

A New Examination of Confucius' Rectification of Names

Cao Feng (曹峰)

Professor of Philosophy, Renmin University, China

caofeng@mail.tsinghua.edu.cn

Translated by Brook Hefright

Abstract

Confucius' explanation of the "rectification of names" is not necessarily related to the theories of "social status" and "names and actuality." The reason scholars have interpreted the rectification of names in the *Analects* in so many different ways is, to a large degree, due to assumptions about Confucius' thinking by his successors, and based on the views on rectification of names among later generations. In the course of the development of thinking about names, scholars have augmented Confucius' own explanation, gradually fleshing it out from an empty shell into a substantial edifice. The original meaning may have been very simple: Confucius did not wish to establish a standard system of names. Rather, he was simply the first person in history to realize the importance of language in politics. As a politician, Confucius noticed and foresaw the influence that the indeterminacy, ambiguity, and arbitrariness of names could have on politics. He discerned the political consequences when language could not accurately express meaning or when there was no way for people to accurately perceive it. He also recognized how names, as a way of clarifying right and wrong and establishing norms, could have a great effect on a society's politics. Although Confucius noted that disunity in speech could lead to disunity in politics, he did not propose a solution.

Keywords

Confucius – rectification of names – theory of names and actuality – theory of social status

Introduction

The following passage occurs in the chapter “Zi Lu” 子路 in the *Analects*:¹

Zi Lu said: “The monarch of the state of Wei wants you to govern the country, what is the first thing you plan on doing?” Confucius said: “First it is necessary to rectify the names.” Zi Lu said: “Is that really what has to be done? You are being too pedantic, aren’t you now? How will you rectify these names?” Confucius said: “Zhong You, you are too unrefined. A gentleman, faced with a matter that he does not understand, takes a skeptical attitude. If names are not correct, one cannot speak smoothly and reasonably, and if one cannot speak smoothly and reasonably, affairs cannot be managed successfully. If affairs cannot be managed successfully, rites and music will not be conducted. If rites and music are not conducted, punishments will not be suitable. And if punishments are not suitable, the common people will not know what to do. So, when the gentleman uses names, it is necessary to be able to speak so that people understand. If one can say it, one can definitely do it. A gentleman should not be careless with words.”²

Since this is the earliest known discussion of the rectification of names [*zheng-ming* 正名], nearly all subsequent discussions, regardless from what perspective, cite it. Yet exactly what kind of names did Confucius 孔子 [551-479 BCE] wish to rectify? Since ancient times, this simple question has inspired many answers, but no consensus view or uniform conclusion has emerged to this day.

1 Passages from the *Analects* come from Cheng Shude 程樹德, *Lunyu jishi* 論語集釋 [Collected Interpretations of the *Analects*] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1990).

2 子路曰：衛君待子而為政，子將奚先？子曰：必也正名乎。子路曰：有是哉，子之迂也。奚其正？子曰：野哉，由也。君子於其所不知，蓋闕如也。名不正則言不順，言不順則事不成，事不成則禮樂不興，禮樂不興則刑罰不中，刑罰不中則民無所措手足。故君子可言也，言之必可行也，君子於其言，無所苟而已矣 (*Analects* 13:3).

Previous Interpretations of Confucius' Rectification of Names

I first summarize the main threads of interpretation.

1. Rectification of names is simply rectification of characters [*zi* 字]—that is, “name” means “character,” and the rectification of names simply means standardizing the writing system. This interpretation can be traced back to Zheng Xuan's 鄭玄 [127-200] commentary on “Zi Lu”: “Rectifying names means rectifying characters. What people in ancient times called names are today called characters.”³ Historically, however, very few scholars took this position until the Qing dynasty [1644-1911], when textual critics once again raised the issue that in the past the ancients called writing and characters “names.” “Confucius' explanation that ‘it is necessary to rectify names’ generally means that the form, sound, and meaning of characters must be fixed before people can use them to speak and act.”⁴

This interpretation focused on the fact that, at that time, in various countries, “languages have different sounds, and writing has different forms”⁵—that is, on the kinds of problems caused by differences in languages and writing systems. Although this explanation is understandable, it did not explain why this problem occurred to Confucius only after he arrived in the state of Wei. At present, very few scholars continue to hold this view in its entirety.

2. Rectification of names is simply the rectification of politics [*zheng* 政]. Zhu Xi 朱熹 [1130-1200] takes this position in his *Collected Annotations of the Analects* [*Lunyu jizhu* 論語集註]:

At that time in the ancestral temple Duke Chu of Wei did not acknowledge his father as his father, but rather acknowledged his grandfather as his father, throwing the correspondence between names and actuality into disorder. That is why Confucius wanted to first rectify the names.⁶

Duke Chu of Wei 魏楚公 was opposed politically to his father Kuai Kui 蒯聩, and in their ancestral shrine he “did not acknowledge his father as his father”

3 正名，謂正書字也。古者曰名，今謂之字 (Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 890).

4 孔子曰：必也正名，蓋必形、聲、義三者正，而後可言可行也 (Jiang Yuan 江沅, “Shuowen jiezi zhu houxu 說文解字注後敘,” in *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注, ed. Duan Yucai 段玉裁 [Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 1981], 788-789).

5 言語異聲，文字異形。

6 是時楚公不父其父而禰其祖，名實紊矣，故孔子以正名為先 (Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注 [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1983], 142).

and passed him over to recognize only his grandfather, Duke Ling of Wei 衛靈公. Zhu Xi's important contribution was to provide a historical background for Confucius' rectification of names, explaining why it occurred to him only after he arrived in Wei. Zhu Xi related the rectification of names to the "social status" [*mingfen* 名分] and "names and actuality" [*mingshi* 名實] perspective that had arisen in Wei regarding the correct relationship between monarch and minister, and father and son. As the discussion below makes clear, this was not actually Zhu Xi's discovery. From early on, other scholars had made the same point. Zhu Xi clarified it, however, and from that time on, rectification of names was no longer mainly a question of language and politics but, rather, became a purely political question.

After scholars influenced by Zhu Xi came to view Confucius' rectification of names from the perspectives of social status and names and actuality, with respect to the correct relationship between monarch and minister, father and son, passages from the *Analects*, *Zuo zhuan* [左傳], and other works were collected and cited somewhat overzealously as evidence for this view. The most famous and most commonly cited example is the following from the *Analects*:

Duke Jing of Qi asked Confucius how to govern a state. Confucius said:

A monarch must be a monarch, a minister must be a minister, a father must be a father, and a son must be a son." Duke Jing said: "Oh, well said! If a monarch is not a monarch, a minister is not a minister, a father is not a father, a son is not a son, even if there is grain, will I still be able to get some to eat?"⁷

This passage has long been considered the best source for Confucius' view of the rectification of names. According to this interpretation, names are an ethical and moral standard and a behavioral norm that everyone—whether monarchs or ministers, fathers or sons—must respect based on his status. If names and actuality diverge and no longer correspond, the political order will descend into chaos.

In the *Analects*, the phrase "rectification of names" occurs only once. Although the passage indicates that rectification of names focuses on society and politics, some questions remain.

First, why was it necessary to rectify names in the first place? The original text offers no explanation, but based on interpretations by Zhu Xi and others we know it is because social status had become confused—that is, it had

7 齊景公問政於孔子，孔子對曰：君君，臣臣，父父，子子。公曰：善哉。信如君不君，臣不臣，父不父，子不子，雖有粟，吾得而食諸？(*Analects* 12:11).

become common at that time that “a monarch is not a monarch, a minister is not a minister, a father is not a father, and a son is not a son.” This interpretation established a definite referent for Confucius’ “names”: what needed rectifying was the system of identity and authority that had fallen into chaos.

Second, how should names be rectified and how should words be brought into line? In other words, what was the standard for rectification of names? The original text is vague, but based on interpretations by Zhu Xi and others, we understand that the guide for rectification was the system of rites and propriety with its concept of patriarchal hierarchy.

Third, was it really a rectification of names or was it perhaps instead a “rectification of actuality”? Based on interpretations by Zhu Xi and others, we know that rectification of names really means using names to rectify actuality, not forcing names to correspond with reality. Therefore, rather than rectification of names, it might be better to say “rectification of actuality.”

Answering these three questions would substantiate Confucius’ theory of the rectification of names and give it a systematic form. At present, many scholars are working along these lines, and the majority of annotated volumes of the *Analects*, as well as most histories of philosophy and logic, relate the rectification of names to social status and the correspondence between names and actuality. For example, Hu Shi’s 胡適 [1891-1962] *An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy* [*Zhongguo zhexue shi dagang* 中國哲學史大綱] takes as its point of departure Zheng Xuan’s explanation, assuming that “names” refer to “simply all names and words” and that “rectification of names and rectification of terms [*zheng ci* 正辭] are the same thing.”⁸ In his subsequent discussion of Confucius’ rectification of names, however, he prefers to relate it to standards for distinguishing right from wrong and true from false, connecting it with the social status system of monarch-minister and father-son.⁹

Feng Youlan’s 馮友蘭 [1895-1990] perspective also falls under this category. According to him, “Confucius thought carelessness [in speech] would ‘throw the world into chaos and overturn righteousness’; he thought it would be better for the Son of Heaven [the king or emperor] to be the Son of Heaven, senior officials to be senior officials, minor officials to be minor officials, and the common people to be the common people—that is, to make reality correspond fully to its names.... Confucius believed that sometimes names were not

8 See Hu Shi 胡適, “Kong zi 孔子 [Confucius],” in *Zhongguo zhexue shi dagang* 中國哲學史大綱 [*An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy*] (Beijing: Dongfang Press, 1996).

9 Ibid.

correct, but in chaos; he wished by means of rectification of names to correct the errors of the times.”¹⁰

3. Confucius’s “rectification of names” was a precursor to Chinese studies in logic. The most important issue that logic discusses is the relationship between names and actuality. This is the perspective of researchers of the history of logic. They have partially assimilated the first and second points of view discussed above and have developed them further according to the concepts and methods of Western logic.

For example, Wen Gongyi 溫公頤 [1904-1996] states that names are concepts [*gainian* 概念], and words are evaluations [*panduan* 判斷]. According to this point of view, Confucius already possessed a theory of concepts, evaluations, and inference [*tuili* 推理].¹¹ Sun Zhongyuan 孫中原 [b. 1938] states that “Confucius’ so-called ‘names rectification’ was mainly to restore the identity between names and actuality; if names and actuality correspond, then language, concepts, and what those concepts signify are all identical.”¹²

Historians of logic do not reject the relationship between names and language [*yuyan* 語言] but, rather, promote it to the level of concept. They have assimilated the interpretation that names and actuality were confused and believe that what Confucius called “names” has a clear referent. Therefore, the essence of Confucius’ rectification of names is the idea that names and reality correspond. Furthermore, based on the aspect of Confucius’ rectification of names in which names are to rectify actuality, they read his thinking on names as characteristic of an idealism that runs contrary to the primary status of material matter [*wuzhi* 物質] and the secondary status of thought [*siwei* 思維]. This line of thinking is the mainstream position to this day, even if in some works that call for abandoning the fetters of the Western framework of logic and for interpreting thinking on “names” and “disputing” [*bian* 辯] according to Chinese historical practice, there is still not much of a change.

For example, Cui Qingtian 崔清田 [b. 1936], states in his work on logic, *Mingxue yu bianxue* 名學與辯學:

- 10 撥亂世而反之正。Feng Youlan 馮友蘭, *Zhongguo zhexue shi* 中國哲學史 [A History of Chinese Philosophy] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1931), 59-60.
- 11 See Wen Gongyi 溫公頤, *Xianqin luoji shi* 先秦邏輯史 [A History of Logic in the Pre-Qin Times] (Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 1983).
- 12 Sun Zhongyuan 孫中原, “Xian Qin juan 先秦卷,” in *Zhongguo luoji shi* 中國邏輯史 [A History of Logic in China] (Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 1987), 27.

Although the rectification of names that Confucius advocated had as its fundamental goal the rectification of politics, and as its basic issue the monarch-minister, father-son political hierarchy in the slave-owning, patriarchal system, his advocacy initiated the first discussion of the problem of the rectification of names in early Qin logic and had extensive and far-reaching influence on both the content of its thought and the direction of its development. In the theoretical system of Chinese logic, it holds a decisive position.

First, in terms of the content of his thought, Confucius's doctrine of the rectification of names involves the most fundamental problem of logic—the relationship between names and actuality. Confucius considered this relationship primary; if there was a contradiction between changeable entities and permanent names, one should not stipulate a new name but, rather, deny the objective facts of change through social development and respect the status expressed by the permanent name, which expressed the order of ranks in the slave-owning class.

Second, Confucius introduced reflection on the relationship between names and actuality to sociopolitical life, causing a clear tendency for early Qin thinking on logic to view social reality in light of social hierarchy and distinctions in status.

Third, Confucius' rectification of names focused on the core subject of logic and laid the basis for diverse developments of the subject in the early Qin Dynasty . . . its basic subject matter included the meanings and requirements of names, the relationship between a name and its referent, as well as why the referent was primary and methods and norms for "rectifying names."¹³

As this perspective would have it, the theory of the relationship between name and actuality came first for Confucius; only later was the rectification of names introduced to the sociopolitical arena. Moreover, Confucius' doctrine of the rectification of names foreshadowed subsequent developments in logic. All the different interpretations can be traced back to it. The *Analects* has only one passage on the rectification of names. That these few short, unelaborated sentences have given rise to such a complicated, profound theory is truly cause for amazement.

13 Cui Qingtian 崔清田, *Mingxue yu bianxue* 名學與辯學 (Taiyuan: Shanxi Education Press, 1997), 44-45.

“Names” in the *Analects* and Historical References to Confucius’ Rectification of Names

There is no reason to doubt that complicated and profound hermeneutics of Confucius’ rectification of names evolved gradually over history. At its most basic level, it is the crystallization of traditional Chinese thought. In the modern period, it has been cloaked in an additional layer of Western philosophy, to the point that it has become distorted nearly beyond all recognition. In order to recover the original historical form of the theory of the rectification of names, we must peel away the accretions of subsequent ages. That is the aim of the present work.

First, it is necessary to survey the uses of “names” in the *Analects*. The phrase “rectification of names” occurs only once. The character for names [*ming* 名] occurs eight times. In addition to the three occurrences in the passage on the rectification of names itself, the other five occurrences are as follows:

- (1) Confucius said: “If a gentleman abandons his benevolence and integrity, how will he make his name?”¹⁴
- (2) Confucius said: “Ah, this kind of monarch, Yao, is truly great! Heaven is the highest and greatest, only Yao could imitate the height and greatness of heaven. His benevolence is so vast the common people do not know how to name him in praise.”¹⁵
- (3) On the path called “achievement” people say: “Ah, Confucius is truly great!” His learning is erudite, one cannot praise his name based on any one aspect of his knowledge.”¹⁶
- (4) Confucius says: “Not having made one’s name until death is regrettable for a gentleman.”¹⁷
- (5) Confucius says: “Why don’t students study the *Book of Songs*?... They could learn more names of animals and plants.”¹⁸

In (1), (3) and (4), “names” refers to reputation [*mingsheng* 名聲] or renown [*mingwang* 名望]. In (2), it is used as a verb meaning “describe” or “characterize.” The meaning in (5) is the designation for an object. In none

14 子曰：君子去仁，惡乎成名 (*Analects* 4:5).

15 子曰：大哉。堯之為君也。巍巍乎，唯天為大，唯堯則之。蕩蕩乎，民無能名焉 (*Analects* 8:19).

16 達巷黨人曰：大哉。孔子。博學而無所成名 (*Analects* 9:2).

17 子曰：君子疾沒世而名不稱焉 (*Analects* 15:20).

18 子曰：小子，何莫學夫詩?...多識於鳥獸草木之名 (*Analects* 17:9).

of these occurrences does “names” have any connection to the rectification of names.

“Names” in the rectification of names is in opposition to “words.” Moreover, names and words are mutually related to “affairs” (as in human affairs), to rites and music, and to punishment. The final exhortation in the original passage is still about one’s speech alone, specifically “A gentleman should not be careless with his words.”¹⁹ So even though Zheng Xuan argues that “names” means characters, and Ma Rong 馬融 [79-166] argues that it refers to “the names of the hundred things.” In fact, because names are in opposition to words in their widest sense, “names” means language, and the rectification of names describes the relationship between language and politics. Given that names in rectification of names are in opposition to words, we should also analyze the occurrence of “words” in the *Analects*. I develop this point in more detail below.

It is interesting that the phrase “rectification of names,” which has had such a great influence on subsequent generations, entered history in the form of a lone example in the *Analects* and only began to be cited much later. Neither *Mencius* 孟子 nor *Xunzi* 荀子 has any references to it either. Although Mencius uses the phrase “names and actuality,” occurrences of “names” all refer to reputation, and uses of “actuality” all refer to advantage. In *Mencius*, there is a passage: “words that have no actuality are not clear,”²⁰ but we cannot simply speculate that this means “words” without real content to which it refers. The main topic in Mencius’ writing is ethical intention. This has no connection to the political doctrine of names and actuality connected to the system of social status, which developed later. Nor does it have any connection to the logical theory of names and actuality related to epistemology.

Xunzi has a chapter dedicated to the rectification of names. It concentrates on the relationship between names and actuality, on the one hand, and politics, on the other. However, Xunzi makes no reference to Confucius’ rectification of names. In fact, in Xunzi’s lifetime “rectification of names” was a very popular phrase, and the theory of names and actuality was already an important topic. It occurs frequently in works of the School of Names [*mingjia* 名家], the Legalist School [*fajia* 法家], and Daoist [*daoqia* 道家] thought—although in each case the meaning is different and the differences are very great.²¹ This was the background for Xunzi’s discussion on the rectification of names. His

19 君子於其言無所苟而已矣 (*Analects* 13:3).

20 言無實不詳 (*Mencius*, Book IV, part B).

21 For further details, see Cao Feng, “Zuowei yizhong zhengzhi sixiang de ‘xingming’ lun, ‘zhengming’ lun, ‘mingshi’ lun 作為一種政治思想的‘形名’論、‘正名’論、‘名實’

goal in writing the chapter “Rectification of Names” was to critique and deride the people who were disputing about names.²² In *Xunzi*, there is another discussion of the passage “a monarch must be a monarch, a minister must be a minister,” from the chapter “Wang Zhi”:

The ethical relationship between monarch and minister, father and son, elder brother and younger brother, husband and wife, from the beginning to the end, from the end to the beginning, is as principled as the division of heaven and earth, and is as enduring as the myriad generations. This is called the great foundation. . . . A monarch must be a monarch, a minister must be a minister, a father must be a father, a son must be a son, an elder brother must be an elder brother, and a younger brother must be a younger brother. The principle is the same.²³

This formulation is in line with the fundamentals of Xunzi’s thought, in particular his idea of “distinctions” [*fen* 分], but it is worth noting that Xunzi did not apply this thinking to the rectification of names. Although they were both exponents of the Confucian school, Mencius does not mention the rectification of names and Xunzi discusses it in a context separate from the discussion of monarchs being monarchs and ministers being ministers. Of course, there must be a reason for this, and the reason will become clear in the discussion below.

Based on extant works, scholars began referring to Confucius’ rectification of names only during the Han dynasty [202 BCE–220 CE]. Dong Zhongshu’s 董仲舒 [179–104 BCE] *Chunqiu fanlu* [春秋繁露] contains the first exegesis to “if names are not correct then speech will not be smooth.” He argues, “Looking at the meaning of Confucius’ statement, the meaning is that it is very difficult to become good.”²⁴ Dong stresses that, for people to become good, the

論 [The Theories of ‘Forms and Names,’ ‘Rectification of Names,’ and ‘Names and Reality’ as a Kind of Political Thought], *Shehui Kexue* 社會科學 12 (2015).

22 Cao Feng, “Xunzi ‘Zhengming pian’ xinlun 〈荀子·正名〉篇新論 [A New Discussion of ‘Rectification of Names’ in Xunzi],” in *Ru lin* 儒林, ed. Pang Pu 龐朴, vol. 4 (Jinan: Shandong University Press, 2008), includes a detailed discussion.

23 君臣，父子，兄弟，夫婦，始則終，終則始，與天地同理，與萬世同久，夫是之謂大本。 君君，臣臣，父父，子子，兄兄，弟弟，一也 (Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解 [Collected Annotations on Xunzi] [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1981], 104).

24 觀孔子言此之意，以為善甚難當 (Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒, “Shi Xing 實性,” in *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露, annot. Ling Shu 凌曙, vol. 10 [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1975], 374).

ruler must set an example: "The names that the sages determined are used by people of the world as a norm";²⁵ "If their names are not correct, they will not be accepted by the people."²⁶ Therefore, "a sage must not be careless with his words."²⁷

To summarize the discussion of the rectification of names in this passage from *Chunqiu fanlu*, the key point is that names and words here are the names and words of sages. Dong Zhongshu based his discussion on the relationship between the monarch and the people, and pointed out that, historically, the names and words of sages were important in helping the common people become good. This is why sages must constantly correct their names and words.

The following passage also comes from the chapter "Yu ying" in *Chunqiu fanlu*:

In the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the first year is called the "origin year." The meaning is to value beginnings. Knowing the meaning of the origin year in which a dynasty was established is something that monarchs value, but common people scorn. Therefore governance starts with the rectification of names. Once names are rectified, five generations can flourish, after five generations, it will be apparent whether they were good or bad. It can be said that [Confucius] found out the true meaning in this, it was not something that Zi Lu could see.²⁸

Even though Dong Zhongshu does not mention Confucius by name, the phrase "it was not something that Zi Lu could see" [非子路之所能見] clearly refers to Zi Lu in the *Analects*, and "rectification of names" is a direct reference to Confucius' rectification of names. This passage claims that the correct or incorrect use of a term is of great import for the political system. This theme of rectifying righteous status by rectifying language use is expressed most forcefully in the three commentaries of *Chunqiu* [春秋], particularly *Guliang* [穀梁] and *Gongyang* [公羊]. Using these commentaries as a bridge, Dong Zhongshu directs Confucius' rectification of names in the direction of righteous status.

25 聖人之所名，天下以為正 (ibid.).

26 其名不正，故不受也 (ibid., 376).

27 聖人於言，無所苟而已矣 (ibid.).

28 謂一元者，大始也。知元年志者，大人之所重，小人之所輕。是故治國之端在正名。名之正興五世。五傳之外，美惡乃形。可謂得其真矣。非子路之所能見 (Dong, "Yu ying 玉英," in *Chunqiu fanlu*, 3:73).

Volume 5 of *Hanshi waizhuan* [韓詩外傳] recounts a story about Confucius and concludes with passages from the *Analects* and the *Book of Songs* [Shijing 詩經]. Nearly the same content appears in *Xin xu* [新序]:

Confucius was sitting with Ji Sun, and the manager of Ji Sun's household sent a message saying: "The monarch is sending people to borrow horses, should we lend them to him?" Confucius said: "When we hear that the monarch is asking his subject for things, we call it 'taking,' we do not call it 'borrowing.'" Ji Sun understood what Confucius meant, and told his manager: "From today on, when the monarch sends people for things, just say that he is 'taking,' do not say that he is 'borrowing.'" Confucius's correction of the word "borrow" determined the status of monarch and minister. In the *Analects* it says: "The first thing one has to do is rectify 'names.'" In the *Book of Songs* it says: "The monarch does not speak carelessly."²⁹

Based on the contrast between the words "borrow" and "take," it is possible to clarify the relationship between monarch and minister. The author believes Confucius wanted to use the rectification of names—that is, the rectification of terms—to regularize the distinction between the monarch and his ministers. As in *Chunqiu fanlu*, this appears to be the earliest extant reference that relates "rectification of names" to the system of social hierarchy and rank. The explanation that the rectification of names means "rectification of the system of social status" can be traced back to these references. Put another way, this clarification must take the writing of people during the Han dynasty as its starting point; in the Han dynasty, the rectification of names was still a concept without fixed meaning.

In response to those who would argue that all the passages quoted above relate rectification of names directly to political thought, the next passage, also from *Hanshi waizhuan* (volume 6) presents a counterexample. Although it also cites "Zi lu," the background of thought and the development of the topic are completely different from the previous passages:

29 孔子侍坐於季孫，季孫之宰通曰：君使人假馬，其與之乎。孔子曰：吾聞君取於臣謂之取，不曰假。季孫悟，告宰通，曰：今以往，君有取謂之取，無曰假。孔子曰正假馬之言，而君臣之義定矣。《論語》曰：必也正名乎。《詩》曰：君子無易由言 (Liu Xiang 劉向, "Za shi di wu 雜事第五," in *Xinxu xiangzhu* 新序詳注 [Detailed Annotations of *Xin Xu*], annot. Zhao Zhongyi 趙仲邑 [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1997], 162).

With respect to disputation throughout the world, the best is divided into three grades, there are also five types of good disputation, but disputation that uses words is the lowest grade. Disputation is used to distinguish different kinds of objects, and renders them harmless to one another. It lists different points of view and renders them no longer incompatible. It expresses personal intentions and publicizes the content that it discusses, in order to make people understand and not to make people confused. So the person who is victorious in debate cannot forfeit his standpoint, the person who loses gains the reason he was seeking—this is the thing about disputation that is worthy of appreciation. If people use obscure words, they end up far away from the main topic of the dispute. If they use too many rhetorical flourishes, they end up departing from the center of the dispute. If they repeatedly use analogies, they end up changing the essence of the dispute, drawing people away from the main topic of the dispute; this makes it so that people cannot grasp the meaning. Although this kind of disputation is advantageous to the disputer himself, disaster comes from this. . . . In the *Analects* it says, “A gentleman is not careless with his words.” In the *Book of Songs* it says: “One does not speak rashly; one does not speak carelessly.”³⁰

The reader can see immediately that the passage is commenting on thought about the disputation of names that was popular during the Warring States Period [475-221 BCE] and is completely unrelated to the system of social hierarchy and rank. While praising the disputers' practices of “distinguishing different kinds of objects” [別殊類] and “listing different points of view” [序異端], the author also criticizes disputers: “if they use too many rhetorical flourishes, they end up departing from the center of the dispute. If they repeatedly use analogies, they end up changing the essence of the dispute” [繁文以相假, 飾辭以相悖, 數譬以相移]. These are faults that “make it so that [people] cannot grasp the meaning” [使不得反其意].

This is similar to the critiques of the School of Names in *Xunzi*, *Han feizi*, and *Mr. Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals* [*Lu shi chun qiu* 呂氏春秋], as well as

30 天下之辯，有三至五勝，而辭置下。辯者，別殊類，使不相害，序異端，使不相悖，輪公通意，揚其所謂，使人預知焉，不務相迷也。是以辯（勝）者不失所守，不勝者得其所求，故辯可觀也。夫繁文以相假，飾辭以相悖，數譬以相移，外人之身使不得反其意，則論便然後害生也。...《論語》曰：君子於其言，無所苟而已矣。《詩》曰：無易由言，無曰苟矣 (Han Ying 韓嬰, *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳, annot. Zhou Tingcai 周廷案 [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1985], 6: 76-77).

Sima Tan's 司馬談 [d. 110 BCE] critique of the School of Names in his essay "Lun liujia yaozhi 論六家要旨." Sima Tan also cites the *Analects* and the *Book of Songs*. The only difference is that he invokes the language of sages as supporting evidence. In reality, the activities of the School of Names also relied on the methods of analysis and inference. It was just that the direction of their activities was "a gentleman should not be careless with his words" [君子於其言，無所苟而已矣]. Like *Yin wenzi* [尹文子] and *Mo Bian zhu xu* [墨辯注序], scholars who sympathized with the School of Names could certainly borrow Confucius' language to serve their own points of view as well. This is the case with the passage in the *Analects*: since its original meaning was quite vague and indeterminate, it could be invoked by subsequent scholars with completely different points of view.

Next, a passage from *Yin Wenzi* says:

The highest *Dao* has no name and no form, but objects that have form must be expressed by names, and names are used to determine the forms of objects. It is precisely because whether the form of an object is determined or not is decided by names, errors cannot appear in names. Therefore Confucius says, "One must rectify names, if names are not definite, then speech will not be smooth."³¹

In this passage, the statement "the highest *Dao* has no name and no form, but objects that have form must be expressed by names" [大道無形，稱器有名] reveals a Daoist understanding of names. The passage also shows the influence of the School of Names, otherwise a statement like "objects that have form must have names, but things that have names need not have form" [有形者必有名，有名者未必有形] would not be possible—that is, the author is aware of the mutual distinction between common [*gongxiang* 共相] names and individual [*gebie* 個別] names. But in *Yin Wenzi* the reference to Confucius' rectification of names does not have any special meaning. The author is merely invoking the words of a famous figure in support of his doctrine. Because this is an isolated passage, there is no further explanation.

To determine when Confucius' rectification of names became associated with the School of Names, and therefore became a formal harbinger of the

31 大道无形，称器有名。名也者，正形者也。形正由名，则名不可差。故仲尼云：必也正名乎，名不正则言不顺也 (Yin Wen 尹文, "Dadao shang 大道上" in *Yin Wenzi* 尹文子 [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1991], 1).

study of logic, one must go back to Ban Gu's 班固 [32-92] *Book of Han* [*Han shu* 漢書]:

This school, the School of Names, probably originated among the officials in charge of rites. In ancient times status and rank were divided among grades, and etiquette differed based on rank and situation as well. Confucius said: "First one has to determine names; if names are not correct, when one speaks it will not be smooth and reasonable, if speech is not smooth and reasonable, affairs cannot be accomplished successfully." This is the area of expertise of the School of Names. And those people, who dally in the techniques of disputation will say ordinary things in confusing ways and distort true reason until it is scattered and smashed.³²

This passage reveals a Confucian point of view: it greatly syncretizes and revises the older thinking on names, and it links the School of Names and the officials in charge of rites to Confucius. Because Ban Gu could not overlook the once-elaborate thinking of the School of Names but also wanted to use Confucian political thought to systematize and reform it, he located its true origin and development in the officials in charge of rites and in Confucius.

From this point forward, Confucius and the School of Names were linked. When scholars research the School of Names today, they must first address Confucius' rectification of names; this is, in fact, a direct result of Ban Gu's influence. It is worth noting that the first scholar to define the School of Names was Sima Tan. Although his definition in "Lun liujia yaozhi" greatly influenced subsequent scholars, he does not mention Confucius' rectification of names. On the one hand, this reflects Sima Tan's Daoist perspective; on the other, it indicates that Confucius' rectification of names originally had no relationship with the School of Names.

"Classics [Jingjizhi 經籍志]" in the *Book of Sui* [*Sui shu* 隋書] follows the statement in "Treatise on Literature [Yiwenzhi 藝文志]" in the *Book of Han*, but it is more expansive and creative. Politically, it discusses more clearly the relationship between Confucius' rectification of names and the concepts of social status and names and actuality:

32 名家者流，蓋出於禮官。古者名位不同，禮亦異數。孔子曰：必也正名乎。名不正，則言不順，言不順，則事不成。此其所長也。及警者為之，則苛鉤鉏析亂而已 (Ban Gu 班固, "Yiwenzhi 藝文志" [Treatise on Literature], in *Han shu* 漢書 [*Book of Han*] [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1962], 30: 1737).

Names are used to determine all kinds of objects, to arrange the order of seniors and juniors, to clearly distinguish the social hierarchy and ranks. If every object can make name and actuality correspond, then things will not be too improper. In *Chunqiu zhuan* it says: "In ancient times the place of names was different, and the system of etiquette was different." Confucius said: "If names are not correct, when one speaks it will not be smooth and reasonable; and if speech is not smooth and reasonable, then affairs cannot be accomplished successfully." In the chapter "Zong bo" in the *Zhou guan* when it says: "The rite of receiving orders that is used for the nine grades of officials is used to determine the ranks of different positions within the state, and to distinguish the different kinds of names for objects," it is certainly talking about this matter. But when an obstinate stickler takes to this matter, he makes it very complicated and convoluted, he clings to an analysis of language and loses the overall principle.³³

During the Jin dynasty [265-420], Lu Sheng 魯勝 [dates unknown] stated in his *Mo Bian zhu xu*:

Names are used to distinguish similarity and difference, to clarify right and wrong, this gives access to righteousness and justice, and the principles for governing the state. Confucius said: "First, it is necessary to determine names, if names are not determined, when one speaks it will not be smooth and reasonable."³⁴

Even though Lu Sheng is discussing the purely speculative writings of Mo Bian 墨辯, he still wants to draw a connection to Confucius' rectification of names. The passage makes clear that, during this time period, the meaning of rectification of names was broad enough to encompass anything connected with names.

33 名者，所以正百物，敘尊卑，列貴賤。各控名而責實，無相僭濫者也。《春秋傳》曰：古者名位不同，節文異數。孔子曰：名不正則言不順，言不順則事不成。《周官·宗伯》：以九儀之命，正邦國之位，辯其名物之類。是也。拘者為之，則苛察繚繞，滯於析辭而失大體 (Zhangsun Wuji 長孫無忌, "Jingjisan 經籍三 [Classics Part Three]," in *Sui shu* 隋書 [Book of Sui], ed. Wei Zheng 魏徵 et al. [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1973], 34: 1004).

34 名者，所以別同異，明是非，道義之門，政化之準繩也。孔子曰："必也正名乎。名不正，則事不成" (Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 et al., "Yinyi zhuan 隱逸傳," in *Jin shu* 晉書 [Book of Jin] [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1974], 94: 2433).

During the Six Dynasties Period [222-589], Huang Kan 皇侃 [448-545] in his *Lunyu yishu* [論語義疏] interpreted the rectification of names as follows:

Confucius answered: "If there is something that needs to be done first, it is to determine the name for every kind of object. The reason one needs to first determine names is because the times are chaotic and the rites are not correct, speech is not unified, objects have lost their original appellations, and so if one is going to govern a state one first needs to determine names." And so in the latter half of the *Analects* it says, "The wife of the monarch, the sovereign calls her *furen*" are examples of determining names. Names are used to express the essence of objects; the essence of objects must correspond to their names. If there is a mistake in the name and it is not accurate, then problems will appear in language, and it will be impossible to express the precise meaning.³⁵

In the following passage, Huang Kan cites the *Analects*:

The monarch calls his wife *furen*, but she calls herself *xiao tong*. The people inside the country call her *jun furen*, in foreign countries people call her *gua xiao jun*. Foreigners also call her *jun furen*.³⁶

Huang Kan's perspective is similar, for example, to *Hanshi waizhuan*, volume 5, quoted above. His discussion of names and actuality is not unrelated to the theory of names and actuality prevalent around the Six Dynasties Period. The history of the interpretations of the rectification of names reveals that it was only in the Six Dynasties Period that scholars completely and definitively related rectification of names to the theories of "names and actuality" and "social status" within political thought.

Because the meaning of Confucius' rectification of names was so broad, and the development and change in his thinking was so complicated, the concept links Confucius with the later School of Names, the Legalist school,

35 孔子答曰：若必先行，正百物之名也。所以先須正名者，為時昏禮亂，言語翻雜，名物失其本號，故為政必以正名為先也。所以下卷云，邦君之妻，君稱之曰夫人之屬，是正名之類也。且夫名以召實，實以應名。名若倒錯不正，即言語紕僻，不得順序也。The present work quotes Huang Kan 皇侃, *Lunyu yishu* 論語義疏, Huai De Tang 懷德堂 edition, coll. Takeuchi Yoshio 武內義雄 (Tokyo: Koubundou, 1923).

36 邦君之妻，君稱之曰夫人，夫人自稱曰小童。邦人稱之曰君夫人，稱諸異邦曰寡小君。異邦人稱之，亦曰君夫人 (*Analects* 16:14).

the Confucian school, Daoist thought, and other schools that were originally antithetical to one another. This should not raise doubts about its validity. There are, of course, scholars who doubt the validity of the passage, such as the Japanese scholar Tsuda Sōkichi [1873-1961], who suggests, “The chapter ‘Zi lu’ in the *Analects* states ‘it is necessary to rectify names’; but are these really Confucius’ words? I am skeptical,”³⁷ and “It must be said, this statement of Confucius’ was manufactured by Confucians after they related rectification of names to politics; perhaps it has some connection with Xunzi’s thinking.”³⁸ Tsuda even suspects that subsequent scholars falsely attributed the statement to Confucius and smuggled it into the *Analects*.

When Western scholars first began translating the *Analects*, they interpreted it in light of the contrast between names and actuality. Arthur Waley translated the phrase *ming bu zheng* 名不正 as “what is said does not concord with what is meant,” while James Legge translated the same phrase as “Language is not in accordance with the truth of things.” Later, Western scholars discovered that this passage in the *Analects* does not contain an actuality identical to “words” and that the passage could be fully interpreted only with the aid of a great deal of additional commentary. Therefore, subsequent translators grew increasingly cautious. Benjamin Schwartz translated the passage above as “one’s words will not be in accord [with one’s actions].” (words in square brackets added by the author). David Hall and Roger Ames translated it as “what is said is not attuned.” J. P. Reding translated it as “discourse is incoherent.” Liu Dianjue translated it as “what is said does not sound reasonable.” Angus Graham translated it as “saying is out of accord.”³⁹ They increasingly cast off the clear-cut interpretation of correspondence between “names” and “reality” and instead gave the reader vague, suggestive clues.

In summary, the present author is driven to the following conclusion: even if this passage really existed in the *Analects* and was not an addition by subsequent scholars, it did not originally have a clear meaning, and the various, more clear-cut meanings were added by later generations.

37 See Tsuda Sōkichi 津田左右吉, “Sophist and *Ming Jia* Thought 辯者及び名家の思想,” in *Daoist Thought and Its Development* 道家の思想と其の展开 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1939), chap. 3, sec. 4.

38 See Tsuda Sōkichi, “The Creation Process of the *Analects* 論語のできたみちすぢ,” in *Analects and Confucius’ Thought* 論語と孔子の思想 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1946), sec. 4.

39 For all of these translations, see the discussion in Carine Defoort, *The Pheasant Cap Master* (He Guan Zi): *A Rhetorical Reading* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), chap. 8; all quotations are taken from the reference bibliography at the end of the book.

Is Confucius' Rectification of Names the Same as the Concepts of Names and Actuality and Social Status?

The influence of Wang Dianji's 汪奠基 [1900-1979] *A History of Logical Thought in China* [*Zhongguo luoji sixiang shi* 中國邏輯思想史] on the study of logic in China was enormous. In this book he points out:

Confucius's thinking on rectification of names actually includes two aspects: one is the "correct descriptive name" concept of names and actuality, and the other is the "correct social status" meaning of the ethical norm. The so-called correct descriptive name is mainly part of the objective historical observation of nature, society, and ordinary objects. The so-called correct social status, however, is part of the subjective question of practical rules in the realm of political ethics. The former wants to achieve knowledge of "determining facts" related to logical subjects, such as establishing designations, distinguishing similarity and difference, clarifying right and wrong, disputing true and false, etc. The latter, by contrast, puts into practice questions of "determining value" based on feudal political ethics, such as determining personal status, managing social order, and imposing orderly governance, as well as clarifying social hierarchy, distinguishing good and evil, etc. Confucius' theory of the rectification of names astutely synthesizes these two questions—that is, it unifies the relationship between designations and facts with the ordering of social status.⁴⁰

The history of interpretations of Confucius' rectification of names is really a portrait of the history of the development of ancient Chinese thought and of recent research on logical thought. In the present author's view, the passage from Wang Dianji quoted above succinctly summarizes the central topic of studies on the gradual historical development of interpretations of Confucius' rectification of names. The meaning of Confucius' rectification of names can be separated into two threads. One thread concerns names and actuality, an aspect of what Wang calls "determining facts." The other concerns social status, an aspect of what Wang calls "determining value."

Unfortunately, judging from the history of interpretations of the rectification of names in section 2 of the present work, "determining facts" and "determining value" have not been clearly distinguished. Names and actuality are

40 Wang Dianji 汪奠基, *Zhongguo luoji sixiang shi* 中國邏輯思想史 [*A History of Logical Thought in China*] (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1979), 124.

also part of “determining value.” The reason that Wang wants to place the two aspects in opposition is to emphasize the role played by names and actuality in “determining facts.” This is, in fact, related to the great impact that Western logic had on China in the twentieth century. The importance that Wang attaches to “determining value” is welcome, since most writing on the history of logic only focuses on “determining facts” and neglects the other important facet of ancient Chinese thinking on names.

Regardless of whether “determining value” or “determining facts” is more important, the consensus is that Confucius’ rectification of names refers to the concepts of names and actuality and social status. But is that really true? Based on the exposition in the previous two sections, one must raise the following objections.

First, let us leave aside the meaning of the three occurrences of “names” in the passage in the *Analects* on rectification of names. The remaining occurrences have no relationship to names and actuality or social status. Therefore, should one be so quick to relate these occurrences to the theories of names and actuality or personal status? One might bend the theory of words and actions in the *Analects* to fit the theory of names and actuality, but in reality the latter cannot be derived from the former.

Second, Mencius and other scholars who came after Confucius engage in no discussion of profound and important thinking of this kind. Is it not unusual that “Zheng ming 正名” in *Xunzi* 荀子 makes no mention of it?

Third, references to Confucius’ rectification of names—whether in the context of personal status or of names and actuality—appear quite late, many after the Han dynasty. How can this be explained?

Fourth, determining facts and determining values are two different threads in intellectual history. Is it really probable that Confucius’ rectification of names recognized these two threads at the same time?

The conclusion is quite simple: The reason scholars have given every kind of interpretation to the rectification of names passage in the *Analects* is largely due to assumptions about Confucius among his successors and based on the views among later generations on rectification of names; alternatively, in the course of the development of thinking about names, scholars have augmented Confucius’ own explanation of the rectification of names, gradually fleshing it out from an empty shell into a substantial edifice.

In epistemology, names and actuality are placed in opposition, and the theory of the rectification of names became an important topic that played an important role in the rise of the School of Names. Afterward, a derivative of the Confucian school, the Legalist school, and the Daoist school transplanted

these concepts to the political sphere. The theory of names and actuality and the explanation of rectification of names flourished the most in the late Warring States Period, when *Gongsun longzi* [公孫龍子] and *Mo Bian* disputed from the perspective of language and epistemology and *Xunzi* disputed from the perspective of the integration of language and politics, while *Guanzi* 管子, *Han Feizi*, *Mr. Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals*, *Yin Wenzi*, and the Mawangdui silk edition of *Huangdi sijing* [黃帝四經] mainly discuss names and actuality and the rectification of names from the perspective of politics. It was only during this period that the rectification of names truly became linked with names and actuality. The theory of names and actuality was used both by those who wished to determine facts and by those who wished to determine values, but the status of the two groups was not equal, with the former often being criticized or rejected by the latter.

In the same way, it was only in the mid- to late Warring States Period that the theory of social status epitomized by the passage "a monarch must be a monarch, a minister must be a minister, a father must be a father, and a son must be a son" became a popular topic, following the centralization of monarchical power and the strengthening of the division of labor and system of ranks in society. The theory of social status is an important topic in *Xunzi*, *Guanzi*, *Han Feizi*, *Mr. Lü's Spring and Autumn*, *Shizi* 尸子, *Yin Wenzi*, the Mawangdui silk edition of *Huangdi sijing*, and other works. In addition, it is a prevalent theme in the three commentaries of the *Chunqiu*, in particular the *Gongyang* commentary. *Da dai lijì* [大戴禮記] and the *Classic of Rites* [*Liji* 禮記] invoke Confucius in many discussions to emphasize social status. It is important to note, however, that even in these late-appearing discussions attributed to Confucius, social status is still not formally related to the rectification of names.

It is because discussion on names in the Warring States Period and from the Qin through the Han dynasties developed along the two paths of names and actuality and social status that people afterward had no choice but to fit Confucius into one of these two perspectives. But this retroactive interpretation could not happen all at once. At first, scholars simply used Confucius' name to raise the profile of their own academic doctrine. Only later was the trend reversed, as scholars began to assume that these doctrines were Confucius' own words and meaning, and only then could scholars make the kind of statements that appear in the *Book of Han* and the *Book of Sui*. Conversely, Mencius and other scholars who came after Confucius did not yet relate Confucius' rectification of names to names, actuality, and social status. When Xunzi mentions these theories, he did not seem to realize that he was presenting the quintessence of Confucius. Only after the Han dynasty,

particularly during the political rule of Confucianism, when Confucius' sayings were elevated to the equal of the *Book of Songs* and *Book of History* [*Shang shu* 尚書], was Confucius' rectification of names cited as the words of a sage. It was, however, merely cited—it was not further elucidated.

Conclusion

If Confucius' theory of the rectification of names is not related to the theories of names and actuality or social status, what then does it mean? How did Confucius understand the problem he was addressing? An examination of the meaning of the text as a whole raises two main points. First, names have a direct impact on politics—that is, on rites and music and on punishment. Second, the counterpart of names is words and action, but mainly words. His conclusion: "A gentleman should not be careless with his words."⁴¹ In addition, even when he is addressing the ruler of Wei, he advises: "wait until you govern a state."⁴² Confucius' rectification of names reflects concrete political problems from the perspective of the ruler; it is not a piece of philosophical reflection. It is also not, as Ma Rong and other scholars suggest, "rectifying the names of the hundred things" because it has no direct relationship at all to the concrete designations of objects.

The original meaning of Confucius' rectification of names may, then, be quite simple. Confucius did not mean to establish a concrete, normative system of "names"; rather, Confucius was simply the first person in history to realize or remark upon the importance of language in politics. As a politician, he noticed and foresaw the impact that the indeterminacy, ambiguity, and arbitrariness of names would have on politics. Confucius recognized the political consequences of language's not accurately expressing meaning or not being accurately received by people. He realized the great role that names, as a means of distinguishing right and wrong and establishing norms, could play in society and politics.

Confucius also discusses rites and music and punishment in this passage. As everyone knows, these were norms that were applied separately to noblemen and commoners. Rectification of names, however, is outside both of these norms. It follows that the names that Confucius wants to rectify may constitute a norm of language use—relatively uniform and stable—that helps the monarch rule. Confucius' rectification of names only hints at this aspiration,

41 君子於其言，無所苟而已矣 (*Analects* 13:3).

42 待子而為政 (*ibid.*).

however; the norm for and object of rectification of names remain unclear. The only means of ensuring the rectification of names remains the gentleman's "not being careless with his words" [於其言無所苟]—that is, the rectification of names depends on the gentleman's spontaneous ethical realization, not any external norm.

As in the original passage from the *Analects*, "When the gentleman uses names, it is necessary to be able to speak so that people understand. If one can say it, one can definitely do it,"⁴³ in the *Analects* words are often in opposition to action. Although the *Analects* does stress the mutual complementarity of names and actions, at its core it seems to be oriented more toward action. For example, there is the exhortation to be "diligent in affairs, prudent in speech";⁴⁴ "Act first, then speak";⁴⁵ "A gentleman should seem slow-witted in speech and nimble in action";⁴⁶ "At the same time as listening to someone speak, observe his actions";⁴⁷ and "The gentleman would be ashamed if his words were better than his deeds."⁴⁸

The *Analects* also directly emphasizes the determinacy of words and action. For example, "In ancient times people did not speak rashly because they would be ashamed if they personally did not live up to what they said";⁴⁹ "One's speech must be trustworthy and one must follow through in action";⁵⁰ "speech is loyal and sincere, action is generous and conscientious";⁵¹ and "speech conforms to the law, action is subject to consideration."⁵²

This orientation toward action reflects Confucius' attempt—through restrictions on individual moral behavior, through not being careless with one's words, and through general reticence in action—to avoid the relentless changeability, indeterminacy, and arbitrariness of words and minimize negative political consequences. The doctrine of words and action found throughout the *Analects* is in fact identical to the doctrine of the rectification of names in the chapter "Zi lu." In analyzing Confucius' rectification of names, the starting point should not be theories of names and actuality and social status, for

43 君子名之必可言也，言之必可行也 (*Analects* 13:3).

44 敏於事而慎於言 (*Analects* 1:14).

45 先行其言而後從之 (*Analects* 2:13).

46 君子欲訥於言，而敏於行 (*Analects* 4:24).

47 聽其言而觀其行 (*Analects* 5:10).

48 君子恥其言而過其行 (*Analects* 14:27).

49 古者言之不出，恥躬之不逮也 (*Analects* 4:22).

50 言必信，行必果 (*Analects* 13:20).

51 言忠信，行篤敬 (*Analects* 15:6).

52 言中倫，行中慮 (*Analects* 18:8).

which the *Analects* itself provides no evidence but, rather, the doctrine of words and action.

The greatest contribution of Confucius' rectification of names to the history of thinking on names in ancient China was not that it initiated imagined theories of names and actuality and social status but that Confucius recognized that the indeterminacy and arbitrariness of names necessarily had an impact on politics. Confucius' statement on the rectification of names is not a concrete political tactic but merely a sensitivity to politics. The goal of the present work is to emphasize that this sensitivity to politics is also sensitivity to language.

Works Cited

- Ban Gu 班固. *Han shu* 漢書 [*Book of Han*], vol. 30. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1962.
- Cao Feng 曹峰. "Xunzi 'Zhengming pian' xinlun 〈荀子·正名〉篇新論 [A New Discussion of 'Rectification of Names' in *Xunzi*]." In *Ru lin* 儒林, ed. Pang Pu 庞朴, vol. 4. Jinan: Shandong University Press, 2008.
- . "Zuowei yizhong zhengzhi sixiang de 'xingming' lun, 'Zhengming' lun, 'Mingshi' lun 作為一種政治思想的 '形名' 論、'正名' 論、'名實' 論 [The Theories of 'Forms and Names', 'Rectification of Names', and 'Names and Reality' as a Kind of Political Thought]." *Shehui Kexue* 社會科學 12 (2015): 109-120.
- Cheng Shude 程樹德. *Lunyu jishi* 論語集釋 [*Collected Interpretations of the Analects*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1990.
- Cui Qingtian 崔清田. *Mingxue yu bianxue* 名學與辯學. Taiyuan: Shanxi Education Press, 1997.
- Defoort, Carine 戴卡琳. *The Pheasant Cap Master He Guan Zi: A Rhetorical Reading*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.
- Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒. *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露. Annot. Ling Shu 凌曙, vol. 10. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1975.
- Duan Yucai 段玉裁. *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注. Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 1981.
- Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 et al. *Jin shu* 晉書 [*Book of Jin*], vol. 94. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1974.
- Feng Youlan 馮友蘭. *Zhongguo zhixue shi* 中國哲學史 [*A History of Chinese Philosophy*]. Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1931.
- Han Ying 韓嬰. *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳. Annot. Zhou Tingcai 周廷案, vol. 6. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1985.

- Hu Shi 胡適. *Zhongguo zhhexue shi dagang* 中國哲學史大綱 [*An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy*]. Beijing: Eastern, 1996.
- Huang Kan 皇侃. *Lunyu yishu* 論語義疏, Huai De Tang 懷德堂 edition. Comp. Takeuchi Yoshio 武內義雄. Tokyo: Koubundou, 1923.
- Liu Xiang 劉向. *Xinxu xiangzhu* 新序詳注 [*Detailed Annotations of Xin Xu*]. Annot. Zhao Zhongyi 趙仲邑. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1997.
- Sun Zhongyuan 孫中原. *Zhongguo luoji shi* 中國邏輯史 [*A History of Logic in China*]. Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 1987.
- Tsuda Sōkichi 津田左右吉. *Daoist Thought and Its Development* 道家の思想と其の展开. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1939.
- . *Analects and Confucius' Thought* 論語と孔子の思想. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1946.
- Wang Dianji 汪奠基. *Zhongguo luoji sixiang shi* 中國邏輯思想史 [*A History of Logical Thought in China*]. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1979.
- Wang Xianqian 王先謙. *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解 [*Collected Annotations on Xunzi*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1981.
- Wei Zheng 魏徵. *Sui shu* 隋書 [*Book of Sui*], vol. 34. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1973.
- Wen Gongyi 溫公頤. *Xianqin luoji shi* 先秦邏輯史 [*A History of Logic in the Pre-Qin Times*]. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1983.
- Yin Wen 尹文. *Yin Wenzi* 尹文子. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1991.
- Zhu Xi 朱熹. *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注. Shanghai: Shanghai Bookstore, 1987.

A Discussion of Xunzi's "Encouraging Learning" and Its Significance for Confucianism

Wang Bo (王博)

Professor of Philosophy, Peking University, China

wangbo67@pku.edu.cn

Translated by Colleen Howe

Abstract

Much of Xunzi's philosophy can be characterized as a deepening of themes introduced by Confucius and, at the same time, a reaction against Mencius' brand of Confucianism. For Xunzi, the idea of learning was a critical concept in achieving both of these goals. In Xunzi's philosophy, learning is not simply the accumulation of knowledge but, rather, the process of coming to understand morality as a lifelong process of self-cultivation and self-improvement. Xunzi did not agree with Mencius that human nature was inherently good; instead he believed that human nature was bad, which is why individuals must actively learn to control their base desires. It is no coincidence that, in Xunzi's project of self-cultivation based on learning to overcome one's primal nature, chapter 1 of his anthology is "Encouraging Learning." Reexamining the respective moral philosophies of Xunzi and Mencius from the perspective of learning and its role in moral cultivation can provide a deeper understanding of their overall philosophy.

Keywords

Confucianism learning – Mencius – moral philosophy – Xunzi

The *Complete Library of the Four Treasures* [*Siku quanshu zongmu* 四庫全書總目] says:

Xun Kuang's works aimed at illuminating the teachings of the Duke of Zhou and Confucius. He honored ceremony and valued learning. He believed that the nature of man is evil and that goodness is learned

through conscious effort. He feared that people would take to heart the theory of Mencius, that the nature of man is good, and would rely on their natural tendencies and neglect acquired learning. Thus in his writings, he claimed that nature is unreliable and that man should strive constantly to follow the teachings of the sage kings.¹

Adding the phrase "changing the innate nature while engaging in self-cultivation"² to the line "[He] aimed at illuminating the teachings of the Duke of Zhou and Confucius" would yield a comprehensive description of Xunzi's 荀子 [340-245 BCE] philosophy.

Xunzi was a Confucian master of the late Warring States period [475-221 BCE], and his teachings can be best understood in the context of a dialogue with his contemporaries, among them scholars of Confucianism and other traditions within the Hundred Schools of Thought. In particular, many of Xunzi's teachings can be viewed as reactions to Mencius, such as Xunzi's belief that man's nature is evil. This paper seeks to examine the differences between Xunzi and Mencius from a new angle, based on Xunzi's "Encouraging Learning [Quan xue pian 勸學篇]."

Encouraging Learning

"Encouraging Learning" is chapter 1 of 32 in *Xunzi*. This sequence was established by the Han dynasty scholar and author Liu Xiang 劉向 [77-6 BCE]. It is worth considering whether this ordering has a deeper meaning. In the ancient texts, special significance was generally attributed to the initial text in an anthology, such as "Fair, Fair Cry the Ospreys" in the *Book of Songs* "Tian Kun" in the *Yi zhuan*, chapter 1 of *Laozi*, and "Free and Easy Wandering" in *Zhuangzi*. Later scholars believed that these works highlighted the themes of their respective anthologies.

In fact, the structure of *Xunzi* is similar to that of the *Analects*. The *Analects* begins with "To Learn, and Then [Xue er pian 學而篇]" and ends with "Emperor Yao Said [Yao yue pian 堯曰篇]" while Xunzi opens with "Encouraging

1 況之著書，主於明周孔之教，崇禮而勸學。至其以性為惡，以善為偽，誠未免於理未融，然卿恐人恃性善之說，任自然而廢學，因言性不可恃，當勉力於先王之教 (Yong Rong 永瑒 et al., *Siku quanshu zongmu* 四庫全書總目 [The Complete Library of the Four Treasures] [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1965], 770).

2 化性而起偽。Wang Tianhai 王天海, "Xing 性惡," in *Xunzi jiaoshi* 荀子校釋 [Interpretations of Xunzi] (Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 2005), 942.

Learning” and ends with “Writings of Emperor Yao [Yao wen pian 堯問篇].” This does not appear to be a coincidence: Because the order of the *Analects* was set before *Xunzi* was written, the compilers of the latter appear to have been deliberately imitating the *Analects*. In addition to having similar composition, both works emphasize the theme of attaining enlightenment through learning. The foundations of this philosophy emerged in the *Analects* and were later made explicit in *Xunzi*. From this perspective, it is no coincidence that “Encouraging Learning” appears at the beginning of *Xunzi*. With this sequencing, the book forms a complete and coherent philosophy based on the importance of learning.

From a critical perspective, “Encouraging Learning” has a distinct purpose. It highlights Mencius’ 孟子 [385-304 BCE] tendency to overemphasize thought or reflection [*si* 思]. It also displays Xunzi’s and Mencius’ differing interpretations of innate nature [*xing* 性] and *xin* 心 [a concept that is generally translated as heart, but which contains elements of the heart, mind, and intention]. Because of these conflicting interpretations, “Encouraging Learning” plays an important role in the history of Confucianism, an issue to which we return shortly.

Broadly speaking, “Encouraging Learning” is a discussion of learning [*xue* 學]. As the chapter unfolds, the reader realizes that Xunzi’s interpretation of learning is not simply the accumulation of knowledge but, rather, the process of understanding existence and morality. It is a constant, lifelong process of self-cultivation and self-improvement: “Thus, if wood is pressed against a straightening board, it can be made straight; if metal is put to the grindstone, it can be sharpened.”³ Similarly: “If the gentleman studies widely and each day examines himself, his wisdom will become clear and his conduct be without fault.”⁴

If we understand wisdom as moral knowledge, and faultless conduct as the ability to act according to this moral knowledge, then this ability is not innate. Rather, it is achieved only through learning. Xunzi believed that man is the product of his environment: “Children born among the Han or Yue people of the south and among the Mo barbarians of the north cry with the same voice at birth, but as they grow older they follow different customs. Education causes them to differ.”⁵

3 木受繩則直，金就礪則利 (Burton Watson, *Xunzi: Basic Writings* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2012], 17).

4 君子博學而日參省乎己，則知明而行無過矣 (ibid., 17).

5 幹越、夷貉之子，生而同聲，長而異俗，教使之然也 (ibid.).

This is similar to Confucius' 孔丘 [551-479 BCE] maxim that "We're all the same by nature. It is habits that make us so different."⁶ Xunzi and Confucius both emphasize the value of conscious activity, particularly learning. It is this acquired learning that determines the direction of man's development. This is not something that happens overnight. Xunzi viewed learning as a process of accumulation: "Pile up earth to make a mountain, and wind and rain will rise from it. Gather water to make a deep pool, and dragons will appear. Pile up good deeds to create virtue, and godlike understanding will emerge by itself; there the mind of sage will find completion."⁷ This "piling up" represents not the accumulation of knowledge but, rather, the accumulation of virtue. As for the content of moral learning, it is found in the words of the sage kings: "If you do not hear the words handed down from the ancient kings, you will not understand the greatness of learning."⁸

According to "Encouraging Learning," learning has two layers.⁹ The first layer deals with the sequence of subjects, beginning with a proper education in the Confucian classics and ending with the learning of ritual. By "classics," Xunzi means the *Book of Songs* and *Book of Documents*, generally considered the most important of the Confucian classics. The phrase "[learning] culminates in etiquette" indicates the proper sequence of study, while providing another opportunity to emphasize the importance of ritual. On the surface, this sequence seems to echo Confucius's exhortation to "be incited by the Songs, established by ritual, and perfected by music."¹⁰ However, the two philosophies are quite different in spirit, especially in how they approach the intention of study: to transform oneself from a scholar into a sage.

According to Xunzi, cultivation is divided into three stages: scholar [*shi* 士], gentleman [*junzi* 君子], and sage [*shengren* 聖人]. The ultimate purpose of learning is to become a sage. At the end of the chapter, Xunzi describes the sage as a "complete man [*chengren* 成人]."¹¹ Mencius also described Confucius as a "perfect man,"¹² in the sense that his character was fully developed. Thus

6 性相近也，習相遠也 (David Hinton, *Analects* [Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2014], 154).

7 積土成山，風雨興焉；積水成淵，蛟龍生焉；積善成德，而神明自得，聖人備焉 (Watson, *Xunzi*, 18).

8 不聞先王之遺言，不知學問之大也 (ibid.).

9 See "Quanxue pian diyi 勸學篇第一 [Encouraging Learning]," in Wang, *Xunzi jiaoshi*, 22-23.

10 Hinton, *Analects*, 84.

11 Watson, *Xunzi*, 21.

12 孔子謂之集大成 (Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注 [Collected Annotations on Sishu] [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1983], 315).

the purpose of learning does not lie outside oneself in the physical world but, rather, in one's own self. According to Xunzi:

The learning of the gentleman enters his ear, clings to his mind, spreads through his four limbs, and manifests itself in his actions. His smallest word, his slightest movement can serve as a model. The learning of the petty man enters his ear and comes out of his mouth. With only four inches between ear and mouth, how can he have possession of it long enough to ennoble a full-grown body? In old times, men studied for their own sake; nowadays men study with an eye to others. The gentleman uses learning to ennoble himself; the petty man uses learning as a bribe to win attention from others.¹³

The difference between the learning of the gentlemen and that of the petty man, then, is that the learning of the petty man is superficial. For the former, learning is something that is manifested throughout his entire being as the result of long and genuine effort. Because of this, the best way to learn is to "associate with those who are learned."¹⁴ Xunzi means that learning is not simply transmitted through words or objects. Through the complete man, such as the sage or wise king in ancient times, we can understand the character of the ideal man. In Xunzi's view, this is the best path. He believed that mindlessly adhering to the classics of the past is useless. They must be connected with life to be relevant.¹⁵

The most important element of Xunzi's school is honoring ritual [*longli* 隆禮]: "Therefore I say that in learning nothing is more profitable than to associate with those who are learned, and of the roads to learning, none is quicker than to love such men. Second only to this is to honor ritual."¹⁶ For Xunzi, the intention behind learning is key. It is only through honoring ritual that one can understand the subtleties of the ancient texts. Otherwise, even if a man spends an entire day studying, nothing will come of it. For this reason, Xunzi criticizes "those shallow scholars who are only able to explain the *Book of Songs* and the

13 君子之學也，入乎耳，著乎心，布乎四體，形乎動靜，端而言，蠕而動，一可以為法則。小人之學也，入乎耳，出乎口，口耳之間則四寸耳，曷足以美七尺之軀哉？古之學者為己，今之學者為人。君子之學也，以美其身；小人之學也，以為禽犢 (Watson, *Xunzi*, 19).

14 近其人 (ibid., 19).

15 See "Quanxue pian diyi," in Wang, *Xunzi jiaoshi*, 18.

16 學之經莫速乎好其人，隆禮次之 (Watson, *Xunzi*, 19).

Book of Documents," "those who do not honor ritual," and "scholars without principles."¹⁷

Although Xunzi's philosophy initially appears to be a separate school of thought, its true character is Confucian. "Encouraging Learning" is intended for other Confucian scholars. We know that after Confucius died, his school split into eight branches.¹⁸ Although Xunzi does not explicitly define what he often referred to as "false Confucianism," we can infer that he means the teachings of Mencius and Zisi, the grandson of Confucius. The unearthed Confucian text *Five Actions* [*Wuxing*] draws heavily from the *Book of Songs* [*Shijing* 詩經], as does Zisi's 子思 [483-402 BCE] *Doctrine of the Mean* [*Zhongyong* 中庸]. According to the Han dynasty historian Sima Qian 司馬遷 [145-90 BCE], by studying these two books carefully, one can understand the entire philosophy of Confucius.¹⁹ However, the quotations that Zisi cites from the *Book of Songs* and *Doctrine of the Mean* advocate the study of the heart, rather than the study of ritual, which was the focus of Confucius. For this reason, Xunzi considered Zisi one of the "false Confucians" who "do not follow rituals."²⁰

"Encouraging Learning" includes several concepts important for understanding Confucianism. First, Xunzi's understanding of learning is not based on education or self-cultivation; rather, it is based on the fundamental nature of existence. Various sayings, from "one should not stop learning"²¹ to "at death one finally stops learning,"²² illustrate that learning begins with birth and ends at death. Learning is the way to attain a moral life. Therefore, learning can be seen as the central element of Xunzi's philosophy. Second, his emphasis on learning is based on the assumption that man is innately defective and needs to be reshaped through acquired effort.

As for the specifics of these "defects," interpretations vary. Xunzi believed that the nature of man is evil. Evil represents the flaws inherent in man, which must be improved through learning. Specifically, these defects are the areas in which man requires outside help to improve himself. Relying on his natural development is not enough to cure these defects, so learning requires

17 順《詩》《書》。陋儒。不隆禮。散儒。See "Quanxue pian diyi," 25-26.

18 儒分為八。Zhou Xunchu 周勳初, "Xianxue pian 顯學篇," in *Han Feizi jiaozhu (xiu ding ben)* 韓非子校注(修訂本) [*Annotation on Han Feizi*] (Nanjing: Phoenix Publishing House, 2009), 568.

19 Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shi ji* 史記 [*Records of the Grand Historian*] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2011), 2065.

20 不道禮憲。散儒。See "Quanxue pian diyi," in Wang, *Xunzi jiaoshi*, 36.

21 學不可以已 (ibid., 1).

22 學至乎沒而後止也 (ibid., 22).

“excelling at the use of tools”: “A gentleman is not born with gifts but, rather, a talent for using the tools available to him.”²³ In addition, learning must have a clear focus. This is seen in Mencius’ axiom that “All the ten thousand things are complete within me. To turn within to examine oneself and find that one is sincere—there is no greater joy than this.”²⁴ Here, Mencius is also advocating thought or reflection [*si* 思]. Xunzi, by contrast, is suspicious of reflection: “I once tried spending the whole day in thought, but I found it of less value than a moment of study.”²⁵ If we consider this statement as part of a dialogue with Mencius, its meaning quickly becomes clear.

The Work of Reflection

As noted above, “Encouraging Learning” has a clear purpose. It is intended as a commentary on Mencius’ teachings regarding reflection. Here it is worth distinguishing between learning and reflection. Confucius most famously compared the two concepts when he said, “To learn and never think—that’s delusion. But to think and never learn—that is perilous indeed!”²⁶ Confucius argued that one should love learning but also engage in active reflection, emphasizing both equally. But beginning with Zisi, reflection began to be emphasized over learning. The texts most representative of this phenomenon are the bamboo and silk manuscripts of the *Five Actions*, discovered in the past few decades. Most scholars believe that they were written by Zisi or another member of the school of Zisi. The silk manuscripts of the *Five Actions* contain both the canon [*jing* 經] and the explanations [*shuo* 說], while the bamboo manuscripts contain only the canon. This section explores the relationship of the five aspects of conduct—benevolence, righteousness, ritual, wisdom, and honesty—to the heart. The Way of Heaven and the Way of Man described in the *Five Actions* are based on the concept of forming these concepts within the heart, and reflection is critical to this philosophy.

The *Five Actions* argues that if reflection does not succeed in attaining a certain state, it cannot form the basis for virtue. Here, virtue refers to a state in which the five aspects are formed within the self:

23 君子生非異也，善假於物也 (ibid., 9).

24 萬物皆備於我矣，反身而誠，樂莫大焉 (William Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, ed., *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From Earliest Times to 1600* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1999], 715-717).

25 吾嘗終日而思矣，不如須臾之所學也 (Watson, *Xunzi*, 17).

26 Hinton, *Analects*, 84.

When benevolence forms within your heart, it is called virtuous conduct. If benevolence is not formed within, it is called a mere act. When righteousness forms within your heart, it is called virtuous conduct. If righteousness is not formed within, it is called a mere act. When ritual forms within your heart, it is called virtuous conduct. If ritual is not formed within, it is called a mere act. When wisdom forms within your heart, it is called virtuous conduct. If it is not formed within, it is called a mere act. When honesty forms within your heart, it is called virtuous conduct. If honesty is not formed within, it is called a mere act.²⁷

"Formed within" means to be rooted in the heart, mind, or inner being. Virtue is not a superficial state; it is dependent on the demands of the internal being. If these conditions are met, virtuous actions provide a sense of peace and joy. At the same time, virtue has been described as the Way of Heaven, as distinguished from the Way of Man, which deals with how to be a good person.²⁸ The difference between virtue and good, or the Way of Heaven and the Way of Man, depends on whether the object of virtue has a spirit.

According to the *Five Actions*: "If a noble man's inner heart lacks concern, then he will lose his inner heart's wisdom. If his inner heart lacks wisdom, his inner heart will lack happiness. If his inner heart lacks happiness, he will not be at ease. Not being at ease, he will lack joy and, without joy, he will lack virtue."²⁹ Thus concern, wisdom, and happiness are necessary conditions for virtue, so internal reflection is necessary to achieve virtue and to form virtue within.

What interests us now is how the Zisi school interpreted the concept of reflection. First, it is clear that reflection is closely related to the heart. Second, since the heart has no fixed intention, the direction of the heart's activity must be specified. As Confucius said, "The *Book of Songs* contains three hundred

27 仁形於內謂之德之行，不形於內謂之行；義形於內謂之德之行，不形於內謂之行；禮形於內謂之德之行，不形於內謂之行；知形於內謂之德之行，不形於內謂之行 (Kenneth Holloway, "The Five Aspects of Conduct: Introduction and Translation," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 15, no. 2 [2005]).

28 *The Five Actions*: "Goodness is the way of man, while virtue is the way of Heaven" [*Shan, ren dao ye; de, tian dao ye* 善，人道也；德，天道也]. Here, the Way of Man and the Way of Heaven are distinguished by the concept of "forming within." Because of this, Heaven and heart are closely related. Following this logic leads to Mencius: "Sincerity is the way of Heaven" [*Cheng zhe, tian zhi dao ye* 誠者，天之道也] (ibid.).

29 君子無中心之憂則無中心之智，無中心之智則無中心之悅，無中心之悅則不安，不安則不樂，不樂則無德；君子無中心之憂則無中心之聖，無中心之聖則無中心之悅，無中心之悅則不安，不安則不樂，不樂則無德 (ibid.).

songs, but this one phrase tells it all: thoughts are never twisty,”³⁰ that is, without direction. In the *Five Actions*, the five aspects of conduct determine the direction of thought. “Forming within” is not simply a process of rooting the five elements in the internal being; rather, it is also a process of giving direction to the internal being. In the *Five Actions*, reflection is separated into the directions of “clear,” “extended,” and “light.” What does it mean for thoughts to be clear, extended, or light?

According to the *Five Actions*, “fine” or “refined” thought is humane thought.³¹ Through clarity and insight, man experiences the moral states of calm, warmth, happiness, grief, affection, and love. Then, man attains the “state of jade,” which is the external manifestation of these internal virtues.³² Specifically, the state of jade is the external manifestation of benevolence. According to Confucius, “the superior man engages in nine types of reflection,” one of which is “laboring to have a warm expression on the face.”³³ According to the *Five Actions*, “jade” is a state in which the subject has undergone an internal transformation in order to manifest externally the state of being warm, gentle, and moist. It is attained through a series of subtle reflections. From the state of calm through the state of love, these are all subtle emotional changes in the inner soul. This is why humane thought is fine thought. Similarly, “extended thought” and “light thought” are intelligent thought and enlightened thought. “Extended thought” is thought that extends outside the self, as would be practiced by a sage. “Light thought” is thought that ascends as one understands the Way of the Gentleman. The same can be said of wise or ritual thought. For all five aspects of conduct, reflection is seen as the way to form virtuous actions within. It is only through reflection that these virtues can be connected to the heart and thus manifest themselves in the physical world.

The Master said: “Is humanity really so far away? We need only want it, and here it is!”³⁴ Most of Confucius’ teachings deal with human relations, but here he delves into the realm of reflection. This is the first time that this subtle distinction between different types of thought appears in the Confucian texts. It

30 《詩》三百，一言以蔽之曰：思無邪 (Hinton, *Analects*, 42).

31 See Li Ling 李零, *Guodian chujian jiaoduyi (zeng ding ben)* 郭店楚簡校讀記 (增訂本) [*Notes on Guodian Bamboo Slips*] (Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2007), 101.

32 In traditional Chinese culture, precious stones were imbued with anthropomorphic qualities and virtues.

33 君子有九思。色思溫 (Cheng Shude 程樹德, *Lunyu jishi* 論語集釋 [*Collected Interpretations of the Analects*] [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1990], 1159).

34 仁遠乎哉？我欲仁，斯仁至矣！ (Hinton, *Analects*, 42).

is important to note that these distinctions refer to the internal world rather than the external physical world.

Echoing Confucius's teachings, in the *Five Actions* the capacity for reflection is analogous to humanity: "Ears, eyes, nose, mouth, hands, and feet, these are the six that the mind employs. If the mind says yes, none dare not say yes. If it [says to] agree, none dare disagree. If it [says to] advance, none dare not advance. If it [says to] withdraw, none dare not withdraw. If it [says to] go deep, none dare not go deep. If it [says to] go shallow, none dare not go shallow."³⁵ Here the *Five Actions* draws a dichotomy between the heart and the five sensory organs: the heart is of central importance and directs the other organs. The Warring States philosophers, including Mencius, Zhuangzi 莊子 [365-290 BCE], Guanzi 管子 [723-645 BCE], and Xunzi all had similar philosophies. But from a historical perspective, these scholars were some of the earliest proponents of this philosophy. Since the concept of "forming within" is central to the *Five Actions*, it is only natural that the concept of the heart-mind is at the core of its philosophy.

The question of whether Zisi and Mencius constitute their own school of philosophy is still disputed. What is undeniable is that Mencius was strongly influenced by the philosophy of Zisi, to which he added his own ideas. Reflection was seen as an important function of the heart-mind, which is why he said that "the heart has the function of reflection."³⁶ From the perspective of reflection, Mencius divides the human spirit into two parts. The first is the heart-mind with the capacity for reflection, also known as the greater part [*dati* 大體]. The second part consists of the organs that lack the capacity for reflection, such as the ears and eyes, also known as the smaller part [*xiaoti* 小體].³⁷ The purpose of reflection is to allow one to separate the self from others. In separating the self from others, one can understand the essence of existence and confirm one's own independence and subjectivity. The eyes and the ears do not have the capacity for reflection, so they do not possess a "self" and do not have a sense of the distinction between the self and the other. Therefore, when the eyes and ears make contact with the outside world, they are incapable of resisting its influence. But the heart-mind is different; it can use reflection to confirm its independent existence and to comprehend that the five virtues are inherent within it: "Benevolence, righteousness, ritual,

35 耳目鼻口手足六者，心之役也。心曰唯，莫敢不唯；諾，莫敢不諾；進，莫敢不進；後，莫敢不後；深，莫敢不深；淺，莫敢不淺 (Holloway, "The Five Aspects of Conduct," 179-198).

36 心之官則思 (Zhu, *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, 335).

37 Ibid.

wisdom, and honesty, these are not endowed upon me, rather they are inherent within me. If it does not seem to be so, it is only because we do not take note of them.”³⁸

In the *Five Actions*, benevolence, righteousness, ritual, wisdom, and sagacity can only be connected to the heart-mind through reflection. Mencius took this philosophy a step further: through reflection, the heart-mind realizes that benevolence, righteousness, ritual, wisdom, and sagacity are inherent qualities. They are endowed by Heaven, so they cannot be rooted in the internal self even through conscious effort.

Here we find that Mencius' concept of the heart-mind is multilayered. The first layer, the conscience or the original mind, consists of the compassionate heart, the shameful heart, the deferential heart, and the heart of right and wrong.³⁹ The second layer is the subjective heart with the capacity for reflection. For Mencius, these two separate layers are contained within one heart. It is only through the reflecting heart that the conscience is manifested. Mencius quotes Confucius: “If you consciously employ it, it exists. If you unconsciously abandon it, it will be lost. It is hard to know whether it will turn inward or outward at any given time. No doubt this describes the heart-mind?”⁴⁰ Spiritual cultivation, then, determines whether one exists as a conscious being. For Mencius, to do is to reflect. Therefore, the goal of learning is to maintain and expand one's innate conscience through conscious reflection. “The Way of Learning is none other than to seek one's lost conscience,”⁴¹ and the means of seeking is to embrace reflection and concentration. If one abandons reflection in favor of learning, the heart-mind will be lost.

Mencius used the same standard to distinguish the “heaven-appointed officer” from the “officer appointed by man,”⁴² and to distinguish the noble from the lowly man. The difference lies in whether they have the capacity for reflection. Honors bestowed by Heaven are innate, while honors bestowed by man are external. Furthermore, if so-called nobility is bestowed by man, it can also be taken away by man. The fundamental character of the two can be understood only through reflection. Without reflection, there is no way to understand an innate morality that is more important than external honors.

38 仁義禮智，非由外鑠我也，我固有之也。弗思耳已 (ibid., 328).

39 Ibid.

40 ‘操則存，舍則亡，出入無時，莫知其向。’惟心之謂與？ (ibid., 331).

41 學問之道無他，求其放心而已矣 (ibid., 334).

42 天爵，人爵 (ibid., 336).

Studying Mencius, one finds that reflection is no longer confined to the realm of conscious effort. Rather, it has become part of man's fundamental nature. This is expressed most clearly in the statement "Sincerity is the Way of Heaven. Reflecting on sincerity is the Way of Man."⁴³ This represents the establishment of a new school that used meteorological phenomena to symbolize the Way of Heaven, thus distinguishing Mencianism from Daoism and other schools of thought. The essence of this new perspective was linking the Way of Heaven, which is sincerity, with the heart-mind. The reason was that the Way of Heaven is the sincerest state of being and the sincerest form of existence. Therefore, sincerity unites Heaven with man. The Way of Heaven represented by meteorological phenomena requires effort to be linked with the real world, but the true Way of Heaven does not require any outside medium to be brought into existence. This is because honesty is nothing other than a state or way of existence that is deeply rooted in the heart-mind. In this context, man and Heaven are united in one entity. Because of this, sincere reflection can be described as reflection on the Way of Heaven. This means reflection on the essence of life—benevolence, righteousness, ritual, wisdom, and sagacity. In the process of reflection, one discovers that "the core of man has benevolence, righteousness, ritual, wisdom, and sagacity as its base." Such reflection leads to the conclusion that "benevolence is the essence of man; combining the two, we can say that the benevolent man is the Way."⁴⁴ This is why man should strive first and foremost to lead a moral existence.

If the philosophy of the *Five Actions* links the four virtues with the heart-mind and the heart-mind with Heaven, then Mencius' philosophy further links the fundamental virtues, the heart-mind, innate nature, and Heaven. Thus, moral behavior is behavior that pleases Heaven. Mencius believed that only in this way can we establish a moral existence. This conclusion is not gained from the outside world through learning but, rather, internally through self-examination. This is the logical conclusion of the philosophy of reflection: Reflection is not attained by good intentions or even by the forming within of the four virtues. Reflection demands that the four virtues form the very essence of the heart-mind—the so-called original intention [*ben xin* 本心]. This original intention unites innate nature and the Way of Heaven. Only in this way can reflection attain its purpose, however briefly.

43 是故誠者，天之道也；思誠者，人之道也 (ibid., 282).

44 仁者，人也；合而言之，道也 (ibid., 367).

The Debate Between Learning and Reflection

Although Xunzi and Zisi both belonged to the Confucian tradition, their philosophies are clearly opposite. In “Fei shierzi pian” and elsewhere, Xunzi criticizes Mencius and his theory of the nature of man. Thanks to the discovery of the *Five Actions* text, we know that the statement “studying the ancient system to create a new doctrine, this is known as the five aspects of conduct”⁴⁵ of Xunzi is analogous to Zisi’s theory of the four virtues. However, Xunzi does not criticize these virtues in themselves. Rather, he believed that Zisi did not correctly understand the relationship between these virtues, the heart-mind, and the nature of man. Zisi and Mencius constantly emphasize this relationship,⁴⁶ to the point that criticisms of the five aspects of conduct and criticism of innate good are fundamentally the same. Therefore, it is clear that Xunzi’s emphasis on learning is in opposition to Zisi and Mencius’ emphasis on reflection. The clearest expression of this is found in “Encouraging Learning”:

I once tried spending the day in thought, but I found it of less value than a moment of study. I once tried standing on tiptoe and gazing into the distance, but I found I could see much farther by climbing to a high place. If you shout downwind, it is not that your voice is any stronger than usual, and yet people can hear you much more clearly. Those who make use of carriages or horses may not be any faster walkers than anyone else, and yet they are able to travel a thousand *li*. Those who make use of boats may not know how to swim, and yet they manage to get across rivers. The gentleman is by birth no different from any other man; it is just that he is good at making use of things.⁴⁷

The sense of opposition between reflection and learning is especially clear in the first sentence (“I once tried spending the day in thought, but I found it of

45 案往舊造說，謂之五行。See “Fei shierzi pian diliu 非十二子篇第六 [Disavowing Twelve Philosophers],” in Wang, *Xunzi jiaoshi*, 206.

46 *The Five Actions* is considered a defining work on reflection, yet it only mentions the heart, and barely touches on the concept of innate nature. Mencius viewed the matter differently: man’s nature is good, and this good takes the form of conscience, so the heart and innate nature are already related concepts.

47 吾嘗終日而思矣，不如須臾之所學也；吾嘗跂而望矣，不如登高之博見也。登高而招，臂非加長也，而見者遠；順風而呼，聲非加疾也，而聞者彰。假輿馬者，非利足也，而致千里；假舟楫者，非能水也，而絕江河。君子生非異也，善假於物也 (Watson, *Xunzi*, 17).

less value than a moment of study"), which also implies judgment of the relative merits of the two activities. In Xunzi's opinion, the essence of learning is relying on outside implements to expand one's knowledge or to improve one's abilities, such as climbing to a high place or shouting downwind. Although these activities do not increase the length of one's arm or the volume of one's voice, they are able to achieve the desired results. Reflection, by contrast, is limited to the qualities that one possesses inherently, such as standing on tiptoe to see farther. Ultimately, reflection cannot compete with the results achieved by using outside implements. In Xunzi's opinion, a wider world exists outside the self that cannot be attained through mere reflection: "Without climbing a tall mountain, one can never know how high Heaven is. Without standing at the edge of the abyss, one can never know how deep it is. Without knowing the words passed down from the sage kings, one cannot know how profound knowledge is."⁴⁸

It is only through the external world that we can understand the vastness of knowledge and our own defects and limitations. Similarly, it is only through learning that we can improve ourselves: "Blue comes from the indigo plant but is bluer than the plant itself. Ice is made of water but is colder than water ever is."⁴⁹ Outside knowledge is important because it provides a connection to the external world. Xunzi said: "It is better to have heard something than not to have heard it. It is better to have practical experience with something than to just be aware of something, and it is better to be aware of something than to have merely seen something. . . . Lacking the foundation of experiential knowledge, one acquires merely the appearance of benevolence."⁵⁰ Reflection without learning is meaningless.

The chapter "Dispelling Obsession [Jie bi pian 解蔽篇]" contains an anecdote that is relevant in this context:⁵¹

There was a man who lived in a cave, named Ji. He was good at thinking up riddles and liked to meditate. But if his eyes or ears were aroused by any stimulus, his thoughts became distracted, and if he heard the

48 不登高山，不知天之高也；不臨深溪，不知地之厚也；不聞先王之遺言，不知學問之大也 ("Quanxue pian diyi," 1).

49 青取之於藍，而青於藍；冰，水為之，而寒於水 (Watson, *Xunzi*, 17).

50 不聞不若聞之，聞之不如見之，見之不若知之，知之不若行之。不聞不見，則雖當，非仁也 ("Ruxiao pian diba 儒效篇第八 [Confucian Conduct]," in Wang, *Xunzi jiaoshi*, 324).

51 See "Jie bi di ershiyi 解蔽二十一 [Dispelling Obsession]," in *ibid.*, 856.

buzzing of mosquitoes or flies, it destroyed his concentration. Therefore he withdrew himself from all stimulus and went where he would be far away from the buzzing of mosquitoes and flies and there, living in quietude and calm meditation, he perfected his art.⁵²

The man's name, Ji, is an allusion to Zisi, whose original name was Kong Ji.⁵³ Ji was a man who was good at reflection, and, because he feared the outside world would distract him from his reflection, he cast away the desire of his eyes and ears and the sound of the mosquitoes and the flies and went to live a solitary life, in which he was able to reach a state of comprehension. But what is comprehension? Comprehension should be the linking of the soul with the entire world,⁵⁴ not merely the soul's comprehension of itself. Being self-taught is an illusion. The problem is that we cannot avoid contact with the outside world: While living a solitary life, we are able to achieve comprehension (this is the moral of the story of the man who lived in a cave), but what about when we are in contact with the outside world? Xunzi asks: "If he had reflected as intensively on benevolence, would he not have achieved real subtlety?"⁵⁵ This is Xunzi's first mention of reflection on benevolence, and it seems to be aimed at Zisi. The *Five Actions* contains the statement that "reflection on benevolence is fine thought." Is fine thought, then, not the same as subtle thought? In Xunzi's opinion, relying on the casting away of outside objects in order to reflect on benevolence cannot truly be called subtle thought. In fact, calling it fine thought is no more accurate than calling it "dangerous thought," as did Confucius! He believed that sages do not rely on fleeing from their desires in order to control them, as seen in Mencius' exhortation that "if one cultivates the heart, one will have few desires." Instead, one should face his desires directly and, through understanding, control them. After the soul has achieved great clearness, one can confront his desires with a sense of calm. "The benevolent man practices the Way through inaction; the sage practices the Way through

52 空石之中有人焉，其名曰觚。其為人也，善射以好思。耳目之欲接，則敗其思；蚊虻之聲聞，則挫其精。是以辟耳目之欲，而遠蚊虻之聲，閒居靜思則通 (Watson, *Xunzi*, 82).

53 Peking University's *Xunzi xinzhu* 荀子新注 [New Annotation on Xunzi] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1979), 358. The compilers' note states: "This may be a means Xunkuang used to obliquely refer to Kongqiu's grandson Zisi." Liang Tao 梁濤, "Xunzi dui simeng wuxing shuo de pipan 荀子對思孟'五行'說的批判 [Xunzi's Criticism of Si and Meng's Five Aspects of Conduct Theory]," *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiu* no. 2 (2001), also mentions this possibility.

54 The state achieved after the "great clarity" described in "Dispelling Obsession."

55 Watson, *Xunzi*, 82.

the absence of striving."⁵⁶ It is never deliberate or forced. If one reflects sincerely, he will achieve a corresponding mental state: "The reflection of the benevolent man is reverent; the reflection of the sage is joyous."⁵⁷ The sage no longer has to engage in conscious activity in order to form virtue within.

Thus, Mencius and Xunzi are, in fact, advocating two completely different forms of reflection. Mencius emphasizes reflection while Xunzi emphasizes learning. But both believe that common people can become sages. Mencius says, "Every man can become a sage like Emperor Yao and Emperor Shun," while Xunzi contends "Any man on the street can become an Emperor Yu." Still, the two have different views on what is required to become a sage—that is, "to become sincere through conscious effort." In Xunzi's opinion, man's nature is evil, but through conscious effort, he is able to transform his abilities. We can categorize conscious effort into two types, representing two distinct branches of Confucianism: that which advocates becoming a sage through reflection and that which advocates becoming a sage through learning. The philosophy of becoming a sage through reflection relies on the notion that man's nature is good, because virtue cannot be sought in the outside world. Self-improvement through reflection is the fundamental means of establishing a moral existence. The philosophy of becoming a sage through learning is the reverse: man's nature is evil, there is no conscience, and man has to rely on the outside world to establish a moral existence. Because of this man has to rely on learning and on a heart that is focused on the single goal of following the Way.

Clearly, the concepts of reflection and learning can only be understood in relation to one another and as core concepts of the philosophies of Xunzi and Mencius. As we have seen, learning demands outside elements, while reflection emphasizes internal development. Yet this is a superficial characterization. More importantly, both offer an understanding of the fundamental nature of life. As Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 [1903-1982] said:

Mencius believes that the nature of man is good. As long as one has a heart, cultivates the self, and is conscientious, he will feel that within him lie all the ten thousand things. For this reason, Mencius emphasizes in particular seeking the cause in oneself instead of in others. But Xunzi

56 故仁者之行道也，無為也；聖人之行道也，無強也（"Jie bi di ershiyi," 856).

57 仁者之思也恭，聖者之思也樂。Here Xunzi's use of "reflection of the benevolent man" and "reflection of the sage" appear to have been influenced by *The Five Actions*' "reflection on benevolence" and "reflection on sagacity." While structurally similar, they have different implications. This serves as further proof of the relationship between Xunzi and Mencius.

believes that the nature of man is evil, so the only remedy is to strive to change oneself through conscious activity and to seek aid through outside things. Seeking to attain moral behavior through outside things depends only on the accumulation of experience. After accumulating experience, man can change his evil nature. Because a lowly man cannot become a gentleman, nor can a gentleman become a sage in a fortnight, Xunzi described learning as a process of gradual accumulation.⁵⁸

This observation is correct. Because Mencius believes the nature of man is good, he is inclined toward inner reflection. Xunzi, by contrast, believes that man's nature is evil and can be changed only through conscious effort.

"Encouraging Learning" has previously received little attention by scholars of either Xunzi or the history of Confucian philosophy more broadly. The analysis above demonstrates that Xunzi's philosophy is markedly different from that of Mencius and other Confucian scholars. The concept of becoming a sage through learning expressed in "Encouraging Learning" also reflects the overarching arrangement of *Xunzi* and mirrors the sequential organization of *The Analects*, from "To Learn, and Then" to "Emperor Yao Said." In contrast, Zisi and Mencius represent the philosophy of becoming a sage through reflection. The difference between reflection and learning is not simply a question of different means of self-cultivation; rather, the difference has to do with the core elements of the two respective philosophies, including their views on the nature of man, the heart-mind, and the Way of Heaven. In this sense, the concept of learning espoused in "Encouraging Learning" offers a point of entry into Xunzi's branch of Confucianism.

Works Cited

- Cheng Shude 程樹德. *Lunyu jishi* 論語集釋 [*Collected Interpretations of the Analects*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1990.
- De Bary, William Theodore, and Irene Bloom, ed. *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From Earliest Times to 1600*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- Hinton, David. *Analects*. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2014.
- Holloway, Kenneth. "'The Five Aspects of Conduct': Introduction and Translation." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 15, no. 2 (2005): 179-198.

58 Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, *Zhongguo renxinglun shi* 中國人性論史 [*History of Chinese Theory of Human Nature*] (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Publishing House, 1984), 249.

- Liang Tao 梁濤. "Xunzi dui simeng wuxing shuo de pipan 荀子對思孟“五行”說的批判 [Xunzi's Criticism of Si and Meng's Five Aspects of Conduct Theory]." *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiu* 中國文化研究 no. 2 (2001): 40-46.
- Li Ling 李零. *Guodian chujian jiaoduyi (zeng ding ben)* 郭店楚簡校讀記（增訂本） [*Notes on Guodian Bamboo Slips*]. Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2007.
- Sima Qian 司馬遷. *Shiji* 史記 [*Records of the Grand Historian*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2011.
- Wang Tianhai 王天海. 荀子校釋 [*Interpretations of Xunzi*]. Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 2005.
- Watson, Burton. *Xunzi: Basic Writings*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.
- Xu Fuguan 徐復觀. *Zhongguo renxinglun shi* 中國人性論史 [*History of Chinese Theory of Human Nature*]. Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Publishing House, 1984.
- Xunzi xinzhushu* 荀子新注 [*New Annotation on Xunzi*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1979.
- Yong Rong 永瑤 et al. *Siku quanshu zongmu* 四庫全書總目 [*The Complete Library of the Four Treasures*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1965.
- Zhou Xunchu 周勳初. *Han Feizi jiaozhu (xiu ding ben)* 韓非子校注（修訂本） [*Annotation on Han Feizi*]. Nanjing: Phoenix Publishing House, 2009.
- Zhu Xi 朱熹. *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注 [*Collected Annotations on Sishu*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1983.

To Obey or Not to Obey? Mencius' Discourse on the Political Duties of Officials

Fang Xudong (方旭东)

Professor of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, East China Normal University, China

xdfang@philo.ecnu.edu.cn

Translated by Kathryn Henderson

Abstract

Mencius' discourse on officials who could not be summoned by the king reveals that, according to him, no universal definition of a subject's political duties existed toward his ruler. On the contrary, duties were determined by the subject's status (i.e., whether he was an official in the bureaucracy) as well as by concrete circumstances (i.e., whether he was on active service or whether the king wanted to see him in order to inquire about the Way). Indeed, from Mencius' standpoint, context mattered considerably when it came to the question of political duties and in fact, Confucian etiquette always reflected the same spirit of differentiation among status and circumstances. Furthermore, the ministers' ethics as understood by Mencius appear to be founded on contract, the spirit of which compelled and also conferred the right to any minister with dignity to unilaterally terminate the contract and resign from his post if he found himself unable to carry out successfully his duty or realized that his ruler had no need for his advice.

Keywords

Mencius – political duties – political philosophy

In ancient China, the question of political duties was generally approached through discussions on righteousness, as one of the principles presiding over the relationship between a ruler and his ministers. Such was the political context under which Confucians, concerned with the Minister's Way [*chen dao*

臣道] pondered the question of political duties. Mencius' understanding of the officials' political duties presents distinctive Confucian characteristics, but another mentality permeating it also makes it easy for contemporary readers to associate his thought with freedom and democracy.

Academic research in the past revolved mostly around Mencius' theory on human nature, while his political philosophy was more often than not discussed in relation to his so-called people-oriented thought [*minbenzhuyi* 民本主義], a governance approach that insisted on the foremost importance of the people.¹ This article, for its part, investigates Mencius' discourse on the

- 1 Huang Junjie 黃俊傑 provided a systematic survey of the history of Mencius hermeneutics titled *Zhongguo Mengxue quanshi shilun* 中國孟學詮釋史論 [*On the History of Chinese Mencius Studies Hermeneutics*] (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2004). He is also the author of a special article on the subject titled "Ershiyi shiji Mengzi xue yanjiu de xin zhanwang 二十一世紀孟子學研究的新展望 [New Research Prospects for Mencius Studies in the Twenty-First Century]," *Wen Shi Zhe* no. 5 (2006). Based on his survey, when it comes to research on Mencius, Chinese and foreign academic circles in the twentieth century can be separated in two main groups, each following a different approach: first, the intrinsic approach concerned with the history of philosophy or the history of ideas, as used in I. A. Richards, *Mencius on the Mind: Experiments in Multiple Definition* (Westport, CT.: Hyperion Press, 1930), Li Minghui 李明輝, *Mengzi zhongtan* 孟子重探 [*New Investigations in the Field of Mencius' Studies*] (Taipei: Linking, 2001), and Kwong-loi Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), whose focus was directed on theories such as human nature's original goodness, the body and mind relationship as well as the power of words of wisdom in fostering moral character; second, the extrinsic approach of studying history or intellectual history, as applied in Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, *Zhongguo renxinglun shi: xian Qin pian* 中國人性論史·先秦篇 [*The History of Chinese Theories on Human Nature: The Pre-Qin Period*] (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1969), as well as in Huang's survey of the intellectual history of Mencius Studies. This research paid special attention to historical and cultural contexts when deciphering the connotations at work behind the notions evoked in Mencius. They thus helped stimulate the field of Mencius studies by making a lot of its concepts and ideas appear more concrete, especially with regard to political thought. According to Huang, methodologically speaking, when researching Mencius' political thought, even when adopting an "intrinsic research method," one should also apply an "extrinsic research method" in order to take into account both internal and external variables, assessing the interactions between Mencius' political ideals and the political reality of every East Asian country. On this question, a few new trends have appeared. First, after new research on Mencius emerged in Japan and Korea, similar interests appeared in the development of East Asian Mencius studies. This brought some transformations in the field as well as new interpretations, thus contributing significantly to intellectual history. Second, at present interest is growing about the theory of the body and mind relationship and the theory on the art of self-cultivation. Third, the universal value of Mencius' thought and ideas in the age of globalization has been increasingly promoted, especially with regard to ideas revealing

Minister's Way by elaborating on the political duties. It also explores some of the subtler areas of Mencius' political philosophy, so as to offer conclusions that will certainly serve as a valuable reference for future discussions on contemporary political duties.

I

The second passage of the second chapter on "Gongsun Chou" shows Mencius avoided his meeting with the king of Qi. This story is quite representative of how Mencius' words and deeds reflected his unconventional understanding of the political duties assumed by ministers.

As Mencius was about to go to court to see the king, the king sent someone to him with this message: "I was wishing to come and see you. But I have got a cold and may not expose myself to the wind. In the morning I will hold my court. I do not know whether you will give me the opportunity of seeing you then." Mencius replied, "Unfortunately, I am unwell, and not able to go to court."

The next day, he went out to pay a condolence call on someone in the family of Dong Guo, when Gongsun Chou said to him, "Yesterday, you declined going to the court on the ground of being unwell, and today you are going to pay a condolence call. May this not be regarded as improper?" "Yesterday," said Mencius, "I was unwell; today, I am better—why should I not pay this visit?"

In the meantime, the king sent a messenger to inquire about his illness and also a physician. Meng Zhong replied to them, "Yesterday, when the king's order came, he was feeling a little unwell, and could not go to the court. Today he was a little better and hastened to go to court. I do not know whether he will have reached it by this time or not." Having said this, he sent several men to look for Mencius on the way, and say to him, "I beg that, before you return home, you will go to the court."

On this, Mencius felt himself compelled to go to Jing Chou's, and there stay the night. Mr. Jing said to him, "In the family, there is the relation of father and son; out of the home, there is the relation of prince and minister.

a concern for "human rights," as concealed in Mencius' people-oriented political thought. From an overall point of view, Mencius' ideas on the Minister's Way are seldom touched upon from the perspective of political duties. There is thus indeed both the need and the room for further research on this question.

These are the two great relations among men. Between father and son the ruling principle is kindness. Between prince and minister the ruling principle is respect. I have seen the respect of the king to you, Sir, but I have not seen in what way you show respect to him."

Mencius replied, "Oh! what words are these? Among the people of Qi there is no one who speaks to the king about benevolence and righteousness. Are they thus silent because they do not think that benevolence and righteousness are admirable? No, but in their hearts they say, 'This man is not fit to be spoken with about benevolence and righteousness.' Thus they manifest a disrespect than which there can be none greater. I do not dare to set forth before the king any but the ways of Yao and Shun. There is therefore no man of Qi who respects the king so much as I do."

Mr. Jing said, "Not so. That was not what I meant. The *Book of Rites* says, 'When a father calls, the answer must be without a moment's hesitation. When the prince's order calls, the carriage must not be waited for.' You were certainly going to the court, but when you heard the king's order, then you did not carry your purpose out. This does seem as if it were not in accordance with that rule of propriety."

Mencius answered him, "How can you give that meaning to my conduct? The philosopher Zeng said, 'The wealth of Jin and Chu cannot be equaled. Let their rulers have their wealth—I have my benevolence. Let them have their nobility—I have my righteousness. Wherein should I be dissatisfied as inferior to them?' Now shall we say that these sentiments are not right? Seeing that the philosopher Zeng spoke them, there is in them, I apprehend, a real principle. In the kingdom there are three things universally acknowledged to be honorable. Nobility is one of them; age is one of them; virtue is one of them. In courts, nobility holds the first place of the three; in villages, age holds the first place; and for helping one's generation and presiding over the people, the other two are not equal to virtue. How can the possession of only one of these be presumed on to despise one who possesses the other two? Therefore a prince who is to accomplish great deeds will certainly have ministers whom he does not call to go to him. When he wishes to consult with them, he goes to them. The prince who does not honor the virtuous, and delight in their ways of doing, to this extent, is not worth having to do with. Accordingly, there was the behavior of Tang to Yi Yin: he first learned of him, and then employed him as his minister; and so without difficulty he became sovereign. There was the behavior of Duke Huan to Guan Zhong: he first learned of him, and then employed him as his minister; and so without difficulty he became chief of all the princes. Now throughout the kingdom,

the territories of the princes are of equal extent, and in their achievements they are on a level. Not one of them is able to exceed the others. This is for no other reason, but that they love to make ministers of those whom they teach, and do not love to make ministers of those by whom they might be taught. So did Tang behave to Yi Yin, and the Duke Huan to Guan Zhong, that they would not venture to call them to go to them. If Guan Zhong might not be called to him by his prince, how much less may he be called, who would not play the part of Guan Zhong!"²

At the beginning of the story, Mencius had been preparing himself to go to court and see the king of Qi, when a messenger arrived to inform him that since the king was ill, he could not visit Mencius personally and, therefore, that he hoped they would be able to meet at the court. It seems, by looking at Mencius' reaction, that this summoning was the exact opposite of what he had been expecting, since he then abandoned his plan to go to court. Nonetheless, the reason evoked by Mencius was diplomatic and, thus, could hardly be criticized: by claiming to be unwell, he resorted to the same excuse as the one used by the king.

It can be inferred that if the monarch had not sent an emissary to summon Mencius, Mencius would perhaps, at that moment, have already been on his way to court. In other words, it is the king asking for him that made him change his mind. Clearly, it is more precisely the king's way of requesting him that displeased Mencius. However, why did the latter feel this way? Zhao Qi's 趙岐 [d. 201] explanation is that "Mencius was displeased that the king requested him to come to court, so he feigned illness and refused to go."³ Zhao Qi thus thought that Mencius simply took offense at the king's summoning him to court. This interpretation is plausible, since it relies to a great extent on the fact that, because of his status at that time in the kingdom of Qi, Mencius' name was not on the list of officials who could be summoned by the king. Zhao Qi notes that "Although Mencius served the state of Qi, it was in the capacity of a guest-teacher, he was respected because of his knowledge of the Way. He would even claim illness and not make the trip to court to see the king."⁴ However, the dialogue reported later in this passage reveals that, at that time, for a minister to decline the ruler's invitation was deemed unacceptable by most people.

2 *Mencius*, book II, part B, 2.

3 孟子不悅王之欲使朝，故稱其有疾而拒之也 (Zhao Qi 趙岐 and Sun Shi 孫奭, *Mengzi zhushu* 孟子注疏 [Notes and Commentaries of Mencius] [Beijing: Peking University Press, 1999], 103).

4 孟子雖仕齊，處師賓之位，以道見敬，或稱以病，未嘗趨朝而拜也 (ibid.).

One could have been in the position of a minister and yet declined the king's call if he thought this invitation was not compulsory. However, if the demand was presented in a gentle way and the person summoned originally planned to go and see the king, this kind of refusal would then appear eccentric and unreasonable and may certainly have left people perplexed. In order to make Mencius' refusal seem less unusual, Zhu Xi 朱熹 [1130-1200] suggested that the offense felt by Mencius did not stem from the invitation itself but, rather, from the inappropriate way in which the king delivered it: "Mencius originally had intended on going to court, but the king did not know; the king himself claimed to be sick (and unable to leave the palace) and thus summoned Mencius to court to see him. Mencius then also claimed to be sick and declined."⁵

Zhu Xi's formulation implies that the illness mentioned by the king was merely an excuse.⁶ Since it was an excuse, the sincerity of the king's invitation was severely undermined, perhaps to the extent that it made Mencius feel insulted by the king's attempt to deceive him. Regardless of how Mencius personally looked upon the matter, what remains absolutely certain is that he was originally getting ready to go to court, but then, because of the king's intervention, he decided against that plan.

The next day, Mencius attended a funeral. His disciple was worried that, in doing so, he might not be able to justify himself, but Mencius paid no heed to his concern. In the end, the king sent a doctor to visit the patient, but evidently Mencius was not at home, let alone lying in bed acting sick. To smooth things over, Meng Zhong then told the doctor that Mencius' condition had already improved and that he consequently had just left for court. In order to conceal Mencius' lie, his disciple did not hesitate to fabricate a new one. In fact, it was unnecessary for him to concoct such a story, since he could easily have handled the king's messenger by simply repeating Mencius' words verbatim: "I was unwell; today, I am better." However, since he lied, he was left with no choice other than to make sure that Mencius would go to court. Meng Zhong's inappropriate answer put Mencius in a difficult spot: either go to court, thus acting against his own will, or not go, even though his disciple had given his word in his stead. For lack of a better option, Mencius thus ran to an acquaintance's home to spend the night. The original text's use of the expression "to feel compelled" precisely reveals the predicament in which Mencius found himself.

5 孟子本就將朝王，王不知而托疾以召孟子，故孟子亦以疾辭也 (Zhu, *Collected Commentaries on Sishu: Mencius*, 241).

6 Regardless of whether the king of Qi really was unwell from the cold weather, there is no way to know for certain, the literature on the subject being insufficient. However, it is obvious from Mencius' reaction that he had some doubts about the matter.

Zhao Qi thus explained: “Mencius felt compelled by Meng Zhong’s words. He felt he had little choice but truly did not want to go to court. Therefore he took refuge for the night at the residence of a Qi minister, Jing Chou.”⁷ On the one hand, Mencius was constrained by Meng Zhong’s words; on the other hand, he had no desire to go to court. Zhao Qi displayed an excellent grasp of Mencius’ state of mind at that time.

The question remains as to whether in the end Mencius went to court. Some believe that Mencius was forced to go in order to fulfill his disciple’s declaration. Jiao Xun 焦循 [1763-1820] presented an argument in support of this view:

In the chapter “Xiang Yin Jiu Li” of the *Classic of Rites*, Jia Gongyan’s commentary reads: “The king summoned Mencius, Mencius did not want to go, but feeling he had no other choice [*bu de yi* 不得已], he went. Then he spent the night at Jing Chou’s residence.” This way of understanding “had no choice” as “had no choice but to go” [*bu de yi er chao* 不得已而朝] is correct. Zhao Qi’s reading of the same phrase was that Mencius “could not stop,” as in: could not refrain from going to court. But at this time, even though Mencius himself physically went to the royal court, the king most likely was not there, either because he did not go at all or because he had already retired to his personal quarters. Either way, Mencius did not see the king, so he went to stay the night at Jing Chou’s residence, and used illness as an excuse for not having been able to see the king.⁸

Jiao Xun’s understanding of Zhao’s notes as “had no choice *but to go*” was certainly influenced to a great extent by Jia Gongyan’s 賈公彥 [Tang dynasty, dates unknown] thoughts on the matter. However, there is not a single word in the original text mentioning Mencius’ going to the court, and the evidence leading Jia Gongyan to such a claim remains unknown. In comparison, Sun Shi’s 孫奭 [962-1033] commentary offers a different account of the story:

7 孟子迫于仲子之言，不得已，而心不欲至朝，因之其所知齊大夫景丑之家而宿焉 (Zhao and Sun, *Notes and Commentaries of Mencius*, 104).

8 《儀禮鄉飲酒禮》賈氏疏云：齊王召，孟子不肯朝，後不得已而朝之。宿于大夫景丑氏之家。此解不得已為不得已而朝是也。趙氏言“迫于仲子之言不得已”，已，止也。不得止者，不得不往朝也。但身雖朝而心不欲至朝，蓋是時王未視朝，或已視朝而退，孟子雖造朝而未見王，故宿于景丑氏，而以所以辭疾之故告也 (Jiao Xun 焦循, *Mengzi zhengyi* 孟子正義 [Annotation on Mencius] [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1987], 257).

In the original text when it says “使數人要於路曰：請必無歸而造於朝”，this means Meng Zhongzi was afraid Mencius would return to his own home, thus not fulfilling the promise to go to court that Meng Zhongzi had made on his behalf, so he sent several people to intercept Mencius on the road and tell him: You mustn't go back; you must go to court to see the king. When the text says “不得已而之景丑氏宿焉” it means Mencius saw these people trying to bar his way, and felt pressure from the promise Meng Zhongzi had secretly made, thus he felt he had no other choice than to take refuge in the Qi minister Jing Chou's residence that night. It was because he truly did not want to go to court for the king that he went to Jing Chou's residence.⁹

Sun Shi's description of Mencius going to Jing Chou's residence means that Mencius did just that, and nothing else. If Mencius had really gone to see the king, the original text would not possibly have omitted such an important detail. Interestingly, even though Jiao Xun believed that Mencius went to court, he also claimed that Mencius had not actually seen the king. How could it be possible that Mencius had been to court, yet not succeeded in meeting the king? Jiao Xun's claim that “even though Mencius himself physically went to the royal court, the king most likely did not, either because he did not go at all or because he had already retired to his personal quarters” and so forth, are evidently mere conjunctures. Furthermore, providing that we accept that Mencius went to court but did not see the king, we would still have to speculate about the other possible reasons driving him to stay overnight at Jing Chou's home. It is written clearly that Mencius felt compelled to go directly to Jing Chou's home. Before going to spend the night at Jing Chou's residence, Mencius must not have been on his way to the court, not only because it does not match his conduct, which was usually consistent, but also because it would clearly deviate from the reasons explained by Mencius to Jing Chou later in the text. How could one imagine, by looking at Mencius' character, that he would have changed his position on the matter merely because of what Meng Zhong had said? Regarding his refusal to comply with the king's call, Mencius appeared confident in his decision. How then could he have gone against his original intention and instead acquiesced to his disciple's request?

9 “使數人要於路曰：請必無歸而造於朝”者，孟仲子恐孟子歸，以為失言，乃使數人而來告孟子于路，曰：請必無歸，而趨造于王朝。不得已而之景丑氏宿焉者，孟子見孟仲子使數人要于路，乃見迫于仲子之言，遂不得已而往齊大夫景丑氏之家宿焉。以其心不欲朝王，故往景丑氏家宿而已 (Zhao and Sun, *Notes and Commentaries of Mencius*, 106).

When it comes to this passage's main point, the question of whether or not Mencius actually attended the court is secondary, since the following fact remains the same: Mencius did not deem it right to answer the king's call. The crucial point at work behind Mencius' refusal to obey lies actually in the questions debated between him and Jing Chou later in the text.

In the story, Jing Chou ought to be an intimate friend of Mencius, otherwise Mencius would not have stayed the night at his house. According to Zhai Hao's 翟灝 [d. 1788] textual research, Jing Chou was probably a member of the Confucian school.¹⁰ That said, once Jing Chou found out what had happened, he did not mince his words but rather made clear his belief that Mencius had failed to show proper respect to the king. Mencius however refused to accept this judgment and proceeded to defend himself. The central issue debated by the two friends consisted in whether or not it was the unconditional duty of someone in an official position to answer the king's call. To a certain degree, the opinion expressed by Jing Chou represented that of the average Confucian scholar and even the general opinion—that is, that a minister had the obligation to accept the king's invitation and that to do otherwise would indeed be disrespectful. Mencius challenged this traditional view of the ministers' duties. His defense had two parts. First, he went back to the root of the question to offer a thorough revision of the point at issue. He acknowledged that officials should show respect for their ruler, but he also pointed out that this type of respect was far from tantamount to rigid obedience. Second, he attempted to cut the ground under Jing Chou's feet by resorting to classical instances of ministers that could not be summoned by the king. The essential idea behind those allusions to classical literature consisted of demonstrating that it would be inappropriate to summon certain officials in order to meet with them. In other words, those officials were not under any obligation to answer the king's call. Since Mencius and Jing Chou represent in this passage two different views—one old, one new—of the ministers' duties, their respective arguments both deserve a serious analysis.

Jing Chou's criticism stemmed from the notion of respect [*jing* 敬]. He put forward the opinion that, on the whole, the king's respect for Mencius was manifest, while Mencius' respect for his ruler remained to be seen. Obviously, this conclusion derived from Mencius' refusal to defer to the king's demand.

10 焦循《孟子正義》引翟灝《考異》云：《漢書·藝文志》有景子三篇，列儒家者流。此稱景丑為景子，其言父子主恩，君臣主敬，及引《禮》父召君召諸文，頗有見於儒家大意，景子似即著書之景子也。孟子宿於其家，蓋亦以氣誼稍合往焉 (Jiao, *Annotation on Mencius*, 257).

According to Jing Chou, the respect owed to the king by his ministers should indubitably have been reflected in their compliance to his commands.

Mencius paid no heed to the connection proposed by his friend between respect and obedience. His understanding of the respect owed by a minister to his ruler concerned whether a minister could offer his ruler some wisdom on the Way of benevolence and righteousness [*renyi zhi dao* 仁義之道]. For a minister to introduce the Way to the king would indeed mean that he believed the king could become a wise, talented, and virtuous monarch such as the legendary emperors Yao 堯 and Shun 舜. In accordance with the scale on which his notion of respect was based, Mencius believed that there was not a single person in the whole kingdom of Qi who respected the king more than he did. Even though all the people of Qi knew that benevolence and righteousness were good precepts, no one would remonstrate with the monarch on this subject. It can be deduced from this opinion that Mencius certainly considered the king of Qi unqualified to consult on the precepts of benevolence and righteousness. However, this would imply that Mencius regarded his ruler as being insufficiently sophisticated. For him to feel this way, does that not consist in a lack of respect for the king? Yet, he did say: "I do not dare to set forth before the king any but the ways of Yao and Shun," thus illustrating Mencius' belief that the current king did indeed embody the kind of promising sovereign who would be willing to follow the way paved by Emperors Yao and Shun. If this is not showing respect to the king, then what is?

Even if Jing Chou had shared his friend's point of view, it would still have been difficult for him to oppose it openly, for the simple reason that the precepts of benevolence and righteousness as well as the exemplars Yao and Shun evoked by Mencius all conveyed grand-sounding values. Zhu Xi thus believed that the notion of respect put forward by Mencius was actually of a higher level: "What Jing Chou was talking about was respect on a small scale; what Mencius was talking about was a much deeper kind of respect."¹¹

But Jing Chou was not left perplexed in the least, nor would he allow himself to be led by the nose by his friend. He pointed out to Mencius that he was not against that form of respect, yet that this was not the object of his criticism.¹² He reminded Mencius that he had to pay attention to the following passage from the *Book of Rites*: "When a father calls, the answer must be without a

11 景醜所言，敬之小者也；孟子所言，敬之大者也 (Zhu, *Collected Commentaries on Sishu: Mencius*, 242).

12 Jing Chou's words: "Not so. That was not what I meant," have been interpreted by many as signifying that he was not talking about not setting forth the Way of Yao and Shun. See Jiao, *Annotation on Mencius*, 258.

moment's hesitation. When the prince calls, the carriage must not be waited for." He went a step further in affirming his opinion: what he was denouncing was precisely Mencius' refusal to comply to the king's invitation.

The rules of etiquette quoted by Jing Chou are well established among the Confucian classics. In the *Book of Rites*, it is written in the Qu Li chapter: "When his father calls, [a youth] should not [merely] answer 'yes,' nor when his teacher calls. He should, with [a respectful] 'yes,' immediately rise [and go to them]."¹³ Moreover, in the *Analects*, such is the manner by which Confucius is described: "When the prince called him, without waiting for his carriage to be yoked, he went at once."¹⁴ Finally, in his chapter on "The Great Compendium [Dalu 大略]," Xunzi 荀子 [313-238 BCE] also cites the *Book of Odes* in order to expound on this precept:

When a feudal lord summons his ministers, they do not wait for their horses to be harnessed to the carriage, but, putting their clothes on upside down in the rush, they hurry out. This accords with ritual practice. An ode says:

he turns them, puts them on upside down,
from the court they have summoned him.

When the Son of Heaven summons the feudal lords, they drag the carriages to the horses. This accords with ritual practice. An ode says:

We bring out our carriage
to the pasture grounds.
From the place of the Son of Heaven
they tell us to come.¹⁵

Although the *Book of Rites* does not contain a passage about promptly responding to the monarch's call, it remains evident, reading through those relevant passages from the *Book of Odes* and the *Analects*, that the precept according to which the prince's call should be answered without any delay constituted, for the ancients, an unwritten rule. Considering Mencius' intimate knowledge of the Confucian classics, it is unlikely that he did not know the passages quoted by Jing. Moreover, it cannot be denied that Mencius did in fact decline the

13 父召無諾，先生召無諾，唯而起 (Qian Miaojin 潛苗金, "Qu li [曲礼]," in *Liji yizhu* 禮記譯注 [Commentary on Rite] [Hangzhou: Zhejiang Ancient Book Publishing House, 2007], 11).

14 *Analects* 10:13.

15 John Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 3:208.

king's invitation or that the *Rites* do indeed prescribe active compliance from the ministers when summoned. Hence, Jing's argument in favor of respect and obedience appears impossible to refute. Nevertheless, Mencius had yet to concede anything and he continued defending himself, by thoroughly analyzing the grounds on which the notion of respect could be established. As he summarized it, three circumstances prescribe respect: (1) when a person enjoyed a higher rank than oneself; (2) when a person was an elder; (3) when a person showed high moral integrity. It becomes clear from comparing those that the respect due to the king came from his rank.

For a given political subject to possess simultaneously rank, age, and virtue would also signify that he possesses three scales or comparative parameters for measurement. Compared to a system with only one comparative parameter, this system offers much more freedom to the subject involved in the comparison, since he had more opportunities to achieve a comparative advantage. For instance, assuming X enjoyed a higher status than Y, but Y was more virtuous than X, then, based on his nobility, X should have been the object of Y's deference and based on his moral integrity, Y should have been the object of X. The result of this is therefore that X and Y would have shown each other mutual respect. It is indeed to that type of situation that Mencius was referring when he quoted Zeng Zi, declaring, "Let their rulers have their wealth—I have my benevolence. Let them have their nobility—I have my righteousness. Wherein should I be dissatisfied as inferior to them?"¹⁶ It is precisely because respect is not merely acquired through the importance of one's rank that Zeng Zi did not feel inferior in the face of rich, powerful, and high-ranking officials.

The issue remains that, in some situations, people who achieved a comparative advantage based on different parameters may have refused to yield to one another. They would then have had to argue about one another's relative superiority or else, in certain situations, to establish a hierarchy for those three parameters. The response to this is that this kind of hierarchy could only be made in context but could not be applied universally. The proposition raised by Mencius to solve this goes as follows: "In courts, nobility holds the first place of the three; in villages, age holds the first place; and for helping one's generation and presiding over the people, the other two are not equal to virtue."¹⁷ This means that in situations in which officials are to follow specific rites and rules, hierarchy is to be determined in accordance with people's official position. By contrast, among the common people it should be in accordance with

16 *Mencius*, book II, part B, 2.

17 *Ibid.*

each person's age. However, when it came to governing the land under heaven, the person in charge should be determined based on the relative superiority of his moral conduct. This proposition from Mencius was consistent with his ideas on the difference between types of nobility that he advanced in the Gao Zi chapter:

There is a nobility of Heaven, and there is a nobility of man. Benevolence, righteousness, self-consecration, and fidelity, with unwearied joy in these virtues; these constitute the nobility of Heaven. To be a *gong* [公], a *qing* [卿], or a *dafu* [大夫]; this constitutes the nobility of man. The men of antiquity cultivated their nobility of Heaven, and the nobility of man came to them in its train. The men of the present day cultivate their nobility of Heaven in order to seek for the nobility of man, and when they have obtained that, they throw away the other—their delusion is extreme. The issue is simply this: that they must lose that nobility of man as well.¹⁸

When Mencius said, “For helping one's generation and presiding over the people, [nobility and age] are not equal to virtue,” this principle established an explicit relationship between political legitimacy and a ruler's virtue, as opposed to his personal power. Virtue and the power to rule as a monarch remained two separate things, moral integrity not being a resource monopolized by the king. Politically, this principle would also have legitimized the following: if, when assuming the position of the king, one's moral conduct was proven inferior to the virtue displayed by one of his subjects, then he would have had to condescend to seek that subject's counsel on the way to rule the country. For the king to consult his subject not only would not have constituted a transgression of decorum but, on the contrary, it would have been the manifestation of his successful application of etiquette. Because of this, such exceptional subjects would obtain certain privileges, such as being exempted from the obligation to answer the king's call. This was how those “ministers whom [the king] does not call to go to him” emerged. Mencius supplied two examples of those: Yi Yin 伊尹, who served as a minister for Cheng Tang 成湯 [1670–1587 BCE], the founder of the Shang dynasty [1600–1046 BCE], and Guan Zhong 管仲 [723 or 716–645 BCE] who served as a minister for the Duke Huan of Qi 齊桓公 [d. 643 BCE].

What needs to be heeded is that Mencius did not categorically reject the obligation to obey the king's call. If he objected to some extent to this rule of etiquette, it was merely by adding a limitation to it: ministers were required

18 Ibid., book VI, part A, 16.

to answer their ruler's call, if and only if the latter had the power to call them. Logically, this could appear to be a tautology; however, in practice it was not at all without meaning. By using this restriction, Mencius insisted on the following: it was not true that the king could summon all officials without exception. In the light of the criterion limiting the king's capacity to summon at will, Mencius actually distinguished between two classes of ministers: the first consisting of the ministers who can be summoned, the second of those who cannot. According to Mencius, who exactly would be the officials who can be summoned and who cannot?

It is clear from Mencius' statement "they love to make ministers of those whom they teach and do not love to make ministers of those who teach them" that he considered the existence of two distinct classes of ministers: those who received their ruler's teachings and those who may offer him some guidance. For a king to instruct his ministers implies that he would listen only to himself and that he alone was in command, while for a ruler to learn from his ministers would mean that he was the one following instructions and learning. Zhu Xi explains: "Those [ministers] whom they teach' means that the ministers only listen to the king's instructions, and are put to work by him; 'ministers who teach them' means they [the kings] learn from them."¹⁹ Zhu Xi interprets "to teach" as signifying "to have the capacity to put others to work." Some evidence supports this definition. According to Jiao Xun in *Annotations on Mencius*:

It is said in the *Guang Ya Encyclopedia's Transcription into Modern Chinese* [*Guang Ya shigu* 廣雅釋詁] that "the character 'jiao' [教] for teaching was also used to mean issuing an imperial edict." Hence, "to teach" and "to issue an imperial edict" had a similar meaning. Liu Xi 劉熙 in his *Shiming shi shu qi* [釋名釋書契] wrote: "The character *chi* 敕 [to issue an imperial edict] was used as a substitute for the character *chi* 飭, which means 'to put in order.' Exhorted by the king to keep things in order, one would not dare abandon his task or do it perfunctorily." To not dare perform one's master's commands perfunctorily also means one is being used accordingly with his abilities.²⁰

Yang Bojun 杨伯峻 [1909-1992] translates the ancient Chinese "those whom they teach" (in the original text, *suo-jiao* [所教], as "the people who would

19 所教，謂聽從於己，可役使者也。所受教，謂己之所從學者也 (Zhu, *Collected Commentaries on Sishu: Mencius*, 243).

20 Jiao, *Annotation on Mencius*, 261.

listen and obey [to the king]" and he translates "those by whom they might be taught" [*suo shou jiao* 所受教] as "those who are capable of offering [him] guidance."²¹ This makes the original's meaning even more apparent.

Someone capable of offering guidance to the king could indeed have been considered his teacher. A person belonging to this class would not possibly have been summoned by the king, since it is the latter who would have been seeking advice, which means that it would indeed have been the king who would personally have made the effort to meet his minister. From this angle, if such a minister happened to be in a situation in which his ruler had required to see him in order to be counseled, he would have been under no obligation to go and should instead have waited for the monarch to come to him. Then and only then would his conduct have conformed to etiquette and propriety. Mencius, in another passage, explained in even more detail why it should have been this way:

Mencius replied, "It is right to go and perform the service; it would not be right to go and see the prince. And," added Mencius, "on what account is it that the prince wishes to see the scholar?"

"Because of his extensive information, or because of his talents and virtue," was the reply.

"If because of his extensive information," said Mencius, "such a person is a teacher, and the sovereign would not call him—how much less may any of the princes do so? If because of his talents and virtue, then I have not heard of anyone wishing to see a person with those qualities, and calling him to his presence. During the frequent interviews of Duke Mu with Zi Si, one day the duke said to him, 'In the past, princes of a thousand chariots have yet been on terms of friendship with scholars—what do you think of such an intercourse?' Zi Si was displeased, and said, 'The ancients have said, The scholar should be served. How should they have merely said that he should be made a friend of?' When Zi Si was thus displeased, did he not say within himself, 'With regard to our stations, you are sovereign, and I am subject. How can I presume to be on terms of friendship with my sovereign! With regard to our virtue, you ought to make me your master. How can you be on terms of friendship with me?' Thus, when a ruler of a thousand chariots sought to be on terms of friendship with a scholar, he could not obtain his wish—how much less could he call him to his presence! Duke Ching of Qi, once, when he was hunting,

21 Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Mengzi yizhu* 孟子譯注 [Translation and Annotation of Mencius] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2005), 91.

called his forester to him by a flag. The forester would not come, and the duke was going to kill him. With reference to this incident, Confucius said, "The determined officer never forgets that his end may be in a ditch or a stream; the brave officer never forgets that he may lose his head." What was it in the forester that Confucius thus approved? He approved his not going to the duke, when summoned by the article which was not appropriate to him."

Zhang said, "May I ask with what a forester should be summoned?"

Mencius replied, "With a skin cap. A common man should be summoned with a plain banner; a scholar who has taken office, with one having dragons embroidered on it; and a great officer, with one having feathers suspended from the top of the staff. When the forester was summoned with the article appropriate to the summoning of a great officer, he would have died rather than presume to go. If a common man were summoned with the article appropriate to the summoning of a scholar, how could he presume to go? How much more may we expect this refusal to go, when a man of talents and virtue is summoned in a way which is inappropriate to his character! When a prince wishes to see a man of talents and virtue, and does not take the proper course to get his wish, it is as if he wished him to enter his palace, and shut the door against him. Now, righteousness is the way, and propriety is the door, but it is only the superior man who can follow this way, and go out and in by this door. It is said in the *Book of Poetry*, 'The way to Zhou is level like a whetstone, And straight as an arrow. The officers tread it, And the lower people see it.'"

Wan Zhang said, "When Confucius received the prince's message calling him, he went without waiting for his carriage. Doing so, did Confucius do wrong?"

Mencius replied, "Confucius was in office, and had to observe its appropriate duties. And moreover, he was summoned on the business of his office."²²

Mencius pointed out that the reason for which the king wished to see a certain minister was undoubtedly because this minister either enjoyed a lot of fame or happened to be very virtuous. However, in both instances, no feudal lords would have had any reason to summon him. In order to illustrate this point, Mencius cited Zi Si's example. Zi Si corrected Duke Mu when he mentioned the possibility for a ruler and his officials to be friends. Indeed, Zi Si thought that feudal lords had to treat a talented and virtuous scholar with the respect

²² Mencius, book v, part B, 7.

due to a master. Mencius explained that this was because in terms of status, deference was owed by officials to their rulers, while in terms of moral conduct, if a minister was more virtuous than his ruler, then he had to be treated as his ruler's teacher. Both cases did not allow for friendship. Mencius logically deduced from Zi Si's story that since it was impossible for a ruler to befriend a virtuous scholar, then it would have also been impossible for a ruler to summon such an individual.

What needs to be kept in mind is that Mencius' reference to the king not summoning his minister has a very specific meaning: he is actually referring to the fact that the king is not allowed to have a virtuous scholar summoned in order for him to inquire about the Way. In other words, only under circumstances where one had happened to be a distinguished virtuous scholar would one then have had the right to not go see the king. Mencius had no intention to negate the monarch's privilege to summon his ministers, or to advocate for the ministers' right to ignore their ruler's call. Rather, it was his opinion that when a ruler demanded his minister to come see him promptly, the minister should hurry as soon as hearing the call, lest he arrive late. This would indeed have been considered by Mencius as entirely justified and proper, considering the fact that Confucius' story of not even waiting for his carriage before going to see the king had already long been told as a deed worthy of praise. In a sense, in doing so, Confucius set an example for the subsequent generations of ministers, urging them to actively answer a ruler's call. Nonetheless, when Mencius interpreted Confucius' behavior in this particular instance, he concluded that it was dictated by Confucius' official position: "[He] was in office, and had to observe its appropriate duties. And moreover, he was summoned on the business of his office." According to this reasoning, if one did not have a post in the bureaucracy, he was under no obligation to answer any feudal lord's call. In fact, the other situation approved by Mencius as a justifiable reason for not going to see one's feudal lord was when the individual in question had not acknowledged his allegiance to that lord specifically.

Gong Sun Chou asked Mencius, "Where is the righteousness in not going to see the princes?" Mencius replied, "Among the ancients, if one had not been a minister in a State, he did not go to see the sovereign."²³

Zhu Xi explains: "'Not being a minister' signifies never having taken an office in the state."²⁴ In the broadest sense, it would have sufficed for an official to find

²³ *Mencius*, book III, part B, 7.

²⁴ 不為臣，謂未仕于其國者也 (Zhu, *Collected Commentaries on Sishu: Mencius*, 270).

himself within the same state borders of a certain feudal lord for their relation to become the equivalent a ruler and his ministers. However, the state of not being a minister here mentioned by Mencius was meant in the stricter sense of the word “minister,” minister indeed referring to the one filling an official position at court. From Mencius’ point of view, there was a significant difference between those serving as officials in the bureaucracy and those who were not, and part of the difference was in how accountable to their ruler they were supposed to be. For those not serving at court or in government to pay a visit to their feudal lord would have constituted a failure to observe the rites.

Wan Zhang said, “I venture to ask what principle of righteousness is involved in a scholar’s not going to see the princes?”

Mencius replied, “A scholar residing in the city is called a ‘minister of the market-place and well,’ and one residing in the country is called a ‘minister of the grass and plants.’ In both cases he is a common man, and it is the rule of propriety that common men, who have not presented the introductory present and become ministers, should not presume to have interviews with the prince.”²⁵

In accordance with the rules prescribed by ancient rites, as long as they had not offered an introductory present and were not appointed to a minister position, commoners (i.e., those not serving as officials) could not meet with the king.

Nonetheless, this did not in any way mean that they were not under obligation to serve the king, since they were dictated by law to either serve in the army or do *corvée*. In passage quoted above, Mencius affirmed, “It is right to go and perform the service; it would not be right to go and see the prince.” Perform one’s service means following the law, while abstaining from seeking an audience with the king refers to a rule of propriety. Thus, the significance of those two types of obedience was substantially different.

From Mencius’ distinction between different types of subjects, it is obvious that in his understanding no single universal and unified description of a subject’s political duties toward his ruler existed. Rather, one subject’s political duties were determined by his status (i.e., whether he was an official in the bureaucracy or not) as well as by the concrete circumstances in which he found himself (i.e., whether he was on active service or whether the king wanted to see him in order to inquire about the Way). Therefore, it can be said that, on the question of political duties, Mencius’ position was to emphasize

²⁵ Mencius, book v, part B, 7.

differentiation between contexts. This “contextualism” put forward by Mencius can be traced directly to Confucian etiquette, which reflected the same spirit of differentiating between status and circumstances. Rules concerned with Confucian rites demonstrate that in communities where the Confucian school was prevalent, members were far from having equal privileges and obligations. If commoners were excluded from the rights endowed by etiquette, based on the notion that “rites do not extend to the common people” as stipulated in the *Book of Rites*, then Mencius’ revision regarding the rule embodied by Confucius’ promptness to answer the prince’s invitation similarly exempted people of outstanding virtue from the duties prescribed by rites.

Perhaps to the average Confucian scholar it would seem that the rule according to which “rites do not extend to the common people”²⁶ remained relatively easy to understand, while the question of censuring Mencius on account of his violating propriety by not replicating Confucius’ behavior would remain perplexing. In fact, these are two different aspects of the same question. The spirit of the Confucian rites resided in its doctrine of differentiating among situations: this was so when it came to the question of privileges, and there was no reason for it to have been any different when discussing the question of political duties. Mencius might appear to have significantly revised the subjects’ duties with regard to their rulers, but in reality he did not go against the spirit of Confucian rites at all. On the contrary, he carried out their requirements by implementing them in the realm of duties.

II

In the fourth passage of the second chapter on “Gongsun Chou,” Mencius successfully led the king to realize that the king himself was the one to blame for having failed to spare civilians from privation. This story discussing the question of accountability reflects yet another aspect of Mencius’ understanding of the political duties assumed by officials.

Mencius went to Ping Lu and addressed its governor, saying, “If one of your spearmen should lose his place in the ranks three times in one day, would you, Sir, put him to death or not?”

“I would not wait for three times to do so,” was the reply.

Mencius said, “Well then, you, Sir, have likewise lost your place in the ranks many times. In bad calamitous years, and years of famine, the old

26 禮不下庶人 (Qian, “Qu Li,” 23).

and feeble among your people, who have been found lying in the ditches and water channels, and the able-bodied, who have been scattered about to the four quarters, have amounted to several thousand.”

The governor replied, “That is a state of things in which it does not belong to me Juxin to act.”

“Here,” said Mencius, “is a man who receives charge of the cattle and sheep of another, and undertakes to feed them for him—of course. he must search for pasture and grass for them. If, after searching for those, he cannot find them, will he return his charge to the owner? or will he stand by and see them die?”

“Herein,” said the officer, “I am guilty.”

Another day, Mencius had an audience with the king and said to him, “Of the governors of your Majesty’s cities I am acquainted with five, but the only one of them who knows his faults is Kong Juxin.” He then recounted this conversation to the king, who said, “In this matter, I am the guilty one.”²⁷

Ping Lu was a minor town in the kingdom of Qi,²⁸ of which Mencius depicted a miserable and dreary picture during the years when it suffered a famine due to crop failures: ditches were filled with the corpses of the old and the weak, while those who were strong fled by the thousands. Mencius believed that the town’s highest-standing official, Kong Juxin 孔距心, could hardly be absolved of any blame. Before condemning Kong, Mencius first laid the groundwork for the censure to come, by putting forward a fictitious example. He then solicited Kong’s opinion on how to handle this hypothetical situation. Kong apparently did not need to think the matter over and quickly answered, his answer being what Mencius had been anticipating and what he also needed to pursue. Mencius thus nimbly changed the direction of the conversation and directed it instead toward his interlocutor’s own behavior. It appears, from its result, that this was quite a clever strategy, since by answering it, Kong allowed himself to fall into the trap set by Mencius. At this stage, he perhaps had come to realize that the questions raised by Mencius were in reality a snare laid for him to fall into, but then it was already too late. However, he would not yet resign himself to surrender without a fight and he attempted to defend himself. Mencius had not directly criticized him yet, but had only drawn an analogy, when Kong Juxin, understanding very well the allusion behind this analogy, finally agreed

²⁷ Mencius, book II, part B, 4.

²⁸ This is based on Yan Ruoku 閻若璩, *Sishu shi di* 四書釋地 [Interpretation of Places in the Four Books], cited in Jiao Xun, *Annotation on Mencius*, 264.

to admit his error. The process of having the king admit his mistake was then rendered considerably simpler: Mencius simply needed to narrate how Kong had acknowledged his error for the king to accept what was implied and to let go of his own accord any kind of defense.

Concerning the military unit's leader who had been found unworthy of the functions he was invested with (by losing his place in the ranks many times), Kong considered, without any hesitation, that he should have received severe punishment. Indeed, the governor affirmed that he would not have waited for the official to neglect his duty three consecutive times before condemning him to a death sentence. However, regarding the question raised by Mencius as to how he, as governor, similarly failed to do his duty, it is made clear from his answer that his opinion differed on this matter. The meaning of this sentence uttered by Kong was, according to Yang Bojun's interpretation, that the power with which he was endowed did not enable him to act on such matters.²⁹ However, Zhao Qi and Zhu Xi shared the opinion that Kong was in fact hinting that the king might be the person who had brought about these misfortunes. Zhao Qi notes: "The overall governance of the state belongs to the king, he is the one who did not save his people from hardship, this is not something I myself can dictate."³⁰ Zhu Xi's notes offer a similar explanation: "The king's political failure's made it so, this is not a situation I can control."³¹

This statement indicates that Kong was far from considering himself bestowed with the kind of responsibility similar to that of a military unit's leader who must protect the troops under his command, the kind of responsibility that would have him spare his subjects from suffering from privation and being forced to leave their home and wander as refugees. In other words, he refused Mencius' accusations of his having deserted his troops. Kong's main defense lay in the fact that he was merely governing this city on behalf of the king of Qi. Therefore, he was acting as the one representing and executing the king's orders and did not have the power to implement his own plans. To have him take the blame for the entire affair thus would have hardly been fair.

From what follows in the story, it seems that Mencius in reality approved of Kong's point of view with respect to the king's responsibility in this calamity: by going to see him, Mencius wanted him to admit his guilt, and in the end, the king truly did so. However, Mencius did not believe that because of this, Ping Lu's governor did not have to be held accountable. Kong's answer touched

29 Yang, *Translation and Annotation of Mencius*, 95.

30 乃齊王之大政，不肯賑窮，非我所得專為也 (Zhao and Sun, *Notes and Commentaries of Mencius*, 109).

31 言此乃王之失政使然，非我所得專為也 (Zhu, *Collected Commentaries on Sishu: Mencius*, 244).

upon the question of a representative's responsibility. On this matter, Mencius did not share Kong's view. Could a representative be blamed in the event of such a disaster? If he could, what kind of responsibility would he be accountable for? It is through an analogy that Mencius expounded his position on that matter.

This analogy concerned the role taken by someone replacing a herder. The herder's role could indeed be considered extremely similar to Kong's position as a county magistrate: they were both at the service of somebody else. Mencius pointed out that the herder's replacement would certainly have sought to ensure good living conditions for the cattle and sheep for which he was caring. Mencius then continued by raising another question: if the herder's replacement had found himself unable to do so, how then should he have behaved? Should he have taken the animals back to their owner of his own accord? Or should he have sat back and watched the herds slowly die off a little every day?

The fact that a person replacing a herder would certainly have striven to ensure good living conditions for the animals (because he had the obligation to do so) was an empirical example frequently observed by Mencius, and it was also his own understanding of the duty assumed by a herder's replacement. It can be assumed that if the replacement indeed did everything he could, but still failed in the end, this perhaps would have been because what was required of him was beyond his abilities (for example, he did not have the necessary experience), or perhaps it would have been because the objective conditions were irremediably poor (for instance, encountering an exceptionally severe drought).

Among the two options provided by Mencius, only one is in keeping either with morality or with intelligence, and it is to willingly give back the animals to their owner. To do otherwise would indeed be a mistake and would also be considered immoral. This analogy was no different from telling Kong: Since things were not solely under your control, why then did you not extricate yourself from this situation before it was too late? Though it is true that you could in no way exercise any influence on the situation, still you could decide to stay or not. This suggestion had already been noticed by both Sun Shi and Zhu Xi. These were Sun Shi's remarks on the question: "This section is arguing that a minister adheres to the Way in service to his lord; if he cannot, he retires. In the *Book of Odes* it is said, 'A gentleman does not accept an empty salary.' This means he does not collect his salary without having provided proper service."³²

32 此章指言人臣以道事君，否則奉身以退，《詩》云彼君子兮，不素餐兮，言不尸其祿也 (Zhao and Sun, *Notes and Commentaries of Mencius*, 109). *Sucan* 素餐 and *shilu* 尸祿 here both refer to the acts of eating the bread of idleness.

Zhu Xi similarly notes that: "Mencius states, if a minister cannot enact his service, why not leave?"³³

Kong understood the moral allusion drawn by Mencius, and, at this moment, he certainly was led to feel ashamed for not having behaved properly. In Zhao Qi's words: "Kong Juxin considered it a transgression that he did not leave his post."³⁴ It is possible that Kong had indeed nothing to be blamed for. Perhaps this was precisely why he opposed Mencius' accusations at first. Like most bureaucrats, Kong Juxin understood that, regardless of whether one was serving on behalf of a superior or the person implementing a superior's orders, what remained central was to do one's duty conscientiously. For one to be found competent at his post and to have a clear conscience, it sufficed to execute the king's orders and to implement his policies. But Mencius reminded him that it was not because he was acting as a proxy or an executor that he was a mere tool in the hands of the king and had only to obey: he still had his own conscience to lead him, and this conscience required him not to remain unconcerned when confronted with the misery of others. Indeed, one's conscience cannot tolerate self-deceit: if one cannot persist in what one considers the right way, then to stay in one's post is the attitude of either a coward or of someone coveting reputation and wealth. In any case, from the point of view of a man of noble character [*junzi* 君子], this attitude would be regarded as shameful and immoral.

Hence, it could be said that Mencius aroused a sense of shame and guilt in Kong. It may be precisely because of those feelings that the governor did not persist in considering himself innocent. Shame and guilt also motivated him in detaching himself from his fellow officials who remained cold and disinterested. Mencius thus reported to the king that among the five county magistrates he knew, Kong was the only one who had come to realize his accountability: "Of the governors of your Majesty's cities I am acquainted with five, but the only one of them who knows his faults is Kong Juxin."³⁵

The average bureaucrat would not aspire so much to great achievements and would prefer to seek to stay out of trouble by avoiding mistakes. Mencius, however, set a higher moral standard. According to this standard, for one to show no merit or result in carrying out his duty constituted committing a fault. To hold one's office and to enjoy the privileges that come with it without doing a stroke of work was regarded as both morally disgraceful and condemnable,

33 孟子言，若不得自專，何不致其事而去 (Zhu, *Collected Commentaries on Sishu: Mencius*, 244).

34 距心自知以不去位為罪者也 (Zhao and Sun, *Notes and Commentaries of Mencius*, 109).

35 *Mencius*, book II, part B, 4.

and it was also a behavior with which no man of noble character could feel at ease.

Mencius' conception of the personal integrity of high officials had also been a persistent concern in the Confucian school, with regard to the officials' ethics with respect to the principle of righteousness. In the *Analects*, Confucius is recorded as saying: "What is called a great minister, is one who serves his prince according to what is right, and when he finds he cannot do so, retires."³⁶

When he was on the road traveling from one kingdom to the next advocating the Confucian ideals of benevolence and righteousness, Mencius often cornered officials who enjoyed their position without lifting a finger by referring to the Confucian ethics. Among those who have been prompted by Mencius were also some who were stirred to action from hearing him, Kong being one example, Qi Wa 蚺蛙 being another. In Kong's case, he admitted his guilt, but in the end there is no way to ascertain whether or not he resigned, while in contrast the official Qi Wa was depicted as having really done so.

Mencius said to Qi Wa, "There seemed to be reason in your declining the governorship of Ling Qiu and requesting to be appointed chief criminal judge, because the latter office would afford you the opportunity to express your views. Now that several months have elapsed, have you found nothing to speak about?"

On this, Qi Wa remonstrated on some matter with the king, and, his counsel not being taken, resigned his office and went away. The people of Qi said, "On the course that he marked out for Qi Wa, he did well, but we do not know which course he pursues for himself."

His disciple Gong Du told him these remarks. Mencius said, "I have heard that he who is in charge of an office, when he is prevented from fulfilling its duties, ought to take his departure, and that he on whom is the responsibility of giving his opinion, when he finds his words unattended to, ought to do the same. But I am in charge of no office; on me involves no duty of speaking out my opinion—may not I therefore act freely and without any constraint, either in going forward or in retiring?"³⁷

At the beginning of the story, Mencius asked Qi Wa whether, in his capacity as chief criminal judge, he had fulfilled the intentions he had originally expressed when he had asked to be transferred to that post—that is, whether he had been able to remonstrate directly with the monarch. This was Mencius' way

36 所謂大臣者，以道事君，不可則止 (*Analects* 11:24).

37 *Mencius*, book II, part B, 5.

of urging Qi Wa to perform his duty and advise his ruler. Qi Wa did in fact go to the ruler and attempt to do so, but the ruler did not adopt any of his ideas, and consequently, Qi Wa resigned from his post. He put into practice the ethics that Mencius had been promoting, and this was precisely what the latter had been expecting of him. The story did not end here, however, since Mencius was consequently self-critical and had to provide some self-defense.

His critics claimed that while Mencius' opinion on Qi Wa could not be objected to, and that indeed the official was better leaving his post if there were no use for his doing his work, Mencius' self-evaluation was perhaps not as accurate as the one he had given of Qi Wa. This criticism was meant to ridicule Mencius by insinuating that he did not realize that he should quit when his own remonstrations were not heeded. Mencius was resented for being strict toward others but lenient toward himself.

The main argument raised by Mencius to defend himself was that the principle stating that one should resign if his advice were not considered did not apply to him. Mencius also implied that the whole set of officials' ethics did not apply to him. This is because he was simply not an official proper. As Mencius stated above, "He who is in charge of an office, when he is prevented from fulfilling its duties, ought to take his departure, and . . . he on whom is the responsibility of giving his opinion, when he finds his words unattended to, ought to do the same." Among those two principles, the first one was used by Mencius to advise Kong, the second one to advise Qi Wa. When it came to his own decision as to remain in his position, he was not bound by those, because neither was he in charge of an office nor did he have the responsibility of speaking his mind to the king. Compared to those officials, he considered himself to enjoy more freedom.

The crux of the question here lies in how Mencius avoided pointing out that this was in fact a question of remuneration. Regardless of whether one was assuming public office (as Kong was) or had the responsibility to counsel the king (as Qi Wa did), they both received a salary. The reason such an official would have had to leave, if he had found himself unable to accomplish his duty, was that to do otherwise would have been a far greater example of taking advantage of his positions without fulfilling its responsibilities. Yet the status occupied by Mencius in the kingdom of Qi was the status of a guest who was also looked upon as a teacher—that is, someone who was not holding a public post yet was highly respected. According to ancient rites, a teacher is not equal to an official and, therefore, he cannot be remunerated. Zhu Xi mentions that: "Mencius was a guest-teacher [to the court]; he received no fixed salary."³⁸

38 孟子居賓師之位，未嘗受祿 (Zhu, *Collected Commentaries on Sishu: Mencius*, 270).

As a result, the ministers' ethics as understood by Mencius happened to be founded on a contract. Since any contract would explicitly stipulate specific rights and responsibilities to be respected, moral principles to be followed by officials that were established in this contract were no exception. This signifies that, once one had agreed to be remunerated, then a contract between minister and ruler instantly became effective. In other words, the official obtaining a salary from the king had the duty to work for the king. For someone to serve as an official and to be unable to perform successfully would mean that he had no reason to enjoy any kind of reward. Likewise, if a ruler had no need of a minister to work for him (for instance, when the imperial censors' advice was not made use of), then a minister with dignity should have refused to accept any remuneration. In both situations, the official had to and was entitled to unilaterally terminate the contract, that is, to resign from his post.

III

This article presented an examination of Mencius' discourse on the Minister's Way by attempting to explicate his conception of the ministers' ethics, a concept that was grounded in a principle of contextualism. This analysis provided us with a new understanding of Mencius' politics by focusing on his detailed and rich reflections on the subject of ethics. From this, we can see that Mencius' politics, ultimately linked to his ethics, could not be generalized under a unified and abstract principle, such as what has traditionally been called his people-oriented thought. Perhaps it is impossible to reduce Mencius' thought to any essentialist scheme since Mencius was more inclined to judge according to context and to differentiate between situations. By posing this as a fundamental principle, when handling situations that were politically and ethically complex, Mencius advocated solutions that were flexible and, at the same time, persuasive. Since the advent of modernity, civil disobedience has become one of the most provocative topics in Western political philosophy.³⁹ This specific topic not only leads directly to the sensitive question of human rights but also simultaneously concerns the foundations of political

39 On this subject, a great number of Western publications has appeared, the most comprehensive and accessible of which probably is Hugo Adam Bedau, ed., *Civil Disobedience in Focus* (London: Routledge, 1991). Among relevant publications in Chinese, there is He Huaihong 何懷宏, *Xifang gongmin bu fucong de chuantong* 西方公民不服從的傳統 [*Western Citizens' Tradition of Disobedience*] (Changchun: Jilin People's Publishing House, 2011).

philosophy: how can political duty be performed by officials? Must they always obey? Western scholars have contributed greatly to debates on that matter, and those debates have yet to be solved. To apprehend Mencius' wisdom as embodied in his use of contextualism in regard to the Minister's Way may undoubtedly lead us to more enlightening conclusions and is therefore certainly of much benefit. In the end, we hope this research can spark the interests of contemporary political philosophers concerning Mencius and other classical texts of ancient Chinese thought.

Works Cited

- Bedau, Hugo Adam, ed. *Civil Disobedience in Focus*. London: Routledge, 1991.
- He Huaihong 何懷宏, ed. *Xifang gongmin bu fucong de chuantong* 西方公民不服從的傳統 [*Western Citizens' Tradition of Disobedience*]. Changchun: Jilin People's Publishing House, 2001.
- Huang Junjie 黃俊傑. *Zhongguo Mengxue quanshi shilun* 中國孟學詮釋史論 [*On the History of Chinese Mencius Studies Hermeneutics*]. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2004.
- . "Ershiyi shiji Mengzi xue yanjiu de xin zhanwang 二十一世紀孟子學研究的新展望 [New Research Prospects for Mencius Studies in the Twenty-First Century]." *Wen Shi Zhe* no. 5 (2006): 20-27.
- Jiao Xun 焦循. *Mengzi zhengyi* 孟子正義 [*Annotation on Mencius*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1987.
- Legge, James. *Han-ying duizhao si shu* 漢英對照四書 [*The Four Books: A Chinese-English Bilingual Edition*] (rev. ed.). Changsha: Hunan Publishing House, 1996.
- Qian Miaojin 潛苗金. *Liji yizhu* 禮記譯注 [*Commentary on the Book of Rites*]. Hangzhou: Zhejiang Ancient Book Publishing House, 2007.
- Yang Bojun 楊伯峻. *Mengzi yizhu* 孟子譯注 [*Translation and Annotation of Mencius*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2005.
- Zhao Qi 趙岐 and Sun Shi 孫奭. *Mengzi zhushu* 孟子注疏 [*Notes and Commentaries of Mencius*]. Beijing: Peking University Press, 1999.
- Zhu Xi 朱熹. *Si shu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注 [*Collected Commentaries on Sishu*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1983.

The Difference Between Confucian and Mencian Benevolence

Chen Ming (陳明)

Professor of Philosophy, Capital Normal University, China

1069807978@qq.com

Translated by Eric Chiang

Abstract

Confucius and Mencius differ in many ways in describing and demonstrating benevolence. For Confucius, benevolence is a basic concept, with filial piety at its core, and entails socially and culturally regulated action; benevolence symbolizes self-perfection while sagacity symbolizes perfection of all things in the universe. In contrast, for Mencius, who transforms the Confucian universe of unending life into a philosophical universe and changes Confucian benevolence of familial respect into a universal and absolute moral sentiment or instinct, the universe is a basic concept. With the universe as the metaphysical core, Mencius changes benevolence from the fruit of intention to an object of thought, so it is no longer a relation between life and its projects but, rather, a relation between the mind and its cultivation. Confucius talks about benevolence through the individual and familial morality while Mencius does so through the universe and human nature. Distinguishing Confucian and Mencian benevolence has theoretical importance for Confucianism and practical importance in our lives.

Keywords

Benevolence – Confucius – Mencius – universe

Regarding benevolence [*ren* 仁], Confucius and Mencius agree on three points. The first is its central importance. The word “benevolence” appears over a hundred times in the sixteen-thousand-word *Analects* [*Lunyu* 論語]. Originator of the doctrine of the Goodness of Human Nature, Mencius believes that benevolence reigns over other virtues, such as righteousness, courtesy, and wisdom,

and advocates for a benevolent government. Second, it has to do with loving one's parents and loving other people. In the *Analects*, the chapter "Xue'er 學而" states that the root of benevolence is filial piety¹ while in the chapter "Yanyuan 顏淵," Confucius tells Fan Chi 樊遲 [b. 515 BCE] that benevolence means loving others. The chapter "Lilou 離婁" in *Mencius* states that a benevolent person is full of love for others and that the truth of benevolence resides in attending to one's parents.² Third, it has to do with sympathy and expanding one's love. The chapter "Yongye 雍也" in the *Analects* states:

If one wishes to be independent, one must also help others to become independent; if one wishes to succeed, one must also help others to succeed.³

The chapter "Wei Linggong 衛靈公" in the *Analects* states: "One must not give to others what one does not want for oneself."⁴

The first section of "Liang Huiwang [梁惠王]" in *Mencius* encourages people to treat all matters with equanimity⁵ and offers this advice from Mencius: "I tend to my elders and extend my effort to include others' elders; I care for my young and extend my effort to include others' young."⁶

Even though Confucius and Mencius hold similar views on benevolence such as these, they have fundamental differences in how to achieve benevolence. We elaborate on how Confucius and Mencius describe and demonstrate benevolence in order to expose these differences.

Root, Source, or Nature: Filial Piety and Sympathy

The statement "the root of benevolence is filial piety" has two possible interpretations. The verb *wei* 為 can mean both "to be" and "to make" (and, by extension, "to practice, to do"). So filial piety can be either the root of benevolence, the first interpretation, or the root of making or practicing benevolence, the

1 孝悌也者，其為仁之本與！(*Analects* 1:2).

2 仁之實，事親是也(*Mencius*, book VI, part A, 27).

3 己欲立立人，己欲達達人(*Analects* 6:30).

4 己所不欲，勿施於人(*Analects* 15:24).

5 舉斯心加諸彼(*Mencius*, book I, part A, 7).

6 老吾老以及人之老，幼吾幼以及人之幼(*ibid.*).

second interpretation. If filial piety is the root of making benevolence, then it is not the root of benevolence itself.⁷

The first interpretation represents the theory of benevolence occurring naturally from filial piety. Huang Kan 皇侃 [488-545] states in his *Notes on Analects* [*Lunyu jijie yi shu* 論語集解義疏]: “Here, surprisingly, filial piety is deemed the source and benevolence the Dao. If filial piety is the source of benevolence, a focus on filial piety will be enough to generate benevolence.”⁸

Qing Confucians such as Mao Qiling 毛奇齡 [1623-1716] and Qian Daxin 錢大昕 [1728-1804] agree with this view.

The second interpretation represents the theory of benevolence as the result of practicing filial piety⁹ and the proponents of this theory include the Song Confucians Zhu Xi 朱熹 [1130-1200] and Cheng Yi 程頤 [1033-1107], who make use of benevolence to explain human nature while attempting to weaken or eliminate the influence of filial piety on benevolence: “There are only benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, and wisdom in human nature. Whence comes filial piety?”¹⁰

Zhu Xi quotes Cheng Yi and states in the *Four Books Annotated* [*Si shu jizhu* 四書集注]: “To realize benevolence, one must start with filial piety; to speak of human nature, one must view benevolence as the root of filial piety.”¹¹

We agree with the first interpretation, that filial piety is the root of benevolence. First, not only is the internal relationship between benevolence and loving one's parents emphasized repeatedly in the *Analects* and *The Book of Rites* [*Liji* 禮記], but the *History of the Jin* [*Jin yu* 晉語] in the *Histories of the States* [*Guo yu* 國語] also states that “to love one's parents is benevolence,” and this represents the social consensus since the Spring and Autumn Period

7 Cheng Hao 程顥 and Cheng Yi 程頤, *Er Cheng ji* 二程集 [*Two Cheng Collection*] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1981), 125.

8 He Yan 何晏 and Huang Kan 皇侃 et al., *Lunyu jijie yishu* 論語集解義疏 [*Notes on Analects*] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1998), 1069.

9 The proponents of this theory claim that “filial piety is familial love; it is not the root of benevolence but the starting point for developing benevolence” (Huang Yong, “Confucian Benevolence and Global Morality [with Christian Critique of Confucianism],” in *Rujia lunli zhengming ji* 儒家倫理爭鳴集 [*Schools of Confucianism*], ed. Guo Qiyong 郭齊勇 [Wuhan: Hubei Education Press, 1981], 819).

10 Cheng, *Two Cheng Collection*, 183.

11 為仁以孝悌為本，論性則以仁為孝悌之本 (Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Sishu jizhu* 四書集注 [*Four Books Annotated*] [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1994], 45).

[770-476 BCE]. Second, Confucius rarely speaks about nature and the Dao of the universe, and it is highly unlikely that he would accept benevolence as the source of filial piety since this view turns his beliefs upside down.¹² Furthermore, Zhu Xi does not explain why filial piety is the root of benevolence; the above quotation from Cheng Yi, much like Zhu's Theory on the Dao of Things [*Gewu shuo* 格物說], is fragmented and contradictory and therefore unconvincing. Finally, some ancient texts have many editions. In his *Analects Explained* [*Lunyu ji shi* 論語集釋], Cheng Shude 程樹德 [1877-1944] quotes Ye Dehui's 葉德輝 [1864-1927] *Proofreading Japan's Tianwen Edition of the Analects* [*Riben tianwen ben lunyu jiaokan ji* 日本天文本論語校勘記]: [regarding filial piety being the root of benevolence, *xiaoti wei renzhi ben* 孝悌為仁之本] "The Zuli [足利], Tang [唐本], Jinfan [津藩], and Zhengping [正平] editions do not contain the word *wei* [為]."¹³ The absence of the verb 為 obviates the need for the second interpretation.

Ancient texts have described filial piety as a simple and natural feeling and benevolence as a cultural and moral sentiment. When Han Yu 韓愈 [768-824] said that benevolence is universal love, he echoed the Confucian sentiment. From the love of one's parents in the *History of the Jin* to the Confucian universal love, there is an increase in behavioral and spiritual generosity. This increase is not a natural process; it has to be motivated by intention,¹⁴ just as the bamboo slip unearthed at Guodian states, "man creates benevolence." Confucius thinks that sagacity happens when we "view the universe as family and the country as person."¹⁵ He uses the word "desire" [*yu* 欲] to describe this intentional effort and moral cultivation in the chapter "Shu'er" in the *Analects*: "Is benevolence far away? I desire it and it comes."¹⁶ *Shuowen jiezi* [說文解字] describes 欲 as related (indeed logogramatically) to a lack, a deficiency. So *yu*

12 The chapter "Yanghuo" in the *Analects* states that two people can have similar natures yet behave very differently. Nature here is interpreted in the pre-Tang era according to "Gaozi" in the *Mencius*: nature is what one is born with. So nature includes feelings, desires, and emotions. Cheng Yi also writes: "Nature here is temperamental rather than ontological. Ontologically, nature is rational, and there is nothing bad about rationality. This is why Mencius says that human nature is always good." See Zhu Xi, *Complete Notes for Four Books* (Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 2001), 207.

13 Cheng Shude 程樹德, *Lunyu jishi* 論語集釋 [*Analects Explained*] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1990), 13.

14 From Kant to Dewey, morality consists of thinking from the position of "us," not "me."

15 以天下為一家，以中國為一人 (Qian Miaojin 潛苗金, "Liyun 禮運," in *Liji yizhu* 禮記譯注 [*Commentary on the Book of Rites*] [Hangzhou: Zhejiang Ancient Book Publishing House], 278).

16 仁遠乎哉？我欲仁，斯仁致矣 (*Analects* 7:30).

means obtaining an object that one does not have or aiming for a goal that one has not reached. The deficiency here is the original feeling, filial piety, proving to be insufficient, so the targeted person of the desire is oneself, and the goal is impartiality and sagacity. Some theorists think that moral intention is only a potentiality to be realized by the mind, that benevolence implies the cultivation, initiation, and implementation of moral intention, and that the first characteristic of benevolence is intention.¹⁷ Because Confucianism is based on filial piety, which is an affective sentiment, moral intention developing along a potentiality is itself sentimental and rational. The role of moral intention is therefore important, though easily overlooked.¹⁸

Feelings are intentional: I desire benevolence, and it comes. Examining texts that discuss benevolence can afford us a glimpse of how this process works. In the chapter “Yanghuo” in the *Analects*, Zai Wo 宰我 [522-458 BCE] states, “Three years of mourning seems long,” to which Confucius exclaims, “Zai Wo is not benevolent!” Wang Yangming 王陽明 [1472-1529] has an explanation for this:

Like plants, we need roots to survive. The love between father and son and between brothers is the source of loving intentions which can develop into benevolence toward other people and love for all things of the world. Mozi’s universal love equates brothers with strangers and kills the source of loving intentions. Filial piety is the root of benevolence; the latter grows out of the former.¹⁹

The newly unearthed text “Nature Originates in Life” states, “Dao starts with love and love starts with nature; the beginning is close to love and the end is close to righteousness.” This is an apt explanation of the *Analects*’ “filial piety is the root of benevolence.”

We can see from all this that benevolence is the concern for others’ well-being and suffering and the desire to help others achieve what one wants to achieve for oneself (such as independence and success). In the

17 Li Youzheng 李幼蒸, *Renxue jieshi xue 仁學解釋學 [Benevolence Explained]* (Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2004), 153, 152, 197.

18 In “The New Proanthropus,” the idea of initiation discloses the immanent aspect of enlightenment, but it does not talk about the intentional aspect (Feng Youlan, “The New Proanthropus,” in *The Collected Essays* [Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000], 2: 240-252).

19 Wang Yangming 王陽明, *Chuanxi lu 傳習錄 [The Practice of Knowledge]* (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou Chinese Classics Publishing House, 2004), 79.

same vein, Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 [1893-1988] states that “benevolence is instinct, emotion, and intuition,”²⁰ while Wang Yangming offers the following explanation: “Intention has a transcendent object that we call ‘matter’ [wu 物]. When one desires benevolence toward other people and love for all things in the world, this benevolence and love are the ‘matter.’”

This passage explains the feeling-intention structure, which generates motivation, action, creation, and assessment. What needs to be emphasized is that this structure starts with the sentiment and behavior of filial piety and ends in solicitude for all.

Mencius stated that “benevolence begins with a sympathetic mind.”²¹ Sympathy is a combination of love and pain. There is a famous Mencian demonstration of sympathy: “When we see a child about to fall into a well, we feel an apprehensive sympathy whose aim is not to better our relationship with the parents, to boast in front of our friends, or to stop the child from crying.” It is obvious that this sympathy for the endangered child is different from filial piety: the former is a universal and absolute moral instinct while the latter is a socially and culturally prescribed sentiment. Mencian benevolence’s break with history and culture is intentional, not accidental, and it is given a metaphysical source—the universe—as compensation. Mencius claimed in the first part of “Gaozi”: “Benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, and wisdom do not come to me from the outside but are inherent within me. I am given them by the universe.” And also: “A man without sympathy is not a man at all.”²²

Such is the essence of the Mencian doctrine of the Goodness of Human Nature. The transformation from an instinctive feeling to an attribute gifted by the universe not only is possible; it is inevitable. This is because the feeling of sympathy is separate from the sympathetic mind that contemplates it, and the sympathetic mind does not equate benevolence that grows from it. Zhu Xi uses Zhang Zai’s 張載 [1020-1077] “Three-Part Doctrine” (mind, nature, and feeling [*xin-xing-qing* 心-性-情]) to explain the somewhat confusing theory of Mencius: “Sympathy is feeling, the sympathetic mind is mind, and benevolence is nature. The three are mutually dependent.”²³

20 Liang Shuming 梁漱溟, *Dongxi wenhua jiqi zhexue* 東西文化及其哲學 [*Comparative Culture and Philosophy*] (Beijing: Commercial Press, 1999), 133.

21 惻隱之心，仁之端也 (*Mencius*, book II, part A, 6).

22 仁義禮智，非由外鑠我也 (*Mencius*, book VI, part A, 6. 此天之所與我者; *ibid.*, book VI, part A, 15. 無惻隱之心，非人也; *ibid.*, book II, part A, 6).

23 Li Jingde 黎靖德, ed., *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 [*Zhu Xi's Sayings*] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1986), 1286.

The difference between Confucian and Mencian ideas of benevolence is now clear: Confucius uses man and filial piety (feeling) to talk about benevolence²⁴ while Mencius does so with the universe and moral rationality (nature and mind).

The Confucian living universe has been transformed into the Mencian moral and philosophical universe; benevolence has also changed from the fruit of desire to the object of thought. Mencius stated, “The function of the mind is to think. One always acquires something through thinking. If one does not think, one acquires nothing.” Here, thinking does not involve the ordinary kind of thinking but a search in a specific direction, and to acquire is to set benevolence (which is nature) as one’s guiding principle in life. Even though the Mencian doctrine of the Goodness of Human Nature became “the principle for thousands of generations,” its metaphysical description does not take full account of the historicity of human nature. The relation between man and benevolence, which is a question of execution between life and its projects in Confucianism, becomes a question of cultivation and a relation between mind and nature for Mencius. Under the framework of the mind as the master of feelings and human nature, the holism of the philosophy of life is vitiated. Feelings are stripped of their importance and become a passive factor to be suppressed due to their opposition to nature.²⁵ When Wang Yangming asserts that “conscience is only the mind distinguishing right from wrong,”²⁶ the evisceration of Confucius’ benevolence is complete. Mencius was the instigator of this tragic ending.

Structure or Status: Essence or Virtue

Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 [1895-1990] noted that the *Analects* treats benevolence sometimes as one of the virtues (along with righteousness, courtesy, and wisdom) and sometimes as “virtue perfected”; the former belongs in ethics

24 We say this in a relative sense. Benevolence concerns the philosophy of life and is not limited by moral feelings or concepts. During the Republican period, people such as Liang Shuming, Chiang Kai-shek, and Chen Lifu used the philosophy of life to reconstruct Confucianism. Xiong Shili, the founder of neo-Confucianism, was also a proponent.

25 Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 criticized the theories of Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi as “static” because they are based on Mencian benevolence while Hu Hong’s 胡宏 “dynamic mystery” inherits the Confucian philosophy of life.

26 Wang, *The Practice of Knowledge*, 304.

while the latter belongs in philosophy.²⁷ If we agree with this distinction, we can say that the essence of Confucian benevolence is philosophical while Mencian benevolence, whose source is the universe, is always bound up with other concepts (such as righteousness and politics) and therefore belongs basically in ethics and political science.

We look at the essential role that benevolence plays in Confucianism first. A concept is essential when it does not derive from any other in the system, though other concepts may derive from it. Some examples are Laozi's Dao, Zhu Xi's *li*, Plato's idea, Hegel's absolute spirit, and Confucian benevolence.

We must also mention the universe here. The role of the universe has degraded during the evolution from a deterministic to an ethical view of life.²⁸ From passages such as "the universe is impartial and its operation virtuous" and "the universe sees what the people see and hears what the people hear," the *Book of Documents* [*Shang shu* 尚書] shows that the universe has gradually acquired an intention that revolves around the people. "For Confucius, the universe comes into being through human nature . . . I, not the universe, give birth to benevolence. There is no Dao of the universe outside of benevolence."²⁹ Furthermore, this Dao of the universe results mainly from Confucius' instinctive feelings about himself and the world, no dominant force is involved. His disciples often rue the absence of discussions on nature and the universe.³⁰

This essential nature is also revealed in the fact that benevolence is the basis of other important Confucian ideas. In *Analects*, the chapter "Bayi" states, "When one is not benevolent, what good are rites? When one is not benevolent, what good is music?"³¹ The biography of Zhai Fangjin 翟方進 [53-7 BCE] in *The Book of the Han* explains it thus: "No job is suitable for a man without benevolence; if talented, he is the plague of the country."³² Bao Xian 包咸 [7-65 BCE] also provides a footnote for this: "A man without benevolence cannot be courteous or well-versed in music." These are all explanations of how benevolence operates in the social system. Qian Mu 錢穆 [1895-1990] says that "benevolence is the basis of courtesy. The Duke of Zhou created the system

27 Feng Youlan, "Further Discussion on Confucian Benevolence," *Confucian Studies* 3 (1989).

28 Fu Sinian 傅斯年, *Xingming guxun bianzheng* 性命古訓辯證 [*Ancient Theories on Life*], vol. 1 (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2006).

29 Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, *Zhongguo renxinglun shi* 中國人性論史 [*History of Nature*] (Shanghai: Shanghai Joint, 2001), 88-89.

30 夫子之言性與天道，不可得而聞也 (*Analects* 5:13).

31 人而不仁如禮何？人而不仁如樂何？ (*Analects* 3:3).

32 不仁之人，亡所施用；不仁而多才，國之患也 (Ban Gu, "Biography of Zhai Fangjin," in *Book of the Han* [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1962], 3420).

of rites while Confucius defined benevolence.”³³ This implies that Confucius established benevolence as the foundation for the system of rites and music.

Newly unearthed texts confirm these arguments. The Five Elements section of *Guodian Chu Slips* states: “Benevolence is the basis of rites and music and relates harmoniously with the other four elements.”³⁴ This same passage is expressed in the earlier *Mawangdui Silk Manuscripts* [*Mawangdui boshu* 馬王堆帛書], also in the Five Elements section, as “sagacity is the basis of rites and music and relates harmoniously with the five elements.”³⁵ How does benevolence generate rites and music? Through the people, and through sages in particular, pre-Qin philosophers described the source of the various cultural systems as “sagacious productions” [*Shengren zhizuo* 聖人製作]. The Legalists think that these systems are the result of rational trends while the Mohists attribute them to a mysterious kind of love. The above-mentioned sagacity is particularly illuminating here. Wang Guowei 王國維 [1877-1927] stated that the Duke of Zhou established the Yin system, which consists of three parts: primogeniture, ancestral worship, and prohibition of marriage between people with the same surname.³⁶ This is a statement of facts. Benevolence as a Confucian basis is an explanation of values, “inferring a sage’s motives through his actions.”³⁷ This sagacious benevolence starts with love [concern is the common feeling of all sagacious productions] and comes into being through the realization that there is Dao in the universe and that one will succeed if one abides by it. The Five Elements section of the *Mawangdui Silk Manuscripts* states, “An honorable man is not wise if he does not have concern in his heart. . . . Wisdom comes through contemplation. . . . Without benevolence, contemplation has no depth. Without wisdom, contemplation does not go far.”³⁸

This profound and boundless sagacity is manifested in rites and music, and benevolence is the driving force behind these sagacious productions. This

33 Qian Mu 錢穆, *Lunyu xinjie* 論語新解 [*Analects Re-examined*] (Beijing: SDX Joint, 2002), 54.

34 Li Ling 李零, *Guodian chujian jiaodu ji* 郭店楚簡校讀記 [*Notes on Guodian Chu Slips*] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2002), 79.

35 *Silk Manuscripts from Mawangdui Han Tomb* [馬王堆漢墓帛書], vol. 1 (Beijing: Cultural Relics Publishing House, 1980).

36 Wang Guowei 王國維, *Guantang jilin* 觀堂集林 [*Guantang Collection*] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1959), 10: 2-11.

37 因其行事而加乎王心 (Su Yu 蘇輿, “Yuxu,” in *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證 [*Luxuriant Dew of Spring and Autumn Annals Explained*] [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1992], 159).

38 Li, *Notes on Guodian Chu Slips*, 78.

essential aspect ensures the integrity of the systems and gives them the theoretical support that allows them to renew themselves through the ages. The chapter “Liyun” in the *Book of Rites* states, “If rites did not exist, righteousness would have created them.”³⁹ The chapter “Fanlun” in the *Huainanzi* states, “A sage creates rites and music but is not confined by them. There is a method in ruling a country and it begins with bettering people’s lives.”⁴⁰ Both these statements express the previous conclusion.

The basic concept of Mencian thought is the universe. The first section of “Gaozi” in *Mencius* talks about the standards by which people abide; a great man follows high standards while a petty man follows low standards. Zhao Qi 趙岐 [d. 201] explains this in *Commentaries on Mencius* [*Mengzi zhangju* 孟子章句]: Low standards symbolize basic instincts while high standards symbolize lofty aspirations; high standards aspire to courtesy and righteousness while low standards want to satisfy basic instincts.⁴¹ The chapter “Jinxin” in *Mencius* states, “The function of the mind is to think.”⁴² The objects of thought are the things that derive from the universe, such as benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, and wisdom. Mencius believed that they constitute human nature: “An honorable man’s nature is such that he has benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, and wisdom in his mind.”⁴³

Even though Mencius claimed that benevolence reigns over other virtues, he seemed unwilling to emphasize this point. He also stated that benevolence means loving other people and is closer to Confucius in equating benevolence to tending to one’s parents.⁴⁴ Confucius used benevolence to explain sagacity while Mencius stated that Yao and Shun’s guiding principle

39 禮，雖先王未之有，可以義起也 (Qian, “Liyun,” 284).

40 聖人制禮樂而不制於禮樂。治國有常以利民為本 (Liu An 劉安, “Fanlun 汎論,” in *Huainanzi Zhu* 淮南子注 [Annotation on *Huainanzi*], annot. Gao You 高誘, *Zhuji jicheng* 諸子集成 [Collected Interpretation of *Zhuji*] [Shanghai: Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House, 1986], 7: 213).

41 小，口腹也；大，心志也。大體，心思禮義；小體，縱恣情慾 (Zhao Qi 趙岐, “*Mengzi zhangju* 孟子章句 [Commentaries on *Mencius*],” in *Lianghan quanshu* 兩漢全書 [Collected Works of the Han Dynasty] [Jinan: Shandong University Press, 2009], 16225, 16226).

42 心之官則思 (*Mencius*, book VI, part A, 15).

43 君子所性，仁義禮智根於心 (*Mencius*, book VII, part A, 21).

44 In the chapter “Liang Huiwang,” Mencius said that “a benevolent man does not abandon his parents; a righteous man always puts the ruler first.” This usage of benevolence is similar to “benevolence means never abandoning one’s roots” in *Commentary on Master Zuo’s Spring and Autumn Annals*.

was none other than filial piety.⁴⁵ He believes that the ancients were better people in that they knew how to extend their exemplary behavior.⁴⁶ To act according to the Dao of the universe, one must, of course, see the world as family, extend one's care to other people's elderly and children, and view all matters with equanimity. But is "extending exemplary behavior" enough to cover all that is involved? We think not. The *Guodian Chu Slips* contain information about the times of Yao and Shun: "During the era of Yao and Shun, the throne was not inherited but passed on to chosen sages. Yao and Shun became king not to benefit themselves but to benefit all people. The rule of the sages represents the pinnacle of sagacity; benefiting all people represents the height of benevolence. Such is how the ancients talked about sagacity, benevolence, and wisdom."⁴⁷

If Mencius abandons the Confucian foundation of benevolence, it is because he wants to start with the universe and the four virtues and put benevolence alongside righteousness, courtesy, and wisdom: "Benevolence begins with the sympathetic mind, righteousness the aversion for sins, courtesy humility, and wisdom the ability to distinguish right from wrong. Man possesses four virtues as he has four limbs."⁴⁸ Benevolence ends up being merely one of the virtues.

If benevolence is viewed as human nature and a virtue in ethics, it can only relate externally to politics and philosophy, unlike its Confucian internal connection with love and desire. Mencius stated, "The ancient sage-kings possessed sympathetic minds which enabled them to implement compassionate administrations. Using sympathetic minds for compassionate administrations is as easy as it is natural."⁴⁹ In short, benevolence is sympathy while politics comprises the rule of sages and the system of owning property, which enable people to become more aware or enlightened in the end. This is not too far from the political ideals and the era of the three sage-kings to which Confucius aspires, but in the *Analects* he speaks only of serving the masses and the simple

45 堯舜之道，孝悌而已矣 (*Mencius*, book VI, part B, 2).

46 古之人所以大過人者，無他焉，善推其所為而已矣 (*Mencius*, book I, part A, 7).

47 《唐虞之道》：唐虞之道，禪而不傳。堯舜之王，利天下而弗自利也。禪而不傳，聖之盛也。利天下而弗自利也，仁之至也。故昔賢仁聖者如此 (Li, *Notes on Guodian Chu Slips*, 95). *The Book of the Han* states that *The Book of Rites* was written by 70 disciples of Confucius; scholars think that the Confucian texts of the *Guodian Chu Slips* can be similarly attributed.

48 惻隱之心，仁之端也；羞惡之心，義之端也；辭讓之心，禮之端也；是非之心，智之端也。人之有是四端也，猶其有四體也 (*Mencius*, book II, part A, 6).

49 先王有不忍人之心，斯有不忍人之政矣。以不忍人之心，行不忍人之政，治天下可運之掌上 (*Mencius*, book II, part A, 6).

joys of playing with children and bathing in the Yi River in the springtime. Perhaps this is the difference between ethics and a philosophy of life?

Cultivation or Completion

The word for benevolence [*ren* 仁] is written differently in the Guodian Chu slips, with a heart/mind [*xin* 心] underneath the body [*shen* 身]. This shows the connection between the mind and the body and that one must contemplate, control, cultivate, and perfect oneself.⁵⁰ Here, perfecting oneself should be understood in the sense put forth by the central text, *The Golden Mean*: “An honest man does not want to perfect himself only; he wants to perfect everything in the universe. To perfect oneself is benevolence, to perfect everything is wisdom. The function of human nature is to combine these two aspects.”⁵¹ Honesty allows one to experience the Dao of the universe which is the generation and change of life forms. To perfect oneself is to connect this solemn and serene living universe with one’s own way of life and cultivate benevolence which connects one with the whole of the universe. Because benevolence implies oneness with the universe, sagacity means giving of oneself to all.⁵² To perfect everything, therefore, is to participate in perfecting a symbiotic relationship with everything in the universe.

Filial piety is the root of self-perfection; benevolence is the symbol of self-perfection; sagehood is the highest level of self-perfection. This is the logic of Confucian benevolence.

50 Liang Tao 梁濤, *Guodian zhujian yu simeng xuepai* 郭店竹簡與思孟學派 [*Guodian Chu Slips and the Si-Meng School*] (Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2008), 66.

51 《禮記·中庸》：誠者，非自成己而已也，所以成物也。成己，仁也；成物，知也。性之德也，合內外之道也 (Qian Miaojin, “Zhongyong,” 653).

52 “Benevolence is oneness with the universe” comes from *Commentaries on I Ching*. Cheng Hao believes that all the most profound thoughts of the sages are all in the section “Xici [系辭].” See Cheng and Cheng, *Two Cheng Collection*, 13. The key here is that one can have a direct apprehension of the universe. *Commentaries on I Ching* also states: “A sage is as virtuous as the universe, as clear as the sun and moon, as punctual as the seasons, and as knowledgeable about man’s fortunes as the gods and ghosts. If he acts before the proper time, the universe does not contravene him. If he acts later than the proper time, he still knows how to abide by the law of nature.”

“Beliefs and desires are intentional,” says John Searle.⁵³ Benevolence that seeks self-perfection implies the formation of a moral character that pursues a meaning or goal. Psychologically speaking, a will is a cognitive desire formed often by unregulated instinct, impulse, or experience; willpower is the strength and durability of the goal of the desire. That Liang Shuming uses will and desire (instinct, intuition) to describe benevolence is not a mechanical application of Bergsonian ideas; Liang clearly has some affinity with Confucius in describing benevolence. Because self-realization is a goal of life, Confucian benevolence is a theory of action.

In the chapter “Xianwen 憲問” in the *Analects*, Zilu 子路 [542-480 BCE] asks what constitutes an honorable man.

“He cultivates himself so that he is respectful of others.” Confucius says.

“Is that all?” Zi Lu asks.

“He cultivates himself so that his neighbors can live peacefully around him,” says Confucius.

“Is that all?”

“He cultivates himself so that everyone in the society can live peacefully; even Yao and Shun found this difficult.”⁵⁴

In the *Analects Correctly Explained*, Liu Baonan draws from *The Great Learning* [*Daxue* 大學] to give this explanation: “To cultivate means to cultivate one’s own moral character. To live peacefully with one’s neighbors is to govern one’s family properly. To live peacefully with everyone in society is to govern the country properly.”⁵⁵ To cultivate oneself implies having a clear and strong goal, which constitutes the intentionality of benevolence. Psychologists and philosophers agree that behavior is organized around a desired goal.⁵⁶ If one wants

53 John R. Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of the Mind*, trans. Liu Yetao 劉葉濤 (Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 2007), 1.

54 子路問君子。子曰“修己以敬。”曰：“如斯而已乎？”曰：“修己以安人。”曰：“如斯而已乎？”曰：“修己以安百姓。修己以安百姓，堯舜其猶病諸？”(*Analects* 14:42).

55 修己者，修身也。安人者，齊家也。安百姓，則治國平天下也 (Liu Baonan 劉寶楠, “Lunyu zhengyi 論語正義 [Analects Correctly Explained],” in *Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成 [*Collected Interpretation of Zhuzi*], 1: 329.

56 Davidson said, “Behavior is explained, described, and predicted through its reason and consequence . . . it is intentional” (Ouyang Kang 歐陽康, ed., *Dangdai yingmei zhuming zhexuejia xueshu zishu* 當代英美著名哲學家學術自述 [*Contemporary Philosophers Explain Themselves*] [Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 2005], 73).

to care for the elderly and the young and to live peacefully with people from far and near, one must choose the appropriate behavior and devise a proper plan. To gather knowledge through investigation into things, to have the right view, to fill one's mind with sincerity, and to give of oneself to all: this is the plan of action in order to "participate in perfecting life with everything in the universe."

A scholar must have a strong mind and steely resolve, for his shoulders are heavy with responsibility and the path before him is long. To choose benevolence as one's responsibility, is it not a heavy burden? To continue one's practice until death, is it not a long path?⁵⁷

The above passage from the chapter "Taibo 泰伯" in the *Analects* shows the sagacity, loftiness, and difficulty of this life path.

To cultivate oneself, under this framework, means far more than the simple moral cultivation that Song Confucians call *gong fu*; it must be understood as an ideology of life that corresponds to the goal of self-perfection. Only by doing this can the logic of Confucian benevolence hold up and the three books of the *Commentaries on I Ching*, *The Golden Mean*, and *The Great Learning* combine to form an organic whole.⁵⁸ Cheng Hao and Hu Hong's proposition that "life is the Dao of the universe and goodness is the logic of life"⁵⁹ connects with the spirit of Confucian benevolence and constitutes a system that holds its own against that of Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi. This is key because only under the framework of philosophy of life can benevolence be affective and intentional, and only an affective and intentional benevolence can be dynamic.

We can see this clearly from the Mencian belief that one can understand nature and the universe by giving one's mind free rein. The first section of "Jinxin 盡心" in *Mencius* states, "In exhausting the function of the mind, one will comprehend one's own nature and consequently one's destiny. By setting one's mind to this goal and through cultivation, one serves the universe. One awaits one's destiny in cultivation whether one's life is long or short. This is

57 士不可不弘毅，任重而道遠。仁以為己任，不亦重乎！死而後已，不亦遠乎！（*Analects* 8:7).

58 Cheng Hao believes that *The Great Learning* comes from Confucius while Mou Zongsan thinks that it has a different approach than *Commentaries of I Ching* and *The Golden Mean* and believes its content unworthy, perhaps because he takes Zhu Xi's commentaries as the true interpretation.

59 天只是以生為道，繼此生理者，即是善也（Cheng and Cheng, *Two Cheng Collection*, 29).

how one should conduct one's life."⁶⁰ To give one's mind free rein is to exhaust the function of the mind. But the Mencian mind is not simply a mind that cognizes but contains meanings and values, a combination of thinking and thoughts. This coincides with the meaning of the word "exhaust [*jin* 盡]" given by *Origins of Words*: to empty the content of a vessel. The only difference is that this emptying is also done by the mind: the mind thinks and pursues its thoughts. Given the a priori logic that sets benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, and wisdom as the content of the mind, it is only natural that they become the thoughts that the mind thinks and pursues.

In terms of behavior, to exhaust the mind can be understood as the thinking mind functioning according to meaning and reason. In explaining the difference between the mind and the Dao, Zhu Xi says, "Experiencing the world through the desires of the eyes and ears, that is the mind; experiencing the world through meaning and logic, that is Dao. The mind is weak and prone to stumble; the Dao is infinitesimal and difficult to trace."⁶¹ This is in the same vein as the Mencian saying about the great man and the petty man; a great man "gains content" for his mind.

The Golden Mean states that one's nature is given to one by the universe. This nature is in reality one's emotions, such as happiness, anger, sadness, and joy, or the "original feelings";⁶² in short, it is liveliness. Goodness is harmony, which is the result of emotions properly expressed. One can express life's possibilities through self-perfection or perfection of all things in the universe. *The Golden Mean* statement that "everything grows when heaven and earth are aligned" is consistent with the Confucian "one can promote Dao through one's own actions"; this is the true meaning of "participating in perfecting life with everything in the universe." By defining nature as benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, and wisdom and placing them inside the mind, Mencius demotes emotions and destroys their legitimacy.⁶³ Emotions no longer figure in the process of knowing one's nature. Mencius stated, "An honorable man is better

60 盡其心者，知其性也。知其性，則知天矣。存其心，養其性，所以事天也。殀壽不貳，修身以俟之，所以立命也 (*Mencius*, book VII, part A, 1).

61 知覺從耳目之欲上去，便是人心；知覺從義理上去，便是道心。人心則危而易陷，道心則微而難著 (Li, *Zhu Xi's Sayings*, vol. 78).

62 *Guodian Chu Slips* states that nature is the *qi* of happiness, anger, sadness, and joy; this is consistent with *The Golden Mean*.

63 Mou Zongsan argues that Mencius uses the moral mind to cover Confucian benevolence, and this is true. But he also thinks that dynamism implies existence, and this is an oversight. Zhu Xi's static theory of rationality is a perfunctory response to Mencian doctrine of the Goodness of Human Nature (Mou Zongsan 牟宗三, *Xinti yu xingti* 心體與性體 [*Mind and Nature*] [Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 1999], 21, 23).

than others because he keeps his mind on benevolence and courtesy,”⁶⁴ and again, “The best way to cultivate the mind is to avoid desires.”⁶⁵ Serving the universe and knowing one’s destiny is the purpose of cultivation. In a static universe, benevolence transforms from a creative force and goal into a moral principle. If we understand “awaiting one’s destiny” as waiting for one’s opportunity and linking it with “benevolent administration” at the theoretical level, are we not separating essence from function if we insist that Mencian benevolence is not static?⁶⁶ If we have to make a comparison, the Mencian thoughts we have discussed here are comparable to the idea of “cultivating oneself with all one’s effort” [*xiu ji yi jing* 修己以敬].⁶⁷

If cultivation itself becomes the goal, living harmoniously with neighbors and the world becomes insignificant, and sagacity and wise administration are reduced to topics of psychology.

Conclusion

The Sages section of *Zhu Xi’s Unrestricted Thoughts* states, “Confucius leaves no trace, Yan Hui a little, Mencius much.”⁶⁸ This is a comment more on the theoretical style than on personality, and the reason for this statement is the difference in era and the discourse of the era. Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 [1619-1692] says, “Yao, Shun, and Yu set laws, and Confucius expounds Dao.”⁶⁹ Confucius’ main task was to establish a foundation for the system of rites and

64 君子所以異於人者，以其存心也。君子以仁存心，以禮存心 (*Mencius*, book IV, part B, 28).

65 養心莫善於寡欲 (*Mencius*, book VII, part B, 35).

66 Hu Hong criticizes Zhu Xi for “essence without function.” On some level, Mou Zongsan’s controversial theory of humbling oneself also divides essence from function.

67 Mencius may have found a soulmate in Zhu Xi, who says in *Four Books Annotated*, “Confucius has amply explained practice for humility.” For Zhu, scholars need to do two things: to be humble and to go where reason takes them. But according to the Japanese *Proofreading the Seven Classic Texts*, “the word for humility has the word for ‘person’ underneath in the old texts.” If this is the case, then Zhu’s theories will be difficult to hold up, and it is more obvious that the conversation has cultivation of the self as goal and emphasis on empirical proof, practice, and effect.

68 Zhu Xi and Lv Zuqian 呂祖謙, ed., *Zhuzi jinsi lu* 朱子近思錄 [*Zhu Xi’s Unrestricted Thoughts*] (Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 2000), 127.

69 Wang Fuzhi 王夫之, “Dutong jianlun 讀通鑑論,” in *Du yidian fajia zhuzuo* 讀一點法家著作 [*Legalist Writings*] (Shanghai: Fudan University Political Declaration Group, 1974), 269.

music, and he begins by the thoughts of the Three Kings. Mencius' main task was to "set the minds straight, eradicate erroneous thoughts, move away from biased behavior, and let go of extravagant expressions," and he begins by providing answers to the problems at hand. Confucius adopted the principles of the Zhou kings Wen and Wu and expounded traditional thoughts without updating them; his words and actions were without fanfare and he did not insist. But for Mencius, whose solutions for practical problems are roundly criticized as impractical, what choice does he have except to create a philosophical and theoretical universe?

Confucian benevolence is the basis of Confucianism, the center of concentric circles; its connection with later Confucianists is manifested by the common understanding that essence can be glimpsed through function. This understanding indicates that it is possible to use phenomenology to study Confucianism; that is, through the reversible property of phenomenology we can revert the analysis of current problems to an understanding of the reasons why these problems appear in the first place.⁷⁰ It is also a basic method for explaining ancient sages' texts and the only way to inherit our traditions and to enrich our culture by responding to practical questions.

Theoretically speaking, both Confucius and Mencius regard the universe as basic. One uses it to affirm the essence of life and define benevolence by feelings while the other uses it to affirm a philosophical essence and explain benevolence by human nature. Explaining benevolence by human nature is a metaphysical discourse on morality and philosophy while defining benevolence by feelings is a religious discourse on life. If we agree that there are big differences between the philosophy of life and the political philosophy emanating from the beliefs that the mind controls human nature and emotions, that human nature keeps emotions in check, that human nature is what is given us at birth, and that rites and music satisfy our desires and needs; if we agree that distinguishing these differences has not only theoretical significance for resurrecting Confucianism but also practical significance for our lives, then we must make an earnest effort to study the difference between Confucius and Mencius.⁷¹ Modernity is not only about values but also involves

70 Heidegger says that all explanations of reality must return to *agere, agens, energiein*, and *ergazesthai* (Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Ding Yun 丁耘 [Shanghai: Shanghai Publisher of Translations, 2008], 131).

71 Mou Zongsan's Three Song-Ming Schools of Philosophy regards Hu Hong and Liu Zongzhou as orthodox and Zhu Xi as inconsistent. But it seems that Mou does not recognize that the same thing can be said about Confucius and Mencius. A possible reason is that Mou thinks highly of metaphysical discourse. See Mou, *Mind and Nature*.

social structure and methods for thinking and behaving. This means that we must make adjustments in our traditions and recreate organic relations for them, as Martin Luther did for Christianity. Confucianism will become more flexible and capable of broader interpretations as a result.

Let us return to Confucius.

Works Cited

- Ban Gu, *Book of the Han*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1962.
- Cheng Hao 程顥 and Cheng Yi 程頤. *Er Cheng ji* 二程集 [*Two Cheng Collection*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1981.
- Cheng Shude 程樹德. *Lunyu jishi* 論語集釋 [*Analects Explained*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1990.
- Fu Sinian 傅斯年. *Xingming guxun bianzheng* 性命古訓辯證 [*Ancient Theories on Life*]. Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2006.
- Guo Qiyong 郭齊勇, ed. *Rujia lunli zhengming ji* 儒家倫理爭鳴集 [*Schools of Confucianism*]. Wuhan: Hubei Education Press, 2004.
- He Yan 何晏 and Huang Kan 皇侃 et al. *Lunyu jijie yishu* 論語集解義疏 [*Notes on Analects*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1998.
- Heidegger, Martin. *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Trans. Ding Yun 丁耘. Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Publishing House, 2008.
- Li Jingde 黎靖德, ed. *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 [*Zhu Xi's Sayings*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1986.
- Li Ling 李零. *Guodian chujian jiaodu ji* 郭店楚簡校讀記 [*Notes on Guodian Chu Slips*]. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2002.
- Li Youzheng 李幼蒸. *Renxue jieshi xue* 仁學解釋學 [*Benevolence Explained*]. Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2004.
- Liang Shuming 梁漱溟. *Dongxi wenhua jiqi zhexue* 東西文化及其哲學 [*Comparative Culture and Philosophy*]. Beijing: Commercial Press, 1999.
- Liang Tao 梁濤. *Guodian zhujian yu simeng xuepai* 郭店竹簡與思孟學派 [*Guodian Chu Slips and the Si-Meng School*]. Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2008.
- Liu An 劉安. "Fanlun 汜論." In *Huainanzi Zhu* 淮南子注 [*Annotation on Huainanzi*]. Annot. Gao You 高誘. *Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成 [*Collected Interpretation of Zhuzi*], vol. 7. Shanghai: Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House, 1986.
- Liu Baonan 劉寶楠. "Lunyu zhengyi 論語正義 [*Analects Correctly Explained*]." In *Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成 [*Collected Interpretation of Zhuzi*], vol. 1. Shanghai: Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House, 1986.
- Mou Zongsan 牟宗三. *Xinti yu xingtì* 心體與性體 [*Mind and Nature*]. Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 1999.

- Ouyang Kang 歐陽康, ed. *Dangdai yingmei zhuming zhexuejia xueshu zishu* 當代英美著名哲學家學術自述 [*Contemporary Philosophers Explain Themselves*]. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2005.
- Qian Miaojin 潛苗金. *Liji yizhu* 禮記譯注 [*Commentary on the Book of Rites*]. Hangzhou: Zhejiang Ancient Book Publishing House, 2007.
- Qian Mu 錢穆. *Lunyu xinjie* 論語新解 [*Analects Re-examined*]. Beijing: SDX Joint, 2002.
- Searle, John R. *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of the Mind*. Trans. Liu Yetao 劉葉濤. Shanghai: Shanghai Century, 2007.
- Su Yu 蘇輿. *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證 [*Luxuriant Dew of Spring and Autumn Annals Explained*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1992.
- Wang Fuzhi 王夫之. "Du tongjian lun 讀通鑑論" In *Du yidian fajia zhuzuo* 讀一點法家著作 [*Legalist Writings*]. Shanghai: Fudan University Political Declaration Group, 1974.
- Wang Guowei 王國維. *Guantang jilin* 觀堂集林 [*Guantang Collection*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1959.
- Wang Yangming 王陽明. *Chuanxi lu* 傳習錄 [*The Practice of Knowledge*]. Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou Chinese Classics Publishing House, 2004.
- Xu Fuguan 徐復觀. *Zhongguo renxinglun shi* 中國人性論史 [*History of Nature*]. Shanghai: Shanghai Joint, 2001.
- Zhao Qi 趙岐. *Mengzi zhangju* 孟子章句 [*Commentaries on Mencius*]. In *Lianghan quanshu* 兩漢全書 [*Collected Works of the Han Dynasty*]. Jinan: Shandong University Press, 2009.
- Zhu Xi 朱熹. *Sishu jizhu* 四書集注 [*Four Books Annotated*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1994.
- Zhu Xi and Lv Zuqian 呂祖謙, eds. *Zhuzi jinsi lu* 朱子近思錄 [*Zhu Xi's Unrestricted Thoughts*]. Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 2000.

Book Reviews



Henry Rosemont Jr.

Against Individualism: A Confucian Rethinking of the Foundations of Morality, Politics, Family, and Religion. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015.

The unique contribution of Henry Rosemont Jr.'s *Against Individualism* lies not only in criticizing individualism, which has been done by others, but in doing it by comparing individualism with Confucianism. Without this comparison, the critique would feel limited and unaware of the modern pan-dominance of the individualism that expresses itself "from Hobbes, Locke, and Kant through Marx, Bentham and Mill to Rawls and their champions, and extends even to most contemporary communitarians and/or feminists" (p. 38). At the same time, lack of reflection on this critical comparison has rendered many contemporary studies of Confucianism—which somewhat arbitrarily combine it with individualism, nationalism, socialism, and, especially, communitarianism—shallow and rootless.

In this book, individualism means the view of "hypothesizing human beings as altogether distinct from each other, and capable of being described, analyzed and evaluated largely if not solely in isolation; and in the end, the basic objects of worth, respect and dignity" (p. 34). It therefore assumes that the human being as a proper individual is rational, reflexively self-conscious, free, autonomous, and value-bearing (pp. xii, 33, 38, 47). Rosemont spends three chapters (ch. 3-5) demonstrating, from philosophical, neuro-scientific, social, political, and moral angles, that this individualism is fundamentally untenable and unjust, or "at best a confused one [idea]" (p. 57). I found his arguments convincing and clear, but see the following chapters as even more interesting because they provide a genuine theoretical and empirical alternative to individualism in Confucianism.

Lawrence Kohlberg suggests that morality has three levels (six stages), of which the higher two are individual conscience with principle orientation (first

level) and obeying authorities (second level).¹ Conventional thought would likely believe that individualism is at the highest level and Confucianism at the second. But here Rosemont changes the basic format of how we understand human morality: he argues that the level or stage higher than “good-boy orientation” is not the self-centered conscience, but rather Confucian role-ethics. It is characterized not merely by “showing respect for authority” but by “reciprocal relationships” (p. 100) and “aesthetic dimensions of the interaction” (p. 97), which identify a better or more harmonious moral consciousness than the individual one.

This kind of role-ethics focuses not only on reciprocal social roles in general but on the closest and the most natural ones, for example, family roles such as those between parents and children, husbands and wives, and elder and younger brothers, as the main source of our moral awareness (pp. 98, 150-154). Among them, the role children play with their parents (*xiao*, lit. family reverence or filial piety) or is “our first, and always most fundamental role” (p. 98). This view, which is authentically Confucian and supported by almost all important Confucian classics, has been largely neglected by neo-Confucians in the modern era. Rosemont, however, finds it unavoidable if we want to reject individualism in a fundamental way. *Xiao* as family-role playing depends on neither rules nor contract (p. 109) but on natural feelings and attitudes among relatives because children have “a natural response” to their parents’ affection and are “deferring to deferrers [parents defer to their parents]” rather than simply deferring to parents (pp. 98, 130). So this is essentially a relation and morality of existential time—that is, a generational receiving and giving of affections and deference forward and backward reciprocally during a lifetime. There is a situational as well as fundamental resonance, reason, and fairness in it, much more so than in self-centered individualism.

Why is *xiao* the most important relation for moral nurturing? Because, in contrast to *ci* (parental affection for children), it does not come mainly from in-born instinct but, like the capacity for language (pp. 24, 103), is a combination of the natural and the learned and therefore will fundamentally affect the

1 Lawrence Kohlberg: *The Psychology of Moral Development: The Nature and Validity of Moral Stages* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), p. 44, table 1.2. The second level, composed of two stages of “good-boy orientation” and “orientation to ‘doing duty’ and to showing respect for authority,” is featured as “Moral value resides in performing good or right roles, in maintaining the conventional order and the expectancies of *others*.” The third or the top level, composed of two stages too as “contractual legalistic orientation” and “conscience or principle orientation,” is described to be “Moral value resides in conformity by the *self* to shared or sharable standards, rights or duties” (emphasis added).

development of our general moral consciousness and behavior. For this reason, Confucians found it necessary to cultivate the natural impulse of *xiao* through rituals (*li*), one of six Confucian arts that function between the innate and the artificial. Rosemont captures the middle position—between the natural and the educational, the moved and the moving, the deferring and the remonstrating (p. 99)—of *xiao* sensitively and therefore proposes that the “ego-reduction” rituals are “spiritual [rather than merely ‘behavioral’] discipline” based on the arts (p. 143) or the “communal ‘grammar’” making life meaningful (p. 145). By loving and yielding to your parents, you will probably not treat others’ parents cruelly, especially when the *xiao* consciousness is tuned, enhanced, and enlarged by the rituals and other Confucian arts.

From this perspective, therefore, a profound middle way of the role-ethics is initiated by the *xiao*. It is said to be a kind of particularism and pluralism because it does not obey uniform rules of universal principles (p. 101) and has to be adapted to concrete family situations (p. 106). At the same time, it does not violate any homoversal principle and need not cause relativism (p. 29). Rather, by opposing hard-minded individualists, it has abundant sympathy and timely wisdom to realize derived human rights such as equality (pp. 110–112), while resisting the national movement to “erase poverty” from communist principles. Without religious metaphysics, dogma, and an absolute deity, the role-ethics nevertheless gives us “ultimate gifts of the spirits” and creates a “human-centered religion” (p. 141) or, rather, a *xiao* religion of family temporality possible. “[L]iving in the ancestors and living on in succeeding generations” (p. 151) actualizes a religion of “immortality—here, now, in *this* world” (p. 157). This undogmatic religion does not conflict with the beliefs of any faith (p. 154) and therefore can provide a common basis of belief for humanity’s future.

Although I greatly appreciate the book’s full-bodied critique of individualism and its deep exposure of the generational temporality that enables family-based morality and religion, I nonetheless see a chance for furthering the inquiry by incorporating the concept and philosophy of *yin-yang*. It was through the productive structure of *yin-yang*—opposing but mutually dependent relations between two sides—that the existential temporality (*shi*) and complementary roles were philosophically explained and advocated, because we find the *yin-yang* within past (ancestors) and future (offspring), husband and wife, and parents and children. Therefore, *The Book of Changes*, another Confucian classic, states: “Because of heaven [*yang*] and earth [*yin*], there are all things in the world; because of all things in the world, there are men and women; because of men and women, there are husband and wife; because of husband and wife, there are parents and children” (*The Order of the Hexagrams*). It is not hard to see from the *yin-yang* origin of all things,

especially of the family roles, that individualism is impossible and family relations are primordial. Moreover, the *yin-yang* structure not only justifies the generalizing tendency of family love to extra-familial persons but also sets limits on the formation of a family. That is why I feel a little bit uneasy at Rosemont's *unconditional* acceptance of homosexual families (p. 125), because gender as an embodiment of *yin-yang* does shape our understanding of family in crucial ways.² I am also surprised to read that we should send our aged parents to a nursing home when things become difficult, for instance, when we are in our early thirties and "our responsibilities to each other, our children, home, and jobs take up 120 percent of our time" (p. 126).

This relates to another point that deserves discussion. The book appears to lack reflection on the modern economic and technological causes of the formation of individualism and the deterioration of families. The modern high-tech sectors and sciences are even regarded as favorable to family relations and role-ethics (pp. 154-156). However, the situation in which "jobs take up 120 percent of our time" is formed precisely by the demands of modern economic and technological life, whereas a traditional economy of agriculture and crafts would favor taking care of one's parents as well as caring for children. Economics and technology are therefore not neutral but, instead, substantially influence our attitudes toward family.

In sum, this is an insightful and timely book that addresses the main source of many tough problems faced by the modern individual and brings to them a family-rooted Confucian morality, philosophy, and religion in the arts. Some historians and scientists hope that Confucianism can help human beings have a brighter future, and this book supports that hope.

Reviewed by Zhang Xianglong

Beijing University

xlzhangmeister@gmail.com

2 Refer to my paper "How Should Confucianism View the Legalization of Homosexual Marriage?," *The Journal of Renmin University*, 2016.1, pp. 62-70.

Carlos Rojas

Homesickness: Culture, Contagion, and National Transformation in Modern China.
Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015.

According to this new book by Carlos Rojas, “homesickness” is “a condition caused not by longing for home, but rather by an excessive proximity to it” (vii). Rojas regards home as a figurative space of illness so as to examine the sense of alterity and alienation deeply structured in the modern Chinese experience. Through a small selection of works, both literary and cinematic, Rojas traces the powerful metaphor of illness in modern China. For him, sickness is a recurring set of tropes in literary, cinematic, and cultural works in a wide range of Chinese communities around the world. Literary and cultural representations of disease are addressed in detail, along with discussions of immunology, DNA, and genetics. This view of illness as both actual and metaphorical leads to the theoretically most exciting phrases that Rojas employs, such as “the cultural logic of the pharmacon” (141), “thematics of virtual cannibalism” (204), and “necropolitical logic of social marginalization” (220). The book takes inspiration from medical humanities in addressing the potential dynamism and structural transformation in the modern Chinese individual, family, and national identity in the light of interrelationships among culture, politics, and science.

The book is organized chronologically in three main parts, titled “1906: Phagocytes,” “1967: Pharmakons,” and “2006: Phantasms,” comprising a total of eight chapters. The year examined in Part I, 1906, is the year of the birth of Pu Yi 溥儀, the last emperor of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), as well as the year in which *Travels of Lao Can* [*Lao Can you ji* 老殘遊記], by Liu E 劉鶚, was published, *Flowers in a Sinful Sea* [*Niehai hua* 孽海花], by Zeng Pu 曾樸, was completed, and Lu Xun 魯迅 saw slides of Japanese executing Chinese in the Russo-Japanese War. In 1967 the Cultural Revolution began, as did production of King Hu’s 胡金銓 martial arts [*wuxia* 武俠] film *Dragon Gate Inn* [*Longmen kezhan* 龍門客棧]. In 2006, the main portion of the Three Gorges Dam [*Sanxia* 三峽] was completed, and China became the world’s largest emitter of carbon dioxide. The centennial of Pu Yi’s birth was also in 2006, when the books *Dream of Ding Village* [*Dingzhuang meng* 丁莊夢], by Yan Lianke 閻連科, and *Brothers* [*Xiongdi* 兄弟], by Yu Hua 余華, were published and the film *I Don’t Want to Sleep Alone* [*Hei yanquan* 黑眼圈], by Tsai Ming-liang 蔡明亮, was released.

Rojas’s Introduction lays out his methodology and presents his main argument, using the historical image of China as the “sick man of Asia [*Yazhou bingfu* 亞洲病夫],” a term adopted by intellectuals and reformers in China

around 1895. Rojas puts a new spin on this hackneyed phrase, however. He reviews the historical introduction of biomedical paradigms into China and juxtaposes it with medical metaphors employed by Yan Fu 嚴復, Liang Qichao 梁啟超, and Lu Xun.

Part I focuses on Liu E, Zeng Pu, and Lu Xun. Using the biomedical term “phagocytosis” from the Russian scientist Élie Metchnikoff’s discovery of the ability of the body’s white blood cells to recognize and misrecognize pathogens, Rojas finds analogies between this immunological phenomenon and the Chinese Boxers, literary characters such as Lao Can 老殘, Sai Jinhua 賽金花, and the Madman [Kuangren 狂人], in works by Liu E, Zeng Pu, and Lu Xun, respectively. Liu E, who was a practicing physician, makes an itinerant doctor the protagonist of his 1906 novel, in which government and flood control are presented in terms of the protagonist’s views on traditional Chinese medicine. At the beginning of Zeng Pu’s *Flowers in a Sinful Sea*, the Island of Happy Slavery allegory “invokes the Sick Man of Asia as a figure not of China itself but rather of the process by which the nation’s condition may come to be recognized and narrated” (67). Rojas regards the significance of Sai’s return to China and her intervention during the Boxer Uprising in terms of the structural exchange and circulation of women as figurative commodities within a generalized exogamic regime. In two other novels published in 1906—*Stones in the Sea* [Qinhai shi 禽海石], by Fu Lin 符霖, and *Sea of Regret* [Hen hai 恨海], by Wu Jianren 吳趸人—Rojas again finds a symbolic meaning for conflicts and uncertainties in the illnesses of the characters.

Lu Xun’s transformative personal experience of watching the slides in Japan depicting executions is an example of how Rojas thinks about the “modern.” Rather than repeating the usual description of Lu Xun and his “Diary of a Madman [Kuangren riji 狂人日記]” as a progressive political allegory, Rojas proposes a “psychoimmunological hermeneutics” (99) that draws upon the combination of modern germ theory and the birth of psychoanalysis at the turn of the twentieth century. Rojas uses Jacques Lacan’s mirror-stage model in subject formation, which means that at a stage of infancy an external representation of the body through a mirror or mirror-like medium affects the infant’s conceptualization of the self, or “I,” to talk about themes of “mediated recognition, corporeal fragmentation, and representational violence” (101). For Rojas, the major difference between Lu Xun’s experience and Lacan’s mirror-stage is the former’s “logic of disidentification” (102): “Lu Xun, by his own account, begins to come to terms with his identity and positionality precisely through an attempt to work through the result of his inability to identify with the subject position and the perspectival position that the execution slide offers him” (102). For Rojas, one sees an anticipation of

“the internal struggles and alienated disavowals that so famously characterize Lu Xun’s subsequent literary and political endeavors” (103). Rojas discusses in great detail the similarities between Metchnikoff’s recollection of discovering phagocytosis and Lu Xun’s account of viewing the slides—both “figuratively consuming the alien and alienating dimension . . . , transforming it into an imaginary ground for . . . new self-conception” (105).

Part II could have been more comprehensive if Rojas had taken into consideration recent scholarship on socialist literature and culture during the period 1949–1966 and the ongoing historical and theoretical obsession with China’s Cultural Revolution.¹ It is surprising that Rojas devotes only 25 pages of his 300-page book to this period and that he treats Mao Zedong’s initiation of the Cultural Revolution as a sign of a power struggle within the high-level leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. For Rojas, the Red Guards are comparable to white blood cells in immunology “that begin attacking healthy tissue, [which] quickly became a destructive force in their own right” (124) and “the violence unleashed by the Cultural Revolution simultaneously dramatized the ideological pollution the nation had suffered over the preceding seventeen years” (124). Rojas finds a Chinese medicine equivalent in martial arts films, which are identified as poison [du 毒]. Both [xia 俠] and du “represent a node of instability that may drive (or undermine) the possibility of a revolutionary transformation” (131). It is in this spirit that Rojas treats King Hu’s film “as an apolitical distraction or as a productive catalyst for a reimagination of existing sociopolitical regimes” (131). This is where Rojas comes up with the most intriguing theoretical phrases in the book: “cultural logic of the pharmakon” as “a mode of engagement based on a mobilization of elements with mutually opposed qualities” (141). This easily reminds of post-structuralist Jacques Derrida’s “Plato’s Pharmacy,”² and his etymological examination of “Pharmakon” in ancient Greek philosophy as a both poison and antidote through writing. It arouses readers’ expectation of how this Derridean concept could relate to modern social and cultural transformations in China.

1 For a great discussion of this period, see Cai Xiang, *Revolution and Its Narratives: China’s Socialist Literary and Cultural Imaginaries, 1949–1966* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016); for one of the most recent discussions on the Cultural Revolution, see Wu Yiching, *The Cultural Revolution at the Margins: Chinese Socialism in Crisis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014). The original version of Cai Xiang’s 蔡翔 book, *Geming/xushu: Zhongguo shehui zhuyi wenxue-wenhua xiangxiang* 革命 / 叙述：中國社會主義文學—文化想象 (1949–1966), was published in 2010.

2 See Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 61–172.

Part III takes up the works of Yan Lianke, Yu Hua, and Tsai Ming-liang as well as less well-known authors, such as Hu Fayun 胡發雲 and Samson Chiu Leong Chun 趙良駿, as part of discussions about SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome), HIV/AIDS, and queer sociality. The titles of the four chapters in this section—"Information," "Capital," "Labor," and "Membranes"—are intriguing.

The chapter on "Information" is devoted to a 2006 electronic novel, *ruyan@SARS.com*, by Hu Fayun, and the 2003 film *Golden Chicken 2* [*Jin ji* 金雞 2], by the Hong Kong-based director Samson Chiu Leong Chun. Rojas examines the way in which information and the 2003 SARS epidemic overlap. The suppression of information about the epidemic exacerbated the spread of the virus. Rojas coins the phrase "digital panopticon" (177) in his discussion of the Golden Shield Project [*Jindun gongchang* 金盾工程] implemented by the Ministry of Public Security.

The chapter on "Capital" examines the blood-selling business and its role in the AIDS epidemic in China through readings of Yan Lianke (*Dream of Ding Village*, 2006; *Lenin's Kisses* [*Shou huo* 受活], 2004; *Time's Passage* [*Riguang liunian* 日光流年], 1998; *The Four Books* [*Si shu* 四書], 2010), Yu Hua (*Chronicles of a Blood Merchant* [*Xu san guanmai xueji* 許三觀賣血記], 1995), and Zhou Xiaowen 周曉文 (*Ermo* 二嫖, 1994). The commodification of blood in rural China has led to the dissolution of traditional sociality and underlies networks of capital and labor. In Yan's novel, Rojas argues, blood becomes "a figure of internal alterity" as well as "a vehicle of contagion" (187). Rojas observes in Yu and Zhou's works that self-commodification and consumption enabled by this business could lead to what he calls "a form of cannibalism or autophagy" (203). These themes of "virtual cannibalism" (204), "process of abject self-commodification" (208), and "necropolitical logic of social marginalization" (220) are also discernible in Yan's novels, as a reflection of the sociopolitical environment during China's transition from socialism to capitalism.

The chapter "Labor" bases its discussion on what Rojas sees as a part of a larger Chinese community, centering on works by the Taiwan-based Malaysian director Tsai Ming-liang. Rojas argues that, in Tsai's films (*The River* [*Heliu* 河流], 1996; *The Hole* [*Dong* 洞], 1998; *The Wayward Cloud* [*Tianbian yi duo yun* 天邊一朵雲], 2005; *I Don't Want to Sleep Alone*, 2006), the displaced laborers demonstrate "a dialectics of desire and alienation," which enables a "polymorphously perverse array of desires and libidinal attachments," and this can be taken as "an interrogation of the familial relationships" (229).

Finally, the chapter on "Membranes" focuses on the "thematization of symbolic barriers" (260), specified in the corporeal membrane the hymen in Yu Hua's 2006 novel *Brothers*. For Rojas, the hymen in Yu's novel "represents a space of homesickness" (260). Because of its marginal position in the body

proper, “the hymen is imagined as both helping guarantee the symbolic integrity of the body and its corresponding family structures, while at the same time offering a reminder of the processes of contamination and fragmentation on which the body’s imagined coherence is itself predicated” (260). In his examination of another novel by Yu Hua, *The Seventh Day* [*Di qi tian* 第七天] (2013), Rojas again finds an intriguing critical “space of radical alterity and self-alienation,” which he regards as “the possibility of imagining new forms of belonging” (275).

Homesickness is ambitious in its choice of a wide range of subjects for discussion, as well as in its claim to be a reassessment of “the interrelationship between a set of scientific and political concerns” (“Preface,” x). The historical period it addresses is rather long, from the early twentieth century to the early twentieth-first century, so it is not reasonable to expect the author to do justice to such ambitious claims. In the book, notions concerning wounds, sensations, bodily diseases produced through colonialism, revolution, and flows of information and capital are used to address the corporeal and affective dimension of communities. This parallel between the individual human body textualized either in literary or cinematic media, on one hand, and larger sociopolitical communities, on the other, explains the book’s investment in areas of knowledge such as immunology, viruses, and DNA at the very beginning and very end of the book. However, it might still be many steps away from what he claims is a paradigm shift of medical humanities scholarship in Anglo-American Chinese studies. Rojas does a close reading of all the texts he chooses, employing a methodology that is conventional and useful. In the end, however, one cannot help but regret the unfortunate lack of institutional, historical, and social analysis in a book that makes claims about the “national transformation in modern China.”

Reviewed by Jiang Wentao

Zhejiang University

wjiang0425@zju.edu.cn

Top Ten Developments in the Studies of Chinese Humanities in 2015

1 The Center of Global Academic Culture Shifts Eastward, and the International Congress of Historical Sciences is Held in Asia

In the past thirty years, the influence of Chinese culture has been growing alongside China's strength as a country. One clear sign of this is China's increasingly normalized role as "the host of the East" in high-profile international scholarship and cultural affairs. In 2008, Beijing successfully hosted the 29th Summer Olympics. In 2015, the 22nd International Congress of Historical Sciences opened in Jinan, marking the first time this event, often hailed as "the history Olympics," was held in Asia. Additionally, the 24th World Congress of Philosophy is scheduled to be held in Beijing in 2018. These are signs that the center of global academic culture may be in the process of shifting eastward.

The 22nd International Congress of Historical Sciences, held August 23-29, 2015, was run jointly by the Association of Chinese Historians [Zhongguo shixue hui 中國史學會] and Shandong University and attended by more than 2,600 well-known representatives and organizations from 88 countries and districts. One of the most important developments at the congress was to "showcase the results of historians breaking away from Eurocentric and Western-centric research frameworks." Fourteen scholars gathered in the first session, which addressed the theme "China from Global Perspectives," to discuss the mutual connections and influences between China and the world as well as China's importance in globalization. Other sessions that were also well-received covered the themes "Historicizing Emotions," on the recent "emotional turn" in historical research, and "Digital Turn in History," which addressed the impact of historical research conducted during the current information age. China's president, Xi Jinping, sent a special congratulatory note to the congress emphasizing that "history is humanity's greatest teacher" and "historical research is the foundation of all the social sciences." The congress and President Xi's note put a spotlight on historical research.

2 **Differentiation in Confucian Studies: Upholding the “Song School” or a Return to the “Han School”?**

In Confucian studies, the Han school favors the Five Classics whereas the Song school reveres the Four Books. In recent years, these two schools have made a comeback. The Song school forms the foundation of what in recent decades has been called neo-Confucianism. With the Four Books as its canon, it is concerned primarily with human temperament and relationships and deals with ontological constructs. Its modern adherents include such great thinkers as the late Feng Youlan and Mou Zongsan. Scholars in the Han school, by contrast, are concerned mainly with politics and institutions; they imagine a system of government for a society undergoing many changes. Therefore, they favor the Five Classics, which pay closer attention to political systems. Supporters of the Han school perceive their position as a return to Confucianism's origins. This trend of “returning to the Han school” is best represented by the recent emergence of such ideas as institutional Confucianism and political Confucianism.

Following the 1911 Revolution, the study of the classics became divorced from politics and its academic presence was mainly in historiography. It was considered dated, and the inherent value of its canon dismissed, a situation that left many scholars adrift. In 2015, Liu Mengxi reiterated Ma Yifu's view that “the classics should be one of the Six Arts” in order to revive academic interest in the Six Classics. The works of many other scholars, such as Zhu Hanmin, Gan Chunsong, and Chen Bisheng, also include a call for the revival of study of the classics, resulting in a renewed clash between proponents of the Song and Han schools of Confucian thought. It remains to be seen whether study of the classics has the power to influence modern politics or to become a meaningful part of modern life.

3 **The Belt and Road Initiatives Invite a Global Response, and Research on Sino-Foreign Cultural Exchange Deepens**

In 2013, the Chinese government proposed a strategic initiative to establish a “Silk Road Economic Belt” and “Twenty-First-Century Maritime Silk Road.” The effects of this initiative, which stimulated and advanced research on the history of Sino-Western cultural exchange, could be felt immediately in the humanities. In 2015, research in the fields of history, archeology, linguistics, and literature offered new forecasts for relations between Eastern and Western cultures and civilizations.

The Silk Road, which dates back to ancient China, is a major transportation hub connecting Asia, East Africa, and Europe. It is also known as “the Canal of

Human Civilization” and “the Womb of Global Culture.” Starting with scholars such as Cen Zhongmian, Feng Chengjun, Zhang Xinglang, Huang Wenbi, Tang Yongtong, and Xiang Da, Chinese academic research on the Silk Road has grown in recent centuries. Achievements in the field in 2015 include the works and lectures of Ge Jianxiong, *The Silk Road and Cultural Interaction between East and West* [*Sichouzhilu yu dongxi wenhua jiaoliu* 絲綢之路與東西文化交流] by Rong Xinjiang, *The Silk Road* [*Sichouzhilu* 絲綢之路] by Liu Yingsheng, Yang Juping’s research on the Silk Road and ancient Greek civilization, and Hou Yangfang’s Silk Road map restoration project.

4 Narrating History: Source Criticism’s Challenge to Traditional Historical Research

In classical scholarship, major breakthroughs have almost always been connected to the discovery of new source materials. In recent years, paradigmatic shifts in methods and approaches to source materials have accompanied the continued emergence of new materials, such as bamboo strips, stele inscriptions, and documents. For instance, *e-kaoju* [electronic textual criticism and research], a form of historical research that uses digital and internet technologies to broadly aggregate and analyze related source materials, has steadily gained ground. *Er chong zou: Hong xue yu Qing shi de duihua* [二重奏: 紅學與清史的對話], by Professor Huang Yinong, exemplifies the success of this approach. The more groundbreaking and influential methodological development of the year, however, was source criticism.

Source criticism, also known as the study of historical archives, is a research paradigm and methodological approach to source materials used mainly in the study of official history. This paradigm can be traced back to debates on antiquity, historical origins studies, and postmodern historiographical methods. A method centered on analyzing the authorial intent of the historian, it mainly examines the question of how historical source materials take on their existing forms and what historical narratives they give rise to. It is currently employed mostly by scholars of Sino-Japanese history from the Qin to Han periods and scholars of the Northern and Southern Dynasties period.

5 Crisis and Revival: Chinese Philosophy Gains International Importance as an Academic Field

In recent years, Chinese philosophy, in a narrow sense, has existed in a state of both crisis and revival. In 2006, the well-known philosophy blog Leiter Report

Blog posted an entry on “Crisis in the Cultivation of Philosophy PhDs in China.” In 2008, the newsletter of the American Philosophical Association offered a similarly grim analysis of China’s situation. In the second half of the twentieth century, as leading Chinese philosophy scholars from Stanford University, the University of California at Berkeley, and the University of Michigan retired, Chinese philosophy began to recede at American universities with the most prominent philosophical research departments. This period constitutes an interruption in the advancement of Chinese philosophical studies internationally.

At the same time, the specificity and nuance of Chinese philosophy have begun to regain attention among international scholars. Many scholars trained in both Chinese and Western philosophy are working to raise the quality of Chinese philosophical research. During the 2015 conference of the International Institute of Philosophy, held in Beijing September 16-19, an unprecedented special session on Chinese philosophy was convened. Flyers for the 24th World Congress of Philosophy, scheduled to be held in Beijing in 2018, announce that the official theme of the conference will be “Learning to Be Human,” a topic that is deeply connected to Confucian thought. The intellectual directions spurred, on the one hand, by the decline of quality overseas research in the field and the unprecedented international attention granted the field, on the other, might indicate that Chinese philosophy, as an academic field, is about to undergo some significant changes in the near future.

6 Holding on to the Enlightenment: Commemorating the Hundredth Anniversary of the First Issue of *New Youth* [*Xin Qingnian* 新青年]

In Shanghai, on September 15, 1915, Chen Duxiu founded *Youth Magazine* [*Qingnian zazhi* 青年雜誌], a publication that was renamed *New Youth* on September 1, 1916, beginning with the first issue of its second volume. The magazine has since gained a reputation for having established an ideological foundation for the May Fourth movement, critiquing China’s feudal past, transmitting Marxist ideology, supporting the New Culture and New Literature movements, and promoting individual liberation. However, in the current climate, in which traditional culture, particularly Confucianism, is enjoying a revival, the “enlightened” status of anti-traditional movements such as the May Fourth and the New Culture movements has been undergoing reexamination and questioning.

Academic conferences were held in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Anhui, and Henan and other cities in the fall of 2015 to mark the hundredth

anniversary of *New Youth* by examining and discussing the impact of the magazine and the New Culture movement on modern Chinese history, literature, thought, and culture. These conferences offered an opportunity for both a positive examination and critique of the New Culture movement, effectively establishing a counterdiscourse to the revival of Confucian studies. How does one evaluate the historical trajectory of “enlightenment” and twentieth-century anti-traditionalism? What position and function should be assigned to traditional culture in the future development of national and academic culture? From the fragmented opinions at present, one can see that the realm of intellectual inquiry has entered a diverse and contentious period.

7 The Scope of Scholarship Broadens to Include Resistance Literature

Interest in the literature of the War of Japanese Resistance in China and the end of World War II revived in 2015, marking the seventieth anniversary of their conclusion. Resistance literature was a prominent theme at academic conferences held throughout the country, special columns in periodicals, and hundreds of scholarly essays, including those on newly discovered primary materials. Some examples include Zhang Zhongliang's essay on the context and origins of the March of the Volunteers [Yiyongjun March] and Zhang Yesong's “The Battleground ‘Landscape’ and the Treble Texts: A Report about Qiu Dongping's *Lost Book Marching Towards the Enemy's Rear Area* [Zhanqu beijing yǔ wenben sanchong xing—dongping yi shu xiang diren de fubei jinjun fajue baogao 戰區‘背景’與文本三重性—東平佚書〈向敵人的腹背進軍〉發掘報告].” Several books released in 2015 offer new theoretical perspectives on Resistance literature, such as *Posui yu chongjian: 1937-1945 kangzhan shiqi de Zhongguo wenxue yanjiu* 破碎與重建: 1937-1945 抗戰時期的中國文學研究], by Gao Yuanbao, which deals with victorious battlefronts and occupied territories, and *Xiaoshuo zhong de Nanjing datusha yu minzu guojia guannian biaoda* [小說中的南京大屠殺與民族國家觀念表達], by Li Yongdong, which discusses the home front and liberated areas.

Resistance literature reached its first peak in the ten years after the Japanese invasion of China (1937-1945). After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Resistance literature became an important part of “Red Memory.” Research on Resistance literature has been influenced by these two main ideological contexts, which accounts for both its flourishing and its limitations. In recent years, the intellectual environment and scope of research in China have become more open and liberal, drawing heavily on ideas ranging

from democracy to colonial theory. Thanks to renewed interest in Resistance literature, the field has made theoretical breakthroughs and progress, marking a turning point.

8 **Macro-Oriented Research Makes a Comeback and Global History Trends**

In the past twenty years, global history, a major intellectual trend in international academic studies, has been the topic of debate in Chinese history circles, revolving mainly around the issue of historiographical writing practices. As a trend that is in the process of taking shape, global history, with its emphasis on macro perspectives and the “total” scope of history, is undoubtedly seen as a counterweight to the currently dominant method that privileges micro-perspectives and research based on attention to detail and fragments.

At the 22nd International Congress of Historical Sciences, held in Jinan in 2015, the most important of the four topical sessions that convened was “China from Global Perspectives.” As Capital Normal University celebrates the fourth anniversary of the establishment of its Global History Research Center, global history and cross-regional civilization studies programs at Beijing Foreign Studies University, Shanghai Normal University, and Shandong University are also establishing research centers. Recent discussions over New Qing History in China also demonstrate that conversations—some tinged with anxiety—are taking place about the variety of historiographical methods available, including global history. In a world in which even culture and the economy are constantly merging, how does one address the growing trend of integration in relation to the integrity of individual countries and specific cultural subjectivities? How does one incorporate Chinese historical narratives into global history? These are pressing questions that are sure to have long-term implications for the future of Chinese historiography.

9 **Yang Yi Restores the Hundred Schools of Thought, Drawing Widespread Academic Attention**

China’s pre-Qin period included pivotal breakthroughs in Chinese thought. The Hundred Schools of Thought contributed uninhibited creativity and penetrating insights to myriad discussions, creating a cultural tradition that has lasted to the present. To study the pre-Qin classics and the Hundred Schools of Thought is to explore the origins and formative processes of Chinese

civilization; it is to decode the DNA of Chinese national identity. Even so, many flaws, blind spots, and errors endure from two thousand years of research and study.

For many years, Yang Yi has combed through, analyzed, and interpreted not only the pre-Qin classics and Hundred Schools canon but also countless related documents and primary materials to trace their ideological origins. His 2015 work *Genesis of Confucius' Analects* [*Lunyu huanyuan* 論語還原], along with works from his previously published “Genesis of the Hundred Schools” series (which includes *Genesis of Laozi*, *Genesis of Zhuangzi*, and *Genesis of Han Feizi*), all seek to strip present classical studies of their frills and laces. By restoring classical works to their unfettered state as canonical documents and historical evidence, Yang seeks to reveal the original context for understanding the value of the ideas expressed in them. His approach has garnered the widespread attention of scholars and might be the first thorough reconsideration and exegesis of pre-Qin and Hundred School texts since the antiquity debates of the 1920s.

10 **Chen Lai Receives the Confucius Culture Prize and a New Generation of Confucius Scholars Make Their Grand Entrance**

On September 27, 2015, Chen Lai, a professor of philosophy at Tsinghua University and chair of its Academy of Chinese Learning, received the Confucius Culture Prize at the seventh World Confucian Conference. The prize, established by China's Ministry of Culture in 2009, is the most prestigious prize offered in the field of Confucius studies. It is awarded to organizations and individuals that have made extraordinary contributions to Confucius studies as well as the dissemination of traditional Chinese culture worldwide. Previous recipients of the award include Pang Pu and Tang Yijie, among other mainland scholars who were educated around 1949, when the People's Republic of China was established. Chen Lai, by contrast, is part of a generation of Confucius scholars who grew up during the market reform era and are reaching the peak of their careers.

Born into a vastly different context, this newer generation of Confucius scholars diverges quite a bit from older generations in terms of intellectual models, modes of inquiry, and points of interest. Older generations comprised individuals who became familiar with the classical canon in childhood. Although they had a stronger foundation in the classics, their education was nonetheless steeped in Western academic theory. In an era of transition, in which old and new coexisted uneasily, their relationship with the classics

likely veered between doubtful contemplation and renewed endorsement. The older generation was not just one of scholars but also one of philosophers. In contrast, the current generation, which came of age during the market reform era, likely trained in the contemporary academic system, in which one pursues a course of study within specific disciplinary divisions. They approach the classics mostly by examining existing scholarship through the lens of epistemology. Living under China's discursive regime of cultural subjectivity, they tend to be more conservative, often prioritizing continuation of the system over engaging in cultural work. Whether Confucius studies can create the conditions necessary to sustain its relevance in twenty-first-century China will depend largely on the efforts of this generation.