts rather than rely on absolute and thus decontextualized principles. Because of this, virtues have to function as *contextual* rather than absolute principles. Rather than pressing universal rules, virtue theory depends on the concept of a person of virtue in each culture. A virtue is disposition to act appropriately for the achievement of some human goal; a moral virtue is one where the human goal is the character of the agent insofar as it constitutes a set of

⁸ Louis P. Pojman, *Ethics* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1990), 115. Also, Robert C. Solomon says: "this goal is part of a much larger scheme of things in which Aristotle speculates upon the purpose of human existence and, ultimately, the purpose of the existence of the world." *Ethics: A Brief Introduction*, 113.

⁹ Did Aristotle affirm the existence of some rigid rules? Aristotle did write that 'adultery,' 'theft,' and 'murder' imply by their names that they are themselves bad (1107a11-12) but he did not specify rules for determining what constituted adultery, theft or murder.

dispositions which will sustain a life worth living. Evidently in different cultural contexts (structured by different social and economic relations) conceptions of what it is to have a life worth living, as well as the dispositions which will contribute to the realization of these conceptions, will vary.

One way to gauge the extent of the differences this encompasses would be to treat Aristotle side by side with Confucius. In the classical tradition of China, as in that of Greece, there is a careful consideration of the characteristics of an outstanding human being. Both treatments of human conduct assume that human beings have a nature, work toward goals which shape their lives within family and society. They share a common interest in trying to identify the qualities of a person who deserves to be admired and through those qualities project patterns of response which may be looked to for guidance. The differences between Aristotle and Confucius (for example, in psychology, in conceptions of the thinking process, in their respective treatment of tradition) are also numerous and instructive. Given the differences and similarities between Aristotle and Confucius, and the fact the two philosophers have comparable standing in their traditions, it would appear that virtue theory could add to its resources with a clearer understanding of where Aristotle and Confucius converge in their consonant approaches to ethics, and also of how their views diverge and yet occasionally complement each other.

This dissertation explores the meaning of virtue, through comparative analysis of Aristotle and Confucius, and argues in the course of carrying this out for the viability of virtue-centered ethics. In order to offer a viable theory, virtue theory

must establish two things: First, that a sense of what is virtuous can guide action, and secondly, that the concept of virtue properly understood can be used to establish common principles for judging standards of conduct across various eras and cultures. How this is possible is best made clear by understanding that and how virtues should relate to one another: *the unity of the virtues*. The main claim of this study thus is that the virtues function as an organic unity in the ethical theory of Aristotle and Confucius, and that the operation of this organic unity is central to the strength of virtue-ethics.

Virtues -- according to Aristotle and Confucius -- function not as separate and independent dispositions, but as an organic unity.¹⁰ In an organic unity such as the human body the different parts and different dimensions (a cell, organ, body) function harmoniously. Thus the focus of this study is the relationships among the virtues, rather than the individual virtues severally. It is possible to think one recognizes a virtue in someone because of one or two things they do (e.g., act

¹⁰ My position is linked with that of Plato's Protagoras: "Is Virtue one [thing], and are Justice, Temperance and Piety parts of it? Or are all those [words] I have just mentioned names of the same [things], which is one [thing]? (*Protagoras*, 329c-d)" In other words, "Do all of these names apply to the same thing? Or must each apply exclusively to its own peculiar 'essence'?" Protagoras agrees with the second (p. 227). ; Virtues are related as "parts of the face" not as "the parts of [a bar of] gold, which do not differ from one another except in size" [329D (p. 231)]; "Which of these two things is the case: That some men partake of one of these parts of virtue, others of some other part? or is it the case that if a man has one he will of necessity have them all?" [329E2-4 (p. 233)] According to Gregory Vlastos, Plato takes the second. In this case, the former is a person who has not yet achieved any virtues, and the latter is one who is achieved all the virtues. (All quotations cited from Gregory Vlastos, *Platonic Studies*, 2d ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1981).

without apparent fear, hence think they are courageous). To have dispositions (*naturally* as in young people or *studied* as in people who are interested only in being thought well of by other people) which produce only these superficial signs is not to have the real thing (but only a simulacrum). A single such "virtue" or a particular subcollection of "virtues" cannot bring human beings to self-realization. In fact, to possess isolated "virtues" can be dangerous. Just as the human body cannot function well without the integration of all its parts, so one virtue without the other virtues (or even a collection of virtues without harmonious integration) cannot function well.

This thesis is challenged by Alasdair MacIntyre who denies the unity of the virtues in Confucius and in general takes a pessimistic view of the commensurability of Aristotle and Confucius.

...[For Aristotle] defectiveness in any one virtue in an individual person, being a sign of disorder in that *psyche*, is a sign of defectiveness with respect also to the other virtues.

Confucius denies this type of strong thesis about the unity of the virtue "A courageous man does not necessarily possess *jen*," although one cannot have *jen* without courage.¹¹

To be sure Confucius does not have a moral psychology at all like Aristotle's. Aristotle's moral psychology is, however, not the only thing which supports his belief in the need for unified virtues. Indeed the passage which leads up to the

¹¹ *The Analects* XIV.4. Alasdair MacIntyre, "Incommensurability, Truth, and the Conversation between Confucians and Aristotelians about the Virtues," in *Culture and Modernity*, ed. Eliot Deutsch (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 106.

statement of that particular thesis by Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics*¹² VI.13), seems to suggest that it is because a concrete action has many dimensions that one needs *phronesis*, so that all of the dimensions of consideration will be properly coordinated.¹³ For example, where the mean for courage lies may depend on what is expected of one as a father, a person responsible for the lives of certain ordinary citizens (or soldiers), etc. Similarly generosity, temperance, etc.

Nor is it clear that the *Analects* XIV.4 is the definitive pronouncement on this subject. Other passages the *Analects* VIII.2 & XVII.23¹⁴ suggest that courage without other virtues such as rites and righteousness is not a good thing.

The Master said, 'Unless a man has the spirit of the rites, in being respectful he will wear himself out, in being careful he will become timid, in having courage he will become unruly, and in being forthright he will become intolerant.'...¹⁵

Tzu-lu said, 'Does the gentleman consider courage a supreme quality?' The Master said, 'For the gentleman it is morality that is supreme. Possessed of

¹² *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross, revised by J. O. Urmson, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle* II, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985). Also, I will refer to the *Nicomachean Ethics* by 'NE' in the rest of my dissertation, unless another translation is indicated.

¹³ I acknowledge Sorabji for this reading. Richard Sorabji, "Aristotle on the Role of Intellect in Virtue," in *Essays on the Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1980), 207.

¹⁴ Hereafter, the abbreviation 'AN' designates *The Analects*. English translations of passages from the *Analects* are from *The Analects*, trans. D. C. Lau (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979), unless another translation is indicated.

¹⁵ AN VIII.2.

courage but devoid of righteousness, a gentleman will make trouble while a small man will be a brigand.'¹⁶

It is natural to speak of isolated character traits which approximate those of a fully virtuous person (what will in the long run be discovered to be *simulacra* of the virtues) as though they were virtues.¹⁷ Aristotle is responsive to this temptation as much as Confucius, for he recognizes "qualities similar to courage"¹⁸ and courage as a natural virtue as less than courage in the full sense.¹⁹ A person who perseveres through hardship even if in pursuit of worthless goals might be called courageous, although from a wider perspective this praise might be tempered or withheld.

MacIntyre, furthermore, insists that because Confucius lacks the conception of *telos* and *polis* as well as *psyche*, there is incommensurability between Aristotle and Confucius. The two do not share the concepts necessary for a dialogue to take place.

[I]n the Aristotelian scheme of things the concepts of the particular virtues find application and exemplification only if and insofar as the concepts of

¹⁶ AN XVII.23. For another example of someone using 'courage' (*andreia*) in this way while subscribing to a unity of virtue thesis. See Plato *Laws* 630b, 696b-e, 710a-b. Plato is apparently prepared to recognize courage and temperance apart from the rest of the virtues, but not to abandon the unity claim. Also see, R. F. Stalley, *An Introduction to Plato's Laws* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 56-58.

¹⁷ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 183.

¹⁸ NE III.8.

¹⁹ NE VI.13, 1144b2-5.

psyche, *telos*, and *polis* also find application and exemplification in some way or other.²⁰

However, having correctly observed these differences MacIntyre infers too hastily that there is no basis to compare the two. Although Confucius indeed does not have the ideas of hierarchical *psyche*,²¹ *telos*, and *polis* in name, when we consider the whole picture of Confucian thoughts, we find that there are in Confucius functional counterparts to certain key Aristotelian concepts. Most important of these is that benevolence (*jen* 仁) in Confucius is the counterpart of practical wisdom in Aristotle; *jen* is the core virtue for Confucius serving as the center of a unified set of virtues, much as practical wisdom serves for Aristotle. The general principle followed here is to seek analogical counterparts rather than similar concepts -- either concepts of virtues or concepts which frame theories of virtues.

To answer MacIntyre on this point will require the work done in the following three chapters. When the comparison is in place it will be appropriate to address MacIntyre's deeper worry about the incommensurability of Aristotle and Confucius. Briefly we can say here that MacIntyre wants to adjudicate between the two -- decide which has the true theory -- and it will be seen (from the main body of the dissertation) that it is both possible and fruitful to do comparative philosophy without demanding adjudication. My project is not to contest the claim that

²⁰ Alasdair MacIntyre, "Incommensurability, Truth, and the Conversation between Confucius and Aristotelian about the Virtues," in *Culture and Modernity*, 106-107.

²¹ The 'hierarchical psyche' refers to the soul's vegetative, sensitive, and rational stages.

Aristotle and Confucius are incommensurable (because that claim is phrased in terms of adjudication) and it is important to acknowledge the differences which will frame the efforts here to find analogical counterparts: (1) different conceptions of particular virtues like courage, (2) different socio-political context (polis vs. warring states), (3) different aims. Aristotle's treatment aims at a discursive understanding of values and norms, on which he seeks to center an understanding of human beings in terms of their social and biological character, and hence their situation as part of nature hence. Confucius aims at a deeper insight into the authority of his culture and of the ancient sage kings who embody and epitomize the best of that culture. Although they have these different aims they share a common project of refining the concepts of virtue common in their respective cultures, not in order to rationalize, but to reshape the values in response to perceived problems.²²

My purpose in comparing Aristotle and Confucius is in any case neither simply to identify their similarities and to overlook their dissimilarities, nor to stress differences which make comparison difficult if not impossible, but rather to present them as contributors to a more general theory of the virtues, and by comparative analysis, to enrich the thought of the tradition each represents, and to contribute a

²² In the case of Confucius we have the perceived political problems of the warring states period and the perceived breakdown of traditional values, such as piety, loyalty. Aristotle, I have to admit, does not express specific dissatisfaction with the prevailing moral climate, but he is the heir of Plato's framework (the *Ethics* and *Politics* is series of moves on the gameboard which Plato set up) and Plato is undeniably in the business of moral reform. Aristotle may not have to preach the need for critical reflection on prevailing moral attitudes, because Plato has created a space in which the reflection is possible.

more comprehensive understanding of virtue theory. This comparison, moreover will serve certain practical needs of our time. In modern society cultures must inevitably interact with each other. If we understand how Aristotle and Confucius understood the virtues, there is a possibility of enhancing communication between the ancient and contemporary, and also between East and West.

Can a virtue-centered approach to ethics be applied in today's pluralistic world, which does not seem to have a firm framework of shared values?²³ Comparing concepts of virtues in different traditions can help us see whether different traditions have any common moral ground. A virtue-centered approach is contextual; it has more flexibility across cultural diversity.²⁴ Although human beings share biological and social aspects, their cultural differences can appear enormous, but they nevertheless should not be made to appear incommensurable.

If Aristotle and Confucius can be compared with each other, and if each tradition can recognize the articulation of virtues used by its counterpart, then there is the possibility that modern Aristotelians and Confucians can understand each

²³ 'Shared' refers to the fact that I am discussing ethics from a cultural perspective (that ethics, as Aristotle defined it is about *ethos* which is shared habits *hexeis*). The problem on the horizon of my project is that people of different cultures have come to live together in communities on both sides (and the middle) of the Pacific Ocean, and there is no real community where there is no shared framework of values.

²⁴ Utilitarianism does not recognize that conceptions of happiness are culturally determined; Kantianism attempts a universal perspective that does not credit cultural conditions. This is not to say that if they did they could not become more flexible, but it is not my concern to explore how this might be done, but to develop the challenge on this point from a virtue perspective.

other, that each can draw on the other for resources. Eventually this kind of study will show that Aristotle and Confucius are two thinkers who articulate human possibility and enlarge our views about our lives, and furthermore, that Aristotelians and Confucians can even collaborate with one another in advancing their traditions for everyone's ultimate benefit. One could argue that even if we do not understand at any deep level the variations of cultural articulation, conversation is still possible. I cannot say that conversation in this circumstance is impossible merely that its prospects are not good. If a comparison is content to trace superficial values, then it can easily succeed, but if the communication is for our further development or constructing better self-understanding, then we need to appreciate better the variation and underlying commonalities.

Conversation, however, requires the right attitude, since once a person has settled habits, it seems difficult to change or to grasp cultural differences, even when this is called for by fast changing modern society, driven as it is by economical and technological development. In cross-cultural communication one must be searching for a deeper understanding, not just holding onto one's ancestors' views or accomplishments. Therefore, it is important not just to defend our decisions as good or right, but also to engage in examination of controversies with an open mind when they arise, without disregarding some viewpoint or blindly accepting others. In fact, even if Aristotle and Confucius do not say that true virtues keep themselves abreast of changing circumstances, this can be inferred from what they say and as a result a virtuous person should be capable of having flexibility. Cross-cultural studies

moreover are a good exercise for building flexible responses even where the cultural resources surveyed have no direct application.

The main sources for this study are Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*, and Confucius' *Lun-yü* 論語 or *The Analects*. Aristotle and Confucius are the subjects of this dissertation because they are the main sources of virtue ethics in their respective traditions. As secondary sources, I have consulted other works of Aristotle, and for Confucianism I have utilized *Mencius* 孟子, *The Great Learning* 大學, and *The Doctrine of the Mean* 中庸 for clarifications and or elaborations of Confucius' positions.²⁵ A primary aim of this study is to contribute to understanding of the relationship between Aristotle and Confucius -- more precisely, between the core of the Aristotelian tradition and the core of the Confucian tradition, for it is neither philosophers nor texts alone that constitute a tradition, but rather the meanings constituted in the interpretations of texts. The Aristotelian tradition has Neo-Platonic elements (particularly evident in the emphasis placed here on *Nicomachean Ethics* X), and in the Chinese tradition, Confucius is read with the help of later Confucians such as Mencius. As a consequence my reading of

²⁵ A. S. Cua says, "In the Confucian traditions, the acknowledgment of the canonical status of the Four Books (*The Analects*, *Mencius*, *The Great Learning*, and *The Doctrine of the Mean*) is due to Chu Hsi's scholarly efforts, representing his selective decision." ("The Idea of Confucian Tradition," *Review of Metaphysics* 45, [June 1992], 814). Also, Tu, wei-ming argues in *Centrality and Commonality* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989) that *The Great Learning* and *The Doctrine of the Mean* are the mere elaborations of the *Analects*.

Aristotle may contain certain Neo-Platonic accretions (not to mention Platonic elements on which Aristotle built),²⁶ and my reading of Confucius is at points influenced by Mencius.²⁷ My aim, however, is not to peel away layers of interpretation to reveal "the real Aristotle" and "the real Confucius," but to show modern ethicists some of the resources available in the sources of these classical traditions.

Both Confucius and Aristotle focus on excellences of individual character and on social practice. Plato had already emphasized the harmony of virtues, but Aristotle discusses the virtues more broadly and in markedly practical terms. Mencius provides more details about the virtues than does Confucius, but his

²⁶ See Plotinus, *Enneads*, 233, footnote 133: "The term Vision translates *theoria*, presented by Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book X as the highest activity of man. It is this concept that Plotinus is developing further here." *Enneads* is translated by Stephen Mackenna, abridged with an introduction and notes by John Dillon (London: Penguin Books, 1991).

I am acknowledging only that my reading follows a tradition which *may* be reading neo-Platonic preoccupations back into Aristotle, thereby influencing what emphasis is to be placed on those passages where Aristotle says that our highest fulfillment lies in contemplation. This influence may extend to preferences for translations and interpretations. The prevailing view of how to understand *Eudemian Ethics* 1249b6-23 treats the phrase '*ton theon therapeuein kai theorein* (to care for and contemplate the god)' (b21) as referring to God; although a minority of scholars treats it as referring to 'the higher of the two parts of the rational soul.' (Michael Woods, *Aristotle's Eudemian Ethics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 196. The preference for the former view may reflect the neo-Platonic reading of Aristotle which was fed into and sustained by Christian philosophy, but I am not for that reason attempting to distance myself from it.

²⁷ Notably, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* shows an ambivalence between chapters I and X. W. F. R. Hardie, *Aristotle's Ethical Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 2. In Confucius' *Analects* the final chapters XVI-XX seem to be accretions. See A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the TAO* (La Salle, IL: Open Court Press, 1989), 10.

concern is limited to certain specific problems. Confucius provides a more general and a more original idea of the virtues. However, Plato's theme of the unity of virtues and Mencius' specifications of application will play a supporting role in the work of this thesis.

An important difficulty in comparing Aristotle and Confucius is understanding the terminologies they use in conceptualizing nature and human nature. Careful attention must be paid to the role of language, and to cultural and social differences that provide the setting of their respective philosophical discussions. There are contentious issues in translating concepts from Chinese into English, e.g., rendering '*jen*' as 'benevolence' rather than 'human heartedness' or 'authoritative humanity,' or '*t'ien* 天' as 'heaven' rather than 'the divine.' When such difficulties of translation arise, I will attempt to clarify the meanings of terms. I use existing translations of Confucius, but where I think the translations reflect inadequate interpretations, I have modified them. For purposes of analysis, I use the terminology from the original Chinese as well as from the translations where it seems appropriate. Our reflections on Aristotle and Confucius must work at the level of the whole structure of their thought and in the context of their cultural surroundings.

For the most part this thesis proceeds on a meta-ethical level, that is to say it considers questions which belongs to the (normative) investigation of how values are formed come to be clarified, altered and applied in new situations. The claim that

one may use the fixed dispositions of certain agents (recognized as virtuous) as a way to resolve questions of how to proceed in problematic situations is, for example, a meta-ethical claim. It is a further matter of normative ethics (a substantial question) of exactly what behavior should be regarded as the falling under the virtue of, say courage. The distinction between meta-ethics and normative-ethics is, of course, not one available to Aristotle or to Confucius. They moved naturally, as does anyone who reflects on ethical issues, to questions that belong on the meta-ethical level, but they were not tempted to see the latter as separate from and independent of the former. How one treats meta-ethical issues influences in important ways the beliefs one will hold on a normative level.

It has already been made clear that the meta-ethical approach taken by both Aristotle and Confucius focuses upon the characteristics of human beings -- those which are sought are referred to (in English) as virtues. On page 3 above a virtue was said to be "disposition to act appropriately for the achievement of some human goal..." Somewhat more precise wording is found in what Alasdair MacIntyre offers as a "partial and tentative definition of a virtue." *"A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods."*²⁸

As the term 'practices' here is left unspecified this definition covers human qualities that would not be treated as 'moral' virtues, such as the dispositions which

²⁸ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 191.

enable athletes to win games or businessmen to make profitable deals. The practices (or forms of practice) which interest Aristotle and Confucius -- to expand further on the definition of 'moral virtue' sketched on page 3 -- are those with one another. Success or failure lies in the extent to which these forms of practice either promote or work against the achieving of the sort of life humans should live -- what in an Aristotelian idiom would be termed 'flourishing' and in a Confucian idiom 'harmony (with the mandate of Heaven).' The forms of practice which interest Aristotle and Confucius are so comprehensive that it does not occur to them to distinguish between internal and external goods.

The second chapter will examine more closely the respective conceptions Aristotle and Confucius have the goal of these general forms patterns of response. The best way to obtain a feel for the sort of comprehensiveness which characterizes their respective to inquiries is to survey the extent of the human characteristics (the 'virtues') which they consider. Thus in the first chapter, "A Comparative Anatomy of Virtue," I begin with Aristotle's and Confucius's claims about the nature of virtue by surveying and classifying the virtues, and examining the general foundation of virtue according to each philosopher. The chapter concludes by examining the arguments that virtues need to function together as an organic unity and so even particular virtues depend on other virtues for their implementation and point back to those other virtues. In the second chapter, "The Realization of Virtue," I examine Aristotle's and Confucius' respective claims about the goal of virtue, and the means they regard as appropriate to achieving goals. Having shown how Aristotle and

Confucius schematized the virtues, and how each has a vision of the unity of virtues, in the third and final chapter, "Virtue Theory as a Foundation for Moral Theory," I indicate the potential contributions of virtue ethics for contemporary moral theory. I respond to criticisms of the virtue-theories of Aristotle and Confucius, and defend virtue-ethics by showing how the organically integrated virtues can provide moral guidance for individuals and societies across time and culture.

Aristotle and Confucius start by accepting the fact that human beings desire 'to live well,' but since they have different ideas about the structure of human society, and hence, about human goals, and the appropriate means of achieving goals, they arrive at different conceptions of the nature of the unity of virtues. For all our differences we have in common biology, social, cultural constraints in common way. I undertake to show that while these divergent factors may lead to us constitute in different ways the core relations among the virtues, common factors provide the ground and boundary of a virtue-based framework for cross-cultural communication. By creating a dialogue between Aristotle's and Confucius' conceptions of the virtues, we can address some of crucial problems of ethical theory and establish a worthwhile model of what is required for human beings to live harmonious and fulfilled lives.

CHAPTER ONE

THE COMPARATIVE ANATOMY OF VIRTUE

1. WHAT IS VIRTUE ?

A comparison of what Aristotle and Confucius have to say on the excellences of character commonly known as the virtues must confront the fact that whereas Aristotle left material for a systematic treatment, all that survives of Confucius' views on this subject are anecdotes and fragments of conversation. Consequently some reconstruction is required to arrive at Confucius' conception of these excellences and a list of what for him they would be. With the necessary organization imposed on the material found in the *Analects* this section outlines Aristotle's and Confucius' concepts of virtue. It then surveys examples of what the two thinkers regarded as virtues, the extent to which the examples offered by the two thinkers correspond and considers the significance (in terms of their respective social contexts) of the virtues which they select as central and which form thereby the basis of a hierarchy of virtues. Although it is clear that both Aristotle and Confucius inquired into excellences of human character, there are difficulties with using the terms 'virtue' as a translation of Aristotle's '*arete*' and Confucius' '*te* 德' which need to be addressed and these are taken up at the end of this section.

1. Meanings of "Virtue"

For Aristotle, a virtue (*arete*) is an "excellence" of the soul. Aristotle's classification of the faculties of the soul allows him to make a distinction between intellectual and moral virtues. Moral virtue is defined as a disposition of the soul toward choice in accordance with a mean regarding things that give us pleasure or cause distress. The proper mean is determined by *logos* or reason and is modeled by the example of a person possessing *phronesis* or practical wisdom. Confucius does not give a formal definition of 'virtue' (*te*), but it is clear that Confucius thinks that virtue is an inborn capacity; also that virtue is a developed disposition; and that virtue is a goal fulfilled through cultivation. For Confucius, as for Aristotle, persons become good or bad by becoming habituated to good or evil action. Those who give up making the effort to habituate themselves properly cannot achieve cultivation. For both Confucius and Aristotle, moral virtue involves a mean, avoiding both excess and deficiency.²⁹

Aristotle and Confucius regard the virtues of character as reflecting the best humans can achieve. They are the central focus of human effort itself to live in accord with nature and with others.

2. Kinds of Virtue

According to Aristotle, intellectual virtues include cleverness, retentiveness, theoretical wisdom, insight or understanding, and practical wisdom. Moral virtues

²⁹ AN VI.29.

include courage, temperance, liberality, magnificence, proper pride (high-mindedness), good temperedness, friendliness, truthfulness, ready wit, and justice. Confucius does not formally divide the virtues into moral and intellectual types. It would be unwise to impose this distinction on Confucian virtues, for the Chinese terms for the virtues presuppose both a moral and an intellectual aspect. Confucius clearly treats some virtues in both moral and intellectual terms; benevolence, for example, is treated in both these contexts. The main emphasis of Confucius is on practice rather than theory, so the distinction between moral and intellectual virtues is not one he thinks needs to be made.

The chief virtues Confucius names are *jen* (love and benevolence 仁), *yi* (righteousness 義), *li* (propriety 禮), *chih* (wisdom, knowledge 知), *yung* (courage 勇), *hsiao* (filial piety 孝), *chung-shu* (consideration 忠恕), *hsin* (trustworthiness 信), *chih* (forthrightness 直), *kung* (respectfulness 恭), *k'uan* (tolerance 寬), *min* (quickness 敏), *hui* (generosity 惠), *kang* (resoluteness, backbone 剛), and *ching* (reverence 敬).³⁰ Some of these have clear Aristotelian counterparts; others do not. Courage appears to be one such virtue both recognize. Confucian filial piety and reverence do not appear in Aristotle's lists, and most of Aristotle's intellectual virtues cannot find their counterparts in Confucius. Although there is no one-to-one correspondence between Aristotle's list of virtues and Confucius' list of virtues, nevertheless the Aristotelian virtuous man and the Confucian virtuous man would share numerous characteristics that are directly relevant to their being virtuous.

³⁰ The lists of Confucian virtues are selected by my own judgement.

When discussing the individual virtues, Aristotle gives precedence to two of Plato's cardinal virtues, courage and temperance (moderation). He devotes a whole chapter to a third virtue: justice. Confucius similarly treats some virtues as more important than others, but he appears to single out *jen* as in several respects, the most important of all. Aristotle similarly places *phronesis* in a unique position (in his practical system this virtue replaces the fourth Platonic cardinal virtue, *sophia*.)

Jen (benevolence)³¹, *yi* (righteousness), *li* (propriety)³², *chih* (wisdom, knowledge), and *yung* (courage) are major virtues in the *Analects*. *Hsiao* is the beginning of *jen* and *chung-shu* is its completion.³³ *Kung* (respectfulness), *k'uan* (tolerance), *hsin* (trustworthiness), *min* (quickness), *hui* (generosity) are expressions

³¹ "See Wing-tsit Chan, 'The Evolution of the Confucian Concept of Jen', *Philosophy East and West* 4, no. 4 (1955); and 'Chinese and Western Interpretations of Jen (Humanity)', *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 2, no. 2 (1975)." Recited from *Understanding The Chinese Mind*, ed. Robert E. Allinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 233, footnote 67. Also, see Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), 81.

³² See Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of thought in Ancient China*, 67-75.

³³ This is similar to what is said when Socrates discusses *sophrosyne* with Charmides. *Sophrosyne* means according to Edith Hamilton "accepting the bounds which excellence lays down for human nature, restraining impulses to unrestricted freedom, to all excess, obeying the inner laws of harmony and proportion." *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, 14th printing, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 99. But young Charmides defines it first as a kind of quietness which is doing all things in an orderly and quiet manner, and further as modesty, and doing our own business. Thus, it seems that just as in Confucius the beginning of *jen* is filial piety, for a Greek of the age of a young Charmides, quietness and modesty are the beginning of *sophrosyne*.

of *jen*.³⁴ Although *jen* is the main virtue, other virtues are not subsidiary to *jen*, they coexist with it. For Confucius, filial piety and reverence are not virtues secondary to *jen*, rather they are the root of *jen*. Filial piety should be practiced consistently and differs in degree and appropriateness according to the age at which it is practiced. It cannot be replaced by any other virtue. As with Aristotle's *phronesis*, *jen* both co-ordinates other virtues and embraces them.³⁵

Aristotle's list of virtue focuses on characteristics which individuals need to interact successfully with other people (who are socially equal as well as socially superior or inferior). Confucian virtues appear to be selected to sustain a harmonious social order which is thoroughly hierarchical.

3. Comparative Considerations

Translating Chinese into English is always difficult, especially in philosophy, because many terms carry connotations not shared between the two languages. Translating *jen* as 'benevolence,' for example, suggests Judaeo-Christian ideas inappropriate to Confucianism with its different presuppositions, such as an isolated faculty of freewill.³⁶ Roger T. Ames says "*Jen*, as a homophone of 'person'

³⁴ AN XVII.6.

³⁵ Mencius treats *jen* as one of natural germs in human nature, although *jen* is considered including all four basic germs (*jen*, *yi*, *li*, *chih*) of human nature. In Confucius *jen* is not the basic feature of human beings. Rather it is achieved through cultivation and is more like the ultimate of all virtues.

³⁶ On which see. Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), Chapter VI.

denoting achieved personhood, is the whole human process: body and mind."³⁷ So, it is wrong to translate *jen* as "benevolence, love, altruism, kindness, charity, compassion, magnanimity, perfect virtue, goodness, human-heartedness, humanity," and similar notions because these translations make *jen* a "subjective" feeling.³⁸ Bearing these in mind, I will nevertheless use 'benevolence' as the translation of *jen* insofar as it denotes a publically observable attitude displayed in a person's conduct. Translating *te* as 'virtue' is even riskier, for both the Chinese and the English terms have rich philosophic histories which complicate their meanings. The term 'virtue' goes back to the Latin *virtus*, which corresponds to the Greek *arete* found in Plato and Aristotle. Originally the word meant any kind of excellence or ability: a thief's *arete* was in stealing. *Arete* became connected with morality in the ideas of Plato and Aristotle, where excellence as a human being entailed moral goodness.

The Latin *virtus* originally meant manliness and the power of a man to act like a man. Like the Greek *arete*, the virtue of something was its potency, its ability to act. The virtue of a poison may be its deadliness and quickness. Christian ideas of humanity -- the idea that there is a right way to live -- also coupled human virtue with morality. In English, 'virtue' has an almost exclusively moral meaning, apart from some archaic constructions like the virtue of a poison, and the common modern

³⁷ Roger T. Ames, "The Meaning of Body in Classical Chinese Philosophy," in *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*, ed. Thomas P. Kasulis with Roger T. Ames and Wimal Dissanayake (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1993), 164.

³⁸ Ibid., 163-164.

idiom "that in virtue of which." To call someone virtuous is to call that person morally upright (although 'virtuous' carries a suggestion of primness with it!) and normally has little or nothing to do with ability, power or skill.

The Chinese word *te* is a complicated term; like virtue it is used differently in different philosophies. Confucius and the Taoist Chuang Tzu agree that *te* is given by *tao* 道. *Te* is thus a kind of power given in a thing. Thus, humans are connected to *tao* by *te*. Beyond this agreement, the two philosophers diverge. Confucius' concern focused on human beings' special ability to develop *te* rather than on other beings in nature. *Te* is a potential in the sense of a field of possibilities to be developed. Abilities are not present full-blown from the outset but must be cultivated. Hence, learning is crucial for personal realization, and learning requires practice, not just scholarship. The *te* is made real in doing; and the doing is made good by cultivation, but it is one's own *te* that must be cultivated; this depends entirely on personal integrity. Chuang Tzu believes that all things -- not just humans -- have *te*. Here, *te* and *tao* are closely connected [*Tao* and *te* are the same thing in quality]: *tao* for the myriad things, *te* for the single thing. To stay close to one's *te* is, therefore, to stay pure. Staying close to *te* is to stay close to the *tao*, setting the individual in harmony with the myriad things.³⁹

Recognizing these differences in the use of the words, one can ask whether 'virtue' is a good translation of '*te*.' The answer is, "it depends." The Confucian

³⁹ See David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1987), 216-226.

idea of *te* as individual potential which as cultivated and expressed resonates with some aspects of the Latin *virtus* as a potency to act. The strength of *te* is that it also suggests the idea of excellence or ability found in Latin and Greek conceptions of virtue. Chuang Tzu and Confucius both consider *te* to be good; it is not a morally indifferent term. This standpoint fits well with the English *virtue*, and with some applications of the Greek and Latin.

But there are real differences as well. The Greek term *arete* suggests any excellence, even one that is morally neutral or negative. Both the Greek and Latin terms are more concerned with action than possibility. Even though *arete* is a disposition, it is according to Aristotle first to some degree an actuality rather than a pure potency; that is, *arete* is already a developed trait rather than a primal one. In a similar vein, *arete* is more individual in its sense of excellence; there is not a sense of union with any sort of ordering principle until Plato and Aristotle connect excellence with morality by appealing to the social dimensions of human character. (The Stoic use of *logos* as both an individual and a universal cosmic force, and a social ordering principle, is a closer parallel to the Chinese -- the former to Chuang Tzu, and the latter to Confucius.)

There is no single English term that captures all the aspects of *te*. Virtue, with its connotations of morality and limited connotations of potential, comes close enough -- providing we remain careful not to equate *te* with the older, less moral and more active ancestors of the word *virtue*.

2. THE FOUNDATIONS OF VIRTUE

Aristotle and Confucius focus on human virtues and they believe that it is in our nature to develop them. However, both understand human beings in the larger context of nature. Even though Aristotle and Confucius think that human beings are superior to other things in nature, neither wants to ignore the role of nature; they agree that nature manifests both constancy and change, and both realize that human beings interact with nature, and what's more, are a part of nature. But the two philosophers offer different accounts of nature. Aristotle is more theoretically concerned than Confucius, and strives to understand nature for its own sake. Confucius far more often uses the word *t'ien*, "heaven," instead of *tzu-jan* 自然, nature. He is concerned entirely with practical matters, especially regarding the relations of *t'ien* with human beings.⁴⁰

Confucius does not try to understand human beings as he would try to understand other parts of nature. The "mandate of heaven" partly implies what is given to us by fortune, to put the matter in Aristotle's terms. What concerns

⁴⁰ *T'ien* is usually translated as "heaven," and before proceeding, we must clarify the term in order to avoid misinterpretation. 'Heaven' in English does not necessarily mean the abode of [the Christian] God. It refers also to the dome of the sky and in this sense is a good translation of the Latin *caelum* and Greek *ouranos*, which correspond approximately to the use of *t'ien* in Chinese. As Chinese cosmology is naturalistic in the sense that humans are regarded as integral parts of nature, heaven may be viewed as the most comprehensive framework from which humans try to view their situation. References to the 'mandate of heaven' (see the detail in Chapter II) may be taken to be no more than what humans will perceive is they adopt this standpoint.

Confucius is the personal realization of that mandate through cooperation with nature. He thinks that the affairs of human beings are inseparable from nature. *T'ien* has not merely a moral force, but also an active moral role. Thus when a government or ruler is corrupted, heaven destroys that state and saves the people from their suffering, allowing a better regime to arise.

Human nature is explained in relation to general nature, especially, the relation between body and soul, and between body and mind in Confucius.

In Aristotle, virtue depends on thought. It involves "an activity of soul in accordance with, or not without, rational principle."⁴¹ Rational activity is both practical and speculative. Confucius on the other hand, does not emphasize rationality as the specific differentia of human beings. For him, human nature is the foundation of virtue, and human nature is understood largely in social terms.

1. Nature

Human nature is explained in relation to nature in general. All things pursue their perfection. Aristotle thinks of "the world as a cosmos -- an ordered world -- for only that which is ordered, permanent, and indestructible can be truly known; as such, it exists of necessity and is therefore eternal."⁴²

⁴¹ Aristotle, *Magna Moralia*, trans. St. G. Stock, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle* II, I.34, 1198a7.

⁴² Alexander S. Kohanski, *The Greek Mode of Thought in Western Philosophy* (London: Associated University Press, 1992), 50.

For Aristotle motion is eternal, time is infinite, and all things in nature have their potentiality which can be actualized. Time is uncreated⁴³; time is not comprehended without motion.

Hence what is moved will not be measured by the time simply in so far as it has quantity, but in so far as its *motion* has quantity. Thus none of the things which are neither moved nor at rest are in time; for to be in time is to be measured by time, while time is the measure of motion and rest.⁴⁴

Thus, time and motion are coexistent. Since time does not have beginning and end, motion is also eternal and continuous, as is manifested in the rotary movement of the heavens.⁴⁵ Aristotle insists that "Heaven is animate and possesses a principle of movement."⁴⁶ The whole universe is "immortal and divine."

On the same principle the fulfillment of the whole heaven, the fulfillment which includes all time and infinity, is duration -- a name based upon the fact that it is always -- being immortal and divine.⁴⁷

All natural objects are compounds of matter and form. The matter underlying all things is the substrate of movement and change. The form is what is described by their definition. Form, more than matter, is considered a thing's nature. For a thing

⁴³ Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle* I, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), VIII.1, 251b15.

⁴⁴ *Physics* IV.12, 221b19-22.

⁴⁵ Alexander S. Kohanski, *The Greek Mode of Thought in Western Philosophy*, 65.

⁴⁶ Aristotle, *De Cael*, trans. J. L. Stocks, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle* I, II.2, 285a29-30.

⁴⁷ *De Cael* I.9, 279a25-28.

is called what it is, "when it exists in actuality than when it exists potentially."⁴⁸

For example, a piece of wood is not an axe handle until it has actually become an axe handle, even though it has that potentiality. Furthermore, we can say that the continuous change of nature is "a potentiality striving to reach actuality."⁴⁹

However, toward what does nature progress? Aristotle argues that nature is telic, i.e., each entity strives to actualize its potential. Nature, he says, "strikes after the better,"⁵⁰ and "does nothing without reason or in vain."⁵¹ The fact that things are engaging in motion reveals their incompleteness; and the very fact of motion or change presupposes a prime mover.

Moreover, we have established the fact that it is the movable that is moved; and this moves potentially, not in fulfillment, and the potential is in process to fulfillment, and motion is an incomplete fulfillment of the movable. The mover on the other hand is already in actuality.⁵²

So the necessity that there should be motion continuously requires that there should be a first mover that is unmoved even accidentally, if, as we have said, there is to be in the world of things an unceasing and undying motion, and the world is to remain self-contained and within the same limits; for if the principle is permanent, the universe must also be permanent, since it is continuous with the principle.⁵³

⁴⁸ *Physics* II.1, 193b8.

⁴⁹ W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. VI (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 124.

⁵⁰ Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption*, trans. H. H. Joachim, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle* I, II.10, 336b27.

⁵¹ *De Cael* II.11, 291b13.

⁵² *Physics* VIII.5, 257b6-9.

⁵³ *Physics* VIII.6, 259b23-28.

And further, if there is always something of this nature, a mover that is itself unmoved and eternal, then that which is first moved by it must also be eternal.⁵⁴

There is a mover -- single, eternal, purely actual -- located outside the universe and responsible for the changes that take place within the order of nature.

The first mover, then, of necessity exists; and in so far as it is necessary, it is good, and in this sense a first principle.⁵⁵

For Aristotle, the universe is moved by God as a final cause. However, unlike Confucius's nature which provides the order of the world and human beings, the divine mover does not provide the order of the universe, although he serves as a model for its perfection. The order of the whole is a product of the individual nature of the constituents. It could be assumed that when all things pursue the best of themselves, there will have some kind of harmony in the universe. Human beings should be able to listen to the harmony of the universe and act in accordance with nature.

In Confucius, there is no formal description of nature. Confucius is concerned with the relation between *t'ien* and human beings rather than with the origin or constitution of nature. Nature itself is *tzu-jan* -- the same term also describes the phenomena of nature -- "so of themselves."⁵⁶ In this sense, it is the

⁵⁴ 259b33-34.

⁵⁵ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. W. D. Ross, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle* II, XII.7, 1072b10-11.

⁵⁶ David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius*, 207.

natural way of nature, *tao*. Confucius himself uses the concept of heaven to represent nature and says that *t'ien* provides the regularity of nature.⁵⁷ Also, *t'ien* is described as the origin of the myriad things.⁵⁸ *T'ien* and earth are counterparts of each other. When heaven is given, the earth is given also. In this sense, the Chinese think of heaven and earth as their parents.

The ideas of *t'ien* (heaven) existed along with the idea of *ti* (lord on high, ancestral god) before Confucius.

The ideas of *ti* and *t'ien* are specially related to the practice of ancestral worship in ancient times: the ancestors of men were identified with ultimate reality and regarded as a perennial source of life. ... Later, the more personalistic notion of *ti* was replaced by the less personalistic notion of *t'ien*, as the latter represents a more general notion open to acceptance by a broader group of people. In a sense, we may regard *t'ien* as a generalized notion of *ti*, developed from the need to unify the ancestral worship of different groups of people. Thus *ti* may be regarded as the ancestor of a specific people, *t'ien* as the ancestor of all peoples.

...Because of this concern of *t'ien*, a ruler is responsible for seeing that his people are well-nourished and well-ordered. Also because of it, the will of heaven is identified with the will of the people, so that the dissatisfaction and unrest of the people can be interpreted as a sign of heaven's withdrawing of a ruler's appointment as ruler due to his loss of virtue or goodness.⁵⁹

The concept of *ti*, at first, functioned in legitimating a royal lineage. Later it was broadened to include other lineages and then universalized to include all people's ancestors -- *t'ien*. As *ti* becomes *t'ien*, the conception was not only widened but

⁵⁷ AN XVII.19.

⁵⁸ *The Shoo King (The Book of Historical Documents)* in *The Chinese Classics*, vol. III, trans. James Legge (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), Part V. Bk. I. Pt. i. 3, 283.

⁵⁹ Chung-ying Cheng, *New Dimensions of Confucian and Neo-Confucian Philosophy* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 68.

was depersonalized. Although heaven is regarded as the origin of things, Confucius does not seek to explain how things are produced.⁶⁰

Yet heaven is still understood as a moral force or standard. Since the concept of heaven is as a parent, its main concern is the welfare of the people. When a ruler does not look after the welfare of the people, heaven punishes that ruler and destroys the corrupted dynasty. Thus the *Chou* dynasty justified its attack on the *Shang* dynasty as the mandate of heaven.⁶¹ It is recorded in *The Book of Historical Documents*:

3. Heaven and earth is the parent of all creatures; and of all creatures man is the most highly endowed. The sincere, intelligent, and perspicacious *among men* becomes the great sovereign; and the great sovereign is the parent of the people.

⁶⁰ Chung-ying Cheng: "In all the major traditions and schools of Chinese philosophy it is considered important that man and nature or reality should be seen as forming a unity and harmony, just as man himself is a unity and harmony of mind and body. There is, furthermore, no separation of the natural from the supernatural, if indeed we can regard the pre-Chin conceptions of *ti* (lord on high), *t'ien* (heaven), and *tao* (the way) as supernatural conceptions at all." Therefore, "[T]he Chinese model of causality is basically reflective of the concrete experience of life, history, and time,..." Cited from *New Dimensions of Confucian and Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, 81 & 105.

⁶¹ Herrlee Glessner Creel objects that "This version of history provided the *Chou* conquest with a precedent and made it merely an incident in a recurring cycle." *Chinese Thought from Confucius to Mao Tsé-tung* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), 16. But the Confucian interpretation of the mandate of heaven does not reduce it to mere historicism, for it does not equate all conquest with justice. The Chinese think that it is obvious to read the mandate of heaven, because the people are the watchdogs. A ruler can not fool all the people. It is a very natural fact that when there is a good ruler, people are together united. It is dynamic relations between heaven, a ruler, and people.

4. But now, Show, the king of Shang, does not reverence Heaven above, and inflicts calamities on the people below.

7. *Now* Heaven, to protect the people, made for them rulers, and made for them instructors, that they might be able to be aiding to God, and secure the tranquility of the four quarters of the empire. In regard to who are criminals and who are not, how dare I give any allowance to my own wishes?

9. The iniquity of Shang is full. Heaven gives command to destroy it. If I did not comply with Heaven, my iniquity would be as great.

11. Heaven is compassionate to the people. What the people desire, Heaven will be found to give effect to.⁶²

7. Heaven sees as my people see; Heaven hears as my people hear. The people are blaming me, the one man, *for my delay*; ...I must now go forward.⁶³

The ruler retains the mandate of heaven through ritual sacrifice and taking care of peoples' needs. The ruler should treat people like his own children, since his authority depends on them. Even though heaven's concern is focused on people, the practice of the mandate of heaven is expressed through a ruler and his governing. Therefore, it is important to have a virtuous king. What is very important with Confucius is his interpretation of the mandate of heaven as revealed within a personal relation to each one of us, rather than through a ruler alone.⁶⁴

Even though heaven seems to be the highest conception, the Chinese did not make use of a concept of God either within or beyond nature. It seems moreover, that for them nature is their context of living rather than an object to investigate.

⁶² *The Book of Historical Documents*, Part V. Bk. I. Pt. i., 283-288.

⁶³ *The Book of Historical Documents*, Part V. Bk. I. Pt. ii., 292-293.

⁶⁴ AN III.24, VII.23, IX.5.

Their concern was how to live in that context, that is, how to become the counterpart of heaven, for their concern was practical rather than theoretical.

2. Human Nature

Aristotle's basic distinction in nature is between the animate and the inanimate. All living things have a *psyche*, or soul. However, "since a *psyche* is what animates, or gives life to, a living thing, the word 'animator' might be used."⁶⁵ Aristotle divides souls into three kinds which form a hierarchy: vegetative, animal, and rational.⁶⁶ Plant life takes nutrition, grows, and produces seeds. These are the functions ascribable to the vegetative soul. Animal life uses sense-perception, desire and movement. Men additionally have the rational faculty of thought. Barnes explains the hierarchy:

Thought, in Aristotle's view, requires imagination and hence perception; so that any thinking creature must be capable of perceiving. And perception never exists apart from the first principle of animation, that of nutrition and reproduction. Thus the various powers or faculties of the soul form a hierarchical system.⁶⁷

The soul is substance in the sense of being form, shape, and actuality of a certain type. Thus, soul is "substance as *the form of a natural body which potentially has*

⁶⁵ Jonathan Barnes, *Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 65.

⁶⁶ Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. J. A. Smith, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle* I, II.3, 414a29-32.

⁶⁷ Jonathan Barnes, *Aristotle*, 66.

life."⁶⁸ What is meant by a natural body which potentially has life is a body that has organs. "Organs are defined by reference to their functions and natural bodies that have parts so defined are alive."⁶⁹ Aristotle argues that soul and body in general are a unity and inseparable (though he later explains that the rational soul in humans may be separable). Nevertheless body and soul are distinguished. The body is the matter. The presence of soul is what distinguishes living from non-living bodies. "Aristotle distinguishes the human body from the human soul, where the term "soul" not only refers to the principle of life but to the form of a *particular* living body."⁷⁰ A soul does not belong to just any kind of body, rather a particular soul is related to a particular body as a form, and thus the body is the particularity of any individual. Therefore, in Aristotle's reasoning, each human being is a unique individual.⁷¹

Confucius, in responding to the questions "What constitutes human nature?" and "What is the source of human nature?" does not provide a general theory, but appeals to practical experience.⁷² Similarly, he refuses to speculate on questions

⁶⁸ J. L. Ackrill, *Aristotle The Philosopher* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 69.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 70.

⁷⁰ Stuart F. Spicker, *The Philosophy of the Body* (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 3-4.

⁷¹ Ibid., 5-6.

⁷² Vincent Shen, "Confucianism, Science and Technology -- A Philosophical Evaluation," *The Asian Journal of Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (1987), 63.

about the existence of spirits and the survival of the dead.⁷³ But even though Confucius does not explicitly discuss the origin of human beings, we can extrapolate his view from his few recorded dialogues and from ideas he shared with his predecessors, in view of his expressed desire to reestablish *Chou* tradition.

In Confucianism there is a common belief that the universe has three components: heaven, earth, and human beings. Heaven and earth together bestow life to human beings: Heaven is the father and earth the mother of human beings. There is a continuity between humanity and the whole of nature, since they form a family. Human beings have mind (*hsin* 心) and body (*shên* 身).⁷⁴ Body is not considered inferior to mind, rather the body is the representation of a whole human being.⁷⁵ So, *shên* also designates the whole person. Furthermore, in the *Analects*, the word *hsing* (nature 性) appears only twice. This suggests that this conception

⁷³ AN XI.12.

⁷⁴ "In the polar metaphysics of the classical Chinese tradition, the correlative relationship between the psychical and the somatic militated against the emergence of a mind/body problem. It was not that the Chinese thinkers were able to 'reconcile' this dichotomy; rather, it did not arise. Since body and mind were not regarded as different 'kinds' of existence in any essential way, they did not generate different sets of terminologies necessary to describe them. For this reason, the qualitative modifiers that we usually associate with matter do double duty in Chinese to characterize both the physical and psychical." Roger T. Ames, "The Meaning of Body in Classical Chinese Philosophy," in *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*, 163.

⁷⁵ In classical Chinese culture, body was not belittled. Since "the quality of character which renders a person consummate and exemplary in the various roles of social, political, and cultural leader will also serve him equally well in the role of military commander," the pursuit of "philosopher and military commander" are similar. Roger T. Ames, *Sun-Tzu: The Art of Warfare* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 42.

did not get much attention from Confucius.⁷⁶ It seems that for Confucius, the conception of *hsing* is either unimportant or too obvious to require discussion.⁷⁷ For Confucius, this concept of human nature is so broad that its use is almost equal to pointing out human existence; thus in *Analects* XVII.3: "Men are close to one another by nature. They diverge as a result of repeated practice." But later in Mencius, it becomes a distinctive given potentiality in human beings which differentiates humans from other beings. Mencius thinks human nature is good rather than neutral, that it has the four germs: the heart of compassion, shame, respect, and sense of right and wrong.⁷⁸ Had Confucius addressed this issue he might well have sounded like Aristotle,

[T]he virtues are implanted in us neither by nature nor contrary to nature: we are by nature equipped with the ability to receive them, and habit brings this ability to completion and fulfillment.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ AN V.13.

⁷⁷ Chung-ying Cheng thinks that there are clear ideas of *te* and *hsing* in the Pre-Confucian Period: "The virtue and goodness in question are nothing but powers for carrying the intentions of heaven in fulfilling the potentiality of one's life. This *te*, which in a sense is inherent in man, and which one can cultivate so as to fulfill oneself in accordance with the will (or mandate) of heaven -- this potentiality of man and his ability to cultivate this potentiality -- is called the nature (*hsing*) of man. It is clear from the fact that man is closely related to heaven -- the source of his life and his model for greatness -- that he must have his nature cultivated to realize *te*." *New Dimensions of Confucian and Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, 68-69.

⁷⁸ *Mencius*, trans. D. C. Lau (London: Penguin Books, 1970), VI.a.6.

⁷⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Martin Ostwald (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1962), II.1, 1103a23-25.

Aristotle thinks that human beings are "potentially virtuous."⁸⁰ By nature, human beings have the basis of virtue.

There are few discussions of nature per se in the *Analects*. Clearly for Confucius, human beings mediate between heaven and earth, and nature is of interest only in relation to issues of human choice and action. Confucius ignores more speculative issues. As we observed above, Confucius thinks of nature as the context of our living, rather than an object to investigate and his goal is to adjust correctly to that context -- "embracing heaven within himself." So, he devotes himself to the goal of living morally and asks how we can achieve it. But it may also be possible for Confucians to accept that reaching this vital goal can be assisted by the use of theorizing as an instrument to clarify thinking about practice.⁸¹

3. The Foundations of Virtue

As we have seen, for Aristotle all things in nature pursue their best. To determine what that is, Aristotle has us inquire into the specific *ergon* of each thing, for its best consists in performing that function, or exhibiting that *characteristic activity* -- both of which can translate *ergon* -- well.

What a thing is is always determined by its function: a thing really is itself when it can perform its function; an eye, for instance, when it can see. When a thing cannot do so it is that thing only in name, like a dead eye of one made of stone, just as a wooden saw is no more a saw than one in a picture. The same, then, is true of flesh, except that its function is less clear than that

⁸⁰ W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. VI, 125.

⁸¹ This is discussed further at the end of Chapter I.

of the tongue. So, too, with fire; but its function is perhaps even harder to specify by physical inquiry than that of flesh. The parts of plants, and inanimate bodies like copper and silver, are in the same case. They all are what they are in virtue of a certain power of action or passion -- just like flesh and sinew.⁸²

Thus in determining the function of man in order to determine the good for man, Aristotle is simply following the general approach which he regards as appropriate for the study of anything in nature. To know what is a good X, one must know what X is, and an X is what X's characteristically do (so that a good X does well what X's do). To know what is a good man, one must know what a man is and a man is what men characteristically do -- act following *logos*, as we will soon see -- so that a good man is one who is good at acting following *logos*. The foundation of virtue is found in a consideration of a human being's *ergon*.

This is why Aristotle explains the specific foundation of virtue in human nature by identifying the highest goal of human life with the most distinctive function and most characteristic activity (*ergon*) of man. The goal for man is the fulfillment of his function.

Presumably, however, to say that happiness is the chief good seems a platitude, and a clearer account of what it is is still desired. This might perhaps be given, if we could first ascertain the function of man. For just as for a flute-player, a sculptor, or any artist, and in general, for all things that have a function or activity, the good and the 'well' is thought to reside in the function, so would it seem to be for man, if he has a function.⁸³

⁸² Aristotle, *Meteorology*, trans. E. W. Webster, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle* I, IV.12, 390a10-19.

⁸³ NE I.7, 1097b23-28.

Aristotle excludes from the human being's specific function the processes of nutrition, growth, and perception, which human beings share with plants and animals. What human beings alone have is the capacity to do rational activity, the highest activity of the soul, and their specific virtue will be what enables them to do this *well*. Rationality is the foundation of virtuous activity. Repeatedly, Aristotle asks what a man does, and furthermore what a good man does; finally "he identifies this with the question 'What is the *good life* for a man?'"⁸⁴

Now if the function of man is an activity of soul in accordance with, or not without, rational principle, and if we say a so-and-so and a good so-and-so have a function which is the same in kind, e.g. a lyre-player and a good lyre-player, and so without qualification in all cases, eminence in respect of excellence being added to the function: if this is the case, [and we state the function of man to be a certain kind of life, and this to be an activity or actions of the soul implying a rational principle, and the function of a good man to be the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed when it is performed in accordance with the appropriate excellence: if this is the case,] human good turns out to be activity of soul in conformity with excellence, and if there are more than one excellence, in conformity with the best and most complete.⁸⁵

The assessment of different ideas of what living well consists in is made by reference to the function (*ergon*) of man, which is discovered by comparing humans to other species (as on p. 40). The good life proves to be based on virtuous activities, those in which we exercise the appropriate virtues or excellences of soul. Thus, in the most general terms, rationality is the foundation of human virtue.

⁸⁴ J. L. Ackrill, *Aristotle The Philosopher*, 15.

⁸⁵ NE I.7, 1098a7-17.

Human beings are limited in time and space. However, Confucianism places more emphasis on their uniqueness. Compared to other things, human natures are not fixed. Human beings are not complete, but have to extend themselves and achieve their possibilities.

Confucius thinks that within the given disposition of human beings, what makes a human is virtue (*te*), whose basis is endowed by heaven:

The Master said, 'Heaven is author of the virtue (*te*) that is in me. What can Huan T'ui do to me?'⁸⁶

Here Confucius means virtue as potentiality rather than as an achieved result. Virtue is not given in a completed form; we have to develop it. Thus Confucius says, "It is these things that cause me concern," and begins his list with "failure to cultivate virtue..."⁸⁷ Because virtue is the expression of humans themselves, it can be enlarged or lost.⁸⁸ Confucius describes the possibility of enlarging oneself:

The Master said, 'Great indeed was Yao as a ruler! How lofty! It is Heaven that is great and it was Yao who modelled himself upon it. He was so boundless that the common people were not able to put a name to his virtues. Lofty was he in his successes and brilliant was he in his accomplishments!'⁸⁹

The lofty virtue is the result of achievement of those virtues. The virtue of human nature is the human capacity to manifest or express such virtue. This requires learning.

⁸⁶ AN VII.23.

⁸⁷ AN VII.3.

⁸⁸ See, AN XV.29.

⁸⁹ AN VIII.19.

3. THE UNITY OF THE VIRTUES

Aristotle and Confucius think that human beings can reflect the order and harmony of nature by virtuous actions. But virtues should work in an organic way in all dimensions such as intellectual and moral, private and public. The unity of the virtues can be explained in three ways.

A virtue cannot exist apart from other virtues. Virtues work as a co-ordinated cluster rather than as isolated traits or habits. One may easily confuse an isolated tendency with a genuine virtue if one considers only superficial features of behavior. (A person who tends to face danger or persevere in hardship may appear courageous.) Both Aristotle and Confucius think that a single tendency or mere collection of tendencies is dangerous, because there is no guarantee of balance. Just as no part of the human body can function well unless other parts are properly developed, a virtue without the other virtues cannot function well. Only when the virtues function as a unity, can they provide a proper standard of judgment and guide actions. To illustrate why when we have only one virtue or a collection of virtues, it may bring harm to us, we have these examples from Aristotle and Confucius: In Aristotle, courage without practical wisdom goes to the extremes of rashness or cowardice. In Confucius, courage without propriety (*li*) or righteousness becomes unruliness or lawlessness. When a unified set of virtues is found in isolated groups whose members practice those virtues only among themselves, it leads to wrong action and brings harm to them and to the larger society, for persons

and groups must exist together in a society. To segregate the virtues in different classes is to vitiate the unity of the virtues.

Can a person have every virtue except one? Doubtless having a number of healthy tendencies, properly related to one another, is better than having just one or several unrelated to one another. But a missing virtue can be a fatal flaw in what would otherwise be a virtuous character and render a person incapable of realizing fully what virtuous tendencies he has. A man without courage can act justly only when it does not take courage to do so; that is hardly a complete or adequate 'virtue' of justice. A man may mistake what generosity requires through an inadequate sense of justice. A man who cannot control his hankering after pleasure may find he behaves with insufficient dignity or justice, or resorts to forms of insincerity in order to gratify himself. Confucius says, "Unless a man has the spirit of the rites, in being respectful he will wear himself out, in being careful he will become timid, in having courage he will become unruly, and in being forthright he will become intolerant.'..."⁹⁰ As the rest of virtues cannot fully function without some missing virtue, it also applies to relations of human beings. Human beings live in social contexts, that is, together with others. In order to achieve good and harmonious life, human beings should fulfill their roles and it requires all the appropriate virtues to do so.

However, it might be objected that since human beings are limited, developing all the human virtues is beyond our reach. Similarly, it might be argued,

⁹⁰ AN VIII.2.

loyalty to country or work may conflict with filial piety. People are engrossed by work and so do not have enough time for their own families. This is why human beings seem to be able to achieve only some or perhaps most of virtues. Further, even having several virtues, there is no guarantee of achieving the proper connection among each of them. Aristotle and Confucius would answer that first, it seems true that human beings are limited, but even if times are bad, the important thing is that we should not sell human potentiality short. We should not confuse the conditions with the ability to develop our nature. It is possible for us not to develop our nature fully, even if we have full potential. But it is possible for us to develop our potential fully, even if conditions render this difficult. Excusing our failure to unite the virtues is symptomatic of ignorance about human nature.

True, some relationships are more demanding than others, but striving to achieve the more demanding virtues is no excuse for giving up the rest. In fact, to continue with the example above loyalty to country complements filial piety and friendship. It cannot be achieved when one does not recognize one's more immediate social responsibility to family and others. People who do not see the importance of their own family cannot know the importance of friends or country which are the relations and context to which they belong. Only those who recognize the importance of family and friends can devote time to their country or work sincerely. Those who seem not to have enough time do in fact have the power to exercise filial piety. So, when the virtues are uncoordinated or scattered, it is because they are underdeveloped. But when they are adequately developed, they are

interdependent and firmly implanted within a virtuous character. No virtue is complete in isolation.

Are virtues compatible, that is, can one have all of them? There could be a bigger worry whether some virtues are incompatible, that is, achieving one prevents one from achieving others. For example, whether a generous man can be a courageous soldier. However, virtues are embodied in a human being's character. The virtues are not defined independently of all the demands made on people by their context but they are relative to the best way to resolve those demands. Thus a person who has unified set of virtues knows what is appropriate action at a certain context considering his goal. A virtuous person knows when he should be generous and courageous. To him, there is no contradiction between virtues.

The unity of the virtues, curiously, can be achieved by developing different virtues. The unity of the virtues is won through starting from a person's strongest merits or best points, whether it be wisdom or courage. If a person is courageous and wants to be truly courageous, while he is lacking other virtues, then he will soon notice that in order to be truly courageous, he needs other virtues as well, such as wisdom, righteousness. In this case, he should use his courage as the ground to develop other virtues rather than regarding it as an obstacle or as a deterrence developing virtues. Also, this idea applies to a given talent. Confucius says,

Some are born with the knowledge [of these virtues]. Some learn it through study, some learn it through hard work. But once the knowledge is acquired, it comes to the same thing. Some practice them naturally and easily. Some

practice them for their advantage. Some practice them with effort and difficulty. But once the achievement is made, it comes to the same thing.⁹¹

People should start from and maximize what they have or given condition. The methods of achieving a goal can vary, but the results are the same. Accepting that the given circumstances are varied, is one of the strengths of virtue theory.

1. Virtues as an Organic Unity

Aristotle explains the unity of the virtues, not simply as a complementarity among various virtues but as a product of the intellectual virtue of *phronesis*. The key to the unity of virtues is the relation of the moral and the intellectual.

Happiness is attained through virtuous action. To achieve it, the moral virtues and practical wisdom must function in unison.

Again, the function of man is achieved only in accordance with practical wisdom as well as with moral excellence; for excellence makes the aim right, and practical wisdom the things leading to it.⁹²

If action is virtuous, it will lead to the right end, and deliberation will find the right means to that end. Indeed practical wisdom should be knowledge about the right end as well as the right means.

Aristotle shows that we cannot be morally good without practical wisdom. People might behave in a just manner without being a just person, for example, if they are afraid of the law or ignorant of what they are doing. So, "they do what

⁹¹ *The Doctrine of the Mean XX*, in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Wing-tsit Chan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 105.

⁹² NE VI.12, 1144a7-9.

they should and all the things that the good man ought."⁹³ But action is virtuous only in certain conditions: "one must do them as a result of choice and for the sake of the acts themselves."⁹⁴ Here, like Kant, Aristotle opposes the idea of purely consequentialist morality. Honesty is the best policy not because it brings one's own satisfaction, but because it is the right thing to do. But unlike Kant's appeal to duty and the good will known by pure transcendental reason, Aristotle ascribes virtuous action to the rational choice of practical wisdom in a virtuous person. Kant substitutes the good will for virtuous character, because he thinks character too vulnerable to varying conditions, and fears lest goodness be made contingent on social conditions or psychological tendencies.

For Aristotle, moral virtue points to the right end and practical wisdom cannot function without good character. Aristotle warns us that we should not confuse practical wisdom with cleverness or cunning. Seeming practical wisdom which delivers the means without engaging the right end is mere cleverness, not practical wisdom. Knowing the right end, practical wisdom requires virtuous character.

But whatever the true end may be, only a good man can judge it correctly. For wickedness distorts and causes us to be completely mistaken about the fundamental principles of action. Hence it is clear that a man cannot have practical wisdom unless he is good.⁹⁵

⁹³ NE VI.12, 1144a17.

⁹⁴ NE 1144a19-20.

⁹⁵ NE (trans. Ostwald) VI.12, 1144a34-37.

Independently, Aristotle argues that when one has practical wisdom, one will also have all moral virtues. Aristotle distinguishes natural virtue and virtue in the strict (full) sense. However, character akin to the virtues is dangerous without intelligence "as a strong body which moves without sight may stumble badly because of its lack of sight."⁹⁶ Thus Aristotle argues that moral virtues should be "guided by right reason -- which is determined by practical wisdom."⁹⁷ He even concludes that virtue must be united with practical wisdom:

Virtue or excellence is not only a characteristic which is guided by right reason, but also a characteristic which is united with right reason; and right reason in moral matters is practical wisdom.⁹⁸

Taking 'virtue' as a natural inclination, a person can have one virtue without another, but not virtue in the full sense. For with virtue in the full sense, "as soon as he possesses this single virtue of practical wisdom, he will also possess all the rest."⁹⁹ This is because practical wisdom and moral virtues must coexist, and so "in this way we may also refute the dialectical argument whereby it might be contended that the excellences exist in separation from each other"¹⁰⁰ -- A moral virtue cannot fully function without the rest.

⁹⁶ NE (trans. Ostwald) VI.13, 1144b11-12.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 1144b22-24.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 1144b26-28.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 1145a1-2.

¹⁰⁰ NE VI.13, 1144b30-33.

Thomas Aquinas comments that even though one does not have magnificence, due to his poverty, he has the ability to be magnificent if he becomes rich in the future.¹⁰¹ However, this does not mean that he can achieve magnificence without practice. Aristotle's main concern here was with the interaction of practical wisdom with moral excellences. He does not mention relations among specific moral virtues, but it deserves notice. For example, becoming courageous requires moral virtues such as justice and truthfulness. In this respect, Confucius offers a more developed account.

Aristotle contrasts practical wisdom with theoretical wisdom. Wisdom is the highest intellectual excellence of which the human mind is capable. It is the result of inquiry for its own sake.

[W]isdom must be the most precise and perfect form of knowledge. Consequently, a wise man must not only know what follows from fundamental principles, but he must also have true knowledge of the fundamental principles themselves. Accordingly, theoretical wisdom must comprise both intelligence and scientific knowledge.¹⁰²

Phronesis or practical wisdom, on the other hand, "is concerned with human affairs and with matters about which deliberation is possible."¹⁰³ *Phronesis* is concerned with changeable things and with individual matters; it is not science (*episteme*), because the objects of *episteme* are not subject to change. It is not an art, for it does

¹⁰¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. C. I. Litzinger, O.P. vol.II (Chicago, IL: Henry Regency Company, 1964), 603-604.

¹⁰² NE (trans. Ostwald) VI.7, 1141a16-19.

¹⁰³ NE (trans. Ostwald) VI.7, 1141b8-9.

not aim at production. Rather "it is a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man."¹⁰⁴ It is achieved through long experience. So the young do not yet have it -- even though they can become proficient at mathematics which is theoretical. Practical inquiry requires not only theory, but also experience and practice.

The task of prudence (*phronesis*) is not to secure one's own good as such but, rather, to devise appropriate means for securing the ends posited by the moral virtues.¹⁰⁵

However, theoretical and practical wisdom are desirable regardless of whether they result in anything or not, since they are regarded as "virtues of different parts of the soul." Aristotle claims that theoretical wisdom contributes to *eudaimonia* in the sense that "health itself makes a person healthy," rather than in the sense that "medicine produces health."¹⁰⁶ Thus, practical wisdom can neither outweigh theoretical wisdom nor claim to be the prior part of the soul "any more than the art of medicine has authority over health. <Just as medicine does not use health but makes the provisions to secure it, so> practical wisdom does not use theoretical wisdom but makes the provisions to secure it."¹⁰⁷

If moral excellence is a necessary condition for practical wisdom, is practical wisdom only a means to achieving goals set by moral virtue or pure intellect?

¹⁰⁴ NE VI.5, 1140b4-5.

¹⁰⁵ *History of Political Philosophy*, 3d edition, ed. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 131.

¹⁰⁶ NE (trans. Ostwald) VI.12, 1144a4-5.

¹⁰⁷ NE (trans. Ostwald) VI.13, 1145a7-9.

Are moral virtues prior to practical wisdom? Without practical wisdom one cannot have the moral virtues. Is this a vicious circle? I think not. 1) Moral virtues are acquired by habit. When one does not yet have the moral virtues, one is taught "to have right opinion for our goal."¹⁰⁸ Practical wisdom is "what protects our general conception of the good life from distorting influences."¹⁰⁹ Practical wisdom ensures attainment of a goal in the long term, as well as informing our choices about means. 2) When we are not practically wise, we can be taught or guided by those who already have practical wisdom.¹¹⁰ Moral and intellectual virtues reinforce each other. Thus incomplete moral and practical virtues can grow together.¹¹¹

Confucius acknowledges that the nature of human beings is bestowed by *t'ien*. So, there is common ground between human beings and *t'ien*. This commonality is the potentiality of human beings, and it can be developed within

¹⁰⁸ Richard Sorabji, "Aristotle on the Role of Intellect in Virtue," in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, 213.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ William K. Frankena, *Three Historical Philosophies of Education: Aristotle, Kant, Dewey* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1961), 59.

¹¹¹ John Herman Randall, Jr. supports this claim.: "In any event, the writings themselves make clear, he [Aristotle] was never bound by his own theories: he used those theories as hypotheses, as tools, as 'leading principles.' He was impressed by the fact that although facts alone do not give understanding--he is no mere observationalist or positivist--facts are nevertheless far more certain than any theory... In Aristotle's own procedure, there is never any conflict between theory and facts: in his practice, theory is always modified to take account of facts." "For Aristotle knowledge is not a neat 'system,' but a living growth, like a tree--it goes on and on, it is biological." Cited from John Herman Randall, Jr. *Aristotle* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 28, 30.

their interrelationships. Human nature can be exercised through the virtues, and each virtue can be developed in relation to the others.

Jen is the universality of man. *Yi* is the necessity and actual application of *jen* to a diversity of situations and relationships. *Li* is the proper way of expressing oneself in fulfilling one's *jen* by means of *yi*. If *li* is the exterior behavior pattern of man toward another man in a situation, *yi* is the principle which confers propriety on the behavior pattern in question, and *jen* is the natural desire for fulfilling *li* in the spirit of *yi*.¹¹²

In addition to the interrelatedness of the virtues themselves, inter-relatedness characterizes the virtues in that they cannot be exercised within oneself, but only in relationships with others.

Unlike Aristotle, Confucius does not divide virtues into moral and intellectual, but for Confucius, the moral virtues already contain intellectual virtues. The moral virtue of *jen* is at the center of the unity of virtues.

Virtue cannot exist apart from others. Confucius shows how each virtue must be mediated by others.

'...Possessed of courage but devoid of *yi* (righteousness), a gentleman will make trouble while a small man will be a brigand.'¹¹³

The Master said, 'Unless a man has the spirit of the rites, in being respectful he will wear himself out, in being careful he will become timid, in having courage he will become unruly, and in being forthright he will become intolerant.'¹¹⁴

¹¹² Chung-Ying Cheng, *New Dimensions of Confucian and Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, 69.

¹¹³ AN XVII.23.

¹¹⁴ AN VIII.2.

Thus, courage must be modulated by propriety and righteousness. It appears in *Analects* III.3 that rites should be modulated by benevolence. Where Aristotle emphasized the choice of the mean by *phronesis*, Confucius shows more directly that virtues must be organic through the example of courage -- a single virtue mediated by other virtues. In *Analects* VIII.2, we can see that how one virtue, propriety, should be linked to others -- being respectful, careful, and forthright. Confucius is concerned with the mean,¹¹⁵ and certainly Aristotle regards the extremes as harmful, but Aristotle too makes reference to other virtues -- or their aims. For example, baseness is an obstacle to achieving justice, and injustice is an obstacle to courage as well as wit.

Confucius regards benevolence as the main virtue, while Aristotle treats practical wisdom as the core virtue. When a human being has benevolence, it means that he has all the other virtues. Confucius shows that benevolence is the point of reference for defining other virtues, and benevolence is also defined by other virtues.

The Master said, 'What can a man do with the rites who is not benevolent? What can a man do with music who is not benevolent?'¹¹⁶

Yen Yüan asked about benevolence (*jen*). The Master said, 'To return to the observance of the rites (*li*) through overcoming the self constitutes benevolence (*jen*)...'¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ AN XI.16.

¹¹⁶ AN III.3.

¹¹⁷ AN XII.1.

'...Being good as a son and obedient as a young man is, perhaps, the root of practicing benevolence.'¹¹⁸

Tzu-chang asked Confucius about benevolence. Confucius said, 'There are five things and whoever is capable of putting them into practice in the Empire is certainly "benevolent" (*jen*).' 'May I ask what they are?' 'They are respectfulness, tolerance, trustworthiness in word, quickness and generosity. If a man is respectful he will not be treated with insolence. If he is tolerant he will win the multitude. If he is true to his word his fellow men will entrust him with responsibility. If he is quick he will achieve results. If he is generous he will be good enough to be put in a position over his fellow men.'¹¹⁹

Benevolence is analyzed by reference to observance of rites and music¹²⁰; to filial piety and obedience¹²¹; to respectfulness, tolerance, trustworthiness, quickness and generosity¹²²; and at the same time these other virtues are defined by reference to benevolence.

In the above examples, Confucius shows his concern with moral character. Although Confucius does not distinguish moral and intellectual virtues, we may find it instructive to look for the moral and intellectual elements in his discussion of character traits. *Jen* is a moral virtue, but knowledge is implicit in *jen* as well as in the other moral virtues. Knowledge is not separated from the moral virtues, and it should be considered as being within benevolence:

¹¹⁸ AN I.2.

¹¹⁹ AN XVII.6.

¹²⁰ AN XII.1, III.3.

¹²¹ AN I.2.

¹²² AN XVII.6.

The Master said, 'Of neighborhoods benevolence is the most beautiful. How can the man be considered wise who, when he has the choice, does not settle in benevolence?'¹²³

The Master said, 'Is it not a pleasure, having learned something, to try it out at due intervals?'¹²⁴

The object of knowledge is practical and not what is beyond human interest. Thus knowledge is not for its own sake or divine truth.¹²⁵ Human beings should revere the gods and spirits without being captivated by unknown things, and should devote themselves to what they have to do.

Thus, a person who is benevolent is also wise as well as righteous, courageous, loyal, and so on. Although Confucius thinks that benevolence is the cardinal virtue, he also understood well that benevolence is not achieved without the other virtues. Thus, his concern was not just this central virtue, but all the other virtues that are needed to fulfill their functions.

2. Virtue as a Representation of an Organic Unity

In both Aristotle and Confucius, the genuine manifestation of a single virtue or a few virtues can indicate the unity of all the virtues, that is, though not all the virtues can be expressed at the same time, we can see that the truly courageous man is also wise and the sincere man is righteous. This is why particular deeds help us

¹²³ AN IV.1.

¹²⁴ AN I.1.

¹²⁵ AN VI.22.

to recognize who is virtuous and who is not, even though we do not observe a whole life.

According to Aristotle, actions by a person with a virtuous character are consistent:

For no function of man possesses as much stability as do activities in conformity with virtue: these seem to be even more durable than scientific knowledge.¹²⁶

A virtuous person leads a happy life (*eudaimon*). And happiness consists in activity in accordance with virtue. We can measure virtues by a person's action. If a person did what virtue required, but did not do so cheerfully, willingly, etc., Aristotle could say this person is not really virtuous, since an indication of the presence of a character trait of any kind (good or bad) is that one acts in that way cheerfully, willingly, etc. So, one of the critical tests of whether a person is virtuous is how he confronts hardship.

If activities are, as we said, what determines the character of life, no blessed man can become miserable; for he will never do the acts that are hateful and mean. For the man who is truly good and wise, we think, bears all the chances of life becomingly and always makes the best of circumstances...¹²⁷

Since the virtuous character is the most consistent, even if a virtuous person fell down to the bottom of life, that person will overcome it gradually.

And yet, he will not be fickle and changeable; he will not be dislodged from his happiness easily by any misfortune that comes along, but only by great and numerous disasters such as will make it impossible for him to become

¹²⁶ NE (trans. Ostwald) I.10, 1100b12-14.

¹²⁷ NE I.10, 1100b33-1101a2.

happy again in a short time; if he recovers his happiness at all, it will be only after a long period of time, in which he has won great distinctions.¹²⁸

Confronting tragedy then, is a test of the unity of the virtues. A virtuous man's life cannot end in failure. For example, even if a magnificent man loses all his fortune, still he will be able to adjust to his poverty, because his other virtues will make him sustain his character and also help him to regain his magnificence. Even if a virtuous man dies from his misfortune, he will confront death with courage and be remembered as a man of virtue.

A fundamental point for Confucius is that the unity of the virtues is expressed in action. Action is the measure of the virtues. So, Confucius says "In his errors a man is true to type. Observe the errors and you will know the man."¹²⁹ Confucius can see that his favorite disciple, Yun-Hui's understanding of Confucius' teaching is known by his actions.¹³⁰ But actions are not an absolute standard. People can disguise their words and facial expressions well without practicing the virtues. Also, one's words and deeds do not always match.¹³¹ People cannot be absolutely measured by their words or deeds.¹³² Secondly, the unity of the virtues can be expressed through a particular virtue or different combinations of virtues. The problem is that not all seemingly courageous acts are

¹²⁸ NE (trans. Ostwald) I.10, 1101a9-13.

¹²⁹ AN IV.7.

¹³⁰ AN II.9.

¹³¹ AN V.10.

¹³² AN XI.21.

benevolent. Only those who achieve benevolence can be courageous, righteous, and ritually correct.

How then do we distinguish whether a person is really courageous or improperly called a courageous man? The answer is that the expressed behaviors have commonality since they are the expression of a same person, and under the same direction toward a goal.

Tzu-chang said, 'One can, perhaps, be satisfied with a Gentleman who is ready to lay down his life in the face of danger, who does not forget what is right at the sight of gain, and who does not forget reverence during a sacrifice nor sorrow while in mourning.'¹³³

Evidently the person who is ready to lay down his life in the face of danger is the same one who does not to forget what is right at the sight of gain. So even though a person's expressed virtues -- for example, courage, justice, piety -- do not show their relations explicitly, these virtues are not separate from each other. Though their unity is implicit, each virtue is expressed in different situations.

4. CONCLUSION

We have seen a number of points of agreement in the philosophies of Aristotle and Confucius. But because of the different historical and social contexts in which they wrote, we find different (although not incomparable) accounts of virtue and different lists of virtues, and these result in the virtues being unified in

¹³³ AN XIX.1.

different ways with different focuses -- for Aristotle, *phronesis* and for Confucius, *jen*. Moreover, although they are based on beliefs about the need to use the human mind, these 'master virtues' are based on different conceptions of deliberation in theory and practice.

How is theory relevant to practice in Aristotle and Confucius?

Aristotle thinks that theoretical wisdom (or theoretical activity) is valuable for its own sake. What Aristotle means by theoretical activity is attaining the ends of rationality, which Aristotle thinks is the highest faculty of human beings and in this sense, man as an individual can share it with divinity.¹³⁴ But theoretical knowledge may seem to limit creativity by simply laying out a uniform blueprint of the universal structure. That might seem to leave no freedom for individuals to do anything other than read the world as it is written. However, when individuals participate as individuals in applying general principles to particular circumstances, their interpretations are not completely constrained. There is opportunity for creativity for each individual. Theoretical knowledge, is the effort to systematize the universe. Besides its intrinsic worth, this kind of knowledge helps us to achieve our goals, because it tells us where we are located in the universal structure in order to know how to conduct our lives (see p. 40-41). Since speculative knowledge is

¹³⁴ However, Aristotle thinks that not everyone, e.g., a slave or a woman, has enough rationality for self-governance or to engage in *theoria*.

essential in deliberation, practical wisdom must constantly consult theoretical wisdom.¹³⁵

Why does Confucius not speculate as Aristotle does? The answer lies in his very practical tendency focusing on action. There is no independent value placed on contemplation in Confucius.¹³⁶

Confucius does not theorize about the nature or heaven. He thinks that heaven's movement is sincere¹³⁷ and has a clear message for us. There seems no need to theorize, but cooperate with heaven, even though it is difficult. But what

¹³⁵ Aristotle and Confucius differ in their methods of deliberation. Aristotle describes a method of practical reasoning. He explains deliberation using the model of a syllogism (NE VI.7). The major premise represents, general and theoretical knowledge; the minor premise, knowledge of particular facts, known by perception and experience. In a practical syllogism the conclusion is an action! Thus in the process of deliberation, one needs both knowledge of universals and (experiential) knowledge of particulars. Also, see John Herman Randall, *Aristotle*, 74-75.

¹³⁶ It is not because Confucius was reacting against excessive speculation of earlier thinkers, but because he was responding to his historical need. "During its [Chou dynasty (1122?-256 B.C.)] early centuries, a large number of small states, most of them grouped around the valley of the Yellow River in North China, were linked together through common ties of allegiance to the Chou royal house in a feudal system roughly analogous to that of medieval Europe. As time wore on, however, this feudal system gradually disintegrated, resulting in the eclipse of the Chou royal power, the steady increase of bitter warfare between the now independent states, and other violent political, social, and economic upheavals. It was men's efforts to find answers to the resulting pressing problems that confronted them, that caused the appearance of the first Chinese organized philosophical thought, which constitutes the cultural glory of the age. Confucius (551-479 B.C.) was the earliest of these philosophers, and was followed by a host of others belonging to widely differing schools of thought." Fung, Yu-Lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Derk Bodde (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), xiv-xv.

¹³⁷ The movement of heaven is consistent and so it does not fail to bring about each season at the appropriate time. It seems that for Chinese, sincerity is not so much intention as consistent objective performance.

makes Confucius sure that human beings can achieve their goal without studying the universal scheme for its own sake? In place of theory Confucius seems to have relied on tradition, that is practical wisdom and values as preserved through history. Rituals and rules are not created, but set out by the ancient sage kings who fulfilled the mandate of heaven to guide people on how to cooperate with heaven in the best way in accordance with their circumstance. Since we build on the foundation of what they achieved, Confucius urges that we should learn the wisdom of the ancients first, from the examples of particular events or figures in history, not via general principles.¹³⁸ Since learning is not separated from practice, it can enable a person to build a virtuous character and act well in particular situations. If one can act well in a given situation, then one already seems to have achieved an intuitive grasp of the standard to be applied whether it is called intuition or morality. We can see in the way Confucius requires a person to recast the wisdom of tradition in diverse situations the need for a kind of creativity. What plays the role of a general principle in Aristotle's terms is understanding the mandate of heaven, or becoming one with heaven. Unlike Aristotle, who tries to make general principles explicit, Confucius does not make them explicit. So his approach seems to require a more intuitive grasp than Aristotle's.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Note the contrast to Aristotle's contention that history is a study that does not attain the status of a science (*Poetics* 1451b5-8) but on the other hand recall Aristotle's remark that we should rely on those with particular experience.

¹³⁹ But we should point out the weaknesses of intuitive grasp: There are no criteria to appeal to other than intuition itself. A person can make wrong judgements and do wrong actions, although these can be correctable by experience. However,

Aristotle is striving more for general principles for guidance than appealing to particulars; where Confucius appears to be guided only by further (historic) particulars. For Aristotle, appealing to general principles reveals the structure of the cosmos and practices are open to an individual. For Confucius, man does not know in general terms what is the mandate of heaven for himself; he has to examine it through particular events. Aristotle and Confucius do seem to agree that humans participate in divinity or heaven both individually and as collectively. However, that personal participation in divinity is not part of Aristotle's account of how we get guidance for conduct.

Aristotle's man can be wrong either by following the wrong general principle or by erroring over particular facts. Tradition, it is hoped, will keep a Confucian from such errors. Yet there is a role for abstract generalization in Confucianism which Confucius does not mention. In generalization we find a clarity and species of consistency, in other words a fresh perspective, not available to someone who does not lift his eyes above the particular. By the same token, tradition may help to get general principles and particular situations properly co-ordinated. For Aristotle, individual or communal experiences seem to function like Confucius' tradition. They are a matter for science, but not yet science itself. Later Confucians do try to explain the origin and principles of the world and human beings. They provide a better understanding of what Confucius said. Thus their efforts contribute to self-

the advantage of intuitive grasp is that it provides a more comprehensive and profound vision. Confucius does not absolutely rely on intuition, rather he uses it when he applies implicit general principles to particular concrete situations.

achievement but still do not go very far beyond Confucius. Nevertheless we should not forget that when tradition is used to gain an absolute authority over an individual, there is little room for individual creativity. Thus, Aristotle and Confucius can compensate for each others' demerits rather than negating each other.

CHAPTER TWO

THE REALIZATION OF VIRTUE

1. THE GOAL OF VIRTUE

For both Aristotle and Confucius we can characterize the goal of virtue as a form of self-realization. For Aristotle, the highest goal is contemplation and for Confucius it is cooperation with the mandate of heaven. Aristotle recognizes a use of the mind, *theorein*, distinct from those involved in meeting our material needs and engaging in social interaction and he assigns to the intellectual virtues required for the latter (in particular *phronesis*) a service role subordinate to the former (1145a7-12). Any *eudaimonia* one might derive from living well in society is thought to be inferior to that derived from the activity of *theorein*. This latter activity is god-like (transcends normal human concerns and endeavors) and because of our physical embodiment we are limited in the amount of this activity we can sustain (both in terms of concentration and in terms of meeting the material needs of the body.) Confucius recognizes no use of the mind separate from its role in managing the affairs of life and *consequently* does not view our embodiment as a limit to our self-realization. The Confucian practical goal (self-achievement) and the Confucian highest goal (understanding and cooperation with the mandate of heaven) are identical.

Aristotle thinks that there are ends (*tele*) in nature. All natural things pursue the ends which are the goods for those things. Human beings are no exception.¹⁴⁰ But they are exceptional in being able to direct their endeavors at a life of one kind rather than another. When as is natural we set ourselves an end for the whole of life, Greeks, Aristotle observes, call this end *eudaimonia* (generally translated into English as 'happiness'). This happiness is taken to be something complete, self-sufficient and the end of our action.¹⁴¹ All our activities are for the sake of something, but their ends are not all complete. Aristotle says that the highest good must be something complete -- pursued for the sake of itself. Happiness is the only aim that can serve as a complete goal for human beings.

Now such a thing happiness, above all else, is held to be; for this we choose always for itself and never for the sake of something else, but honour, pleasure, reason, and every excellence we choose indeed for themselves (for if nothing resulted from them we should still choose each of them), but we choose them also for the sake of happiness, judging that through them we shall be happy. Happiness, on the other hand, no one chooses for the sake of these, nor, in general, for anything other than itself.¹⁴²

Aristotle thinks that the complete good is also self-sufficient -- an activity which by itself would make life choice-worthy and complete without anything else.

Now by self-sufficient we do not mean that which is sufficient for a man by himself, for one who lives a solitary life, but also for parents, children, wife,

¹⁴⁰ When Greek speakers try to get clear about what kind of life-as-a-whole this should be we find agreement only about what such a life should be called, viz. *eudaimon* (and what to call that which people are pursuing for their lives, viz. *eudaimonia*).

¹⁴¹ NE I.7, 1097b20-21.

¹⁴² 1097a35-1097b7.

and in general for his friends and fellow citizens, since man is sociable by nature.¹⁴³

Elsewhere Aristotle clarifies the notion of happiness as self-sufficient activity.

If these implications are unacceptable, and we must rather class happiness as an activity, as we have said before, and if some activities are necessary and desirable for the sake of something else, while others are so in themselves, evidently happiness must be placed among those desirable in themselves, not among those desirable for the sake of something else; for happiness does not lack anything, but is self-sufficient. Now those activities are desirable in themselves from which nothing is sought beyond the activity.¹⁴⁴

Aristotle assumes that *eudaimonia* is the achievement of an ultimate good at which all human beings' actions aim rather than a state of mind. Thus *eudaimonia* means doing well, or living well with the emphasis on activity rather than mere feeling of pleasure (satisfaction). Happiness is a schematic notion; different people fill it in different ways -- for example, pleasure, honor, knowledge. In order to assess these candidates Aristotle goes further and holds that we should seek the unique function or "characteristic activity" (*ergon*) of man, which distinguishes man from the other animals. What kind of activity is the specific function of human beings?

Our function cannot be merely "to live," for this we share with plants. It also cannot be to move around and desire objects, because any animal can do this. The only thing unique to humans is a capacity for something Aristotle calls *logos* and he identifies the function of man as activity in accordance with *logos* (*praxis kata logon* 1098a8) and *eudaimonia* as activity of the human soul with its best and most

¹⁴³ 1097b9-11.

¹⁴⁴ NE X.6, 1176a35-1176b6.

complete excellence (virtue, 1098a16). *Logos* is commonly translated as 'reason' (although it applies generally to human linguistic activity, so that the nearest single equivalence in English is 'discourse'). The good for man would, under that translation, be life filled with activities involving the use of reason. It is not until Book X, Chapter 6 (and following) that Aristotle argues that the highest activity of the human soul is *theorein*, understood as the contemplative use of the mind, the exercise of a god-like ability.

Now suppose we cannot engage in much *theorein* (after all we get tired as Aristotle recognizes (1176b35), and we have to eat, attend to affairs both our own and those of the city), it is still possible to find *eudaimonia* in any activity conducted *kata logon*. It is not as high a grade, but it is why Aristotle is able to accept a life devoted to practical (political) affairs in this world as a strong candidate for *eudaimonia* -- in this one can use one's mind in a grade of activity nearly as rewarding as *theorein*. For *eudaimonia* in Book I is activity which manifests a virtue of our ability to act following 'reason' and the sound judgement required to engage well in practical affairs is such a manifestation. Thus the use of intelligence is an essential ingredient to virtue, the actualization of which will constitute happiness, and whatever activity this can be an ingredient in can claim to be a candidate for happiness. This needs to be remembered when considering the case made in NE X.7 that the theoretical (speculative) use of the mind is the highest activity we can engage in, and the suggestion at the end of NE VI.13 that practical wisdom serves (merely) to arrange our lives to make contemplation (the exercise of

'theoretical wisdom') possible. Practical thought can function as a constituent of the end as well as a means to the end.

There are various reasons why Aristotle should think of contemplation as the highest goal. He argues that there is an unmoved mover that is the final cause of universe, the explanation of continuous movement and change in nature. "Immune from change, and hence from matter, it must be pure actuality with no kind of potentiality. Aristotle's candidate for an activity that involves no change is pure thought -- contemplation, not problem-solving."¹⁴⁵ "The act of contemplation is what is most pleasant and best."¹⁴⁶ The first or unmoved mover may be called God, eternal and supremely happy. God is the highest form of actuality; he thinks only about his own thought.

And thought thinks itself because it shares the nature of the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought in coming into contact with and thinking its objects, so that thought and object of thought are the same.¹⁴⁷

Aristotle holds thus that the highest activity of the soul is contemplation. So, when we contemplate, we share in the divine activity. Like Plato, Aristotle seeks the divine and finds it in pure actuality. Indeed, in their various own ways all living things also engage in the divine:

The acts in which it manifests itself are reproduction and the use of food, because for any living thing that has reached its normal development and which is unmutated, and whose mode of generation is not spontaneous, the most natural act is the production of another like itself, an animal producing

¹⁴⁵ J. L. Ackrill, *Aristotle The Philosopher*, 133.

¹⁴⁶ *Metaphysics* XII.7, 1072b23-24.

¹⁴⁷ 1072b20-22.

an animal, a plant a plant, in order that, as far as its nature allows, it may partake in the eternal and divine. This is the goal towards which all things strive, that for the sake of which, they do whatsoever their nature renders possible.... Since then no living thing is able to partake in what is eternal and divine by uninterrupted continuance (for nothing perishable can for ever remain one and the same), it tries to achieve that end in the only way possible to it, and success is possible in varying degrees; so it remains not indeed as the self-same individual but continues its existence in something like itself--not numerically but specifically one.¹⁴⁸

But, unlike other beings, only human beings as individuals have a little divinity of their own. Man can participate in the divine, through contemplation. Nevertheless the human longing for this god-like activity is limited by our embodiment. Aristotle seems to accept the practical observable life of this world as at least a strong candidate for happiness, for those who reject theory.

At a high level of generality, Aristotle defines happiness as an "activity in conformity with virtue."¹⁴⁹ Note that happiness is not having virtue but acting in accordance with virtue.

For a characteristic (*hexis*) may exist without producing any result, as for example, in a man who is asleep or incapacitated in some other respect.¹⁵⁰

However, even excellence proves to be imperfect as an end: for a man might possibly possess it while asleep or while being inactive all his life, and while, in addition, undergoing the greatest suffering and misfortune.¹⁵¹

Rational activity in accordance with virtue is moral and intellectual. That is to say, virtuous activity involving reason (*kata logon*) may be either intellectual (assenting

¹⁴⁸ *De Anima* II.4, 415a25-415b8.

¹⁴⁹ NE I.8, 1098b31.

¹⁵⁰ 1098b33-1099a2.

¹⁵¹ NE (trans. Ostwald) I.5, 1095b32-1096a1.

to, dissenting from, and articulating thoughts) or moral (involving our habitual responses to the stimuli of pleasure and pain). A man of temperance not only can control himself, but also is more rational (has better judgment) than a self-indulgent man. This does not mean he excludes such human activities, as those that involve physical prowess, and pleasure. Indeed, Aristotle is even willing to insist that a person can't be happy without being relatively free, rich, good-looking, healthy, and born into socially well-placed family. "...[F]or the man who is very ugly in appearance or ill-born or solitary and childless is hardly happy..."¹⁵²

Since happiness is a certain kind of activity which requires as its context an active practicing of the virtues, it is necessary to engage in public affairs and friendship. Thus, neither an animal nor a youth can properly be called happy.¹⁵³ *Eudaimonia* is gauged publicly rather than by our own subjective judgment of good life. A unified set of virtues must be achieved through harmonious development of moral/intellectual aspects of human beings, and by fulfilling roles harmoniously in personal/social aspects.

Aristotle thinks that since achieving *eudaimonia* needs external goods, it can be influenced by fortune. Bad luck can prevent *eudaimonia*. So, when Aristotle claims *eudaimonia* as an *activity* in accordance with virtue, this seems to be his effort to cooperate with his circumstances and even an attempt to diminish the role of luck in order for him to control his life as much as possible by his action. As we

¹⁵² NE I.8, 1099b3-4.

¹⁵³ NE I.9, 1099b33-1100a3.

will see in Confucius, self-achievement is the formation of virtuous character. Being virtuous is our goal. Self-cultivation involves a gradual expansion from family, to village, to society. Those graduated contexts also serve as mechanisms to minimize the play of luck. For contextual expansion means a greater sophistication of his virtues, and each sphere of action makes his activities more virtuous. Then, eventually his actions are made by himself rather than by circumstantial forces. Although Confucius does not hold that external goods are as important as does Aristotle, a person cannot avoid the need for favorable external conditions. It is advantageous to be born within a good family. A family is the best and first ground for achieving unified virtues. Before a person has developed virtuously within a family, that person is not able to participate appropriately in a society. Even though a virtuous person meets with misfortune, as long as he sustains his virtuous character, he is still in an achieved state. Part of the ability of a virtuous man is able to see in advance and avoid forthcoming misfortune.

For Confucius the goal of human beings is self-achievement. Although self-achievement is fulfilled differently in each individual, depending on his status or situation, Confucius maintains that the highest goal we can achieve as human beings is to cooperate with heaven. What this means will be examined below.

Confucius describes his own experience of self-realization.

At fifteen I set my heart on learning; at thirty I took my stand; at forty I came to be free from doubts; at fifty I understood the Decree of Heaven; at

sixty my ear was attuned; at seventy I followed my heart's desire without overstepping the line.¹⁵⁴

From this passage, it is clear that self-realization is a life-time project and demands continuous effort. Also, its attainment is a gradual process, as Confucius shows when he confesses that his own cultivation progressed according to his age. His attainments advanced as he aged but they are not to be taken as the exact standard of any other human being's self-cultivation at the same age. For the achievements at each age will differ from person to person, Confucius' goals changed with age and according to his maturity his moral values had advanced. But, each achievement was appropriate to his age.

Furthermore, at a certain stage of self-realization there follows the understanding of the mandate of heaven (*t'ien-ming* 天命). Confucius does not stop at that stage. The highest stage is to live up to the mandate of heaven. As Confucius does at seventy, when a human being's action and heaven's order are in harmony, the human being can enjoy the freedom of spontaneity. In this perspective, Confucius's goal is a single thread and is free of the tension many feel obtains between Aristotle's theoretical and practical goals.¹⁵⁵ In Confucius, the human body is not an obstacle to the realization of true human nature. A human being's goal is to become more human rather than to become divine. Confucius

¹⁵⁴ AN II.4.

¹⁵⁵ The problem is that the life of *theorein* might actually subvert the excellences of the more practical life. A man might commit serious crimes or outrages in order to gain the opportunity to engage in *theorein*.

seems more optimistic than Aristotle about this issue of what can be realized as a physical being.

What does Confucius mean by heaven and the mandate of heaven? Since heaven is the highest power¹⁵⁶, the mandate of heaven is the highest authority for human beings. *T'ien-ming* can be interpreted into two ways -- as fate or as a goal. First, *t'ien-ming* as fate is what is beyond our control -- life, sickness, death,¹⁵⁷ wealth or poverty.¹⁵⁸ Fate applies not only to individuals but also to nations.¹⁵⁹ But the mandate of heaven as fate is the network of constraints under which we must act. A virtuous man must adjust (control) his aspirations to fit what life's circumstances afford him. So in the *Analects*,

Ssu-ma Niu appeared worried saying, 'All men have brothers. I alone have none.' Tzy-hsia said, 'I have heard it said: life and death are a matter of Destiny; wealth and honour depend on Heaven. The gentleman is reverent and does nothing amiss, is respectful towards others and observant of the rites, and all within the Four Seas are his brothers. What need is there for the gentleman to worry about not having any brothers?'¹⁶⁰

The network of constraints under which we act leaves room for humans to act in better or in worse ways. We are physically vulnerable and eventually must die, but a virtuous man (intellectually, at least) can frequently avoid peril to survive to an old age. (He might for example use medicine to forestall illness or death.) It is not a

¹⁵⁶ AN III.13.

¹⁵⁷ AN VI.10.

¹⁵⁸ AN VII.12.

¹⁵⁹ AN XVI.2.

¹⁶⁰ AN XII.5.

matter of the constraints represented by this aspect of the concept of *t'ien-ming* being reasonable or unreasonable; they simply need to be discovered so we can act intelligently within them. Self-realization is not expression of an autonomous self but reaching for a kind of functional integration within an antecedently given framework.

In a second sense, the mandate of heaven is the goal of each human being. Achieving the mandate of heaven, not merely accepting but cooperating with the mandate of heaven, is the goal of human beings. *T'ien-ming* is the natural way of nature (*tao*). To understand *t'ien-ming* is to follow or to cooperate with *tao*. Confucius says,

‘Who can go out without using the door? why, then, does no one follow this way (*tao*)?’¹⁶¹

By nature, human beings are mortal but have full potentiality. Virtue is the center from which human beings can extend themselves. By cultivating this given potentiality, virtue (*te*), human beings come to coincide with heaven. Compared with Aristotle's conception of virtue as an achieved character, Confucius' concept of virtue is broader. For Confucius, the concept of virtue includes both potentiality of human beings to realize themselves as well as having achieved virtuous character.

For Confucius, to cooperate with *tao* does not mean our becoming the highest power or authority but rather our becoming counterparts of heaven. In other words, it is called "*t'ien jen ho yi* 天人合一" -- the unity of heaven and man, as it is

¹⁶¹ AN VI.17.

understood by the later Confucian tradition.¹⁶² In fact, this is an important Confucian development. Before becoming a counterpart of heaven was only possible for an emperor as son of heaven, but, as I mentioned in chapter I, later when the concept of heaven had been expanded and depersonalized, Confucius expands and internalized this concept so that everyone can be counterparts of heaven and it is a moral realization rather than a matter of status or authority in society. Hall and Ames explain that "In the immanent cosmos of Confucius, one accomplishes this same project of bounding by achieving a quality of integration in the world which dissolves the distinction between part and whole, and makes of one a peculiar focus of meaning and value in the field of existing things."¹⁶³ Thus, Confucius emphasizes that "A man can enlarge the way (*tao*); the way (*tao*) does not enlarge the man."¹⁶⁴ From this perspective, "the way" in Confucius is not the universal law of the world but "the way of human beings" when it opens within the framework structured by such laws -- the way of human beings (what they should do or are to do) is realized only by acting humanly. What human beings should do is attained not through humanity as a whole but through each person's achievement,

¹⁶² See David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius*, 241.

¹⁶³ Hall and Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius*, 243. But I do not agree that this can be seen as "a fundamental characteristic of Chinese religiousness" (241) -- "in becoming fully *t'ien-jen* -- the human beings becomes 'deity'" (243). Maybe this is what Chuang Tzu aspired to when spoke of becoming a counterpart of heaven (*p'ei t'ien*) (242), but the idea of becoming god seems too irreverent for Confucians. Aristotle believes we exercise our god-like capacity for contemplation. But what Confucius means is not to become the divine but to become fully human.

¹⁶⁴ AN XV.29.

that is, each one of us should make an effort to pursue whatever his mandate of heaven is. Nevertheless, the realization of a person cannot be purely personal, rather it is continuous with the social realm. Heaven has authority to enforce the order of the world, and the order of a person is recognized within the order of world since he is a part of the world. So, *t'ien-ming* is what each human being should do within a given social circumstance, acknowledging what heaven demands of each one of us.¹⁶⁵ For example, Confucius thinks of himself as a transmitter of tradition.

When under siege in K'uang, the Master said, 'With King Wen dead, is not culture (*wen*) invested here in me? If Heaven intends culture to be destroyed, those who come after me will not be able to have any part of it. If Heaven does not intend this culture to be destroyed, then what can the men of K'uang do to me?'¹⁶⁶

Confucius has confidence in what he should do. Understanding the mandate of heaven makes man act appropriately.

¹⁶⁵ "[T]he fullest realization of the human being is as an active and creative participant in the shaping of order." Roger T. Ames, "Introduction to Part Three," in *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*, 150. Ames says in *Sun-Tzu The Art of Warfare*, 50, "*Tao* is, at any given time, both *what* the world is, and *how* it is. In this tradition, there is no final distinction between some independent source of order, and what it orders. There is no determinative beginning or teleological end. The world and its order at any particular time is self-causing, 'so-of-itself' (*tzu-jan*)." It is agreed that each individual interacts with the order of the world and also that there is hardly any deity in the classical Chinese world. However, temporal continuum shown by returning seasons does not mean that the world is a collection of particular incidents. The order is embedded within nature. True that there is no evident starting and ending point in nature, nevertheless it does not follow that human beings should not have goals such as cooperating with heaven.

¹⁶⁶ AN IX.5. Also, see AN VII.23.

A man has no way of becoming a gentleman unless he understands the mandate; he has no way of taking his stand unless he understands the rites; he has no way of judging men unless he understands words.¹⁶⁷

Those who understand *t'ien-ming* have a steady mind,¹⁶⁸ and are natural, and spontaneous.

There were four things the Master refused to have anything to do with: he refused to entertain conjectures or insist on certainty; he refused to be inflexible or to be egotistical.¹⁶⁹

Understanding *t'ien-ming* is to see the whole rather than to know all things, and to seek the harmony of the whole. This also is the ultimate achievement of *jen*. The expression of the unity of the virtues can be interpreted through *chung-shu*.

The Master said: 'Tseng-tzu, I have one thread running through my Way.' Tseng-tzu assented. When the Master went out the disciples asked 'What did he mean?' 'The Master's Way', said Tseng-tzu, 'is nothing but doing-one's-best-for-others (*chung*) and likening-to-oneself (*shu*).'¹⁷⁰

A. C. Graham comments, "It is this single thread which unifies courage, reverence, and the other dispositions which are distinctively noble or human."¹⁷¹

Understanding the mandate of heaven requires being sensitive enough to understand and appreciate other people. To realize the mandate of heaven is to see heaven within other people and their nature, to recognize the value of others and treat them according to their better nature. Thus, human beings have to show concern toward

¹⁶⁷ AN XX.3.

¹⁶⁸ AN XIII.22.

¹⁶⁹ AN IX.4.

¹⁷⁰ AN IV.15. Quoted from A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the TAO*, 21.

¹⁷¹ A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the TAO*, 21.

other human beings as much as they do toward heaven. So, Confucius says, "Love your fellow men."¹⁷² The attitudes toward heaven and human beings converge: Heaven cannot be fully realized without human beings, as it is in part realized through human beings, indeed through human beings being human(e). Self-realization can be accomplished only when a person sees himself within the whole structure of relations of nature and other people. Then the result of a person's self-achievement is to "bring peace and security to his fellow men"¹⁷³ within the public relations of the social and political realms.

2. THE METHODS OF REALIZING THE VIRTUES

We have seen that the general goal of human beings as the result of being fully virtuous is called "*eudaimonia*" in Aristotle and "cooperating with heaven" in Confucius. These goals cannot be accomplished without a social community and also not without the cooperation of nature. Since the realization of the virtues is a lifelong project, education is necessary to develop personal abilities and habits of social interactions.

On the personal level, Aristotle thinks that intellectual virtue owes its origin chiefly to inborn talents. Its development is due chiefly to instruction, but does not

¹⁷² AN XII.22.

¹⁷³ AN XIV.42.

exclude observation and modeling oneself on exemplars. The moral virtues, on the other hand, are habits formed almost exclusively by observation and modelling. Developing the virtues requires experience and time. Personal education can be examined by way of Aristotle's educational principles, followed by his outline of development through ages, and his survey of what (subjects) needs to be taught (reading, writing, gymnastic exercises, and music).

Confucius also holds that to develop virtue, human beings must learn. Learning here means studying books as well as engaging in concrete (especially ritual) practice. Intellectual knowledge and practice are inseparable. Thus learning is accomplished through the practice of what is taken in cognitively, and so he recommends the study of Poetry, History,¹⁷⁴ as well as the six arts (ritual, music, archery, charioteering, reading and arithmetic); these provide the basis for intellectual and moral achievement. Learning is integrated into practice and the proper attitude to take toward learning is important.

On the social level, although Aristotle and Confucius emphasize the importance of virtues, they do not disregard the importance of laws. Aristotle

¹⁷⁴ *The Book of Poetry* comprised collections representing all spheres of life engagement. Thus it is natural that some of the poetry was decadent. Scholars interpreted the decadent poetry as an allegory of the love for a ruler, but this presented a further problem. For now poetry as well as *The Book of History* could be corruptive, a mere apologetic or panegyric of the winner's point of view. See, H. G. Creel, *Chinese Thought: from Confucius to Mao Tsé-tung* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), 15. However, what is important in Confucius is his interpretation of *The Book of Poetry* and *The Book of History* as expressions of traditional values.

argues that as the virtuous man is the happiest man, so it is true for a city. Without virtues, a city cannot be happy. That is why Aristotle thinks that educating people is an important part of legislation. Thus virtue is to be supported by laws and institutions that provide for education. Aristotle believes that ideally people should be guided by persuasion, but in reality they also require the threat of force and punishment. The lawgiver or ruler must establish good laws, and customs must supply the detail that laws do not give.¹⁷⁵ Only a virtuous ruler or our peers can provide the right *mores* and can be effective models.

Although in some respects Confucius agrees with Aristotle that the highest concern of the state is cultivating people's virtue, he seems to think of education in more private than public terms as effected through the relations of family and society rather than depending on or even supervised by the state.¹⁷⁶ For being governed by laws will not necessarily make people repent in their hearts. Virtue and rites are more effective than laws. Penal laws still are needed for the incorrigible.¹⁷⁷ But even in governing the incorrigible, a virtuous ruler as a model who supports rites is most effective. Laws, for Confucius, have penal, negative

¹⁷⁵ Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. B. Jowett, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle* II, III.16, 1287b5-7. I will refer to Jowett's translation of the *Politics*, unless otherwise noted.

¹⁷⁶ It is presumed that during Confucius' era, government office is still transmitted from officers to their sons. So, there is no real examination system, etc.

¹⁷⁷ Chou dynasty also used penal laws as well as rites. Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, 324.

meaning, and are used for reform.¹⁷⁸ However, since constituting adequate laws is a delicate task and applying laws is difficult, both Aristotle and Confucius claim that virtue is a prerequisite of just rule.

Secondly, education should be realized within a social and political context. Aristotle regards the relationship of *philia* as fundamental to the social cohesion of a city, whereas Confucius wishes social relations to be founded on those within families, specifically that between father and son. Those relations are what Aristotle and Confucius think are the best ways of achieving a unified set of virtues in their respective social historical circumstances. Aristotle lives in a self-governing city state which places individuals not only in competition with one another but in need of alliances (friends) to secure their positions. Confucius lives in world where the idea of imperial peace (of the bygone era of Chou dynasty) stands in tension with the existing turmoil of warring feudal states. Aristotle thinks in terms of social relations (*philia*) which include nurturing family relations (mother to son) and alliances between equals. Confucius thinks in terms of social relations (*wu-lun* 五倫) which depend on recognition of dominance on the part of one member of the relation. Aristotle's virtues are unified around the intellectual ability to deliberate well (function well in taking council, where relations of dominance can be fluid and shifting) which is clearly the form of *praxis kata logon* which will allow friendly alliances to function well. Confucius' virtues are unified around a concern for

¹⁷⁸ The Confucian idea that the ruler should concentrate on educating people rather than enforcing rules is even more prominent in Plato than it is in Aristotle.

humanity (modeled on that of a father for his sons) clearly to be exercised toward those for whom one is responsible.

1. Education on a Personal Level

Aristotle emphasizes the education of citizens (that is free males) in the state. In order to do that, it seems necessary that parents, educators, and legislators set the right principles for consistent habits. So, personal education is a part of public education and public policy. The aim of education is to achieve a unified set of moral and intellectual virtues.

a) The Principles of Education

Education must work at the interface between reasoning and the formation of habits; "for it is equally possible to make an intellectual error about the best principle and to find oneself led astray by one's own habits and training."¹⁷⁹ In order to achieve this harmony between them, first, we have to bear in mind that "in men reason and mind are the end toward which nature strives, so that the birth and training in custom of the citizens ought to be ordered with a view to them."¹⁸⁰ Second, the irrational part of the soul develops prior to rational part of the soul, as we can see from a child: "anger and wishing and desire are implanted in children from their very birth, but reason and understanding are developed as they grow

¹⁷⁹ Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. T. A. Sinclair (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1962), VII.15, 1334b10-12.

¹⁸⁰ 1334b15-17.

older."¹⁸¹ So training of the body is prior to that of the soul but it is, however, for the sake of the soul and so also discipline of the appetites for the sake of reason.

From this perspective, for education, Aristotle argues, our first concern should be that young children learn useful knowledge without making 'mechanics' of themselves: "any occupation, art, or science, which makes the body or soul or mind of the freeman less fit for the practice or exercise of excellence, is mechanical; wherefore we call those arts mechanical which tend to deform the body, and likewise all paid employments, for they absorb and degrade the mind."¹⁸² This view may have had more legitimacy in an economy where there were insufficient technical devices to release more than a few people (those of independent means, i.e., property) for the activities Aristotle regarded as distinctively human. The elitist outlook appears less acceptable in an age when most people have substantial periods of leisure. But what Aristotle intended was to preserve the most precious thing in human beings -- human nature -- by having them develop their higher faculties. In order to do that, human beings should have leisure to free both mind and body. In the same vein, "the first principle of all action is [not labor but] leisure."¹⁸³ Only the free and refined soul can be ready for creativity. In modern society, leisure can

¹⁸¹ 1334b23-24.

¹⁸² 1337b9-14.

¹⁸³ *Politics* VIII.3, 1337b32. "The mention of 'leisured classes' is misleading in that Aristotle's *scholē* [leisure] entailed for him the continuous delights of hard intellectual work; besides, for most Greeks *scholē* was leisure to compete, not leisure to relax." George Huxley, *On Aristotle and Greek Society* (Belfast: Mayne, Boyd & Son, Ltd., 1979), 45.

be shared more freely and widely than would have been possible in Aristotle's day. From Aristotle's point of view, the question how to spend leisure should be reflected within our goals and seems to require some amount of education. Youth should be educated not only to watch passively (TV) but to play sports, not only to watch drama but to perform, not only to visit museums, and to read books in their leisure time but to participate in "social welfare."

Furthermore, since virtues and vices can be acquired by repeated actions that eventuate in habits, having good habits from early childhood is very important. Aristotle claims, "In a word, characteristics develop from corresponding activities. For that reason, we must see to it that our activities are of a certain kind,..."¹⁸⁴ Good moral character can be achieved by avoiding deficiency and excess in action.

[E]xcess as well as deficiency of physical exercise destroys our strength, and similarly, too much and too little food and drink destroys our health; the proportionate amount, however, produces, increases, and preserves it.¹⁸⁵

By becoming habituated to despise and to endure terrors we become courageous, and once we have become courageous we will best be able to endure terror.¹⁸⁶

Since pleasure and pain, along with action and emotion, are basic elements of human experience, Aristotle emphasizes that virtuous character is concerned with pleasure and pain. For example, "a man who endures danger with joy, or at least

¹⁸⁴ NE (trans. Ostwald) II.1, 1103b21-22.

¹⁸⁵ NE (trans. Ostwald) II.2, 1104a15-18.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 1104b1-3.

without pain, is courageous; if he endures it with pain, he is a coward."¹⁸⁷ Thus acquiring the proper responses to such things is important.

[I]t is pleasure that makes us do base actions and pain that prevents us from doing noble actions. For that reason, as Plato says, men must be brought up from childhood to feel pleasure and pain at the proper things;...¹⁸⁸

b) The Stages of Education according to Age

Aristotle holds that education should follow the natural process of human development. But natural development alone does not make a man fulfilled. Human beings become human by acting virtuously; so education is necessary for them to learn how to think and act. "...[W]e ought to keep to the divisions that nature makes. For all training and education aim at filling the gaps that nature leaves."¹⁸⁹

Stage of development is not a concern which appears in the surviving Confucian writings, but it is worth a brief survey to remind us of an aspect of Aristotle's thought which does not match anything found in Confucius. This is not a matter which attracts any attention from Confucius, but it is worth being reminded of.

¹⁸⁷ NE (trans. Ostwald) II.3, 1104b6-8.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 1104b10-13.

¹⁸⁹ *Politics* (trans. Sinclair), VII.17, 1336b40-1337a1.

During infancy, the greatest concern is for physical health: "[T]he manner of rearing them may be supposed to have a great effect on their bodily strength."¹⁹⁰ In order to do that, they should be provided appropriate food.

The next stage is up to the age of five. Children should not be forced to study or labor so much that it inhibits growth, instead they should be engaged in activity which promotes growth. Educators should be careful about what children hear: tales, stories, pictures and speeches from plays, in order to protect them from mean or inhuman influence. In the same vein, children should be exposed to slaves as little as possible.¹⁹¹

From the age of five until the age of seven, "they must look on at the pursuits which they are hereafter to learn,"¹⁹² i.e., They must watch what the children in the next stage do.

The further stages are divided into two which are from seven to the age of puberty, and from puberty to the age of twenty-one. In the latter term, "When boyhood is over, three years should spent in other studies; the period of life which follows may then be devoted to hard exercise and strict diet,"¹⁹³ i.e., discipline.

¹⁹⁰ 1336a4-5.

¹⁹¹ 1336a23-1336b34.

¹⁹² 1336b36.

¹⁹³ *Politics* VIII.4, 1339a4-6.

c) The Subjects of Education

Aristotle lists four customary areas of education: reading, writing, gymnastic exercises, and music. Drawing may sometimes be considered an additional area of education.

Aristotle argues that "in education practice must be placed before theory," and thus the training of body is prior to that of mind. Gymnastics is the first stage of education. Therefore, children should learn first under "the trainer, who creates in them the proper habit of body, and the wrestling-master, who teaches them their exercises."¹⁹⁴ Gymnastic exercises "should be of a lighter kind, avoiding severe diet or painful toil, lest the growth of the body be impaired."¹⁹⁵ An educator should know that labor of the mind and that of body exclude each other, "for the two kinds of labor are opposed to one another; the labor of the body impedes the mind, and the labor of the mind the body."¹⁹⁶ Moreover, children may develop inappropriately if they devote their time only to gymnastics while neglecting other area of education.¹⁹⁷ In physical education, we should not limit the cultivation of the mind either for the sake of physical courage (to face a noble danger) or the body.¹⁹⁸ As we will see in the following section, Confucius thinks that growth of

¹⁹⁴ *Politics* VIII.3, 1338b3-7.

¹⁹⁵ *Politics* VIII.4, 1338b40-41.

¹⁹⁶ 1339a9-11.

¹⁹⁷ 1338b33-34.

¹⁹⁸ 1338b30-32.

mind and body coincide. Thus in Confucius physical exercise is not treated separately from mental education. Unlike Aristotle, there is no purely bodily exercise in Confucius and this is why there is nothing corresponding to Athenian gymnastic culture in Confucius. Bodily exercises are not consigned to a gymnasium, but start from daily life of sweeping, cleaning, and responding to calls, etc.¹⁹⁹ Bodily exercises moreover are given a ritual structure and integrated in that way into moral education.

As gymnastics not only contributes to the development of physical strength but also of moral virtues, other subjects are also treated as contributing to the development of moral and intellectual character. Reading, writing, and even drawing are of course useful in life in various ways. But parents should educate sons not only for usefulness or necessity but also for liberty and nobility,²⁰⁰ since pursuing only usefulness does not make children "free and [refined] souls."²⁰¹ Thus reading and writing should be taught "not only for usefulness, but also because many other sorts of knowledge are acquired through them."²⁰² Also, drawing allows children to evaluate "the beauty of the human form."²⁰³

Music is for pleasure.

¹⁹⁹ AN XIX.12.

²⁰⁰ *Politics* VIII.3, 1338a31-32.

²⁰¹ 1338b2-3.

²⁰² 1338a39-40.

²⁰³ 1338b1.

Amusement is for the sake of relaxation, and relaxation is of necessity sweet, for it is the remedy of pain caused by toil; and intellectual enjoyment is universally acknowledged to contain an element not only of the noble but of the pleasant, for happiness is made up of both. All men agree that music is one of the pleasantest things, whether with or without song;²⁰⁴

However, in Aristotle's view music serves a further purpose which is that it enables us to spend our leisure time well.²⁰⁵ If music were only for amusement, we would not need to educate children musically. It would be better for them to listen to professionals. Music contributes to intellectual enjoyment as well as amusement.

And therefore our fathers admitted music into education, not on the ground either of its necessity or utility, for it is not necessary, nor indeed useful in the same manner as reading and writing, which are useful in money-making, in the management of a household, in the acquisition of knowledge and in political life, nor like drawing, useful for a more correct judgment of the works of artist, nor again like gymnastic, which gives health and strength;... There remains, then, the use of music for intellectual enjoyment in leisure; which is in fact evidently the reason of its introduction, this being one of the ways in which it is thought that a freeman should pass his leisure.²⁰⁶

Intellectual activity is the best way of spending leisure.

²⁰⁴ *Politics* VIII.5, 1339b15-20.

²⁰⁵ Unlike Plato, Aristotle thinks that music is for intellectual amusement as well as for moral education. For Plato, music is only for the purpose of achieving intellectual character.: "[T]he two arts, gymnastics and music, in which this education of the guardians consists, are not meant or not merely meant to improve body and soul, as the customary view has it (376E). Both arts serve the soul, i.e., the essential nature of man. More specifically, both arts are designed to reconcile the two contrary qualities decisive in the selection of the guardians (375E) -- courageous spirit and intellectual striving" (*Plato* III, 84). In *Republic* Book VII, "the true science of music ...is concerned only with the consonance of pure numerical proportions." Music makes our souls see the order beyond the world and leads us to "the highest kind of knowledge." (*Plato* I, 188). Quoted from Paul Friedländer, *Plato* I & III, trans. Hans Meyerhoff (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969).

²⁰⁶ *Politics* VIII.3, 1338a13-23.

This pleasure, however, is regarded differently by different persons, and varies according to the habit of individuals; the pleasure of the best man is the best, and springs from the noblest sources. It is clear then that there are branches of learning and education which we must study merely with a view to leisure spent in intellectual activity, and these are to be valued for their own sake; whereas those kinds of knowledge which are useful in business are to be deemed necessary, and exist for the sake of other things.²⁰⁷

Music also has an effect on personal character and the soul, besides amusement and intellectual enjoyment.

Since then music is a pleasure, and excellence consists in rejoicing and loving and hating rightly, there is clearly nothing which we are so much concerned to acquire and to cultivate as the power of forming right judgments, and of taking delight in good dispositions and noble actions. Rhythm and melody supply imitations of anger and gentleness, and also of courage and temperance, and of all the qualities contrary to these, and of the other qualities of character, which hardly fall short of the actual affections, as we know from our own experience, for in listening to such strains our souls undergo a change.²⁰⁸

"[M]usic has a power of forming the character,"²⁰⁹ -- a claim with which

Confucius agrees very much²¹⁰ -- because music in its modes and rhythms is akin to the harmony of the soul.²¹¹

However, Aristotle raises the question that even if music is for amusement, intellectual enjoyment and formation of the character, do we have to learn how to play music rather than to listen just to others? Education in music does contribute in

²⁰⁷ 1338a6-13.

²⁰⁸ *Politics* VIII.5, 1340a14-23.

²⁰⁹ 1340b11.

²¹⁰ See AN III.25, XVII.4, XVII.18.

²¹¹ 1340b14-18.

developing moral character and intellectual enjoyment. Also, it is true that musicians find that those who play learn better how to listen. Children should be taught music not only as critics, but also as performers. "Clearly there is a considerable difference made in the character by the actual practice of the art. It is difficult, if not impossible, for those who do not perform to be good judges of the performance of others."²¹² Confucius could, however, appreciate Aristotle's point that personally learning how to play is a better way to learn how to judge and learning music for private purposes also contributes to the public good.

But since "the learning of music ought not to impede the business of riper years, or to degrade the body or render it unfit for civil or military training, whether for bodily exercises at the time or for later studies,"²¹³ music should be taught to children "only until they are able to feel delight in noble melodies and rhythms, and not merely in that common part of music in which every slave or child and even some animals find pleasure."²¹⁴ Also, Aristotle disapproved of educating children with professional instruments that could possibly tempt to a profession in music, "for in this the performer practices the art, not for the sake of his own improvement, but in order to give pleasure, and that of a vulgar sort, to his hearers"²¹⁵ and the

²¹² 1340b22-25.

²¹³ *Politics* VIII.6, 1341a6-9.

²¹⁴ 1341a14-16.

²¹⁵ 1341b11-12.

demands of professional training, Aristotle believed, might degrade the body making it unfit for civil or military training.

Aristotle thought that different kinds of music are useful for different aims. One may promote virtues, such as courage, and piety. For the education of children, the ethical harmonies should be taught. And the rest should be left to professionals. Melodies of music represent the purpose distinct from each other. "We accept the division of melodies proposed by certain philosophers into melodies of character, melodies of action, and passionate or inspiring melodies, each having, as they say, a mode corresponding to it."²¹⁶ Aristotle thinks that concerning modes and melodies, the Dorian is best for educating character.²¹⁷ "All men agree that the Dorian music is the gravest and manliest. And whereas we say that the extremes should be avoided and the mean followed, and whereas the Dorian is a mean between the other modes, it is evident that our youth should be taught the Dorian music."²¹⁸

As we will see in the next section, Confucius likewise expresses a preference for the tunes of *shao* -- in his experience, the best in their beauty and goodness.²¹⁹

Although Aristotle and Confucius think that music is an important part of (moral) education, each holds a different orientation toward it. For Aristotle, music

²¹⁶ *Politics* VIII.7, 1341b32-35.

²¹⁷ 1342a27-29.

²¹⁸ 1342b12-17.

²¹⁹ AN XV.11.

is for the excellence of an individual, and as a result, "'music" is the best way to promote civic virtue in citizens."²²⁰ On the other hand, for Confucius music is used for the purpose of communal and political association more than for personal excellence.

Confucius says, "By nature men are alike. Through practice they have become far apart."²²¹ Even though human beings have a precious nature, it is useless if not developed. *Analects* III.22, implies that what limits a person is ignorance. Thus we must learn! What Confucius means by learning, is study of the Classics, observing other people and the phenomena of the nature, and thereby gaining experience.

What Confucius means by self-cultivation is the balanced development of natural talent and cultivation.

The Master said, 'When there is a preponderance of native substance over acquired refinement, the result will be churlishness. When there is a preponderance of acquired refinement over native substance, the result will be pedantry. Only a well-balanced admixture of these two will result in gentlemanliness.'²²²

²²⁰ Judith A. Swanson, *The Public and the Private in Aristotle's Political Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 154.

²²¹ AN XVII.2. We should understand the first sentence of this quotation in the same sense that everybody is equal before the law. It does not suggest that a poorly endowed person can become a ruler through practice. Rather it says that habituation builds man's character either for better or for worse.

²²² AN VI.18.

Cultivating oneself is supposed to develop what we have in nature by way of what we learn. The ideal balance of nature and refinement will make us realize who we are, that is, who we must become. Refinement should not overwhelm our nature. Over-refinement also distorts human nature. Refinement should be done in terms of developing the nature in best way, avoiding both coarseness and mere decorativeness.

Confucius does not divide the function of human beings into intellectual and physical facets. Learning should lead to the harmonious integration of a person's physical, moral, and intellectual capacities. Confucius says,

There is the love of being benevolent without the love of learning;--the beclouding here leads to a foolish simplicity. There is the love of knowing without the love of learning;--the beclouding here leads to dissipation of mind. There is the love of being sincere without the love of learning;--the beclouding here leads to an injurious disregard of consequences. There is the love of straightforwardness without the love of learning;--the beclouding here leads to insubordination. There is the love of firmness without the love of learning;--the beclouding here leads to extravagant conduct.²²³

His focus is on the action of a person. His intellectual knowledge should be expressed and completed through his action. So, a person should practice what he has learned before he engages in the further pursuit of further knowledge.

a) The Subjects of Learning

The main subjects of learning are classics²²⁴ such as *The Book of Poetry*

²²³ *Confucian Analects*, trans. James Legge, in *The Four Books* (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1966), XVII.7.

²²⁴ Traditionally, there are six classics, *the Book of Changes*, *the Book of Poetry*, *the Book of History*, *the Book of Rites*, *Music*, and *the Spring and Autumn Annals*. But the Books are mentioned by Confucius, in *Analects* are *the Book of Poetry*, and

(*Shih Ching* 詩經)²²⁵, and *The Book of History* (*Shu Ching* 書經) and the six arts.

These classics are the accumulation of Chinese culture, tradition, history, and wisdom. Along with classics, there are the six arts which are focused on practice. Those subjects appear to be what an educated man should know and thus they seem to be the requirements for various occupations, too. This is similar to Aristotle's belief that learning certain subjects will result in usefulness and pleasure as well as virtuous character. As a member of the *shih* 士, Confucius was among the "experts in and teachers of the civil aspects of the cultural heritage."²²⁶ Rituals and music are the main elements of six arts.²²⁷ Tu, Wei-Ming says, "The Confucian six arts 六藝 -- ritual, music, archery, charioteering, calligraphy, and arithmetic -- broadly speaking, are all 'rituals' designed to discipline people's bodies and minds so that they can act suitably in all human situations."²²⁸ For example, archery as well as music was a part of ceremony. Even the function of martial arts was to build

the Book of History, and *the Book of Changes*. But *the Book of Changes* (AN VII.17), it seems not something to recommend for ordinary people because even Confucius himself wants to study it, if time allows him. All six classics are mentioned in *Chuang Tzu* XXXIII. (*The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trans. Burton Watson [New York: Columbia University Press, 1968], 363). See, for the summary of classics, Chen, Li-Fu, *Why Confucian Has Been Reverenced As the Model Teacher of All Ages* (New York: St. John's University Press, 1976), 14-19.

²²⁵ Also known as *The Odes*.

²²⁶ Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, 86. Also, see *Ibid.*, 44 & 57-59.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 85.

²²⁸ Tu, wei-ming, *Way, Learning, and Politics: Essays on the Confucian Intellectual* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. 1993), 6.

virtuous character. In commenting on Confucius' attitude toward "the highly ceremonialized archery contests of the nobility," Benjamin Schwartz says,

...but what he obviously appreciates is not the skill of archery, but the fact that even on an occasion as obviously conducive to a spirit of rivalry and desire for mastery over others as an archery contest, the noble man, restrained by ceremonies, remains a noble man. Even in archery, it is the victory of moral power which is celebrated.²²⁹

Confucius' own recommendation was in these terms, "In archery we have something resembling the Way of the superior man. When the archer misses the center of the target, he turns around and seeks for the cause of failure within himself."²³⁰

Bodily movement represents a person's character. Even though *The Book of Poetry*, and *The Book of History* are classics, Confucius thinks they are directly related to practice and cannot be functionally separated from rites and music. Confucius says, "Be stimulated by the *Odes*, take your stand on the rites and be perfected by music."²³¹ *The Book of History* teaches wisdom especially about governing. The odes encourage a mind to cultivate the good and diminish the evil. Rites guide us to act properly. However, even following the rites cannot prevent a person from facing conflicts sometimes, for example, whether one should rescue his drowning sister-in-law by touching her hand, which the rites prohibit. Also, rites can give ambiguous guidance leaving unclear which of two or more ways one should perform. In these cases, for a final decision, Confucius seems to appeal more

²²⁹ Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, 85-86.

²³⁰ *The Doctrine of the Mean*, XIV.

²³¹ AN VIII.8. Also see AN XVI.13.

to harmony one can learn from than to law.²³² There is not this use of music in Aristotle. Harmony goes beyond right and wrong. Confucius seems to think that music will teach us the sense of harmonious action, since the heart of music is harmony. This seems to be the aesthetic perspective of Confucius. Music and rituals round off education.

Tzu-lu asked about the complete man. The Master said, 'A man as wise as Tsang Wu-chung, as free from desires as Meng Kung-ch'uo, as courageous as Chuang-tzu of Pien and as accomplished as Jan Ch'iu, who is further refined by the rites and music, may be considered a complete man.'²³³

By rites and music, all other virtuous characteristics are refined appropriately and harmoniously, that is, a person achieves a unified set of virtues. There will be further discussion of music as a method of governing the public in the next section.

Confucius argues that these subjects preserve cultural values, and keep order in society: 'A man is worthy of being a teacher who gets to know what is new by keeping fresh in his mind what he is already familiar with.'²³⁴ Confucius himself insists that one should recognize the wisdom of established tradition. Such wisdom, can make the meanings of tradition new and can make room for new knowledge. The tradition carries the essentials but its interpretation is open to change, and depending on circumstances, human beings can re-interpret the essential factors.

²³² "Yu Tzu said, 'Of the things brought about by rites, harmony is the most valuable...'" (AN I.12).

²³³ AN XIV.12.

²³⁴ AN II.11.

Thus tradition continues and its contents become richer.²³⁵ In keeping with this cumulative view of tradition, Confucius describes himself as a transmitter rather than an originator. "The Master said, 'I transmit but do not innovate; I am truthful in what I say and devoted to antiquity. I venture to compare myself to our Old P'eng.'²³⁶ Our studying the tradition makes us understand who we really are. Working from tradition, human beings can properly develop their futures. But there are also subjects which are excluded from learning, such as, strange phenomena, physical exploits, disorder and things after death.²³⁷ Confucius only mentions righteous things. Strange phenomena, physical exploits, and disorder were not ordinary and righteous things but deviations from the order of nature as well as the

²³⁵ "Like poets who have mastered the subtleties of the language, articulating their innermost thoughts through them, Confucians who have become thoroughly proficient in the nuances of the ritual are said to be able to establish and enlarge others as well as themselves by bringing this personal knowledge to bear on daily practical living. The seeming naivete of the Confucians in accepting their own linguistic and cultural universe as intrinsically meaningful and valuable is based on the collective judgment that the survival and continuation of their civilization is not a given reality but a communal attainment. This judgment is itself premised on a fundamental faith in the transformability and perfectibility of the human condition through communal self-effort." Tu, Wei-Ming, "Embodying the Universe: A Note on Confucian Self-Realization" in *Self as Person in Asian Theory and Practice*, ed. Roger T. Ames with Wimal Dissanayake and Thomas P. Kasulis (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 178-9.

²³⁶ AN VII.1. "Who the individual called endearingly "our old P'ang" was can hardly be ascertained... A P'ang Hsien appears in the Lî São, st. 21, Where Chû Hsî describes him as a worthy of the Yin (or Shang) dynasty, and he supposes him to be the Lâo P'ang here." Quoted from James Legge, *Confucian Analects in The Four Books*, 78.

²³⁷ AN VII.21 & XI.12.

order of society. Also, he is concerned with human life in the here and now rather than things that will occur after death.

While Confucius emphasizes the Classics as resources for us to deal with the present situation, Aristotle does not recommend literature in quite the same vein; it is recommended rather as a source of discursive understanding (p. 62, fn. 139) for stimulating rationality. While for Confucius, history, odes, and rites are the framework of guidance, for Aristotle, deliberation seems the main source of guidance for our actions. Aristotle could appreciate Confucian rituals because, along with music, rituals involve the participation of a whole person and do not treat culture (*mousike*) as separated from gymnastics. It is easier, Confucius believes, for a person to become attuned to the virtues by practicing rituals. For Confucius music is included in rituals which are part of the practice developing the moral life and so, unlike Aristotle, leisure is less necessary for moral education.

Although Confucius does not distinguish moral and intellectual virtues, this does not mean that he does not recognize the importance of knowledge. In the following section, we see how knowledge and practice are related and how moral actions are produced.

b) Knowledge, Reflection, and Practice

Thought and learning should support each other. What is learned should be reflected upon. "Learning without thought is labor lost; thought without learning is perilous."²³⁸ Learning provides the content of thought.

²³⁸ AN (trans. Legge) II.15.

I have been the whole day without eating and the whole night without sleeping:--occupied with thinking. It was of no avail. The better plan is to learn.²³⁹

The importance of reflection on learning is related more to application than theory-making. What we have to learn is not limited to the knowledge of books. It extends directly to practical action toward other people. Since action is the application of our learning in concrete contexts, it should include moral judgment, which is the result of reflection. So, it is inferred that intellectual learning is not learning for its own sake. Thus, learning is not for a scholarly ivory tower, but for living with others within society.

Although Confucius does not insist precisely on which is more important, knowledge or practice, he seems to place more emphasis on practice. But chronologically, learning should be prior to practice.

Before he could put into practice something he had heard, the only thing Tzu-lu feared was that he should be told something further.²⁴⁰

On the occasion Tzu-lu made Tzu-kao the prefect of Pi, the Master said, 'He is ruining another man's son.' Tzu-lu said, 'There are the common people and one's fellow men, and there are the altars to the gods of earth and grain. Why must one have to read books before one is said to learn?' The Master said, 'It is for this reason that I dislike men who are plausible.'²⁴¹

Confucius believes that learning the wisdom embedded in books is the first thing to do as a learner in order to act as well as to engage in official occupations such as governing people or serving at the altar. Confucius remarks on how intellectual

²³⁹ AN (trans. Legge) XV.30.

²⁴⁰ AN V.14.

²⁴¹ AN XI.25.

learning, such as that derived from literature, can guide one to improve moral practice.²⁴²

The odes can stimulate your emotions, broaden your observation, enlarge your fellowship, and express your grievances. They help you in your immediate service to your parents and in your more indirect service to your rulers.²⁴³

When knowledge is completed through action, it brings pleasure and joy to us.

The Master said, 'The wise find joy in water; ...The wise are active; ...The wise are joyful;...' ²⁴⁴

The Master said, 'Is it not a pleasure to learn and to repeat or practice from time to time what has been learned?' ...²⁴⁵

The Master said, 'To be fond of something is better than merely to know it, and to find joy in it is better than merely to be fond of it.'²⁴⁶

However, practice has priority in importance. Furthermore, the whole physical practice is prior to partly bodily practice of speech alone because practice is expression of a whole human being.

²⁴² "In contrast with its classical Greek counterpart where 'knowing' assumes a mirroring correspondence between an idea and an objective world, this Chinese 'knowing' is resolutely participatory and creative -- 'tracing' in both the sense of etching a pattern and of following it. To know is 'to realize,' to 'make real.' The path is not a 'given,' but is made in the treading of it. Thus, one's own actions are always a significant factor in the shaping of one's world." Roger T. Ames, *Sun-Tzu The Art of Warfare*, 57.

²⁴³ AN XVII.9. Quoted from *The Humanism of Confucius*, in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. trans. Wing-Tsit Chan.

²⁴⁴ AN VI.23.

²⁴⁵ AN (trans. Chan) I.1.

²⁴⁶ AN VI.20.

The Master said, 'In antiquity men were loath to speak. This was because they counted it shameful if their person failed to keep up with their words.'²⁴⁷

He [gentleman] acts before he speaks and then speaks according to his action.²⁴⁸

The gentleman desires to be halting in speech but quick in action.²⁴⁹

The gentleman is ashamed of his word outstripping his deed.²⁵⁰

It can be inferred that learning and thought, are proved by action. How one acts is a measure of the degree of one's learning and understanding. In this vein, education of the young should begin with practicing from small and near things, such as sweeping, cleaning, responding to calls and replying to questions put to them, coming forward and withdrawing,²⁵¹ and these things should not be treated as less important relative to the aims of such education.

For Confucius, learning is an instrument of self-cultivation. So, "...a scholar is identical with a superior man. A person can never be a scholar if he does not cultivate his moral virtues."²⁵² But there is a chance that a scholar can be a

²⁴⁷ AN IV.22.

²⁴⁸ AN (trans. Chan) II.13.

²⁴⁹ AN IV.24.

²⁵⁰ AN XIV.27.

²⁵¹ AN XIX.12. "Chinese theory treats the function of language as socializing, regulating, and co-ordinating behaviour." Chad Hansen, "Language in the Heart-mind," in *Understanding the Chinese Mind*, ed. Robert E. Allinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 77.

²⁵² Lin, Tian-Min, "Thought and Action in Confucius," *Religious Humanism* 22, no. 1 (Winter, 1988), 9.

hypocrite. So, Confucius says, "'The village worthy is the ruin of virtue.'"²⁵³ The village worthy is one who cooperates with corruption and yet shows himself off trying to gain approval from people. When the village worthy sets himself as a model of virtuous character, he is neglecting himself and is a bad influence to others.²⁵⁴

c) The Attitude toward Learning

What makes Confucius as a person (standing in his tradition) truly different from that of Aristotle in his, is that Confucius himself is used by Confucians as a model of sincere learner and teacher. Aristotle himself is taken by Aristotelians only as a good model of a teacher and learner with respect to scholarly work, but not for living itself. Aristotle tells us how to think about ethical concerns, while Confucius is taken to have shown us how to live by his way of living. While in Confucius, learning should be deepened throughout the whole of one's life, for Aristotle, there is only certain period of time to learn and then next to engage in politics or to contemplate.

The Master said, 'How dare I claim to be a sage or a benevolent man? Perhaps it might be said of me that I learn without flagging and teach without growing weary.'...²⁵⁵

He confesses that what gives the motivation to learn is the joy of heart.

²⁵³ AN XVII.13.

²⁵⁴ But what if someone is inspired by him at some time and becomes truly virtuous? Then This good result is not because of good influence of the village worthy, rather because the man is a good kind of person.

²⁵⁵ AN VII.34.

Is it not pleasant to learn with constant perseverance and application?²⁵⁶

The Duke of She asked Tzu-lu about Confucius, and Tzu-lu did not answer. Confucius said, "Why didn't you say that I am a person who forgets his food when engaged in vigorous pursuit of something, is so happy as to forget his worries, and is not aware that old age is coming on?"²⁵⁷

Confucius shows us his humble and self-critical mind, and ceaseless efforts to learn.

As a sincere teacher, Confucius was a model for self-fulfillment. Confucius not only taught but applied what he learned to every day life, becoming a living text and an ideal model.²⁵⁸ He offers teaching to whomever showed enthusiasm for learning. He says, 'I have never denied instruction to anyone who, of his own accord, has given me so much as a bundle of dried meat as a present.'²⁵⁹

Learning should be gradual depending on differences in a personal ability.

(Yen Yüan said) 'The Master is good at leading one on step by step. He broadens me with culture and brings me back to essentials by means of the rites. I cannot give up even if I wanted to, but having done all I can, it seems to rise sheer above me and I have no way of going after it, however much I may want to.'²⁶⁰

Learning requires the learner's active involvement.

The Master said, 'I never enlightened anyone who has not been driven to distraction by trying to understand a difficulty or who has not got into a frenzy trying to put his ideas into words. When I have pointed out one corner

²⁵⁶ AN I.1.

²⁵⁷ AN (trans. Chan) VII.18.

²⁵⁸ Chen, Li-Fu, *Why Confucius Has Been Reverenced As The Model Teacher of All Ages*, 19.

²⁵⁹ AN VII.7.

²⁶⁰ AN IX.11.

of a square to anyone and he does not come back with the other three, I will not point it out to him a second time.'²⁶¹

Learning requires continuous work. Confucius compliments Yen Yuan's making progress ceaselessly.²⁶² A learner should have an alert mind.

The Master said, 'Even with a man who urges himself on in his studies as though he was losing ground, my fear is still that he may not make it in time.'²⁶³

Learning should not be postponed even for a day. Self-achievement is through by human effort. Since a human being's life is to be made by himself, we should not rely on supernatural powers.²⁶⁴ So, learning is a struggle for oneself as well as against oneself.

The Master said, 'As in the case of making a mound, if, before the very last basketful, I stop, then I shall have stopped. As in the case of levelling the ground, if, though tipping only one basketful, I am going forward, then I shall be making progress.'²⁶⁵

Learning is a battle against oneself, a person should remain critical of himself. But this fight is also for himself. Even if he goes one step further than yesterday, it is he who has made progress.

The foundation of progress in learning is that a learner should be critical of himself.

²⁶¹ AN VII.8.

²⁶² AN IX.21.

²⁶³ AN VIII.17.

²⁶⁴ AN V.18.

²⁶⁵ AN IX.19.

The Master said, 'I suppose I should give up hope. I have yet to meet the man who, on seeing his own errors, is able to take himself to task inwardly.'²⁶⁶

Also, in *Analects* IX.24, Confucius insists that a person should examine himself and find out what causes his errors. In order to do that, we need to rectify our purpose constantly, because as human beings we are often overtly affected by desires and emotions.

The Master said, 'I have never met anyone who is truly unbending.' Someone said, 'What about Shen Ch'eng?' The Master said, 'Ch'eng is full of desires. How can he be unbending?''²⁶⁷

The main obstacle seems to be selfish interest.²⁶⁸ If we want to realize ourselves, we have to set our goals high. One should not be satisfied with small achievements or compliments of others²⁶⁹ until he achieves himself. And a person first should do his duties and only expect the reward afterwards.²⁷⁰ Confucius thinks that selfish desires should be removed by other virtues, such as righteousness. "If one acts for the sake of one's own profit, he will result in reproaches."²⁷¹ So, "The gentleman understands what is righteousness. The small man understands what is

²⁶⁶ AN V.27.

²⁶⁷ AN V.11.

²⁶⁸ AN V.11. Also, emotions such as wrath, terror, fondness, and sorrow as in *The Great Learning*, VII. In *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Wing-Tsit Chan.

²⁶⁹ AN IX.27 & XIII.17.

²⁷⁰ AN XV.38.

²⁷¹ AN IV.12.

profitable."²⁷² Confucius thinks that selfish interest is diminished by acting in accord with moral virtues alone, while Aristotle appeals to reason which informs virtues to bar desires.²⁷³

Confucius seems to focus very much on the attitude of a learner. It is because human beings can fully develop their nature, only if they make effort. Since what is the mandate of heaven to each one of us is difficult to define, the process of making effort sincerely is itself virtuous and one way of self-cultivation. Being virtuous is the means as well as end.

2. Education on Social Level

(a) *Laws and Rituals*

Aristotle thinks that education although conducted privately is a matter of public concern. The state should set up the right rule or law to ensure that people are habituated to the right *mores*, thereby regulating personal education.

Aristotle asks "what is the most desirable life for all men?"²⁷⁴ He assumes that what is desirable for an individual is what determines what is desirable for the whole, the city or state: "happiness is the same for the individual human being and for the city."²⁷⁵ It follows that moral virtue and intelligence are necessary for

²⁷² AN IV.16.

²⁷³ See II-2-2-(a), *Politics* III.16, 1287a30-32.

²⁷⁴ *Politics* (trans. Sinclair) VII.1, 1323a20.

²⁷⁵ *Politics* (trans. Sinclair) VII.2, 1324a5.

happiness, whether individual or civic.²⁷⁶ Also, civic welfare is generally a prerequisite of individual happiness. Thus, education becomes a critical component of legislation. Ruling at its core must concern educating people. "[L]aw is itself a kind of order, and to live under good laws is to live in good order."²⁷⁷

Aristotle thinks that law is more effective than persuasion for educating the common people.

For these do not by nature obey the sense of shame, but only fear, and do not abstain from bad acts because of their baseness but through fear of punishment; living by passion they pursue their own pleasures and the means to them, and avoid the opposite pains, and have not even a conception of what is noble and truly pleasant, since they have never tasted it.²⁷⁸

It is a practical necessity to insist on laws as an effective means of public education.

Only the few and fortunate are gifted with divine good nature, and teaching and argument can guide only those who are brought up to have good habits. Thus, Aristotle argues that people should be brought up "under the right laws" from their youth. Even though youth are more open to learning, some virtues such as self-control are more difficult for them than others. Even after they are grown up, it will be easier to be guided by laws because achieving virtuous habits is a lifelong project.

It is hard, if not impossible, to remove by argument the traits that have long since been incorporated in the character.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁶ *Politics* VII.1, 1323b28-35.

²⁷⁷ *Politics* (trans. Sinclair) VII.4, 1326a30.

²⁷⁸ NE X.9, 1179b10-15.

²⁷⁹ 1179b16-17.

But it is surely not enough that when they are young they should get the right nurture and attention; since they must, even when they are grown up, practise and be habituated to them, we shall need laws of this as well, and generally speaking to cover the whole of life; for most people obey necessity rather than argument, and punishments rather than what is noble.²⁸⁰

But the effect of law seems to vary according to personal ability.

This is why some think that legislators ought to stimulate men to excellence and urge them forward by the motive of the noble, on the assumption that those who have been well advanced by the formation of habits will attend to such influences²⁸¹; and that punishments and penalties should be imposed on those who disobey and are of inferior nature, while the incurably bad should be completely banished.²⁸²

Laws are more powerful than a particular individual's commands. Laws are "the rule of reason derived from some sort of practical wisdom and intelligence."

but the law *has* compulsive power, while it is at the same time a principle proceeding from a sort of practical wisdom and intellect. And while people hate *men* who oppose their impulses, even if they oppose them rightly, the law in its ordaining of what is good is not burdensome.²⁸³

Aristotle notes that to educate individuals under the guidance of their own parents will be more efficient, since "individual treatment is superior to group treatment in education as it is in medicine."²⁸⁴ However, he claims that "the general principle" is prior to "a particular case."²⁸⁵ "[I]f a man wants to master a

²⁸⁰ 1180a1-5.

²⁸¹ This is advocated by Plato in his *Laws* IV, 722d-723d (as cited by Martin Ostwald in *Nicomachean Ethics*, 297, footnote 29).

²⁸² NE X.9, 1180a6-9.

²⁸³ 1180a21-24.

²⁸⁴ NE (trans. Ostwald) X.9, 1180b8.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1180b9-10.

skill or art or some theoretical knowledge, he ought, one would think, probably to go on to a universal principle, and to gain knowledge of it as best as possible."²⁸⁶ Unlike Aristotle, Confucius insists that education be oriented privately by rites. Education should begin from learning how to act in particular circumstances, rather than general principle. The particular details of rituals contain the general principles implicitly; there is no need to appeal to a higher authority or the general principle but to a good model.²⁸⁷ However, there is a need for family members who already practice the rituals well.²⁸⁸ For Aristotle, education should involve reference to general principles and reasoning in order to apply to the particular situations. Confucius provides particular examples of rituals, so that practicing them leads a person to a grasp of the general principle behind them.

Furthermore, Aristotle says if a man has a belief that "laws can make us good" and he wants to devote his life to overseeing the affairs of other people, he should learn about legislation.²⁸⁹ Moreover, legislation is included in politics and becoming politicians requires more practice and experience than theoretical

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 1180b20-21.

²⁸⁷ "Confucius is relevant to the present as a precursor who can teach us to think ourselves inside the unnoticed context of ritualised behaviour with which performative speech and gesture are in interaction, which analytic philosophy has rediscovered but tries to objectivise in value-free terms, as 'the intelligent practice of learned conventions and language.'" A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the TAO*, 25.

²⁸⁸ However, even if a father has a evil character, a son should treat his father with filial piety which is appropriate to a father, if there is a virtuous person. Only treating his father as a father can influence his father (*Mencius* V.a.1-5).

²⁸⁹ NE (trans. Ostwald) X.9, 1180b23-25.

knowledge. So, concerning political matters, it is wrong for sophists to be overconfident about persuasion by rational argument. Sophists think that they can teach young men how to become politicians by means of theory rather than experience.

[B]ut while the sophists profess to teach politics, it is practiced not by any of them but by the politicians, who would seem to do so by dint of a certain faculty and experience rather than of thought;²⁹⁰

Sophists profess to teach politics. But teaching politics is very far from treating it like rhetoric in the way it is taught. This applies in particular to legislation.²⁹¹

In every field, it is those who are experienced that judge its products correctly, and are privy to the means and the manner in which they were accomplished and understand what combinations are harmonious.²⁹²

In the same vein, only those who have experience can choose the best collection of laws.

So also collections of laws and constitutions may perhaps be of good use to those who have the capacity to study them and judge what enactments are good and which are not, and what kind of measures are appropriate to what circumstances.²⁹³

Only experienced politicians can collect and construct laws and apply them to the right circumstances in the right manner in order that all these processes will be harmonious. For this reason, Aristotle argues that laws are not universal and different cities require different laws.

²⁹⁰ 1180b33-1181a2.

²⁹¹ 1181a14-16.

²⁹² NE (trans. Ostwald) X.9, 1181a18-21.

²⁹³ NE (trans. Ostwald) 1181b6-8.

A ruler then is needed as a decision maker who provides right direction. A city is made up of the rulers and the ruled. Yet, there is no distinction given by nature between the ruled and the ruler, except that "[N]ature herself has provided one distinction: that class which in respect of birth is all the same she has divided into older and younger, the former being more fit for ruling, the latter for being ruled."²⁹⁴ Since the young should obey if they are to learn to rule, Aristotle emphasizes that a ruler should be ruled first and only then should be allowed to rule.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴ *Politics* (trans. Sinclair) VII.14, 1332b36-38.

²⁹⁵ "[T]he excellence of the good citizen coincides with the excellence of the good man under the two conditions that he exercises a commanding role and that he exercises this role in the best type of city." Richard Bodéüs, *The Political Dimensions of Aristotle's Ethics*, trans. Jan Edward Garrett (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 44.

Next, Aristotle states that lawgivers should construct society "with the best possible aim," "laws and education toward producing all the virtues."²⁹⁶ For this reason, the good ruler must be a good man.

[O]ne who is to become a good ruler must first himself be ruled. But since we hold that the same qualities are needed for citizen and for ruler and for the best man, and that the same man should be first ruled and later ruler, it immediately becomes an essential task of the planner of a constitution to ensure that men shall be good men, to consider what practices will make them so, and what is the end or aim of the best life.²⁹⁷

Only a good ruler can contribute to "peace and a cultured life." Since rules are general, even though the rules are good, if the ruler is not virtuous, he cannot apply a rule in the right manner, to the right situation. If the ruler is not virtuous, there is a danger that he will either make rules too rigid or interpret them in whatever way pleases him. Only a good ruler can provide the details behind the general rules.

²⁹⁶ *Politics* (trans. Sinclair) VII.14, 1333b4-9. Lawgivers should model after nature.: "The fact, therefore, that Plato's truly wise statesman orients himself by looking at the idea of the just and the good, while Aristotle's true lawgiver and serious statesman derives his measure from 'nature', is certainly significant." "The doctor must study nature in all its manifestations, both in the human body and in the surrounding world, in order to be able to support it in its struggle for restoration of the body and its functions against inimical influences. The investigation of 'nature' in this sense certainly contains a strong element of empiricism, since it is largely based on empirical observation. Nevertheless, it seems to contain also an element which, in a way, transcends empirical observation, pure and simple. For the assumption is always made that 'nature' aims at something namely, perfect health, a perfect harmony and functioning of the body which is but scarcely, if ever, realized." Cited from K. von Fritz and E. Kapp in "The Development of Aristotle's Political Philosophy and the Concept of Nature," in *Articles on Aristotle*, vol. 2, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Malcolm Schofield, Richard Sorabji (London: Gerald Duckworth & Company Limited, 1977), 116.

²⁹⁷ *Politics* (trans. Sinclair) VII.14, 1333a11-16.

However, Aristotle thinks that law is better than a good ruler because it is free from being affected by personal desire.

for desire is a wild beast, and passion perverts the minds of rulers, even when they are the best of men. The law is reason unaffected by desire.²⁹⁸

Aristotle also recognizes that rigid law is not the best form of rule. So he recommends customary laws over those that are written.

Again, customary laws have more weight, and relate to more important matters, than written laws, and a man may be a safer ruler than the written law, but not safer than the customary law.²⁹⁹

In addition, he thinks that many wise men governing is better than one man governing.

If, as I said before, the good man has a right to rule because he is better, still two good men are better than one: this is the old saying, "two going together," and the prayer of Agamemnon, "would that I had ten such counsellors!"³⁰⁰

It is worth noticing that the question of a philosopher king is the question of whether and how the contemplative living is related to the political life.³⁰¹

²⁹⁸ *Politics* III.16, 1287a30-32.

²⁹⁹ 1287b5-7.

³⁰⁰ 1287b12-15.

³⁰¹ "Some years later, in his treatise on kingship which he addressed to his former pupil, Alexander the Great, he [Aristotle] wrote that not only was it not necessary for a king to become a philosopher but it was a positive hindrance in his work; instead, a good king should listen to the true philosophers and be agreeable to their advice." K. Von Fritz and E. Kapp, "The Development of Aristotle's Political Philosophy and the Concept of Nature," in *Articles on Aristotle*, vol. 2, 114. "Aristotle seems to suggest that legislators should promote the best way of life by allowing a choice between serving the city in the capacity of either office holder or philosopher (*Pol* 1342a29-35, 1325b14-21, 27-32)." Judith A. Swanson, *The Public and the Private in Aristotle's Political Philosophy*, 65.

Aristotle does not accept Plato's ideal of a philosopher king and he criticizes Plato's communistic system as the way to unify a republic.

The error of Socrates [sc. in Plato's *Republic*] must be attributed to the false supposition from which he starts. Unity there should be, both of the family and of the state, but in some respects only. For there is a point at which a state may attain such a degree of unity as to be no longer a state, or at which, without actually ceasing to exist, it will become an inferior state, like harmony passing into unison, or rhythm which has been reduced to a single foot. The state, as I was saying, is a plurality, which should be united and made into a community by education; and it is strange that the author of a system of education which he thinks will make the state virtuous, should expect to improve his citizens by regulations of this sort, and not by philosophy or by custom and laws,...³⁰²

Aristotle thinks that the unity of a city is based on plurality and that education for citizens should be done "by philosophy or by custom and laws" rather than by the institutional system of Plato.³⁰³

And since the good man is prior to the good ruler, education should concentrate on raising people to be good men. Good men should be educated to cooperate with "the diversities of human lives and actions," remembering "the parts of the souls and their functions, and above all the better and the end." Thus toil is for leisure and war is for peace.³⁰⁴ When we educate men with "the practice of single excellence"³⁰⁵ such as the purely military, like the Lacedaemonians, in peace

³⁰² *Politics* II.5, 1263b30-41.

³⁰³ See *History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, 153.

³⁰⁴ *Politics* VII.14, 1333a38-1333b2.

³⁰⁵ *Politics* VII.15, 1334b1.

they suddenly are destroyed since they do not know how to live in peace. Virtues such as "philosophy, temperance, and justice" are more needed in leisure.³⁰⁶

Confucius does not raise the question but it is safe to assume that he believes that the natural tendency of people is neutral with respect to good and evil. Although Mencius later argues that the natural tendency of human beings is good, Confucius like Aristotle says only that human beings have a capacity to be good; if one is habituated to good, he becomes good, and if he is habituated to evil, he becomes evil. From this perspective, learning and acting in accord with what a person has learned are very important to becoming a virtuous person. Governing a nation is the fitting continuation of individual education.

A governor should work to satisfy the primary prerequisite condition for education, which is a flourishing life, and then his people will be able to undertake their own education.

When the Master went to Wei, Jan Yu drove for him. The Master said, 'What a flourishing population!' Jan Yü said, 'When the population is flourishing, what further benefit can one add?' 'Make the people affluent.' 'When the people have become affluent, what further benefit can one add?' 'Educate them.'³⁰⁷

The education of people comes from the ruler's love for them.

The Master said, 'Can you love anyone without making his work hard? Can you do your best for anyone without educating him?'³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ *Politics* VII.15, 1334a33-34.

³⁰⁷ AN XIII.9.

³⁰⁸ AN XIV.7.

The method of governing is also related to the rectification of names.

Duke Ching of Ch'i asked Confucius about government. Confucius answered, 'Let the ruler be a ruler, the subject a subject, the father a father, the son a son.' The Duke said, 'Splendid! Truly, if the ruler be not a ruler, the subject not a subject, the father not a father, the son not a son, then even if there be grain, would I get to eat it?'³⁰⁹

The Master said, 'Do not concern yourself with matters of government unless they are the responsibility of your office.'³¹⁰

It seems that when a person fulfills his role in public affairs, whether a ruler or a subject, and in private life as father or son, then a person's private and public life become harmonious.³¹¹ It is admitted that "names have a performative quality," thus "saying so makes it so."³¹² Confucius thinks that "if these [ruler, subject, father, and son] key role types could be successfully established, all other pertinent social change would be realized as a natural and necessary corollary."³¹³ Thus, although Confucius focuses on the rectification of names for socio-political order, it is arguable that rectifying names can also apply to the names in more private

³⁰⁹ AN XII.11.

³¹⁰ AN VIII.14.

³¹¹ AN XII.11.

³¹² John Makeham, *Name and Actuality in Early Chinese Thought* (New York: State University of New York press, 1994), 46-47. A similar thought appears in Plato and is part of Aristotle's background. The true knowledge of things including human beings is to enable us to know how to act. This concern extended to the giving of "proper names" in Greek society. "The name was an anticipation of the future *arete* of its bearer; it set, as it were, the ideal pattern for his whole life." Werner Jaeger, *Paideia I: The Ideals of Greek Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 419. fn. 24.

³¹³ John Makeham, *Name and Actuality in Early Chinese Thought*, 45.

relations or even more things. The meaning of the last passage from Confucius, is not a kind of individualism which says "I am only doing my job." In public affairs, when each person fulfills his own role and duty, he cooperates with other people.

However, is this idea well founded? If people are not aware that they are interrelated with each other, the risk is that they will excuse themselves from responsibility to others. There is even more danger to humanity itself; when this excuse is mistaken for a dictum of morality, a society runs the serious risk of dehumanization. But also fulfilling a role sometimes may cost a person his own life, e.g., to stand up for the good against an evil character under tyranny may risk one's life. Confucius thinks that fulfilling one's role is supposed to be achieving humanity, thus any actions which are against humanity are also against oneself. So, we have to practice humanity, even if it costs us our own lives.

In the *Analects* XIII.3, Confucius provides more details about the administration of states and how rectification of names is related to rites and music. When names do not fit the reality of things, then what is said will not be reasonable, and when what is said is not reasonable, we cannot see things aright, so things will not turn out well. "When affairs do not culminate in success, rites and music do not flourish; when rites and music do not flourish, punishment will not fit the crimes,"³¹⁴ and people will find it difficult to act properly and not commit crimes. It is because the order of things lies in rites, and harmony lies in music, that when affairs do not culminate in success, are disordered and lose harmony, those

³¹⁴ AN XIII.3.

governing lose the right way, and punishments cannot be applied to the right circumstance, in the right amount and manner.

Confucius thinks that law is the second best policy, a point with which Aristotle in his own way concurs. As we have seen, for Aristotle, explicit rational persuasion is a better method than laws but it is less effective. In Confucius, people must be guided by rites and music, and follow a virtuous person.³¹⁵ To appeal to law and to inflict punishment, even capital punishment, does not always change people's minds. For if a governor rules by punishment, people may stay out of trouble but will not actually reject crime in their hearts.

The Master said, 'Guide them by edicts, keep them in line with punishments, and the common people will stay out of trouble but will have no sense of shame. Guide them by virtue, keep them in line with the rites, and they will, besides having a sense of shame, reform themselves.'³¹⁶

When people are motivated from the heart, the ruler should regulate them with propriety, because the rites regulate each person's (individual) deficiency and excess, a conception which echoes Aristotle's more elaborate doctrine regarding virtue as a mean between two extremes. Then, those who have not reached propriety will feel

³¹⁵ For Confucius said to Yen Yüan that "to return to the observance of the rites through overcoming the self" leads us to achieve *jen* (AN XII.1), a good ruler should guide people by rites. "The word *li* 'ceremony' embraces all rites, custom, manners, conventions, from the sacrifices to ancestors down to the detail of social etiquette. *Li* in social intercourse corresponds to a considerable extent with Western conceptions of good manners; the Confucian gentleman moves with an effortless grace within the framework of fixed convention, informing every action with consideration and respect for the other person" (A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the TAO*, 11).; "An extremely remarkable feature of Confucius' thought is his conviction that all government can be reduced to ceremony" (Ibid., 13).

³¹⁶ AN II.3.

shame and then make efforts be virtuous. Clearly both Aristotle and Confucius regard "a sense of shame" as the best form of social control.³¹⁷ Rites are not just ways of keeping people in line (like laws) but actually determine the boundary lines of shame. Rites are implicit cultural persuasion by the body of traditional wisdom. While for Aristotle, laws, if carefully drafted, are open, positive and for the good of the public, for Confucius, laws are negative and for providing the minimal limits below which people would be dehumanized. Confucian rites are comparable with Aristotle's laws both customary and statutory in their major function.

Confucius expands his own idea of *li* to include the old meaning of rites:

Someone asked about the explanation of the *ti* sacrifice. The Master said, 'It is not something I understand, for whoever understands it will be able to manage the Empire easily as if he had it here,' pointing to his palm.³¹⁸

Confucius extends the old meaning of the sacrifice. The service for ancestors is not only respect for them, but it affects our present life. When people are concerned with the dead, how can they fail to be sincere toward their living parents and also their own lives. So, Confucius says that filial piety is the beginning of virtue. Just as people should be filial throughout their parents' lifetime, death, and after death,³¹⁹ so the virtues are consistent throughout human beings' life and after life.

³¹⁷ NE IV.9, 1128b10-35.

³¹⁸ AN III.11. The *ti* sacrifice is the service for ancestors. See Arthur Waley's translation, *The Analects of Confucius* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1938, 1971). *The Doctrine of the Mean*, XIX.

³¹⁹ AN II.5.

Music in Confucius is mainly treated from the standpoint of public education rather than from that of private enjoyment. Music is a method of educating people.

The Master went to Wu Ch'eng. There he heard the sound of stringed instruments and singing. The Master broke into a smile and said, 'Surely you don't need to use an ox-knife to kill a chicken.' Tzu-yu answered, 'Some time ago I heard it from you, Master, that the gentleman instructed in the Way loves his fellow men and that small man instructed in the Way is easy to command.' The Master said, 'My friends, what Yen says is right. My remark a moment ago was only made in jest.'³²⁰

Very much as Aristotle says, music powerfully influences people's character in Confucius, so, Confucius warns that choosing music requires careful consideration. As we can tell a person's character by his favorite music, we can tell a country's character by its music. Confucius criticizes the Cheng dynasty's music.

The Master said, 'I detest purple for displacing vermillion. I detest the tunes of Cheng for corrupting classical music. I detest clever talkers who overturn states and noble families.'³²¹

Confucius says, "the tunes of Cheng are wanton."³²² When music is corrupt, it can bring disorder to the country: it distorts people's character, so that they may transgress against their superiors, and furthermore, it may cause a rebellion.³²³

Music is a method to keep order in a country. For example, *Analects* III.2, shows that music is part of ritual performance. The music should be appropriate to each person's position and the occasions. To violate the appropriateness of rituals is to

³²⁰ AN XVII.4.

³²¹ AN XVII.18.

³²² AN XV.11.

³²³ AN I.2.

corrupt the order of society. On the other hand, Confucius compliments Yao's music, as beautiful and good.

The Master heard the *shao* in Ch'i and for three months did not notice the taste of the meat he ate. He said, 'I never dreamt that the joys of music could reach such heights.'³²⁴

The Master said of the *shao* that it was both perfectly beautiful and perfectly good, and of the *wu* that it was perfectly beautiful but not perfectly good.³²⁵

Music is a key method to educate people, but judging what music is the best music still depends how much joy can it bring to the heart of a person.

Thus, Confucius demands that a ruler should be virtuous.

Confucius said, 'When the Way prevails in the Empire, the rites and music and punitive expeditions are initiated by the Emperor. When the Way does not prevail in the Empire, they are initiated by the feudal lords. When they are initiated by the feudal lords, it is surprising if power does not pass from the Emperor within ten generations. When they are initiated by the Counsellors, it is surprising if power does not part from the feudal lords within five generation...'³²⁶

Otherwise, the rites and music cannot be established as just. Governing should begin by the governor becoming virtuous himself. Only those who practice in accordance with rituals can be a good model for people.³²⁷

³²⁴ AN VII.14.

³²⁵ AN III.25.

³²⁶ AN XVI.2.

³²⁷ AN XIV.41.

Chi K'ang Tzu asked Confucius about government. Confucius answered, 'To govern (*cheng*) is to correct (*cheng*). If you set an example by being correct, who would dare to remain incorrect?'³²⁸

The prevalence of thieves was a source of trouble to Chi K'ang Tzu who asked the advice of Confucius. Confucius answered, 'If you yourself were not a man of desires, people would not steal even if stealing carried a reward.'³²⁹

Chi K'ang Tzu asked Confucius about government, saying, 'What would you think if, in order to move closer to those who possess the Way, I were to kill those who do not follow the Way?'

Confucius answered, 'In administering your government, what need is there for you to kill? Just desire the good yourself and the common people will be good. The virtue of the gentleman is like wind; the virtue of the small man is like grass. Let the wind blow over the grass and it is sure to bend.'³³⁰

When a ruler is corrupt, the only remedy, Confucius thinks, is found in performing rituals. While Aristotle thinks that even a virtuous ruler is susceptible to corruption and the law should protect against this kind of weakness, Confucius thinks that even the best code of laws would still have weaknesses, because it is more important that people act from their hearts than conform to laws. Rituals are effective beforehand by providing details of how to behave appropriately in daily life. Since rituals are based on the order of nature³³¹ and human nature, practicing the rituals leads us to

³²⁸ AN XII.17.

³²⁹ AN XII.18.

³³⁰ AN XII.19.

³³¹ Aristotle and Confucius agree that education makes human beings cooperate with the order of nature. However, there is an alternative interpretation of what is the order of nature. Following the order of nature is eating "the Raw" rather than "the Cooked," which is to say our cultural traditions are disguises and rituals are based on what is contrary to nature. Both Aristotle and Confucius are in the "Cooked" tradition which regards culture as natural. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and The Cooked*, trans. John & Doreen Wightman (New York: Harper and Row,

achieve virtue. This is because rituals are not selected but evolved as the accumulation of practices of the good.³³² So, their essence builds up and the details of practice could be changed according to different periods of time. Thus a virtuous person is needed to set up appropriate rituals. Confucius does not give up the claim of the necessity for a virtuous ruler,³³³ while Aristotle believes it to be possible to prosper without a virtuous king. However, a virtuous governor is necessary to engender public virtue, although not perhaps sufficient.³³⁴ Also, the governor should appoint officials who are wise and good.³³⁵

Duke Ai asked, 'What must I do before the common people will look up to me?' Confucius answered, 'Raise the straight and set them over the crooked

Publishers, 1969).

³³² "Ritual as a corpus of meaning-invested practices both preserves and transmits cultural significance. For this reason, the performance and embodiment of the ritual tradition not only socializes a person and makes one a member of a community, it further enculturates one. Ritual informs the particular person of shared values and provides one with the opportunity to integrate in a way conducive to the maintenance and enrichment of community. And lived body is the medium through which the tradition -- its rhythm, its music, its language -- is expressed." Roger T. Ames, "Introduction to Part Three: On Body as Ritual Practice," in *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*, 152-153.

³³³ *Doctrine of the Mean*, XXVIII.

³³⁴ Theoretically, Confucius thinks that a virtuous ruler is a necessary and sufficient to make people virtuous. But this is true, if and only if the ruler is absolutely virtuous. But, it is often the case that a ruler is not absolutely virtuous. In reality, lowering our expectation seems more practical. A. C. Graham says, "Ideally the ruler should not have to do anything at all, simply trust to the Potency which radiates from him. Confucius once even uses the term *wu wei* 無為 'doing nothing' later to become characteristic of Taoism." *Disputers of the TAO*, 14.

³³⁵ See also, *Analects* VI.12 & VIII.20.

and the common people will look up to you. Raise the crooked and set them over the straight and the common people will not look up to you.'³³⁶

While he was steward to the Chi Family, Chung-kung asked about government. The Master said, 'Set an example for your officials to follow; show leniency towards minor offenders; and promote men of talent.' 'How does one identify men of talent to promote?' The Master said, 'Promote those you do recognize. Do you suppose others will allow those you fail to recognize to be passed over?''³³⁷

However, his governing should begin with concern for those of who are near him.³³⁸

The Governor of She asked about government. The Master said, 'Ensure that those who are near are pleased and those who are far away are attracted.'³³⁹

This seems the natural way for one's influence to be effective.

If there is a person who has only either virtues or a ruling position, he is not able to govern well, because people will not follow well. Governing should

³³⁶ AN II.19.

³³⁷ AN XIII.2.

³³⁸ This idea shows that Confucius regards humanity as the ground of morality and governing. A good example is: "The Governor of She said to Confucius, 'In our village there is a man nicknamed *Straight Body*. When his father stole a sheep, he gave evidence against him.' Confucius answered, 'In our village those who are straight are quite different. Fathers cover up for their sons, and sons cover up for their fathers. Straightness is to be found in such behaviour'" (AN XIII.18). To cover up for members of his family does not mean to disregard one's wrong doing. Plato's *Euthyphro* explores the same theme. But Plato seems to invoke the need for "the Idea" of piety to determine what piety requires. However, Confucius seems to think that relations between family is prior to social relations and is ground for reserving humanity. Humanity itself is prior to morals. To love some with heart seems the best way to lead into the right way.

³³⁹ AN XIII.16.

combine a virtuous character with the appropriate position to influence people. The ruler is the best model in educating people.³⁴⁰

(b) Philia and Wu-Lun

Aristotle emphasizes that the human being is a social animal. Having a virtuous character is not enough for human happiness; for to live well in society, man also needs external goods and contexts in which to exercise virtuous actions. External goods are such things as instruments, wealth, political peace, good birth, and friends,³⁴¹ but among these goods, friends are most important.³⁴²

External goods are either of instrumental or intrinsic value. Friends are both: they are valuable instrumentally when they are related economically or politically, and valuable intrinsically when they engage one as would members of one's family or as true friends. Friends are the main constituents of the contexts in which a human being can practice the virtues and achieve happiness, and make us realize that our own happiness includes that of others. Thus, a person is happy not "as an isolated individual, but as an extended self with attachment, or friends."³⁴³

³⁴⁰ *The Doctrine of the Mean*, XXIX.

³⁴¹ NE I.8, 1099a32-1099b5.

³⁴² NE VIII.1, 1155a1-7. Aristotle thinks that friendship is more important than justice. "...when men are friends they have no need of justice, while they are just they need friendship as well, and the truest form of justice is thought to be a friendly quality" (1155a26-28).

³⁴³ Nancy Sherman, "Aristotle on Friendship and the Shared Life," *Philosophy of Phenomenal Research* 47 (June, 1987), 595.

Friendship should be recognized as being within a social context. Aristotle thinks that relations between citizens cannot be modeled on such subpolitical associations (rule over children, slaves) as provide the model for kingship.

Aristotle proceeds to criticize the view--developed in the writings of both Plato and Xenophon--that political rule or political expertise is essentially the same as the expertise involved in kingship, household management, and the rule of a master over slaves. The city as a form of human association differs essentially not only from the subpolitical associations of persons in the household, but even from the rule of a king over a tribe or people (*ethnos*).³⁴⁴

A city differs from a kingdom in the kind of political unity it forms. A city appears less organic but more reciprocal.

That is why the principle of reciprocity, as I have already remarked in the *Ethics*, is the salvation of states. Even among freemen and equals this is a principle which must be maintained, for they cannot all rule together, but must change at the end of a year or some other period of time or in some order of succession.³⁴⁵

A city is a unity formed through the free and equal participation of men. So, there is "irreducible diversity."³⁴⁶

A household constituted by the relations between wife and husband, master and slave is a natural formation for racial continuation and for individual preservation.³⁴⁷ Likewise, the development from families, to villages,³⁴⁸ and

³⁴⁴ *History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, 134.

³⁴⁵ *Politics* II.2, 1261a30-34.

³⁴⁶ *History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, 135.

³⁴⁷ *Politics* I.2, 1252a25-31.

³⁴⁸ 1252b16-17.

communities³⁴⁹ is natural, a city is natural for the same reason as forming a household and village and state is natural. "Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal."³⁵⁰ Thus, men live together even though they may not necessarily need one another in an immediate way.

And therefore, men, even when they do not require one another's help, desire to live together; not but that they are also brought together by their common interests in so far as they each attain to any measure of well-being.³⁵¹

Indeed, humans associate with one another not for the exchange of goods but for the expression of the good and just by using language.

Now, that man is more of a political animal than bees or any other gregarious animals is evident. Nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal who has the gift of speech. ...the power of speech is intended to set forth [what should and should not be done], and therefore likewise the just and the unjust. And it is a characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust, and the like, and the

³⁴⁹ 1252b27-30.

³⁵⁰ 1253a2-3. Cf. "The polis is a natural organism, of which the individual is a constitutive element." "Nature in man, however, does not for Aristotle reach its complete fulfillment and exhaust its creative power in the production of the perfect *individual*. Rather, the individual is essentially a part of a larger unit, that organized society which Aristotle calls the *polis*. This is the self-sufficient whole which nature operating in man strives to produce, a whole of which each individual and every basic human partnership are natural but subordinate parts. But as nature arrives at perfection in the individual through the subject's cooperation under the guidance of the moral philosopher, so nature requires the cooperation of free and virtuous citizens under the guidance of the statesman or political philosopher to produce the best possible political organism." Theodore James Tracy, *Physiological Theory and the Doctrine of the Mean in Plato and Aristotle* (Chicago, IL: Loyola University Press, 1969), 285, 284.

³⁵¹ *Politics* III.6, 1278b19-23.

association of living beings who have this sense makes a family and a state.³⁵²

The state/polis is prior to individual human beings for their happiness.³⁵³ "And the state is the union of families and villages in a perfect and self-sufficing life, by which we mean a happy and honorable life."³⁵⁴ Someone who does not live in society is "either a beast or a god."³⁵⁵ Society is the ground of good life based on each individual's choice.

But a state exists for the sake of a good life, and not for the sake of life only: if life only were the object, slaves and brute animals might form a state, but they cannot, for they have no share in happiness or in a life based on choice. Nor does a state exist for the sake of alliance and security from injustice, nor yet for the sake of exchange and mutual intercourse; for then the Tyrrhenians and the Carthaginians, and all who have commercial treaties with one another, would be the citizens of one state.³⁵⁶

³⁵² *Politics* I.2, 1253a7-18.

³⁵³ For Aristotle, a city presupposes individual happiness, but this does not entail individualism. Although a city does not exist for its own end, it provides the context of individual's happiness. Thus, "it becomes immediately obvious that it is in each individual's interest that he offer his cooperation to the support and prosperity of the city, even if this should be at the expense of his own immediate advantage." Richard Bodéüs, *The Political Dimensions of Aristotle's Ethics*, 43.

³⁵⁴ *Politics* III.9, 1280b39-1281a2.

³⁵⁵ *Politics* I.2, 1253a28-29. "Even when they are least political, that is, when devoting themselves to 'contemplation,' human beings still remain decisively dependent on favorable conditions provided for them by the city." Richard Bodéüs, *The Political Dimensions of Aristotle's Ethics*, 43.

³⁵⁶ *Politics* III.9, 1280a31-37.

So, Aristotle denies that a city is simply for utility but rather affirms that it is for living well and that means engaging in virtuous activity.³⁵⁷

Aristotle calls friends "all those who are 'dear,'" ³⁵⁸ including family.³⁵⁹

Friends have mutual love and good will based on a shared interest in good, pleasure, and utility...³⁶⁰ Friendship based only on pleasure is the lowest kind of friendship.

Pleasure and utility are byproducts of virtuous friendship. Aristotle looks at friendship from a more social perspective. So, he says in the *Politics*,

Such community can only be established among those who live in the same place and intermarry. Hence there arise in cities family connexions, brotherhood, common sacrifices, amusements which draw men together. But these are created by friendship, for to choose to live together is friendship. The end of the state is the good life, and these are the means towards it. And the state is the union of families and villages in a perfect and self-sufficing life, by which we mean a happy and honourable life.³⁶¹

Strauss says,

³⁵⁷ "[T]he good state will be the one in which there is least opportunity for wickedness. Thus we are brought back to ethics from politics. The happy life is the life according to goodness without impediment, and the goodness is a mean; therefore the life which is a mean must be the best (1295a35-38 on EN. 1153b9-19)." George Huxley, *On Aristotle and Greek Society*, 45-46. "Each, being of one mind with himself, enjoys spending time in private, and thus agrees that privacy is a good (1166a23-24, 1167b5-6). What good men argue for in public, then, is the protection and provision of the private opportunities and means to cultivate virtue." Judith A. Swanson, *The Public and the Private in Aristotle's Political Philosophy*, 187.

³⁵⁸ W. F. R. Hardie, *Aristotle's Ethical Theory*, 317.

³⁵⁹ NE VIII.1, 1155a16-19.

³⁶⁰ NE VIII.2, 1155b18-21.

³⁶¹ *Politics* III.9, 1280b35-1281a2.

It encompasses not only the attachment of friends but the love of husband and wife, the affection of parents and children, and the fellow feeling between persons belonging to a variety of private associations, citizens of the same city, and (in certain circumstances) human beings simply.³⁶²

Aristotle defines a community by way of the possibility of conjugal relations. But, the meaning of family is not limited to biological relations. It also includes all those who choose to live together. Those who share in common sacrifices, joy and sorrow are family. Thus, the family-oriented community can be extended by chosen friendships.

Aristotle accounts all the five relations remarked by Confucius³⁶³ as friendships. I divide Aristotle's relations into five kinds which are based either on equality or inequality.³⁶⁴ The relations between father-son, elder-younger, man-wife, and ruler-subject belong to unequal friendship. Friendship between equals is the relation between true friends.

Each counterpart of an unequal friendship has a different excellence and function, thus the love which they get should be proportional in the manner characterized here:

³⁶² *History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, 129.

³⁶³ In the *Analects* only the three relations of father-son, elder brother-younger brother, and friend-friend appear, but in the *Doctrine of the Mean* XX, two further relations of husband-wife and ruler-subject are also addressed by Confucius, thus giving a total of five relations (*wu-lun*).

³⁶⁴ This "equal and unequal" distinction relies on Hardie's interpretation. *Aristotle's Ethical Theory*, 319-320. According to Hardie, friendships between equals include friendships based on utility, pleasure, virtue, the first two of which may include "friendships between bad or inferior persons." Note however that if inequality between people is too great, friendship is impossible (1158b33-1159a5).

And these friendships differ also from each other; for it is not the same that exists between parents and children and between rulers and subjects, nor is even that of father to son the same as that of son to father, nor that of husband to wife the same as that of wife to husband. For the excellence and the function of each of these is different, and so are the reasons for which they love; the love and the friendship are therefore different also. Each party, then, neither gets the same from the other, nor ought to seek it; ...In all friendships implying inequality the love also should be proportional, i.e. the better should be more loved than he loves, and so should the more useful, and similarly in each of the other cases; for when the love is in proportion to the merit of the parties, then in a sense arises equality, which is held to be characteristic of friendship.³⁶⁵

Note 'the better should be more loved than he loves.' Love should be proportional.

"That we should not make the same return to every one, nor give a father the preference in everything, as one does not sacrifice everything to Zeus, is plain enough."³⁶⁶ That should bestow the honor due to a father and to Zeus according to their roles is also a fundamental principle in Confucianism.³⁶⁷

Aristotle draws analogies between relations of father-son, man-wife, brothers respectively to the three kinds of constitutions -- monarchy, aristocracy, and timocracy, and their deviations are tyranny, oligarchy, democracy.³⁶⁸ In the father-

³⁶⁵ NE VIII.7, 1158b14-20, 24-28.

³⁶⁶ NE IX.2, 1165a14-16.

³⁶⁷ But, actually "[b]enefactors are thought to love those they have benefited, more than those who have been well treated love those that have treated them well, and this is discussed as though it were paradoxical" (1167b16-19). Thus mothers love their children more than fathers do; "bringing them into the world costs them more pains, and they know better that the children are their own" (1168a26-27).

³⁶⁸ "There are, however, degrees of inner conflict and instability among the various deviation forms.... And within the deviation form of polis, as in the diseased or deformed animal organism, the dominant and excessive part may grow until it destroys the constitution and brings ruin on the whole (1302b33-1303a3; 1309b20-35)." Theodore Tracy, *Physiological Theory and the Doctrine of the Mean in Plato*

son relation, the father is superior to his children: As a king benefits his subjects, a father benefits his children "for he is responsible for the existence of his children, which is thought the greatest good, and for their nurture and upbringing."; Like "a king over his subjects," "by nature a father tends to rule over his sons."³⁶⁹ The unity of mind between husband and wife is important. "[T]here is no greater blessing on earth than when husband and wife rule their home in harmony of mind and will."³⁷⁰ It means that a husband and wife should cooperate with "wisdom and understanding" instead of "each other's vices."³⁷¹ Although Aristotle seems to distinguish private life from public life, he argues that the private relation of husband and wife is related to their public life.

For when wife and husband are agreed about the best things in life, of necessity the friends of each will also be mutually agreed; and the strength which the pair gain will make them formidable to their enemies and helpful to their own.³⁷²

The unity of mind between husband and wife provides the cooperative ground for each of their own friends and their family has a strong influence in a society. Aristotle thinks that among unequal relations, private and public relations are not interchangeable, e.g., a ruler is not to be treated as a father. There is a discontinuity

and Aristotle, 304. Further discussion continues to p. 308.

³⁶⁹ NE VIII.11, 1161a17-19.

³⁷⁰ *Economics* III.4.

³⁷¹ *Economics* III.4.

³⁷² *Economics* III.4.

of roles between private and public life,³⁷³ though there is no absolute dichotomy between private and public life.

As for friendship between equals, the good man "is related to his friend as to himself."³⁷⁴ A friend is 'another self.'³⁷⁵ Thus, "The good man is related to himself in the ways in which he is related to his friend."³⁷⁶ A good man's quality contrasts with a bad man's. A bad man is morally weak, so his mind and his action are in conflict; he runs away from his life. Bad men hate their own company. They cannot trust themselves.³⁷⁷ They do not have the right standard for evaluating action. "We see, therefore, that a bad man's disposition is not friendly even toward himself, because there is nothing lovable about himself."³⁷⁸ On the other hand, a good man is a self-lover: "since a man is his own best friend and therefore should

³⁷³ Since the heads of household know the existing laws and have a capacity to legislate, they can educate their children appropriately for their children's further participation in society. "Thus is removed the possible discontinuity between the household regime and the political regime." Richard Bodéüs, *The Political Dimensions of Aristotle's Ethics*, 56. "[T]he household, being a model of natural justice, is a kind of model for the best regime" due to the "multiple functions or obligations" of its members. Judith A. Swanson, *The Public and Private in Aristotle's Political Philosophy*, 22.

³⁷⁴ NE IX.4, 1166a31.

³⁷⁵ 1166a31.

³⁷⁶ W. F. R. Hardie, *Aristotle's Ethical Theory*, 324. Also, see 1166a10-33.

³⁷⁷ This is, of course, based on Plato's very limited conception of the sources of moral evil. See 1166b2-26.

³⁷⁸ NE (trans. Ostwald) IX.4, 1166b25-26.

have the greatest affection for himself."³⁷⁹ A true self-lover lives up to his rationality. "At any rate, he assigns what is supremely noble and good to himself, he gratifies the most sovereign part of himself, and he obeys it in everything."³⁸⁰ "His self-love is different in kind from that [sc. of the egoist] with whom people find fault: as different, in fact, as living by the guidance of reason is from living by the dictates of emotions, and as different as desiring what is noble is from desiring what seems to be advantageous."³⁸¹ Thus a good man is a self-lover and is beneficial to other people as well as himself."³⁸²

The best friends have singleness of mind, thus they share emotions of happiness and sorrow, and also reciprocate good will and share choices with each other. Even though friends of good character share their thoughts and choices, the shared ends "do not pre-exist."³⁸³ Friends develop their shared ends over time and through shared activities. However, it is true that "While specific and shared ways of being virtuous will be among those values peculiar to a specific friendship, the acquisition of virtuous states of character must pre-exist any friendship based on virtue. That is, the agents must choose each other, in part, on the basis of a firm

³⁷⁹ NE (trans. Ostwald) IX.8, 1168b9.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 1168b29-30.

³⁸¹ NE IX.8, 1169a3-6.

³⁸² 1169a11-13.

³⁸³ Nancy Sherman, "Aristotle on Friendship and the Shared Life," 599.

and stable character."³⁸⁴ Therefore, friendships are based on the shared choice of each individual.³⁸⁵

Aristotle admits that close friends are limited in number:

But the need of active loving also prevents one from being at the same time a friend to many; for one cannot be active towards many at the same time.³⁸⁶

In fact, genuine friendships demand considerable time and energy.

If a friend is regarded as another self, how, we might ask, can we distinguish a friend as a separate self? Although he does not address this question, it would be appropriate for Aristotle to say that the distinction is due to each individual's unique combination of virtues. Even though a virtuous person has all the virtues, each has a unique way of unifying the virtues. A different person's character is developed in a different context in different aspects. For example, if two people, one rich and the other poor, are fully virtuous, their way of living will be different and so their virtuous actions will not be the exactly same. Also, someone can be more affectionate, and another be more intellectual. Also, among intelligent people, their

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ "Friendship, in the proper or specific sense, is for an individual, not for a collective mass... In loving a friend one loves the good in that person. But this does not mean simply that one loves the good in abstract or at large. One loves this person's unique goodness. Not her haecceity, which is itself an abstraction, but the good as uniquely revealed in her. And one loves her not for the good one receives or takes from her, but for the good she has, to which one can contribute, because she uniquely deserves that good, in virtue of the goodness that she is." Quoted from Lenn E. Goodman, "Friendship in Aristotle, Miskawayh and al-Ghazālī." Paper given at the society for Asian & Comparative Philosophy meeting (Hancock, MA. July 22, 1993), 8.

³⁸⁶ *Eudemian Ethics*, trans. J. Solomon, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle* II, VII.2, 1238a9-10.

concerns could be different; one for art and the other for science. Therefore, as separate individuals, we can complement each other. Because of the differences among friends, each can learn and overcome personal deficiencies by observing others. Aristotle says,

...happiness in an activity;... if we can contemplate our neighbours better than ourselves and their actions better than our own, and if the actions of virtuous men who are their friends are pleasant to good men (since these have both the attributes that are naturally pleasant) -- if this be so, the blessed man will need friends of this sort, since he chooses to contemplate worthy actions and actions that are his own, and the actions of a good man who is his friend have both these qualities.³⁸⁷

It appears from this that not merely may we learn and improve ourselves by observing our friends, but the appreciation of our own virtues is best accessible to us reflected in the corresponding virtues of our friends. Aristotle here does not make the Cartesian assumption that we know our own minds better than anything in nature, but appears to adopt the opposite view explicit in Scholastic Aristotelianism (Kenny)³⁸⁸ that we can know (and therefore appreciate) the world around us (including the virtues of our friends) more readily than we can our minds (our own virtues from the inside as it were). From this standpoint, friends are an essential link between virtues and any happiness that includes a sense of our own virtues.

The goal of self-fulfillment is realized within the relationships in family and society. First, relations are based on self-love (as Aristotle claims that a good man

³⁸⁷ NE IX.9, 1169b29-1170a3.

³⁸⁸ Anthony Kenny, *The Anatomy of the Soul* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973), 113.

is the self-lover and best friend of himself) and the Golden rule. Second, relations are described as five types, each manifesting different virtues. These virtues guide thought and action in concrete situations. Third, Confucius shows that true friendship exists only between gentlemen by contrasting the gentleman with the small man. The gentlemen (*chun tzu* 君子) in Confucius is the general term for the exemplary person who has achieved virtues.³⁸⁹

In Confucianism, all relations with others are based on self-love. In the *Hsun-Tzu*,

Tzu-lu came in and Confucius asked him, "...What is an 'authoritative (*jen*) person?'" He replied, "...An authoritative person is one who causes others to love him." Confucius remarked, "Such can also be called a refined person." Tzu-kung came in and Confucius asked him, "...what is an 'authoritative person?'" He replied, "...An authoritative person is one who loves others." Confucius remarked, "Such can be called a consummately refined person." Yen Yuan came in and Confucius asked him, "...What is an 'authoritative person?'" He replied, "...An authoritative person is one who loves himself." Confucius remarked, "Such can be called the truly enlightened person."³⁹⁰

In this conversation, the first definition is of the public person who causes other people to serve him willingly. The second definition is an altruistic person whose concern is all for others. The third definition is a virtuous person who loves himself. What Confucius means by identifying them is that one who can really love others is one who knows how to love himself. Confucius says, "Men of antiquity

³⁸⁹ For more discussion of gentleman (*chun tzu*), see *Thinking Through Confucius*, 182-192.

³⁹⁰ Cited from *Thinking Through Confucius*, 121. Also, see AN XI.26. Here an "authoritative person" means a benevolent man.

studied to improve themselves; men today study to impress others."³⁹¹ From a practical viewpoint, Confucius sees that one does not know how to love others, unless one has experience in loving oneself. So, the self-love that is presupposed in *Chung-shu* is "putting oneself in another's place (*shu*) and doing one's best (*chung*) to effect one's insight."³⁹² "Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire."³⁹³ Confucius insists that relations with others have to begin from self-love and self-examination. Through these, a person can extend his love toward other people. There is continuity between private and public life.

Confucius defines the five relations (*wu-lun*) of human beings as father-son, ruler-subject, husband-wife, elder-younger brothers, friend-friend.³⁹⁴

[K]indness in the father and filial piety in the son; righteousness in the husband and obedience in the wife; gentility in the elder brother and respect in the younger brother; humane consideration in elders and deference in juniors; and benevolence in rulers and loyalty in subjects.³⁹⁵

These five relations are interdependent and reciprocal. For example, a son does not have to submit absolutely to his father. A father should be a model for his son and kind to him, and a son should show respect by heeding, deferring, etc., to his father.

³⁹¹ AN XIV.24.

³⁹² AN IV.15.

³⁹³ AN XII.2.

³⁹⁴ *The Doctrine of Mean*, XX.

³⁹⁵ Tian-Min Lin, "Thought and Action in Confucius," *Religious Humanism* 22,

Confucius emphasizes that human beings should learn their roles through these relationships. Among these relations father-son, and younger and elder brothers are the basic. Properly conducted these relations are what bring the private and public life under order.

Yu Zu said, 'It is rare for a man whose character is such that he is good as a son and obedient as a young man to have the inclination to transgress against his superiors³⁹⁶; it is unheard of for one who has no such inclination to be inclined to start a rebellion. The gentleman devotes his efforts to the roots, for once the roots are established, the Way will grow therefrom. Being good as a son and obedient as a young man is, perhaps, the roots of a man's character.'³⁹⁷

The private relations of father-son, and younger-elder brothers and their accompanying virtues are immediately transformable into those of the public, for relations within the home are prior and critical to those of society. However, among these two relations, father-son is the most central relation, and the core virtue is filial piety. Analogically, it should be compared to Aristotle's core relation which is friendship between equals. Confucius's claim that being a good son so as to be a good subject can be compared to Aristotle's claim that one must learn how to be a subject before one can rule. Aristotle says, in effect learning how one is to be a good son is part of becoming a good father.

³⁹⁶ It could yield an authoritarianism. Since loyalty comes from a virtuous character, our loyalty should strengthen our moral character rather than cause its sacrifice.

³⁹⁷ AN I.2.

A person gradually widens his relationships and contributions starting from the family and extending to the world.³⁹⁸ A person becomes gradually virtuous by fulfilling roles and duties in those relations. Personal achievement is directly related to the harmony of family and nation and to world peace. A person is the center of relations, and relationship is the continuance from oneself to others. A person cannot realize himself by being isolated from others; it is accomplished in the contexts of, and with the cooperation of, family and society.

In Confucius, the counterpart of Aristotle's virtuous or "true" friendship between good men would be the relationship between gentlemen. Confucius explains why gentleman and small man cannot be counterparts of each other.

The gentleman cherishes righteousness, while the small man cherishes profits.³⁹⁹ The gentleman opens his heart. He does not have a double mind. The small man is dishonest and tries to rally other people to his side. In the *Analects*, it is said:

The Master said, 'The gentleman enters into associations but not cliques; the small man enters into cliques but not associations.'⁴⁰⁰

The Master said, 'The gentleman agrees with others without being an echo. The small man echoes without being in agreement.'⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁸ This very idea developed well in "The Text," in the *Great Learning*.

³⁹⁹ AN IV.16.

⁴⁰⁰ AN II.14.

⁴⁰¹ AN XIII.23.

The gentleman seeks the goodness in others and encourages them. The small man always sees the weakness of others and blames them.

The Master said, 'The gentleman helps others to realize what is good in them; he does not help them to realize what is bad in them. The small man does the opposite.'⁴⁰²

Thus, the gentleman is easy to serve, and the small man is easy to please.

Confucius says,

The Master said, 'The gentleman is easy to serve but difficult to please. He will not be pleased unless you try to please him by following the Way, but when it comes to employing the services of others, he does so within the limits of their capacity. The small man is difficult to serve but easy to please. He will be pleased even though you try to please him by not following the Way, but when it comes to employing the services of others, he demands complete perfection.'⁴⁰³

The gentleman makes efforts to improve himself, thus he does not pay attention to praise by others. In the *Analects*,

The master said, 'Men of antiquity studied to improve themselves; men today study to impress others.'⁴⁰⁴

The Master said, 'What the gentleman seeks, he seeks within himself; what the small man seeks, he seeks in others.'⁴⁰⁵

What concerns the gentleman is the harmony of virtues. The small man has an incomplete set of partially developed virtues. The deficiency of other virtues makes a small man dangerous.

⁴⁰² AN XII.16.

⁴⁰³ AN XIII.25.

⁴⁰⁴ AN XIV.24.

⁴⁰⁵ AN XV.21.

Tsu-lu said, 'Does the gentleman consider courage a supreme quality?' The master said, 'For the gentleman it is righteousness that is supreme. Possessed of courage but devoid of righteousness, a gentleman will make trouble while a small man will be a brigand.'⁴⁰⁶

The gentleman is one who has developed his virtuous character harmoniously and whose acts are based on co-operative virtues. So, it seems that only the gentleman can develop true friendship and that the relations between gentlemen are more serious than relations between gentlemen and small men. Having the common goal of self-achievement, virtuous friends are necessary to fulfill themselves, because they encourage and become good models.

Tseng Tzu said, 'A gentleman makes friends through being cultivated, but looks to friends for support in benevolence.'⁴⁰⁷

Tzu-kung asked about the practice of benevolence. The Master said, 'A craftsman who wishes to practise his craft well must first sharpen his tools. You should, therefore, seek the patronage of the most distinguished Counsellors and make friends with the most benevolent Gentlemen in the state where you happen to be staying.'⁴⁰⁸

Confucius shows the same attitude as Aristotle about friendships between gentlemen which is that since friends are very influential to one another, choosing friends should be considered carefully. A person should choose a friend who is virtuous and become a good friend of the virtuous by being compatible with his virtue. Moreover, one should be more careful about giving advice especially when it is between friends.

⁴⁰⁶ AN XVII.23.

⁴⁰⁷ AN XII.24.

⁴⁰⁸ AN XV.10.

Tzu-kung asked about how friends should be treated. The Master said, 'Advise them to the best of your ability and guide them properly, but stop when there is no hope of success. Do not ask to be snubbed.'⁴⁰⁹

Advice should be given as needed and not forced on other persons, especially if they are friends; for this will estrange them,⁴¹⁰ thus losing friendships instead of getting closer.

3. CONCLUSION

We have seen in chapter I that Aristotle and Confucius operate in different socio-political environments, then offer differing definitions of virtue and select different virtues to be the core of the unity of virtues. In chapter II we have examined their different conceptions of the goal and the method of achieving a unified set of virtues. When virtues are regarded both as goal and as method, personal goals and means are understood from the perspective of the social and cultural context and the discussion of the personal is conducted from the perspective of the social level.

Aristotle thinks that his highest goal, that of theoretical contemplation, the best and happiest form of action, cannot be achieved continuously by a human being. On the other hand, Confucius thinks that we can live continuously in accord with the mandate of heaven. However, whether Aristotle and Confucius think that

⁴⁰⁹ AN XII.23.

⁴¹⁰ Also see AN IV.26.

human beings can achieve their final goals in this present world or not depends on the views of human nature which they hold: it is not the question of whether Aristotle has a higher goal than that of Confucius, but rather it is the matter of how human nature is conceived. Aristotle thinks that human beings cannot be complete because of their natures as bodily humans, while Confucius thinks only in terms of bodily humans realizing their nature.

Both 'cooperating with mandate of heaven' and 'achieving *eudaimonia*' are schematic notions. How each man of unified virtues acts depends on his circumstances. Since Aristotle and Confucius accept hierarchy of social status, a person who does not act in accordance with his status is not a virtuous man. But they do not absolutely deny that any free man can achieve an appropriately unified set of virtues, unless he gives up this possibility.

Concerning the method of achieving a unified set of virtues, Aristotle relies on laws and Confucius appeals to rituals. Laws and rituals should be determined by men of virtue with a view to producing the same kind of men -- for Aristotle, these are men of practical wisdom and for Confucius, men of benevolence. These differences arise from different emphases on social relationships. Instead of emphasizing all the relations, Aristotle and Confucius focus on certain relations, and organize the different types of relationship around the core relation to achieve their goals within their social and cultural framework. Aristotle does this by focusing on friendship (*philia*), relying on friendships between equals, while Confucius presents five-relations (*wu-lun*) focusing on father-son relation. The core function of

friendship is making a man of practical wisdom. That of *wu-lun* is to raise man to a man of culture, a benevolent (*jen*) man. These concepts reveal how their social orders should function and what values they pursue when they work for a better society, and to better people in society.

When Aristotle includes various human relations within friendships, he seems to stress the superiority of one social context the (male) public sphere, to family as a natural context. Rational activities in this sphere are what makes us more human. But in Confucius the (male) public sphere is to be refashioned according to the family. A family is a microcosm of society. There one finds the archetypes of social relations in the individual members of a family. While Confucian private relations can immediately extend into social relations, Aristotle does not think that the relations of privacy are convertible into the social relations. But Aristotle's individuals are equal participants of society. For Aristotle, a state or city is a macrocosm of an individual. What is true for a human being is also true for a state directly. So, a society is a unity of the irreducible diversity of individuals.

Even though he emphasizes that men are social animals, Aristotle's final concern is contemplation. It cannot be denied that Aristotle is interested in statecraft, but the main purpose of statecraft seems to be thought of as the opportunity to allow equal participation of free men to develop themselves rather than bringing peace into the world. From this perspective, the Confucian man is more purely political than the Aristotelian man. Achieving one's own unified set of the virtues makes a man extend himself from private to public life, that is, it enables

man to govern the country well immediately, if called upon. Aristotle's man is political in order to become an individual. But we must not ignore the fact that a flourishing of society is a necessary condition for practicing virtuous activities.⁴¹¹

Since Aristotle thinks that educational policy should be the responsibility of the state, his policy to regulate education by appealing to laws appears to be formed from the perspective of the educator rather than the learner. On the other hand, when Confucius claims that each person should be stimulated by virtue and rites, he thinks of education more from the perspective of a learner than an educator. Yes, a ruler has the responsibility for guiding people. But it is done by a ruler himself serving as a model by becoming virtuous rather than imposing laws -- even good laws. So, Confucius always emphasizes the importance of, and the attitude of learning, instead of the importance of educating. Aristotle's aim in education is producing a greater or less number of equal and free men in society. Governing by law and participation in public affairs creates the opportunity for men to become free and equal citizens. Confucius' aim is for producing the best possible men in a hierarchy. Thus his education is dependent more on each individual's ability.

Aristotle and Confucius operate with a normative method, but the norms they generate are not fixed but may always be reconsidered in the light of what is best.

⁴¹¹ Also, when we consider the relation between Aristotle and Alexander the Great, we cannot ignore that Aristotle had an implicit idea of world peace. Unlike Plato, Aristotle does not want "to substitute himself for the lawgiver by proposing a system of laws in his own name, but rather to enlighten the lawgiver by examining, for his benefit, *what concerns legislation*." Richard Bodéüs, *The Political Dimensions of Aristotle's Ethics*, 81.

It would appear therefore that Aristotle and Confucius are open to accepting other views as long as they can be seen to be beneficial to achieving a good life. We can see that if Aristotle and Confucius were able to draw on the views of the other, their ideas would be enriched. For example, Aristotle might well have adopted the concept of rites, for laws can be supported as well by cultural forms as by rational persuasion. Confucius might add the techniques of Aristotle's discursive rationality in order to make the thinking process is clearer and more carefully articulated, so that the people could discern the virtuous more clearly. The possibility that cross-cultural conversation between Aristotle and Confucian tradition might be mutually beneficial will be explored further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

VIRTUE THEORY AS AN OPTION FOR MORAL THEORY

1. CHALLENGES TO A VIRTUE-CENTERED ETHICS SUCH AS THAT FOUND IN ARISTOTLE AND CONFUCIUS

Virtue ethics emphasizes the qualities of the agent. Since virtue ethics focuses on character rather than on action, it appears to have weaknesses when it comes to guiding actions. We should therefore examine what resources are in the theories of Aristotle and Confucius for determining how one should act. From the standpoint of an individual there appear to be four problems:

First, since one's goal is to become a virtuous person, it would seem one could disregard other people and act in a self-centered way. For Aristotle and Confucius, however, a virtuous person always regards himself within a social structure and tries to nurture a virtue-centered society by way of promoting the virtues of others. Second, owing to the great emphasis placed on one's overall character, it would seem that one who was guilty of temporarily morally backsliding would be excused. In response to this accusation, Aristotle and Confucius would say that any lapses are signs that a person has not yet achieved virtue. Third, the challenge is that virtuous people cannot pass their virtues to others in a tidy "routinizable" package and thus cannot offer much useful advice to those facing difficult moral decisions. In response it must be admitted that moral guidance in a virtue framework cannot consist in advice alone, because without the trying to

emulate the character of a virtuous person, advice will be misunderstood and misapplied. The same, however, may be said of the decision procedures offered by Kantian or utilitarian theories, and decision procedure blindly or mechanically followed can result in disaster. Fourth, becoming a virtuous person demands good models and favorable conditions, and because favorable conditions and good role models are not always readily available, Aristotle and Confucius' virtue theories seem unduly optimistic. In fact, it is a strong point of virtue ethics that it calls on us to face squarely such facts of the human condition.

We will consider these four points in detail in 1. below, but we will also (in 2. below) consider the possible challenges to a virtue-centered society as it appears from our study of the texts of Aristotle and Confucius. Although Aristotle and Confucius share the ideal of a virtue-centered society, their emphases are different. So, the weaknesses they face are also different. For Aristotle, human beings are social animals and society is the concrete context for each individual to achieve personal happiness (fulfillment), but a free, rational, and happy man is the goal. When each individual emphasizes his own happiness, there is a risk of slipping into the narrow material interests of a utilitarian society. On the other hand, since for Confucius, even more than for Aristotle, a person is not fully a person outside of relationships with other persons, one's individual good should not normally conflict with the good of the family and society. Thus, it is possible that virtues are thought of in terms of duties, and when that happens, duty is more emphasized than happiness (fulfillment). The risk appears to be one of producing a paternalistic

authoritarian society.⁴¹² Both risks may be the product of looking at Aristotle and Confucius from the standpoint of the later historical periods which made use of their texts and encouraged certain readings of them. Here reading each from the perspective of the other can reveal resources which complement each other.

1. Problems for Virtue-Centered Ethics from the Standpoint of an Agent

David Solomon raises the so-called "the self-centeredness objection."⁴¹³

Virtue ethics seems to pay too much attention to the agent. The goal of virtue ethics is to become a virtuous person, "a person of a particular kind."⁴¹⁴ It is argued that one should change one's character from "the way it is" to "the way it ought to be."⁴¹⁵ To attain this goal, a moral agent must show more concern for his own character than concern for others. Thus, there is a risk, if moral agents follow the direction offered by virtue theorists, of their becoming self-centered or "ethical egoists of some sort". However, the assumption of this criticism seems to have arisen from a narrow interpretation that stoicizes virtue ethics, making virtue the goal rather than *eudaimonia* or self-achievement. If we see that the goal includes

⁴¹² This is the reason that some philosophers such as Donald Munro think Confucianism is a Kantian or duty-based theory. See Donald J. Munro, *The Concept of Man in Early China* (California: Stanford University Press, 1969).

⁴¹³ David Solomon, "Internal Objections to Virtue Ethics," in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. XIII (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 431.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 431-432.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., 432.

more than one's own moral self-image, e.g., includes the flourishing of friends and family, then we do not have the same problem about moral self-preoccupation.

Solomon, in fact, offers the following response to this sort of objection.

Virtue ethics has an aspect of self-centeredness but another aspect of it can diminish the accompanying risks. "While each agent may be expected to devote primary practical attention to the development of his or her own character, that attention may be required to turn the agent into a person fundamentally concerned with the well-being of others."⁴¹⁶ But he maintains that at a deeper level, this objection cannot be removed.

At this deeper level, the objection points to an asymmetry that arises between an agent's regard for his own character and his regard for the character of others. The question raised here has this form: Since an EV [ethics of virtue] requires me to pay primary attention to the state of my own character, doesn't this suggest that I must regard my own character as the ethically most important feature of myself? But, if so, and if I am suitably concerned about others, shouldn't my concern for them extend beyond a mere concern that their wants, needs, and desires be satisfied, and encompass a concern for *their* character? Shouldn't I indeed have the same concern for the character of my neighbor as I have for my own?"⁴¹⁷

However, it seems that Solomon accepts the existence of an asymmetry too readily. For Aristotle, true friends are separate persons physically, but not psychologically. A virtuous friend and his prosperity is the part of one's self. In this kind of relationship, a person is naturally concerned with his friend's moral character and needs because these are constituents of his own well-being. Like

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., 434.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 435.

Aristotle, for Confucius, a person cannot be regarded as a being completely independent, separated from his family. The members of his family are extensions of himself. A person and family cannot exist without each other. (These are interpretive premises; they permeate Confucius' thought.) For Aristotle and Confucius, it is true that there are certain degrees of familiarity between self and others. Closer persons are treated more like oneself. Thus both true friends for Aristotle and the family for Confucius stand in symmetrical rather than asymmetrical relationships, and hence 'self-preoccupation' is not necessarily self-centered.

Second, Robert Louden also points out that "the focus on good and bad agents rather than on right and wrong actions may lead to a peculiar sort of moral backsliding."⁴¹⁸ Owing to the emphasis on a lifetime pursuit of virtue, virtue ethics seems to overlook or disregard "occasional lies or acts of selfishness" with the excuse of "temporary aberrations -- acts out of character."⁴¹⁹ Furthermore, this kind of moral backsliding can lead to "self-deception."

Even the just man may on occasion act unjustly, so why haggle over specifics? It is unbecoming to a virtue theorist to engage in such pharisaic calculations. But once he commits himself to the view that assessments of moral worth are not simply a matter of whether we have done the right thing, backsliding may result: "No matter how many successes some people have, they still feel they 'are' fundamentally honest." At some point, such backsliding is bound to lead to self-deception.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁸ Robert Louden, "Some Vices of Virtue Ethics," in *American Philosophical Quarterly* 21 (July, 1984), 231.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

It seems that two kinds of response are possible. First, what Louden means by the notion of character seems to reduce it to an empirical concept which applies whenever there is a sufficient preponderance of acts of a certain kind, while Aristotle and Confucius regard character as a source of action of a certain kind and 'acts out of character' as signs of a weakness in that source. One who acts selfishly even sometimes is not yet virtuous. Confucius says, for example, "The gentleman never deserts benevolence, not even for as long as it takes to eat a meal."⁴²¹

Second, although this criticism appears to raise a serious problem for virtue ethics, the problem reflects the weakness of human beings rather than of the theory itself. Indeed, Aristotle and Confucius acknowledge this point fully. Confucius thinks that there are various pitfalls depending on the degree of maturity which make people backslide temporarily, i.e., for a young person, physical desire and for an old person, material desire.⁴²² Aristotle also mentions sources of temptation, observing that for human beings, pleasure is more difficult to resist than anger.⁴²³ So rules (laws) are laid down to guide immature people.

Furthermore, the judgment of who is virtuous is observable for Aristotle and Confucius. After committing wrongs, a person may try to excuse himself and regard himself as still being honest. For Aristotle and Confucius, this kind of behavior need not always be considered self-deception. Rather the person is simply not yet

⁴²¹ AN IV.5.

⁴²² AN XVI.7.

⁴²³ NE II.3, 1105a8.

virtuous. This kind of self-complacency will not be acceptable, not to anyone who understands what virtue requires.

However, if these responses do not satisfy the critics, then, we seem to have only the alternative of following rules without considering character. But isn't making mistakes better than just relying on rules without motivation? In practice, we cannot guide people through difficult situations by rules alone. A man who follows rules does not necessarily coincide with a man of virtue. Such a man will face situations where rules cannot provide guidance, for example, when he is called upon to write and to refine rules, and to apply existing rules in conflict situations. Although a man of rules makes an effort to solve some conflict cases by generating more rules, he might end up with too many rules, so that he needs specialists to interpret the rules. Then there seem to be two choices, either he will seek more and more rules to fit each case, or he can call upon a man of virtue who knows how to generate and apply rules. Relying on rules alone will not teach us the disposition of judgement needed to apply rules intelligently. From this perspective, virtue seems indispensable to action- and rule- based ethics, for conduct based on principles requires character, moral discernment, and a sense of responsibility. Further, morality encompasses more than actions that accord with principles; the agent's disposition to act morally is important to both the motive behind action and the strength to discern and do what is right.

Third, Louden also claims that virtue theory cannot provide adequate guidance.

[T]hey [virtue theorists] involve skills of perception and articulation, situation-specific "know-how," all of which are developed only through recognizing and acting on what is relevant in concrete moral contexts as they arise. These skills of moral perception and practical reason are not completely routinizable, and so cannot be transferred from agent to agent as any sort of decision procedure "package deal." Due to the very nature of the moral virtues, there is thus a very limited amount of advice on moral quandaries that one can reasonably expect from the virtue-oriented approach. We ought, of course, to do what the virtuous person would do, but it is not always easy to fathom what the hypothetical moral exemplar would do were he in our shoes, and sometimes even he will act out of character. Furthermore, if one asks him why he did what he did, or how he know what to do, the answer -- if one is offered -- might not be very enlightening. One would not necessarily expect him to appeal to any rules or principles which might be of use to others."⁴²⁴

Louden thinks that virtue theory cannot guide decision making. The best advice virtue theory can offer "do what the virtuous person would do." But this virtuous person is a "hypothetical" model and cannot provide rules as guidelines for uncultivated people.

Aristotle points out the practical syllogism as a description of the form of practical (including moral) decision making, although he offers no rules of thumb of how to act. In circumstances not calling for refined judgement one may (and probably *should*) rely on habits instilled by one's upbringing. Confucius does not explicitly discuss how we should make decisions. But for Confucius, tradition and rituals provide guidelines for those who have not yet achieved virtue. So, Aristotle's and Confucius' advice is not limited. On the contrary, a virtuous man will be able to offer very full and detailed advice (in Confucius' case there will be a wealth of relevant material cited from *The Book of Odes* and *The Book of History*). Because

⁴²⁴ Robert Louden, "Some Vices of Virtue Ethics," 229.

of the needs of the uncultivated, Aristotle and Confucius think that a virtuous man should ultimately play a political role in his community. Aristotle's virtuous man would devise rules (laws) for the immature to follow, and offer reasons to those who are able to engage in rational deliberation. Neither Aristotle nor Confucius thinks that good models are merely imaginary, but rather that we may start by looking to someone near us.⁴²⁵ Virtuous persons can act in particular instances without relying on rules and principles and without providing fully articulated reasons (and their response to a certain situation can be different since they are different persons and their virtues are formed differently), but that does not mean they cannot offer explanations of how to act. Aristotle emphasizes sensitivity to the concrete situation and Confucius's dialogues always reveal specific concern about particular things.

It seems to be true that virtue ethics does not provide what is provided by consequentialist ethics in the principle of utility or by deontological ethics in principles like Kant's "universal law" formulation of the categorical imperative. However, there are, as Solomon says, also "difficulties in applying" consequentialist or deontological principles. "Some of these difficulties are of a broadly theoretical sort like those utilitarians have in making sense of interpersonal comparison of

⁴²⁵ No rationalist (from Plato to Kant) will accept that we can derive adequate standards of conduct from the world of experience (examples of good deeds or examples of virtuous people) because they will feel any selection of empirical paradigms will beg the question, "In virtue of what are these good examples?" In reply it might be argued that the rational faculty which is supposed to determine criteria *a priori* is itself a cultural product. This cultural product may need the refinement of criticism, but it remain rooted in a cultural context and one begins the critical process from the standards found in that context.

utility."⁴²⁶ Other problems arise over the application of principles. i.e., although there is agreement "with Kant's formulation of the fundamental principle of morality," some of his conclusions are unacceptable to many.⁴²⁷ It seems that unanimous agreement cannot be expected about "what the results of applications should be." Like Kantians, utilitarians have "practical disagreement" in spite of "theoretical agreement." Confronting the most controversial contemporary moral "issues involving abortion, the use of nuclear weapons, affirmative action, or the details of schemes for distributive justice," neither utilitarians nor Kantians provide definitive answers.⁴²⁸

One strength of virtue ethics is that a unified set of virtues can guide proper actions in a way which is responsive to various situations and assorted agents. "An agent who embodies the virtue of justice may discern the justice of particular actions, projects, or institutions as specifically and decisively as some impersonally formulated rules or principle." Thus virtues may be more effective "than rules or principles with regard to specificity and decisiveness," because of their ability to embody complexity.⁴²⁹ Further, virtue ethics places more weight on solely human qualities such as benevolence, sincerity, and friendship than deontological and utilitarian ethical theories. It brings out the best in human beings. Actions are

⁴²⁶ David Solomon, "Internal Objections to Virtue Ethics," 437.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 437-438.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., 438.

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 439.

performed by nurturing harmony among moral, intellectual, and emotional aspects of man. This kind of tendency affects a person's social realm, so a virtuous man pursues harmony between different values such as equality and justice. With these concerns, he makes efforts to minimize conflicts with or between other individuals or with his community.⁴³⁰

Fourth, according to Aristotle, not only is a certain sort of psycho-physical constitution required to be virtuous, one also needs appropriate economic and socio-political conditions, and the good fortune to have sound models on which to pattern one's life. For Confucius, in order to become virtuous it helps to be born either into a virtuous family or virtuous society. The question, then, is to what extent good conditions are necessary, that is, how can a person born into a family lacking virtue, ever become virtuous?

In fact, virtue does require a variety of forms of luck. Since man is a social animal, "[e]ven the shiningly virtuous are sometimes corrupted rather than supported by the company they keep" and we can be "playthings of the moral luck of our political and social situation, the luck of the draw of our interactive community."⁴³¹ In reality, luck is a part of what constitutes our living context.

[T]he luck of a person's constitutional and intellectual traits; the luck of having appropriate formative models to imitate; the luck of living in

⁴³⁰ How does this contrast with deontological and utilitarian theories? The point is these are immediate objects of endeavor not sought by directing effort via general principles or by a some ultimate goal like general happiness.

⁴³¹ Amélie O. Rorty, "Virtues and Their Vicissitudes," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. XIII, 145.

historical, economic, and socio-political conditions that are consonant with one's own dispositional directions; the luck of good company. But it is just the strength of practical descriptive oriented virtue theories that they acknowledge the pervasive presence of moral luck.⁴³²

However, accepting the role of luck turns out to be a strength of the practical aspect of virtue theories, because they do not disregard the realities of life. "The virtues are, among other things, the range of skills that enable a person to cope with luck, to deal with the contingencies and vagaries of the particular situations."⁴³³ Indeed, Confucius accepts some given conditions, such as being poor or rich, as fate. Both Aristotle and Confucius take for granted that good fortune is a necessary part of the human condition which provides us with contexts in which to exist and act. Their thoughts begin with an acknowledgement of a person in a given set of circumstances.⁴³⁴ However, both agree that luck is not the most important factor in becoming a virtuous person. Aristotle says that true nobility comes from a person's noble actions rather than being born in noble family.⁴³⁵ Confucius thinks a human being's inner ability can overcome his bad conditions.⁴³⁶

⁴³² Ibid., 146-7.

⁴³³ Ibid., 147.

⁴³⁴ In Kant, a person can be morally good without the co-operation of "step-motherly nature." Just as one does not need favorable circumstances to have a good will, one does not need them to act to maximize the general happiness, circumstances only determine what maximum is possible.

⁴³⁵ NE I.9, 1099b17-24.

⁴³⁶ AN VI.11.

For Aristotle and Confucius, how minimal are the conditions that are needed? If a virtuous person is under the rule of a tyrant, how he should act? In a modern society, where there are commercial and legal sophists around who entice a person to use vicious methods for achieving his goal, is he not being too naive, if he insists on acting only virtuously? What if his virtuous acts result in unhappiness or disadvantage to his family? This, then, gives rise to another criticism: Do not Aristotle and Confucius seem too optimistic and naive or is it our perspective that is too jaded?

Neither Aristotle nor Confucius thinks that a virtuous man is unhappy or disadvantaged, even though in some circumstances probably he won't be content, either. Aristotle says, "If, as we said, the activities determine a man's life, no supremely happy man can ever become miserable, for he will never do what is hateful and base."⁴³⁷ Judging a person happy/unhappy may be done from the internal perspective of a person's own satisfactions or the external perspective of our assessment of his life and situation. Aristotle's '...miserable, for...' is a sensible *sequitur* only from the external perspective. He does not mean 'miserable' as a psychological state. A virtuous man pursues "what is noble" rather than "what seems to be advantageous,"⁴³⁸ such as money and honor, and "he would rather

⁴³⁷ NE (trans. Ostwald) I.10, 1100b34-35.

⁴³⁸ NE (trans. Ostwald) IX.8, 1169a6.

live nobly for one full year than lead an indifferent existence for many."⁴³⁹

Confucius is in total agreement with Aristotle on these points.

Nevertheless, it is true that both Aristotle and Confucius are optimistic about human nature. Although they do not define human nature as intrinsically good, they assume it as neither fundamentally perverted, nor afflicted by original sin. Thus, Confucius admonishes us not to doubt our ability to cultivate ourselves. All human beings have the capacity for self-fulfillment. We should not worry or be apologetic about our abilities, but should do our best. It depends on us.⁴⁴⁰ For Aristotle, man becomes himself only by his action. Aristotle clearly trusts people, when he says that people are less corruptible than a ruler.⁴⁴¹ Confucius also thinks the majority of people are good, when he assumes that people's purposes coincide with heaven's purpose.⁴⁴² Indeed it seems that their optimism is related to the concept of nature. Following the movement of nature brings harmony to us; so Aristotle says, "the best is that which preserves and arranges with respect to nature."⁴⁴³ Confucius believes that the rise and fall of things in nature also applies to human beings and their actions. Nature provides the ground idea of the mean and a sense

⁴³⁹ NE (trans. Ostwald) IX.8, 1169a23-24.

⁴⁴⁰ AN VI.12 & IX.19.

⁴⁴¹ See Chapter III. 2. 2.

⁴⁴² See Chapter II. 1.

⁴⁴³ 246b24. See W. Wieland, "The Problem of Teleology," in *Articles on Aristotle*, vol.1, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Malcolm Schofield, Richard Sorabji (London: Gerald Duckworth & Company Limited, 1975), 149.

of the natural way which things should be done. Considering the virtues as an organized whole, both Aristotle and Confucius seek to correspond to the order of nature. But as we have seen their different socio-historical perspectives result in different core virtues around which the other virtues unify.

The impositions of tyrants and the manipulations of sophists have limitations. It will be obvious, Aristotle and Confucius believe, if we consider carefully that their behavior neither conforms to human nature nor brings happiness and harmony when looked at from the large picture of nature. However, Aristotle and Confucius accept that a virtuous person is not always successful in the possibly corrupted eyes of the world. Also, a virtuous person has a variety of options under the governing of a unjust ruler, e.g., one can exhort the tyrant, or join the resistance, or leave the country. Thus, it might be the case that from the viewpoint of an unachieved person, a virtuous person would be misunderstood, hard to appreciate.⁴⁴⁴ But this seems to be what a virtuous man should be able to take care of with his virtues. For Aristotle and Confucius, at least some virtuous persons are needed around a person if that person is to become virtuous. True that unless two people are matched or at least in similar stage in virtue, there may be a difficulty for a virtuous person to be understood completely or to be appreciated by another virtuous person. Perhaps to appreciate fully what Socrates meant by "knowing oneself" would take the Buddha,

⁴⁴⁴ For Confucius, see AN.XIV 32 & 35. In case of Socrates, he was sentenced to death by the uncultivated. Plato alludes to this in *Republic* VII. 517a.

who deserted his palace to pursue his enlightenment and only after that could he offer salvation to other people in the world.

2. Challenges to the Idea of a Virtue-Centered Society

In Aristotle, happiness is the goal for human beings, and for the community. Unlike Plato, happiness is a property which applies distributively over its individual members rather than being a property of the collective entity, the community. Concerning the social aspect, we can say that in Aristotle proper balance between an individual and society is necessary. For Aristotle, a city does not exist for utilitarian purposes alone, although in a very broad sense a city has a utilitarian purpose, because a city is treated as an instrument of human fulfillment. The city is the context of virtuous activities of human beings, the place that makes self-fulfillment possible. The dangers which an Aristotelian must avoid are the following. When the individual or the individual aspect of happiness is overemphasized, the individual becomes selfish, as if *eudaimonia* could be achieved at the expense of social responsibilities. On the other hand, when the happiness of society is overemphasized (if the happiness of all, collectively, is made paramount without placing responsibility on each distributively for their own happiness), the society becomes too demanding and smothering,⁴⁴⁵ and individuality can be reduced and threatened by the impositions of the whole community. Such is Aristotle's criticism of the idea

⁴⁴⁵ *Politics* II.5.

of Plato's Republic.⁴⁴⁶ Plato was wrong in assuming that maximal unity rather than the harmony of each of its members would perfect the state. If the common good of a society is emphasized so much that concern for property and family are rejected, there is not much to stimulate individual interests, and then even the community suffers.

Since Aristotle's interest is in establishing a good life, there is a possibility that the search for good principles could lead to Kantian unconditional imperatives, that is, rules which hold regardless of the consequences. Since the nature of virtues can only be derived from right actions having good consequences, Aristotle could only be seen to approach that outcome if we presume some sort of preordained harmony between a formally determined right and happiness. Kant for his part denies this, for doing right things may bring about happiness, but that does not guarantee our happiness. For Aristotle, it seems correct to assume that right actions should be defined as those which bring happiness.

The problems for Confucius are different. Since self-realization is achieved through fulfilling virtuous roles in various relations, roles and duties may be hardened purely in formal and thoughtlessly mechanical ways, so that the virtues become robotic, mere habits. Authoritarian, legalist, and rigorist interpretations of the virtues may overwhelm the better nature and judgment of human beings. Take

⁴⁴⁶ *Politics* II.5, 126330-36.

rituals as an example. Confucius thinks that rituals can lead us to the virtues and convey their meaning.

Tzu-kung wanted to do away with the sacrificial sheep at the announcement of the new moon. The Master said, 'Ssu, you are loath to part with the price of the sheep, but I am loath to see the disappearance of the rite.'⁴⁴⁷

What Confucius argues is that keeping the tradition alive is more valuable than the cost of the sheep. This interpretation, however, does not suggest that the rituals should not change at all or that particular rituals should be kept at any price. Rather Confucius is asking us to reflect in our heart upon what is really important.

Confucius thinks of history as a decline from the standards of the ancients.⁴⁴⁸

The Master said, 'In antiquity, the common people had three weaknesses, but today they cannot be counted on to have even these. In antiquity, in their wildness men were impatient of restraint; today, in their wildness they simply deviate from the right path. In antiquity, in being conceited, men were uncompromising; today, in being conceited, they are simply ill-tempered. In antiquity, in being foolish, men were straight; today, in being foolish, they are simply crafty.'⁴⁴⁹

If history is a decline of this kind, rites become hardened or merely decorative rather than enriching. Their meanings are forgotten, obscured, or neglected. Without supplying appropriate meaning or renewing of the ceremonial procedures, rites can

⁴⁴⁷ AN III.17.

⁴⁴⁸ The fact of the decline of history seems not to be taken by Confucius pessimistically. Since human beings' possibilities are not degrading, obviously he thinks that each generation can reach to the same accomplishment of the golden ages. This comparison with the past seems to be for the purpose of motivating people.

⁴⁴⁹ AN XVII.16.

make us blind. When people become blind, their minds lose flexibility.⁴⁵⁰ Then, the role of rituals is taken over by derivative rules and laws.

When virtues are reduced to mere habits within society, they become the sort of derivative rules set up for people who lack virtues. Then, the rules are very rigid and similar to law in their character. For Confucius, laws restrict human nature. Laws tell us what we should not do as human beings and as a result, laws keep our expectations of human beings low. So, if people are governed mainly by laws, they are actually degraded.⁴⁵¹

It is also true that when the importance of community always or almost always outweighs that of the person, the society becomes authoritarian. Then, people within the society are afraid of being creative. The happiness of an individual is hardly considered important. The individual is forgotten as a center of relations and exists as a mere linking point for the network of relations.

⁴⁵⁰ AN XIV.32.

⁴⁵¹ In this case how are these rules different from Kantian laws? It seems that derivative principles of virtue ethics are more difficult to have an open mind about than Kantian laws. For derivative rules are set by tradition or religion over a long period, while Kantian rules are supposed to be intelligent expressions of autonomous rationality.

2. THE STRENGTH OF AN ETHICS CENTERED ON A UNIFIED SET OF VIRTUES

Criticisms of virtue theory are more easily answered if one bears in mind the role which Aristotle and Confucius give to the unity of virtues. A virtue theory appears more compelling when it is realized that the virtues are meant to function as a unity of some definite sort. The unity of the virtues is represented by the integrated character of the virtuous man, the man of practical wisdom in Aristotle, and the benevolent man in Confucius. A virtuous man becomes a standard of moral judgment in guiding actions. He can act properly in particular situations where rules and laws are not flexible or detailed enough. Indeed, it takes virtue to consistently apply laws correctly. Even if universality is thought to be a desirable feature of an ethical theory, the strength of a virtue theory lies in its flexibility. The flexibility of virtue makes it a concept which is possible to apply across time and place.

A deontological theory holds that there are prescriptions and proscriptions which are context independent: Utilitarianism on the other hand is context-sensitive in the sense that what will generate good consequences are not the same in all times and places, but it nevertheless assumes that human desires and the natural laws which must be observed to achieve those goals, are context-independent. Indeed classical utilitarianism (Bentham, Mill) tried to specify the goal without reference to man's social nature and historical situation. A virtue theory may hold that virtue is context-independent, that a good man in China is the same sort of person and perhaps will even do the same sort of things as a good man in ancient Greece or

modern Europe. It may, on the other hand, because it stresses the context sensitivity of the virtuous person (whose virtue lies in being able to figure out what is the right thing in given circumstances) end up acknowledging that the practice of virtues may be different in different contexts. For example, how an individual acts courageously in a warrior culture is different from how an individual acts courageously in a commercial culture. Not only does courage elicit different responses, it may not be as important a virtue, say, as thrift is in a commercial culture. While deontological or utilitarian ethics claim universality of rules and goals respectively, virtue theory is more context-sensitive and related to concrete human experience. However, to serve as a general ethical theory, virtue theory needs to prove that it is applicable to different cultures and eras, so that it can provide a framework for communication between value systems in modern society.

1. The Virtuous Person as a Standard of Moral Judgment

For Aristotle, a man of practical wisdom is the standard of moral judgment. Moral virtue is a disposition guided by reason to choose the mean⁴⁵² between two extremes. Moral virtues involve choice and should be recognized as a function of practical wisdom. That is to say moral virtue involves choice of a mean by which one acts or feels "at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the

⁴⁵² The meaning of 'the mean' is illustrated by a mathematical example, but Aristotle uses it in a metaphorical sense. Aristotle says that although its essence is a mean, virtue is an extreme "with regard to what is best and right." (NE II.6, 1107a6-7)

right people, with the right aim, and in the right way."⁴⁵³ So, a courageous person knows when he should attack or retreat, what a noble death is, and that sometimes enduring an insult is courageous. Moral virtue should be supported by emotions and reason. A virtuous man is habituated to the appropriate emotional reactions as well as rationally informed activities. Moreover, a virtuous man enjoys doing the right thing.

We must take as a sign of states the pleasure or pain that supervenes on acts; for the man who abstains from bodily pleasures and delights in this very fact is temperate, while the man who is annoyed at it is self-indulgent, and he who stands his ground against things that are terrible and delights in this or at least is not pained is brave, while the man who is pained is a coward."⁴⁵⁴

A man of practical wisdom can see that the mean varies with circumstances. For example, Aristotle himself recognizes, in spending money, two kinds of means, generosity and magnificence, depending on whether a person is moderately wealthy or very wealthy. But keep in mind that there may be a need to recognize more than two. The former is on a small scale and the latter, on a large scale. Even though magnificence is a mean, an ordinary man is not praised for spending money on the same large scale that a rich man may be. He should indeed not spend more than he can. If he spends on a large scale, it is not a mean for him, rather it is a vice and he should be criticized.

Aristotle distinguishes a man of practical wisdom from a man of theoretical wisdom. A man of practical wisdom can act appropriately in every situation. A

⁴⁵³ NE II.6, 1106b21-22.

⁴⁵⁴ NE II.3, 1104b4-9.

man of practical wisdom has "the capacity of deliberating well about what is good and advantageous for oneself" from the perspective of "what sort of thing contributes to the good life in general."⁴⁵⁵ In contrast, people like Anaxagoras and Thales are called wise but not *phronimos* because they seemed to neglect their own advantage. "[W]hen we see that they do not know what is advantageous to them, we admit that they know extraordinary, wonderful, difficult, and superhuman beings, but call their knowledge useless because the good they are seeking is not human."⁴⁵⁶ Aristotle applied "*phronimos*" to men concerned with more practical ends: "Pericles and men like him have practical wisdom, viz. because they can see what is good for themselves and what is good for men in general; we consider that those can do this who are good at managing households or states."⁴⁵⁷

A man of practical wisdom knows how to apply the general to the particulars especially when it comes to the management of households and states. Yet, Aristotle also distinguishes a man of practical wisdom from a self-interested man. It is because "one's own good cannot exist without household management, nor

⁴⁵⁵ NE (trans. Ostwald) VI.5, 1140a25-28.

⁴⁵⁶ NE (trans. Ostwald) VI.7, 1141b5-7.

⁴⁵⁷ NE VI.5, 1140b8-11. Louden criticizes Aristotle's for applying '*phronimos*' to men like Pericles: First, it is only apt for "a small face to face community." Second, his method is not sufficient for the universally valid standard. So, his theory will not function in a different community --"one where people really do not know each other all that well, where there is wide disagreement on values." (In "Some Vices of Virtue Ethics," 317). It is true that Aristotle thinks that we should control the population and territory in the ideal state (*Politics*, VII 4 & 5). However, searching who is a *phronimos* is not a matter of the size of country. Pursuit of a model of each one of us should start from our neighbor and look further.

without a form of government."⁴⁵⁸ Since Aristotle does not provide full details, at first glance, it may seem difficult to distinguish with any degree of certainty who really is a virtuous or vicious person from those who merely seem virtuous. Nevertheless, as a virtuous man's life both in private and in public is under control and harmonious, we will not find his private and public life falling apart. So, it will not be impossible to recognize a virtuous man. Good models are objectively recognizable. From that seems to come Aristotle's optimism that the majority of people have a good sense of judgment. Also those who become models reflect what the people want and value most. But to prevent mistaking the sort of person Confucius called the village worthy⁴⁵⁹ for the *phronimos* requires applying discrimination to extended observation.

The apparent difficulty (as well as the strength) of virtue as a standard of action in Aristotle, is that there is no fixed mark of a mean of action. A mean is very much dependent on individual circumstances and situation, which is why a mean must be determined by a virtuous man. However, the judgment is not totally subjective. As a good model is recognizable, a mean has objectivity. What then assures us that a man of practical wisdom will determine right action? Aristotle argues that it is because he does not forget his aim -- the flourishing life.

In matters of action, the principles or initiating motives are the ends at which our actions are aimed. But as soon as a man becomes corrupted by pleasure or pain, the goal no longer appears to him as a motivating principle: he no

⁴⁵⁸ NE VI.8, 1142a9-10.

⁴⁵⁹ AN XVII.13.

longer sees that he should choose and act in every case for the sake of and because of this end. For vice tends to destroy the principle or initiating motive of action.⁴⁶⁰

Since a man of practical wisdom -- a man who loves himself, so that he desires to actualize his potential -- constantly reminds himself of his goal, his actions can be integrated. For a man of practical wisdom acknowledges that a man lives within a social environment and shares values with fellow community members. If he deviates to selfish pursuits, soon his actions will not harmonize with other people in the community and will eventually even conflict with his own interests. So, his personal aspects harmonize his social aspects. Judgement should be made in the given context and in fact, context provides safe boundaries of judgement. To hit the mean is difficult, but for that reason even a close approximation to it is praiseworthy.⁴⁶¹

For Confucius, moral judgement is also to be made by a virtuous man. Just who is the virtuous person? Confucius also says that a virtuous man leads an integrated life.⁴⁶²

⁴⁶⁰ NE VI.5, 1140b16-19.

⁴⁶¹ NE II.9, 1109b18-20.

⁴⁶² In Confucius, the sage (*shêng jên* 聖人) is the completed person and gentleman (*chun tzu*) and benevolent man (*jen tzu* 仁者) are still in the process of realizing themselves. A sage is the highest stage of personal realization (AN VI.30) which Confucius confesses that he has not yet reached (AN VII.34). Since *jen* is counterpart of *phronesis*, a gentleman or a benevolent man is comparable to a man of practical wisdom. Furthermore, while *phronesis* and *sophia* are parts of a unity, so their difference is in kind, the difference between *jen* and *shêng* is in degree. Thus the relation between *jen* and *shêng* is not the same to that of *phronesis* and

The Master said, 'The gentleman has righteousness [*yi*] as his basic stuff and by observing the rites puts it into practice, by being modest gives it expression, and by being trustworthy in word brings it to completion. Such is a gentleman indeed!'⁴⁶³

Confucius' thought is built on the assumption that when a person unites the virtues, the person's deeds should also form an organic unity. His actions are not only coherent, consonant, and converge in the pursuit of his goal but also are appropriate to achieving the goal of the community to which he belongs. Aristotle, we have seen, provides a guideline as to what kind of person is qualified as our model and points in the direction of political figures such as Pericles. Confucius points out particular persons, especially historical exemplars, in particular cases and shows what kind of actions are desirable and what kinds of character are admirable. There is objectivity among exemplars but to choose which will be a model is a personal decision which, however, requires learning and maturity.

The availability of models is not restricted by the number of people in the community. Even if there are only three men, a man can improve himself by observing the others either in a positive or a negative sense,⁴⁶⁴ Confucius seems to leave open ended the question of who will be a model. Each person has to search for a mean and a model in his own situation.

sophia. For living well in society, Aristotle emphasizes becoming a man of practical wisdom rather than a man of theoretical wisdom. But for Confucius, in order to fulfill one's life, man should never stop or be satisfied at the stage of *phronimos*.

⁴⁶³ AN XV.18.

⁴⁶⁴ AN VII.22.

A virtuous man by himself is the standard of moral judgment. Thus his character guides action.

The Master said, 'In his dealings with the world the gentleman is not invariably for or against anything. He is on the side of what is righteous.'⁴⁶⁵

To find enjoyment in the discriminating study of ceremonies and music; to find enjoyment in speaking of the goodness of others; to find enjoyment in having many worthy friends:--these are the beneficial pleasures. To find enjoyment in extravagant pleasures; to find enjoyment in idleness and sauntering; to find enjoyment in the pleasure of feasting:--these are the injurious pleasures.⁴⁶⁶

As in Aristotle, virtuous character determines what people should take pleasure in, and also beyond that the virtuous person can be a standard of right and wrong actions. Virtues work as a unity and provide the standard.

The Master said, 'What can a man do with the rites who is not benevolent? What can a man do with music who is not benevolent?'⁴⁶⁷

Jen is the foundation of rituals and music, and this phrase, as an example of the relationship between *jen* and *yi*, shows when *jen* works within a unity. Thus, it can be inferred that a man of *jen* can judge what is right and wrong, and based on the character of a man of *jen*, the rituals and music able to function right. Also, in the *Analects* XVII.9, it is shown that a virtuous man may show anger to a person, in the appropriate manner, at the appropriate time. For example, a virtuous person is able to express complaint without expressing resentment. It is possible because he does

⁴⁶⁵ AN IV.10.

⁴⁶⁶ AN (trans. Legge) XVI.5.

⁴⁶⁷ AN III.3.

not despise the person complained against, rather merely disapproves of his wrongdoings, and yet a virtuous man would not hold resentment within himself.

Confucius himself despises behavior such as "cunning words, an ingratiating face and utter servility" and being "friendly towards someone while concealing one's hostility."⁴⁶⁸ This kind of person is not only insincere to others, but is also deceiving himself because even though he may gain some benefit by his insincere behavior, his gain is at the cost of self-cultivation. Only a person who is sincere with himself can express himself honestly. "It is only the benevolent man who is capable of liking or disliking other men."⁴⁶⁹ However, a virtuous person appears differently in different situations.

Tzu-hsia said, 'In the three following situations the gentleman gives a different impression. From a distance he appears formal; when approached, he appears cordial; in speech he appears stern.'⁴⁷⁰

A benevolent man does not ignore his circumstance, so his action chooses the best way of achieving his goal. Thus he may even pretend to be stupid in order to avoid unnecessary danger. There is no fixed guidance for a virtuous person. But this is fully practiced only when a virtuous person, as Confucius confesses, achieves the spontaneity and embodies the order by himself. There, of course, is a danger that some well-intentioned and studious men spend their lives adhering to narrowly conceived virtues. Having a sense of the organic relatedness of the virtues,

⁴⁶⁸ AN V.25.

⁴⁶⁹ AN IV.3.

⁴⁷⁰ AN XIX.9.

Confucius appeared undogmatic, open to the possibility that there may be many ways to attain one's fulfillment and more than two alternatives (black and white) to consider when judging. So Confucius says, "I have no preconceptions about the permissible and the impermissible,"⁴⁷¹ meaning permissible and impermissible *simpliciter*.⁴⁷² So, he says that "... I so detest inflexibility."⁴⁷³ Flexibility itself is not a virtue, but it facilitates the virtues. Confucius describes only those who achieve a unified set of virtues as having a certain ability to act spontaneously.

The Master said, "There are some with whom we may study in common, but we shall find them unable to go along with us in pursuit the way. *Perhaps* we may go on with them to pursue the way, but we shall find them of unable to get established in those along with us. Or if we may get so established along with them, we shall find them unable to weigh *occurring events* along with us."⁴⁷⁴

People can be varied in the degree to which they have virtues. Some set the goal, some know how to arrive it, some achieve and stand firmly, but they still fail to apply flexibly in accordance with circumstances. The only detailed prescriptions on how we should react in any situation which Confucius endorses are to be found by following his advice to adhere to the rites. But after achieving a unified set of virtues, a benevolent person is meant to function as a standard for determining how the rites are to apply to and be carried out in his particular circumstances. This moral discretion is a situational, spontaneous decision. But it differs from acting

⁴⁷¹ AN XVIII.8.

⁴⁷² AN XVIII.8. (*Italic word is added to clarify the meaning.*)

⁴⁷³ AN XIV.32.

⁴⁷⁴ AN (trans. Legge) IX.29.

solely on one's whim.⁴⁷⁵ A virtuous person should be able to act appropriately but also beyond rigidity. Confucius explains what makes a virtuous person a standard of moral judgement.

As in Aristotle, the reason why a virtuous person can be a standard of moral judgment is that he does not forget his goal. Confucius regards him as having the sincere desire to cooperate with heaven. A person who has this sincere desire can judge from the perspective of the whole picture, including himself and his community. So, a virtuous man constantly reflects upon himself and corrects his selfish desires.⁴⁷⁶

The Master said, 'If a man sets his heart on benevolence, he will be free from evil.'⁴⁷⁷

The Master said, 'If one sets strict standards for oneself and makes allowances for others when making demands on them, one will stay clear of ill will.'⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁵ *Mencius* IV.a.17. Although rites prescribe that man and woman should not touch each other in giving and receiving, not giving a hand to save the drowning sister-in-law is brutal. In this kind of situation, a person should use his own judgment. There is a time to act spontaneously as well as to give up one's own life for the sake of rites of propriety (*Mencius* III.b.1). Both ways of practicing virtues are difficult but important.

⁴⁷⁶ For Example, Tseng Tzu examines his behavior with respect to his relations with others. "'Every day I examine myself on three counts. In what I have undertaken on another's behalf, have I failed to do my best? In my dealings with my friends have I failed to be trustworthy in what I say? Have I passed on to others anything that I have not tried out myself?' (AN I.4)" Thus, his social relations provide the materials to cultivate himself. He and his circumstances are interrelated.

⁴⁷⁷ AN IV.4.

⁴⁷⁸ AN XV.15.

For a virtuous man knows that there are times to preserve one's life and also times when one must give up one's life to achieve oneself. His virtues guide him so that he does not to hold onto a particular fixed virtue. Unified virtues guide him so that whatever situation he faces, he can advance toward his goal.

When Yen Yuan asked about the actual details of benevolence, "The Master said, 'Do not look unless it is in accordance with the rites; do not listen unless it is in accordance with the rites; do not speak unless it is in accordance with the rites; do not move unless it is in accordance with the rites'."⁴⁷⁹ However, when Chung-kung and Ssu-ma Niu ask about benevolence, Confucius gives different answers to them.

Chung-kung asked about benevolence (*jen*). The Master said, 'When abroad behave as though you were receiving an important guest. When employing the services of the common people behave as though you were officiating at an important sacrifice. Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire. In this way you will be free from ill will whether in a state or in a noble family.'⁴⁸⁰

Ssu-ma Niu asked about benevolence (*jen*). the Master said, 'The mark of the benevolent man is that he is loath to speak.' 'In that case, can a man be said to be benevolent simply because he is loath to speak?' The master said, 'When to act is difficult, is it any wonder that one loath to speak?'⁴⁸¹

The reason why Confucius gave different answers is that he took account of differences of character and situation, and gave an answer appropriate to each of

⁴⁷⁹ AN XII.1.

⁴⁸⁰ AN XII.2.

⁴⁸¹ AN XII.3.

them. It also shows in the governing matter.⁴⁸² Confucius gives three different answers because he knows each questioner's weaknesses and what sort of self-governing will remedy those weakness.

2. Virtue Across Time and Place

Aristotle does not hold the view that there is a fixed list of virtues. Nor does he assume that the Athenian constitution is the best. His lists of the virtues and his investigations of diverse constitutions and laws are good examples of his concern about virtues in diverse settings.

When he selects courage as the first virtue to discuss, he is obviously influenced by his social circumstances. But he does not just enlist recognized Athenian virtues, rather he seems to introduce virtues appropriate for the Athenian society, relying on his experience. For many moral traits are nameless -- including both extremes as well as their means -- and Aristotle gives names to unrecognized virtues and vices.⁴⁸³ For example,

Good temper is a mean with respect to anger; the middle state being unnamed, and the extremes almost without a name as well, we place good temper in the middle position, though it inclines towards the deficiency, which is without a name. The excess might be called a sort of irascibility. For the passion is anger, while its causes are many and diverse.⁴⁸⁴

Sometimes in cases of a nameless mean, the extremes look like the mean.

⁴⁸² AN XII.11 & 14.

⁴⁸³ See Martha C. Nussbaum, "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach," in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. XIII, 33.

⁴⁸⁴ NE IV.5, 1125b27-31.

But sometimes we praise the ambitious man as being manly and a lover of what is noble, and the unambitious man as being moderate and temperate as we said in our first treatment of the subject. Evidently, since people are said to be fond of such and such in more than one way, we do not assign the term 'ambition' always to the same thing, but when we praise the quality we think of the man who loves honour more than most people, and when we blame it we think of him who loves it more than is right. The mean being without a name, the extremes seem to dispute for its place as though that were vacant. But where there is excess and defect, there is also an intermediate;⁴⁸⁵

Although it seems that the list of virtues consists of precisely the exemplary cases chosen by Aristotle himself, his intention is to show how to set up a list of virtues. So, Aristotle engages in the discussions of virtues : "[W]hat are they? With what sort of thing do they deal? And how they operate? The answer to these questions will also tell us how many virtues there are."⁴⁸⁶ The answers to the questions "what kinds and how many virtues are there?" are for us to determine.

This is also true of the process of choosing the best constitution. Aristotle collects and compares constitutions and laws and later he introduces the best version of a regime for his society. First, he examines the best states existent either theoretically or historically.⁴⁸⁷

Our purpose is to consider what form of political community is best of all for those who are most able to realize their ideal of life. We must therefore examine not only this but other constitutions, both such as actually exist in well-governed state, and any theoretical forms which are held in esteem; so that what is good and useful may be brought to light. And let no one suppose

⁴⁸⁵ NE IV.4, 1125b11-19.

⁴⁸⁶ NE (trans. Ostwald) III.5, 1115a4-6.

⁴⁸⁷ George Huxley says, "we notice that the ideal city is firmly based in historical experience," in *On Aristotle and Greek Society*, 66.

that in seeking for something beyond them we are anxious to make a sophistical display at any cost;⁴⁸⁸

He classifies the various constitutions as democratic, oligarchic, and monarchic. He then judges what is the best constitution for his society. He thinks that if the best ruler could act as the embodiment of law, kingship would be the best, but there will be less chance of abuses, if the state is ruled by many.⁴⁸⁹ Aristotle claims that man is a being who naturally lives in a polis; all free educated men should be able to participate in politics. Moreover governing by many is less dangerous even in the case where corruption prevails than ruling by one, for when the assemblies engage in deliberation, their judgement is more reliable than that of a wise man. Even when things go wrong, e.g., when the assemblies are influenced by emotions, it will be unlikely that all the members of the assembly are wrong or corrupted at the same time.⁴⁹⁰ On the other hand, when even a good ruler is corrupted, there is a greater chance that he may become a tyrant. Thus, it is better to be governed by many rather than to be governed by one. However, we should remind ourselves that Aristotle means the assemblies should be composed of the educated free men (meaning males).

Virtue is a means to and constituent of an end. *Eudaimonia* can be achieved only within a society. To live well in society requires virtuous activities appropriate to that society. Aristotle believes that character as well as actions are voluntary.

⁴⁸⁸ *Politics* II.1, 1260b25-34.

⁴⁸⁹ *Politics* III.15.

⁴⁹⁰ *Politics* III.15, 1286a23-35.

To sum up: we have described the virtues in general and have given an outline of the genus to which they belong, i.e., that they are means and that they are characteristics. We have stated that they spontaneously tend to produce the same kind of actions as those to which they owe their existence; that they are in our power and voluntary; and that they follow the dictates of right reason. However, our actions and our characteristics are not voluntary in the same sense: we are in control of our actions from beginning to end, insofar as we know the particular circumstances surrounding them. But we control only the beginning of our characteristics: the particular steps in their development are imperceptible, just as they are in the spread of a disease; yet since the power to behave or not to behave in a given way was ours in the first place, our characteristics are voluntary.⁴⁹¹

Thus, we set up the list of virtues in order to see more clearly how to achieve *eudaimonia*. Recall, however, that there are different list of virtues in Aristotle and Confucius; the list of virtues can vary depending on social context, and particular situations as much as on individuals. Furthermore, what Aristotle intends is to show us how to choose the best constitution for achieving *eudaimonia*. The society in which we live should be chosen by ourselves.

How does Aristotle think that the virtues are applicable to different cultures and eras? What Aristotle holds onto is the balance between general rules and particulars. Theoretical knowledge is not subject to change but practical knowledge is: We have to rely on general rules, but their applications can be varied and modified depending on situations. Thus the rules of medicine can guide in general but only a good doctor can apply them well to particular patients. A doctor is not treating man in general, but a particular person. Setting the virtues correctly is open to modification by new experiences. What human beings want and seek is not

⁴⁹¹ NE (trans. Ostwald) III.5, 1114b26-1115a3.

conformity with the past, but the good.⁴⁹² So ethics should encourage humans to go beyond the past. A concern of virtue comes from observation of actual human experience. Virtue should be sensitive to circumstances, leaving room to criticize even the social and traditional morality that gave rise to it, for the sake of happiness.

The problem facing Confucius was how to preserve the coherence of the virtues in different times and places while at the same time saving the tradition from rigidity. For Aristotle, tradition reflects the striving process in which the potentialities of all beings become actualized, thus any given tradition is not the most important factor to reflect upon for a future value system, rather the variety of traditions of each different country can be valued as an indication of the general truth. For Confucius, on the other hand, tradition seems not just the sum of their history, but is the crystallization of human efforts, and the backbone of the value system sustaining the relation of the past and the future. Confucius acknowledges that the practices of virtues are relative to time and place. Thus, as long as they preserve the essential meaning of virtues, flexibility of interpretation and application is allowed; this is because practicing the virtues is not restricted to one way but admits of many different ways.⁴⁹³ So, although *Hsia*, *Yin*, and *Chou* dynasties had

⁴⁹² Aristotle says, "Again, men in general desire the good, and not merely what their fathers had" (*Politics* II.8, 1269a3-4).

⁴⁹³ However, we should notice that there is a pitfall in flexibility. Flexibility includes openness to reinterpretation; it is itself not, of course what allows a group in power to become corrupt to the point committing 'crimes against humanity.' (What is going on in Bosnia is not perpetrated in the name of flexibility.) But a

different forms of rituals,⁴⁹⁴ Confucius thinks that he can choose a good model for his society,⁴⁹⁵ for example, in leadership which can be achieved by different persons whose characters are either resolute, or understanding, or accomplished.⁴⁹⁶

Confucius thinks that the best form of virtues was embodied in the golden ages in the ancient culture, albeit not in one place.

Yen Yüan asked about the government of a state. The Master said, 'Follow the calendar of the Hsia, ride in the carriage of the Yin, and wear the ceremonial cap of the Chou, but, as for music, adopt the *shao* and the *wu*. Banish the tunes of Cheng and keep plausible men at a distance. The tunes of Cheng are wanton and plausible men are dangerous.'⁴⁹⁷

Compared to the era of antiquity, Confucian contemporaries seemed to possess inferior moral qualities.⁴⁹⁸ However, what Confucius claims is not just that he wants to follow ancestral custom, but to achieve the same ends. Since people and society changed from those of antiquity, he thinks that new interpretations of tradition or virtue are permissible. The arbiter is the virtuous person.

small group or even a nation may take advantage of the openness of a people and as a result they may take a direction which is against humanity itself. This kind of a wrong turn eventually ends up with self-contradiction and isolation. Whatever the size, whatever the basis of cohesion of a group in power (be it culture, economics or military discipline) it should be able to justify its politics in terms of the flourishing of all who live within its sphere.

⁴⁹⁴ AN III.21.

⁴⁹⁵ AN III.14.

⁴⁹⁶ AN VI.8.

⁴⁹⁷ AN XV.11.

⁴⁹⁸ AN XVII.16.

The Master said, 'Extravagance means ostentation, frugality means shabbiness. I would rather be shabby than ostentatious.'⁴⁹⁹

The Master said, 'A ceremonial cap of linen is what is prescribed by the rites. Today black silk is used instead. This is more frugal and I follow the majority. To prostrate oneself before ascending the steps is what is prescribed by the rites. Today one does so after having ascended them. This is too casual and, though going against the majority, I follow the practice of doing so before ascending.'⁵⁰⁰

Confucius shows his sensitivity to changes in customs. His choices of what he can and cannot follow from his ancestors and contemporaries are based on reflective assessment, which in turn issue from his character. Confucius is not one who wants to hold to established custom at all costs, rather he wants to be open to his contemporaries and to adjust his behavior to his circumstances in accordance with proper judgement. So, Confucius says that 'The gentleman is no vessel.'⁵⁰¹ This means that unlike a vessel which has a rigid form and is used for only one particular function, a virtuous man is not fixed and close minded. Rather he has flexibility and openness of mind.

The reason Confucius thinks that customs and virtues of antiquity are important is as follows:

The Master said, 'A man is worthy of being a teacher who gets to know what is new by keeping fresh in his mind what he is already familiar with.'⁵⁰²

⁴⁹⁹ AN VII.36.

⁵⁰⁰ AN IX.3.

⁵⁰¹ AN II.12.

⁵⁰² AN II.11.

The Master said, 'men of antiquity studied to improve themselves; men today study to impress others.'⁵⁰³

The Master said, 'I was not born with knowledge but, being fond of antiquity, I am quick to seek it.'⁵⁰⁴

Established wisdom is an eloquent description of the achieved. Knowing what kind of values our culture has to offer makes our foundation strong, in terms of knowing who we are and what we already know. So, though Confucius is enthusiastic to know about antiquity, he does not do so to impress others but to develop himself.

Among specific virtues, some of those that Confucius regards as important, would be difficult to put into practice today. However, the difficulties should be examined in light of the question whether they are matters of substance or mere behavior -- whether some virtues are not important any more, or only that it is the way of practicing virtues that should be changed. For example, in the *Analects*, it appears that a three-year mourning period for parents seemed controversial even in his own time.

Tsai Wo asked about the three-year mourning period, saying, 'Even a full year is too long. If the gentleman gives up the practice of the rites for three years, the rites are sure to be in ruins; if he gives up the practice of music for three years, music is sure to collapse. A full year's mourning is quite enough. After all, in the course of a year, the old grain having been used up, the new grain ripens, and fire is renewed by fresh drilling.'

The Master said, 'Would you, then, be able to enjoy eating your rice and wearing your finery?' 'Yes. I would.' 'If you are able to enjoy them, do so by all means. The gentleman in mourning finds no relish in good food, no pleasure in music, and no comforts in his own home. That is why he does not

⁵⁰³ AN XIV.24.

⁵⁰⁴ AN VII.20.

eat his rice and wear his finery. Since it appears that you enjoy them, then do so by all means.'

After Tsai Wo had left, the Master said, 'How unfeeling Yü is. A child ceases to be nursed by his parents only when he is three years old. Three years' mourning is observed throughout the Empire. Was Yü not given three years' love by his parents?'⁵⁰⁵

This passage shows that the judgement of rituals really relies on one's sensitivity -- what is felt in heart. What Confucius is concerned about is not the formality, but the spirit of appreciation of parents' love. However, Confucius thinks that form is important to preserve the spirit. Also, ceremonies such as sacrifices involving parents and ancestors are an important feature of the larger background.

Tseng Tzu said, 'Conduct the funeral of your parents with meticulous care and let not sacrifices to your remote ancestors be forgotten, and the virtue of the common people will incline toward fullness.'⁵⁰⁶

What underlies the emphasis on rituals of funerals and sacrifices is not only their being conducted not only for the dead, but also for the living people to remind them of the value of their lives and their identity as members of a continuing family.

Nowadays living patterns have changed and this particular formality would be difficult to sustain. However, even though in contemporary society we cannot spend three years in mourning for our parents, what Confucius does teach us as the essence of filial piety can be retained. In the *Analects*, the essence of filial piety is explained:

⁵⁰⁵ AN XVII.21.

⁵⁰⁶ AN I.9.

Meng Wu Po asked about being filial. The Master said, 'Give your father and mother no other cause for anxiety than illness.'⁵⁰⁷

Tzu-yu asked about being filial. The Master said, 'Nowadays for a man to be filial means no more than that he is able to provide his parents with food. Even hounds and horses are, in some way, provided with food. If a man show no reverence, where is the difference?''⁵⁰⁸

Tzu-hsia asked about being filial. The Master said, 'What is difficult to manage is the expression on one's face. As for the young taking on the burden when there is work to be done or letting the old enjoy the wine and the food when these are available, that hardly deserves to be called filial.'⁵⁰⁹

The essence of filial piety is not only to provide food, but more importantly to revere parents with sincerity. Not only supplying or gratifying parents with food, but also setting their minds at ease about the character of their children is filial piety. This suggestion is not only acceptable nowadays, but also sorely needed in our materialist era.

In Confucianism, it is acknowledged that the beginning of filial piety is to take good care of one's body, but the final stage of filial piety is to establish oneself in the world and to earn respect. One's body belongs to not only oneself but also to one's parents, because it is a heritage from them. So to keep it healthy is the beginning of filial piety. However, one should not stop at preserving one's body but should cultivate oneself. If one establishes oneself in the world, one will gain a good name for oneself. Any fame one might attain belongs not only to oneself but also to

⁵⁰⁷ AN II.6.

⁵⁰⁸ AN II.7.

⁵⁰⁹ AN II.8.

one's parents; this is not the selfish idea of that family seeking fame for itself. When a person distinguishes himself in society, he is showing that he can stand by himself, and furthermore he can contribute something to the world. This is what virtuous parents care about. So, in Confucianism, filial piety should be understood along the lines of cultivating of oneself, regulating one's family, contributing to governing the state, and making peace in the world. Thus a moral conflict such as that discussed by Sartre, between loyalty to one's country or one's own parents does not exist in Confucianism.⁵¹⁰ The Confucian answer is that if there is a virtuous son, there are virtuous parents in most of such cases or some virtuous models near him.⁵¹¹ So, when a son is indecisive whether to fight for his country, which is in danger, or to take care of his mother, who is alone and in pain, a virtuous mother will decisively tell him to save his country. For a virtuous mother knows that a family cannot exist without a country will have taught her son this! In this perspective, Confucian theory shows the merits of virtues and encourages us to establish virtuous community.

⁵¹⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism (trans. Philip Mairet)," in *The Existentialist Tradition*, ed. Nino Langiulli (New Jersey: Humanity Press, 1977), 411.

⁵¹¹ AN V.3.

CONCLUSION

This project, it is hoped, may serve to ease the uncertainty over whether it possible to compare representatives of traditions as diverse as classical China and classical Greece. But we should recall the challenges which face a comparative study of this sort. As we have seen in the introduction, MacIntyre uses the unity of the virtues in Aristotle and a perceived lack of the unity of the virtues in Confucius to suggest the distance between the two is unbridgeable. Evidence that Confucius regarded, e.g., courage on its own as a mere *simulacrum* (above p.5-6) would be discounted by MacIntyre because Confucius lacks of the ideas of a hierarchical *psyche*, of *telos*, and of the *polis*.

Now the absence of a detailed moral psychology in Confucius is significant, just as an absence of emphasis on ritual action in Aristotle is significant.⁵¹² It follows only, however, that some of Aristotle's virtue will not find for application and exemplification in Confucius (and vice versa). Officially Aristotle's virtues should answer directly to a detailed conception of human flourishing, the human *telos*. In practice the detail is not so carefully worked out that specifics of the virtues are affected. One might argue that Confucius has a less theoretically articulate conception of flourishing but nevertheless he has an idea of what it is for an individual and for a society to prosper and this notion informs his conception of

⁵¹² Alasdair MacIntyre, "Incommensurability, Truth, and the Conversation between Confucians and Aristotelians about the Virtues," in *Culture and Modernity*, 107 & 110.

the virtues in great detail. Aristotle's account of the virtues does ideally need to be read in the context of the sort of society he thought ideal but it is not uncommon to detach his discussion from that context. Confucius' discussion similarly should be read in the context of the socio-political structures which were breaking down and which he was endeavoring to preserve, as well as in the context of the imperial structure which later adopted him as its ideological figurehead. That Aristotle and Confucius speak to more than their own times and compatriots suggests that neither is Aristotle's thought firmly tied to the *polis* nor is Confucius that tied to a system of warring fiefdoms.

But MacIntyre has a deeper worry about incommensurability. He argues that the absence (as he sees it) of the unity of the virtues in Confucius is due to the fact that Aristotle and Confucius do not share a conceptual scheme, and consequently there cannot be a rational encounter between their views. They are just incommensurable.

[I]ncommensurability is a relationship between two or more systems of thought and practice, each embodying its own peculiar conceptual scheme, over a certain period of time.... It is not that what is according to the one scheme true is according to its rivals false; it is rather that the standard or standards which determine how the true-false distinction is to be applied are not the same.⁵¹³

... without rational encounter the rival theory becomes a subject matter concerning which we have not achieved that truth which *adaequatio intellectus ad rem*.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹³ Ibid., 109-110.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., 112.

What MacIntyre thinks is that commensurability involves being able to adjudicate, i.e., decide which one is (more) true. MacIntyre thinks that there is no commensurability unless there is the possibility of rational encounter. As a condition of promoting rational encounter, he suggests, there will have to be a reduction of cultural diversity to conceptual uniformity, or there has to be a neutral standpoint, and he regards both as hardly possible.

It is arguable, however, that the point of comparing different traditions is not in order to adjudicate, i.e., to determine which is right and which is wrong, and about what, rather it is to understand the other, and thereby oneself, and to see the possibilities which might serve to expand the horizons of either or of some third standpoint. Rational encounter does not require total suspension of cultural presuppositions and prejudices. Even if we have grown up in a certain culture, this does not diminish the possibility of our being open to thought styles from outside that culture, especially since few cultures are now isolated from other cultures and individuals are nowadays informed by thoughts from other times and places.

My project, here, is like Gadamer's. It is true that we have cultural prejudices, but to have prejudice means to have a horizon. "[T]o have a horizon' means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it."⁵¹⁵ Our prejudices are not barriers but legitimate and are the ground, (i.e., basis of

⁵¹⁵ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Corporation, 1989), 302.

possibility) of enlarging our horizon.⁵¹⁶ Gadamer argues that the distinction between cultures is the basis of the understanding of ourselves, and "justified prejudices"⁵¹⁷ can lead us to open toward alien cultures:

In fact the important thing is to recognize temporal distance as a positive productive condition enabling of understanding.⁵¹⁸

The historical movement of human life consists in the fact that it is never absolutely bound to any one standpoint, and hence can never have a truly closed horizon. The horizon is, rather, something into which we move and that moves with us. Horizons change for a person who is moving.⁵¹⁹

The point of broadening our horizon is not to acquire a trans-cultural mind-set or to make our rationality more uniformly comprehensive, but (eventually) to deepen ourselves. For philosophers should engage in comparative work and open up themselves to the other possibilities. In order to achieve broadened horizons, it seems to me, that comparative work requires cooperation between those who devote themselves to the primary works (of for example, either Aristotle or Confucius) and

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., 277.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., 279.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., 297.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., 304. Also, see Ibid., 302.: "Every finite present has its limitations. We define the concept of "situation" by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence essential to the concept of situation is the concept of '*horizon*.' The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point... A person who has no horizon does not see far enough and hence overvalues what is nearest to him. On the other hand, "to have a horizon" means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it... Similarly, working out the hermeneutical situation means acquiring the right horizon of inquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition."

those who devote themselves to comparative reflection based on the primary works and translations.

From a Gadamerian viewpoint, my project demonstrates commensurability in the sense of bringing Aristotle and Confucius into our horizon and shows how if Confucians and Aristotelians are open to building on their own traditions, they can find resources in each another's traditions. Comparing Aristotle and Confucius shows that most of what they emphasized can still be understood today, even though some of their cultural assumptions may no longer have a viable application. The attitude of neither man toward women offers guidance today, e.g., when Confucius speaks of all women in the same breath as of small men⁵²⁰ or Aristotle classifies women as incompletely developed men.⁵²¹ Neither Aristotle nor Confucius believes women can participate in political life. Both have a low regard for women's abilities, but in reality, what their judgement reflects is the lack of opportunities to develop women's abilities or a perhaps political cultural defined to exclude women's special contribution.

⁵²⁰ AN XVII.25.

⁵²¹ For Aristotle's view about women, see 728a18, 766a30-31, 1254b14, 1260a14. However, before discarding material which appears to reflect obsolete (superseded) social and economic patterns, we should consider carefully -- what exactly has been superseded. For example, Aristotle's concept of a slave as one 'who does not belong to himself' (*Politics* I.4, 1254a14-15) seems to have application more than ever in modern society. If we take Aristotle's concept of a slave to mean in this sense one who is alienated, then as most of us are indeed alienated, not only from ourselves, but also from others and from our environment. Unlike Aristotle's era, no one is slave in social and economical sense in this century, but we become slaves of our work, and many find themselves employed as cogs in a machine, and are not encouraged to think for themselves.

Setting aside the aspects of the thought of Aristotle or Confucius which no longer apply, we can still recognize and appreciate virtues and values such as courage, benevolence, happiness, self-realization, etc. One might argue that the reason we recognize these virtues is because we belong to cultures shaped by Aristotle or by Confucius. Although we cannot deny that human beings are interrelated and influenced by the thoughts of their predecessors, this reason is hardly conclusive; if we only recognize the values of our own ancestors, how is it possible for a Westerner to make sense of Confucius or an Easterner to make sense of Aristotle? It seems to me that as long as human beings exist together there will be common basic features to the structures of their relations and therefore basic similarities among the qualities needed by people to function well. So, there are no insurmountable obstacles which stand in the way of our conversing with them. Aristotle and Confucius made efforts to resolve their problems in their times, and as we try to answer our problems in our times we will find that their thinking is by no means irrelevant.

But more interesting and significant, it has been argued here, is how, (comparing analogically) Aristotle and Confucius saw the unity of the virtues. Aristotle and Confucius encourage us to think of human beings from the standpoint of their relations to nature, society and family rather than isolated beings. This holistic approach points to important features of the structure of relations among human beings. Each tried to characterize the people who would act properly within conditions set by his historical situation. Their ideas come together in the similar

function of their respective ideas of the unity of the virtues. This is one way to argue that although we cannot -- perhaps should not -- adjudicate between Aristotle and Confucius; their views are not incommensurable. Perhaps this conclusion should not surprise us; the drift of MacIntyre's argument takes us away from what (a priori) we might expect.

To think properly about the virtues we have to think in several dimensions and to use several contrasts: moral and intellectual, private and public, particular and general, vertical and horizontal social relations. Neither Aristotle nor Confucius explore all of these dimensions; depending on their contextual needs, they treat some explicitly and others are left implicit. In any kind of society, those dimensions are present, and in order for humans to live well, there must be harmonious relations among them.

Furthermore articulation among the different virtues within unified structure, which they need to constitute, seems to have two layers. First, human nature is a framework which consists of two aspects, a biological and a social. These two aspects need to be borne in mind not so much because they are contentful (tell us exactly how to live) but because they constrain (set limits on how we might try to live). Second, what makes the different virtues, and the unified structure which they need to constitute vary is that above these grounds, there are cultural differences. Each culture needs a somewhat different set of virtues and builds a different form of the unity of [those] virtues. Aristotelian and Confucian core virtues show what kinds of values and what kind of society each sees as ideal. Nevertheless according

to Aristotle and Confucius the core relations are the best ways to exercise the virtues in this social dimension.

Can the two different cultures share any of the same virtues? Since we share common features as human beings, there seem to be some virtues that are recognized as common to different cultures. For example, insofar as the relation between father and son is common to all cultures and there will be some conception of what is required by filial piety. However, depending on their needs, one culture might emphasize parental virtues and responsibility more than filial ones or vice versa. The former is like the society, a city state, governed directly by authorities chosen by those whom they will govern. The latter is the society with a feudal system whose ruler takes parental responsibility for those who are governed, and so society is sustained by indirect power derived from the respect of the people to the ruler. Parental and filial virtues are, however, complementary sides of the same coin, neither can exist without the other.

The connotations of the same virtue can, moreover, vary in different cultures. For Aristotle, courage (*andreia*) means manliness mostly in physical sense, e.g., bravery in the battlefield, while for Confucius, the usage of courage (*jung*) is broader, and includes the relation one should have to one's own selfish desires. But *andreia* and *jung* are functionally similar to each other and each is covered by the general phrase "having persistent vigor."⁵²² Furthermore, one virtue can be found

⁵²² As John Dewey analyzes the term 'courage.' See *Middle Works 5*, Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois university Press, 1976), 368.

in another virtue, e.g., in some cultures, honesty is a part of the conception of sincerity. For example, according to Lau, Confucius' *hsin* means to be reliable in word and indeed Cephalus's⁵²³ *dikaio*s means to tell the truth and pay your debts (= reliable in word). Honesty, originally, *Honestas* (honorable), still has a lot to do with being a man of one's word. So, it seems that the identification of names is not of consequence; rather, what matters is the underlying character of the virtue. *Jen* can be translated as 'humanity' or 'care' as well as 'benevolence,' but it is the humanity and care of an authority figure, as Hall and Ames' interpretation of *jen* as 'authoritative person' emphasizes.⁵²⁴ From the Western point of view, it seems possible to regard *jen* as a good example of a cultural reflection of one of the main basic virtues. The core virtues in each tradition seem to have very wide connotations and is each tradition's basic expression of its conception of humanity. Thus, it is arguable that *human* society could not evolve to a point where nothing is related with certain core virtues such as sincerity. However, some virtues can disappear due to social change and changed relations. So, the loyalty of a knight as a king's champion in the middle ages either no longer exists or has been flattened out into that of employee to employer (or firm) or been replaced by the friendship of citizen to citizen.

Most importantly, the core virtues and relations should remain flexible to contextual need. Even within the same tradition, the emphasis should lie more on

⁵²³ In *Republic* I, he represents for Plato the ordinary (rich) man's view.

⁵²⁴ David I. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius*, 110-114.

keeping the spirit of the virtue through the changes of time rather than on the outward form of virtue. For example, Confucian filial piety can be recognized in modern Eastern society more by its spirit than in the precise form prescribed by Confucius. However much some recognizable form may be important to preserving the spirit, holding on rigidly to a specific form can distort the spirit. Therefore, if we are to keep the spirit alive, it must be allowed to change form. Overconcern about the form may make us lose the spirit of the virtues. Virtues should be reinterpreted and re-organized according to time and place.

For the core social relations, Confucius chooses the father-son relation as the model of organic form, while Aristotle's social nexus is friendship. But, in another society, proper human relations might be modeled on another relation. For example, in a modern society, neither Confucian filial piety nor Aristotelian friendship might be wholly appropriate. No officials will be excused for three years to mourn their deceased parents and no similar extreme expressions will be regarded as appropriate. We need new social structures suited to our own circumstances. It can be done either by endowing new meaning to relations within the old model, or by changing the model itself. For example, for modern Confucians, the father-son relation can become more flattened, i.e., less severely hierarchical or replaced by something closer to the model Aristotle had of the husband-wife relation.

In order to show that the traditional concept of virtue offers a viable way to approach moral theory, we have show how a unified set of virtues embodied in

character can guide action. By considering the classical traditions of two cultures as far apart as Greece and China, we have seen that what is required to be a virtuous person can both differ across time and place and yet have an important underlying commonality. This commonality does not render the two traditions 'commensurable' in the sense that we can say which is right (true) and which is wrong (false). But we have by comparing them, shown how they are comparable and seen where each tradition might look to the other as a model of how to further complete its own conception of human excellence -- the Confucian by extending its practices of deliberation, the Aristotelian by close attention to the practices everyday interaction.

Contemporary moral theorists have returned to the consideration of virtues because doing so allows us to consider the question what we should become alongside the question what we should do. Virtue theories such as those of Aristotle and Confucius start from the fact that human beings are conditioned and lead us to confront a choice of who we should become and what kind of society we should work toward constructing. What is the most precious thing in us is what we are both with -- our possibilities -- but they are not realized until we achieve them. A virtue is a power which enables us to achieve the best of ourselves. A virtue is the continuous human effort to live well [and recognizing what we are recognizing that this is the effort to live well] with others.

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