

Ren as the Third Life

It is a common understanding that one of the core concepts of the *Analects* is *ren*. Yet it is not easy to come up with a handy definition of *ren* as discussed in the *Analects*. The difficulty stems from the fact that Confucius did not give a clear-cut definition of *ren* and instead mentioned it here and there in fragmented fashion in the *Analects*. This difficulty became ever more serious as the readers of the Confucian literature attempted to grasp some consistent meaning out of the heterogeneous, fragmentary words of Confucius. Captured by the image or prejudice of Confucius as a “great sage,” the general reader presumes that there must be a logically coherent set of meanings among such fragmentary words. This is where we fail to obtain the true meanings and implications of *ren*.

In order to overcome this habitual thinking, among all things we need to realize that there is no consistent definition or meaning of *ren* in Confucius’ thought. It is important to realize that *ren* is not supposed to be assigned a particular consistent definition if we recall Confucius’ animistic views of life, society, and the world. Logically speaking, the animistic worldview cannot offer any universal, deductive, and consistent definition of life, let alone *ren*.

Ren becomes manifest and realized in coincidental and unintended ways. This is why disciples of Confucius always wanted to ask about *ren* while Confucius did not want to discuss it at great length. If there were any clear definition of *ren*, Confucius could lay it out once and for all, instead of taking up the topic time and again with his disciples. The very ambiguity of *ren* led Confucius to characterize it as something unclear, situational, and random, which his disciples were not up to swallowing.

For example, when Confucius says

克己復禮爲仁。

He who can himself submit to ritual is Good.⁶ (12.1)

we should not conceive of this as a general definition of *ren*. This sentence means that if we can ourselves submit to ritual, there might appear an accidental life called *ren*. *Ren* is coincidental rather than entirely accidental. There is regularity and predictability to some extent; *ren* may or may not materialize according to a gentleman’s experiences and intentions. In order to make certain this regularity and predictability, people should learn and practice *li* 禮 (ritual) as the reinforcing system for promoting the status of their being.

When Fan Chi 樊遲 asked about *ren* (12.22), Confucius answered that it is “to love men” (樊遲問仁、子曰愛人). However, this should not be considered anything close to a definition. Confucius’ answer should not read as “To

love men is *ren*.” Instead, when he provided this answer, he might have meant that when a gentleman loves men, a new form of life-like between-ness called *ren* might appear in that particular coincidental interface between the gentleman and the men.

But we need to be reminded of the matter of regularity. When the gentleman loves a human, *ren* might materialize, but we do not definitely know whether or not *ren* materializes at each interface between the gentleman and the human.

When Confucius said “He who can himself submit to ritual is *ren*” to Yan Hui 顏回 and “to love men” to Fan Chi, he might have thought that *ren* would appear only to some specific persons under some specific situations. And all these incidents of *ren* must be recognized from shared subjective perspectives. This explains why there exists a variety of meanings and connotations of *ren*.

Having discussed the preceding, we can understand that *ren* is neither benevolence nor “human-heartedness” (as in Fung Yu-lan),⁷ nor is it morality. Instead, it is life. To be more precise, *ren* represents a form of life in the way it involves the interface and interrelatedness of social entities. In other words, it is the life of between-ness, which is anchored in the power of inter-entity consciousness.

Life and Time

Ren is not eternal. It can be momentary, transitory, and ephemeral, because it is the third life. This is why Confucius thought that timing was the most important factor for the gentleman:

子曰、學而時習之、不亦說乎、有朋自遠方來、不亦樂乎、人不知而不慍、不亦君子乎。

The Master said, To learn and at due times to repeat what one has learnt, is that not after all a pleasure? That friends should come to one from afar, is this not after all delightful? To remain unsoured even though one's merits are unrecognized by others, is that not after all what is expected of a gentleman?⁸ (1.1)

The key word in this chapter is “time.” The Master did not say “To learn and to repeat what one has learnt”; he said “To learn and at due times to repeat.” Here, the phrase “at due times” is not to mean some points in time where some duty or obligation is implied. The repeating could be incidental; yet the final outcomes of the unplanned or unintended incidents would prove that the legitimate timing had been exercised. A gentleman neither prepares nor plans nor

aims at a certain time deliberately. Instead he is cultivated to grope for the very best moments, which appears to be coincidental to the beholders.

However, we should be cautious about the “coincidental” nature of this revelation. It is because a lot of practice, training, and rehearsal are demanded for one to be able to catch the perfect timing. It is not guesswork. It is not a deliberate work either. In a natural stream of consciousness, a gentleman gets to catch the moment accurately as though he had planned it perfectly. This is the very meaning of “at due times.” And it is at this very moment that the third life materializes in the form of pleasure and benefits all members of the group.

In a similar vein, the phrase “有朋自遠方來” should not be read as “from afar (遠方) friends come.” Instead we should read it as “from afar (遠) at the very right moment (方) friends come.” The reason is that Confucius is talking about timing here, too. He says here that at the very moment that friends come from afar, the third life, paraphrased as “delight,” appears between the two persons. The timing may look coincidental, but the two true gentleman friends realize that the right timing is a manifestation of their shared perception.

From this animistic point of view, we can read the third sentence as follows: At the very moment when one remains unsoured (or not disappointed) even though his merits are unrecognized, the third life appears in the form of gentleman-ness.

A logical corollary is that the gentleman here is not a specific object that has an unchanging identity; it rather is a perception or recognition. The gentleman here implies a phenomenon or incident that can enlighten the life, and, for him to do so, timing is crucial. Even if the gentleman can enlighten life once, we should not presume that his gentleman-ness might last forever. In the next moment he can become the small man since the gentleman-ness does not stand for an unchanging, constant entity but a plastic, performative agency.

The following chapter proposes quite a challenge in figuring out the animistic nature of Confucius’ writing:

色斯舉矣、翔而後集、曰、山梁雌雉、時哉、時哉、子路共之、三嗅而作。

[The gentleman] rises and goes at the first sign, and does not “settle until he has hovered.” (A song) says: The hen-pheasant of the hill-bridge, Knows how to bide its time! Bide its time! When Tzu-lu made it an offering, it sniffed three times before it rose.⁹ (10.18)

It is hard to comprehend this chapter clearly unless we understand the special importance of timing in Confucius’ thinking. In my animistic point of view, this chapter must be interpreted as follows.

When Confucius and his disciples went on a journey, a hen-pheasant fly-

ing in the atmosphere about them rose and settled on a tree after hovering for a while. The Master said, “The hen-pheasant of the hill-bridge knows the time, it knows the time!” After listening to these words, Zi Lu (Tzu-lu) 子路 gave food to it, but the bird only sniffed three times and rose.

Confucius praised the hen-pheasant because it knew the timing. This statement corresponds completely to the opening chapter of the *Analects*. In the beginning there is the Chinese character *xi* 翬, which portrays a young bird flapping its wings trying to fly.

Now in the last chapter of Book 10 (actually this book was the last volume of the ancient version of the *Analects*), this young bird has become the hen-pheasant (the gentleman) and is flying high (*xiang* 翔) after a lot of learning, practice, and experience in order to give life to everything. In the beginning, a little infant bird did practice the third life awkwardly, but through a long process of training it became able to display the third life without rational reflective knowledge. This is why Confucius emphasized what has happened by yelling out “Timing, Timing!”

That the hen-pheasant sniffed three times at the food Zi Lu gave it and then rose in fact represents the practice of ritual (*li*). Book 10 is a textbook description of Confucius’ daily demeanors and bearings. The compiler of this book wanted to say that every move Confucius made represents the *ren* that gives life to everything. Acquiring the life of *li*, *ren*, and being a gentleman, the hen-pheasant now bows down low three times following the traditional ritual, as described in detail here:

(君召使擯、色勃如也、足躩如也): 揖所與立、左右其手、衣前後襜如也、趨進翼如也。

(An extremely elegant bird emerged as the gentleman here as though): “When saluting his (her) colleagues he (she) passes his (her) right hand (wing) to the left, letting his (her) robe (tail feathers) hang down in front and behind; and as he (she) advances with quickened step, his (her) attitude is one of majestic dignity.”¹⁰ (10.3)

And it is as though the bird has gracefully soared high up into the sky when Confucius says,

(賓退、必復命曰、) 賓不顧矣。

“The guest is no longer looking back.”¹¹ (10.3)

In all these situations, time and life are closely interrelated, for the third life emerges always “at due times.” Confucius puts emphasis on timing in the daily practice of letting the third life emerge in the community.

Rising of the Second Life

This specific worldview of Confucius is based on a particular perspective on life. It recognizes life as a phenomenon that only occurs in a particular community or in a group that shares feelings, and not as a universal phenomenon. This is an animistic worldview in itself. Whether a stone or a tree is living or not is not to be decided deductively by a universal standard. It should be decided inductively by the collective feelings of the people or multitude that observe and listen to the stone or the tree.

However, this animistic worldview had been thoroughly destroyed in the process of dissolution of the traditional society while a powerful empire with a centralized government was establishing itself in the post-Confucian era, especially during the Zhanguo 戰國 (Warring States) period.

The global powers detested the old-fashioned animistic worldview of Confucius and adopted the opposite side's universal and shamanistic worldview. This saga is depicted in the genealogy from the Daoists to Mencius to Xun Zi 荀子 of the Legalist school. Daoists were a philosophical group who thought that it was not animistic life but Dao, the ultimate spiritual being, that was the ruler of the universe. Since Dao is universal, everything derives from and goes back to it; there are no mediating mechanisms such as customs, rules, or cultures between Dao and individual things. This completely brand-new school of thought was intimately understood in particular by the newly emerging global powers, whose intention was to destroy the old clan societies.

The following episode from Book 18 provides a vivid description of the nuanced relationship that Confucius and the early Daoists had with each other.

長沮桀溺耦而耕、孔子過之、使子路問津焉、長沮曰、夫執輿者爲誰、子路曰、爲孔丘、曰、是魯孔丘與、對曰是也、曰是知津矣、問於桀溺、桀溺曰、子爲誰、曰爲仲由、曰是魯孔丘之徒與、對曰、然、曰滔滔者天下皆是也、而誰以易之、且而與其從辟人之士也、豈若從辟世之士哉、耰而不輟、子路行以告、夫子憮然曰、鳥獸不可與同群也、吾非斯人之徒與而誰與、天下有道、丘不與易也。

Ch'ang-chu and Chieh-ni were working as plough-mates together. Master K'ung, happening to pass that way, told Tzu-lu to go and ask them where the river could be forded.

Ch'ang-chu: Who is it for whom you are driving?

Tzu-lu: For K'ung Ch'iu.

Ch'ang-chu: What, K'ung Ch'iu of Lu?

Tzu-lu: Yes, he.

Ch'ang-chu: In that case he already knows where the ford is.

Tzu-lu then asked Chieh-ni.

Chieh-ni: Who are you?

Tzu-lu: I am Tzu-lu.

Chieh-ni: You are a follower of K'ung Ch'iu of Lu, are you not?

Tzu-lu: That is so.

Chieh-ni: Under Heaven there is none that is not swept along by the same flood. Such is the world and who can change it? As for you, instead of following one who flees from this man and that, you would do better to follow one who shuns this whole generation of men.

And with that he went on covering the seed. Tzu-lu went and told his master, who said ruefully, One cannot herd with birds and beasts. If I am not to be a man among other men, then what am I to be? If the Way prevailed under Heaven, I should not be trying to alter things.¹² (18.6)

This chapter introduces the picture of the primitive Daoists, Chang Ju (Ch'ang-chu) and Jie Ni (Chieh-ni), who were not mere hermits. They were ploughing their field without exchanging words. Daoists did not need words, while Confucius' group always needed a lot of words to communicate with each other. Nevertheless, Chang Ju and Jie Ni were not ignorant men; they knew everything in the world including the fact that Confucius and his disciples would come to them on that day. Since they always had the newest information concerning the whole world through the spiritualistic network of primitive Daoists, the meeting between them and Confucius was in fact not at all coincidental, and there seemed to be no surprise in this seemingly "accidental" encounter. The Daoists had all the information even though they hardly move around.

Chang Ju and Jie Ni were not perfect Daoists, but they understood the world in terms of universal spirituality and wanted to unite themselves to the One, escaping from an artificially segmented society.

This episode provides a window through which we can look at a situation where Confucius and his disciples were looking for the "right path" in a disorderly world. But from the perspective of Chang Ju and Jie Ni, Confucius' worldview was completely wrong. The reason is as follows. Confucius thought that he was going to cross over to a certain land when he came to a river, and he looked for a ford. This turned out to be a perfectly wrong understanding of the world. At the time, there was no land at all in the eyes of Chang Ju and Jie Ni. Everywhere the country was under water, and no one could distinguish land from river. So it was futile to look for a ford. Jie Ni said, "Under Heaven there is

none that is not swept along by the same flood. Such is the world and who can change it?" This deductive recognition is the perfect expression of the primitive Daoist and spiritualist worldview. Everyone was drowning in the same moving flood of universal water, but no one could realize this except for the believer in the second life.

From Mencius to Neo-Confucianism

Mencius is widely believed to have been a successor of Confucius. However, he may in fact have been influenced by primitive Daoists and did bring about great changes in Confucianism. Mencius discarded the inductive methodology of Confucius and instead developed boldly the deductive methodology learned from primitive Daoists.

Mencius intended to destroy the profit-oriented (*li* 利) worldview of the hegemony-seeking global powers through righteousness (*yi* 義). Needless to say he was Confucian in this regard, but his perception of life was completely different from that of Confucius. Mencius might have been a successor to the Daoist concept of life, which approaches life in terms of spiritual matter (*qi* 氣). As I have mentioned, this is a typically spiritualistic worldview that believes all things in the universe are made of *qi*.

Confucius had never explained human nature by employing universalistic or deductive discourses. But Mencius explained it deductively in terms of universal morality and the metaphor of moving water spreading all over the world. This indicates a stark difference between the two thinkers.

After Mencius, Confucius' animistic notion of life on the one hand and the spiritual notion of life by Daoists and Mencius on the other came to be in competition with each other. Over the course of time Confucius' out-of-fashion notion of animistic life was forgotten, and his words in the *Analects* became incomprehensible all too soon. In this way, the interpretations of the *Analects* have all become out of focus because of their tendency to understand Confucius in terms of the second life. Thus, Confucius became a spiritual Divine Sage with absolute perfection.

The complete version of the notion of spiritual life in Chinese philosophy lies in Neo-Confucianism. According to the Neo-Confucian worldview, animism or the third life ought to be held in disdain as a lower-level or "vulgar" notion of life. The thorough extermination of the animistic way of thinking from the public sphere in China and Korea can be understood as a Neo-Confucian crusade in the name of civilization.

On the other hand, the animistic worldview was well preserved in a country that was relatively less civilized, that remained "barbaric" from a Neo-Confucian point of view, and that lacked a strong, centralized governing authority: Japan.

This offers a sharp contrast with China and Korea, where strongly centralized power existed that was highly civilized from the Neo-Confucian point of view. Japanese *waka* 和歌 and *haiku* 俳句 are just two illustrations of the animistic form of artistic expression that serves to realize and give form to the ephemeral third life.

The Japanese cherish the momentary aura in these forms of literature and strive to grasp the ephemeral yet eternal quality of “life” (*inochi* いのち) that is inherent in them. Japanese Shintoism is also animistic in its worldview and was not absorbed into shamanism or spiritual religion or formal thought until the Meiji era. The reason is that “vulgar” animism had widely penetrated to the far corners of the country, and the love of the Japanese for the *Analects* may be due to the very animistic atmosphere of the literature, instead of the spiritualism emphasized by a moralistic Neo-Confucianism that deviated from the original Confucian teachings.

Notes

1. In this chapter “animism” will be taking on a new meaning, to be elaborated below.
2. Kanaya Osamu 金谷治, trans., *Rongo* 論語 (*Analects*), Waidoban Iwanami Bunko series (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001), p. 286.
3. Arthur Waley, trans. and annot., *The Analects of Confucius* (New York: Random House, 1989), p. 177.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
7. Fung Yu-lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Derk Bodde (New York: Free Press, 1976), p. 42.
8. Waley, *Analects of Confucius*, p. 83.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 151–152. Where Chinese personal names occur in passages that are quoted from Waley’s translation, his original Wade-Giles romanization has been retained.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 146. I have inserted the parenthetical (her), (she), and so forth in order to explain the actions of the hen-pheasant.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 219–220. There are no line breaks in the original translation by Arthur Waley. I have rewritten this passage in a playscript style for readability.

CHAPTER 9

The Noble Person and the Revolutionary

Living with Confucian Values in Contemporary Vietnam

NGUYEN Nam

AT A CONFERENCE in Hanoi in 2012 on research methods for studies on Confucianism, a couple of papers were presented on President Hồ Chí Minh and Confucian teachings. During the discussion on this topic, a participant brought to the audience's attention the case of the well-known medical doctor and political activist Nguyễn Khắc Viện, who was seriously criticized in North Vietnam in the 1960s for figuring out, in an essay, Confucian elements in Hồ Chí Minh's thought. Rereading Viện's essay, titled "Confucianism and Marxism in Vietnam," together with his notes added to the text later in 1984, we can retrieve some traces of a downturn period for Confucianism in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). Examining how the essay and its author have been treated throughout different phases of recent history, we can see the changing attitudes toward Confucianism, the opposing public points of view on it as part of socialist leadership, and the diverse standpoints of Vietnamese intellectuals under the influence of prevalent sociopolitical discourses.

Equally interesting is Nguyễn Khắc Viện's analysis of passages cited from Hồ Chí Minh's handbook *Let's Change Our Methods of Work*. The citations comprise a set of moral values put under the name of "Revolutionary Virtues," and they are unquestionably the modifications of Confucian cardinal moralities. Thus, these "revolutionary virtues" epitomize the revolutionization of Confucian pivotal virtues, which makes them more effective for and suitable to new revolutionary tasks. Through Hồ Chí Minh's revolutionization of Confucian moral values, it is not hard to see an enduring of Confucianism in

his ideological foundation, and this is a universal feature shared by East Asian leaders, no matter which ideology they are pursuing. Furthermore, the core of Confucian virtues remains as a powerful force to unite people around a leadership that skillfully employs it in East Asian society. All these arguments will be justified through the scrutiny of Hồ Chí Minh's Confucian foundation and his cardinal revolutionary moral values as explained in *Let's Change Our Methods of Work*.

Introductory Remarks

In 1962, the French journal *La Pensée*, a quarterly review of “modern rationalism” founded in Paris, published a feature essay titled “Confucianisme et Marxisme au Vietnam” (Confucianism and Marxism in Vietnam) (*La Pensée*, no. 105 [October 1962]) by Vietnamese pediatrician and political activist Nguyễn Khắc Viện (1913–1997). It was later translated into English in 1974,¹ and subsequently became Viện's most widely read work. Ironically, however, it was not available in Vietnamese translation until 1993, more than three decades after its initial publication² and about seven years after the implementation of Đổi Mới (Renovation) policy in Vietnam.³ The 1993 Vietnamese edition included a short but significant note from the translators, who observed that the essay “has been translated into many languages. That year [1962], the Sự Thật Publishing House⁴ in Hanoi translated it into Vietnamese, but did not publish it.”⁵ Although the translators offered no explanation for the three-decade delay in publication, Nguyễn Khắc Viện himself offered a few hints in an appendix to the 1993 volume. The appendix, which Viện had drafted during the 1980s, proposed “to review a few crucial points from the previous essay before discussing other issues.” Viện first restated the main argument that he had advanced in 1962, and acknowledged that his thesis had provoked controversy:

Confucianism paved the way with auspicious conditions for the introduction of Marxism [into Vietnam]. This is an argument that has caused many “waves and winds.” The main argument is that unlike other religions, [the aim of] Confucianism is to direct human beings' thought completely into social life; therefore it stands on the same page with Marxists. If we are able to convince a Confucian that Marxism can realize all the social ideals that he has ever thought of, this Confucian should be willing to decline Confucianism and accept Marxism. Meanwhile, socially persuading a Christian, a Buddhist, or a Muslim remains insufficient, because persuasion cannot provide them with an answer about the transcendental afterlife. Like Marxists, Confucians do not raise such a question.⁶

As a way of defending his argument, Viện identified two main historical aspects of Confucian thought. The first and most foundational aspect was the essentially humane quality of Confucianism, which emphasized the ideal of human social improvement. The second and far less appealing aspect of Confucianism had to do with its recasting as a bureaucratic ideology of governance. Viện summed up this difference as follows: “one is the mandarin’s Confucianism, and the other the scholar’s.” According to Viện, the first aspect of Confucianism—its fundamental humanity—was particularly apparent in the Confucian background of Communist Party founder Hồ Chí Minh. Viện argued that this claim regarding Hồ’s affinity for Confucianism had been the main reason that his essay had not previously been published in Vietnam.

Due to their lack of awareness of these two trends, a number of people have blotted out the historical role of Confucianism, upholding that since its beginning, Confucianism has only played a negative role antithetical to the so-called folk-thought. Armed as these people are with such a prejudice, whenever they hear someone asserting the proximity between Confucianism and Marxism, or, more seriously, mentioning some Confucian elements in President Hồ’s thought, they will treat [these allegations] as “heresies” or “insubordinations.”

To back up his claims about Hồ’s embrace of Confucianism, Nguyễn Khắc Viện also cited at length a few passages from a 1948 handbook authored by Hồ titled *Sửa đổi lề lối làm việc* (Let’s change our methods of work). In this text, Hồ undertook to transform pivotal Confucian values into revolutionary moral concepts. An investigation of Viện’s essay, coupled with an analysis of Hồ’s handbook, reveals some of the ways in which Vietnamese intellectuals and political elites undertook to adapt core elements of Confucian morality into a revolutionary ethical system.

Nguyễn Khắc Viện and His Essay

According to the autobiographical account in his book *Đạo và đời* (The way and life), Nguyễn Khắc Viện was born into “a laureate family.”⁷ His father Nguyễn Khắc Niêm (1889–1954) passed the imperial examination at a very young age in 1907, with the title of Metropolitan Graduate with Honors, and then served as a mandarin of the Nguyễn dynasty, but did not want his son to follow in his footsteps. Viện was sent to a Franco-Vietnamese elementary school, and later attended high school in Vinh, Huế, and Hanoi. After studying in Hanoi’s Medical School for three years (1934–1937), Viện continued his study in Paris. Having earned his medical degrees in pediatrics and tropical diseases in 1940 and 1941, respectively, he became active in the politics of the overseas Vietnamese community in France. Suffering from tuberculosis, Viện had to undergo seven surgeries between 1943 and 1948: eight of his ribs,

the entirety of his right lung, and one-third of his left lung were removed, and doctors warned him that he had at most two years to live. But instead of surrendering to this miserable fate, Viện consulted various “books on Eastern and Western philosophies,” and finally adopted the technique of “breathing with the stomach” as a treatment for his ailments. In 1949, as Viện was recovering, he joined the French Communist Party. This was a significant political landmark in Nguyễn Khắc Viện’s life, and he would later describe himself as “rooted in Confucianism but equipped with [the] experimental science that is liberal democracy and Marxism.”⁸

As the secretary general and Communist Party secretary of the Overseas Vietnamese Federation in France from 1952 to 1963, Nguyễn Khắc Viện was a leader of the Vietnamese liberation movement in France, and contributed to notable French journals such as *La Pensée*, *La Nouvelle critique*, *Démocratie nouvelle*, and *Europe*. His essay “Confucianism and Marxism in Vietnam” was written during this time, coincident with the construction of “the initial foundation of socialism” in North Vietnam and “the struggle against [the] U.S. neo-colonialism regime” in South Vietnam.⁹ Recalling the causes and conditions of his essay’s composition, Viện writes:

On the occasion of a discussion with writer Albert Camus, I raised the question on the relationship between Confucianism and Marxism in Vietnam. I presented a few arguments. First, Confucianism actually had two trends; one was humane/anthropocentric [*nhân bản* 人本], and the other feudal [*phong kiến* 封建]. Second, although differing from one another, Marxism and Confucianism share a common point [in] that [each] directs human thought toward the improvement of social organization, and the construction of relationships among people, but makes no claims about where the soul goes after death, whether [to] heaven or hell. Hence, if persuaded, those who follow Confucian teaching can accept Marxism. Based on these observations, I wrote an essay printed in the journal *La Pensée* in 1962. This work received a lot of attention from the public within and outside Vietnam because the way it posed questions was not as rigidly dogmatic as the style favored by many Party authors during that period. Some brothers from Sự Thật [“Truth”] Publishing House also suggested that the work be translated and published, but they could not obtain permission and had to abandon the idea.¹⁰

In addition to reiterating his main point about the basic compatibility of Confucianism and Marxism, Nguyễn Khắc Viện also specified the adaptability and relevance of Confucianism in a new society founded on Marxist philosophy. Trained with the anthropocentric and collectivistic spirit of Confucian-

ism, Vietnamese Confucian scholars, according to Viện, saw no conflict in their transition from the teaching of Confucius to the doctrine of Karl Marx. Viện's bifurcation of Confucianism into "humane/anthropocentric" versus "feudal" traditions was designed to legitimate it in the new socialist Vietnam. Yet it was the very distinctiveness of the essay's claims that had triggered the negative reactions against it.

Due to his antiwar activities, Nguyễn Khắc Viện was expelled from France and returned to Vietnam in 1963. Around the same time, the Ninth Plenum of the Vietnam Worker's Party passed a Resolution on "The International Situation and the Party's International Duties," which called on the Party to fight against opportunism, revisionism, dogmatism, and sectarianism.¹¹ Viện later described the political atmosphere in North Vietnam at that time as fraught with tension and suspicion:

When I returned [to Vietnam], people in the country were conducting a course on learning Resolution Nine against revisionism. Since I had just come back, I did not yet fully understand the Party's internal situation. [The transfer of] my Party membership was also not yet accepted. [Vietnamese] members of the French Communist Party who had returned to Vietnam before 1960 only needed to complete a couple of formalities, and quickly joined the Vietnamese Party. However, as there occurred the problem of fighting against "revisionists" starting from 1960, European parties were regarded as "revisionist," and consequently Party members coming home from European countries had to endure a trial period [to verify if they were qualified to join the Vietnamese Communist Party]. The political situation of 1963 was truly quite complicated.¹²

Although Nguyễn Khắc Viện did not explicitly link the suppression of the Vietnamese version of his essay to the 1960s domestic context in North Vietnam, such a political situation was evidently unfavorable for the publication of his work.¹³

After his return, Viện eventually gained admission to the Party and was placed in charge of the Foreign Language Publishing House in Hanoi, where he became "an interpreter of Vietnamese history, culture, and the Vietnamese struggle to the many intellectuals, militants, and journalists sympathetic to Vietnam who visited Hanoi during the Vietnam War, from 1965 to 1975." In this role, he was "one of the Vietnamese scholars who did most to interpret Vietnam for the West."¹⁴ Although he rejoiced at the end of the war and the reunification of the country in 1975, Viện remained critical of whatever was detrimental to the development of the nation. During the period from 1976 to 1993, he submitted about thirty recommendations, comments, and letters discussing various

critical issues of the country and calling for reforms to leaders of the Party, the National Assembly, and the Government. These documents were not released to the public at the time, and only a portion of them was recently published.¹⁵ In 1992, in keeping with the implementation of the *Đổi mới* policy, the Party's General Secretary Đỗ Mười had several meetings with various audiences, assuring them that the Party would welcome divergent ideas from the people.¹⁶ It is probably not coincidental that in the following year, 1993, Thế Giới Publishers (formerly Viện's Foreign Language Publishing House) printed the Vietnamese translation of his essay together with some of his other writings in a book titled *Bàn về đạo Nho* (On Confucianism).

The publication of Nguyễn Khắc Viện's book *On Confucianism* in 1993 should be examined in relation to the broader reappraisal of Confucianism in connection with its alleged contribution to the rise of the "Four Asian Tigers" (alternatively, "Four Asian Little Dragons")—Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan. As early as 1974, Edwin O. Reischauer attributed the economic success of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore to a number of key traits easily linked to Confucian values.¹⁷ In his "1984's Supplemental Notes," Viện mentioned *en passant* that "a Japanese scholar¹⁸ has also formed the argument that Confucianism has helped nations like Japan, Taiwan, [and] Korea easily move toward modernity."¹⁹ In the same vein as these observations, *Le Nouveau monde sinisé* (The new sinicized world) by French scholar Léon Vandermeersch was translated into Vietnamese in 1992, reconfirming the appreciation of Confucianism within an Asian framework.²⁰ More than thirty years after he first wrote it, Viện's essay seemed to be reaching Vietnamese readers at a propitious moment. Four years later, in 1997, its author passed away at the age of eighty-four.

In a section of the 1962 essay called "Confucians and Marxists," Nguyễn Khắc Viện painted a picture of Vietnam's first Marxists. In most cases, these revolutionaries were "petty intellectuals," educated in the Franco-Vietnamese education system but "forced to end their studies before taking their baccalaureate exams." In other cases, they were "village teachers, often at private schools, just like the scholars of old."²¹ Having grown up in the Confucian tradition, these Vietnamese Marxist cadres often appreciated and integrated Confucian principles of political morality into their revolutionary lives:

The notion that leaders should exemplify high moral standards was deeply engrained in Confucian countries... [Today's Marxists] still recite Confucian sayings: "Do not be corrupted by wealth," "Do not succumb in the face of adversity," "Do not bow your head before demonstrations of force."²²

To support this contention, Viện quoted long passages from a handbook called *Sửa đổi lề lối làm việc* (Let's change our methods of work) that was employed as a main material for the Party's cadre training during the national liberation war in the late 1940s. Although Viện did not mention the identity of the writer of the handbook, Hồ Chí Minh (under the pen name of X.Y.Z.) is widely known to have been its author. And even though the reason why the author's name is omitted remains unknown, the cited passages in Viện's essay clearly showed how Hồ had transformed pivotal Confucian moral values into key virtues required for the revolutionary. Before examining their transformation in detail, let us do a quick review of Hồ Chí Minh's attitude toward Confucianism.

The Issue of the Noble Man and the Revolutionary

A number of Vietnamese scholars have written about Hồ Chí Minh and Confucianism since the 1990s.²³ The opening of a 1993 essay titled "Nguyễn Ái Quốc—Hồ Chí Minh với Nho giáo" (Nguyễn Ái Quốc—[also known as] Hồ Chí Minh and Confucianism) by Nguyễn Đình Chú points out that

There exists something strange in the following case: Confucianism had had a predestined affinity with Nguyễn Ái Quốc since his childhood, and followed Hồ Chí Minh to the end of his life; and although the discipline "Hồ Chí Minh Studies" was founded and has been developing for about thirty years, the recognition of Confucian influence on Nguyễn Ái Quốc—Hồ Chí Minh—was officially promoted only three years ago (1990), on the occasion of the commemoration of the centenary of his birth. Perhaps the title of "Cultural Personality" that the world offered him on the occasion of this commemoration²⁴ plus the atmosphere of renovation started after the Sixth National Plenum of the Communist Party of Vietnam have helped us to overcome that abnormal thing.²⁵

The Confucian background of Hồ Chí Minh has recently been lauded as a key part of his commitment to patriotic tradition. According to an official biography of Hồ Chí Minh (announced on the website of the Ho Chi Minh Museum), Hồ "was born into a *family of patriotic Confucian scholars*, and grew up in a locality that had a patriotic tradition of valorous fighting against aggression."²⁶ Thus, we may wonder what Hồ Chí Minh himself thought of Confucianism.

In a conversation with Russian poet and essayist Osip E. Mandelstam (1891–1938) in Moscow in 1923, Nguyễn Ái Quốc (the future Hồ Chí Minh) offered an understanding of Confucianism framed within a Vietnamese context:

I was born into a Vietnamese Confucian family. . . . The youth from those families often studied Confucianism. Comrade, you must know that Confucianism is not a religion but a science of moral experience and conduct. Based on this foundation, one puts forward the notion of the “Great Unity.”²⁷

Mandelstam recorded these words in an interview-like essay under the title “Visiting an International Communist Warrior—Nguyễn Ái Quốc.” For Mandelstam, the view of Confucianism as “a science of moral experience and conduct” plus the Confucian goal of the “Great Unity” in Nguyễn Ái Quốc’s narrative were highly suitable to communist ideals.

Hồ Chí Minh regarded Confucianism as part of his life. In a speech presented at the ceremony to celebrate the National Unity Front (Liên hiệp quốc gia) organized by the Buddhist Association for National Salvation (Hội Phật giáo cứu quốc) on January 5, 1946, Hồ claimed that “As Buddhists believe in Buddha, [and] Christians believe in God, *we believe in the teaching of Confucius*. Those are the most venerated to whom we entrust.”²⁸ Later, during an interview with Vasudev Rao of Reuters in May 1947, when asked whether Hồ Chí Minh’s government would include members of all social classes and parties in order to reach a political solution for a Vietnamese–French relationship, Hồ asserted that “*Hồ Chí Minh may pursue Marxism, or follow Confucianism*, but the Vietnamese government still comprises representatives of all parties and even those who belong to no party at all.”²⁹

Among the extant writings collected in *Hồ Chí Minh: The Complete Works* (*Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập*), there survives a short article titled “Confucius,” published in 1927.³⁰ This article expressed Hồ’s reaction to the Chinese Nationalist Government’s decision “to henceforth abolish all ceremonies commemorating Confucius as well as projected expenses for those rituals, and to use all temples of Confucius as public schools.” Hồ’s reaction in this particular case was based not only on his political standpoint, but also on his general understanding of Confucius and Confucianism. According to the article, the Chinese Nationalist Government’s official order was issued on February 15, 1927.³¹ Hồ Chí Minh (also known as Ly Thuy around that time) wrote the article in Guangzhou—the former seat of the Nationalist Government, and commented on the abolition of the ceremonial ritual clearly from a communist perspective. The Nationalist Government’s order discussed in Hồ’s article was the beginning of an ideological policy that would be widespread in China in the next few years, pinpointing Confucius’ political shortcomings, and reevaluating the contributions of Confucianism to the development of China through history.³² Hồ’s response to this policy was decidedly mixed. While he seemed prepared to accept the abolition

of Confucianism as a political doctrine, he argued that it could and should be preserved as a system of moral values:

With the abolition of rituals commemorating Confucius, the Chinese government has dropped an old institution that goes against the spirit of democracy. For us, the Vietnamese, let us perfect ourselves spiritually by reading Confucius' works, and revolutionarily reading Lenin's works is a must.³³

Eighteen years later, as the provisional president of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Hồ Chí Minh had the chance to formally pay respect to Confucius and his teaching in a revolutionary spirit and style. As the head of the new state, standing against colonialism and feudalism, in David Marr's words "Hồ was quite selective when it came to participation in commemorations, reflecting the national persona he was crafting for himself."³⁴ Nonetheless, on October 21, 1945, President Hồ invited the former emperor, Bảo Đại, who had previously announced his abdication, and was currently serving as a "Supreme Adviser" to the new DRV, to accompany him to Hanoi's Giám Temple (also known as the Temple of Literature, dedicated to Confucius) and attend the Autumn Ritual commemorating the Sage. It was worth mentioning that not only Vietnamese government officers but also high-ranking Chinese officials took part in this annual commemoration. It was also noteworthy that Hồ Chí Minh played the role of the ritual host, and that the commemoration "was carried out with a specifically new spirit" through several reformed rituals, reflecting the "breaking with bad feudal practices to follow the path of revolutionary democracy."³⁵

The fusion of Confucian and revolutionary values was prevalent indeed during the early years of the DRV. Perhaps the best evidence of this appears in the reworking of the concept of "noble person" (*junzi/quân tử* 君子) in official DRV discourse. Only about three weeks after the commemoration of Confucius hosted by President Hồ, the DRV's first university opened in Hanoi. As the General Director of the Higher Education Department and the Director of the École française d'Extrême-Orient, Professor Nguyễn Văn Huyền delivered the opening speech at the university's inauguration in the presence of President Hồ. Emphasizing the university's responsibility to train a new generation of Vietnamese intellectuals, Nguyễn Văn Huyền announced:

We all feel responsible in training a number of people who possess good morals and the capability to guide the masses. Should you allow me to employ an ancient term with its ancient connotations from an Eastern civilization, [these people are] *quân tử*, who, on the one hand, know how to hone their knowledge to be able to evaluate any force of civilization,

and who, on the other hand, also apprehend how to process practically so that they can apply their wisdom in life, raising the national flag together with their brothers, sisters, and compatriots of different professions, even in thunderous storms, and in all international meetings on culture built on the glorious foundation of peace, justice, liberty, happiness, and universal love of human beings in the future.³⁶

The *quân tử* (noble person) in this speech implicitly carried on the traditional Confucian values, yet was also a blend of both nationalism and internationalism. Although sometimes overlooked, the notion of the “noble person” always serves as the foundation for the construction of the ideal personality (colored with a specific political ideology) in countries influenced by Confucian culture. In his essay, Nguyễn Khắc Viện portrayed Hồ Chí Minh as “a Confucian scholar who changed from one philosophy to another,”³⁷ and “yet still retained his basic personality of a ‘quan-tu.’”³⁸ Peter A. DeCaro, in his study *Rhetoric of Revolt*, even dedicates a full-length chapter to a portrait of “Ho Chi Minh: The Chun Tzu [*junzi*].”³⁹ Just as he had reformed the rituals commemorating Confucius along revolutionary lines, Hồ Chí Minh would promote the new image of the revolutionary (and not the “noble man”), with redefined Confucian values, in his handbook *Let's Change Our Methods of Work*.

Let's Change Our Methods of Work

For a better apprehension of the handbook *Let's Change Our Methods of Work* (hereafter, “the handbook”), a brief review of its historical background is needed. Hồ Chí Minh completed the handbook in October 1947 under the penname of X.Y.Z. It was first printed by Sự thật (“Truth”) Publishing House in 1948, and was subsequently reprinted several times in Vietnam.

During the short but tumultuous period from 1945 to 1948, the Vietnamese were fighting for their country's unity and independence from the Japanese and French occupiers. Taking advantage of the Japanese surrender at the conclusion of World War II, the Việt Minh (League for the Independence of Vietnam), under the leadership of Hồ Chí Minh, established the new state known as the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on August 28, 1945. A few days later, on September 2, Hồ proclaimed Vietnam's independence in Hanoi, opening his speech with Thomas Jefferson's declaration “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”⁴⁰ More than a year later, unwilling to lose its colony, France opened fire in Hanoi on December 17, 1946; shortly after that, on December 19, France issued an ultimatum, demanding the disarmament of the DRV's armed forces. Refusing the French demand,

on December 20, as DRV President, Hồ appealed to the whole nation to stand up and join the national resistance against the colonial regime. The Việt Bắc, a mountainous region between the Sino-Vietnamese border and the Red River, then became “the very cradle of the resistance.” In October 1947 the French secretly launched the Lea Campaign to “destroy the foundation of Vietnamese resistance” in the north; it was also at that time that the Central Party Committee’s Standing Bureau decided to “destroy the winter march of the French army.”⁴¹ Hồ’s resistance government not only fought against the French army, but also commenced building the foundation for a new ideology. David Marr succinctly describes the beginning of this long and complex process:

From his mountain hideout during the Pacific War, Hồ Chí Minh promoted a mix of Confucian and modernist values to be assimilated by the [Indochinese Communist Party] members and then taught to followers.... The Propaganda Ministry under Trần Huy Liệu took responsibility for devising a comprehensive program of social transformation dubbed the New Life Campaign (Vận động Đời sống Mới).⁴²

These were the historical circumstances under which the handbook was completed. Its targeted readership clearly included Party members and cadres who were striving for the nation’s independence and governing part of the country’s territory.

Revolutionary Virtues

Under the title “Revolutionary Virtues” (*Đạo đức cách mạng*), Hồ presents a concise account of the moral values that a cadre must display and embrace in order to transform himself into a revolutionary:

It is not difficult for a cadre to become a real revolutionary if he wants to. Everything depends on his *heart-and-mind* [*lòng mình*]. If his sole interest is the Party, the country, and his compatriots, he will *gradually* become *totally just and selfless* [*chí công vô tư* 至公無私]. *As he has been just and selfless*, his personal faults will progressively decrease, and his virtues *described below* will become increasingly apparent each day. *In brief*, the good virtues are five in all: humanity [仁], righteousness [義], knowledge [智], courage [勇], and integrity [廉].⁴³

This excerpt brings up a number of issues, including the origin of *chí công vô tư*, a phrase that would later become one of the foundational revolutionary moral values of the members and cadres of the Vietnamese Communist Party. It also

illustrates Hồ's selective appropriation of certain Confucian virtues to form the list of five required norms of revolutionary virtue. The first chapter of the *Classic of Loyalty* (*Zhongjing* 忠經), titled "Heaven, Earth, and Gods" ("Tiandi Shenming" 天地神明),⁴⁴ begins with the following lines:

A maxim from ancient times [states that] the only virtue for the above and the below to receive Heaven's favor is the way of loyalty. Overshadowed by Heaven, sustained by Earth, and followed by human beings, nothing is greater than loyalty. Loyalty means [standing at] the center, being *totally just and selfless*.⁴⁵

Another dictum in the same chapter also reads, "Loyalty is what is described as 'being whole-hearted.'"⁴⁶ Thus, the notion of being "totally just and selfless" and the importance of the *heart-and-mind* in self-training to become "a real revolutionary" asserted in Hồ's handbook seem to have been inspired by this classical text. Although Hồ did not cite the *Classic of Loyalty* explicitly, the circulation and popularity of the classic in Vietnam can be confirmed by the local reproduction of this work now preserved at the Han-Nom Research Institute in Hanoi.⁴⁷

At first glance, the five good virtues of the revolutionary are reminiscent of the "Five Constants" (*wuchang* 五常) originally advocated by Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 B.C.E.). Indeed, three of Hồ's five essential revolutionary virtues apparently were taken directly from the "Five Constants": benevolence (*ren* 仁), righteousness (*yi* 義), and knowledge (*zhi* 智). Hồ opted to replace the other two of the five, ritual (*li* 禮) and trustworthiness (*xin* 信), with courage (*yong* 勇), and integrity (*lian* 廉). However, a further reading of the *Analects* shows another group of three fundamental virtues of the noble man:⁴⁸

The Master said, "The way of the superior man is threefold, but I am not equal to it. Virtuous [*ren*], he is free from anxieties; wise [*zhi*], he is free from perplexities; bold [*yong*], he is free from fear."⁴⁹

The Master said, "The wise are free from perplexities; the virtuous from anxiety; and the bold from fear."⁵⁰

The *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong* 中庸) also gathers *ren*, *zhi*, and *yong* into a trio called *dade* 達德 ("universally binding virtues"): "Knowledge, benevolence, and courage, these three are the universally binding virtues" (*Zhongyong* 20).⁵¹ Hence, following this approach, one may treat Hồ's revolutionary virtue quintet as a combination of the *dade* trio and two additional elements (righteousness and integrity). However, due to the quintet format of the essential

revolutionary moral values, they were apparently grouped together according to the model of the “Five Constants.” The choice and use of these Confucian moral concepts was reminiscent of the New Life Movement in China of the early 1930s, which emphasized the roles of the old Confucian virtues of ritual (*li* 禮), righteousness (*yi* 義), integrity (*lian* 廉), and knowledge (*zhi* 智) as a means to reinforce nationalism and modernization.⁵²

In his essay titled “Virtues of *Junzi*,” Antonio S. Cua tries to distinguish the basic interdependent/complete virtues of *ren* 仁 (benevolence, humaneness), *li* 禮 (rules of proper conduct, ritual, rites), and *yi* 義 (rightness, righteousness, fittingness) from dependent/partial virtues such as *kuan* 寬 (magnanimity), *xin* 信 (trustworthiness), and *yong* 勇 (courage). According to Cua, the cardinal virtues of *ren*, *yi*, and *li* are “relevant to all situations of human life as our actions have always effects on others,” whereas the partials have their “application to circumstances,” and, furthermore, their ethical value “depends on connection with the . . . cardinals.”⁵³

The emphasis on certain moral values reflects specifically temporal socio-political demands, even as the modification of the connotations of the selected moral concepts reveals the efforts to make them fit well in new social contexts. Although the handbook does not specify any reasons for its particular choices from the Confucian repertoire of moral concepts, reading its interpretation of the five highlighted virtues can help to better understand why Hô selected them.

HUMANITY

Humanity (*ren*) is the first virtue to be interpreted, and its interpretation also paves the way for the representation of the remaining virtues. The handbook explains:

The virtue of humanity consists of loving deeply and wholeheartedly assisting one’s comrades and compatriots. That is why the cadre who displays this virtue wages a resolute struggle against all those who would harm the Party and people. That is why he will not hesitate to be the first to endure hardship and the last to enjoy happiness. That is why he will not covet wealth and honor, nor fear hardship and suffering, nor be afraid to fight those in power. Those who want nothing are afraid of nothing and will always succeed in doing the right thing.⁵⁴

In this explanation of “humanity,” readers can identify at least two Confucian writings that have been reworded and altered for a better fit into the handbook’s new context. First, there is Fan Zhongyan’s 范仲淹 (989–1052) oft-quoted motto from his “Memorial to Yueyang Tower” (*Yueyang Lou ji* 岳陽樓記): “Be the first in all under heaven to bear hardship, be the last in all under heaven to

enjoy happiness.”⁵⁵ Moreover, Fan’s thought is followed by a slight modification of Mencius’ definition of “the great man” (*dazhangfu* 大丈夫). A passage in the *Mencius* reads:

To be above the power of riches and honors to make dissipated, of poverty and mean condition to make swerve from principle, and of power and force to make bend—these characteristics constitute the great man.⁵⁶

For Hồ, the ideal revolutionary was obviously close to the Confucian “great man.” At the same time, Hồ departed from classical precedents in subtle ways. As described by the handbook, the “virtue of humanity” comprises *honestly* loving (*thật thà* thương yêu) and *wholeheartedly* assisting (*hết lòng* giúp đỡ) “one’s comrades and compatriots.” Here, humanity also requires sincerity (*cheng* 誠) and full devotion of one’s heart-mind (*jinxin* 盡心) to realize one’s object of commitment. Unlike the Confucian “great man,” the revolutionary “wages a resolute struggle against all those who would harm the Party and people.” Thus, for Hồ, loyalty (*zhong* 忠) was directed first and foremost to the Party and the people while love was clearly class-oriented.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

As for righteousness (*yi* 義), the handbook writes:

Having a sense of duty means uprightness—not having ulterior motives, doing nothing unjust and having nothing to hide from the Party. It also means not being preoccupied by personal interests in conflict with those of the Party.⁵⁷

The distinction between “just” and “unjust,” the individual’s transparency in front of the Party, and the harmonization between the individual’s and the Party’s interests here are clearly based on a subset of class-based moral values that the revolutionary must follow strictly. The distinction between “right” and “wrong” of course requires the involvement of knowledge/wisdom.

KNOWLEDGE

According to the handbook, selflessness plays a crucial role in the display and application of knowledge (*zhi* 智):

Since one’s conscience [*zhi/tri*] is not clouded by personal interests, clarity of purpose can be easily maintained. It becomes easier to reason and find the right way. One can judge men and investigate matters. Useful projects can be accomplished, while interests harmful to the Party can

be avoided. For the sake of the [Party's] just cause, people of value will be promoted while vigilance against crooks is maintained.⁵⁸

Often rendered into English as “knowledge” or “wisdom,” *zhi/trí*, as Henry Rosemont has observed, “is the philosophically significant most frequently occurring term in the *Analects*.”⁵⁹ Having examined this concept in various contexts of the *Analects*, Rosemont concludes that “[*Zhi*] is perhaps best defined as a sense of what it is most fitting to do in our interactions with our fellow human beings, understanding why, performing those actions, and achieving a sense of well-being from so doing.”⁶⁰ Hence, there is another translation suggested by Roger Ames for this Confucian concept: the term “realize” can serve well here, for “it is epistemically as strong in English as ‘know’ with respect to truth conditions.”⁶¹ Moreover, since “realize” also means “[making] real” it simultaneously carries the meaning of “[putting] into practice” with the proper stances and feelings toward what one is making real in one’s conduct. Through Confucius’ teaching on *zhi/trí*, Rosemont finally sees it as “religious or spiritual instructions for how to live a meaningful life.”⁶² The handbook’s description of this concept also reflects this spirit, but redefines it on the basis of the interests of the Party and the people.

COURAGE

For Hồ, the introductions of *nhân*, *nghĩa*, and *trí* prepared the way for the fourth moral virtue, “courage” (*yong* 勇):

Having courage means carrying out what one believes is right. It means not being afraid to correct one’s faults, to endure suffering, and to face hardship. It means not hesitating to reject honors and ill-gained wealth. If necessary, it means the sacrifice of one’s life for the Party and country without qualm.⁶³

The premise on which Hồ understands *yong* is clear: it must be carried out on the basis of daring to realize “what one believes is right” (*gặp việc phải có gan làm*).⁶⁴ This principle is in agreement with Confucius’ sayings in the *Analects*, where the Master emphasizes the critical need of righteousness in improving personal courage:

To see what is right and not to do it is want of courage.⁶⁵ (2.24)

Zilu said, “Does the superior man esteem valor [courage]?” The Master said, “The superior man holds righteousness to be of superior importance. A man in a superior situation, having valor without righteousness,

will be guilty of insubordination; one of the lower people, having valor without righteousness, will commit robbery. (17.23)

According to the *Analects*, courage must be guided by righteousness, and in its turn righteousness must be based on humanity/benevolence as indicated by Confucius: “Men of humanity are sure to be bold, but those who are bold may not always be men of humanity” (14.5).⁶⁶ Based on the *Analects*’ accounts, one scholar has described the interrelationship among humanity, righteousness, and, implicitly, courage as follows:

Hence, a *ren* person must be a righteous (*yi*) person. If this reasoning is correct, the relationship between *ren* and *yi* has to be that *ren* determines both *yi* as the rightness of an action and *yi* as the righteousness of the agent.⁶⁷

Noteworthy is that courage is often linked to other virtues in the *Analects*, such as the love of learning: “There is the love of boldness without the love of learning; the beclouding here leads to insubordination” (17.8).⁶⁸ Bravery must follow propriety/rites (*li* 禮) to avoid chaos—“Boldness, without the rules of propriety, becomes insubordination” (8.2)⁶⁹—and this is why Confucius hates those who “have valor merely, and are unobservant of propriety” (17.24).⁷⁰ In the handbook, since the “propriety/rites” of the Five Constants are not listed among the five required virtues of the revolutionary, the absence of the link between this moral value and courage is understandable. However, as we have seen in the elucidations of the previous three moral values of benevolence, righteousness, and knowledge, loyalty to the Party and the people stands out as the pivotal criterion that defines every single virtue essential for the revolutionary’s self-cultivation. This trend of thought was first promoted in 1946 in the educational system of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and became an essential moral norm of the Vietnamese state.⁷¹ Hồ Chí Minh would later crystallize this loyalty in his oft-cited motto, originally written in 1955:

Revolutionary virtue can be summarized as clearly distinguishing right from wrong, persevering with class position, wholeheartedly being loyal to the country, and unreservedly practicing filial piety toward people (*tận trung với nước, tận hiếu với dân*).⁷²

Nine years later, in 1964, he proclaimed another version of the motto:

Our army is loyal (*trung* 忠) to the Party, and practices filial piety (*hiếu* 孝) toward the people, being ready to fight and sacrifice their lives for the independence and freedom of the fatherland, and for socialism.⁷³

“Being loyal to the country/the Party and practicing filial piety toward the people” has been regarded as one of Hồ Chí Minh’s fundamental ideas. The textbook *Tư tưởng Hồ Chí Minh* (Hồ Chí Minh’s thought), prepared for college students, observes this principal virtue:

Hồ Chí Minh introduces new revolutionary contents into a new concept, namely “being loyal to the country and practicing filial piety toward the people.” This is the most important moral criterion. Moving from being loyal to the king and practicing filial piety toward parents to being loyal to the country and practicing filial piety toward the people is a revolution in moral conception. Hồ Chí Minh reverses the old Confucian concept, and constructs new morality as if “a man firmly stands on his feet, and raises his head toward the sky.”

In Hồ Chí Minh’s view, the country is the people’s country and the people are the country’s owner. Hence, “being loyal to the country and practicing filial piety toward the people” is the expression of responsibility toward the enterprise of nation-building-and-defending and the development path of the country.

The core content of loyalty to the country is that within the relationships of individuals, community, and society, one must give the foremost priority to the interests of the Party, Fatherland, and Revolution.⁷⁴

The common thread that traverses the first four revolutionary moral values of humanity, righteousness, knowledge, and courage has been summed up in Hồ Chí Minh’s mottos and clarified in the commentaries: as the representative of the country and the people, the Party deserves the top priority, and loyalty to the Party assures the perfection of the five fundamental revolutionary virtues highlighted in the handbook. Reading the handbook in its original context when the Party was taking the lead in the fight against feudalism and the resistance against French colonialism, one can straightforwardly understand why courage was one of the five desired moral values for the revolutionary.

INTEGRITY

As a Confucian moral value, depending on the contexts in which it emerges, *lian* 廉 has been rendered into various English equivalents, such as “grave reserve,”⁷⁵ “self-denying purity,”⁷⁶ or “upright, honourable, integrity and character.”⁷⁷ However, the most common equivalent is “integrity,” which also appears in Nguyễn Khắc Viện’s citation from the handbook:

Having integrity means not coveting status or wealth, not seeking an easy life or *not willing to be flattered by others*. That is why one can be lucid and generous and avoid self-degradation. *There exists only one type of eagerness—that is the eagerness to study, work, and make progress.*⁷⁸

In the Vietnamese original of the citation, the term *tham* (“coveting” 貪) stands for different English rewordings, such as “seeking” or “willing.” The quote ends with the eagerness for self-cultivation, and this reminds us of a saying from the *Analects*: “When his desires are set on benevolent government, and he secures it, who will accuse him of covetousness?” (20.2).⁷⁹ Having a rhetorical structure similar to Confucius’ cited assertion, the handbook defines “integrity” as the avoidance of any temptations that lead to self-degradation, and the enthusiastic striving for self-improvement.

Two years later, in 1949, writing under the pseudonym of Lê Quyết Thắng, Hồ Chí Minh revisited this moral concept in a series of four newspaper articles on diligence (*cần* 勤), frugality (*kiệm* 儉), integrity (*liêm* 廉), and straightforwardness (*chính* 正),⁸⁰ and discussed *liêm* in great detail:

Liêm means purity, without greediness. In the past, under feudalism, mandarins who did not squeeze money from the people were called *liêm*, but it has only a narrow meaning. Our country is now the Democratic Republic; and the term *liêm* has a broader meaning. Everyone must practice *liêm*. Similarly *trung* is to be loyal to the Fatherland, and *hiếu* means to practice filial piety toward people. We love our parents, but we must also love others’ parents, and inspire the love for parents in all human beings.

Liêm must be accompanied by *kiệm*. Correspondingly, *kiệm* must be paired with *cần*. *Kiệm* is the premise for the practice of *liêm*, because lavish spending begets greediness.

... Our nation is carrying out the war of resistance and structuring the country, building the New Life in our new Vietnam. Not only do we need to be diligent and frugal, but we must also keep our purity/integrity (*liêm*).⁸¹

Here, as in the earlier handbook, Hồ sought to redefine Confucian key moral values in the context of revolutionary Vietnam in the 1940s. An examination of some Confucian classics, such as the *Analects*, *Mencius*, *Liji* (Classic of Rites), and *Xunzi*, to name but a few, shows that *liêm* has various connotations, and as a moral value it can be universally practiced without restriction to any social class.⁸² Like Hồ’s elucidations of the other Confucianism-based moral values,

his interpretation of *liêm* is positioned within the framework of the war of resistance and nation-building led by the Communist Party.

WHY ARE PROPRIETY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS MISSING?

The absence of two Confucian constants, propriety (*li* 禮) and trustworthiness (*xin* 信), from Hồ's set of revolutionary virtues cannot be easily overlooked. Given its status as a cardinal virtue, the exclusion of "propriety" from the list is particularly striking. As we will see, the logic of the omission of "propriety" helps explain Hồ's decision to leave "trustworthiness" off the list. Having reviewed extant documents relevant to Hồ Chí Minh and Confucian morality, Hoa John Le Van concludes:

As a son of a Vietnamese mandarin-scholar, [Hồ Chí Minh] was trained early in the Confucian heritage. The five cardinal virtues of compassion, righteousness, ritual, knowledge, [and] integrity, perhaps except for ritual, were part of [Hồ's] personal life.⁸³

Nonetheless, Hồ Chí Minh himself did not stipulate why he left "propriety" out of the repertoire of revolutionary virtues. Various scholars have endeavored to fill in the gap, rationalizing any possible reason that might have caused Hồ to pass over "propriety." The following is a line of reasoning articulated by a Vietnamese academic:

Whenever talking about human beings' virtue, Confucians often link it with *li/lǐ* of the Five Constants (*ren, yi, li, zhi, xin*). Based on the explanation from the *Shuowen jiezi* [說文解字, Explanation of patterns, elaboration of graphs], the principle of *li* is "stable steps, respecting the spirits, and seeking happiness,"⁸⁴ reflecting the relationship between human beings and spirits. [*Li*] is combined with theocracy, and developed into the distinction between superior and inferior, rich and poor, closeness and distance, that is founded on a strict aristocratic ranking system. Therefore, in the *Zuozhuan*, the account of Zhanggong's [莊公] eighteenth year says, "As fames and positions vary, rituals are also different." ... Thus, *li/lǐ* stands for the social status of the feudal hierarchy. Among the dominant classes, *li/lǐ* also cannot escape from it. *Li/lǐ* becomes a powerful political tool, and an effective method for controlling the realm and people in the feudal monarchical age. Thus, in *Hồ Chí Minh: The Complete Works* (ten volumes with 7,053 pages in total), Uncle Hồ never mentions the term *li/lǐ* from the Five Constants of feudal Confucians.⁸⁵

The passage starts with a definition of *li* (unfortunately, inaccurately translated) from the *Shuowen jiezi* to suggest that *li* was originally deployed as an instrument to enhance the unequal relationships between human beings and spirits. It then takes the next step of identifying *li* as a feudal social practice, a claim that appears to confirm the class-based nature of this moral concept and reveal it as a “powerful political tool, and an effective method for controlling the realm and people in the feudal monarchical age.” Although Hồ Chí Minh never endorsed such an understanding of *li/lǐ*, it seems to be widely accepted in Vietnam, as the phrase *lǐ giáo phong kiến* (“feudal proprieties”) carries strongly negative connotations (especially of gender inequality). However, the author of the excerpt above seemingly overlooks a well-known dictum of Confucius in the *Analects*: “To overcome oneself and restore the practice of proprieties is benevolent love.”⁸⁶ Since *ren* (benevolence) is the ground of *li* (rules of propriety), and *li* must be in accord with *ren*, “customs, rituals, regulations, and rules eventually should be regulated by *ren*.”⁸⁷ In other words, rules of propriety are the vehicle for realizing and strengthening benevolence. When discussing the civility of the revolutionary policeman in a letter written in March 1948, Hồ Chí Minh reminds the reader that police must treat people with respect, etiquette, and moral standards (*lǐ phép*).⁸⁸ Obviously, revolutionary benevolent love needs to be expressed through certain revolutionary rules of propriety. *Li/lǐ* was omitted from President Hồ’s writings possibly due to the fact that it was generally understood as “rites” or “rituals,” and its hierarchical features had been prevalently associated with feudalism. However, as the set of rules of propriety or social conventions, *li/lǐ* was unquestionably required and practiced in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Although trustworthiness (*xin* 信) is not recorded in the handbook’s list of moral virtues that the revolutionary must acquire, it occasionally emerges as a required virtue in a number of other writings by Hồ Chí Minh. In his speech given at the concluding ceremony of a complementary training course for mid-level cadres in 1947, Hồ declared:

A good cadre must have revolutionary morality. If one is well-trained in military affairs, but lacking revolutionary morality, it is difficult to succeed. In order to acquire revolutionary morality, one must possess the following five elements: *Trí* [智], *Tín* [信], *Nhân* [仁], *Dũng* [勇], [and] *Liêm* [廉]. I now clarify them.

Trí means clear-headedness, knowing both the enemy and ourselves; recognizing good people and supporting them; identifying bad ones and not employing them; being aware of our goodness and improving it; identifying evil and avoiding it.

Tín means [that] whatever is said must be trustworthy; assertions and practices must be in accordance with one another; we must try our best to earn people's and soldiers' trust.

Nhân means to possess universal love: loving our country, people, and soldiers.

Dũng means being forceful, decisive but not jeopardizing, having well-prepared plans and determinedly carrying them out straightaway, even if facing dangers. It also means to have bravery in any business.

Liêm means not to covet fame or position, not being excessively desirous of life, money, and sex. A cadre who dares to sacrifice his life for the fatherland, for his people, and for the just cause does not covet anything.⁸⁹

The above-cited passage not only furnishes us with another chance to further comprehend Hồ's understanding of *trí*, *nhân*, *dũng*, and *liêm*, but also supplies us with his explanation of *tín*, another moral value. Hồ Chí Minh's notion of *tín* is basically in agreement with the Confucian notion of *xin*, which emphasizes verbal commitment with respect to one's deeds. This point can be illustrated through a couple of examples from the *Analects*. For instance, when asked about how a man's conduct can be appreciated by his fellows, Confucius replies, "Let his words be sincere and truthful, and his actions honorable and careful."⁹⁰ In another case, the Master places emphasis on the imperative concordance between words and conduct: "At first, my way with men was to hear their words, and give them credit for their conduct. Now my way is to hear their words, and look at their conduct."⁹¹ Having examined the concept of *xin* in the *Analects*, Cecilia Wee comes to the following conclusion:

Xin is concerned primarily with commitments in which verbal (or other) representations have been made, where trust can exist, and perhaps usually exists, against a background of unspoken social norms.⁹²

Indeed, the agreement between words and deeds stands out as the foundational principle of *xin*, but it must be conducted against the "background of unspoken social norms." This background is spelled out in Hồ's discourse: as all means must serve revolutionary ends, the cadre must be trustworthy so as to win his people's and soldiers' hearts-and-minds. Hồ Chí Minh obviously did not treat the Confucian Five Constants as an entirety; he broke them down into individual entities and recombined them with other moral values into different clusters of five. Depending on his audience, Hồ selected a certain cluster to present to his targeted readers/listeners. Thus, even though *xin/tín* does not emerge among the "Revolutionary Virtues" discussed in the handbook *Let's*

Change Our Methods of Work, it remains as an essential quality of the revolutionary in other writings by Hồ Chí Minh.

The handbook in general and its five revolutionary moral elements in particular are in many ways reminiscent of Chinese Communist Party leader Liu Shaoqi's 劉少奇 *Lun gongchan dangyuan de xiuyang* (On the cultivation of Communist Party members).⁹³ First delivered as a series of lectures for CCP members at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Yan'an in 1939, Liu frequently invoked the Chinese concept of self-cultivation (*xiuyang* 修養), and therefore aligned his views with "Chinese tradition, most specifically with Neo-Confucian praxis based on the *Great Learning* [*Daxue* 大學], the *Mean* [*Zhongyong* 中庸], and self-examination through quiet-sitting." In this work, Liu cited several sayings from Confucian and Neo-Confucian sources, but these quotes "survive in the collective memory only as traditional sayings without awareness of their exact provenance."⁹⁴ Liu's work was translated into Vietnamese and also employed as training material for Vietnamese cadres in the late 1940s.⁹⁵

Unlike Liu's indoctrination work, Hồ's handbook does not contain any direct quotations from the Confucian classics, although traces of those texts can be discerned in his text, as this chapter has shown. By rephrasing Confucian sayings in Vietnamese language, the handbook rhetorically presents them in a simple and easy-to-understand way, and consequently strips off the old-fashioned classical veneer of the original texts. This tactic is especially clear in Hồ's discussion of the Confucianism-inspired essential revolutionary virtues. The Confucian roots of these terms were instantly recognizable to Vietnamese elites trained in the Confucian educational system. And yet, as they were popularly employed and practiced in daily life, ordinary Vietnamese embraced them as common sense and as part of their culture, even though they were unaware of their classical provenance.

After examining several Confucian values as they were reinterpreted in Hồ Chí Minh's writings, Hoa John Le Van concludes:

[Hồ]'s unique revolutionary contribution was his adaptation of Marxism to elaborate a new dimension of traditional Confucian values that had tightly bound Vietnamese society in ritual bondage. Earlier, we have noted that [Hồ] deliberately excluded [*lễ*, ritual] from the five basic Confucian virtues.⁹⁶

That Hồ infused traditional Confucian values with revolutionary meanings is undeniable. However, based on the evidence presented here, it is hard to find any trace of Marxist theory in Hồ's adaptation of Confucian moral concepts. In addition to distilling and simplifying Confucian values, Hồ's revolutionary framework points his readers to the ultimate goal: service to the Party and the

people, or, in Neil L. Jamieson's words, to "behave toward the party as if it were your family."⁹⁷

Conclusion

Although there has never been any government-led campaign of "Criticizing Confucius" during the Democratic Republic of Vietnam era (1945–1975) or in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam period (1975 to the present), the treatment of Confucius and his doctrine has changed significantly over the decades. Often identified with pejorative suppressive feudalism, Confucianism has sometimes been targeted for eradication, even in countries where it enjoyed deep influence. Nguyễn Khắc Viện's essay "Confucianism and Marxism in Vietnam" serves as an example, showing an intellectual effort to acknowledge the positive aspects of "Confucianism of the scholars" of a Vietnam in transition. However, a number of his arguments, including his discussion of the relationship between Hồ Chí Minh and Confucianism, faced negative reactions and criticisms from contemporary readers. Only after the implementation of the *Đổi mới* (Renovation) policy, the international reappraisal of Confucianism due to the success of the four Asian Little Dragons, and the commemoration of Hồ Chí Minh as a "cultural personality" on the occasion of the centenary of his birth, did Viện's essay have the chance to reach its Vietnamese readers. Since the publication of the essay in Vietnam, numerous studies on Hồ Chí Minh and Confucianism have been carried out, revealing his skillful transformation of Confucian values to serve the nation's revolutionary cause. Cited in Nguyễn Khắc Viện's essay, the section "Revolutionary Virtues" from Hồ Chí Minh's *Let's Change Our Methods of Work* and other examples from Hồ's writings reveal how Hồ transformed pivotal Confucian moral values and reintroduced them as essential virtues required for the revolutionary. Simplified, Confucian values are rendered into new revolutionary contexts. The Confucian noble person is transformed into the ideal revolutionary and put forward to serve the revolution.

Appendix 1

1984'S SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES

by Nguyễn Khắc Viện⁹⁸

Please allow me to review a few crucial points from the previous essay before discussing other issues:

We must clearly identify two trends of thought in Confucianism: one is

the original stream that is humane, and the other is a stream belonging to the ideology of the bureaucratic apparatus; one is the mandarin's Confucianism, and the other the scholar's.

Due to their unawareness of those two trends, several people have blotted out the historical role of Confucianism, asserting that since its beginning, Confucianism has only played a negative role in opposition to the so-called folk-thought. Of course, as they're armed with such a prejudice, whenever they hear someone asserting the proximity between Confucianism and Marxism, or, more seriously, mentioning some Confucian elements in President Hồ's thought, they will consider [these sayings] "heresies" or "insubordinations."

Also due to this type of prejudice, they believe that Nguyễn Trãi [阮鵬] [1380–1442] has nothing to do with Confucianism, repudiating all Vietnamese patriotic Confucians as a whole, and treating patriotism merely as anti-Confucian. Someone even writes, "Patriotism is the *pathbreaking* light (let me emphasize the term 'pathbreaking') for the early naissance of a traditional and unique culture in Vietnamese territory."

Such statements reverse the historical process. There must first have been the establishment of a thriving and distinctive culture, and later from this foundation patriotism would gradually take shape. When the Bách Việt [百越, or "One-Hundred Viet] nations fought against the Qin-Han army, they were not motivated by patriotism; even in the time of the Trưng sisters [the rebellion against the Han military], there did not exist a true patriotism as it is understood in our time. People must have gone through a long historical process in which the resistance against foreign invasions was not the exclusive element that formed patriotism. One must include the following components:

- Self-protection from natural disasters through the construction of embankment systems
- The establishment of a centralized monarchical government
- The construction of a national culture

Without the centralized monarchy with its mandarin machinery accountable for national duties based on a unified ideology, there could not exist the awareness of patriotism at an advanced level. Only when facing natural disasters and foreign invasions would commoners come to the recognition of transcending their local mentality, scholar gentry would be conscious of their duties to the nation, and everyone would be [unified] around the image of a king. Within a long historical evolution, being loyal to the king [*trung quân* 忠君] and being patriotic [*ái quốc* 愛國] would have remained inseparable from one another. Confucianism played a crucial role in the formation of patriotism. Nguyễn Đình Chiểu, Mai Xuân Thưởng, [and] Phan Đình Phùng were Confucians,

and one cannot distort the truth by claiming that these patriots totally had no relationship with Confucianism.

Later, as history moved forward, there emerged more progressive regimes and ideologies. To return to Confucianism is reactionary, but to fully reject the role of Confucianism is really childish. Only the emergence of capitalist [thought] and proletarian thought could end the historical role of Confucianism. Nowadays it is easy to point out the weaknesses of Confucianism, but one has to relocate it back into its historical context to be able to see its multifacetedness.

Some have argued that people do not accept Confucianism because it arrived in our country together on “the hooves of invading soldiers.” What a simplistic view! Some portion of the people will accept an ideology because of its contents, but not for its place of origin (let’s consider the cases of Buddhism and Marxism!). In the early independent period, during the Lý and Trần dynasties, the centralized monarchical machinery had not reached an advanced level; although the warlords were gone, rice fields, estates, and the fiefs of royal nobles still existed. Confucianism and its unified mandarin apparatus were not accepted. The mandarin machinery employed Confucianism as its weapon to compete with Buddhism. During this period, Confucianism was progressive in comparison to Buddhism.

Others have also considered the Lý-Trần period with the dominance of Buddhism more progressive than the post-fifteenth-century Lê dynasty founded on Confucianism. To some extent, Buddhism was better than Confucianism, and the Lý-Trần regime more “likeable” than that of the Lê dynasty. However, examined within the nation’s historical process, the Lê period achieved a higher level of unification of the kingdom. Newly independent, the Lý [and] Trần dynasties could only defend the northern borders of their realm; with a population still small, they could not fully explore the Red River Delta, and they had to confront two kingdoms, Champa and Khmer, without a decisive victory. The realm was always threatened by two-pronged attacks from the Northern and Southern frontiers. In the Lê dynasty, Đại Việt [大越, “Great Viet” = Vietnam] clearly gained more advantages: the Northern and Southern borders were secured for a long time, and the territory was expanded southward. This was a centralized monarchy with a mandarin apparatus working on a unified ideological foundation of Confucianism. In the historical context of that time, this regime was the most rational (in comparison to the Champa and Khmer kingdoms). Later on, Confucianism could not handle conflicts and had to concede.

Confucianism paved the way with auspicious conditions for the introduction of Marxism [into Vietnam]. This is an argument that has caused many “waves and winds.” The main argument is that unlike other religions, [the aim of] Confucianism is to direct human thought completely into social life; there-

fore it stands on the same page with Marxists. If we are able to convince a Confucian that Marxism can realize all the social ideals that he has ever thought of, this Confucian should be willing to decline Confucianism and accept Marxism. Meanwhile, socially persuading a Christian, a Buddhist, or a Muslim remains insufficient, because persuasion cannot provide them with an answer about the transcendental afterlife. Like Marxists, Confucians do not raise such a question.

Recently a Japanese scholar⁹⁹ has also formed the argument that Confucianism has helped nations like Japan, Taiwan, and Korea more easily move toward modernity.

On this favorable land, Marxism sowed new seeds—science, democracy, and international proletarian spirit, which were completely new elements. However, like Confucianism, when the Party has held political power, the risk of the bureaucratization of Marxism is always threatening, and a Marxism bureaucratized in several aspects is very similar to Confucianism. Criticizing Confucianism is also helpful for the criticism of today's bureaucratism.

Appendix 2

CONFUCIUS¹⁰⁰

Guangzhou, February 20, 1927

On February 15, the Government of the Republic of China issued a decree: henceforth to abolish all ceremonies commemorating Confucius as well as projected expenses for those rituals, and to use all temples of Confucius as public schools.

Confucius lived 2,478 years before our time. During the last 2,400 years, he had been worshiped by the Chinese people. All Chinese emperors called Confucius the head of sages, and offered honorific titles to his successors.

From ancient times, the Vietnamese people and Vietnamese kings highly respected this sage. Nevertheless, the Chinese government has just decided that from now on, there is no longer any official worship for Confucius. Is that truly a revolutionary action?

Let us first review who Confucius is, why kings and emperors venerated him so approvingly, and why the Chinese government now rejects such a sage who has been so greatly worshiped.

Confucius lived in the Spring-Autumn period. His virtue, scholarship, and knowledge have earned great admiration from his contemporaries and later generations. He studied tirelessly, and never felt shame when learning from his inferiors; being unknown to the masses did not bother him at all. His renowned formula "See what a man does. Mark his motives. Examine in what things he

rests. How can a man conceal his character?"¹⁰¹ reflects the profundity of his cleverness.

Nevertheless, in a setting twenty centuries ago, during the time when capitalism and imperialism did not exist, and nations were not oppressed as we have now experienced, Confucius' mind was never roused by revolutionary doctrines. His virtue is perfect but cannot accommodate our contemporary trends of thought. How can a round lid fittingly cover a square box?

Kings venerated Confucius, not only because he was not a revolutionary, but also due to the fact that he carried out a prevailing propaganda beneficial to them. They exploited Confucianism in the same way as imperialists are exploiting Christianity.

Confucianism is founded on three cardinal guides, namely [that] the king is the guide to his subjects, a father to his children, and a husband to his wife; and five constant virtues, namely benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom, and trustworthiness.

Confucius compiled the *Spring and Autumn Annals* to criticize "rebellious ministers" and "villainous sons,"¹⁰² but did not write anything to indict the crimes of "evil fathers" and "parochial princes." In brief, he was obviously a speaker who defended the exploiters against the oppressed.

Judged by Confucian teaching, Russia, France, China, the United States, and democratic countries are nations in which moral principles are missing, and people who rise against the monarch are seditious. If Confucius lived in our time, and persistently kept those opinions, he would become a reactionary person. There could also be another possibility that this super-man would be able to cope with the situation, and quickly become a loyal inheritor of Lenin.

With the abolition of rituals commemorating Confucius, the Chinese government has dropped an old institution that goes against the spirit of democracy. For us, the Vietnamese, let us perfect ourselves spiritually by reading Confucius' works, and revolutionarily reading Lenin's works is a must.

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Translated [into Vietnamese] from a French translation

Notes

1. Nguyen Khac Vien, *Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam*, ed. David Marr and Jayne Werner; trans. Linda Yarr, Jayne Werner, and Tran Tuong Nhu (Berkeley, CA: Indochina Resource Center, 1974).

2. Nguyễn Khắc Viện, *Bản về đạo Nho* (On Confucianism), trans. Đào Hùng and Trần Văn Quý (Hanoi: Thế Giới Publishing House, 1993).

3. This chapter employs the edition published by Trẻ Publishing House (Ho Chi Minh City, 1998).

4. Now known as Nhà xuất bản Chính trị Quốc gia (National Political Publishing House), this publisher belongs directly to the Party's Central Committee.

5. Nguyễn Khắc Viện, *Bản về đạo Nho*, p. 1.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 68. For a complete translation of the document, see Appendix 1 at the end of this chapter.

7. Nguyễn Khắc Viện, *Đạo và đời* (The way and life) (Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 2007), p. 7.

8. Nguyễn Khắc Viện, *Bản về đạo Nho*, pp. 75–76.

9. Words used in the title of chapter 9 of Nguyễn Khắc Viện's book *Vietnam: A Long History* (Hanoi: Thế Giới Publishers, 1999).

10. Nguyễn Khắc Viện, *Ước mơ và Hoài niệm* (Wishes and yearnings) (Đà Nẵng: Đà Nẵng Publishing House, 2003), p. 143.

11. "Hội nghị lần thứ chính Ban chấp hành Trung ương Đảng khóa III, tháng 12–1963" (Ninth Plenum of the Party's Central Committee, Third Term, December 1963), accessed September 30, 2015, http://dangcongsan.vn/cpv/Modules/News/NewsDetail.aspx?co_id=30653&cn_id=65356.

12. Nguyễn Khắc Viện, *Tự truyện* (Autobiography) (Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 2007), pp. 4–105.

13. For the fight against revisionism in Vietnam, see Martin Grossheim, "‘Revisionism’ in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam: New Evidence from the East German Archives," *Cold War History* 5, no. 4 (November 2005): 451–477; "The Lao Động Party, Culture, and the Campaign against ‘Modern Revisionism’: The Democratic Republic of Vietnam before the Second Indochina War," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 8, no. 1 (February 2013): 80–129.

14. Elizabeth Hodgkin, "Obituary: Nguyen Khac Vien," *The Independent* (London), May 26, 1997.

15. Trung Sơn, "Nguyễn Khắc Viện và những ‘di cảo’ chưa công bố" (Nguyễn Khắc Viện and his unpublished 'Posthumous Manuscripts'), *Đại biểu nhân dân*, May 6, 2007, accessed September 30, 2015, <http://daibieunhandan.vn/default.aspx?tabid=78&NewsId=13746>; "Di cảo Nguyễn Khắc Viện: Vai trò của khoa học xã hội và dân chủ xã hội" (Nguyễn Khắc Viện's Posthumous Manuscripts: The roles of the social sciences and social democracy), *Sông hương* 294 (August 2013), accessed September 30, 2015, <http://www.tapchisonghuong.com.vn/tap-chi/c289/n12315/Di-cao-Nguyen-Khac-Vien-vai-tro-cua-khoa-hoc-xa-hoi-dan-chu-xa-hoi.html>.

16. "Vietnam" section in *Human Rights Watch World Report* 1992, accessed September 30, 2015, http://www.hrw.org/reports/1992/WR92/ASW-15.htm#P938_343433.

17. Edwin O. Reischauer, "The Sinic World in Perspective," *Foreign Affairs* 52, no. 2 (January 1974): 347.

18. This may refer to Morishima Michio and his book *Why has Japan "Succeeded"? Western Technology and Japanese Ethos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

19. Nguyễn Khắc Viện, *Bản về đạo Nho*, p. 73.

20. Léon Vandermeersch, *Le Nouveau monde sinisé* (The new sinicized world) (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986); *Thế giới Hán hóa mới*, trans. Chu Tiến Anh and Hoàng Việt (Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 1992).

21. Nguyen Khac Vien, *Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam*, p. 45.

22. Ibid., pp. 47–48.

23. For instance, see Trịnh Khắc Mạnh and Chu Tuyết Lan, eds., *Thư mục Nho giáo Việt Nam = A Bibliography on Confucianism in Vietnam* (Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 2007), pp. 228–229. Some noteworthy works, just to name a few, are Lương Duy Thứ, “The Confucian Origin of Hồ Chí Minh’s Ideas,” in *Confucianism in Vietnam* (Ho Chi Minh City: Vietnam National University in Ho Chi Minh City, 2002), pp. 229–235; Hồ Sĩ Hù, “Tư tưởng đạo đức Hồ Chí Minh với tinh hoa Nho giáo” (Hồ Chí Minh’s moral thought and the quintessence of Confucianism), *Văn hóa Nghệ An Online*, accessed April 27, 2011, <http://vanhoanghean.com.vn/goc-nhin-van-hoa3/nh%E1%BB%AFAng-g%C3%B3c-nh%C3%ACn-v%C4%83n-h%C3%B3a/tu-tuong-dao-duc-ho-chi-minh-voi-tinh-hoa-nho-giao>.

24. It is said that UNESCO conferred the title of “Cultural Personality” on Hồ Chí Minh. In fact, UNESCO adopted a Resolution on the commemoration of the centenary of the birth of President Hồ Chí Minh instead; see UNESCO’s *Records of the General Conference: Twenty-fourth Session, Paris, 20 October to 20 November 1987*, vol. 1, *Resolutions*, pp. 134–135. However, in UNESCO’s commemoration list of “Anniversaries of Great Personalities and Historic Events, 1990–1991,” there are only three events listed for May 1990: the 100th anniversary of Labor Day (Federal Republic of Germany), the 100th anniversary of the birth of Portuguese poet Mario de Sa-Carneiro (Portugal), and the 100th anniversary of the founding of the National Theater (Costa Rica).

25. Nguyễn Đình Chú, “Nguyễn Ái Quốc: Hồ Chí Minh với Nho giáo” (Nguyễn Ái Quốc: Hồ Chí Minh and Confucianism), in *Tư tưởng đạo đức Hồ Chí Minh: Truyền thống dân tộc và nhân loại* (Moral thought of Hồ Chí Minh: National tradition and humankind), ed. Vũ Khiêu (Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 1993), accessed September 30, 2015, http://www.viet-studies.info/NguyenDinhChu_NguyenAiQuoc.htm.

26. Ho Chi Minh Museum, “Biography of Ho Chi Minh,” accessed September 30, 2015, <http://www.baotanghochiminh.vn/tabid/545/Default.aspx>; emphasis added.

27. *Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập* (Hồ Chí Minh: The complete works), 2nd ed., vol. 1, 1919–1924 (Hanoi: National Politics Publisher, 2000), p. 476.

28. *Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập* (Hồ Chí Minh: The complete works), 2nd ed., vol. 4, 1945–1946 (Hanoi: National Politics Publisher, 2000), p. 256; emphasis added.

29. *Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập* (Hồ Chí Minh: The complete works), 2nd ed., vol. 5, 1947–1949 (Hanoi: National Politics Publisher, 2000), p. 373; emphasis added.

30. The time and location of this article’s composition are quite clear as stated in the subtitle line “Guangzhou, February 20, 1927,” but it remains unclear in which language the article was originally written. A few words added to the end of the article inform readers that it was published in a weekly newspaper called *Thanh niên* (Youth), and the current Vietnamese version is in fact a translation from another French translation (*dịch lại từ bản dịch ra tiếng Pháp*). In a report to the Comintern’s Oriental Division dated June 1927, Hồ Chí Minh wrote: “Starting from November 1924, I was sent by the Oriental Division and the French Communist Party to Guangzhou to work for Indochina.... Although lacking time and money, thanks to the assistance of Russian and Vietnamese comrades, we were able to... publish three small weekly newspapers” (*Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập*, 2nd ed. [Hanoi: National Politics Publisher, 2000], vol. 2, 1924–1930, p. 241). Thus, the newspaper in

question might have been one of the three publications printed in Guangzhou around that time.

31. This decree was issued during the transition of the Nationalist Government from Guangzhou to Wuhan, and only six days before the official inauguration of the Government in Wuhan on February 21, 1927. See Guo Tingyi 郭廷以, *Zhonghua Minguo shishi rishi* 中華民國史事日志, 1912–1949 (Daily record of historical events of the Republic of China, 1912–1949) (Beijing: Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Jindaishi Yanjiusuo 中央研究院近代史研究所, 1985), accessed September 30, 2015, <http://fzr5185.blog.163.com/blog/static/1552408852011112913844968/>.

32. See Zhang Songzhi 張頌之, “Kongjiaohui shimo huikao” 孔教會始末匯考 (Comprehensive research on the whole story of the Association for Confucian Religion), *Wen shi zhe* 文史哲 1 (2008): 68; Wang Shichun 汪士淳, *Ruzhe xing: Kong Decheng Xiansheng zhuan* 儒者行：孔德成先生傳 (A Confucian’s practices: A biography of Mr. Kong Decheng) (Taipei: Lianjing, 2013), pp. 65–67.

33. For a complete translation of Hồ Chí Minh’s article on Confucius, see Appendix 2 at the end of this chapter.

34. David Marr, *Vietnam: State, War, and Revolution (1945–1946)* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013), p. 471.

35. “Ngày thu lễ đức Khổng Tử tại Đền Giám” (Commemorating Confucius in the Giám Temple on an autumn day), *Cửu quốc* 73 (October 22, 1945).

36. From Nguyễn Kim Nữ Hạnh, *Tiếp bước chân cha* (Following our father’s footprint) (Hanoi: Thế Giới, 2003); the letter is accessible online at <http://hnue.edu.vn/directories/Science.aspx?username=thanhvn&science=75>.

37. Nguyen Khac Vien, *Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam*, p. 51.

38. Hoa John Le Van, “Cultural Foundation of Ho Chi Minh’s Revolutionary Ideology” (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1989), p. 12.

39. Peter A. DeCaro, *Rhetoric of Revolt: Ho Chi Minh’s Discourse for Revolution* (Westport, CT, and London: Praeger, 2003), pp. 51–86.

40. For a quick reference on Vietnamese independence movements, see Shelton Woods, *The Story of Việt Nam: From Prehistory to the Present* (Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies, 2013), pp. 37–44.

41. Nguyễn Khắc Viện, *Việt Nam: A Long History*, 7th rev. and expanded ed. (Hanoi: Thế Giới Publishers, 2007), pp. 467–468.

42. David Marr, *Vietnam: State, War, and Revolution (1945–1946)*, p. 536.

43. This is my revised version of the English translation from Nguyen Khac Vien, *Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam*, pp. 48–49. I also consulted the French original, “Confucianisme et Marxisme au Vietnam” and the Vietnamese translation of the essay “Bản về đạo Nho” as references during my revision procedure.

44. The *Zhongjing* is attributed to Ma Rong 馬融 (79–166) of the Later Han period. This work is said to be commented on by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200), a disciple of Ma Rong. For a study of the *Zhongjing*, see Judith Suwald, “Zhong 忠 und das Zhongjing 忠經” (Ph.D. diss., Ludwig-Maximilians-University of Munich, 2008).

45. 昔在至理，上下一德，以徵天休，忠之道也。天之所覆，地之所載，人之所履，莫大乎忠。忠者、中也，至公無私。

46. 忠也者，一其心之謂矣。

47. For instance, the Han-Nom Research Institute has a copy titled *Trung kinh biểu kinh tiết yếu* 忠經孝經節要, reprinted in 1852 (VHv.1006); accessed September 30, 2015, <http://www.hannom.org.vn/trichyeu.asp?param=8833&Catid=248>.

48. Scholars have recently tried to track the origin of the trio of knowledge, benevolence, and courage even further back than the *Lunyu*. See Peng Lin 彭林, “Cong ‘San dade’ kan Kongzi de shu er buzuo” 從“三達德”看孔子的“熟而不做” (From “Three universally binding virtues,” Reexamining Confucius’ self-identification as “a transmitter and not a maker”), *Kongzi yanjiu* 孔子研究 5 (2012): 32–39.

49. 子曰：君子道者三，我無能焉：仁者不憂，知者不惑，勇者不懼 (*Analects* 14.28). Unless stated otherwise, this chapter employs James Legge’s translation for all citations from the *Analects*, occasionally with slight modifications. See Confucius, *Confucian Analects, The Great Learning and The Doctrine of the Mean*, trans. James Legge, 2nd rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893; New York: Dover, 1971).

50. 子曰：知者不惑，仁者不憂，勇者不懼 (9.29).

51. 知仁勇三者，天下之達德也。

52. Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-Shek and the Struggle for Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 109.

53. Antonio Cua, “Virtues of Junzi,” in *Confucian Ethics in Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Vincent Shen and Kwong-loi Shun (Washington, D.C.: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2008), pp. 10, 9.

54. Nguyen Khac Vien, *Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam*, p. 48. In this chapter, all excerpts of the handbook *Let’s Change Our Methods of Work* are from Nguyen Khac Vien’s work, pp. 48–49.

55. 先天下之憂而憂，後天下之樂而樂。

56. 富貴不能淫，貧賤不能移，威武不能屈。此之謂大丈夫 (“Teng Wen Gong II,” 7, in *The Works of Mencius*, trans. James Legge [Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1991], p. 265).

57. Nguyen Khac Vien, *Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam*, p. 48.

58. *Ibid.*, pp. 48–49.

59. Henry Rosemont, *A Reader’s Companion to the Confucian Analects* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 30.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

61. *Ibid.*

62. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

63. Nguyen Khac Vien, *Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam*, p. 49.

64. Nguyễn Khắc Viện, *Bản về đạo Nho*, cites it as “gặp việc phải làm có gan làm” (literally, “daring to do what one has to do”); here I follow *Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập*, vol. 5, p. 489.

65. 見義不為無勇也。

66. 仁者必有勇，勇者不必有仁。

67. Shirong Luo, “A Defense of Ren-Based Interpretation of Early Confucian Ethics,” in *Taking Confucian Ethics Seriously: Contemporary Theories and Applications*, ed. Kam-por Yu, Julia Tao, and Philip J. Ivanhoe (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), p. 136.

68. 好勇不好學，其蔽也亂。

69. 勇而無禮則亂。

70. 惡勇而無禮者。

71. David Marr, *Vietnam: State, War, and Revolution (1945–1946)*, pp. 82–83.

72. From the article titled “Người cán bộ cách mạng” (The revolutionary cadre), published in *Nhân dân* (People) newspaper on March 3, 1955; see *Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập* (Hồ Chí Minh: The complete works), 2nd ed., vol. 7, 1953–1955 (Hanoi: National Politics Publisher, 2000), p. 480. A Chinese equivalent of *tận trung với nước, tận hiếu với dân* is *weiguo jinzhong, weimin jinxiao* 為國盡忠為民盡孝.

73. This citation is from a speech given on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the People’s Army of Vietnam on December 22, 1964; see *Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập* (Hồ Chí Minh: The complete works), 2nd ed., vol. 11, 1963–1965 (Hanoi: National Politics Publisher, 2000), p. 351.

74. Mạch Quang Thắng, ed., *Giáo trình tư tưởng Hồ Chí Minh* (Hồ Chí Minh’s thought: A textbook) (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2005), pp. 160–161.

75. “The stern dignity of antiquity showed itself in grave reserve; the stern dignity of the present day shows itself in quarrelsome perverseness” (古之矜也廉，今之矜也忿戾) (*Analects* 17.16).

76. In his translation of the *Mencius*, James Legge also renders *lian* as “self-denying purity,” in “Teng Wen Gong II,” 15.

77. Patrick Kim Cheng Low and Sik Liang Ang, “Confucian Ethics, Governance and Corporate Social Responsibility,” *International Journal of Business and Management* 8, no. 4 (2013): 32.

78. The original English translation reads, “becoming angered because of the actions of others” and “Our only aim should be to study, work and make progress,” respectively.

79. 欲仁而得仁，又焉貪。

80. The four articles, titled “Thế nào là *cần*?” (What is “diligence”?), “Thế nào là *kiệm*?” (What is “frugality”?), “Thế nào là *liêm*?” (What is “integrity”?), and “Thế nào là *chính*?” (What is “honesty”?), were consecutively printed in the newspaper *Cứu quốc* (National salvation) from May 30 to June 2, 1949. Signing under the pen name Lê Quyết Thắng (Lê the determined-to-win man), Hồ Chí Minh opens the series with a rhetorical question, “Why does President Hồ promote the slogan *Diligence, Frugality, Integrity, Honesty*?” The answer is:

Because Diligence, Frugality, Integrity, [and] Honesty are the foundation of the *new life* (*đời sống mới*), and the cornerstone of *patriotic emulation* (*thi đua ái quốc*).... From the success of the August Revolution (1945), and the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, until these years of resistance, thanks to Diligence, Frugality, Integrity, [and] Honesty, our people have defeated many enemies such as flooding, illiteracy, colonialism, and famine. However, among our compatriots there are some people who comprehend those concepts, and others who still do not clearly understand them. There are some people who have practiced them well, and others who have rarely realized them. Hence, we must explain the concepts in question so clearly that everyone can apprehend and practice them. (See *Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập*, vol. 5, 1947–1949, p. 1312)

81. *Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập*, vol. 5, 1947–1949, pp. 1321, 1323.

82. In his translation of the *Mencius*, James Legge presents his understanding of this concept through different renditions, such as “moderation” in “Li Lou II,” 51; “pure” in “Wan Zhang II,” 10; or “disinterestedness” in “Jin Xin II,” 83.

83. Hoa John Le Van, “Cultural Foundation of Ho Chi Minh’s Revolutionary Ideology,” p. 263.

84. The original reads, “*Li* is as if wearing shoes [i.e., being bound and following criteria], thus, worshiping the spirits and receiving blessings [from them]” (履也。所以事神致福也).

85. Lê Văn Quán, “Bước đầu tìm hiểu Bác Hồ với học thuyết của Nho gia” (Preliminary understanding of Uncle Hồ and Confucian doctrine), in *Thông báo Hán Nôm học 1996* (Sino-Nom Studies’ reports of 1996), accessed September 30, 2015, <http://hannom.vass.gov.vn/noidung/thongbao/Pages/baiviet.aspx?ItemID=176>.

86. 克己復禮為仁 (*Analects* 12.1; English translation from Antonio S. Cua, ed., *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy* [New York: Routledge, 2003], p. 941). In China, this renowned saying was severely criticized in the anti-Lin Biao, anti-Confucius campaign during the period from 1973 to 1976.

87. Bo Mou, *Chinese Philosophy A–Z* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 84.

88. *Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập*, vol. 5, 1947–1949, p. 875. The term *lễ phép* is, in fact, a Vietnamization of the Chinese *lǐfǎ* 禮法.

89. *Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập*, vol. 5, 1947–1949, pp. 460–461.

90. 言忠信，行篤敬 (*Analects* 15.6; James Legge’s translation).

91. 始吾於人也，聽其言而信其行；今吾於人也，聽其言而觀其行 (*Analects* 5.10).

92. Cecilia Wee, “Xin, Trust, and Confucius’ Ethics,” *Philosophy East and West* 61, no. 3 (2011): 529.

93. This text is also known as *How to Be a Good Communist* (see *Selected Works of Liu Shaoqi* [Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984–], vol. 1), online version at <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/liu-shaoqi/1939/how-to-be/index.htm>; original Chinese version available at <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/shizheng/8198/30513/30515/33955/2524494.html>.

94. Wm. Theodore de Bary, ed., *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2nd ed., 2001), vol. 2, pp. 427, 430–431.

95. According to Trần Đình, Liu Shaoqi’s book was translated into Vietnamese as *Bản về tu dưỡng của người cộng sản*.” See Trần Đình, *Đèn cù* (Lighted merry-go-round lantern) (Người Việt Books, 2014), p. 27.

96. Hoa John Le Van, “Cultural Foundation of Ho Chi Minh’s Revolutionary Ideology,” p. 269.

97. Neil L. Jamieson also has a brief comment on the handbook as follows, “A handbook used by Party militants defined the core values of tradition in contemporary terms. Nhan and nghĩa were still the core elements of the ethical system.... This handbook for cadres might be summarized in a single sentence: behave toward the party as if it were your family.” See Neil L. Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 217–218.

98. Nguyễn Khắc Viện, *Bản về đạo Nho*, pp. 68–73.
99. This may refer to Morishima Michio and his book *Why has Japan "Succeeded"?*
100. *Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập*, vol. 2, 1924–1930, pp. 456–458.
101. 子曰：「視其所以，觀其所由，察其所安。人焉廋哉？」 (*Analects* 2.10).
102. 孔子成春秋而亂臣賊子懼 (“Confucius completed the Spring and Autumn, and rebellious ministers and villainous sons were struck with terror”) (*Mencius*, Book 3, “Tengwen Gong II,” part 2.9; English translation from Legge, *Works of Mencius*).

PART III

Clarifying Confucian Values

CHAPTER 10

The Ethics of Contingency

Yinyang

Heisook KIM

IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND how Confucian culture is relevant to a changing world cultural order, we must allow this tradition to speak on its own terms. That is, we must appeal to its own philosophical vocabulary. The language of yinyang is pervasive in Confucian philosophy, from the *Yijing* in classical times down to the contemporary New Confucianism. What I want to do in this chapter is to bring clarity to this central idea, and then explore its philosophical implications and cultural expressions. The ethics of contingency that I try to draw from the doctrine of yinyang would be of significance especially in the age of contingency that we are living in.

The concept of yinyang in the East Asian philosophical context has worked as a core idea that explains changes, harmony, and unity in both the universe and the human world. Originally, yin and yang were two words referring, respectively, to the dark and to the light. Yin indicated the phenomenon of a cloud blocking the sun and yang that of the sun shining. But later they were combined to mean a complex quality (a pair of opposites) or function (a dialectical movement) of things or phenomena that displayed a dynamic feature of the world.

The concept of yinyang as a dialectical principle or as Dao is most conspicuously present in the *Yijing* 易經, or *Book of Changes*, which has had tremendous influence on Confucianism, ancient and modern. Even though “yinyang” is found in Daoist philosophy, the *Laozi*, and the *Zhuangzi*, but not in the four cardinal Confucian books (*Si shu* 四書), the Confucian metaphysics

and cosmology developed in the Song dynasty cannot be discussed without it. Its influence on Confucian culture in general is even greater. The concept of yinyang, connected with that of the Five Phases (*wuxing* 五行) of Fire, Water, Wood, Metal, and Earth, has exercised great explanatory power in China since the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.) and was widely used among Han Confucians, especially by Dong Zhongshu, for political purposes. Since Song Neo-Confucianism developed a unique worldview by fully exploiting the *Yijing*, the doctrine of yinyang and *wuxing* has constituted a basic Confucian philosophical framework within which natural phenomena and human affairs could be explained. Its influence in Confucian culture is so extensive that we cannot fully understand its nature without recourse to it. In particular, the concept of yinyang defines a special aspect of Confucian reasoning: it is the ability to balance between two conflicting opposites through ways that are quite different from other ordinary ways of reaching equilibrium and from the way that Western dialectical reason works.

As the explanatory force of yinyang has been enormous, the range of its use has been wide to the extent that it has covered the areas of metaphysics, epistemology, logic, aesthetics, and ethics as denominated by the discipline of Western philosophy. The main reason for yinyang having such diverse and widespread use is that the history of its use is long and complex, generating multiple layers of meaning.

Risking oversimplification, I want to divide these layers into three categories.

1. Yinyang as *substances*. In a Neo-Confucian context, it is used to indicate two modes of *qi* 氣. It is also not unusual to find contexts where yinyang refers to people or entities like male and female and heaven and earth.
2. Yinyang as the *properties of things*. It also refers to such properties of things as dark-light, soft-hard, feminine-masculine, and low-high.
3. Yinyang as a *principle of signification*. This refers to a function that generates contrasts and differences or a principle that makes changes in the world.¹

For all of these equivocations, there is one essential aspect of yinyang: it is always concerned with the cyclic relation and the changing movement between contraries or opposites. They keep rotating without cessation. It is the *way* (*dao* 道) in which there is an eternal movement where yin follows yang and yang follows yin, as in the movement of bending and expanding, and in the change of day and night. This relation includes interdependence, in which opposites are interfused and intermingled so that they cannot exist on their own even though they keep their own identities in the sense that one cannot be reduced to the other or be defined by the other. The exact nature of the relation, however, can-

not be manifested in clear terms or concepts. In the appended remarks of the *Book of Changes*, we find this passage: “The unfathomable in the operation of yin and yang is called spirit (*shen* 神).”²² Throughout the history of the development of Confucianism, we may find different types of yinyang relations: (1) There is yinyang as a *successive* relation, where a yin phase follows a yang phase as in an ebb and flow. (2) There is yinyang as a *simultaneous* relation, where yin grows and yang shrinks simultaneously. In this type, yin and yang always come together, overlap, and interpenetrate. And (3) there is yinyang as a *stimulus-response* relation in order to make a unified whole. My concern in this chapter is to think about the ethical implication of the principle of yinyang characterized in type 2.

The Superposition of Yinyang and Its Moral Implications

The *Book of Changes* consists of judgments and comments on sixty-four symbolic hexagrams, each consisting of double trigrams, and each one of these in turn consisting of eight trigrams having an iconic relation with an element of the universe. One of the governing concepts of the *Changes* is the intertwining of yinyang to the effect of yin existing in yang and yang in yin (陰陽錯綜). Here, Heaven (*qian* 乾), earth (*kun* 坤), water (*kan* 坎), fire (*li* 離), wind (*xun* 巽), thunder (*lei* 雷), mountain (*gen* 艮), and pond (*dui* 兌) are considered the basic elements of the universe. Each corresponds to a state of affairs or a quality such as being lofty, being low, being in adversity, being bright, bending, being in action, stopping, and being pleased. This accordingly yields various meanings piling up one upon another. A trigram consists of three lines, divided or undivided. The divided line represents yin and the undivided yang. The first, third, and fifth lines of a hexagram are considered to take yang positions, and the second, fourth, and sixth, yin positions. A divided yin line (*yinyao* 陰爻) may take either a yang or a yin position. In this way, yin and yang are always superposed in a hexagram yielding different judgments depending on the ways they are superposed.

The fact that opposites and contraries are always intertwined, interpenetrating, and interdependent has an ethical implication of great importance in the East Asian cultural context. There is nothing that is one hundred percent pure yang or pure yin. The hexagram *qian* 乾 consists of six yang lines representing the image of pure yang. But the second, fourth, and sixth lines are located in yin positions, which means that yang lines (*yangyao* 陽爻) are located in yin positions. There is yin force hidden even in *qian* as pure yang. Even when something looks like pure yang, it contains a moment that makes the transformation of it into the other phase possible. The negative moment penetrating into the purity of yang or yin is indispensable for a certain state of affairs to change into another phase. Everything categorized as yang or yin contains a moment of its

own negation within it to make the alternation possible. All things in the universe change through the alternation of opposing forces, yin and yang. Everything comes and goes in a cyclic order of the universe. When a state of affairs is such that a thing reaches the utmost limit of its development, it is doomed to change into the opposite state (i.e., its annihilation). On reaching the utmost limit, however, there is already inherent in the thing a seed of downfall at the moment of change. The sage is that person who can examine the subtle emergence of the moment and foresee the turning of one phase into the next. The moment is so subtle that ordinary men cannot recognize it. The ethics of yin-yang exhorts people to learn the wisdom of the sage who can see the phase of a thing within the process of its changes and thus within the totality of the vicissitudes of life. This is the way we understand *dao*.

A sage is a person who can see the superposition of yin and yang in all phenomena of the universe. By noticing a sign of fall in rising and a sign of rise in falling, for instance, a sage can see the superposition of fall and rise. All things appear in the twofold yin and yang. As there is neither pure yang nor pure yin, there is nothing that is absolutely good or evil in a moral context. Unlike the Western philosophical tradition, where one may find the concept of absolute substance, or the concept of the highest good (*summum bonum*), the Confucian tradition does away with the concept of absolute good and absolute evil. In the Christian tradition, evil has been posited as the other of the perfect good, God. Modern philosophers tend to internalize evil as something deeply rooted in human nature. Kant, for example, identified radical evil in human nature as the perversion of our will exposed in our desires and inclinations.³ The contemporary political philosopher Hannah Arendt observed in her early work *The Origins of Totalitarianism* that radical evil is rooted in some original fault of human nature, even though she later claimed the banality of evil.⁴ But in the East Asian Confucian tradition, what counts as evil is the inappropriate manifestation of moral feelings and values. Even if the moral feelings represented in the four sprouts (*si duan* 四端) are themselves purely good, they tend toward being evil when not being properly utilized. Evil in this context does not have a radical feature of being deeply rooted in human nature. In the Confucian context, it is not the case that human feelings and desires are bad on their own account. Only when they run against the principle of the middle and the rules of propriety do they become evil. But how do we know the middle and what is proper in all the variety of human situations?

The Middle as Not Fixed, but Situated

The moral ideal in the ethics of yinyang is not the removal of the bad, as it is in Kantian ethics, where one's moral will is free of desires and inclinations that

follow the dictates of a practical reason that is absolutely independent of sense experience. As mentioned above, the *dao* that governs all the changes in the universe tells us that there is no eternal good or bad. Everything has its own limit containing the seed of its downfall. Thus, if you are experiencing bad fortune, then it means that good fortune will soon come. If you are on the apex, then you have to prepare yourself for the downward road. Even before you arrive at the highest point, you should already have prepared for the lowest, because the lowest is already present in the highest without being seen. By avoiding the ultimate and the final, you can control your desires at the proper level. You always have to stop before your desire is fully realized. Full realization or perfection is almost the same as excess and overflow. Being at the highest simply means being at the beginning of falling: the judgment on the top yang in the hexagram *Qian* runs, “‘A dragon that overreaches should have cause for regret’: when something is at the full, it cannot last long.”⁵ The position of a noble man is not the top, but right below the top (the fifth line).

The principle of the middle, in a Confucian context, tells us to avoid standing on two ultimate ends of a line in all human situations. To determine the middle, we have to examine closely the situation we are in. As everything constantly changes, there cannot be a fixed middle point where the balance between the two opposing forces, yin and yang, can be achieved. In accordance with the time and position in which one is located, one can determine where the middle point is. But it is not easily found. Nor can we depend on our intuition, as may be proposed in ethical intuitionism. There is no such thing as a moral intuition by which one knows the middle once and for all. Only the wisdom of a sage may let us know where the middle is. Wisdom is based on a deep reflection on human experience, helping us to attain a fine sensibility that enables us to be in tune with the needs of the time and space of a particular situation (*shizhong* 時中).

Let us think about the example in the *Mencius* (“Jin Xin I” 盡心章句上, 26) where the difficulty of taking the middle is mentioned. Taking the middle is different from holding just one middle point while disregarding a hundred others. It is rather like holding the whole by holding one point, the middle as the center point of weight.⁶

Cheng Yi, in his commentary to the *Mencius*, says that the middle is the most difficult concept to understand, and thus we dare not talk about it but rather try to grasp it in quiescence, utterly focused using our inner eye (*mo shi xin tong* 默識心通): “It is most difficult to understand the word *zhong* (中). Thus you should try to know it through your inner mind in silence.”⁷

The middle is always contextually determined depending on the perspective one takes. The wisdom of a sage is the wisdom that sees the balancing point in the fluctuation of things and the flexibility of truth in human affairs. But this wisdom is different from moral intuition, which is a priori given as the wisdom

learned through experience and through trial and error. Everything has its own middle. It is therefore impossible to grasp the middle in general, or the truth in all human affairs, as Cheng Yi tells us:

It is impossible to grasp the middle. If we knew the middle, then we would not have to wait to search for the middle in each case of human affairs and in every natural phenomenon. If there were a given middle, then it is not a real middle.⁸

To find the middle of something, we have to examine it in its particularity, that is, examine the specific situation within which it is located. The middle must be determined in each individual case. As a skilled surfer knows how to balance at every movement of the waves, so a sage knows how to be attuned to the needs of the times in human affairs. As every layperson can learn the skill of surfing only by participating in surfing, a common man learns the wisdom of the sage through experience. Learning involves knowing how and when to advance, to retreat, to preserve, to live, when to gain, and when to lose. Through regret and good fortune, one can learn lessons and come to know proper timing and the way to refrain from certain actions at inopportune times.

On the surface, Confucian ethics has much in common with moral intuitionism. The concepts of Mencius' four sprouts (*si duan*) and Wang Yangming's innate knowledge (*liangzhi* 良知) are often considered to advocate innate or a priori moral knowledge. But I think rather that they represent a moral ability or disposition inherent in every human being. Moral knowledge in Confucian contexts always comes through constant learning and self-cultivation simulating the wisdom of a sage. It is not a priori or intuitively given but rather is to be searched in every moment of our experience by taking care of the moment. To attain moral wisdom, it is important to ride the change and transformation of affairs, trying to view matters in the totality of unending change. Is this kind of ethical position to be assimilated into a situation ethics? In what follows, I would like to argue that the ethics of yinyang is not a kind of situation ethics that may result in ethical relativism or ethical nihilism.

Keeping Desire Subdued through Concerned Consciousness

It is important to note that the yinyang ethics proposed in a Confucian context is not opportunistic, the strong emphasis on timing and the strong blame for inopportune choice of action notwithstanding. Situation ethics does not accept universal moral principles or values that may hold in every human situation. All moral judgments depend on the situation one is located in at the moment of action. In contrast, according to Kantian ethics, telling a lie is morally bad

in whatever situation one is placed. If everyone tells a lie, then a linguistic discourse itself, let alone the everyday communication among people, would not be possible. In Kantian ethics, a maxim cannot be a moral rule if it cannot pass the test of universality. Kant thought that the first core of morality is universality, which prescribes that we must all be the same human beings. When one tells a lie, therefore, one goes against the principle of humanity. Regardless of the situation, certain actions are not to be allowed.

But in the context of yinyang ethics, we cannot make a Kantian judgment on the act of telling a lie as such. In certain situations, the act could also be one of helping a dying person or saving another person's life. Moral goodness is not something inherent in actions and intentions. It can only be measured in the wider context of human actions. There is no fixed rule to define the scale of that context. It only depends on one's own moral sensibility finely developed through one's experience in society. This kind of contextual and situational attitude of yinyang ethics, however, does not result in ethical relativism because in all situations one should not take one's eyes off the *dao*, moral truth, and rectitude. In the ethics of yinyang, there is a strong belief in the way of things and the dictates of the inner nature of things. The indeterminacy of the middle only shows the subtlety of the way these dictates emerge.

Accepting the contingencies and vicissitudes of life does not necessarily lead one to a relativist attitude toward what is valuable and right. A relativist believes that there are many ways to be good or right and that it is not possible to determine one right way. But the moral attitude advocated in the *Book of Changes* is that of an inquirer ever searching at every turn of life for what is right and morally true. The truth is not of relative value. Even though the truth is not what we can easily find, being hidden in moving moments of time, it does exist. To find the truth, we need wisdom and sensitivity to the manifold of human affairs. Wisdom is attained through constant efforts to achieve rectitude and propriety. These efforts include learning to take care of what every moment of life requires, willingness to rectify faults, and keeping one's own person through all adversities (*jinshen* 謹身). Learning through experience with a humble mind will show the way to the truth.

To make the proper response in every moment, one has to adopt an alert and fearful attitude (*jieju* 戒懼) toward the contingencies of life. This attitude of caution does not result from calculating the advantages or disadvantages one may have from taking a certain course of action. It is the awareness of the contingencies of human lives where nothing lasts long that makes us humble and fearful. A yang state contains a yin element, and a yin state a yang element. Let's consider an example of a line statement of the third yang in *Qian*, that is, the top of the lower trigram located just below the upper trigram. Here, yang is in its proper position (the third, top being yang elements) but located in the lower

trigram, which contains yin force. The statement says, “The noble man makes earnest efforts throughout the day, and with evening he still takes care; though in danger, he will suffer no blame.” In the “Commentary on the Words of the Text,” we find this paraphrased as follows:

The noble man fosters his virtue and cultivates his task. He fosters his virtue by being loyal and trustworthy; he keeps his task in hand by cultivating his words and establishing his sincerity. A person who understands what a maximum point is and fulfills it can take part in the incipency of the moment. A person who understands what a conclusion is and brings it about can take part in the preservation of righteousness. . . . Thus when he occupies a high position, he is not proud, and when he is in a low position, he is not distressed. To be at the top of the lower trigram is still to be below the upper trigram.⁹

Being alert and fearful is a moral attitude commonly exhorted in Confucian texts, and constitutes a core value that differentiates Confucian ethics from a situation ethics of a relativist vein. This attitude keeps one from overreaching a maximum point and from pursuing the full realization of one’s desire. Concerned consciousness or caution is a precondition under which one searches for what is right at the moment of action. It is an attitude that accepts the contingencies of human lives. One who is alert and fearful sincerely pursues rectitude and sincerity at the moment of one’s choice of action. This attitude is needed to discern subtle changes in the processes of the world. It is not an expression of hesitation or oscillation between relative values. Rather, it helps one to find truth hidden in myriad moments of time. If one masters this moral attitude without losing rectitude in all actions, then one would suffer no blame and no regret. Unlike a relativist, who does not believe in a moral truth, a Confucian person being alert and fearful strongly believes in the existence of moral truths that underlie the moments of time and that are only revealed to searching and reflecting minds.

From Personal Morality to Social Ethics

Texts in Confucian ethics are abundant with everyday norms and exemplary models mainly focused on building moral character and traits in an individual, usually a male noble person (*junzi* 君子). They prescribe various ways for a person to be a morally right person modeled on a Confucian sage. But the final goal in Confucian ethics is not simply the perfection of an individual mind, or the fulfillment of virtues allotted to a person in accordance with social and familial position, but the common well-being of a wider community. Individual

moral fulfillments must converge upon the general well-being and order of a society, eventually producing harmony within it.

For example, there is a much cited a passage in the *Great Learning* to the effect mentioned above:

The ancients who wished to manifest their clear character to the world would first bring order to their states. Those who wished to bring order to their states would first regulate their families. Those who wished to regulate their families would first cultivate their personal lives. Those who wished to cultivate their personal lives would first rectify their minds. Those who wished to rectify their minds would first make their wills sincere. Those who wished to make their wills sincere would first extend their knowledge. The extension of knowledge consists in the investigation of things. When things are investigated, knowledge is extended; when knowledge is extended, the will becomes sincere; when the will is sincere, the mind is rectified; when the mind is rectified, the personal life is cultivated; when the personal life is cultivated, the family will be regulated; when the family is regulated, the state will be in order; and when the state is in order, there will be peace throughout the world.¹⁰

In the Confucian tradition, the philosophical and political base of the state is the family. As is widely recognized, a state is considered a big family. It is quite natural, therefore, that Confucian ethics is much focused on ramifying the role of an individual within a family and on analogically extending personal morality to the public arena. Most fundamental to making a Confucian individual is establishing sincerity within that individual's mind through constant inquiry into what is true. I have argued in the previous section that what differentiates Confucian ethics from situation ethics is the keen awareness of the true and of rectitude. The emphasis on knowledge is more conspicuous in the Neo-Confucian tradition than in the Yangming school.

The political ideal of the nation as a big family no longer serves the contemporary world based as it is on principles and laws not known to a traditional Confucian society. Confucian ethics nowadays seems to be left within the boundary of an individual life. To develop it into a social or political ethics, we need to pay attention to the spirit of the ethics of yinyang as an ethics of contingency that sees human civilization in constant change where nothing ever lasts. The ethics of contingency, as I have examined in the previous sections, suggests to us that there cannot be an eternal winner or loser, and that there cannot be ultimate otherness. It tells us that when one phase prevails, the opposite phase will soon follow. To live through such an ever-changing world we should continue to be alert and fearful without losing rectitude. This attitude is good not only for helping individuals to

keep their desires within certain limits, but also for helping the state to attain justice by keeping it from going to the extreme in making social policies and pursuing relations, political and economic, with other states. All, being interconnected and interpenetrating, are under the perennial changes and mutual influences in which we move toward an ideal goal of reaching balance and harmony. Based on the metaphysics and the ethics of yinyang, we may have to redefine the identity of an individual and a nation. We may also envision a world order in which it is the correlational and intercultural aspects that are most valued.

Notes

1. These diverse aspects of yinyang have been explored in my recent book; see Kim Heisook 김혜숙, *Sin eumyangnon: Dong Asia munhwa nollu ui haeche wa jaegeon* 新음양론: 동아시아 문화 논리의 해체와 재건 (A new interpretation of yinyang: Deconstructing and reconstructing the logic of East Asian culture) (Seoul: Ewha Womans University Press, 2014).

2. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, trans. and comp. Wing-tsit Chan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 266.

3. Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), pp. 15–39.

4. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1951), p. 469.

5. *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as interpreted by Wang Bi*, trans. Richard John Lynn (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 138.

6. Mencius, “Jin Xin I” 盡心章句上, 26:

Mencius said, “The principle of the philosopher Yang was: ‘Each one for himself.’ Though he might have benefited the whole kingdom by plucking out a single hair, he would not have done it. The philosopher Mo loves all equally. If by rubbing smooth his whole body from the crown to the heel, he could have benefited the kingdom, he would have done it. Zi Mo holds a medium between these. By holding that medium, he is nearer the right. But by holding it without leaving room for the exigency of circumstances, it becomes like their holding their one point. The reason why I hate that holding to one point is the injury it does to the way of right principle. It takes up one point and disregards a hundred others.” (James Legge translation; see Chinese Text Project website at <http://ctext.org/mengzi/jin-xin-i>)

7. *Maengja jipju* 孟子集注 (Complete translation of the Mencius), trans. and annot. Seong Baek-hyo 懸吐完譯 (Seoul: Jeontong Munhwa Yeon’guhoe, 1996), p. 395.

8. Ibid.

9. See Lynn, *Classic of Changes*, p. 135, and *Maengja jipju*, p. 395.

10. Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, pp. 86–87.

CHAPTER 11

Zhong in the *Analects* with Insights into Loyalty

Winnie SUNG

THIS CHAPTER ATTEMPTS to analyze the notion of *zhong* 忠 in the *Analects*. Since *zhong* is often translated as “loyalty” in the existing literature, it is tempting to read Confucius as placing emphasis on the importance of being loyal, and this will easily call to mind many negative connotations associated with loyalty such as blind submission, ungrounded favoritism, and the erosion of integrity. Such a strong association between *zhong* and loyalty might prevent us from fully understanding why *zhong* is valued. The aims of this chapter are to examine Confucius’ use of *zhong* as recorded in the *Analects*, to articulate the early Confucian conception of *zhong*, and to extract ethical insights from such an early Confucian conception by juxtaposing it against the contemporary conception of loyalty.

Zhong is often hailed as one of the cardinal concepts in early Confucian ethics. In English translations, the early Confucian term *zhong* is often rendered as “loyalty.” The same tendency is found in modern Chinese translations. For example, in his modern Chinese translation of the *Analects*, Yang Bojun uses a seemingly similar modern Chinese expression, *zhongxin* 忠心, which means loyalty, as a modern translation of “*zhong*.”¹ In addition, there is a tendency to take the early Confucian conception of *zhong* to mean loyalty to a ruler. With regard to the spread of Confucianism to Japan, scholarly interest in *zhong* has been focused predominantly on loyalty to the emperor or the state and on the potential tension between loyalty to the state and filial piety.

If *zhong* is understood as loyalty, this understanding not only potentially conflicts with other ethical attributes, such as filial piety,² but it also seems to be in tension with the early Confucian ethical system as a whole. Loyalty requires

one to have a special regard for someone. I give unwavering support to my friend, to whom I am loyal, because my friend stands in special relationship to me. However, even though early Confucians do emphasize special relationships, the ideal seems to be that ethical agents should eventually extend their care to everyone.³ The emphasis on loyalty is a *prima facie* obstacle to the extension of care to other people in general. If the focus of *zhong* is more narrowly on one's loyalty to the ruler or state, there are further problems, such as whether one is justified in being loyal to a corrupt ruler or what one should do in practical cases where there is a conflict between one's loyalty and one's duty to the general public. This raises the worry that the Confucian idealization of loyalty is in tension with our current global dynamics. Chenyang Li, for example, points out that one of the main contemporary challenges faced by Confucianism is pressure from liberal-democratic value systems. While Confucianism emphasizes loyalty to one's country and family, liberal democracies tend to emphasize individual autonomy and freedom.⁴

Worries along this line are not unfounded. Indeed, the Confucian notion of *zhong* has evolved throughout the imperial period to mean something ever closer to loyalty to the ruler. As we look for resources in early Confucian thought that could contribute to resolving our current global predicaments, we certainly need to be wary of the failings of Confucianism over its long history. However, we should not let our reading of the early Confucian conception of *zhong* be colored by these later developments. As some scholars have already pointed out, in the early Confucian texts *zhong* does not always mean loyalty, especially not in texts earlier than the *Xunzi*.⁵ What I attempt to do here is not to elaborate on the Confucian emphasis on loyalty but to salvage the early Confucian view on *zhong* by clarifying the concept of *zhong* in the *Analects*.

As the following analysis will show, if we discard the assumption that *zhong* means "loyalty" in the *Analects* and try instead to approximate the meaning of the term as it is discussed in the text, we can retrieve valuable insights from early Confucian thought that have contemporary relevance. In section two below, I seek to approximate what *zhong* means in the *Analects* without being guided by any contemporary understanding of loyalty. In section three, I articulate what I take to be the early Confucian conception of *zhong* based on the textual observations made in section two. In section four, I discuss the ethical significance of *zhong* by juxtaposing it with our contemporary conception of loyalty. I attempt neither to equate Confucius' conception of *zhong* with loyalty nor to defend loyalty. Whether or not *zhong* means loyalty does not affect the second and third parts of the present investigation. What matters for the fourth part is that we can retrieve some early Confucian insights on a psychological attitude that has to do with how we relate to others. This attitude has aspects that overlap with those we find appealing about the notion of

loyalty, yet avoids some of the difficulties with the contemporary understanding of and emphasis on loyalty.

Zhong in the *Analects*

The term *zhong* appears in sixteen passages in the *Analects* and is used as either an adjective or a noun. As D. C. Lau aptly points out in the introduction to his translation of the *Analects*:

Translators tend to use “loyal” as the sole equivalent for *zhong* even when translating early texts. This is a mistake and is due to a failure to appreciate that the meaning of the word changed in the course of time. In the later usage, it is true, *zhong* tended to mean “loyalty” in the sense of “blind devotion.” But this was not its meaning at the time of Confucius.⁶

Lau himself translated *zhong* as “doing one’s best” instead of “loyalty.” Since the nature of Lau’s work is translation, he did not have the space to go into detailed discussion of why “doing one’s best” is more suitable than “loyalty.” Nonetheless, his insightful remark certainly suggests the limitation of translating *zhong* as “loyalty” and alerts us to do justice to the nuances and complexities of *zhong*. The task of this section is to follow up on Lau’s suggestion and investigate the usage of *zhong* in the *Analects*. There is, of course, a question about the extent to which the *Analects* is an accurate record or representation of Confucius’ thought. Indeed, two of the important quotes about *zhong* come from Confucius’ disciple Zeng Can 曾參 (also known as Zengzi 曾子), rather than Confucius himself (*Analects* 1.4, 4.15). Such ambiguity will not greatly affect the discussion, and I leave open the possibility that this is not necessarily what Confucius himself took *zhong* to mean. The goal here is to analyze the concept of *zhong* as it is presented in the text of the *Analects*. For convenience, I shall continue to use the name “Confucius” in my discussion to refer to the ideas expressed in the *Analects*.

Three main observations may be made about *zhong* in the *Analects*. First, *zhong* has to do with how one engages with others in general. Although later scholarship tends to understand *zhong* as a normative trait that ministers should embody or the proper attitude that ministers should have toward their superiors, there is no indication that Confucius thought that *zhong* pertains specifically to ministers or any hierarchical relationship. In the *Analects* there is one instance where it is said that ministers should serve the lord with *zhong* (3.19) and another where a minister is described as *zhong* (5.19). But even in these two instances there is no conclusive reason to think that *zhong* is a specific ethical trait of ministers or an attitude that someone in a lower hierarchical posi-

tion should assume toward those who are superior.⁷ This observation is in line with those made by Satō Masayuki, who conducted a detailed textual analysis that traces the development of *zhong* in the Spring and Autumn period and argues that the concept of *zhong* at the time of Confucius broadened from an ethical attribute of the leaders to an ethical attribute of individuals in general.⁸ A piece of positive evidence suggesting that *zhong* is about how one relates to people in general is *Analects* 13.19. When Fan Chi asks Confucius about *ren*, Confucius says:

居處恭，執事敬，與人忠。

While at home hold yourself in a respectful attitude; when serving in an official capacity be reverent; when dealing with others be *zhong*.

It is worth noting that the emphasis in this passage is that one has to be *zhong* in interacting with others or with people in general (*ren* 人).⁹ There is no suggestion that one can only be *zhong* with someone who stands in special relation to oneself.

In a similar vein, one of the things Zengzi reflects on daily is whether he has failed to be *zhong* to others:

曾子曰，吾日三省吾身，為人謀，而不忠乎，與朋友交，而不信乎，傳不習乎。

Zengzi said, “Every day I examine myself on three counts. In my planning for others, have I failed to be *zhong*? In my dealings with my friends have I failed to be trustworthy in what I say? Have I failed to practise repeatedly what has been passed on to me?”¹⁰ (*Analects* 1.4)

It is said in this passage that Zengzi would frequently reflect on whether he had been *zhong* with people and *xin* 信 (trustworthy) with friends.¹¹ It is interesting to note that Zengzi takes *xin* to be the appropriate attitude for one’s interacting with friends and *zhong* the appropriate attitude for one’s interacting with people in general (*ren* 人).¹² This suggests that the domain of relationships that *zhong* covers is not restricted to special relationships. Another point made about *zhong* in this passage is that *zhong* is concerned with planning on others’ behalf.

This leads us to the second observation: *zhong* in the *Analects* is intimately linked to offering advice. As the passage above suggests, *zhong* is an idealized state in which we *mou* 謀 for others. *Mou* in early Chinese texts is often used to mean planning strategies, offering advice to others, or giving thoughtful consideration to how to help others deal with a situation.¹³ The association between being *zhong* and one’s planning for others deserves attention. Indeed, in about

a third of the passages where “*zhong*” appears, *zhong* is concerned with speech. There is hardly any evidence that *zhong* has to do with doing.¹⁴ According to Confucius, the superior person always keeps nine things in mind, and one of them is *zhong* in speaking:

君子有九思，視思明，聽思聰，色思溫，貌思恭，言思忠，事思敬，疑思問，忿思難，見得思義。

There are nine things the gentleman turns his thought to: to seeing clearly when he uses his eyes, to hearing acutely when he uses his ears, to looking cordial when it comes to his countenance, to appearing respectful when it comes to his demeanor, to being *zhong* when he speaks, to being reverent when he performs his duties, to seeking advice when he is in doubt, to the consequences when he is enraged, and to what is right at the sight of gain. (*Analects* 16.10)

The “nine things” identified by Confucius all seem to be concerned with the appropriate attitudes one should strive to assume when one finds oneself in any of these nine circumstances. For example, in looking at something, one should aim at looking at it clearly; in having doubts, one should aim at raising questions.

Similarly, in saying things, Confucius thinks that one should aim at *zhong*. This suggests that *zhong* is a mental state or attitude toward which one should aim when saying things. This impression is further supported by *Analects* 15.6:

子曰，言忠信，行篤敬，雖蠻貊之邦，行矣，言不忠信，行不篤敬，雖州里，行乎哉。

The Master said, “If in word you are *zhong* and *xin* and indeed single-minded and reverent, then even in the lands of the barbarians you will go forward without obstruction. If you fail to be *zhong* and *xin* or to be single-minded and reverent in deed, then can you be sure of going forward without obstruction even in your own neighbourhood?”

It is obvious in this passage that both *zhong* and *xin* are attributes of speech. In addition, *Analects* 12.23 discusses *zhong* as the manner in which one should offer advice:

子貢問友。子曰，忠告，而善道之，不可則止，無自辱焉。

Zigong asked about how friends should be treated. The Master said, “Advise them in a *zhong* manner and guide them properly, but stop when there is no hope of success. Do not ask to be snubbed.”

An important clue in this passage is the latter part where Confucius says that one should stop if there is no hope of success in convincing the friend. This implies that *zhong* advice is not necessarily something that the friend would want to listen to.

Commentator He Yan took *zhong* in this context to mean that one should say what it is that is right and what it is that is wrong. His comment is insightful and it helps us make better sense of *Analects* 14.7:

子曰，愛之，能勿勞乎，忠焉，能勿誨乎。

The Master said, “Can you love anyone without making him work hard [alternative translation: without working hard]? Can you be *zhong* without saying something to correct them?”¹⁵

Confucius’ view here seems to be that if one is *zhong* toward someone, it is inevitable that one would want to say something to instruct and correct them (*hui* 誨). Both passages convey the point that being *zhong* has to do with telling others what is right—at least what the subject deems to be right. Confucius is probably aware that the hard truth might not be something that the other side can receive very well and therefore says in *Analects* 12.23 that one should stop if the friend does not listen, to avoid possible infringement of propriety.

The third observation is that what motivates one to make this kind of corrective yet potentially irksome advice is a concern for others rather than the self. The following passage gives us a glimpse into the kind of person whom Confucius considers as *zhong*:

子張問曰，令尹子文，三仕為令尹，無喜色，三已之，無愠色，舊令尹之政，必以告新令尹，何如。子曰，忠矣。

Zizhang asked, “Ling Yin Ziwen gave no appearance of pleasure when he was made prime minister three times. Neither did he give any appearance of displeasure [yun 愠] when he was removed from office three times. He always told his successor what he had done during his term of office. What do you think of this?” The Master said, “He can, indeed, be said to be a man of *zhong*.” (*Analects* 5.19)

Although this passage tells us very little about Ziwen, one striking characteristic of him according to this passage is that he is neither pleased nor upset by whether he himself holds office. Even when he was removed from office three times, what seems to be at the center of his attention is whether the office itself was handed over properly, rather than how his own standing was affected. It is worth noting that the term that is being used for displeasure here is *yun* 愠. While *yun* roughly

means feeling irritated or upset, it seems to be a special kind of displeasure that arises from one's thinking that something should not have happened to oneself, and one thinks the situation should be rectified. As we can observe from the accounts in the *Guoyu*, a ruler would feel *yun* when he believes that he has been offended and he wants to rectify the situation by going into battle.¹⁶

A similar idea is found in *Analects* 1.1 when it is said that the superior person is not *yun* even when others fail to appreciate him. This suggests that, in Confucius' view, people will normally *yun* when they are not recognized, presumably because they think they deserve to be recognized. In *Analects* 5.19, not only did Ziwen not show signs of *yun*; he would even ensure that the office was handed over properly so that the next prime minister would know what needed to be done. This suggests that Ziwen's focus was not on whether he was treated the way he thought he deserved to be treated but on what would advance the interest of the state. This is probably also why he did not show any sign of pleasure when he was made prime minister, for what occupied his mind was how he could do his job well in order to advance the interest of the state rather than dwelling on how the appointment reflected well on himself. This brief account suggests that, for Confucius, the state of *zhong* is one in which the subject is preoccupied with considerations of how to advance the interest of others and has bracketed, or at least marginalized, considerations of how to advance the subject's self-interest.

The general shape of these observations on *zhong* in the *Analects* is in line with the uses of *zhong* in early texts before and around Confucius' time. Indeed, scholars have noted that *zhong* is hardly used as a normative concept before the *Analects*. As Qu Wanli notes, there is no mention of *zhong* in the judgments of the hexagrams in the *Zhouyi* 周易, the *Shangshu* 尚書, the *Shijing* 詩經, or the *Chunqiu* 春秋經.¹⁷ This suggests that *zhong* is not used to describe a concept, or, at the very least, thinkers before Confucius had not paid attention to the importance of *zhong*.¹⁸ It is in the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu* that we start to see relatively more frequent occurrences of *zhong*. Assuming that the composition of the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 and the *Guoyu* 國語 are roughly contemporaneous with the *Analects*, we may through these two texts get a sense of the linguistic context of Confucius' time.

In the *Zuozhuan*, *zhong* is also concerned with a relational attitude that one has in one's interactions with others, and this attitude has the character of being objective and looking at the facts of the situation. For example:

所謂道忠於民而信於神也上思利民忠也祝史正辭信也

What I call *Dao* is being *zhong* to the people and being truthful [*xin*] to the Spirits. When [the ruler] thinks about benefiting the people, it is called *zhong*; when [the priests'] words are all upright, it is called *xin*.¹⁹

Here, *zhong* is characterized as an attitude the ruler assumes when he relates to his subjects. This further reinforces the impression that *zhong* is concerned with benefiting, rather than obeying, others. In addition, *zhong*, as a relational attitude, is not restricted to one's relation to those superior to oneself.

In another instance in the *Zuozhuan*,

公曰 小大之獄 雖不能察 必以情 對曰 忠之屬也 可以一戰

[When] the Duke said, "In great and small matters of legal process, even though I cannot investigate them thoroughly, I must rely on the facts," [Cao Gui] replied, "This is a type of *zhong*, [and] with it you can go into battle."²⁰

In Cao Gui's reply to Duke Zhuang, we again get the impression that *zhong* is taken to mean viewing the situation objectively without being colored by presumptions or biases.

In the *Guoyu*, we also see a tight connection between *zhong* and offering thoughtful advice. In "Jinyu" 3, we find the line

不謀而諫不忠

Remonstrating without planning—it is not *zhong*.

It is clear in this instance that what makes one *zhong* is not just giving any kind of advice. Rather, a *zhong* subject would need to plan thoughtfully (*mou* 謀).²¹ The thought here is probably that it is not sufficient to credit someone with *zhong* if she just candidly speaks her mind; what is also required is that she has to hold herself responsible and be committed to the person with whom she is *zhong*. Since she is committed in such a way, she has to consider carefully the different factors at play, put herself in the other person's shoes, and devise the best strategy that she can offer.

Another relevant piece of textual evidence is in "Jinyu" 2:

除闇以應外謂之忠...今君施其所惡于人，闇不除矣

To remove dimness in order to respond to the external is called *zhong*... Now that the ruler imposes what he dislikes on others, the dimness is not removed.

The metaphor of dimness here suggests that a person who fails to be *zhong* is obscured in a certain way. Whether it is selfish desires or a deficiency in cognitive understanding that is obscuring the subject, when the subject is in such a

state of moral obscurity he will impose what he dislikes on others. Interestingly, this idea also echoes the parallel between *zhong* and *shu* in *Analects* 4.15:

子曰，參乎，吾道一以貫之。曾子曰，唯。子出，門人問曰，何謂也。曾子曰，夫子之道，忠恕而已矣。

The Master said, “[Zeng] Can! There is one single thread binding my way together.” Zengzi assented. After the Master had gone out, the disciples asked, “What did he mean?” Zengzi said, “The way of the Master consists in *zhong* and *shu*. That is all.”

And *shu*, for Confucius, is about “not imposing on others what you yourself do not desire” (15.24). Even though we lack the information here to tell what it is that connects the points about being obscured, *zhong*, and imposing on others, we can at least infer that not being *zhong* and *shu* is, in some way, to disregard the interest of others.

The Early Confucian Conception of *Zhong*

In the preceding section, I tried to organize Confucius’ ideas about *zhong*. In this section, I shall try to articulate my own interpretation of the early Confucian conception of *zhong* on the basis of the three textual observations above. The goal is to approximate a faithful interpretation of Confucius’ view on *zhong*, but I submit that my discussion of *zhong* from this point onward might depart from the way the early Confucians initially thought about *zhong*. The hope is that we can extract from the textual observations above a line of thinking that is of interest to us in contemporary ethical discourse.

If we piece together the three observations about *zhong*, we start to get the picture that *zhong* is a state of mind in which one interacts with others, most often in the context of offering advice. A *zhong* person is someone who would offer this advice or strategic plans, even though she knows quite well that this is not something the recipient can comfortably accept. It might be easier for her to say something that is conveniently pleasing to the recipient, but a *zhong* person would choose to tell the hard truth because her concern is to advance the interest of others instead of her own. She would, of course, still observe the basic etiquette and behave with decorum (12.23), but this will not change the content of her advice if she sincerely thinks that the advice is right and will do the recipient good. If this picture is roughly what Confucius espouses, then we can probe further into this conception of *zhong* by analyzing the nature of *zhong* advice, the objects of *zhong*, and the motives *zhong* entails.

Let us first analyze the nature of *zhong* advice. For convenience, I will label

the *zhong* person as Z and the recipient of the *zhong* person's advice R. As we have seen, a piece of *zhong* advice is not necessarily something that would please R. But since Z cares about R, she would want to correct the mistake that she sees R is making (*Analects* 14.7) or potentially making. In considering what benefits the other, the *zhong* person's sole focus is on what is the right thing for R to do. The characteristically Confucian assumption operating in the background is likely to be that there is a distinction between what is in fact good for the self and what satisfies self-regarding desires, and that there is identification between what is in fact good for the self and what is in accordance with ethical standards. Hence, when I say that Z is one who offers advice that advances R's interest, I do not mean that she tries to satisfy R's desires or help R obtain whatever it is that R wants; instead, I mean Z will try to tell R what is in fact good or, equivalently, what is in fact right for R to do. From Z's point of view, her advice to R is what she thinks will in fact advance R's interest, which is also to say that her advice is about what is in fact in accordance with ethical standards.

It is not necessary for Z in fact to be right about what R should do. What is necessary is that she tell R what she sincerely believes to be the right thing to do. She might in fact be wrong, but it will not affect her being *zhong*. We can imagine a particular cultural setting where it is believed that a woman has to be confined to bed for a year after giving birth or else there will be far-ranging negative effects on her health. Let us suppose this is a myth. It is possible that someone who comes from this cultural setting would advise her friend who has just given birth to stay in bed for a year because she sincerely believes that this is good for her friend's health. Even though she is mistaken in this case, she can still be considered *zhong* in offering what she sincerely deems to be the advice that accords with the right standards. This is probably why, in Confucius' view, *zhong* is still short of *ren* (*Analects* 5.19, 5.28), for it is still possible that one misjudges a situation and imposes bad advice on others.

Paul Goldin suggests that *zhong* in the *Analects* conveys the sense of "being honest with oneself."²² It should, however, be emphasized that, in my interpretation, *zhong* is different from just offering one's honest opinion. Honesty is certainly important here, for I have to say what I take to be the case, but it is not the defining feature of *zhong*. A subject may be required to be honest under other ethical constraints; she can also be dictated by her natural temperament to say what she thinks is true. However, if she has not put serious thought into what furthers the interest of R, honest opinion alone cannot count as *zhong* advice. *Zhong* has the constraint of good cognitive judgment. Z does not simply report true beliefs to R but has to make the effort to work out the various factors at play in the situation and form a view about what is best for R.²³ The requirement for good judgment also implies that the subject must have her own view on what the ethical standards are and which ones are applicable in the situation.

Our analysis so far shows that it is the psychology of having someone's best interest at heart that is constitutive of *zhong*, and this psychology is often instantiated in the context of offering advice. One important feature of being in a *zhong* psychological posture is that the *zhong* person holds herself responsible for others' well-being. People sometimes undertake responsibilities by publicly entering into special relationships, such as politicians assuming duties at office and doctors taking patients. In these relationships, there is an external set of responsibilities that the subject is required to fulfill. If a doctor fails to advise the patient on the best treatment available because of certain self-regarding considerations, the patient can accuse the doctor of failing to be *zhong* because the doctor is supposed to be responsible for her health problem. However, it is not always the case that our responsibilities for others are clearly and formally defined. Coming to see someone as a friend, for example, is often a gradual process that is not formalized by a public act.

Also lacking is a set of clearly defined responsibilities between friends. Suppose Z and R are friends. It is conceivable that there are many circumstances under which it is ambiguous as to when R can hold it against Z for failing certain responsibilities and Z herself might well be aware of it. If there is some kind of psychology ensuring that Z will still have R's best interest at heart even if R cannot hold her responsible, then this psychology is not R's holding Z responsible, but Z's holding herself responsible for R. The upshot of this is that *zhong* does not necessarily require a mutual understanding or acknowledgment of the *zhong* person's responsibility. It is crucial to being *zhong* that one hold herself responsible and commit herself to promote the best interest of those with whom she is *zhong*. A failure of *zhong* is when Z fails to deliver on her responsibility, and it is possible that this kind of failure is only known to Z herself. For example, I would have failed to be *zhong* if I had advised my friend not to apply for a certain job partly because I myself wanted to apply for the job and saw her as a rival. Even if the advice actually turned out to be beneficial to my friend and she would never have found out that I had factored in my own selfish interest in my planning on her behalf, I would still have failed to be *zhong*.

Let us now turn to the kind of relationship to which *zhong* pertains. Recall from our first textual observation that the scope of the object of *zhong* is broad and covers other people in general.²⁴ Although there is no textual evidence suggesting that the object of *zhong* must be someone who stands in special relation to the subject, there are good reasons to think that, in practice, *zhong* is an attitude that usually pertains to special relationships. This is so because the circumstances that call for *zhong* are likely to be those that involve people with whom one is in some kind of special relationship. Suppose I were approached by a stranger on the street who happens to ask me for advice on whether she should quit her job; I think the intuition here is that I am not in a position to

give advice because I do not know her. Hence, in order to be in a position to give *zhong* advice, the *zhong* person must be in a position where she has adequate knowledge of the other person, the circumstances she is in, and the different factors at play. In our everyday life, the latter position is usually attained in special relationships.

That *zhong* is more often called for in special relationships further explains why *zhong* is a difficult psychological posture to sustain. Since the interests of both parties in a special relationship are so intimately intertwined, it is both practically and epistemically more difficult to separate considerations of what is good for others from what is good for oneself. Sometimes considerations creep in without the subject's awareness. A finance minister, for example, might propose a tax reduction for vehicle purchases. It might be true that such a tax reduction is in fact good for the state, but she might have factored into her consideration that this policy would serve her own interest in purchasing a vehicle. There could also be cases where the subject is not so blatantly self-serving. From an external standpoint, the public might insist that the finance minister take advantage of her position to benefit herself, but from the finance minister's own point of view, she might sincerely think that she was only considering what is good for the general public.

There are even fussier cases where it is difficult to tell what the subject's intention is from both external and internal standpoints. A parent might know the temperament of her child so well that she knows what kind of advice would upset the child. It is very likely that this worry about her upsetting the child would bias her consideration, and it turns out that the advice she gave is the kind that does not upset the child. However, in both cases, from the finance minister's and the parent's point of view, they might sincerely believe that they are offering advice on what is in fact the right thing to do. We do not have to go so far as to suppose that there is something like self-deception or unconsciousness involved. It can simply be that the interests in special relationships are so tightly connected that it is a challenging epistemic task to separate and differentiate considerations of the two.

What will ensure that the *zhong* subject does not slide into considerations of her self-interest, then? It seems that what grounds the *zhong* subject's focus on others' welfare is not a cognitive appraisal of the situation, for, as we have seen, there are cases where even if one holds herself responsible and is committed to the welfare of others, her self-interest might be so bound up with that of her object that it is genuinely difficult for her to keep track of where one ends and another begins. My proposed understanding is that *zhong* is grounded in the subject's affective concern and care for others, which motivates the subject's entire psychological posture to shift from focusing on the self to focusing on others. It is by virtue of this affective concern for others that, even if the subject

cannot cognitively discriminate between others' interests and those of her own, her entire attention is directed to others rather than herself. All the considerations and planning that a *zhong* person undertakes for others occur under a guiding light that is directed to others.

This interpretation also has the advantage of explaining the parallel between *zhong* and *shu*. While *shu* is about not imposing on others what one dislikes, *zhong* is about helping others to obtain what is good for them. What is common between the two notions is that both are grounded in the affective concern for others. At first glance, it might be tempting to understand *shu* as grounded in rational reflection. For example, it is convenient for me to shovel the snow in front of my house to my neighbor's side. But on reflection, my neighbors might shovel snow to my side, and this is something I would not want. However, if I know for certain that what I impose on others will not come back to me, what is it that holds me back from taking a free ride? If we take seriously the parallel between *zhong* and *shu*, a plausible explanation is that it is because I care about my neighbor that once I come to see on reflection that this is something that I myself will dislike, I would not want to do it to my neighbor. The reason I do not want to impose on my neighbor is not that I rationally reason that I would not want her to do the same to me but because I have an affective concern for her so that I do not want her to go through the feeling of discomfort that I would go through if it were imposed on me.

Zhong and Loyalty

In this section, I extract several ethical insights from the early Confucian conception of *zhong* outlined above and make it relevant to contemporary interests by juxtaposing it with loyalty. I do not want to suggest that *zhong* is the Confucian conception of loyalty. Even if the early Confucians did have in mind a certain idealized psychological posture that is akin to loyalty, it is unlikely that such a posture is exhausted by the concept of *zhong* alone. If there is some early Confucian conception of "being loyal" that we can model, such a conception must involve a broader cluster of related concepts, such as *jing* 敬, *cheng* 誠, *zhong* 忠, *yi* 義, and *xin* 信. My limited goal here is to show that *zhong* partially captures in some important ways the psychological terrain of loyalty, and this gives us a basis to think that early Confucians still have some important insights to offer to present-day discussions. It will also be shown how *zhong* can avoid some key difficulties with our contemporary understanding of and emphasis on loyalty. This should help us further appreciate the distinctive insights of early Confucian ethics. Since my purpose is to make relevant early Confucian insights to contemporary interests, the notion of "loyalty" under consideration is not a technical one but a colloquial one. In that regard, a dictionary definition of loyalty should

suffice to capture what we mean by “loyalty.” According to the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, “loyal” is defined as “giving or showing firm and constant support or allegiance to a person or institution.”²⁵ Throughout my discussion of “loyalty” below, it is this commonsense view of loyalty that I have in mind.

Loyalty is not an outdated concept. People across cultures still value loyalty in many domains of our contemporary life, whether it is the loyalty of a friend, of a spouse, of a family member, of an employee, or of a citizen. In modern multinational corporations, for example, loyalty is still expected from employees. However, if the balance between loyalty and duty to public justice is not maintained properly, things done in the name of loyalty sometimes have unfortunate consequences, with large-scale impact on the public. The Ford Pinto case is an example wherein excessive emphasis on loyalty had disastrous consequences.²⁶ Between 1970 and 1977 there were about five hundred to nine hundred burn deaths resulting from explosions of the Ford Pinto model caused by a faulty fuel system. Records show that in the pre-production period, engineers had already discovered that the gas tank used in the Pinto was unsafe and seriously considered switching to a different kind of gas tank. However, the loyalty of many of these engineers had prevented them from speaking up to the executive vice-president of Ford or “blowing the whistle.” In another case at the B. F. Goodrich plant, engineer Kermit Vandivier handed in a fraudulent report of a new brake design for LTV Aerospace Corporation against pressure from his supervisor and resigned. The resignation was supposed to take effect a few weeks later, but the chief engineer, citing Vandivier’s “disloyalty” to the company, informed Vandivier that he would accept his resignation “right now.”²⁷ In view of the tension between the demand of loyalty and the sometimes disastrous consequences that result from being loyal, let me briefly highlight how *zhong*, in three respects, preserves the appeal of loyalty and avoids its difficulties.

One prominent feature of loyalty that normally appeals to us is its emphasis on special obligations. There is usually a history that we share with people who are special to us, and these historical qualities make us think that we have stronger obligations to those who stand in special relationship to us. For instance, I have a stronger obligation to support my friend because she is the one who stood by me and helped me during a difficult time. There are also circumstances under which by entering into special relationships, like getting married, I also make a promise always to be supportive to my partner.

Failing to be loyal is also in some ways like breaking a promise. This prompts philosophers like Andrew Oldenquist to argue for the moral priority of special obligations over universal moral principles.²⁸ But once we take this route, there is the problem of grounding special obligations. As William Godwin puts it: “What magic is there in the pronoun ‘my’ that should justify us in overturning the decisions of impartial truth?”²⁹ One might adopt an “objective

consequentialist” reply along the line suggested by Peter Railton,³⁰ arguing that the form of deliberation that puts special relationships first is in fact conducive to bringing about the best possible outcomes. An objectivist consequentialist should indeed cultivate the trait of being loyal even though traits like this might sometimes manifest themselves in acts that do not seek to maximize the good. Railton himself gives the example of a couple, Juan and Linda, who live apart.³¹ Suppose Juan faces the choice of paying Linda a surprise visit to temporarily cheer her up or donating his money for travel to charity. The difficulty with this line of thought, however, is that it is unclear how a consequentialist agent can identify her consequentialist commitment with an agent-relative commitment. It seems that the commitments of the consequentialist agent are, after all, commitments that make reference to the commitment to the best outcome, rather than the well-being of a particular person. Even if the objective consequentialist is committed to the person, such commitment is still derivative.

By contrast, the notion of *zhong* preserves the emphasis on special relationships and circumvents the problem of grounding special obligations. *Zhong* is not grounded in special relationships. Instead, *zhong* is constitutive of special relationships.³² If we really are friends, I will necessarily want to take your best interest to heart and sincerely tell you what I think is the best thing for you. If in offering advice to you I have always factored in my own interest or made sure your interest will not conflict with my own, it is questionable if there really is a relationship between us as substantial as friendship. Indeed, as I argued in the previous section, the early Confucian reply is that there should not be any “magic of ‘I’” in consideration of *zhong* at all. What *zhong* requires is precisely that any consideration of “my X” will be out of the picture in one’s deliberation of what is good for others without sliding into consideration of oneself. A mother who is a lawyer may advise her child to pursue a career in law as well. Whether or not this is a piece of *zhong* advice does not turn on how well her child ends up doing in her career but on whether, when she offered the advice, she was only thinking about what is in fact good for the child or was thinking that “because she is *my* child, she has to follow in my footsteps.” The latter kind of thought would discount her advice as *zhong* even if the child turns out to enjoy her career in law. Since a *zhong* person’s regard for others is not further defined in terms of a regard for something that is “mine,” she will not let any consideration pertaining to herself affect her judgment of what really is good for others.

It is precisely because *zhong* does not focus on the “mine” component, *pace* Oldenquist, that it also extends to non-special relationships. A *zhong* subject holds herself responsible and is committed to looking out for others who are related to her by virtue of certain undertakings or social roles in a way that is in accordance with ethical standards. This means that the content of a *zhong*

person's obligations is not derived from special obligations but is derived from ethical standards. The obligation of a doctor to work in the best medical interest of her patient, for example, is not derived from the special relationship the doctor has with the patient but from the ethical standards to which the doctor is subject.³³

A second appealing feature of loyalty is the resoluteness or perseverance of a loyal subject,³⁴ who will remain committed to her object even when doing so might be disadvantageous to her own interest. For many loyal subjects, it is not that they do not have alternatives available to them. But because of their loyalty, they do not see the alternative options as available to them. Instead, they dedicate all their strength and will to serving the interest of their object. This resoluteness is especially valuable when a third party potentially rivals the object of loyalty, which is most often seen in soldiers' putting their lives on the line to protect their country. It is very tempting to think that there is something admirable in how a subject would unwaveringly put her object's interest above her own. The obvious worry with this kind of resoluteness is that it threatens integrity. The demand of loyalty might require the subject to willingly compromise or overlook her ethical standards, as we saw with engineers involved in the Ford Pinto case. Moreover, since loyalty requires one to follow and support the object of loyalty, some form of loyalty might even discourage the subject from forming a view about what matters to herself because it is always the object's interest that should be at the forefront of her mind. For example, for centuries women were discouraged from thinking for themselves about what matters to them because that could potentially conflict with the interest of their husband. Hence, in demanding loyalty there is the danger of reducing the subject to a servile state in which she has little self-respect.

The early conception of *zhong* also values resoluteness. One will offer whatever advice one sincerely believes is good for others, even if the consequence of doing so is costly to oneself. As we saw in the case of Ziwen (*Analects* 5.19), it is possible that a minister's *zhong* might result in his removal from office; however, this will not deter him from saying what he thinks is the right way to safeguard the interest of the ruler and the people. And even though Confucius says that one should stop advising when there is no hope of success (*Analects* 12.23), it is not far-fetched to surmise that Confucius would think, should the friend come back and seek advice again, that the subject would still be required to be *zhong*. Implicit in the notion of *zhong* is the expectation that the subject herself needs to have her own beliefs about and commitment to ethical standards. Since the subject sees herself as accountable to others, she will also endeavor to form a view of the situation and deliberate about the relevant ethical standards at issue. This is also why *zhong* advice is not just an honest opinion but has to be something that is thoroughly thought through by the subject. Hence, what

makes a *zhong* person's concern for others resolute is her firm commitment to observe ethical standards because of the assumption that what is good for one must be what is in accord with ethical standards.

The emphasis on a consideration of others' interests in a way that is independent of self-interest in *zhong* might lead some to worry that the subject's own interest and self-respect are threatened. This worry stems from a conflation of seeing oneself as one factor in the situation and seeing self-interest as the objective of one's consideration. It is possible that the subject's is one factor at play in the situation, in which case she should also take that into consideration. When sage Shun married without his father's permission, he did not do so out of self-interest. Rather, he took himself into account when thinking about what would further the interest of his father. Since Shun thought it would in fact be good for his father if his father had descendants, he felt it would be best for himself to get married so that his father could have descendants (*Mencius* 4A26). With *zhong* there is no connotation of obedience, implying that there is no requirement in the concept of *zhong* for the subject to go along blindly with the demands of others. If *zhong* is primarily a mental attitude that concerns how we offer advice to others, there is also little reason to think that there can be conflicting *zhong* as in the case of conflicting loyalties. If I am loyal to Team A, the nature of my loyalty will prevent me from supporting any team other than Team A. But if I am *zhong* to person X, there is nothing in the structure of *zhong* that prevents me from offering my honest advice to person Y about what I take to be right for her. This does not preclude the possibility that there is something else in my relationship with X that prevents me from offering *zhong* advice to Y.

It is interesting to note that, for the early Confucians, the image of the *zhong* subject is almost the exact opposite of the village worthies (*Analects* 17.13). While a village worthy is always eager to please her audience so as to advance self-interest when she in fact does not have any view that can be called her own, the *zhong* subject is only concerned with thinking about what advances her audience's interest.³⁵ She will carefully form her own view of the situation lest her object is obscured and, in voicing her honest opinion when necessary, she is willing to risk offending her audience.

The third aspect of loyalty that we normally find appealing is the emotive aspect. Josiah Royce poignantly characterizes this aspect of loyalty as follows:

The finding of one's rest and spiritual fulfillment even in one's life of toil itself—this state is precisely the state of the loyal, in so far as their loyalty gets full control of their emotional nature.³⁶

The idea that one's loyalty is at least supposed to have some grip over one's affective state is implicitly accepted in our everyday understanding. Suppose

one claims to be a fan of a certain sports team but never shows any excitement or disappointment when the team wins or loses. It is difficult to see how one is really loyal to the team, even if one attends every game just as a fan would do. Supposing this affective dimension of loyalty to be what makes loyalty valuable, it cannot be the particular kind of affective state that can sustain the loyal subject's perseverance and devotion.³⁷ At least it cannot be the fleeting or primitive kind that directly responds to stimuli in the environment. Then, what causes or sustains this kind of ongoing emotional state wherein the subject has "neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak" and will serve her object "with all [her] might and soul and strength?"³⁸ Royce's own answer is that if one has the need to glorify oneself it is only by devoting oneself to an object that one sees oneself as worthy. However, there is something paradoxical in this line of thought. If the starting point built into loyalty is a self-serving one after all, how can we attain the kind of wholehearted devotion to the other that is idealized in loyalty?

In a *zhong* state, even though the way one works toward the interest of another is regulated by ethical standards, this kind of psychological posture, which requires effort and is demanding to sustain, is grounded in an affective concern for others. This is not to say that the emphasis of *zhong* is affective concern as such. What it means is that the kind of resoluteness and strictness with oneself in doing what is ethically appropriate is grounded in affective concern. If this is correct, the proposed interpretation of *zhong* captures the necessity of both *ren* 仁 (benevolence) and *yi* 義 (propriety) in being *zhong*. While one has to be *yi*, that is, subjecting oneself to ethical standards, one's resoluteness in subjecting oneself to ethical standards is grounded in *ren*, an affective concern for others.

The question, then, is what causes one to have such affective concern for others in the first place. It is at this point that I also lack the textual evidence to speculate what Confucius' answer would be. The following passage perhaps gives us a clue:

季康子問使民敬忠以勸，如之何。子曰，臨之以莊，則敬，孝慈，則忠，舉善而教不能，則勸。

Ji Kangzi asked, "How can one get the common people to be reverent, *zhong*, and to be filled with enthusiasm?" The Master said, "Rule over them with dignity and they will be reverent; treat them with kindness and they will be *zhong*; raise the good and instruct those who are backward and they will be filled with enthusiasm." (*Analects* 2.20)

Confucius' response suggests that one's becoming *zhong* has to do with treating others with kindness. I surmise from this and my early observation about the

ffective dimension of *zhong* that, for Confucius, what causes one to be *zhong* is that one is being *affected* or feels a certain resonance. The subject is jolted into a *zhong* state not only because she values her ethical commitments at a cognitive level but also because her heart, so to speak, is moved at an affective level. If this is something close to what Confucius had in mind, then an implicit assumption or nascent idea underlying his conception of *zhong* is that human beings are beings that have the capacity for affective resonance. It is by virtue of this capacity that we are affected by others' kindness and thereby develop an affective concern that motivates an attitude of *zhong*.

The preceding analysis has sought to piece together fragments about *zhong* in the *Analects* and to use these as the basis for articulating an early Confucian conception of *zhong*. I hope I have approximated a picture, even if it is not a completely accurate representation of the original, that helps us retrieve certain early Confucian ethical insights that are of contemporary interest to us.

Notes

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1. See Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Lunyu yizhu* 論語譯注 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1980). For references to the *Analects*, I have benefited from James Legge, trans., *Confucian Analects* (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 2010 [1967]); and D. C. Lau, trans., *Confucius: The Analects* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2002 [1979]). I have also consulted *Lunyu jijie yishu* 論語集解義疏 in *Sibu yaoji zhushu congkan* 四部要籍注疏叢刊, 1998 ed. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju). References are to the volume, page, and line numbers. Unless stated otherwise, I follow D. C. Lau's translations of the *Analects* throughout, with some modifications, including the use of pinyin romanization.

2. See, for example, Heiner Roetz, *Confucian Ethics of the Axial Age* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 93–100, for a discussion of the tension between loyalty and filial piety.

3. For example, in *Analects* 12.22, *ren* 人 (benevolence) is characterized in terms of loving people (*ai ren* 愛人), and in *Mencius* 1A7, Mencius emphasizes that the ruler should extend his bounty (*tui* 推) to all his subjects.

4. See Chenyang Li, "Five Contemporary Challenges for Confucianism," *Journal of East-West Thought* 21, no. 2 (2012): 58.

5. See Lau, *Confucius: The Analects*, p. xvi; Paul Goldin, “When *Zhong* (忠) Does Not Mean ‘Loyalty,’” *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 7, no. 2 (2008): 165–174; and Satō Masayuki 佐藤將之, *Zhongguo gudai de ‘zhong’ lun yanjiu* 中國古代的「忠」論研究 (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2010).

6. Lau, *Confucius: The Analects*, p. xvi n. 6.

7. I am not suggesting that *zhong* as a concept does not have political implications. My point is simply that there is no textual support in the *Analects* for us to think that the scope of *zhong* is restricted to certain qualities of the ministers.

8. See Satō, *Zhongguo gudai de ‘zhong’ lun yanjiu*, chap. 1, for a detailed discussion on this point.

9. I am indebted to Kwong-loi Shun for his insightful remarks on the use of *zhong* in the *Analects*.

10. I have modified Lau’s translation of *mou* as “In what I have undertaken on another’s behalf” to “In my planning for others” here because Lau’s translation might create the impression that *mou* means doing something for others in a dutiful manner and is therefore evocative of what loyalty requires.

11. My translation of *xin* 信 as “trustworthy” is only tentative. In the *Analects*, *xin* is often discussed in association with *zhong*. In a majority of the passages where *zhong* appears (1.4, 1.8, 5.28, 7.25, 9.25, 12.10, 15.6), the term is used in connection with *xin*. It is clear that both *zhong* and *xin* are esteemed as ethical traits.

12. It is also interesting to note that in contemporary philosophical discussions, loyalty is often taken to be an attitude necessary for friendship. Here in the *Analects* it is suggested that trustworthiness (*xin*) is an attitude pertaining to friendship, whereas *zhong* encompasses the broader domain of relationships in general. For a recent discussion of the relation between loyalty and friendship see John Kleinig, *On Loyalty and Loyalties: The Contours of a Problematic Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

13. See, for example, *Guoyu*, “Luyu shang” 魯語下; *Zuo zhuan*, “Xianggong Fourth Year” 襄公四年; *Shijing*, “Huang huang zhe hua” 皇皇者華.

14. I thank Nicolas Bommarito for pressing me to clarify this point.

15. I have modified Lau’s translation of *hui* 誨 here. Lau has translated *hui* as “educating.” Since *hui* in early texts has the connotation of using words, I opted for “to say something to correct them” to capture the verbal dimension of *hui* although this is not an elegant translation.

16. For example, Xu Yuangao 徐元誥, *Guoyu jijie* 國語集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2002), “Jinyu” 晉語 3, “Jinyu” 晉語 4, and “Wuyu” 吳語.

17. Cited in Satō, *Zhongguo gudai de ‘zhong’ lun yanjiu*, p. 37.

18. A few scholars have suggested that *zhong* 忠 is connected or may even be used interchangeably in the early texts with the phonologically indistinguishable term *zhong* 中, which has the connotation of impartiality or conformity to penal laws without bias. If this is really the case, it will further strengthen my interpretation; however, textual evidence seems inconclusive in showing that there is such a connection. Scholars who have made this observation tend to rely on annotations in the Han period that define 忠 in terms of 中 (see, e.g., Wang Zijin, “Zhong” *guannian yanjiu—Yizhong zhengzhi daode de wenhua yuanliu yu*

lishi yanbian “忠” 觀念研究——一種政治道德的文化源流與歷史演變 [Changchun: Jilin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1999]). The methodology of interpretations of early texts based on Han texts is disputable. Paul Goldin (“When *Zhong* [忠] Does Not Mean ‘Loyalty’”) reiterates this point about the connection between 忠 and 中, but it is not clear what substantial textual evidence Goldin has in thinking that the two terms are intimately connected in early texts other than that they are phonologically indistinguishable and he uses a passage in the *Zuozhuan* to suggest that the meaning of the passage will not change even if we replace 忠 with 中. See Satō, *Zhongguo gudai de ‘zhong’ lun yanjiu*, chap. 1.1.2 for a discussion of and references to studies of the connection between 忠 and 中 in early texts.

19. Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, “Huangong liu nian” 桓公六年 (Huangong sixth year), in his *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2006 [1981]), p. 111.

20. Yang Bojun, “Zhuangong shi nian” 莊公十年 (Zhuangong tenth year), in his *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, p. 183.

21. The connection between *zhong* and *mou* is also found in *Guoyu*, “Jinyu” 8.

22. Goldin, “When *Zhong* (忠) Does Not Mean ‘Loyalty,’” p. 170.

23. I am indebted to Jay Garfield for prompting me to address this point.

24. See Satō, *Zhongguo gudai de ‘zhong’ lun yanjiu*.

25. “Loyal,” in *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

26. This case is widely discussed in business ethics and is also cited by Marcia Baron in her discussion of loyalty. See Marcia Baron, *The Moral Status of Loyalty* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1984), pp. 2–3.

27. Cited by Baron, *The Moral Status of Loyalty*, pp. 1–2.

28. Andrew Oldenquist, “Loyalties,” *Journal of Philosophy* 79, no. 4 (1982): 173–193.

29. William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness*, 3rd ed., photographic facsimile, ed. F. E. L. Priestley (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1946 [1798]), vol. 1, p. 127.

30. See Peter Railton’s distinction between “subjective consequentialism” and “objective consequentialism” in his “Alienation, Consequentialism and the Demands of Morality,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, no. 13 (1984): 152.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

32. I rule out cases of defective special relationships here, such as one’s relationship with an enemy.

33. I owe this example to Kwong-loi Shun.

34. For further discussion on this point see John Kleinig, “Loyalty,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2013, ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2013/entries/loyalty/>, Section 2.1.

35. For a discussion of village worthies in early Confucian thought see Winnie Sung, “*Xiang Yuan* 鄉原: The Appearance-only Hypocrite,” *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 15, no. 2 (2016): 175–192.

36. Joshua Royce, *The Philosophy of Loyalty* (New York: Macmillan, 1908), p. 97.

37. Some philosophers like R. E. Ewin and Simon Keller exclude loyalty as a virtue because of the emotional dimension of loyalty. The reservation is that loyalty hinders or dis-

courages epistemic judgment. Since the overall concern is related to the earlier point about how loyalty can threaten integrity and self-respect, I will not rehearse that here. Even so, they do not deny that this emotional dimension is what makes loyalty valuable. See R. E. Ewin, "Loyalty and Virtues," *Philosophical Quarterly* 42, no. 169 (1992): 403–419, and Simon Keller, *The Limits of Loyalty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

38. These are phrases used repeatedly by Josiah Royce in *The Philosophy of Loyalty*.

PART IV

Limitations and the Critical Reform of Confucian Cultures

CHAPTER 12

Whither Confucius? Whither Philosophy?

Michael NYLAN

BERNARD WILLIAMS' *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* registers two important observations: first, that philosophy had better not aim to give an account of moral knowledge like that expected in scientific fields, since that would be futile and inappropriate; and second, that ethical philosophy is at best a particularly imprecise form of philosophizing. Moreover, as Otto Neurath noted, "we repair the ship while we are on the sea."¹ If these observations are true, as I believe they are, discussions about the current and possible future growth of Confucian studies, here and abroad, had better focus on the specifics of present-day practices and beliefs, leaving behind the antiquated and highly contentious notions of the Daotong 道統 ("Genealogy of the Way"). With this in mind, my chapter is divided into three parts: (1) a brief summary of observations made by others about contemporary life, which tend to highlight stark contrasts between contemporary life and life in the pre-industrial societies that gave rise to the early Confucian masters; (2) a summary of the values that we can *usefully* import from early Confucian teachings for adaptation to today's world, East or West, encapsulated in ten words; and (3) a brief consideration of motivation in light of a perceived need to make certain early Confucian teachings more appealing to those not conversant with traditions in early China (a group that would include many Chinese today). After all, the *Shiji* 史記 tells us that it was Mencius and Xunzi who once made Confucian teachings "sexy and appealing" (*runse* 潤色)² to the "talking heads" of the fourth and third centuries B.C.E., the implication being that it is hardly likely that Confucius would have become a household name or "icon" today had they not done so.

The present chapter, in short, attempts to consider this world, a world in

an admittedly perilous state, asking how we can move beyond the semi-fictive construct that we dub “Confucianism” and the scary calls for “harmony”³ to retain some of the best features of the Confucius that we find in the *Analects* and in the writings of his early followers.

Contemporary Life as Exceptional

A number of features sharply distinguish the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (“contemporary life”) from earlier, pre-industrial eras. Readers should note that I will not address many larger aspects of contemporary geopolitical life (e.g., proliferating nuclear arms and the resurgence of backward-looking binary models in politics) that philosophy can hardly hope to ameliorate.⁴ I confine my list below to the features of contemporary life that others have identified before me and that seem relevant to a discussion about ethics:

1. Contemporary life requires us, as a matter of course, to rely ever more substantially on relations and instruments of impersonal trust rather than those of personal trust (e.g., email, ATM machines, and Internet information).⁵
2. Contemporary life makes available to each educated person a radically expanded set of ethical beliefs, as compared with societies of even a century ago.⁶ Darwin may have sounded one of the first modernist voices when he wrote, “Let each man hope and believe what he can.” Certainly, I have read the complaints that students (especially those at elite universities) tend to be smart “sheep” lacking any moral compass,⁷ but I myself see more feasting at an ethical smorgasbord than “careerist zombies.” For example, I have Caucasian students who identify their “ultimate concern” as Israeli nationalism, Zen Buddhism, atheism, or Sufi-Catholicism.
3. Most of the technologies, slogans, and institutions of contemporary life promote isolation and competition between individual persons and groups. For instance, the destructive “clash of civilizations” rhetoric batters on ever-stronger ethnic and cultural identities, as well as deep divisions among sectarian religions. Meanwhile, physical isolation is ensured by a host of new technologies such as Facebook and headphones, and is then reinforced by the corporate calls for a more “self-reliant” and “flexible” globalized labor market—calls reiterated despite sharply *decreasing* socioeconomic mobility.⁸ In this our purportedly “ludic century,”⁹ in unwitting defiance of earlier sightings of *Homo ludens*, institutions of group solidarity seem to be fewer and weaker outside the far right, which likes megachurches and megastores. Union and professional memberships are sharply down, for instance. Up through the mid-twentieth century,

concern about neighbors' opinions exerted a strong influence on personal behavior, but there are growing indications that the "international elites" (a.k.a. the 1 percent, buttressed by the 10 percent who serve them) identify far more with the members of their own class than with compatriots living in close proximity.¹⁰

4. Apparently contemporary life is so sex-drenched that it curiously retains many of the anti-carnal sentiments inherited from Platonic idealism, Neoplatonism, and the Mediterranean monotheisms via Kantian and Marxist doctrines. What Roland Barthes, in reifying virtual life, called the new "civilization of the image"¹¹ fosters two sorts of conflicting conditions. The first can be called "carnal alienation," opposing the tactile experiences of love and friendship in-the-flesh, and the second an incapacity to enjoy being well and truly alone. For evidence of "being out of touch with the body," we have only to think of phone sex, pornography-as-substitute sex, computerized diagnosis and treatment of illnesses, or remote-controlled drone killings. With people never truly in the moment in time and space, "the touch screen replaces touch itself. The cosmos shrinks to a private monitor, each viewer a disembodied self unto itself."¹² At the same time, some experts (e.g., Sherry Turkle at MIT) trace the popularity of these demanding "always on, always on you" technologies directly to people's losing their capacity to be alone while increasing their desires for control.¹³ Certainly, I know people who cannot sit through a short meal without checking their iPhones repeatedly.
5. Ever faster computing is apparently changing the ways that people habitually interact with one another and analyze materials. As noted in Nicolas Carr's *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, new scientific studies now suggest that heavy Internet usage actually reformats our neural pathways so as to decrease our attention spans. As of January 1, 2014, the average American attention span was eight seconds, or one second less than that of a goldfish.¹⁴ As a result, heavy Internet usage is correlated with a stronger desire for speedy results and efficient sound bites, which then work harder *against* our impulses to take the time we need for deep reflection or for rewarding long-term commitments.¹⁵ Authentic conversations and companionship (usually messy and invariably time-consuming) are the real losers in this race, as my undergraduates in a recent seminar on friendship remarked.¹⁶ One by-product of reduced social exchanges may be an increased risk of detaching ourselves from other people, and then regarding those outside our immediate circle "as less human."¹⁷
6. One early ethical concern was to ascertain the common good, and urge people to seek it.¹⁸ Contemporary life's turn to a relentless celebration of

“choice”—a concept mainly reduced to consumer choice—is misguided on at least two counts: it downplays the role of habit and unthinking responses in the construction of personal and social identities,¹⁹ and it also tends to reduce the exercise of personal freedom to consumer choice.²⁰ In addition, the well-known phenomenon called “hedonic adaptation” usually prevents consumer purchases from leading to feelings of long-term well-being.²¹ Therefore, the freedom to consume is not just partly to blame for the environmental degradation we see all around us; it may account as well for the growing dissatisfaction with the state of the world, a dissatisfaction steadily expressed via countless polls since the 1980s.²²

7. Nearly all philosophical thinking, in Euro-America and East Asia alike, is predicated on the pernicious fiction that people (i.e., people of privilege, those thought to truly “count”) are autonomous, rational individuals capable of identifying and reforming their own conditions by sheer acts of will (—the old Unmoved Mover resurfaces). The language of “human rights” consistently argues that all people and nations should aspire to realize this condition of legal autonomy,²³ despite the obvious fact that this construction ignores many, if not most, present-day realities. Neuroscientific findings on “free will”²⁴ problematize the very notion of “agency,”²⁵ for example. In addition, as Joseph E. Stiglitz has pointed out, “[Legal] justice has become a commodity, affordable only to the very few.”²⁶ For these and other reasons, more ethicists are turning to consider the roles played by the emotions, including self-regard, in shaping perceptions and modes of existence,²⁷ while querying the hard-and-fast dichotomies dividing the cognitive and evaluative impulses,²⁸ though their work seldom has an impact on the public discourse.

Taken together, such “acids of modernity” are having a predictably corrosive effect on human relations.²⁹ Amelioration may be possible, but what forms should it take? Many used to the daily specters, if not the actual experience of violence,³⁰ suspect that the highest present good may simply be to be left alone, in the company of family and friends, to live at peace.³¹ But the documentary film *Citizen Four* should remind us that we are not left alone; privacy is dead. And what is it about contemporary life that has left us begging for a mere non-aggression pact when humanity as *Homo faber* is capable of so much more?³²

These are ethical questions not amenable to quick or certain solutions. There are precedents, however, as Bernard Williams remarked, for treating a philosophical account “as a destination not a route.”³³ We might benefit from a few signposts rather than the imposition of extra rules, since all of us are finite, embodied, and historically situated agents, whose rational faculties employed in cost-benefit analyses seldom offer much guidance, given how frequently we

act on auto-pilot, operate purely by habit, and try to maneuver through a web of obligations ringed round with emotions. I will argue below that the Ancients have provided us with a series of signposts in the form of “practical wisdom.”

The Utility of the Ancients

For some time now, I have been thoroughly convinced that the Ancients have things to teach about what it means to be human, in large part because they inhabited a world that was less ruled by arid abstractions and also more cognizant of the need to depend upon long-term personal exchanges and commitments. They “saw things differently than we do—or rather, they *saw different things*,” as one historian of early Rome put it.³⁴ I like to cite Bernard Williams’ *Shame and Necessity* in this connection, where Williams is talking of the Ancient Greeks instead of the early Chinese thinkers:

The ethical thought... [of these early thinkers discussed here] was not only different from most modern thought, particularly modern thought influenced by Christianity; it was also *in much better shape*... since this system of ideas basically lacks the concept of morality altogether, in the sense of *a class of reasons or demands which are vitally different from other kinds of reason or demand*.... Relatedly,... the questions of how one’s relations to others are to be regulated, both in the context of society and more privately, are not detached from questions about the kind of life it is worth living....³⁵

Needless to say, the erection of strict barriers between moral and practical reasons in contemporary discourse, far from elevating the work of universities and ethicists, has made it that much easier to dismiss careful investigation into the human condition as either hopelessly “reality-based” (and hence lacking in moral fire or political swagger)³⁶ or the sorry product of “ivory tower” idealists who couldn’t think their way out of a paper bag in real life. When citing Williams, I often recall Herbert Fingarette’s first paragraph in his classic *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred*:

Increasingly, I have become convinced that Confucius can be a teacher to us today—a major teacher, not one who merely gives us a slightly exotic perspective on the ideas already current. He tells us things not being said elsewhere; things needing to be said. He has a new lesson to teach.³⁷

History and philosophy should let the dead live again on their own terms, as much as possible, so that we moderns may benefit from better acquaintance

with unfamiliar thoughts.³⁸ But there are major flaws with Greek thought and its Western successors, especially those of the Kantian and neo-Kantian sort. Doubtless we can all name features of earlier societies that we would prefer not to emulate: the enslavement of human beings, the casual oppression of women and homosexuals, the resort to superstition, and so on.³⁹ More subtle is the propensity of Greek and later Western thought to be “incurably egoistic” (i.e., narrowly preoccupied with the inner life of the presumed self).⁴⁰ Furthermore, most Western philosophy identifies two main motivations for action (the pursuit of pleasure and the grim acceptance of duty), in the rather naive belief that moving beyond perceived self-interest will make it much easier to reconcile self and society.⁴¹ A close comparison of early Greek with early Chinese thought illustrates the virtues of the Chinese thinkers: they are not “incurably egoistic”; they stipulate far less about the world and its inhabitants, they are inclined to distrust arid abstractions claiming universal applicability,⁴² and ultimately, in elevating the Middle Way, they require less of the person while nonetheless upholding strict standards for “civilized” conduct. If philosophy is the therapeutic examination of belief and action (in the old sense),⁴³ then greater resort to early Chinese modes of thinking may well be a salutary exercise for all of us.

Please understand: I am no wild-eyed romantic railing against a loss of community or tradition, content to shill for Confucian learning in the hopes that blind adherence to older forms will miraculously usher in a “return” to an idealized past that never existed.⁴⁴ Rather I am a hardheaded historian who is acutely aware of the dangerous propensity to retroject anachronisms into presentist readings of history.⁴⁵ But I confess that cataloging a huge range of invented traditions has led me to wonder whether contemporary life might not profit from the selective reinvention of a few traditions designed to counter the motley (when not positively murderous) traditions we have inherited. Are we not enjoined, as ethical people of some imagination, to “warm up the old” (*wen gu* 温故)? Our job is to ask not only “How are we to live?” (that being, of course, the question posed by Socrates and Confucius), but also “How are we to live so as to be more alive?”⁴⁶ Like the Ancients whom I study, I seek a design of life (not wholly “rational”) that would reduce the power of fortune and fate through maximal appreciation for hard work in service of communal goods, the sort of life that would help myself and others from being “enslaved by things.”⁴⁷

Older wisdom texts are in general agreement that an ethical life begins with moving beyond narrow self-interest. As one contemporary thinker summarizes it:

Imagine that each of us lives at the center of a set of concentric circles, the nearest being our own self, the furthest being the entire universe of living creatures. The task of our moral development is to move the circles pro-

gressively closer to the center, so that we regard our parents and children like ourselves, our other relatives like our parents, and strangers like our relatives.⁴⁸

Noting that “we are least like anything else in the world when we do not treat each other like physical objects, as animals, or even as sub-human creatures to be driven, threatened, forced, maneuvered,” Fingarette skillfully argues that we are conversely most sublimely and supremely human whenever we fuse personal presence to “(learned) ceremonial skill,” making ceremonial acts “the primary, irreducible events” constituting our memorable experiences.

In that spirit, I volunteer two early slogans as signposts for contemporary life, slogans associated with the early Confucian teachings and with the *Zhuangzi*, a work in critical engagement with those same teachings. The two signposts are “Know what is enough” (*zhi zu* 知足) and “Treat [others] as honored guests” (*ru jian da bin* 如見大賓). The first slogan is typically (mis)labeled as Daoist, since it occurs in both the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*; however, the *Xunzi*, the *Zhouli*, and the *Kongcongzi* use the exact same phrase in the same way, so this two-character phrase in classical Chinese is better characterized as prevailing “wisdom talk.”⁴⁹ Likewise, the second slogan, best known from *Analects* 12.2, does not belong solely to any particular group. In several pre-Han and Han texts, including the *Lunheng* 論衡, exemplary figures are said to epitomize this or closely allied notions, this being the best possible way to “pay due heed to and communicate with others” (*jing tong ren* 敬通人), based on their knowledge of past and present social practices.⁵⁰ Helpfully, the second slogan is paired with a parallel injunction in the same *Analects* passage; the injunction equally enjoins members of the governing elite to demonstrate their care for “those below”: “Employ the people [as carefully] as if officiating at a solemn sacrifice” (*shi min ru cheng da ji* 使民如承大祭).⁵¹ Rough equivalents for these slogans could be found, no doubt, in many different parts of the world in their distinctive “wisdom books,” suggesting that they can shed a kind of “global radiance,” provoking deeper reflection,⁵² without getting hopelessly mired in arguments over the so-called “universal principles” masking neoliberal and statist agendas.

“Learning by subtraction” (as in “Know what is enough”) can serve citizens of postmodern societies touting “choice” as the highest freedom.⁵³ For if “it is the vice of the vulgar mind to be thrilled by bigness,” contemporary society is stupendously vulgar. Whether we would address environmental degradation and global warming or protest the serene self-righteousness displayed by our most flagrantly corrupt organizations and leaders,⁵⁴ the mere repetition of this mantra may create a distaste for “more is better” and “shop ’til you drop.” The same phrase, meanwhile, undercuts the emerging world of virtual reality “rife with delusions of omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence,”⁵⁵ insofar as it

reminds us to identify our real needs as human beings, among them the need to be loved and physically touched and to maintain a measure of dignity.

As the advantages of “Know what is enough” seem unmistakable, let me tarry a bit longer on the second slogan, which urges us to treat others as honored guests, a slogan redolent with antique notions of hospitality and sanctuary. One line after another of the *Analects* reiterates some variation on this set of injunctions, which leads me to see this extension of exquisite courtesies to the lowly among us as the central task for any would-be Confucian,⁵⁶ then or now. We have all heard of the Golden Rule, but Confucius asks both less and more of us here.⁵⁷ On the one hand, we are not expected to love others as ourselves (something that may be quite impossible for those not graced with special gifts). On the other, we are enjoined to consider what words and gestures we find humiliating, demeaning, and condescending, and then avoid using those words and gestures with others. More pro-actively, we are instructed to treat others with the same exquisite courtesy we would render recognized dignitaries. This standard asks us not only to meet, but also to anticipate the needs of others, as we would happily do for important guests due to visit. It requires recurrently asking others what they would prefer, rather than presuming what they deserve and merit. When successful, this highly ritualized performance conveys via complex gestures a temporary self-effacement meant to honor the engrossing importance of another; thus it balances an acute awareness of one’s own person in relation to the visitor(s) with a willing displacement of conscious focus on oneself.⁵⁸ It moreover asks us to regard those who are in our power as if they were a higher power, without conceding to worldly powers any power to harm ourselves or others.

But let us not ignore the flipside: to receive a dignitary well places the host in the gratifying role of the person conferring hospitality. The miracle is that somehow the great dignity residing in the one can be shared with another, with no diminution to either party. For hospitality given and acknowledged valorizes both sides’ implicit claims to worth.⁵⁹

Unless the host is blessed with stupendous luck, however, easy and affable treatment of the guest presupposes the host’s prior acculturation to a range of enlivening sociable exchanges. Long before the guest arrives, she must, *as if by instinct*, have learned the art of “reading” people, even strangers. And there is more: she must evince a readiness to change course when advisable, in a kind of free-form, improvisational fugue or dance.⁶⁰ As with any art form, the course of training for a virtuoso performance is long and arduous; after all, by the moral mandate, the host does nothing less than open herself to fully experiencing the presence of another person (followed by another and another), equipped with the social insights and practices culled over time.⁶¹ The ultimate goal: a kind of fluency that lends the mundane a sort of magic, thereby reacquainting us

with the ordinary mysteries of life. Yet no part of this set of injunctions dictates a particular religious, philosophical, or patriotic creed about this life or the next; every part of it hearkens to local practices and individual idiosyncrasies.⁶² Even to pose the question “what is enough?” is, like acting hospitably, to firmly refuse to subscribe to one or more universal rules, in that suitable adjustments will continually have to be made to assess “what is enough” and “goodly” under changing circumstances. Most importantly, perhaps, learning to aim for this set of injunctions moves us firmly away from the “main aspects of modern identity—that is, liberty, autonomy, . . . and . . . the subject’s self-positioning or rational self-determination.”⁶³

There is no reliable way to calculate the long-term consequences of our actions, however well intended, nor can reason, custom, or experience resolve many puzzles of human existence.⁶⁴ I am willing to live with the Mystery.⁶⁵ Yet it is best to be as precise as possible when we talk, and speaking of “dignity” rather than “justice” seems a vast improvement, since no two figures in my readings in philosophy and history have ever arrived at a shared notion of justice. Some equate “justice” with utilitarianism and others with communitarianism, libertarianism, or God’s will.⁶⁶ As one smart philosopher put it: “Justice is inescapably judgmental . . . an open invitation to narrow, intolerant moralisms.”⁶⁷ By contrast, we all have a fairly good sense of what constitutes the sort of treatment we would accord dignitaries, those deemed to have dignity. Dignity is hard to make into an abstract quality, and therein lies its attraction for me as a grounding for life. I note in this connection that Wittgenstein’s description of the ethical/religious is “a sense that we are absolutely safe.”⁶⁸ Having members of a community preserve our human dignity—that’s as close to paradise on earth as we are likely to get.

The legends about Confucius would have us understand that Confucius goes to his death believing himself a miserable failure, but ultimately he is hailed as an uncrowned king (and in some texts a virtual god), for his remarkable ability to turn personal misfortunes into blessings for others. If the main thrust of the Confucian *Analects* throughout remains the human imperative to accord others the same dose of dignity that we would gladly impart to an honored guest, the life of Confucius suggests that we may sometimes have to set aside our physical comforts and our most cherished mental constructs in order to clear a space wherein we may better observe the needs of others. As the *Analects* makes plain, we must not only adopt this way of operating in the world but make it a habit before we can possibly see any benefits accruing from this ritualized mode of operation. We must try it as an act of faith, in other words. The promise is that we are then likely to learn to feel at home in our own skins in our daily rounds. We may then derive pleasure (*le* 樂) from living in the simplest circumstances (*Analects* 6.11, 7.16), from seeking wisdom and acting compassionately (6.23),

and from visits paid by friends and peers (1.1), all in the serene confidence that “to find it [this way] a pleasure is better than to know it or prefer it” (6.20), since secure “pleasure need not be licentious or [to] go to excess” (3.20). The early Confucian masters assure us that greater human happiness is to be found in connecting, communicating, and sharing than in gaining or asserting power over others. In doing so, they supply models for continual engagement with the world, rather than urging a hasty retreat from it.

I was deeply moved when reading one op-ed writer’s recent summation of her “thought processes” in her younger days:

You do things you regret or don’t understand and then you make other choices because life keeps going forward. Or you do something out of love and then, through biology or accident, it goes inexplicably wrong, and you do what you can to cope. Or you do whatever you do, however you do it, for whatever reasons, because that’s your experience.⁶⁹

Doubtless, some people will deplore the lack of self-knowledge expressed here, but to me, at any rate, this looks a lot like life, and not even a particularly bad or unreflective sort of life. In *A Room of One’s Own*, Virginia Woolf commented: “Life for both sexes... is arduous, difficult, a perpetual struggle”; “it calls for gigantic courage and strength,” yet we usually go around “snubbed, slapped, lectured, and exhorted.” To maintain courage in the face of this muddle, the key thing may be just to keep the image of our common (if failed) humanity front and center before us, refusing to go to a place where we grow numb.⁷⁰ To that end, I read and reread this set of questions posed in early China:

In our world, is there such a thing as supreme pleasure or is there not? Is there something that may be used to make ourselves more alive or not?⁷¹ In the present times, how are we to act? How are we to make a basis?... What are we to take pleasure in and what are we to deplore?⁷²

This set of questions reminds us that a good life must bespeak plenitude (a “richness”), that boils down less to material resources and more to a life open to encounter new experiences every single day, thanks to a more capacious regard for the world.

Moral philosophy invites a second look at the early Chinese thinkers, who go beyond a few guideposts to speak of the sorts of human institutions that promote the “most alive” forms of being and acting, producing pleasures great and small. If we are looking for something that may help us find our way around, everyday experience usually suffices to reveal a startling amount of information that we need to know about ourselves and the world we inhabit, if we are to

act wisely and well, even if that information is not liable to objective proof.⁷³ And, as a recent psychology experiment has shown, the only sure indicator of what we ourselves will end up doing in a particular moral dilemma is what we presume others in our community would do in precisely the same situation.⁷⁴ In short, if I wish to act well, I must conceive of the possibility that others will act well and then act upon that conception. (This is precisely what one Chinese Classic, the *Shujing* 書經 or *Documents*, advises.) But that is not all: I must know the members of my community well enough to be able to visualize what actions others might take in similar situations. Should I manage that, it should be less difficult to conceive of the potential benefits—intangible and unseen, as well as tangible—of cooperating with others, while conceding, too, that occasional feeling of being deceived or disappointed in others. That concession may be reckoned a small price to pay for the possibility of transfiguration, a sort of “rent” for living fully,⁷⁵ so that one is primed (“heartened” if you will) to embrace the rigors of contemporary life.

Confucian Teachings and Their Appeal

Confidence in our ability to improve contemporary conditions is half the battle. But, as Bernard Williams notes, “Confidence [in an ethical decision]... is basically a social phenomenon.” He means, in general, that confidence relies on social confirmation; a society’s support for a person’s attitude tends to make him or her more conscious of holding certain convictions. Williams continues:

Philosophy cannot tell us how to bring it [confidence in an ethical conviction] about. It is a social and psychological question what kinds of institutions, upbringing, and public discourse help to foster it.⁷⁶

Williams may be right, but he then concludes—quite wrongly, I feel—that the business of philosophy is not to consider social and psychological questions, and hence not to think further about institutions. Apparently, he wishes for philosophy today to preserve or even harden its current conventional academic boundaries. I dearly wish, in return, to ask him why, for it seems to me that philosophy has been proposing social and psychological institutions for millennia now, at least since Plato and Confucius. How could an abnegation of our responsibility to plan for our own and future generations possibly lead to better philosophy? Surely the job of philosophy is to map, then ruminate upon, the many ways that human beings have sought to be human.

So, *pace* Williams, I feel we should be asking, “What mix of motives, instrumental and non-instrumental, is most likely to propel people to perform their tasks constructively and well, without summoning inadvertent disasters?”

A recent set of studies suggests that efforts to promote constructive activities should focus on the meaning and potential impact of these initiatives, rather than on their connection with conventional markers of “success,” if we are to ensure good and lasting outcomes.⁷⁷ Xunzi made the same point centuries ago, in the essay “On Ritual,”⁷⁸ where he insisted that ritual shapes and channels people’s disparate longings within a larger symbolic system that creates meaning. Yet too many self-styled Confucians today have forgotten what both Mencius and Xunzi knew: that people living on the margin of subsistence cannot be expected to be good candidates for moral development, and people rightly seek satisfaction in their social relations and in their work.

Were I in a position of power, such attention to economic and environmental conditions would require me to consider giving out cash grants to the poor, so as to ensure their minimum standard of living. Certainly this would be cheaper than our current patchwork of “social safety nets”—and nineteen major studies agree: only a very small proportion of the poor will waste the money (especially if women are the targeted recipients). If we let the poor “eat cash,” then alcohol and tobacco consumption falls or stays the same, while drug counseling and anger management programs fare better. Why? People need food security if they are to feel that they merit other people’s warm regard.⁷⁹ And, as Mencius bluntly puts it, “It is not worth the trouble talking to a man who has no respect for himself...or confidence in himself” (4A1).⁸⁰

Mencius and Xunzi made Confucian teachings more glossy and appealing to a wide range of thinkers in a second way: both of these thinkers went far beyond the earlier teachings ascribed to Confucius to elaborate the pleasures that rest upon establishing a secure place in close communities. Book 1 of the *Mencius* details the conversation between Mencius and King Hui of Liang, where the King is asked to conceive of the pleasures that will accrue once he rests secure in the allegiance of his own subjects. A lesser moralist might have been inclined to score points by labeling the desires of this powerful man as flaws, faults, weaknesses, and shortcomings (*ji* 疾). Mencius tries quite another tactic: he focuses upon the common human desire to be held in high esteem, insisting that “all people share the same desire to be exalted,” to be held in high regard in one’s own estimation and in that of others. Nonetheless people often fail to appreciate the fact that every person has the wherewithal within the self to be exalted (6A17).⁸¹ But so long as the person believes himself to be capable of acting morally, Mencius says, this basic compulsion to be admired can motivate constructive social action. So whenever power-holders seem unaware of their potential to become authoritative figures, they are to be given better teachers (6A9).⁸² Reasoning in much the same way, Xunzi famously articulates the view that the fundamental human desires are not obstructions to morality, but rather the bedrock of morality.⁸³ Far from endorsing the popular slogans

“reduce desires” (*shao yu* 少欲) or “eliminate desires” (*wu yu* 無欲), Xunzi argues that (a) desires are what people have, (b) desires make the world go around, and (c) wise policy-makers use these two facts to devise better institutions of governance and compelling models of cultivation (i.e., self-governance). These, in turn, ultimately promote the satisfaction of all bodies (and so the body politic itself), with the result that the imperial subjects eagerly learn to “manage their lives and their means of living” (*zhi sheng chan* 治生產).⁸⁴

In the expansive view informed by Mencius and Xunzi, good governments utilize any and all methods that make it markedly easier to rule well—wanting good governance to be as easy as the proverbial “reeling in like skeins of silk,” as natural as “the spokes of a wheel hub converging on the hub.” The writings ascribed to Mencius and Xunzi, not coincidentally, share an unremitting focus on institutional matters, with both thinkers assuming that personal morality, with rare exceptions, can never be sustained for long in the absence of institutional props. Sumptuary regulations and regular community rituals (e.g., community banquets and well-defined marriage and mourning practices) are but two of the institutions they pushed to encourage the development of the basic sociable habits upon which super-civilization is to be built. I doubt that the United States will ever establish anything like sumptuary regulations, but that kind of willingness to countenance powerful destructive behavior may feed the Gordon Gekkos of this world.⁸⁵ So it is well worth asking, “What features of our current tax code truly benefit society by inducing real contributions to it?”⁸⁶ Put another way, what message does it send to society-at-large when Scientology, Princeton University, and charities set up for cats all get equal tax deductions under our code?

The early classicists and Confucians in China showed exceptional clarity in three areas: they insisted that economic security is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for building good character,⁸⁷ they carefully delineated the pleasures to be had from living in more secure communities, and they urged reward structures to be put in place so as to encourage people to make more constructive contributions to their neighbors and peers, not to mention future generations. If the early Chinese thinkers exhibited such practical wisdom millennia ago, then one may well ask, “Why is it that Chinese thought and Chinese institutions have received such unrelentingly bad press in modern times?” Anthropologist Jack Goody offers a forceful analysis in his recent book *The Theft of History*.⁸⁸ According to Goody, long ago, in colonial days, Northern Europe and the United States gained the upper hand in discussions about human development, thanks to the master narrative of “Western civilization” (a shape-shifting siren, if ever there was one), so much so that, regardless of whether the discourse is Orientalizing or self-Orientalizing,⁸⁹ Euro-America is now credited with playing the central role in the evolution of all manner of desirable goods, ranging

from “democracy” and “humanism” to, most astonishingly, “antiquity” itself. Consequently there is little left for China to claim but perceived “lacks” or “failures.” Then, too, the spectacularly bad behavior of certain Chinese elites may have deterred those unfamiliar with Confucian ideas from undertaking quiet study of the good advice proffered by wise men long ago in China. That said, no time or place is ever free of cheats and sycophants and connivers.

In any case, that would be a discussion for another day. I cannot do better than end on a poem by a Han dynasty poet, Cui Yuan 崔瑗 (77–142 C.E.), that encapsulates some of the foregoing themes in a supremely artful way:

One must not speak of others' faults,
 Nor of one's own strengths.
 If you offer someone something, forget it later on.
 If someone offers you something, never forget it!
 A reputation is not worth envying in another.
 Only *ren* (humankindness) should become your rule and frame,
 Keep your person in the shadows, and then act.
 Then how can slander and talk ever really harm you? ...
 So long as all your actions be as constant as the day is long,
 You will find yourself forever sweetly perfumed.

無道人之短。無說己之長。
 施人慎勿念。受施慎勿忘。
 世譽不足慕。唯仁為紀綱。
 隱身而後動。謗議庸何傷？...
 行之苟有恆。久久自芬芳。

Notes

This chapter is dedicated to Henry Rosemont, Jr., who can say everything better.

1. Otto Neurath, cited in Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 113.

2. *Shiji* 121.3116.

3. Repeated calls for “harmony” in today’s world often mean little more than “forced ethnic assimilation” and “obedience to the powers-that-be.” An early Qing dynasty exchange suggests that this (mis)use of “harmony” is long-standing. Dorgon in 1645 defined “harmony” as “acting in concert to serve the ruling house and country (*guojia* 國家) and the people,” as against “acting in concert to serve themselves, their families, or their selfish desires,” which is said to be “conspiring.” See Harry Miller, *State versus Gentry in Early Qing Dynasty China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 25. Rosemont and Ames have insisted, quite rightly, on the importance of remonstrance functions in the early Confucian classics, including the *Xiaojing*.

4. A reduction of potential outcomes seems to be on offer with respect to the systems for contemporary politics and economics. In politics, for example, there have been put forward two main models for future emulation: (a) the Northern European “world of postmodern statehood,” where roughly equal partners tend to tend their own gardens in considerable smugness, and (b) the model which says that only worlds dominated by a single superpower can ever enforce the peace. As Robert Kagan’s 2000 essay “Power and Weakness” suggests, these two views have prestigious pedigrees, as they hearken back to Immanuel Kant and Thomas Hobbes. Incredibly, to my mind, the Northern European powers are increasingly adopting the American model in their cultural and political institutions.

5. For this distinction, see Steven Johnstone, *A History of Trust in Ancient Greece* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

6. Stephen Angle, *Human Rights and Chinese Thought: A Cross-cultural Inquiry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

7. William Deresiewicz, *The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life* (New York: Free Press, 2014) (see *New York Times*, September 20, Book Review, p. C1, for a review of this book). Deresiewicz describes the students he knew at Yale as trapped “in a bubble of privilege, heading meekly in the same direction, great at what they’re doing but with no idea why they’re doing it” (p. 3).

8. For the corporate origins of the “self-reliance” movements, designed to absolve corporations from many responsibilities toward their employees, see Barbara Ehrenreich, *Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009). “Flexible” globalized markets are but another name for outsourcing and downsizing, which increase anxiety among most workers.

9. Eric Zimmerman of New York University has called this “the ludic century” (Eric Zimmerman, “Manifesto for a Ludic Century,” online at http://ericzimmerman.com/files/texts/Manifesto_for_a_Ludic_Century.pdf). See Chris Suellentrop, “Can Video Games Survive?” *New York Times*, October 26, 2014, Sunday Review, p. 1. For *Homo ludens*, see Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-element in Culture* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949).

10. The first time I saw this “unmooring” discussed was in 1990, in Anthony D. King’s *Global Cities: Post-imperialism and the Internationalization of London* (London: Routledge, 1990). Counter-evidence may come from Erez Yoeli, Moshe Hoffman, and David Rand, “How to Prevent Summer Blackouts,” *New York Times*, July 5, 2014, Opinion Pages, p. A19, which concludes, “Humans have faced public-good quandaries since the dawn of time, and we’ve developed since the dawn of time, and we’ve developed a powerful force to deal with them: our reputation in society.”

11. See Barthes’ essay in *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven: Leete’s Island Books, 1980).

12. Richard Kearney (Boston College), “Losing Our Touch,” in *New York Times*, “Opinionator,” August 30, 2014.

13. Sherry Turkle (interview), “The Networked Primate,” in “Special Evolution Issue: Humanity’s Journey,” *Scientific American* 311, no. 4 (September 2014): 82–85. This past summer’s comedy hit titled “Her” (director Spike Jonze) plays with such fears, insofar as it depicts a man falling in love with his own operating system, which he nicknames “Saman-

tha”; before long, however, the male lead becomes insanely jealous because he discovers that his virtual lover is flirting with tens of thousands of other subscribers. Susannah Elm, my colleague at Berkeley, clearly struck a nerve in Germany when she remarked that master-slave relations in the Roman empire were perhaps more positive than her relation with her iPhone (she was interviewed by *Frankfurter Allgemeine* and four other newspapers).

14. See the National Center for Biotechnology Information, U.S. National Library of Medicine, report of January 1, 2014, which also reports a sharp decrease from the year 2000 (from an average of twelve seconds to eight). “Attention span” is the amount of time concentrated on a task without becoming distracted. Most educators and psychologists agree that the ability to focus attention on a task is crucial for the achievement of one’s goals. Nicholas Carr, in *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), speaks of the Internet “remapping the neural circuitry, reprogramming the memory,” destroying our powers of concentration. “We don’t see the forest when we search the Web,” he writes. “We don’t even see the trees. We see twigs and leaves” (p. 91). A 2008 study, reviewing 34 million academic articles published between 1945 and 2005, concluded that while the digitization of journals made it far easier to find this information, it produced a narrowing of citations, with scholars relying much more heavily on recent publications.

15. Carr, *The Shallows*, passim.

16. Evolutionarily, *Homo sapiens*, we are told, developed a competitive advantage due to its special capacity for engaging in the figurative “mind reading” of another person’s thoughts and engagement in shared tasks, where the engagements required memory, touch, speech, and sight. See Gary Stix, “The ‘It’ Factor,” in “Special Evolution Issue: Humanity’s Journey,” *Scientific American* 311, no. 4 (September 2014): 72–79.

17. Aaron Ben-Ze’ev, *The Subtlety of Emotions* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), pp. 259–260.

18. See Hans Sluga, *Politics and the Search for the Common Good* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

19. Xunzi was a genius at explaining this role, but so is Herbert Fingarette in his *Self-Deception* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969, 2000); cf. Anaïs Nin, “We don’t see things as they are, we see things as we are” (*Seduction of the Minotaur* [Chicago: Swallow Press, 1961], p. 124), and Epictetus, “People are not moved by things, but the views which they take of them.”

20. I recommend Adam Phillips, *Missing Out: In Praise of the Unlived Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013). A review of that book by Sheila Heti (*New York Times*, January 20, 2103, Book Review, p. 12) says this: “We live in an age in which many of us no longer feel rooted in traditional systems of belief[, and] we know we are nothing special—‘on a par with ants and daffodils’—and so seek our satisfaction in the perpetual present of consumer capitalism, in which ‘knowing ourselves’ means ‘simply knowing what we have to have.’”

21. Generally speaking, hedonic adaptation involves a happiness “set point,” whereby humans maintain a constant level of happiness throughout their lives, despite events that occur in their environment. The process of hedonic adaptation is often conceptualized as a treadmill or thermostat, since one must consciously or mechanically work to maintain a certain level of happiness beyond a certain “set point.”

22. “[T]he pursuit of happiness of modern (consumer) society is [one where]... the Utopian project is reduced in scale to the *individual*, into a modern mode of self-building aiming at completion within the boundaries of one’s own self and one’s own life,” with “[consumer] goods as the building bricks” (Pasi Falk, *The Consuming Body* [London: Sage, 1994], p. 30). Some have called this contemporary Utopian project “consumutopia.” See, e.g., Grant McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Brian J. McVeigh, “‘Consumutopia’ versus ‘Control’ in Japan,” *Journal of Material Culture* 5, no. 2 (1990): 225–245.

23. Henry Rosemont, Jr., has led the way here in consideration of the enormous gap between the discourse of rights in China and in Euro-America. See, e.g., “Human Rights: A Bill of Worries,” in *Confucianism and Human Rights*, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary and Tu Weiming (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). See his recent monograph, *Against Individualism: A Confucian Rethinking of Morality, Politics, Family, and Religion* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015).

24. E.g., Michael Gazzaniga (University of California–Santa Barbara) argues, “Social constructs like good judgment and free will are even further removed, and trying to define them in terms of biological processes is, in the end, a fool’s game.” See “Decoding the Brain’s Cacophony,” *New York Times*, November 3, 2011; John Tierney, “Do You Have Free Will? It’s the Only Choice,” *New York Times*, March 21, 2011; Kerri Smith, “Neuroscience vs. Philosophy: Taking Aim at Free Will,” *Nature* 477 (August 2011): 23–25.

25. Apparently, we smell differently and appreciate smells differently, depending upon our political orientations. See Arthur C. Brooks, “Smelling Liberal, Thinking Conservative,” *New York Times*, October 5, 2014, Sunday Review, p. 5.

26. Joseph E. Stiglitz, “Is Inequality Inevitable?” *New York Times*, June 29, 2014, Sunday Review, p. 7; also Martha Bergmark (Executive Director, Voices for Civil Justice), *New York Times*, July 4, 2014, Opinion Pages response.

27. As Western society becomes more individualistic, a successful life has come to be equated with having high self-esteem, but paradoxically, people with high self-esteem tend to be less effective as social agents, since people don’t really like self-enhancers very much (Steven J. Heine et al., “Is There a Universal Need for Positive Self-regard,” *Psychological Review* 106, no. 4 [October 1991]: 766–794).

28. Memory does not correspond to a single brain site or function; it is a complex group of learning systems. For a review of such ideas, one may consult Ben-Ze’ev, *The Subtlety of Emotions*, esp. chaps. 2, 3, 6 (the last on “rationality” vs. “functionality”). Martha Nussbaum, among others, has been arguing for the inseparability of the emotions from reasoning. See, for example, her *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), which argues for the complex intelligence of emotions.

29. The phrase was originally that of Walter Lippmann, but it has been widely adopted in theological studies, including *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 8, *World Christianities c. 1815–c. 1914*, and vol. 9, *World Christianities c. 1914–c. 2000*.

30. See, e.g., <http://www.apa.org/about/gr/pi/advocacy/2008/kunkel-tv.aspx>, for the assertion that watching violence on TV, at the movies, or in video games affects us as deeply as violence in the flesh.

31. One woman explained to Sherry Turkle (Turkle, “The Networked Primate,” p. 84) why she preferred a robot boyfriend to a real one: “Look, I just want civility in the house. I just want something that will make me feel not alone.”

32. For *Homo faber*, see Richard Sennett, *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures, and Politics of Cooperation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), which is part of a larger project.

33. Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, p. 55. Cf. Iris Murdoch, in her 1967 lecture “The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts”: “Ethics should not be merely an analysis of ordinary mediocre conduct; it should be a hypothesis about good conduct and about how this can be achieved,” in Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 1970, 1971), p. 76.

34. Daryn Lehoux, *What Did the Romans Know? An Inquiry into Science and World-making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 8.

35. Adapted from Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 20, 251 (italics mine). Williams speaks of the Ancient Greeks; I of those thinkers (nearly all of whom were policy advisors at court) writing in classical Chinese.

36. The sneering quotation condemning the Third Estate as a “*reality-based* community” (now widely attributed to Karl Rove) first appeared in an October 17, 2004 issue of the *New York Times*. The quotation juxtaposed people who rely upon faith, assumption, or ideology and those who naively “believe that solutions emerge from judicious study of discernible reality.” Bush (or Rove?) reportedly continued, “That’s not the way the world really works anymore.... We’re an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality.”

37. Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred* (New York: Harper/Torchbooks, 1972), p. vii.

38. Samuel Moyn speaks of the “ethical value of the past,” and also of “an ethical command to respect its alterity.... The past is not simply a mirror for our own self-regard” (Samuel Moyn, *Human Rights and the Uses of History* [London: Verso, 2014], p. xii). Arnaldo Momigliano posited another distinction, whereby the antiquarian gathers details to accumulate a store of facts, whereas the historian looks for patterns. By his definition, I would prefer to be a historian than an antiquarian. See his “Ancient History and the Antiquarian,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 13, no. 3/4 (1950): 285–315.

39. Williams’ *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* shows that a position is idealist if what is ontologically primary in the position is something abstract. As a trained historian, I am more accustomed to the idea that truth is contingent and change constant. From the outside, philosophy seems much more stable in its objects of contemplation and models of inquiry. I have argued at some length elsewhere that the charge that “Confucians oppressed women” is muddle-headed.

40. Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, pp. 15, 49. These broad generalizations ignore the huge gaps between Plato and Aristotle, just to name two classical Greek philosophers, which Williams and other classicists acknowledge. See Kearney, “Losing Our Touch,” for a listing of some of these gaps.

41. One of the strengths of Kongzi in the *Analects* is that he allows that this is so only in some cases, not all.

42. Here I part company with Hans-Georg Moeller, whose book *The Moral Fool: A*

Case for Amoralism (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), *passim*, enjoins us to eschew universal injunctions universally, which is a logical contradiction in terms.

43. Leroy S. Rouner, ed., *The Longing for Home* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), p. 5. Cf. Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002).

44. Sarah Hoagland says that “care ethicists” tend to underplay self-regard, thereby helping to maintain the existence of oppressive institutions; and besides, the reciprocity they ascribe to warm social relations is much overrated. See Sarah Hoagland, *Lesbian Ethics* (Palo Alto, CA: Institute of Lesbian Studies, 1988) and “Some Thoughts about Caring,” in *Feminist Ethics*, ed. Claudia Card (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1991). What I am discussing is not exactly “reciprocity,” but rather what actions may lead to a better outcome.

45. Cited in Moyn, *Human Rights and the Uses of History*, p. xi.

46. See the opening lines of the “Zhi le” 至樂 chapter in the *Zhuangzi*.

47. On enslavement by things, no reading can surpass that of the *Xunzi* or chapter 129 of the *Shiji*. Sima Qian is particularly clear on the subject of “wage slavery,” and the early Chinese thinkers generally regard “enslavement by things” to be harmful to a person’s health and community. That hard work is “the epicenter of a good life” is suggested by the University of Michigan’s Panel Study of Income Dynamics, which polls thousands of American families. See Arthur C. Brooks, “The Father’s Example,” *New York Times*, June 13, 2014, Opinion Pages, p. A25.

48. Ben-Ze’ev, *The Subtlety of Emotions*, p. 261. Note, too, that the foregoing ideal does not map neatly onto the “cascading logic of human rights” outlined by Lynn Hunt in her book *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2007).

49. See *Xunzi*, chapter 18, “Zhenglun” 正論; *Kongcongzi*, chapter 7, “Juwei” 居衛; and *Zhouli*, chapter 2, “Da Situ” 大司徒. Cf. *Laozi*, sections 33, 44, 46, and *Zhuangzi*, chapter 18, “Rang Wang” 讓王.

50. See *Lunheng*, *pian* 38, “Bie Tong” 別通; please note that I translate *jing* as “pay due heed to,” following the Han dynasty *Shangshu* commentaries. Cf. *Hanshu* 47, where a successful Overseer of the Han Capital invites potential candidates to office, treating them with the same ceremony accorded dignitaries (*jin jian ru bin li* 進見如賓禮). *Zuozhuan*, “Lord Xi,” year 33, defines “respect” and “due attention” (*jing* 敬) as *xiang dai ru bin* 相待如賓, as does the *Guoyu*, “Jin Yu,” 4.53. This line is very much paired with *shi min ru da ji* 使民如大祭.

51. *Huainanzi* 19, “Xiuwu Xun” 脩務訓, has the sage-ruler Yao “employing the people as if they were sons and disciples” (much the same idea); *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義 8.1 has the Ancients employing the people as if they were “on loan.”

52. Here I am mindful of Arthur Waley’s remark that the Confucius of the *Analects* “contrived to endow compromise [i.e., the Middle Way] with an emotional glamour.” See Arthur Waley, trans. and annot., *The Analects of Confucius* (London: George Allen and Unwin; reprint, New York: Vintage Books, n.d.), p. 37. I wonder if these two slogans do not have the same potential. On the propensity for major thinkers to be radical, however, see Lee Yearley, “The Perfected Person in the Radical Chuang-tzu,” in *Experimental Essays*

on *Chuang-tzu*, ed. Victor H. Mair (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1983), pp. 126–147.

53. The phrase is that of François Jullien, and it is cited by Martin Verhoeven in his article “Buddhism and Science: Probing the Boundaries of Faith and Reason,” *Religion East and West* 1 (June 2001): 77–97.

54. We should not look to our leaders to offer profiles in courage. Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, American presidents, both Democrat and Republican, have repeatedly launched wars simply “to avoid appearing to be a coward,” though their declarations of war have spouted high-minded principles. See the 2009 documentary *The Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers*, directed by Judith Ehrlich and Rick Goldsmith (shown on PBS).

55. Verhoeven, “Buddhism and Science.”

56. Cf. *Analects* 9.22: “Respect the young. How do you know that they will not be all that you are now?” or *Analects* 5.26: “In dealing with the aged, comfort them; with friends, be trustworthy; and with the young, cherish them.”

57. Those who know their *Analects* well will have noticed that I do not suggest that we impose on others the much stricter standard of altruistic behavior found in *Analects* 14.45, where Zilu asks about the qualities of the noble person: “The person cultivates his or her person by comforting others.” “Is that all?” “To cultivate one’s person by comforting everyone else is something that even Yao and Shun found difficult.”

58. Simone Weil wrote that beauty requires us “to give up our imaginary position as the center.... A transformation then takes place, at the very roots of our sensibility, in our immediate reception of sense impressions and psychological impressions.” See her “Love of the Order of the World,” in *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), p. 159. Iris Murdoch, in “The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts,” says: “The Sovereignty of Good makes beauty the single best or most obvious thing in our surroundings which is an occasion for ‘unselfing.’” By this Murdoch does not mean “self-forgetting,” but something more interesting: that all the space typically devoted to protecting or promoting the self or its prestige seems now freed to be in the service of something else.

59. Ben-Ze’ev, *The Subtlety of Emotions*, p. 170, usefully distinguishes the function of the emotions from the functions of reflexes and physiological drives: reflexes allow human beings to interact with their environments in highly stereotyped ways (which often come at a high cost), and physiological drives serve a particular homeostatic need. Emotions differ from both reflexes and drives in “flexibility, variability, richness, and dependence upon the mental.” Imagination allows us to refer to what is not actually present to the senses.

60. Here I think of the arguments put forward by Maurice Hamington, in his *Embodied Care: Jane Addams, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Feminist Ethics* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004). I do not argue that the development of caring habits is instinctual; rather it demands a great deal of attention; still the bodies that human beings inhabit give everyone the potential to develop habits of imaginative care that integrate the epistemic and the ethical. Hamington writes, “Habits of care ‘hold’ knowledge of what it is to care, but the imagination is also present, because knowledge must be applied to new and unknown situations” (p. 66).

61. It is this way of conducting oneself that represents “full humanity”—the ability,

as Shakespeare said, “to feel what wretches feel” and also what artists, cooks, and massage therapists feel. Alexander Pope once said, “Drop into thyself, and be a fool!” See the last line of his philosophical poem “An Essay on Man” (ca. 1733).

62. Why would these slogans have a prayer of working, when so many pieces of antique “common sense” have failed? Perhaps because they do not particularly reflect any single tradition’s assessment of the human condition and its relation to the extra-social world. Xunzi made this point when he argued ritual theory: the priority should be on inducing constructive behavior, not orthodox thinking, as did Rosemont and Ames, in their discussions of “role ethics” in their various publications on this topic. In life, Confucius or Zhuangzi may be a better model than Socrates, who was purportedly certain of a rash of highly questionable propositions, for example that deep reflection invariably leads to firm knowledge, and so on.

63. Monique Canto-Sperber, *Moral Disquiet and Human Life*, trans. Sylvia Pavel (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 45.

64. *Analects* 13.24; 17.13; cf. *Nichomachean Ethics* I, 2, 1094b–1095a: “We do not seek or expect the same degree of exactness in all sorts of arguments...and because this is the nature of our premises, we must be satisfied [when discussing ethics or political science] with probabilistic conclusions of the same sort.” It does not help us one bit to equate settled conventions or local norms with profound moral insights. See *Analects* 13.24. We routinely (mis)read recommendations and endorsements about the world as empirical statements about the world that are verifiable (thinking ethics to be a science).

65. John Rawls’ *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971) would demonstrate, if proof were needed, that no way exists to construct a theory of human morality with the certitude demanded in the evaluation of scientific theories.

66. Utilitarianism: minimize social harm; libertarianism: maximize personal freedom; communitarianism: cultivate civic virtue.

67. Michael J. Sandel, *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), p. 261. I am not convinced by the arguments lodged by Simone Weil and Iris Murdoch that say an experience of beauty prepares us to receive a sense of justice. They were responding, of course, to aesthetic theories that put the sublime above the beautiful—a silly dichotomy. See above for citations.

68. Ludwig Wittgenstein, “A Lecture on Ethics,” part I of “Wittgenstein’s Lecture on Ethics,” *Philosophical Review* 74, no. 1 (1965): 3–12, at p. 8.

69. Merritt Tierce, “This Is What an Abortion Looks Like,” *New York Times*, September 13, 2014, Opinion Pages, p. A19.

70. Dina Kraft, “By Talking, Inmates and Victims Make Things More Right,” *New York Times*, Sunday, July 6, 2014, p. 13, on the “restorative justice” movement, where victims and offenders discuss how their lives were affected by crimes. One speaker, a longtime community activist, said that “Holding you in your humanity—it’s how we hold each other accountable.”

71. As Zhuangzi says, this means there are principles whereby one can attain happiness and keep oneself alive, but he doesn’t know about others’ propensity to choose or reject them.

72. This is the opening of the “Supreme Pleasure” (“Zhile” 至樂) chapter in the *Zhuangzi*.

73. One obvious candidate here is *bao* 報 (requit, return). While one is not invariably repaid for good deeds or bad in kind, more often than not there is a return.

74. Nicholas Epley and David Dunning, “Feeling ‘Holier than Thou’: Are Self-serving Assessments Produced by Errors in Self- or Social Prediction?” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79, no. 6 (December 2000): 861–875. Four studies cited here suggest that people hold overly charitable views of themselves and accurate impressions of their peers. Participants consistently overestimated the likelihood that they would act in generous or selfless ways, whereas their predictions of others were considerably more accurate (and the best indicator of what they would do themselves in the same situation). This work builds upon Anatol Rapoport’s “Tit-For-Tat,” where an account of this code appears in Rapoport’s book, *General System Theory: Essential Concepts and Applications* (Tunbridge Wells, UK: Abacus, 1986).

75. Here, Confucius comes close to E. M. Forster’s “Only Connect” in *Howard’s End*: the Schlegel sisters call this “small price” a form of “rent” that must be paid, if one is not to descend into cynicism or paranoia.

76. Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, p. 189.

77. “The Secret of Effective Motivation,” in “Gray Matter,” by Boaz Keysar and Albert Costa, *New York Times*, July 6, 2014. In 2009, researchers from the University of Rochester conducted a study tracking 147 recent graduates in reaching their stated goals; those with “intrinsic” goals (e.g., the aim is for enduring relations or satisfying work) fared much better on the “happiness scale” than those with “extrinsic” goals (e.g., to get ahead); the latter experienced much higher levels of shame, fear, and dissatisfaction.

78. I have in mind the lines where Xunzi says, not far into his essay “On Ritual” (“Lilun” 禮論): “Let the [would-be candidates for office] know . . .”

79. Christopher Blattman, “Let Them Eat Cash!” *New York Times*, June 30, 2014, p. A19, reporting on nineteen recent studies conducted by the World Bank economists tracking money grants given to countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

80. I do not mean to imply that this idea is exclusively Confucian. The *Guanzi* “Mu Min” 牧民 chapter argues that “The granaries must be full first, before people can have an understanding of ritual principles, and clothes and food must be sufficient before people can develop a sense of shame.”

81. All references in the text to the *Mencius* use the standard book, part, and chapter designations (e.g., “4A1,” “6A17,” “6A9,” etc.).

82. This tactic works, as Mencius says, because “if one does not give one’s whole mind to it, one will never master it” (D. C. Lau, trans., *Mencius* [London and New York: Penguin, 1970], p. 165). Conversely, if one devotes one’s whole effort to something, one will master it.

83. In other words, Mencius and Xunzi see no necessary conflict between the “want” self and the “should” self, contra the Harvard Business School analysis offered by Ann E. Tenbrunsel, Kristina A. Diekmann, Kimberly A. Wade-Benzoni, and Max H. Bazerman, in their 2012 working paper “The Ethical Mirage.”

84. *Shiji* 129.3259; the phrase is ascribed to Bo Gui. The phrase “managing their lives” occurs in *SJ* 129.3259, the story of Fan Li 范蠡.

85. Of course, this is the fictional character in the movie *Wall Street* who pronounces the slogan “Greed is good.”

86. See Jane Mayer's article "Covert Operations" in the *New Yorker*, August 30, 2010, which argues that corporations are moving swiftly to the right, seeing regulation not as something that may "save" capitalism but as something that destroys their productivity.

87. Although David Brooks, columnist in the *New York Times*, usually enrages me, I agree with his basic analysis about character formation on the op-ed page of July 31, 2014, which associated character with four factors: habits, opportunities, exemplary models, and societal standards. The devil is in the details, of course.

88. Jack Goody, *The Theft of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

89. Here the Confucius Institutes have played a big role in "essentializing" Chinese culture, reducing its marvelous complexity to politically safe topics.

CHAPTER 13

Euro-Japanese Universalism, Korean Confucianism, and Aesthetic Communities

Wonsuk CHANG

The Advent of European-Japanese Universalism since the Nineteenth Century

During the nineteenth century, core Western countries such as Great Britain, Germany, France, and Russia began to penetrate into East Asia, and the traditional East Asian tributary system centered on China was challenged. The consequence of war between Great Britain/France and China in the years between 1839 and 1860 demonstrated the ineluctable dominance of the main European powers over China.

It is interesting to note that until the eighteenth century Chinese civilization had served Europe as a model to be emulated, or at worst as a rival. China had a *lingua franca*, a centralized bureaucratic system, and sophisticated philosophies in the form of Confucianism and Buddhism. Yet suddenly, from the nineteenth century on, Chinese civilization came to seem increasingly ossified, straddled by serious and inherent defects that could only be remedied through the tutelage of Western modernity.

The images and the knowledge of East Asia produced by key Western countries in the course of the nineteenth century were based on a simple premise. Everything that had occurred to put Western countries in their current position had been inevitable, progressive, civilized, and universal; this included ideas and movements such as the rise of capitalism, liberal democracy, and the development of the natural sciences and industrialization. At the same time, whatever resisted these forces was feudal, barbaric, reactionary, and backward.

What is distinctive in this era in East Asia is the role of Japan as a late colonizer. In the wake of Perry's expedition to Japan, during the period 1868–1912, and under the slogan of “enrich the country, strengthen the military” (*fukoku kyōhei* 富國強兵), Japan transformed itself along the Western model of the aggressive nation-state. As a late colonizer, Japan presented two faces: inferiority regarding Western domination and superiority vis-à-vis its Asian neighbors. Japan defined itself as a paradox, part of a larger community of oppressed Asian nations standing against Western hegemony, while also being the most Westernized, civilized country among Asian nations.

As a late colonizer, Japan began to develop a knowledge of Korean Confucianism from both of these perspectives. Korean Confucianism was seen as the main source of Korea's backwardness: Korea was destined to fall because of its preoccupation with pedantic and unproductive debates, ignorance of the state of the people's welfare, and blind dependence upon the Zhu Xi school of Confucianism that was followed by the Korean literati. At the same time, Japan was developing a “Pan-Asian” theory of culture regarding the “yellow race” on the basis of which Japan claimed the exclusive right and “burden” to intervene in Asian countries. As an Asian country that had successfully adjusted to the Western model of an aggressive nation-state, Japan began to cultivate a kind of European-Japanese universalism, nurtured in the soil of racism and Pan-Asianism, and to introduce it into the neighboring cultures, including Korea, where it was combined with local Confucian beliefs and practices. In this way Japan was able to introduce European universalism along with selected elements of the Japanese tradition, including Japanese Confucianism, especially the Wang Yangming School (*Yōmeigaku* 陽明学) and the National Studies School (*Kokugaku* 国学).

Inoue Tetsujirō (1855–1944), philosopher and proponent of the theory of Eastern philosophy (*Tōyō tetsugaku* 東洋哲學)—as distinguished from Western philosophy (*Seiyō tetsugaku* 西洋哲學)—argued that Japanese philosophy was unique in that it combined the merits of both Eastern and Western philosophical traditions. Although today Inoue's arguments are seriously challenged, they were representative of the Euro-Japanese universalism that dominated the modern intellectual climate in East Asia at the time.

Some Forms of Orientalism and Occidentalism in Interpreting Korean Confucianism

Many intellectuals in late nineteenth-century Korea, including Yun Ch'i-ho (1864–1945), a Korean “enlightenment” intellectual educated at Emory and Vanderbilt Universities in the United States as well as in Japan, began to express a highly iconoclastic attitude toward Confucianism, viewing it as a shackling

ideology of backwardness, oppression, hierarchism, laziness, and hypocrisy, and thereby incompatible with modern values such as individualism, tolerance, and freedom, which he felt the Korean people should be pursuing. Commenting on a situation where a Chinese teacher quit his position in his Western-style school without prior notice, Yun wrote:

The more Confucianism a Chinaman has the less reliable he is in words. Shame on Confucianism! After having absolute control over the body, mind, and heart of a nation over twenty-five centuries the system has ever failed to make honest men and women of its worshippers.

The maxims of Confucianism are simply beautiful. But what is the use of them? A system that has no power to make its believer practice its maxims is as bad as a Chinese proclamation full of fine things never intended to be carried out. A rule can't work without someone to work it. Confucianism is *powerless* and therefore *useless* because its foundation is no higher than filial piety. It contains the seeds of corruption in its doctrine of the inferiority of women, of absolute submission to kings, of its everlasting "go-backism." Its materialism makes men gross. It has no life and vitality in it to advance or improve. Now when a system of teaching has no power to make its professor a better man than he might be otherwise it is worse than useless.

A Confucianist thinks he has reached the principle of virtues when he fulfills the prescribed rules of filial piety. With him this exceedingly commonplace virtue made uncommon covers every sin—licentiousness, revengefulness, lying, hatred, great dissimulation....¹

More subtle forms of interpreting Confucianism in Korea according to an increasingly influential Euro-Japanese universalist perspective were developed by other Japanese scholars, including Takahashi Tōru (1878–1967).²

Attacking mainstream Neo-Confucianism for its political-factional conflicts that had no philosophical value, its dependency on China, its neglect of the people's welfare, and its general responsibility for Korea's backwardness, Takahashi reevaluated the statecraft of marginalized Confucian scholars, such as Chōng Yag-yong, Yu Hyōng-wōn, and Chōng Che-du, and the Wang Yang-ming School in Korea of the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries.

Takahashi's perception of the eighteenth-century "Confucian Statecraft School" (*Keirin no gaku* 經倫の學) as a failed forerunner of modernity came from his appreciation of Japanese Confucian statecraft studies, such as the Wang Yangming School or various other Confucian schools during the late Tokugawa period. This Confucian scholarship on statecraft is thought to be a key factor behind Japan's ability to achieve an aggressive nation-state status without being

colonized. Takahashi's appraisal of Chŏng Che-du, a Wang Yangming scholar in Korea, also derives from a Japanese chauvinistic attitude because many of the participants in the Meiji Restoration, including the likes of Nakae Tōju, Kumazawa Banzan, and Yoshida Shōin, were perceived to be from the Wang Yangming School.³ Presented with the model of Euro-Japanese universalism, Takahashi saw the statecraft of the Wang Yangming School in Korea as either very weak or absent altogether. In his view, because the Confucian tradition in Korea had become ossified, it could only achieve modernity through Japanese tutelage.

Interestingly, Korean nationalists also developed their reinterpretation of Korean Confucianism within the confines of a chauvinistic Euro-Japanese universalism. Chŏng In-bo (1893–1950), one of the scholar-journalists and founders of the *Chosŏnhak* 朝鮮學 (nationalist Korean studies) movement in the 1930s, brought back into the foreground of Korean national history such marginalized Korean traditions as Wang Yangming Learning and Practical Learning (*Sirhak* 實學), Confucian scholars like Chŏng Yag-yong, and even Tan'gun, the mythical founder of the Korean nation. Chŏng In-bo argued in his book *Extended Studies of Wang Yangming (Yangmyŏnghak yŏllon* 陽明學演論) (1933) that while the Cheng-Zhu school had undermined traditional Korean society with its futile metaphysical debates between rival political factions, Wang Yangming Studies was able to encourage the Korean people to achieve modernity through practicality (Ch. *shixin* 實心; K. *shilshim*) and self-assertiveness (Ch. *zhuti* 主體; K. *chuch'e*).⁴ As an ardent proponent of the idea of “practical learning,” Chŏng was also one of the editors of the *Complete Works of Chŏng Yag-yong (Yŏyudang chŏnsŏ* 與猶堂全書), compiled with An Chae-hong and Kim Sŏng-jin during the period between 1934 and 1938. It is noteworthy that Takahashi Tōru and Yun Ch'i-ho joined the celebrations upon the publication of the work. In a predictable manner, Takahashi expressed his approval of *Yangmyŏnghak yŏllon* in his published review of it in 1955.

In the wake of the Great Depression of 1929, Japan became a national socialist regime in opposition to the Allies, adopting Pan-Asianism as an ideology and launching a series of military attacks: on Manchuria in 1931, China in 1937, and Pearl Harbor in 1941. Its ideology combined Shinto-Confucian elements with totalitarianism. Imperial Confucianism (*Kōdō Jugaku* 皇道儒學), supporting the national socialist regime in Japan and the ideology of unifying the five Asian races—Japanese, Korean, Manchu, Mongol, and Chinese—was a Confucian form of Occidentalism. In a 1931 article, Takahashi restrained his harsh criticism of Korean Confucianism with a more positive tone, lauding it as an exemplar of national education. Originally Takahashi was adamant in criticizing T'oegye (Yi Hwang) (1502–1571) as a mere imitator of Zhu Xi as follows:

T'oebye is the typical example of Korean Confucian thinking, more broadly representative of all Koreans' way of learning. Lacking in creativity and originality, he was just an authentic transmitter of Zhu Xi. In interpreting the Classics, he modeled himself after Zhu Xi's Collected Commentary without considering works prior to Zhu Xi. By contrast, Ogyū Sorai and Itō Jinsai, heroic Japanese Confucians, initiated the National Learning School, a civil school, rather than the Zhu Xi School, a bureaucratic school. This is the stark difference between Japanese and Korean Confucianism; there is an everlasting disparity between the two nations and schools.⁵

Yet, according to Abe Yoshio (1905–1978), one of Takahashi's disciples, this same T'oebye was elevated in 1944 beyond the level of practical scholar to that of creator:

At the moment the peninsula [Korea], as part of imperial Japan, is committed to the construction of a moral world. It is worth reflecting on the practical thought of Yi T'oebye, the foremost educator-scholar of the Korean peninsula and the creator of the philosophy of moral national education. Thereby it is never insignificant for us to consider how best to act as loyal subjects of the emperor and train our spirits. Moreover, it is urgent and relevant for educators on the peninsula whose mission it is to transform the people.⁶

Colonial scholars such as Takahashi Tōru and Abe Yoshio had situated T'oebye, like Wang In, who was the putative transmitter of Confucianism from Korea to Japan in ancient times, as the creator of moral cultivation in Korea, which was then transmitted to Japan. Prior to 1930, T'oebye had seemed a quintessential Cheng-Zhu Confucian, responsible for the ossified Confucian tradition of Korea. Yet during the war period he was transformed into a model of national education, contributing to the ultra-nationalistic Imperial Confucianism headed by the Japanese emperor.

During the war, Confucianism was employed as part of the strategy of fundamental "otherness" vis-à-vis Western domination. Confucianism as a whole became a representative and inclusive culture of the "yellow races," antagonistic to the egoistic, hedonistic, dominant Western culture. According to Korean Confucian scholar Yi Myōngse, American and British civilization, characterized by individualism, materialism, and utilitarianism, is inherently greedy and exploitative. To save the repressed yellow race from becoming the prey of the dominating West, Japan had a moral duty (*dōgi* 道義) to fight on behalf of the Asian peoples: "Our imperial army is invincible because we fight for benevo-

lence and righteousness (*renyi* 仁義). The Sage's dictum that the benevolent do not have enemies proves this."⁷

A Critical Assessment of Modern Assumptions

THE PRACTICAL SCHOOL: WAS THERE A PRACTICAL SCHOOL IN SEVENTEENTH- THROUGH NINETEENTH-CENTURY CHOSŎN?

The colonialist Takahashi's interpretation of Korean Neo-Confucianism as being unproductive and that an anti-Zhu Xi Confucianism (i.e., a "practical" Confucianism, including the Wang Yangming School) emerged from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries is still influential today. Nationalist as well as socialist historiographies have argued that there emerged a practical Confucian school, termed *Sirhak* 實學, whose characteristics were practical and whose emphasis was on statecraft, capitalist development, individualism, and evidence-based science.

It is interesting to see that in the history of the Confucian tradition, Neo-Confucians referred to their school as *Sirhak*, in contrast to the "unproductive" Buddhist studies (*Xuxue* 虛學). In this tradition, emerging Confucian schools, including Neo-Confucianism and the Wang Yangming School, have used this general term to refer to themselves. Yet Takahashi's idea of a practical school seems to derive from a Eurocentric perception of Asian history, because we can discern in the features of this "practical school" a mere collection of European "universal values" such as individualism, capitalism, empiricism, and rationality.

In fact, the idea of a practical school is closely related to the reorganization of the world of learning in nineteenth-century Europe, characterized by the nation-state-funded rehabilitation of the university and professional fields. During the nineteenth century, the European world of learning began to define itself as a concentration of professionals pursuing objective truth (the rise of positivism) between two extremes—reactionaries and radicals—for the betterment of the people and the nation-state. For example, the newly unified German Verein für Sozialpolitik (Social Policy Association), founded in 1873, was the operational organization for supporting a Bismarckian centrist social-program legislation that avoided both the liberal-economic circle and social revolutionaries. It is well known that the Prussian (German) model of the world of learning was the object of emulation by Japanese academics during the nineteenth century. One of these was Shiratori Kurakichi, the founder of Eastern History (Tōyōshi 東洋史) in Japan, who studied under Ludwig Reiss, himself a student of Leopold von Ranke. Enshrining positivism as an analytical and universal method, Shiratori established the particularistic and nationalist historiography of Eastern History. The aim of the Imperial universities in Japan

was the teaching of arts and academics and the pursuit of in-depth research to meet the demands of the state. The Japanese construction of modern higher learning did not differentiate between the state and the people. It supported the ideal of objectivity and positivism as a method, and “practical studies” to meet the demands of the state.⁸

These days, an increasing number of Koreanists have found the term *Sirhak* or “Practical Learning” in seventeenth- through nineteenth-century Chosŏn to be not an indigenous term but one imposed by a linear-progressive view of history. Chŏng Yag-yong was not antagonistic to Zhu Xi but an admirer of Zhu Xi and a revisionist at the same time. The notion of self-interest was not advocated by “conservative” Confucians, nor was it by most *Sirhak* scholars.

Yet, at a deeper level, arguments about the emergence of the practical school in the early modern period are a product of the modern notion of time being linear and progressive. This teleological view, giving priority to a certain “end of history” toward which the deterministic historical route was fixed, is not congruent with postmodern sensibilities in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, or with Confucian tradition. Non-linear and irreversible time as posited by Ilya Prigogine does not allow any teleological end to the historical process.⁹ Rather, evolving systems have their internal times of birth and death, such as oscillations, cycles, progression, and the emergence of novelty, without any transcendent, deterministic sense of the beginning or ending of time. The idea of time (*shi* 時) in the *Yijing* is historicist, emphasizing the priority of process over causal or teleological agency. In such concepts of time, a universal standard or inevitable route of history dissolves into the shifting propensities (*shi* 勢) as alternating modes of centralization and decentralization, unification and diversification—that is, *yang* and *yin*.

CONFUCIANISM AND THE STATE: WAS T’OEGYE AN IMPERIAL TEACHER?

The dominance of Pan-Asianism from 1930 on was the basis for a strategy of “otherness,” assuming there was that essential other called the “East” in opposition to the “West.” As we have seen, as part of a Pan-Asian tradition, the Confucian tradition as a whole was interpreted in a more positive light than before, as in the aforementioned case of T’oegye. Yet, was Neo-Confucianism in Korea, including T’oegye’s philosophy, supportive of central statism? There is much evidence to show that T’oegye’s ideas were rather supportive of the domination of local elites in the Yŏngnam area, for example in his commitment to local education and community compacts, while sympathetic to the criticism of legalists and Wang Anshi, the state-led reformer of the Northern Song.¹⁰ Many topics of his counsels to the King include the necessity of a self-effacing and deferential kingship. Dismissing the arrogance of the king, T’oegye said, “When there is

no reciprocal trust, [no] agreement between ministers and kings in governing the country, benefits are not able to reach the people.”¹¹ His family consisted of local landlords who owned large areas of land and slaves in the Andong area. Though the actual relationship between Confucian scholar-officials and the monarchy during the Chosŏn period is complex, the power of the kings in sixteenth-century Chosŏn was limited, and, relative to the period of Japanese imperial rule in Korea in the 1930s, Confucians and communities at the local level enjoyed autonomy. After denouncing Korean Confucians, Japanese colonialists invented the image of T’oegye as an imperial or national teacher and educator who supported highly centralized power.

On a deeper philosophical level, I argue that Occidentalism after 1930 was the reverse of the liberalism-Orientalism of the Taishō era, because both were based on a modernist epistemology of essentialism entailing interdependent notions of universalism and particularism. One strategy of this way of thinking is an assumption that a certain thing, person, or group—such as a race, nation, culture, or civilization—has an unchanging, abstract, and inherent essence. Yet, defining an entity in this way easily exposes it to historical and geographical contingencies. For example, when Occidentalists state that Asian people are inherently reticent and obedient, do they mean a person from eighteenth-century Andong? Third-century Shandong? Tenth-century Okinawa? Twenty-first-century Hong Kong?

One of the most insightful arguments against essentialist knowledge comes from the pragmatist John Dewey. According to Dewey, the most pervasive fallacy of philosophical thinking is the error of ignoring the historical, developmental, and contextualizing aspects of experience, something termed “the philosophical fallacy.” It is the abstracting of one element from the organism that gives it meaning and sets it up as absolute, and then proceeds to revere this one element as the cause and ground of all reality and knowledge. In the same context, John Dewey mentioned the invalidity of the essentialist notion of the East or West in his congratulatory remarks in the inaugural issue of *Philosophy East and West*:

I think that the most important function your journal can perform in bringing about the ultimate objective of the “substantial synthesis of East and West” is to help break down the notion that there is such a thing as “West” and “East” that have to be synthesized.... Some of the elements in Western cultures and Eastern cultures are so closely allied that the problem of “synthesizing” them does not exist when they are taken in isolation. But the point is that none of these elements—in the East or the West—is in isolation. They are all interwoven in a vast variety of ways in the historical-cultural process. The basic prerequisite for any fruitful

development of inter-cultural relations—of which philosophy is simply one constituent part—is an understanding and appreciation of the complexities, differences, and ramifying interrelationships both within any given country and among the countries, East and West, whether taken separately or together.¹²

Appreciating Uncommon Assumptions for a Viable Confucianism: Aesthetic Communities

Since the early twentieth century, assumptions of European universalism, such as universal values, nationalism-racism, scientism, a progressive view of history, capitalist economics, technological advancement, individual rights, citizenship and national sovereignty, and essentialism and objectivism, have all become objects of criticism by late-modern philosophers and Asian thinkers, and in the frontiers of some natural sciences. At the same time, cultural studies have dismissed the Western canons of white male European bias. Philosophers from the West have been urged to look within Western cultural elements, heretofore marginalized. We can observe a surging interest in pragmatism, hermeneutics, process philosophy, feminist philosophy, and postcolonialism. There is also an increased interest in non-Western philosophies, including Confucianism and Buddhism, distinctive cultural assumptions far from European universalism.

I believe we need imagination and a knowledge of viable Confucianism beyond Euro-Japanese universalism (Orientalism) and its antagonistic particularism (Occidentalism) because they have been neither philosophically coherent nor sound, and they have been historically catastrophic. It is tragic to realize that since the advent of European-Japanese universalism around 1875, the Korean people have had to endure two Sino-Japanese Wars, the Russo-Japanese War, colonization, the Japanese invasions of China, World War II, and the Vietnam War, and they are still technically fighting the Korean War. If war is the most horrible event that can befall the common people, Orientalism and Occidentalism, which have dominated the intellectual atmosphere over the last century in Korea, may be the primary sources and consequences of such tragedies.

According to Confucian philosophy, war, social conflict, sectarianism, and exclusion are the result of a failure of communication of shared experience—a lack, that is, of ritual propriety. We also need new ways to interpret Confucian philosophy and tradition that come without assumptions regarding essentialism and the linear notion of time, which are constituents of liberal ideologies.

I mentioned an essentialist strategy as one of the epistemological assumptions of European universalism. Debates over individualism and collectivism, the core concepts of modern political philosophy, are attempts to establish answers in this manner. They are conflicting answers to the same question

regarding the identity of “the people.” This became a focus of debates after the French Revolution, in which the sovereignty of the monarch was replaced by popular sovereignty. While the liberal answer has been that the people constitute a collection of “individuals” bearing rights, on the extreme other end of the spectrum it is said that the people constitute a single collective society. The issue is as follows: when many modern political philosophers deal with the relationship between the individual and society, they tend to use atomistic, essentialist, quantitative language that assumes there are two distinct entities in the form of a right-bearing individual and a general social will. As we have seen in the emergence of the modern *Yomeigaku* (Wang Yangming School) in nineteenth-century Japan, the controversy over the nature of the “people”—between the nationalist, state-oriented, right-wing idea of *kokumin* 國民 and the cosmopolitan, civic-oriented, left-wing idea of *heimin* 平民—was the East Asian form of the sovereignty debates in the modern nation-state.

However, it is hard for us to encounter the Leviathan as a personalized collective polity. Society as a whole, independent of process, is an abstraction from larger complex transactional processes. According to Ch’oe Han-ki, a nineteenth-century Korean Confucian scholar, if you achieve proper communication between self and others (in his words, the penetration of configurative energy), there is continuity between them, and relationships will be productive. In the same context, it is hard to assume a discrete self in our experience. Once you accept this abstract entity as reality, there are two contested entities, namely the discrete individual and the collective society. These entities, far from authentic experience, can become a source of the variety of social and ethical theories in which ideas regarding the individual or state compete with each other for priority. Individualism is closely related to liberalism and utilitarianism, in which individual rights, freedom, and autonomy are an end where government or communal purpose cannot intervene and rather are used as a means for the happiness of individuals. By contrast, collectivism is closely related to totalitarianism, which argues that individuals should be in the service of a greater good, such as the aims and interests of the nation-state. Seemingly contradictory, what they have in common is their view of the individual or community as a self-sufficient entity that requires others as a means to achieve its own ends.

Elsewhere I mentioned that we need to construct a viable Confucian philosophy without essentialist assumptions. Now we begin to focus on experience instead of abstraction. Experience is communal and aesthetic. The term aesthetic is derived from the Greek *αισθητικός* (*aisthetikos*), meaning “esthetic, sensitive, sentient,” which is in turn derived from *αισθάνομαι* (*aisthanomai*), meaning “I perceive, feel, sense.” I argue for the notion of “aesthetic communities” as conceptual sources for a viable interpretation of Confucianism without an essentialist assumption.

The self is not a discrete entity but an experiential or aesthetic field in the sense that the person has as many selves as there are others who recognize the person. This is also true for a variety of groupings, such as ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, one's own lived body, family, fraternity, religious community, nations, international communities beyond national boundaries, and so on. Fields are composites, vague and full of shared experience constituting their meaning. Ch'oe Han-ki thought it was configurative energy forming the emergence of the self and others as focus-field relations. This radical relatedness permits the self and others to communicate at a deep level and to achieve an associated humanity (Ch. *ren* 仁; K. *in*), penetration of the spiritual configurative energy (Ch. *shenqi tong* 神氣通; K. *shin'gi t'ong*), consensus (Ch. *yitong* 一統; K. *ilt'ong*), and impartiality (Ch. *gong* 公; K. *kong*) in shared experiences. This vagueness of shared experience is focused and made immediate through its embodiment by a particular focus, such as *this* communal exemplar, *this* mother, *this* leader of a fraternity, and *this* historical model. This is a performance of optimal signification (*yi* 義) by which the meaning of the group is made present in its exemplary personalities or symbols.¹³

Optimal signification of shared experience means responding to the world with our senses in meaningful, skilled, productive, active, and shared ways. It is the art of communities (*li* 禮) that allow humans to feel one with each other in a meaningful, rich, and productive way. The term art or aesthetic here denotes neither individualistic creativity nor a special domain outside the ordinary business of life. Art is an integral part of communal life (*li*). It includes facial expressions, calligraphic style, table manners, and quality human relations in the workplace and at memorial services, which are the source and expression of collaborative creativity.

Lastly, it seems worthwhile to think about democracy from a Confucian standpoint. As I mentioned, these days we may be entering a period of disintegration for European universalism, in which liberal democracy, capitalist economic systems, and technological progress lose their legitimacy and power. Yet democracy should not be thought of as the product of a European bias, but in fact as something in conflict with liberalist assumptions in general. John Dewey did not think democracy to be the product of the inevitable progress of Western civilization, nor possible with liberalist assumptions. Rather he presumed that democracy meant full participation and communication in many forms of communities. The interpretation of the Confucian idea as aesthetic communities may be a viable alternative to the European universalist interpretation of Confucianism as well as democracy. How can we reconstruct the idea of democracy and viable Confucianism without intellectual assumptions constructing the modern world? I believe this to be the direction of the collective discussions and research being conducted today worldwide by scholars interested in Confucian philosophy.

Notes

1. Yun Ch'i-ho 尹致昊, *Yun Ch'i-bo ilgi* 尹致昊日記 (Diary of Yun Ch'i-ho) (Seoul: Kuksa P'yönch'an Wiwönhoe, 1973), December 12, 1893; my emphasis.

2. Starting his career as a journalist in Japan, from 1903 Takahashi Tōru took up residence in Korea as teacher and colonial bureaucrat. From 1926 he was a professor of Korean language, culture, and thought at Keijo (Seoul) Imperial University. After World War II, he was one of the founders of Chōsen Gakkai 朝鮮学会 (Association for Korean Studies). He left behind extensive writings on Korean Confucianism, Buddhism, culture, and language, which had a profound impact on the next generation of Japanese, Korean, and American scholars of Korean Studies, including Edward Wagner.

3. Inoue Tetsujirō was one of the major scholars to view the Wang Yangming School as having contributed significantly to the activists of the Meiji Restoration, delineating the genealogy from Nakae Tōju to Katsu Kaishū, as he argued in his book, *Nihon Yōmeigakuha no tetsugaku* 日本陽明學派之哲學 (Philosophy of the Japanese Wang Yangming School), published in 1900. Yet many scholars today have found the notion of the Wang Yangming School as being behind the spirit of the Meiji Restoration to be incongruent with the historical facts and a deliberate creation of Inoue's. For example, Ogyū Shigehiro has argued that there were two conflicting ways of interpreting the sovereignty of the people in the nineteenth century: by commoners (*heimin* 平民) or by all the people of the nation (*kokumin* 國民). The Wang Yangming Learning discussed above that was transformed by modern ideas into *Yōmeigaku* should be distinguished from the *Yōmeigaku* that existed prior to the Meiji Restoration: "The idea that Wang Yangming Learning contributed to the Meiji Restoration was a thesis created by modern nationalists through the projection of their own ideas onto history" (see Ogyū Shigehiro 荻生茂博, *Kindai, Ajia, Yōmeigaku* 近代・アジア・陽明学 [Modernity, Asia, and Yangming Learning] [Tokyo: Perikansha, 2008]). For a partial English translation of this book, see Ogyū Shigehiro, "The Construction of 'Modern Yōmeigaku' in Meiji Japan and its Impact in China," trans. with intro. by Barry D. Steben, *East Asian History* 20 (December 2000): 83–120.

4. Chōng In-bo 鄭寅普, *Tamwŏn Chōng In-bo chōnjip* 齋園鄭寅普全集 (Collected works of Chōng In-bo), vol. 2 (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1983), p. 114.

5. Takahashi Tōru 高橋徹, *Chōsen Jugaku taikan* 朝鮮儒學大觀 (General survey of Korean Confucianism), in *Takahashi Tōru Chōsen Jugaku ronshū* 高橋徹朝鮮儒學論集 (Collected articles of Takahashi Tōru on Confucianism in Korea), ed. Kawahara Hideki 川原秀城 and Kim Kwang-nae 金光來 (Tokyo: Chisen Shokan, 2011 [1927]), p. 31.

6. Abe Yoshio 阿部吉雄, *Ri Taikei* 李退溪 (Yi T'ŏegye) (Tokyo: Bunkyo Shoin, 1944), pp. 7–8.

7. Haruyama Akiyo 春山明世 [Yi Myōngse], "Tōa Kyōeiken to Jukyō no yakuwari" 東亞共榮圏と儒教の役割 (The [Greater] East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere and the role of Confucianism), *Judō* 儒道 (Confucian way) 1 (1942): 1, 38.

8. Imperial Ordinance No. 3 of 1886, Article 1 in the Decree of the Imperial University, Nakano Bunko, [http://www.geocities.jp/nakanolib/rei/rm19-3.htm#帝国大学令\(明治19年勅令第3号\)](http://www.geocities.jp/nakanolib/rei/rm19-3.htm#帝国大学令(明治19年勅令第3号)).

9. Ilya Prigogine in collaboration with Isabelle Stengers, *The End of Certainty: Time, Chaos, and the New Laws of Nature* (New York: Free Press, 1997).

10. In addition to reluctant service to the central government, for many years T'oegye also actively served local bureaucrats in Tannyang and P'unggi in promoting private local Confucian academies and community compacts. Regarding his hostile comments on Wang Anshi, see *T'oegye chip* (Collected works of T'oegye), book 4, "Petition to the King No. 2" (Seoul: Minjok Munhwa Ch'ujinhoe, 1988).

11. *T'oegye chip*, Book 7, "Lectures on the top line of the hexagram Qian" (Seoul: Minjok Munhwa Ch'ujinhoe, 1988).

12. John Dewey, "On Philosophical Synthesis," *Philosophy East and West* 1, no. 1 (1951): 3.

13. David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *The Democracy of the Dead: Dewey, Confucius, and the Hope for Democracy in China* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999).

CHAPTER 14

State Power and the Confucian Classics

Observations on the *Mengzi jiewen* and Truth Management under the First Ming Emperor

Bernhard FUEHRER

DISCUSSIONS OF THE RELATION between state power and the Confucian classics tend to revolve around distinct events such as the infamous burning of the books, the central government's attempts to re-take possession of the classics in the late medieval periods after the reunification of the empire that led to the "correct meanings" (*zhengyi* 正義), regulations for prohibiting foreigners access to the classics, or the stocktaking-cum-censoring enterprise that produced the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書.

Notwithstanding academic trends, China's intellectual history as well as the distinctly political nature of discussions of this topic in the contemporary context attest to the mere truism that the state's exercise of control over the Confucian classics was—and still is—an ongoing project, not limited to discrete events. As ultimate authority governing intellectual discourse, the Confucian classics constituted not only a comprehensive and definitive intellectual framework but also an instrument of state power to ensure continuation of existing hierarchies of social status and political power, embedded in which was the authority to define, disseminate, and enforce orthodoxy. Where the interests of the supreme earthly powers required new interpretative norms and directions, these changes tended to be set out by leading scholars under imperial directives, on some occasions even through emperors directly engaging with the classics as commentators.¹

The canon and its exegetical directives were enforced via education. From

the Han onward the curriculum, with its focus on the classics and associated works—such as the *Analecets* (*Lunyu* 論語) or, in later periods, the *Xiaojing* 孝經 and the *Mencius* (*Mengzi* 孟子)—functioned as the primary mechanism not only to shape the minds of the educated classes but also to control their intellectual pursuits. Despite the textually heterogeneous nature of the classics, they were traditionally perceived as an embodiment of the *dao* 道—which we read here as “the ultimate truth.” At first glance, this textual embodiment of “the ultimate truth” seems to provide learners with basic ethics in a given environment, a method to better oneself, a procedure that ideally leads to the attainment of the highest level of self-cultivation, that is, to become an “accomplished person” (*junzi* 君子). But then, the classics and their state-sanctioned readings had another and—in our context here—far more significant function. They offered clear guidelines on how established hierarchies were to be maintained, and imperatives that—once internalized through educational indoctrination—demanded subordination by means of a philosophy of “knowing one’s station” in society.

Of course, the primary corpus of the classics (*jing* 經) is not an eternally fixed textual body but has gone through various stages of complex canonization processes. But it seems perhaps more important that the real prowess of the classical canon lies in its interpretations and the way in which earthly authorities invested authority in their readings. Different periods showed different levels of tolerance toward divergent interpretations, some institutionalized interpretative diversity even in the highest educational bodies, and at other times some allowable co-existence of conflicting and sometimes even mutually contradictory readings. The degree to which the canonical texts are perceived as open texts often tends to coincide with periods of governance characterized by the ineffectiveness of the political mandate. In times when we observe strong central power, the authority’s urge to take possession of the intellectual foundations of state power, namely the Confucian classics, tends to become preeminent. At the direction of emperors, scholar-officials set out to narrow the range of allowable readings. This standardization of readings of the canon aims at bringing out a particular version of “the ultimate truth,” a process that renders the canonical texts serviceable in a specific historical and political context.

In this chapter I shall concentrate on Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328–1398; r. 1368–1398), the founding emperor of the Ming (1368–1644), his management of truth, and his attempts to ensure the serviceability of canonical writings. In pursuit of these aims, he applied various strategies.²

As he felt discontent with interpretations of the *Shujing* 書經 by Cai Chen 蔡沈 (1167–1230), Zhu Yuanzhang ordered his trusted advisor Liu Sanwu 劉三吾 (1312–1399) to revise the parts of Cai Chen’s commentary that the emperor considered deficient or unsuitable.³ Liu Sanwu, an erudite scholar who

found favor in the eyes of the emperor at a very late stage in his life, revised over sixty passages in Cai Chen's *Shu jizhuan* 書集傳 (1210), parts of which carry glosses made by his former teacher Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) shortly before his death.⁴ After its completion in 1394, the *Shu zhuan huixuan* 書傳會選 by Liu Sanwu and his team of Hanlin scholars was promulgated to the empire until it underwent further revisions during the Yongle 永樂 period (1403–1425).⁵ What we witness in this case is an emperor who challenges received norms and orders a revision of crucial explanatory material. In the *Shu zhuan huixuan* the transmitted *jingwen* 經文 (“main text”) remains untouched. Nonetheless, the readings extracted from the *jingwen* as well as their implications undergo significant changes pontificated by the emperor. The new exposition of the canon is a redefinition of a classic by exegetical means, constructed through rectifications according to a new interpretative standard.⁶ The newly established readings are promoted throughout the empire as standard for examinations. Non-adherence to this new standard simply means that the doors to any career as a scholar-official remain closed.

Zhu Yuanzhang also applied the classics to regulate and remedy hierarchies. His continuous revisions of various ritual prescriptions were aimed at keeping potentially treacherous members of the imperial family in check, and at making visible the envisaged hierarchies through the symbolic language of ritual performances. The revised ritual prescriptions and their points of reference stemmed from the venerated exegetical traditions in exactly the same way as the pre-reform prescriptions. While remaining within the multifaceted repertoire of exegetical traditions for ritual affairs, revisions of ritual prescriptions allowed the emperor to react to changing political situations. These revisions were confirmed in tandem with points of reference in the tradition, which consented—or could be explained as consenting—to changes implemented to address perceived new operative needs. The classics and their exegetical corpora served as a repository of glosses at the disposal of erudite literati, who, in accordance with the imperial directive, formulated codified credenda of governance.⁷

In *biji* 筆記 notebooks—which I perceive as highly valuable accounts that not only offer information otherwise not transmitted in official historical source material but provide us with an alternative historiography—Zhu Yuanzhang tends to appear primarily in an unfavorable light.⁸ However, these sources contain interesting accounts of the first Ming emperor's elaborations on the readings of the classics. They tell us of his aversion to the contemplative interaction with canonical texts that was so fashionable during the Song (960–1279), and of the issues Zhu Yuanzhang had with Zhu Xi's readings.⁹ Although *biji* authors may well aim at caricaturizing the first Ming emperor, the important point here is that some of the readings put forward by Zhu Yuanzhang do actually coincide

with interpretations suggested by earlier scholars.¹⁰ This is to say that the man who is widely perceived as the embodiment of an emperor with an educational deficit, and whose views on the classics are often in open disagreement with Zhu Xi's line of scholarship, which was elevated to the national standard during the Mongol period, arrived at readings shared with earlier scholarship.¹¹

A particularly noteworthy case of manipulation of the classics by state power is Zhu Yuanzhang's short-lived suppression of substantial portions of the *Mencius*.¹² The Qing scholar Quan Zuwang 全祖望 (1705–1755) transmitted a short account of Zhu Yuanzhang faulting the *Mencius* for promoting insurrection and subversive teachings.¹³ In 1372, so Quan Zuwang reports, the emperor set his mind on prohibiting the transmission of such outdated views.¹⁴ But shortly after he had the tablet of Mencius removed from the Confucius temple, Zhu Yuanzhang saw himself forced to withdraw his order following the occurrence of an inauspicious omen.¹⁵ In the same source we also learn of his rage over the warning given by Mencius to King Xuan of Qi (齊宣王) which Zhu Yuanzhang deemed entirely unacceptable.¹⁶ The relevant passage in *Mencius* 4B3 reads:

君之視臣如手足，則臣視君如腹心；君之視臣如犬馬，則臣視君如國人；君之視臣如土芥，則臣視君如寇讎。¹⁷

If the ruler looks upon subjects as [his] hands and feet, then the subjects look upon the ruler as [their] belly and heart. If the ruler looks upon subjects as dogs and horses, then the subjects look upon the ruler as a passerby.¹⁸ If the ruler looks upon [his] subjects as mud and weeds, then the subjects look upon the ruler as a robber and enemy.¹⁹

With the office of prime minister abolished and the government reorganized in 1380, Zhu Yuanzhang's ministers thus expurgated from the *Mencius* the passages faulted by the emperor and produced an abridged version of the *Mencius* that, it would appear, became part of the reading list for civil examinations after the restoration of the examinations in 1384–1385.²⁰

One decade and several serious episodes of political turbulence later, Zhu Yuanzhang ordered Liu Sanwu to cleanse the *Mencius*, once again, of material that he found objectionable.²¹ In 1394 the *Mengzi jiewen* 孟子節文 was established by the Imperial Academy as the standard version of the *Mencius* in civil examinations.²² Two decades later, Zhu Di 朱棣 (1360–1424; r. 1403–1424) abolished the version censored according to his father's wish and reinstated the full transmitted version of the *Mencius*, which—in the compendium of commentaries on the *Five Classics* and the *Four Books*, the *Wujing Sishu daquan* 五經四書大全 (1415), compiled by the Hanlin academician Hu Guang 胡廣

(1370–1418) and his staff—became part of the newly established reading list for civil examination candidates.²³

In the introduction to his excerpts from the *Mencius*, Liu Sanwu endeavors to provide a rationale for censoring this book.²⁴ He states that during the time of Mencius, titled lords (*zhuhou* 諸侯) behaved without restraint, “valued their own profit most highly, and no longer knew of the existence of humankindness (*ren*) and sense of duty (*yi*).”²⁵ And with reference to the first section of the *Mencius*, that is, Mencius’ encounter with King Hui of Liang/Wei, Liu Sanwu notes the philosopher’s failure to grasp the actual threat that the king and his country faced from their mighty neighbors:²⁶

仁義正論也。所答非所問矣。是以所如不合，終莫能聽納其說。²⁷

Humankindness and sense of duty are the correct teachings. [But Mencius] did not answer [the king’s] question(s). Hence their destinations were not in accord, and in the end his suggestions could not/cannot be accepted.²⁸

Liu Sanwu clearly agrees with the *Mencius* that, as a matter of principle, *ren* 仁 and *yi* 義 are the right measures.²⁹ Nevertheless, he—as well as Zhu Yuanzhang and others before them—came to consider his approach starry-eyed and thus unable to deal with the actual political situation. In their judgment the *Mencius* is deemed incapable of providing counsel that Zhu Yuanzhang would deem fit for his purpose.³⁰ Section 1A1 of the *Mencius*, which according to Zhao Qi 趙岐 (d. 201) sets the main theme of the entire book, is subsequently taken out.³¹ With *Mencius* 1A2 also deleted on similar grounds, the *Mengzi jiewen* begins with *Mencius* 1A3.

Where he spotted a need for censorial action, Liu Sanwu did not doctor sentences, words, or characters but deleted entire sections (*zhang* 章) and noted that these sections would no longer be included in examination questions and topics.³² As a result, the *Mengzi jiewen* carries only about two-thirds of the sections transmitted in Zhu Xi’s *Mengzi jizhu* 孟子集注 (1177).³³

In the sections deleted by Liu Sanwu we observe a clear focus on the relationship between subjects and rulers, a crucial point in the Mencian political philosophy that Zhu Yuanzhang found particularly difficult to endorse. In his preface to the *Mengzi jiewen* the *realpolitiker* Liu Sanwu summarized his objections to the *Mencius* with reference to its historical environment. The current situation under the first Ming emperor, Liu argued, was fundamentally different from the Warring States (475–221 B.C.E.) environment in which the Mencian argument was situated. Strategies suitable then would thus not be applicable under the newly established regime. In his view, the Mencian strategies and postulates

...在當時列國諸侯可也。若夫天下一君，四海一國，人人同一尊君親上之心，學者或不得其扶持名教之本意。³⁴

...were allowable in those days of various states and titled lords. Nowadays there is one ruler of the “all-under-heaven,” one state within the four seas, and all men are united in their mind of honoring the ruler and having affection for the supreme [emperor], [but] some scholars do not grasp his genuine intention to support the venerated teachings [on Confucian morality and ethics].

In the reception history of the *Mencius*, Zhu Yuanzhang—and Liu Sanwu with him—stands in an illustrious line of scholars who vented their skepticism about or outright denial of the efficiency of core political concepts outlined in the *Mencius*.³⁵ Though Zhu Yuanzhang and Liu Sanwu clearly paid lip service to—or may even have agreed with—some of the more widely shared aspects of its general ethics, the book *Mencius* and its commentarial traditions provided no valuable perspectives for some of their more pressing lines of inquiry. From an exegetical standpoint, the crucial task of interpreters, namely to take older traditions and reinterpret them in light of their own situation, seemed impossible: the deficit of the *Mencius* could not be bridged; central portions of the book were deemed to be “beyond repair.” Rather than attempting to have the message of the *Mencius* adjusted to Zhu Yuanzhang’s needs through reinterpretation of the main text, he thus decided to repress the operative force of the Mencian tradition.³⁶ With interpretative projections of meaning being rooted in the situation of the interpreter, the sections expurgated by Liu Sanwu, which can be divided into the following groups, offer insights into Zhu Yuanzhang’s political and social philosophy.³⁷ None of the following five topic areas was a natural paradigm for the first Ming emperor to employ.³⁸

1. Sections in which the *Mencius* proposes the people as the ultimate locus of political sovereignty: the Mencian hierarchy (in descending order: people, state, ruler) clashed with the emperor wielding power oppressively and striving at ruling with absolute power. This includes Mencian views on the prerogatives and duties of rulers, namely to serve and look after their people.³⁹
2. Sections in which the *Mencius* explores its vision of an idealized relationship between ruler and subject: from the Northern Song (960–1127) onward, this had become an increasingly popular stance among officials. In Zhu Yuanzhang’s view, the teachings of the *Mencius* led to unrest and lack of respect for the ruler; and he took decisive action wherever he encountered any signs of these.

3. Sections in which the *Mencius* discusses the possibility of dethroning a ruler and the conditions under which such an act would be legitimate.
4. Sections in which the *Mencius* hints at a certain degree of (intellectual) autonomy of members of the educated class, which, in the eyes of Zhu Yuanzhang, led to insufficient subordination and disputatious officials.
5. Sections in which the *Mencius* makes pacifistic statements or argues against the wars between titled lords that lead to nothing but suffering and destruction.⁴⁰

Though Zhu Yuanzhang's attempts to eradicate Mencius from the Confucian pantheon were short-lived, the case of the *Mengzi jiewen* remains rather unique—so unique, in fact, that some challenged the historical truthfulness of accounts of the first Ming emperor's anti-Mencian activities.⁴¹ Some go so far as to urge us to disregard entirely the *Mengzi jiewen* in our considerations and discourses. Because of—what he perceived as—a lack of reliable records, the eminent Qing scholar Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629–1709), among others, refused to regard accounts of Zhu Yuanzhang's censorship of the *Mencius* as trustworthy.⁴²

What may have seemed most inconceivable in the traditional environment is the candid nature of Zhu Yuanzhang's management of orthodoxy. Whereas other rulers adjusted the classics—or had them adjusted—to their needs via exegetical procedures without major amendments of the venerated main texts (*jingwen*), Zhu Yuanzhang stands out in assigning to himself such authority over the main text of a classic as to be permitted to make significant editorial changes.⁴³ And in contrast to others who engaged in censorship and who made possession or dissemination of uncensored material a criminal offense, Zhu Yuanzhang allowed the unabridged version of the *Mencius* to remain in circulation. If the examination system is seen as a means to implement a new state orthodoxy, the decision to keep the uncensored version in circulation may be understood as a confident manifestation of imperial power that is—inter alia—formulated through and symbolized in the bold contrast between the old and the new *Mencius*.

The founding father of the Ming dynasty attributed great importance to education; his efforts to establish schools throughout the empire are well documented.⁴⁴ And the Confucian classics, which are traditionally presumed to elevate their readers out of their own lives to another reality with overriding purposes and concerns, played a prominent role in this education campaign: they were held as an indispensable requisite in every household.⁴⁵ Within this context of education, the expurgated version, that is, the *Mengzi jiewen*, was established as the only valid version of the *Mencius* in the compulsory reading list for examination candidates. Its main purpose was to make a claim on its readership so as to rein in potential criticism rooted in the political philosophy

of the *Mencius*. As a function of the examination mechanism, education was the channel through which he promulgated and tried to enforce his “*Mencius* light,” excerpts from one of the traditionally celebrated Confucian core readings cleansed of edges and potential points of reference for critical minds in an autocratic system.

Notes

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The following abbreviations are used for collectanea:

- CSJC *Congshu jicheng* [*chubian*] 叢書集成 [初編]. 3,999 vols. Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1935–1937.
- SBBY *Sibu beiyao* 四部備要. 100 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1989.
- SBCK *Sibu congkan* [*zhengbian*] 四部叢刊 [正編]. 100 vols. Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1979.
- SKJHSCK *Siku jinbuishu congkan* 四庫禁燬書叢刊. 300 vols. Beijing: Beijing Chubanshe, 2000.
- SKQS *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書. 1,501 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1987.
- SKQSCMCS *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu* 四庫全書存目叢書. 1,298 vols. Jinan: Qi Lu Shushe, 1997.

1. Though highly authoritative at the time they were issued, only a fairly limited number of commentaries made by or attributed to emperors remained part of the canonized readings of the Confucian classics over more substantial periods of time. The preface (*xu* 序) and the commentary (*zhu* 注) on the *Xiaojing* 孝經 (722; revised 743) by Li Longji 李隆基 (685–762), i.e., Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang 唐玄宗 (r. 712–756), which—through the subcommentary of Yuan Xingchong 元行沖 (653–729)—fed into Xing Bing’s 邢昺 (931–1010) subcommentary in the highly authoritative *Thirteen Classics* of 1815/1816, may serve as an example here for an imperial reading that exercised considerable influence on the subsequent reception of this elementary teaching material. Li Longji brought together the conflicting commentarial traditions deriving from the works of Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200) and Kong Anguo 孔安國 (d. ca. 100). For the imperial commentary and preface see Li Shuchang 黎庶昌 (1837–1897) and Yang Shoujing 楊守敬 (1839–1915), *Guyi congshu* 古逸叢書 (Tokyo: Published by the compiler, 1882–1884), 5:1a–5b (preface) and 5:5b–25b (commentary). Cf. also Ruan Yuan 阮元, *Shisan jing zhushu* [*fu jiaokanji*] 十三經注疏 [附校勘記] ([1815/1816], 8 vols. (Taipei: Yiwen Yinshuguan, 1985), vol. 8.

2. For further comments on Zhu Yuanzhang “rectifying the classics” see the notes by Zhu Yunming 祝允明 (1461–1527) under the heading “Zheng jing zhuan” 正經傳 in his

Qianwenji 前聞記, in Deng Shilong 鄧士龍, *Guochao diangu* 國朝典故, 3 vols. (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 1993), vol. 2, pp. 1389–1390 (*juan* 62).

3. See the “Introduction” (*tiyao* 提要) to *Shu zhuan huixuan* 書傳會選, *SKQS* 61, 1a–4b, esp. 1b; cf. also Ming T’ai-tsu and Romeyn Taylor, “Ming Tai-tsu’s ‘Essay on the Revolutions of the Seven Luminaries and the Body of Heaven,’” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 102, no. 1 (1982): 93–97, esp. p. 93. The *Shu zhuan huixuan* is also known as *Shangshu huixuan* 尚書會選. On some of Liu Sanwu’s amendments to Cai’s readings see the comments by Zhu Yunming in his *Qianwenji*, in *Guochao diangu*, vol. 2, pp. 1389–1390 (*juan* 62); cf. also Zhu Yunming, *Yeji* 野集, 4 *juan*, in *Guochao diangu*, vol. 1, pp. 496–497 (*juan* 31). Prior to this attempt to rectify and improve Cai’s readings of the *Shangshu* 尚書, we observe a number of efforts to correct Cai’s version, including Zhang Baoshu 張葆舒 (Yuan dynasty) in his *Cai zhuan dingwu* 蔡傳定誤; Huang Jingchang 黃景昌 (early fourteenth cent.) in his *Cai shi zhuan zhengwu* 蔡氏傳正誤; and, among others, the two *Shujing* commentaries by Chen Li 陳櫟 (1252–1334), namely his *Shu zhuan zhezhang* 書傳折衷 and his *Shangshu jizhuan zuanshu* 尚書集傳纂疏. See Yves Hervouet, *A Sung Bibliography (Bibliographie des Sung)* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1978), pp. 22–23. On Liu Sanwu and his works see L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography 1366–1644*, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), vol. 1, pp. 956–958.

4. Cai’s *Shu jizhuan* was established as the standard commentary for civil examinations under Emperor Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1312–1320) of the Yuan (1279–1368). It was in circulation under a number of alternate titles including *Shangshu jizhuan* 尚書集傳 and *Shujing jizhuan* 書經集傳. For Zhu Xi’s corrections on the chapters “Yao dian” 堯典, “Shun dian” 舜典, and “Da Yu mo” 大禹謨 see the “Preface” (*xu*) to the *Shu jizhuan* 書集傳, *SKQS* 58, 1a–2b. Later, the *Shu jizhuan* served as the primary base when Hu Guang 胡廣 (1370–1418) and others, again under imperial direction, compiled their *Shu zhuan daquan* 書傳大全 as part of the *Wujing daquan* 五經大全 (1415) project. And it served again as a base for the [*Qinding*] *Shujing zhuanshuo huizuan* [欽定] 書經傳說會纂 (1730) by Wang Xuling 王頊齡 (1642–1725) and others.

5. See Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 (1672–1755) et al., *Mingshi* 明史 (1739), 28 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, [1974] 1987), 96:2352, 137:3942, 137:3955, and the various prefaces to the *Shu zhuan huixuan*. Cf. Goodrich and Fang, *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, vol. 1, pp. 362–363.

6. On competing orthodoxies from the Song to the Ming see Thomas A. Wilson, “The Ritual Formation of Confucian Orthodoxy and the Descendants of the Sage,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 3 (1996): 559–584, esp. pp. 560–563.

7. For more detailed investigations see Ho Yun-i, “The Organization and Functions of the Ministry of Rites in the Early Ming Period (1368–1398)” (unpubl. Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1976), and Ho Yun-i [He Yunyi 賀允宜], *The Ministry of Rites and Suburban Sacrifices in Early Ming [Ming chu de li bu ji jiao si 明初的禮部及郊祀]* (in English) (Taipei: Shuang-yeh Bookstore, 1980). I am also indebted to Dr. Zhan Beibei’s research on changes in the official prescriptions for marriage rituals applicable to imperial princes under Zhu Yuanzhang; see Beibei Zhan, “Deciphering a Tool of Imperial Rule: A Case Study of the Marriage Rituals for Imperial Princes during the Hongwu Reign” (unpubl. Ph.D. diss., SOAS, 2015).

Cf. also Edward L. Farmer: "Social Regulations of the First Ming Emperor: Orthodoxy as a Function of Authority," in *Orthodoxy in Late Imperial China*, ed. Liu Kwang-ching (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 103–125, esp. pp. 107–111.

8. See the comments in Wolfgang Franke, *An Introduction to the Sources of Ming History* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1968), esp. pp. 98–118.

9. See, e.g., Li Xian's 李賢 (1408–1466) *Gurang zalu* 古穰雜錄 (1460s), *CSJC* 3962, p. 10.

10. For one such case see his reading of *Lunyu* 2.16, which coincides with explanations offered by Sun Yi 孫奕 (d. after 1205) in his *Lüzhai Shierbian* 履齋示兒編 (1205), *SBCK*, 5:15a (442); cf. Bernhard Fuehrer: "Did the Master Instruct His Followers to Attack Heretics? A Note on Readings of *Lunyu* 2.16," in *Reading East Asian Writing: The Limits of Literary Theory*, ed. Michel Hockx and Ivo Smits (London: RoutledgeCurzon Press, 2003), pp. 117–158.

11. Whereas it is well known that at the beginning of his enterprise Zhu Yuanzhang was rather undereducated, he later achieved a good command and knowledge of classical learning and literature; see Zhao Yi's 趙翼 (1727–1814) appraisal in his article "Mingzu wenyi" 明祖文義, in Zhao Yi, *Nian'er shi zhaji* 廿二史劄記 (1799), *SBY* 51, pp. 387–388 (*juan* 32), and the references in Hok-lam Chan: "Xie Jin (1369–1415) as Imperial Propagandist: His Role in the Revisions of the *Ming Taizu Shilu*," in *T'oung Pao* 91, nos. 1/3 (2005): 58–124, esp. p. 61.

12. With regard to the short period of its effectiveness, we note that the bibliographical chapter of the *Mingshi* as well as the magisterial *Siku quanshu zongmu* 四庫全書總目 (1782), 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, [1965] 1987) both fail to list the *Mengzi jiewen*. Though Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629–1709) records the *Mengzi jiewen* in his *Jingyikao* 經義考, *juan* 235, he notes that he had not seen it; see Zhu Yizun: *Jingyikao* 經義考 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1998), p. 1192. As it is absent from the important catalogs of private book collectors (for one of the rare exceptions see the reference to the *Dushu mingqiu ji* in note 13 below) it would appear that copies were exceptionally rare during later Ming and Manchu times. This is also confirmed by a catalog entry on a Hongwu block print in Mo Boji's 莫伯驥 (1878–1958) *Wushiwanjuanlou cangshu mulu chubian* 五十萬卷樓藏書目錄初編 (Taipei: Guangwen Shuju, 1967), p. 355, where it is noted that no recent prints of the *Mengzi jiewen* were available. For the short entry on the *Mengzi jiewen* in the more recent continuation of the *Siku quanshu* catalog see *Xuxiu Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao: Jing bu* 續修四庫全書總目提要 • 經部, 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1993), vol. 2, p. 921.

13. The book collector Qian Zeng 錢曾 (1629–1701) has a somewhat different take on this and states that Liu Sanwu cleansed the *Mencius* text of "impurities" (*wei chun* 未醇), which Qian Zeng—with direct reference to Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824)—sees as a result of the *Mencius* text being put together posthumously by disciples of Mencius; see Qian Zeng, *Dushu mingqiu ji* 讀書敏求記 (1726), *CSJC* 49, 1:13, and Han Yu, "Da Zhang Ji shu" 答張籍書, in Ma Qichang 馬其昶, *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu* 韓昌黎文集校注 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1986), pp. 30–133, esp. p. 132. Similar arguments about the transmitted text as a twisted representation of Mencius' statements, and about these distortions being caused by the way in which the text of the *Mencius* came into being, have also been made by scholars such as Feng Xiu 馮休 in his *Shan Meng* 刪孟, 2 *juan*, and Sima

Obviously, this design is very different from the reality in which the emperor determines what is right or wrong. Huang even suggests that the emperor should go to listen to the critics from the royal academy, and that officials should do the same.¹⁶ This proposal can be traced back to the traditional idea that local schools should participate in local politics. But according to Huang, the political involvement of schools should be more extensive. This might strengthen the political function of schools, but it could also jeopardize the academic independence of the schools from politics, since schools are supposed to be politically neutral.

Fifth, Huang suggests that there should be different methods of selecting officials, that the royal examinations cannot be the only way; other methods such as recommendations should be included. Furthermore, the government should also employ those with special talents and a strong commitment to serve the country.¹⁷

Overall, Huang's political design is quite different from the traditional idea that the emperor alone should hold absolute power. Huang believed that the purpose of a government is to function for the good of the people.

Wang Fuzhi's "Gong Tian Xia" (The Good of the Country)

With regard to the criticism of monopolization of power in the county system, Wang Fuzhi shares a similar view with Gu Yanwu and Huang Zongxi. Wang criticizes King Wen of the Zhou dynasty (1152–1106 B.C.E.), who was well respected by Confucians. Wang points out that in both the Xia and Shang dynasties there was the position of prime minister. But starting with King Wen of the Zhou, the position of prime minister was abolished and absolute monarchy in China began.¹⁸ Wang argues that the power of the emperor should henceforth be shared.

Wang proposes the political ideal of "*gong tian xia*" (the good of the country). His principle is that the well-being of the people is more important than the power of the royal family. This principle is similar to Huang Zongxi's idea that the well-being of a country depends on the life of the people rather than the power of the royal family. Wang also compares the county system with the feudal state system, arguing that the county system is much better for the country. However, Wang also points out that since the county system assumes the monopoly of power by the emperor, it is not good for the well-being of the people. Furthermore, the length of rule of a royal family has nothing to do with whether or not the people are well cared for. Wang believes that the first emperor of the Qin dynasty (259–210 B.C.E.) was overthrown because the royal family was interested only in passing the royal line to its descendants. However, afterward many royal families did not see this as the reason for the

failure of the Qin royal family.¹⁹ Wang argues that the good of the people should be the only criterion of political legitimacy.

However, regarding the best way to restrain the power of the emperor, Wang's view is different from Gu's and Huang's. Huang argues that the emperor and the ministers should share power and suggests that a senior minister can even exercise executive authority when the emperor is incompetent. Wang disagrees. He proposes that the position of the emperor should be more like a symbol of power and that a set of laws and regulations are the basis for government policies to be made and carried out. Wang even argues that the early sage-kings were humble and never used power to dominate others. They acted in accord with the spirit of Daoism, *wuwei* 无为, letting the ministers perform their duties according to the laws and regulations.²⁰ In this way are the political institution and the existing laws and regulations the key to good government.

Wang also proposes that there are three ways to transfer the power of the emperor: inheritance, recommendation, and revolution. He points out that when the security of the nation is at stake, those who can defend it should be leaders so that the nation does not fall into the hands of foreigners.²¹

With regard to how to achieve a balance of power, based on his research of Chinese political history Wang proposes that the emperor, the prime minister, and the counselors should form the core of the government. According to Wang, they have different duties. The duty of the emperor is to appoint the prime minister. If the prime minister is incompetent, then the emperor can determine whether to discharge him. And the counselors are supposed to point out the mistakes made by the emperor, rather than those by the prime minister. And the prime minister should weigh in on significant issues, such as national security and important appointments. Counselors can participate in the deliberation of less significant issues.²² Thus, Wang's proposal is different from those of Huang and Gu with regard to the balance of power. Overall, the emperor appoints the prime minister, the prime minister appoints counselors, and the counselors evaluate the political performance of the emperor. Wang believes that this arrangement of the balance of power could keep the government stable.

Compared to Huang's proposal, Wang's idea of the balance of power is less radical. It is much closer to the traditional political setup in the Tang dynasty. Compared to Gu's proposal to balance power vertically by increasing the power of the county magistrates, Wang's idea is to balance power horizontally at the highest level. Nevertheless, the balance of power is the goal of both, and both are drawn to the spirit of modern liberal democracy. Their proposals present different alternatives for early Chinese democratic ideals. In fact, Gu and Huang did communicate with each other about their political ideals, but Wang did not participate. However, they all targeted the problems of the county system.

In addition to the balance of power, Wang also discusses the issue of land

property rights. Wang argues that the right to land ownership should be protected; the replacement of one royal family by another one should not affect people's rights to their land since the land was not given to them by the new emperor.²³ Thus, people's property rights are immune from political change. This is a huge challenge to the idea that the land is owned by the royal government under the county system. This idea is similar to what modern philosophers hold concerning the legitimacy of private property.

Political Thought of the Middle Qing Period and the Modern Transformation of Confucian Political Thought

Even under the tight literary inquisition during the rule of the Qianlong Emperor in the Qing dynasty, philosopher Yuan Mei made a comparison of the county and feudal state systems and pointed toward the direction of modern democracy.

With regard to political reform, Yuan Mei's proposal is close to Gu's. Yuan argues that the county system does not carry out the ancient sages' idea of "the good of the country," and that the feudal state system does a better job. Here is Yuan's argument: as the ancient sages pointed out, since the emperor cannot govern the country by himself, in the feudal state system the dukes would share power with the emperor, and this would serve the country better. As there are many dukes, they would challenge and even overthrow any emperor who is incompetent and corrupt.²⁴

Furthermore, Yuan argues for the feudal state system from the perspective of personal liberty. First of all, Yuan argues that the feudal state system would prevent a corrupt emperor from abusing power since the dukes share some of the power. A local riot against a duke would not jeopardize the stability of the whole country. But it would in the county system, as it did in the peasant riot against the Qin dynasty, which rapidly resulted in its overthrow.²⁵

Second, under the feudal state system, scholars have more freedom. What Kongzi, Mengzi, and other early Chinese philosophers achieved occurred during the time of the feudal states. If a scholar was not welcomed or valued by one duke, he could move and make proposals to another duke, as Kongzi and Mengzi did in their times. However, under the county system, the standard examination was implemented nationwide. If a scholar failed this exam twice, he would not be given credentials to move to another county and find a job there. Therefore, under the feudal state system, scholars would have more space to exercise their capacities.²⁶

Yuan shares many arguments with Gu. But Yuan has some distinct views of his own. For example, Yuan perceives the space for scholars to exercise their capacities as intrinsically valuable, and he believes that a diversity of profes-

sional skills is also good in itself. This view is compatible with the value given to diversity in modern society.

I believe that what Gu Yanwu, Huang Zongxi, Wang Fuzhi, and Yuan Mei each argue for, and sometimes disagree about, in their stated political ideals and designs is far from liberal democracy, but what I have tried to explain up to this point is something that has been ignored by many philosophers: they miss the significance of the anticipation by these four thinkers of political modernization in China. Gu, Huang, Wang, and Yuan should not be perceived as classical Confucians, such as the New Confucians during the Song and Ming periods. However, they are still Confucians and are inspired by Confucianism. Therefore, I believe that Confucian political thought has the potential to contribute to modernization in China today. During the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries there was no Western political democracy in theory or practice that developed from the native Confucian tradition. However, this does not imply that during these three centuries that no Chinese political democracy, at least in theory, emerged from the Confucian tradition. Probably due to the influence of this newly emergent thought, many Confucian scholars during the transition from the Qing to the Republic endorsed Western political democracy. The political reform launched by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao was an experiment that resulted from this endorsement. Even if it did not last long and ultimately failed, it marked the official beginning of the pursuit of real political democracy, an experiment that continues today.

Notes

1. Dai Zhen 戴震, "Yuan shan" 原善, in *Dai Zhen quanji* 戴震全集, vol. 2 (Beijing: Qinghua Daxue Chubanshe, 1999), p. 27.

2. Qian Daxin 钱大昕, "Yuan xiao" 原孝, in *Qian Yan Tang ji* 潜研堂集, vol. 2 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1989), p. 281.

3. Gu Yanwu, "Junxien lun yi" 郡县论一, in *Gu Tinglin shi wenji* 顾亭林诗文集 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1983), p. 12. Hereafter, "feudalistic system of dukes" will be referred to as "feudal state system," and "system of counties" as "county system."

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Gu Yanwu 顾炎武, "Yan si qi cong" 言私其縱, in *Ri zhi lu ji shi* 日知录集释, (Changsha: Yue Lu Chubanshe, 1994), p. 92.

7. Gu Yanwu, "Junxien lun yi."

8. Ibid., p. 17.

9. Huang Zongxi 黄宗羲, "Yuan Chen" 原臣, in *Huang Zongxi quanji* 黄宗羲全集, vol. 1 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Guji Chubanshe, 1985), p. 5.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Huang Zongxi 黄宗羲, "Yuan Fa" 原法, in *Huang Zongxi quanji*, vol. 1, pp. 6–8.
14. Ibid., p. 8.
15. Ibid., p. 9.
16. Huang Zongxi, "Xue Xiao" 学校, in *Huang Zongxi quanji*, vol. 1, p. 10.
17. Ibid.
18. Wang Fuzhi 王夫之, "Shangshu yin yi" 尚书引义, in *Wang Fuzhi quanji* 王夫之全集, vol. 5, book 2 (Changsha: Yue Lu Chubanshe, 1996), p. 397.
19. Wang Fuzhi, "Du tong jian lun" 读通鉴论, in *Wang Fuzhi quanji*, vol. 1, book 10, p. 68.
20. Ibid., p. 474.
21. Wang Fuzhi, "Huangshu yuanji di yi" 黄书原极第一, in *Wang Fuzhi quanji*, vol. 1, book 12, p. 503.
22. Wang Fuzhi, "Song lun" 宋论, in *Wang Fuzhi quanji*, vol. 4, book 11, pp. 121–122.
23. Wang Fuzhi, "E meng" 恶梦, in *Wang Fuzhi quanji*, vol. 4, book 12, p. 551.
24. Yuan Mei 袁枚, "Shu Liuzi fengjian lun hou" 书柳子封建论后, in *Xiao Cang Shan Fang shi wenji* 小仓山房诗文集, book 3 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1988), pp. 1634–1636.
25. Ibid., p. 1636.
26. Yuan Mei, "Zai shu fengjian lun hou" 再书封建论后, in *Xiao Cang Shan Fang shi wenji* 小仓山房诗文集, book 3 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1988), p. 1638.

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of comparative philosophy) (*Hwait'übedü yōn'gu* / *Journal of Whitehead Studies* [2013]).

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