EUROPEAN JOURNAL
FOR PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

VOLUME 8 NUMBER 1 SPRING 2016

SPECIAL ISSUE

in cooperation with the Center for East Asian and Comparative Philosophy
at City University of Hong Kong

TRADITION, RITUAL, AND HEAVEN IN EAST ASIAN RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY

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EDITORIAL

This special issue of the *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* is dedicated to introducing major figures, ideas, and arguments from East Asian religious philosophy in ways that promote productive conversations with the broader field of philosophy of religion. Max Müller famously defended the importance of the comparative study of religion, insisting that, "He who knows one, knows none." It is surely true that one has a more complete understanding of the phenomena of religious experience if one pursues a comparative study of diverse traditions; this can lead to a deeper appreciation of what Lee H. Yearley calls, "the similarities within differences and the differences within similarities." One might also plausibly believe that one does not adequately understand or appreciate important features of any tradition until one sees how they compare with alternative views, which brings one closer to Müller's perspective. Such comparison can lead one to appreciate the contingent nature of features of religious belief or practice; it can lead one to wonder why certain beliefs and practices are part of a given tradition and what they really mean or imply.

One can see the same phenomenon in the process of learning a second language. For example, in English we say "It is raining" and "She is rich." After studying Chinese, which would express similar propositions roughly by saying "Rain falling" (*xia yu le* 下雨了) and "She has money" (*ta you qian* 她有钱), one might begin to wonder what the "it" of the first English sentence refers to, and why we seem to say that a person who *has* money *is* something. Comparative study has led scholars of religion to reconceive the primary object of their discipline, moving it from a theocentric conception of "religion" to a broader concern with the sacred. Those who seek to justify universal claims should be interested in comparing and testing such with the available alternatives in search of confirmation or challenge. Indeed, philosophers who make such claims for moral theory and base their claims on empirical facts about human beings have an imperative to engage in comparative study. For they, like all human beings, begin their reflections with the beliefs and practices of a particular historically contingent tradition and seek a broad reflective equilibrium that can only be attained by exploring alternative sources of wisdom. In this regard, in general, Religious Studies is much closer

to disciplines like Psychology than mainstream contemporary Analytic Philosophy in appreciating the need for comparison and the nature of their epistemological position.

The essays contained in this special issue represent all three of the great cultures of East Asia – China, Korea, and Japan – as well as all three of its most sophisticated and well-known traditions – Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. They describe, explore, and analyze conceptions of heaven and ritual, as well as other forms of spiritual practice, the character, role, and cultivation of virtue, the ethical status of non-human animals, and theories about human nature and how these inform ideas, attitudes, and practices about the sacred. This collection does not offer a comprehensive introduction to East Asian religious philosophy, a survey of its general features, or a systematic account of any particular culture or tradition; rather, it seeks to present samples of significant treatments of important and characteristic problems in the philosophy of religion that intrigued and inspired some of the most influential thinkers in the most important traditions found throughout the region. These more focused studies offer a good sense of several distinctive ideas and approaches and illustrate that at least in a number of cases religious thinkers in East Asia shared core concerns with their Western counterparts. Our hope is that this special issue will help to raise interest and build bridges among scholars of religious philosophy around the world and encourage mutual cooperation between those working in different traditions to the common edification of all.

Philip J. Ivanhoe

THE HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS OF RITUAL: PASCAL AND XUNZI ON FAITH, VIRTUE, AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

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Abstract. Blaise Pascal contends that ritual is not simply an expression of religious faith; it is also the means by which religious faith is cultivated. While Pascal fails to offer a plausible account of how ritual can lead to faith, the classical Confucian philosopher Xunzi's account of ritual – especially his account of how rituals shape a person's character and how one comes to "acquire a taste" for the things that rituals achieve – is a helpful resource for extending and refining Pascal's account of how ritual works to transform not just our actions but our feelings, desires, and beliefs, as well.

> You want to find faith and you do not know the way? You want to cure yourself of unbelief and you ask for remedies? Learn from those who have been bound like you, and who now wager all they have. They are people who know the road you want to follow and have been cured of the affliction of which you want to be cured. Follow the way by which they began: by behaving just as if they believed, taking holy water, having masses said, etc.[1]
>
> Of the paths to learning, none is quicker than to like the right person, and exalting ritual comes second .... If you are going to take the former kings as your fount and make benevolence and righteousness your root, then rituals are exactly the highways and byways for you.[2]

[1] Blaise Pascal, *Pensees and Other Writings*, trans. by Honor Levi (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 155-156. Hereafter cited parenthetically with page number.

[2] "Xunzi", trans. by Eric L. Hutton, in *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, Second Edition (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2005), pp. 259-260. All subsequent translations from the *Xunzi* follow Hutton 2005 unless otherwise specified and are cited parenthetically with page number. For a complete translation, see Eric L. Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

Much has been written about Pascal's *The Wager*, but most interpreters pass quickly over his discussion of the role of ritual in the development of religious faith. That this is a neglected aspect of Pascal's view is understandable, for it does not pertain directly to the heart of the wager – the contention that "If there is a God, he is infinitely beyond our comprehension," which means that "reason cannot decide anything" about God's existence (153). According to Pascal, we should "Wager that God exists, without hesitating!" because if God exists, we win everything – an eternity of life and happiness (154). If God doesn't exist, we lose nothing, because – and here Pascal writes not just as a philosopher but a mathematician – any finite number of hours, days, or years "wasted" believing in a God that doesn't exist are, in fact, "pure nothingness" compared with the prospect of infinity: "That removes all choice: wherever there is infinity and where there is no infinity of chances of losing against one of winning, there is no scope for wavering, you have to chance everything" (154).

Yet Pascal has a good deal more to say about what wagering "yes" entails, and the results of the wager in one's daily living. In this paper, I examine Pascal's contention that religious practice plays a key role in the development of belief in God. I argue that for Pascal, ritual has both an expressive and a developmental role: it is not simply an expression of religious faith; it is also the means by which religious faith is cultivated, even in those who do not believe in God. However, Pascal fails to offer a plausible account of how religious practice can lead to faith; ritual by no means has the central role in Pascal's thought that it has in the work of some other thinkers. Notable among these is the classical Confucian philosopher Xunzi, and I argue that Xunzi can serve as a helpful resource for amending, developing, and refining this dimension of Pascal's view. Specifically, I focus on Xunzi's account of how rituals serve to shape a person's character and how one comes to "acquire a taste" for the things that rituals achieve. Despite the remarkable differences between them, I show that Xunzi's view can amend and augment Pascal's account of how ritual works to transform not just our actions but our feelings, desires, and beliefs, as well. Not only does this renew Pascal as a resource for thinking through the relationship between faith and ritual; it also offers an example of how East Asian religious philosophy, as well as comparative philosophy, can contribute in significant ways to our understanding of a variety of thinkers and topics in the philosophy of religion and theology.[3]

I. PASCAL'S WAGER AND THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICE IN FAITH

Pascal opens *The Wager* with a discussion of the nature of infinity: "A unit added to infinity does not increase it at all, any more than a foot added to an infinite length. The finite dissolves in the presence of the infinite and becomes pure nothingness. So it is with our mind before God ..." (152). Given the limitations of our finite minds in the face of the infinite, we cannot resolve the question of God's existence through rational argumentation, and so we must wager either that God exists or that God doesn't exist: "But here there is an infinitely happy infinity of life to be won, one chance of winning against a finite number of chances of losing, and what you are staking is finite" (154). His account of the nature of infinity leads Pascal to argue that since we are forced to gamble,

[3] There has been much written on ritual in disciplines such as anthropology, but very little in the discipline of philosophy. One of my central aims in this paper is to show how the work of philosophers can help us to better understand and appreciate the role of ritual, and thus to show how work from different disciplines can be valuable in the study of ritual. I also hope to help convince philosophers that ritual is worthy of more attention than it has received in the discipline of philosophy. My argument is certainly not that studying Pascal and Xunzi is the *only* way to appreciate these things or that they are the only thinkers who ever noted certain dimensions of ritual practice; rather, I am arguing that their work *does* help us to appreciate a range of important aspects of ritual, and that a comparative study of these two philosophers is especially helpful. While there are many different thinkers who can enlighten our understanding of ritual, including a variety of Confucian thinkers and scholars in fields such as anthropology, I have chosen to focus on Pascal and Xunzi both because these are thinkers in which I have expertise as a specialist in classical Chinese philosophy and the philosophy of religion, and because in studying and teaching these thinkers over the course of several years, I have found the comparative study of ritual in their work to be a helpful resource for thinking through the relationship between ritual and belief. For a discussion of the reasons for selecting particular thinkers as subjects for comparison in comparative philosophy, see my *Confucius, Rawls, and the Sense of Justice* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), pp. 55-58. For interdisciplinary studies that put Confucian philosophers into conversation with work in ritual theory, see Robert Campany, "Xunzi and Durkheim as Theorists of Ritual Practice", in Ronald L. Grimes (ed.), *Readings in Ritual Studies* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), pp. 86-103; Michael J. Puett, "The Haunted World of Humanity: Ritual Theory From Early China", in J. Michelle Molina and Donald K. Swearer, *Rethinking the Human* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 95-11; Michael J. Puett, "Ritual Disjunctions: Ghosts, Anthropology, and Philosophy", in V. Das, M. Jackson, A. Kleinman, and B. Singh, *The Ground Between: Anthropologists Engage Philosophy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 218-233; T. C. Kline III, "Sheltering Under the Sacred Canopy: Peter Berger and Xunzi", in T. C. Kline III and Justin Tiwald, *Ritual and Religion in the Xunzi* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014), pp. 159-178.

"you have to have discarded reason if you cling on to your life, rather than risk it for the infinite prize which is just as likely to happen as the loss of nothingness" (155). Now, one might be bothered by Pascal's apparent disregard for whether or not one holds true beliefs, and the time and effort we expend as a result of holding certain beliefs, but his account is grounded in a mathematical point: no amount of time spent in this life could possibly make it worthwhile to gamble against infinity.

While we can use our reason to evaluate the stakes and wager wisely, it is important to remember why the wager is necessary in the first place: given our finitude, we are severely limited in what we can know about God. Indeed, Pascal maintains that Christians who are unable to provide a rational basis for their belief should not be criticized for that; they are simply "keeping their word" by taking seriously the contention that God is "infinitely beyond our comprehension" (153). He writes that "we know neither the existence nor the nature of God, because he has neither extent nor limits. But we know of his existence through faith" (153). For Pascal, faith is of the heart and not our reason: "It is the heart that feels God, not reason: that is what faith is. God felt by the heart, not by reason" (157). But how does faith in something that cannot be known by reason develop?

Pascal's answer to this question, and his contention that religious practice plays a key role in leading one to faith, is presented when Pascal entertains a series of questions and objections from an interlocutor who cannot bring herself to believe in God, even though she understands that she must wager. She says, "I am made in such a way that I cannot believe. So what do you want me to do?" (155). Pascal responds by urging this person to "realize that your inability to believe, since reason urges you to do so and yet you cannot, arises from your passions. So concentrate not on convincing yourself by increasing the number of proofs of God but on diminishing your passions" (155). For Pascal, the passions are clearly distinct from and in this case opposed to reason, consisting of strong feelings or emotions that cloud our judgment, preventing us from proceeding as we should – in belief or in action – even when we have good reasons to do so. But there is another piece to the puzzle, for Pascal says to this interlocutor, "You *want* to cure yourself of unbelief," emphasizing that this person *wants* to believe in God, but is unable to move herself to do so (155, emphasis mine). So we have a person who not only understands the reason why she should believe in God, but also *wants* to do so. Yet her passions hold her back and she cannot bring

herself to make the wager. For Pascal, then, the passions are opposed both to this individual's reason and her desire to have faith, and the way for her to address the problem is to diminish her passions.[4]

It is worth noting that the problem is complex, as Pascal paints it: this individual is not simply held back by reason or desire, and Pascal does not see religious faith as resulting solely from reason or the passions, nor does he equate the individual's desires – especially her desire to believe and to be a person of faith – with her passions. Pascal seems to understand the latter as the emotions – perhaps rooted in fears, painful memories and aversions tied to her experiences with religion – that hold her back even though her reason and her desires ought to lead her to believe. On his view, there are multiple faculties that are in tension with each other, but the passions are the ultimate barrier to faith in the case of this individual, which is what leads him to argue that she must diminish her passions. Pascal argues that the way to do this is to engage in religious practice, which "diminishes the passions, which are your great stumbling-blocks" (156). Why should we think that religious practices will effectively diminish the passions and lead one to believe in God? Pascal makes an argument from precedent here, arguing that others have been led to believe in God as a result of ritual practice:

> Learn from those who have been bound like you, and who now wager all they have. They are people who know the road you want to follow and have been cured of the affliction of which you want to be cured. Follow the way by which they began: by behaving just as if they believed, taking holy water, having masses said, etc. That will make you believe quite naturally, and according to your animal reactions (155-6).

There are a number of features of Pascal's view that should be noted here. First, Pascal rejects the view that religious rituals are simply a way of expressing one's faith, or a way for the faithful to communicate with God. It is clear that he also sees ritual as having a developmental role when it comes to faith: participation in religious rituals can lead one to have faith in God. If one sees faith as fundamentally being about

[4] Although not all Christian thinkers have agreed about the nature of faith and how it is acquired, there has been a general tendency to view faith as consisting of three aspects or elements: belief or assent (*assensus*), trust (*fiducia*), and obedience. Some Christian theologians and philosophers have emphasized one or more of these aspects of faith over others, but very few have denied any of them altogether. For a helpful overview of this set of issues, see C. Stephen Evans, *Faith Beyond Reason: A Kierkegaardian Account* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 1-15.

a relationship with God, then this is not surprising, for religious rituals provide an opportunity for a relationship to develop. Pascal states that faith is a gift from God, but his account of the role of ritual suggests that ritual plays a role in preparing us to receive this gift; if ritual practice is important, then we are not completely passive recipients.[5] Without opening oneself up to such opportunities, one should not expect to develop a relationship or have an experience that would give rise to faith. Second, we can see Pascal's concern with those who suspend belief, and suspend themselves in between a life of belief and unbelief. On his view, not only *do* we all, in fact, wager – since even those who claim to be uncertain about God's existence either go to mass or do not – but those who claim to be uncertain typically do not do the things that would allow one to move from uncertainty to certainty.[6] The expectation seems to be that God will do all of the work, if God exists, and that nothing is required of them in order to prepare or open themselves up to the kind of encounter that moves one to believe.[7] Such individuals never give faith a fighting chance.

To be sure, Pascal exhibits considerable confidence in the power of religious rituals to transform our beliefs. But one difficulty with Pascal's view is seen in his claim that participating in religious rituals "will make you believe quite naturally, and according to your animal reactions." Pascal's language here reveals an important though not unsurprising aspect of his view, historically: he accepts the Cartesian view of animals and the human body as machines. As a result, he appears to advocate a purely mechanical mode of behavior that is, as he says, characteristic of animals.[8] Pascal sees ritual practice as diminishing the passions, which will remove the stumbling blocks that prevent this individual from

[5] His view also seems to assume that the Church and its sacramental system is, or can be, the means that God uses to instill faith in an individual. So although Pascal was largely critical of the Church in his day, he nevertheless seems to accept this traditional Catholic view, at least in a basic form. For Pascal's remarks on faith as a gift from God, see *Pensees* 11-12 (par. 41) and 118 (par. 487). See also Michael Moriarty, "Grace and Religious Belief in Pascal" in *The Cambridge Companion to Pascal*, ed. by Nicholas Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 144.

[6] William James defends a similar view in "The Will to Believe" (1897).

[7] David Wetsel argues that Pascal's primary target audience is not hardened unbelievers, but dubious or tentative unbelievers. See Wetsel, *Pascal and Disbelief* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), esp. pp. 366-86.

[8] On this aspect of Pascal's view, see Moriarty, "Grace and Religious Belief in Pascal", pp. 144 and 158 n. 1.

believing, but he says nothing about how this process works, nor does he seem to think it includes any type of reflection on what one is doing when one takes holy water or attends mass. In the absence of further explanation, it is difficult to see how these actions could diminish the passions and ignite one's belief in God. Pascal's view seems to be that we will simply grow accustomed to behaving in certain ways and will be "naturally" lulled into belief. Pascal's remarks about custom shed further light on this aspect of his view, for he presents belief as automatic, and not as a result of a gradual transformative process or as arising from experiences that engage the heart. He writes, "Custom is natural to us. Anyone who becomes accustomed to faith believes it, and can no longer not fear hell, and believes in nothing else" (156).[9] Michael Moriarty points out that on Pascal's view, "Custom inclines the body (the 'machine') and carries the mind unreflectingly along with it. This is no doubt disastrous when the beliefs it supports are irrational. But custom also supports true beliefs ... which is why Pascal suggests that our intellectual convictions need the reinforcement it provides. If we have once seen the truth (in this case, of Christianity), we must try to stabilize our conviction, for left to itself belief ebbs and flows."[10]

Pascal clearly evinces an understanding of how difficult and complex it can be for individuals to have faith – even when they *want* to believe and understand the reasons why they should.[11] He also understands that ritual is a powerful tool in relation to religious belief, and he rightly maintains that belief doesn't develop in a vacuum or isolation from others; we are initiated into a life of faith through rituals and customs, and by being a part of a certain kind of community. But Pascal's account falls short of offering a compelling account of how ritual can transform one's faith. While he maintains that religious practices can transform us, he thinks this transformation takes place automatically, as a result of blindly practicing rituals with the body, with little if any reflective or affective engagement.[12]

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[9] Here we see a similarity with Hume, who viewed custom and experience as evidential grounds for belief (including religious belief).

[10] Moriarty, "Grace and Religious Belief in Pascal", pp. 155-56.

[11] While it is beyond the scope of the present paper, there is a large body of literature in epistemology and the ethics of belief concerning whether belief can be willed, with the general consensus being that it cannot.

[12] Pascal does not offer a supernatural explanation for how this transformation occurs (e.g., in terms of the operation of the Holy Spirit), but this is likely an implicit feature of his

There are, however, resources in Pascal's work that will prove helpful in working to address these difficulties, one of which is his contention that faith resides in the heart. As we saw earlier, Pascal defines faith with reference to the heart: "It is the heart that feels God, not reason: that is what faith is. God felt by the heart, not by reason" (157). Having grounded belief in God in the experience of feeling God with one's heart, Pascal goes on to reject the view that reason plays a decisive role in the process: "The heart has its reasons which reason itself does not know: we know that through countless things" (158). If we take these remarks seriously, then for Pascal, faith should be closely tied to rituals because they set aside the space and time to encounter God – providing opportunities for us to feel God with the heart, for the heart to acquire its own reasons which will be unknown by reason. Here we can see clearly the realist aspect of Pascal's claim: there is something we are trying to contact and appreciate. He describes faith as highly experiential, and it is easy to see how participation in the rituals that are central to the lives of the faithful – when engaged reflectively and with sincerity and meaning – might give rise to genuine faith. The problem, of course, is that Pascal does not defend such a view. His definition of faith is not integrated with his discussion of how religious practice leads to faith, and he does not specify that rituals must be followed reflectively; to the contrary, his remarks suggest the opposite. Nevertheless, one way of amending Pascal's view of the relationship between ritual and faith is to further develop his account of how faith ultimately resides in the experience of the heart feeling God, and to offer an account of how ritual can help to facilitate this experience.

Another aspect of Pascal's view that can serve as a constructive resource in amending his account of the relationship between ritual and faith is what we might call his moral argument for participating in the life of a religious community. In addition to his contention that religious practice gives rise to faith, Pascal contends that a variety of virtues are cultivated in the process: "You will become faithful, honest, humble, grateful, doing good, a sincere and true friend" (156). Here Pascal builds upon his contention that we should wager "yes" based on the potential for infinite gains versus finite losses, arguing that there are finite gains,

view. Traditionally, Christian theologians have tended to view God's grace as a necessary condition for faith, and while Pascal was more of an Augustinian than a Thomist (given his Jansenist theological views), he would have been familiar with the Thomistic view that faith (along with hope and love) is one of the "infused" or supernatural virtues.

as well: "I tell you that you will win thereby in this life, and that at every step you take along this path, you will see so much certainty of winning and so negligible a risk, that you will realize in the end that you have wagered on something certain and infinite, for which you have paid nothing" (156). Pascal highlights the genuine goods that come with living well and developing the virtues that are often cultivated within religious communities, and the process of moral cultivation that he describes is not an unreflective one; to the contrary, when he says that we will realize in the end that we have wagered on something certain and infinite, he is suggesting that we will reflect on the transformation that has taken place in our lives and that this will strengthen our faith. Pascal goes on to elaborate on the role that members of religious communities play in relation to the process of moral cultivation: "We owe a great deal to those who warn us of our faults, for they mortify us; they teach us that we have been held in contempt, but they do not prevent it from happening to us in the future, for we have many other faults to merit it. They prepare us for the exercise of correction, and the removal of a fault" (156). Everything that Pascal describes here involves cognitive and affective work on the part of the individual. So while he does not offer an account of how ritual practice requires reflecting and feeling in certain ways, he does seem to envision these things as part of the work of moral cultivation within religious communities. In amending Pascal's account of ritual, these remarks might be extended and applied to his account of ritual and faith.

Although I will argue below that Pascal's definition of faith as "God felt by the heart" and his discussion of moral cultivation within religious communities serve as helpful resources for amending his account of ritual and faith, I also contend that considerable further constructive work is needed in order to offer a plausible account of how religious rituals can diminish the passions that hold one back from faith, and lead to genuine religious belief. In the next section I turn to the work of the 3rd century BCE Confucian thinker, Xunzi, who offered a sophisticated account of how ritual serves to transform a person's character – including not just their behavior but their desires, feelings, and beliefs, as well. Xunzi's explanation is also broadly naturalistic, in the sense that it does not rely upon supernatural explanations of how ritual practice transforms a person's character. I will argue that Xunzi offers us a fruitful way of amending and developing various aspects of Pascal's view of ritual and faith in order to make it more plausible. In the process, we will come to

a deeper appreciation of the unique character of ritual, and its importance in different philosophical and religious traditions.

II. XUNZI ON RITUAL AND MORAL SELF-CULTIVATION

Like Pascal, Xunzi believed that religious rituals could shape us in significant ways. However, unlike Pascal, whose primary concern was how ritual gives rise to religious faith, Xunzi was most concerned with how ritual changes a person's character, leading them to embody the virtues that define the Confucian Way (Dao 道) and also instilling in them a genuine love of the Way.[13] This tells us something important: Xunzi was interested not just in leading people to have certain beliefs, but in bringing about a thoroughgoing change in them, including not just their beliefs and behavior but also their desires and feelings. As we have seen, Pascal, too, contends that being a part of a religious community can help one to develop a range of virtues. But there is nevertheless an important difference here, and keeping this difference in mind will allow us to note several features of Xunzi's view that can help us to deepen and extend Pascal's account. For it is partly because of Xunzi's focus on how ritual shapes a person's character in a thoroughgoing way – as opposed to how it gives rise to religious faith – that he offers such a detailed account of precisely *how* ritual transforms us, and it is this account that will prove to be a rich resource when we return to Pascal below.

Xunzi argues that humans are born without any moral sensibilities; this leads him to claim that "Human nature is bad," which for him means that the state humans find themselves living in prior to acquiring a proper education is a bad one. We are led exclusively by our unlimited physical desires, and possess no incipient moral inclinations or tendencies.[14] As Philip J. Ivanhoe points out, the most critical aspect of Xunzi's position

[13] Hutton offers an insightful description of Xunzi's understanding of the Way as "the proper pattern for organizing both society as a whole and the life of each individual within it. The Way is the highest normative standard in Xunzi's thought, and it is in following the Way that people come to possess the various virtues that he advocates and thereby to achieve the status of gentlemen and sages." See Eric L. Hutton, "Xunzi and Virtue Ethics" in the *Routledge Companion to Virtue Ethics*, ed. by Lorraine Besser-Jones and Michael Slote (New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 114.

[14] Xunzi argues explicitly against the earlier Confucian thinker Mengzi, who claimed that humans have incipient moral inclinations that can develop into virtues with the proper kind of cultivation. For an overview of Mengzi's view, see P. J. Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2000), pp. 15-28.

is that we begin life "in a state of utter moral blindness. Morally, in our natural state, we are rudderless ships. According to Xunzi, we have no innate conception of what morality is; we would not recognize it even if we were to see it plainly before us."[15] This, however, does not mean that we cannot become good. Xunzi is profoundly optimistic in this regard, for he contends that with much hard work and the proper tools, humans are not only capable of change, but thoroughgoing transformation – a process that he likens to artisans reshaping recalcitrant substances such as wood, metal, and clay:

> Thus, crooked wood must await steaming and straightening on the shaping frame, and only then does it become straight. Blunt metal must await honing and grinding, and only then does it become sharp. Now since people's nature is bad, they must await teachers and proper models, and only then do they become correct in their behavior. They must obtain ritual and the standards of righteousness, and only then do they become well ordered (298-99).

In this passage, Xunzi not only describes what the process of cultivation is like; he also mentions the essential tools that are necessary for this process, including "teachers and proper models," and "ritual and the standards of righteousness." Rituals have a special place in Xunzi's account, for he argues that past sage-kings crafted them as a way of dealing with the unlimited desires of humans in their natural state:

> From what did ritual arise? I say: Humans are born having desires. When they have desires but do not get the objects of their desires, then they cannot but seek some means of satisfaction. If there is no measure or limit to their seeking, then they cannot help but struggle with each other. If they struggle with each other then there will be chaos, and if there is chaos then they will be impoverished. The former kings hated such chaos, and so they established rituals and the standards of righteousness in order to allot things to people, to nurture their desires, and to satisfy their seeking (274).

The rituals (li 禮) that Xunzi advocates are a particular set of formal practices that "mark out" the Way: "Those who cross waters mark out the deep places, but if the markers are not clear, then people will fall in. Those who order the people mark out the Way, but if the markers are not clear, then there will be chaos. The rituals are those markers" (273). These rituals specify how one should behave across a broad range

[15] Ibid, p. 32.

of circumstances, including how one should move, speak, dress, eat, etc., while also including religious rituals such as funeral rites and ancestral sacrifices. While most English speakers today separate social customs and matters of etiquette from religious rituals, Xunzi and other early Confucians saw them as unified under the category of "ritual." They further regarded all of these things – things we would refer to as manners, as well as funerals, weddings, and forms of religious worship – as having tremendous moral significance, partly because they understood them to have both expressive and developmental functions.[16] As Ivanhoe argues, early Confucian thinkers maintained that rituals "shaped the character of those who practiced them, expressed and refined the virtue of those who knew them well, and influenced those who participated in or observed a given ceremony."[17]

All of this should sound somewhat familiar, for as we have seen, Pascal contends that rituals are not just an expression of religious faith, but a way of developing faith, even for those who cannot yet bring themselves to believe in God. There is a notable difference between Xunzi's focus on the expression and development of virtue, and Pascal's focus on the expression and development of faith. Nevertheless, Pascal, like Xunzi, recognizes that the developmental role of ritual is particularly important, for on his view ritual leads to a transformation in one's beliefs by diminishing the passions that are a barrier to belief – something we will explore more fully below. Pascal also exhibits an awareness of the expressive role of ritual when he instructs individuals to follow the way by which those who have faith began, "by behaving just as if they believed, taking holy water, having masses said, etc." On his view, the ritual practices of believers are an expression of their faith – of "wagering all they have."

Just as Pascal stresses that those who wish to have faith must follow the example of believers, who "have been cured of the affliction of which you want to be cured" (156), Xunzi argues that those who wish to develop the virtues of the sages must have teachers and follow the "proper models" seen in the example of the sages: "The learning of the

[16] The other category Xunzi mentions in the above quoted passage – the standards of righteousness – refer to what Hutton describes as a specific set of higher-order social standards created by the sages for structuring society (e.g., by defining various social roles), from which the more particular directives for behavior contained in ritual are derived. (See Hutton 2005: 260, n. 12)

[17] Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, p. 4.

cultivated person enters through his ears, fastens to his heart, spreads through his four limbs, and manifests itself in his actions. His slightest word, his subtle movement, all can serve as a model for others" (259).[18] Despite their shared emphasis on following the model of others, there is a remarkable difference between Pascal's and Xunzi's descriptions here. Xunzi emphasizes the process of change and describes this process in detail, specifying that the sages became this way slowly, over time, through the things they heard and felt – things which "fastened" to their hearts, and were made manifest in their actions. Xunzi explicitly emphasizes the stages in the process of development here; he does not leave it at saying that they received instruction, but describes how learning *fastened* to their hearts, *spread through their four limbs*, and then manifested itself in their actions. In offering his account of this process of transformation, Xunzi repeatedly stresses that the virtue we see in such people does not stem from their nature: "One who makes use of a boat and oars has not thereby become able to swim, but he can now cross rivers and streams. The cultivated person is not different from others by birth. Rather, he is good at making use of things ..." (257).[19] The cultivated person makes use of rituals and moral exemplars as tools for acquiring virtue, just as one might use a boat and oars to cross rivers and streams. Like a boat and oars, rituals are human-made implements, designed for a particular purpose, that allow us to do things we would not otherwise be able to do. Xunzi, like Pascal, contends that we need external help in order to get where we are going. However, as we can already see, Xunzi has much more to say about how and in precisely what ways those external tools operate to successfully bring about change in us, not just externally but internally as well.

According to Xunzi, rituals – and teachers to guide us in our practice and understanding of ritual – are the most important form of external help that is available to us:

> Rituals are the great divisions in the proper model for things; they are the outlines of the proper classes of things. And so learning comes to

[18] Translation slightly modified from Hutton 2005, with "junzi" translated as "cultivated person" here and in subsequent quotations.

[19] The phrase "outside-in" is used by T. C. Kline III to describe Xunzi's view that moral transformation begins with external practices and eventually reaches the heart, transforming our feelings and desires. This view is a contrast to Mengzi's "inside-out" account of moral cultivation, where we begin with our innate moral feelings and those lead us to transform our behavior.

> ritual and then stops, for this is called the ultimate point in pursuit of the Way and Virtue. In reverence and refinement of ritual, the balance and harmony of music, the broad content of the *Odes* and *History*, the subtleties of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, all things between Heaven and earth are complete (258-9).

Xunzi argues that rituals can bring about permanent change in people, and he expresses this view by returning to his craft metaphors: "Through steaming and bending, you can make wood straight as a plumb line into a wheel. And after its curve conforms to the compass, even when parched under the sun it will not become straight again, because steaming and bending have made it a certain way" (256). It is not just that we are reshaped externally; Xunzi also contends that we come to acquire new feelings and our desires are shaped in such a way that acting in accordance with the Way comes naturally: "Thus, the person of benevolence carries out the Way without striving, and the sage carries out the Way without forcing himself" (292). Xunzi stresses that this process of transformation takes considerable time and persistence, but – drawing upon his craft metaphors once again – he stresses that "if you start carving and don't give up, then you can engrave even metal and stone" (258).

For Xunzi, "engraving" involves shaping a person's desires and feelings as well as their behavior, and ritual practice is the primary means by which he proposes to do this. Ritual, he argues, "is a means of nurture" (274). It is not, however, a way of eliminating the desires that create problems for us in our natural state. He is quite explicit about this: "All those who say that good order must await the elimination of desires are people who lack the means to guide desires and cannot cope with the mere having of desires. All those who say good order must await the lessening of desires are people who lack the means to restrain desire and cannot cope with abundance of desires" (296). For Xunzi, we do not need to eliminate our desires or even lessen them. Rather, we must allow ritual to "nurture" us by giving our desires an appropriate outlet and also shaping and channeling them: "In every case, ritual begins in that which must be released, reaches full development in giving it proper form, and finishes in providing it satisfaction" (276). Once again, Xunzi offers a series of vivid metaphors to describe this process:

> Ritual cuts off what is too long and extends what is too short. It subtracts from what is excessive and adds to what is insufficient. It achieves proper form for love and respect, and it brings perfection to the beauty of carrying out the standards of righteousness. Thus, fine ornaments and

> coarse materials, music and weeping, happiness and sorrow – these things are opposites, but ritual makes use of them all, employing them and alternating them at the appropriate time (280).

On Xunzi's account, ritual offers our desires a healthy outlet – one which channels, shapes, shortens or extends them as appropriate, but which does not seek to eliminate them. We can easily appreciate how this works by considering examples such as marriage and funerals. Marriage allows us to meet various physical and emotional needs (seen in various kinds of desires) in a way that not only gives rise to stable families (and, as a result, a more stable society) but which also prevents us from harming ourselves and others in certain ways, and which allows us to flourish more fully by experiencing the joys, challenges, and satisfaction that is uniquely found in sharing a life with someone. Similarly, funeral rituals set aside the space and time to mourn losses openly and deeply within a supportive community – a process that can help to prevent unhealthy responses to death such as denial and depression, which undermine our flourishing (and the flourishing of others in our families and communities) in clear and dramatic ways.

Xunzi contends that we must follow in the footsteps of those who have walked the path of self-cultivation: "In learning, nothing is more expedient than to draw near to the right person. ... if you imitate the right person in his practice of the precepts of the cultivated person, then you will come to honor these things for their comprehensiveness, and see them as encompassing the whole world" (259). The last line here is important: we come to genuinely see and appreciate things in a new way when we undergo this transformation. This is especially important to note because for Xunzi, we do not see things this way to begin with, nor do we initially take joy in following the Way – something Xunzi clarifies in the following passage:

> Just as it is said that a short well rope cannot reach down to the source of a deep well, those of little knowledge cannot reach up to the words of the sages. The allotments found within the *Book of Odes* and the *Book of History*, and in rituals and music are such that the average person will not understand them. Therefore it is said, study them once and you will see them as worth studying again .... Follow and investigate them repeatedly and you will like them more.[20]

[20] Xunzi Ch. 4/p. 16/lines 11-16, trans. by Eirik L. Harris, quoted in "The Role of Virtue in Xunzi's Political Philosophy", Dao 12 (2013), 103-4.

Here Xunzi argues that only by studying and practicing rituals do we come to appreciate them, see them as worthwhile, and come to enjoy them. When we begin the path of self-cultivation, we do not initially enjoy ritual, nor do we appreciate its richness or meaning – at least not fully. Only through practice – only through giving ritual a chance – do we come to appreciate their meaning and take joy in their richness. The fact that Xunzi highlights both our appreciation and our enjoyment of ritual is important, for he highlights both the cognitive and affective transformation that takes place in us. On Xunzi's view, we "acquire a taste" for ritual and for the Way. The cultivated person

> makes his eyes not want to see what is right, makes his ears not want to hear what is not right, makes his mouth not want to speak what is not right, and makes his heart not want to deliberate over what is not right. He comes to a point where he loves it, and then his eyes love it more than the five colors, and his ears love it more than the five tones, his mouth loves it more than the five flavors, and his heart considers it more profitable than possessing the whole world (261).

Although we cannot initially appreciate the moral dimensions of life when we embark upon the Way, as our understanding progresses we begin to take satisfaction in virtue and ritual. As Ivanhoe puts it,

> The culmination of this process is a fundamental change in one's evaluative scheme. ... In the initial stages of self cultivation, knowledge of the Way will enable one to override one's errant desires. As one's understanding deepens and, with sustained and concerted practice, one shapes oneself to the moral way, one discovers new, richer, and more powerful sources of satisfaction within a newly unfolding form of life.[21]

For Xunzi, the cultivated person comes to desire and take joy in different things, but this happens partly through his own dedicated efforts to work at it: he *makes* his eyes, ears, mouth, and heart not want certain things. This should remind us of the way in which Pascal envisions one who lacks faith taking holy water and attending mass, and coming to have faith as a result of behaving as if she believed. But Xunzi stresses that if such practices are to successfully change us, we "must reflect and deliberate

[21] Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, p. 35. Eirik L. Harris discusses the role of this aspect of Xuni's view in his political philosophy. He offers the helpful example of how one "acquires a taste" for foods such as raw oysters, discussing how the process of "acquiring a taste" for ritual is similar in many respects. See Harris 2013: 104-5.

and seek to know [ritual and the standards of righteousness]" (301). For Xunzi is not simply a matter of doing the same things that the sages do; the way that we do them also matters; our hearts must be fully engaged in the process: "The heart must know the Way, and only then will it approve of the Way. Only after it approves of the Way will it be able to keep to the Way and reject what is not the Way" (288).

All of this shows that for Xunzi, ritual plays a central role in what Xunzi and other Confucians refer to as "self-cultivation," meaning *the cultivation of the self*. There are two important things I want to note about Confucian accounts of self-cultivation here. First, Confucian self-cultivation should not be confused or equated with change that we as individuals bring about in ourselves, on our own. Confucians like Xunzi explicitly argue that self-cultivation always occurs in concert with and through our reliance on and trust in others. Xunzi's remarks on the importance of having the proper teachers and models highlight this dimension of his view and its connection to his view of human nature: "If you do not concur with your teacher and the proper model but instead like to use your own judgment, then this is like relying on a blind person to distinguish colors, or like relying on a deaf person to distinguish sounds" (265). We simply cannot engage in Confucian self-cultivation by ourselves, without the help and support of others; for Xunzi this is a natural outgrowth of the moral blindness that defines our natural state, but all early Confucians affirm the importance of families, communities, and even the state in making self-cultivation possible for each of us. Second, as Ivanhoe points out, "The practices of Confucian moral self cultivation were not designed to blindly habituate people to virtue, and though their full realization would, under normal circumstances, result in a variety of both material and psychological goods, they could not successfully be cultivated solely with the aim of acquiring such goods. The pursuit ultimately must be an expression of who one is, a follower of the Way."[22]

This point is especially important because it highlights the deepest and most important difference between the views of ritual that we find in Xunzi and Pascal. Xunzi would decisively reject Pascal's contention that ritual can mechanically habituate people to faith, and this is precisely where Xunzi's account can help to amend and develop Pascal's view to make it more plausible. It is to this task that I now turn.

[22] Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, pp. 7-8.

III. RE-SHAPING PASCAL'S VIEW OF RITUAL AND FAITH

The most striking difference between Xunzi and Pascal is that Pascal advocates practicing rituals because it leads one to believe in God, while Xunzi advocates practicing rituals because it leads to virtue. The contrast here is not just between a personal God and the Way; the contrast is also between the goal of faith and the goal of having a certain sort of character. Now, as we have seen, Pascal *does* believe that one acquires certain virtues in the process of coming to faith. Similarly, it is not that Xunzi does not think beliefs are important; he contends that one acquires certain beliefs about the Way through the process of Confucian moral self-cultivation – seen for instance in his contention that the cultivated person "considers it more profitable than possessing the whole world." In addition, Xunzi clearly believes that having certain beliefs about the Way is central to following it; he writes, "there has never been one who knows that nothing is as great as the Way and yet does not follow the Way" (297). However, Xunzi's primary focus is not on how ritual transforms our beliefs but our character as a whole. As we have seen, Xunzi places a special emphasis on the way that ritual transforms our desires, which is part of the reason why it is so appropriate to speak of "acquiring a taste" for the Way.

In contrast, Pascal's contention is *not* that rituals *shape the desires* of the individual who knows that she should believe in God and wants to believe, yet cannot bring herself to have faith. Interestingly, though, Pascal contends that the practice of ritual serves to *diminish this individual's passions*, which are, on his view, the barrier to belief. Although he does not elaborate on the process by which the passions are diminished and belief in God ignited – except to say that ritual practice will make one believe naturally, easily, and automatically – Pascal seems to think of diminishing the passions and igniting faith as one unitary act.[23] Once this individual's passions are diminished, the barrier to faith has been removed, and she will believe. A central question here is whether belief in this sort of case is enabled simply by removing barriers, or whether something more positive and constructive is required. For Pascal, one component of this is likely divine grace, but surely there must be other components as well.

[23] In this regard, he is similar to neo-Confucians such as Wang Yangming, who think moral action will begin to emerge spontaneously once we eliminate bad desires.

Xunzi's account of ritual can offer a way of amending Pascal's view in two primary ways in order to make it more plausible. First, Xunzi would urge Pascal not to think solely in terms of diminishing the passions but shaping them. Xunzi's account urges us to take into consideration the complex array of feelings, desires, motives, attitudes, thoughts, and actions that contribute to an individual's ability to bring herself to believe something. Applied to Pascal's account, while some passions may need to be diminished or "cut off," there are others that will need to be increased or "stretched" – something I discuss further below. Second, engaging in ritual should be understood not as a process of blindly habituating an individual into faith; rather, ritual practice should engage one's feelings and reflective capacities. For Xunzi, this is the only way that ritual can bring about genuine change in a person's character – for Xunzi's goal is not just to bring about external change in one's behavior, but in one's feelings, desires, beliefs, and attitudes. Applied to Pascal's account, only if one reflects upon one's experiences with religious rituals – including the feelings and religious experiences to which they give rise – are they likely to result in genuine belief. It is important to remember that the individual Pascal describes already knows the reasons why she should believe, and she already wants to believe. What she seems to lack is the kind of experience that leads one to believe in God.

There are good reasons to think that this type of view is consistent with other aspects of Pascal's view, and that this sort of amendment to his view would therefore result in making his overall view more consistent and coherent. So in addition to the fact that Xunzi offers considerable detail as to how ritual brings about substantial change – thus allowing Pascal to offer a more fully-developed account of how ritual might lead to faith – another reason to accept these particular amendments to Pascal's view is that they build upon other dimensions of his thought, namely his definition of faith and his account of how virtues develop within religious communities.

To be sure, faith is an affair of the heart, for Pascal; we cannot use our reason to decide whether or not God exists; that is the entire point of the wager, and that is why he defines faith as "God felt by the heart, not by reason" (157). But the fundamental issue, for one who believes in a personal deity, is how one enters into a relationship with that being, and how one comes to feel God with the heart. This relationship cannot be reduced to or equated with a path of moral self-cultivation – although

Pascal rightly believes that one ought to develop certain virtues and become a certain sort of person as a result of that relationship, a view that is firmly rooted in Christian tradition. But the relationship is the starting place, and since one cannot have a real relationship with someone without believing that she or he exists, belief in God is the first step on that journey. Simply put, rituals set aside the space and time for individuals to *encounter* God with the heart. They also specify formal practices that are designed to prepare one for such an encounter, and that have a long history of serving this function. In this way, rituals give faith a fighting chance by serving as a context that is set aside specifically for that purpose.

In addition to his view of faith, what we might call Pascal's self-cultivationist side can also be drawn out and further developed in order to support these amendments to his view. As we saw earlier, Pascal offers an account of how religious communities play a key role in helping us to develop a range of important virtues. He also argues that they lead us to "acquire a taste" for virtue: "You will be faithful, honest, humble, grateful, doing good, a sincere and true friend. It is, of course, true; you will not take part in corrupt pleasure, in glory, in the pleasures of high living. But will you not have others?" (156) Here Pascal argues that we will come to take pleasure in different things as a result of living a life of faith within a religious community that is in part defined by its values. If we extend this line of argument to Pascal's account of ritual and faith, then we might argue that on an amended view, Pascal would maintain that one ought to "acquire a taste" for ritual – one ought to come to love and delight in religious practices because they give rise to the experiences and encounters that lead to faith – and when we experience them as such, we come to love them.

Xunzi's views concerning the expressive and developmental aspects of ritual can also help us to amend and further develop certain dimensions of Pascal's account. As we saw above, early Confucians believed that rituals not only developed the character of those who practiced them, but also refined the virtue of those who knew them well and influenced those who observed them. If we apply the basic Confucian view here to Pascal's account and consider ritual as having these functions in relation to religious faith, then it is important to note that the ritual practices of believers are not only an expression of faith (evidence that they have "wagered all they have," as Pascal contends). They also serve to further develop the faith of believers, deepening it not just as a result of repetition

or habit, as Pascal contends, but because of the experiences, feelings, and kinds of reflection to which ritual gives rise. Such a view takes seriously the dynamic and developmental dimensions of faith, which for most religious people are not simply a matter of believing or not believing, once and for all. Additionally, as Ivanhoe argues, early Confucians like Xunzi maintained that rituals can even influence those who observe a given ceremony, and this is another way in which one might be moved to faith. One need not take holy water, receive communion, or recite prayers in order to be affected by these practices. Observing others doing these things – as well as experiencing parts of rituals that do not require active participation, such as taking in the scent of incense and the sound of sacred music – can be a deeply moving experience, and can be an important part of the process of influencing one's beliefs. Both of the amendments to Pascal's view that I advocate here stress the developmental dimension of faith, and the process through which one comes to believe in God over time. This is not completely out of line with what Pascal says, for he sees ritual as habituating people to faith, and habits take time to establish. But the view I advocate here stresses the role of reflection on one's experiences and feelings in ritual settings, it does not see this process as "easy," "natural," or automatic, and it also moves away from a strict focus on the moment where one first believes in God. It is also important to note that Pascal's account of faith clearly requires the participation of a divine person, God, which is curiously absent from his discussion of how engaging in ritual practice can help one to acquire faith and develop certain virtues, as well.

CONCLUSION

My primary aim in this paper has been to show how Pascal's account of ritual and faith can be amended and developed in light of Xunzi's view, in order to overcome certain problems. However, it is important not to lose sight of the very different traditions and times in which these two thinkers are situated. Given the centrality of belief in God in Pascal's view, it is only natural to ask where Xunzi stands when it comes to religious beliefs of this sort. Does he think that rituals give rise to religious faith in the way that Pascal describes, and if so, what is the role of religious faith? Xunzi's religious outlook differs significantly from his predecessors Kongzi and Mengzi, who each express their belief in the quasi-personal entity of Tian 天 ("Heaven"), which has a plan for human

beings to flourish, occasionally acts in the world in order to help fulfill that plan, and called individuals like the former sage-kings and Kongzi to help preserve, codify, and propagate the Way that will enable humans to achieve this end.[24] For Xunzi, however, Tian is not an entity or force for human good, but the impersonal patterns and processes of nature. Xunzi's naturalistic understanding of Tian, not surprisingly, impacts his view of ritual. At least when it comes to certain religious rituals, Xunzi rejects the view that they have any effect on the natural order: "One performs the rain sacrifice and it rains. Why? I say: There is no special reason why. It is the same when one does not perform the rain sacrifice and it rains anyway." Why, then, should we perform such rituals? Xunzi writes, "When Heaven sends drought, one performs the rain sacrifice. One performs divination and only then decides on important affairs. But this is not for the sake of getting what one seeks, but rather to give things their proper form" (272). What does Xunzi mean by "giving things their proper form"? Xunzi believes that rituals give order and shape to our lives – not just any shape, but the proper shape – the best one, the one that will allow us to flourish most fully.

While a thorough overview of Xunzi's religious view is beyond the scope of this paper, all of this helps to make clear that Xunzi holds a very different religious outlook than Pascal. One of the virtues of the amended version of Pascal's view that I propose is that it helps Pascal fend off an obvious weakness in the view as stated, namely that if faith is just mechanical habituation and the people undergoing it are blind to the process, then it is a form of brain-washing; it can be used to get people (or oneself) to believe *anything*. Clearly, this is not what Pascal intended. My amended account of ritual as providing space and time for individuals to encounter God highlights the realist aspect of this process that is needed to avoid this implication. The process is not mechanical; it requires us to be aware and attentive and it does so confident that if we are, *we will see and feel something we currently tend to overlook*. For Xunzi, this process is not just a matter of discovery, and herein lies an important difference. While Xunzi maintains that the Way leads us to see things we miss and interpret what we see differently, he also thinks it leads us to develop

[24] See Philip J. Ivanhoe, "Heaven as a Source for Ethical Warrant in Early Confucianism", *Dao* 6 (2007), 211-220; Erin M. Cline, "Religious Thought and Practice in the Analects", in *The Dao Companion to the Analects*, ed. by Amy Olberding (New York: Springer, 2013), pp. 259-291.

sensibilities that we have the capacity for but which need to be oriented and shaped in order to become distinct and vital parts of our standing desire set. These issues are especially worth noting because given these differences, one might expect that the work of a thinker such as Xunzi would not be able to shed light on Pascal's account. One of the things that this paper shows is that it is quite possible for thinkers from very different religious traditions, with very different religious perspectives, to augment one another's views – something that should lead us to explore further the possibilities that exist for comparative work in the philosophy of religion.[25]

[25] I would like to thank Philip J. Ivanhoe, Michael R. Slater and an anonymous referee for very helpful comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this paper.

CONFUCIANISM AND NON-HUMAN ANIMAL SACRIFICE

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Abstract. In this paper, I argue that the use of non-human animals in ritual sacrifices is not necessary for the Confucian tradition. I draw upon resources found within other religious traditions as well as Confucianism concerning carrying out even the most mundane, ordinary actions as expressions of reverence. I argue that this practice of manifesting deep reverence toward God (or deities and ancestors in the case of Confucianism) through simple actions, which I call *everyday reverence,* reveals a way for Confucians to maintain the deep reverence that is essential for Confucianism, while abandoning the use of non-human animal sacrifice.

I. INTRODUCTION[1]

Whether or not, and to what extent, humans have obligations toward non-human animals is a topic widely discussed by contemporary moral philosophers. Frequently such questions are explored from a contemporary liberal perspective (often importing utilitarian leanings) that attempts to operate from a distinctively moral point of view. But how should one approach such questions from a Confucian point of view? This is a question that has been underexplored. Recently, however, Professor Ruiping Fan has addressed this issue by arguing that for Confucians, the practice of non-human animal sacrifice is both justified

[1] I am particularly indebted to Philip J. Ivanhoe for reading through several drafts of this paper and offering me extremely valuable comments and suggestions. I have also benefited from the advice and comments of Ruiping Fan, Eirik Harris, Sungmoon Kim, Justin Tiwald, and my audience at the City University of Hong Kong. This work was supported by a generous grant from the Academy of Korean Studies funded by the Korean Government (MEST) (AKS-2011-AAA-2102).

and necessary in order to uphold the integrity of the Confucian tradition. In this paper I will argue against Professor Fan's claim that the sacrificial use of non-human animals is necessary by showing how the Confucian tradition can maintain its integrity without the practice of non-human animal sacrifice, especially through the practice of what I call *everyday reverence*.[2]

I will lay out, in Section I, Fan's argument for the conclusion that non-human animal sacrifice is necessary for upholding the Confucian tradition and clarify what I take to be some ambiguities in the argument. In Section II, I will present a desideratum that must be satisfied if the Confucian tradition is to discard the use of non-human animal sacrifice without endangering its integrity. I will attempt to satisfy this desideratum by presenting alternative practices, focusing especially on what I call *everyday reverence*. In Section III, I will make a few remarks about the role and value of traditions and offer a suggestion about how Confucians like Fan could respond to my argument.

In the course of presenting my argument, two questions will emerge: (1) What is the role and value of traditions? (2) How can we determine whether or not a certain practice is necessary for the maintenance of a tradition? Although both questions deserve more attention than I will be able to offer in this paper, my hope is that what I say will at least bring to the surface what makes them significant and worthy of further exploration.

I. FAN'S ARGUMENT

In his article, "How Should We Treat Animals? A Confucian Reflection," Ruiping Fan argues for two central claims. The first is that the Confucian view of using non-human animals for sacrificial purposes is morally justified.[3] The second is that the sacrificial use of non-human animals is necessary for sustaining the Confucian tradition. The two claims are logically independent of each other. Even if the second claim is false, the first could still be true (or false). In this paper I will focus primarily on the second claim and argue that there are reasons for rejecting it. Nevertheless, I suspect that Fan and other Confucians would want to

[2] I am grateful to Justin Tiwald for suggesting the phrase 'everyday reverence'.

[3] Fan defends this claim by appealing to the threefold division of love as described in Mengzi 7A45. I will discuss this division in Section Two.

agree that if it turned out that the sacrificial use of non-human animals was morally impermissible, then it could not be essential to the Confucian tradition since all of the practices within the tradition must help one to live according to the Way (*dao* 道), and it would be difficult to see how an immoral practice could help one achieve such a life.

Fan provides the following outline of his argument:

(1) We ought to revere gods, spirits, and humans in practicing our filial or benevolent love to them.
(2) We ought not to revere animals in practicing our sympathetic love to them.
(3) Using animals in certain rituals is *necessary* to show our reverence to gods, spirits, and humans.
(4) Therefore: we ought to control our natural sympathy with animals and use them in these rituals.[4]

Premise (2) might at first glance look unnecessary, but I think that Fan includes it since if it turned out that even non-human animals require our reverence, it looks like the conclusion, which I take as including an "all-things-considered" ought judgment, might not follow. To make this point more sharply, I think it is helpful to make explicit the assumption that one is permitted to kill an entity if (and only if) it is not necessary to revere it.[5] So to restate the argument:

(1) We ought to revere gods, spirits, and humans in practicing our filial or benevolent love to them.
(2) We ought not to revere animals in practicing our sympathetic love to them.
(3) It is morally permissible to kill an entity if (and only if) reverence toward it is not required.
(4) Using animals in certain rituals is necessary to show our reverence to gods, spirits, and humans.
(5) Therefore: we ought to control our natural sympathy with animals and use them in these rituals.

[4] See Fan 2010: 90. By "animals" Fan clearly means non-human animals.

[5] Although I state this as a necessary and sufficient condition, the relevant question here is whether or not the fact that non-human animals do not require our reverence is sufficient for showing that it is morally permissible to kill them. I use a biconditional statement since it seems clear from the paper that Fan also thinks that the fact that an entity does not require our reverence is a necessary condition for the fact that it is morally permissible to kill it.

Let me begin by questioning (3), our additional premise, which is more directly related to the moral defensibility of non-human animal sacrifice. Why think that the fact that reverence toward an entity is not required implies that it is morally permissible to kill it? One might agree that the obligation to revere an entity is sufficient to make it morally impermissible to kill it (at least under normal conditions) but that it can be morally impermissible to kill an entity for other reasons as well. One could think that we ought not to kill non-human animals not because they require our reverence, but because they require what Fan calls "sympathetic love," one of the three forms of love that Fan draws upon to support his argument that the practice of non-human animal sacrifice is justifiable. Let me pause here to briefly lay out the three forms of love found in the *Mengzi* as discussed by Fan.

Drawing upon the text of the *Mengzi,* Fan develops a tripartite division of love involving three distinct attitudes that are appropriate for the type of relationship involved.[6] One ought to be devoted to one's parents (*qin* 親), benevolent (but not devoted) toward the people (*ren* 仁), and caring (but not devoted or benevolent) toward non-human animals (*ai* 愛). Fan uses the term "devotional love" for the love that one should have toward one's parents, "benevolent love" for the love that one should have toward other human beings in general, and "sympathetic love" for the love that one should have toward non-human animals. These different forms of love generate different requirements for action depending on other morally salient features of the particular situation in which a person finds herself.

Employing this division, Fan argues that while Confucians are obligated to treat animals "seriously, cautiously, and carefully" due to the requirements of sympathetic love, the kind of relationship that ought to exist between humans and non-human animals does not preclude the practice of killing non-human animals for ritual sacrifice. This is ultimately because while both devotional love and benevolent love give rise to the obligation of respecting ancestors, deities, and other humans, sympathetic love does not generate an obligation to respect non-human animals. So even if we do accept, along with Fan, that respect for an entity is necessary for the existence of an obligation to refrain from killing it, the real question becomes why sympathetic love doesn't also require respect.

[6] Fan relies upon *Mengzi* 7A45 to develop his account of love.

The reason Fan seems to think that sympathetic love cannot require us to respect non-human animals is because sympathetic love is qualitatively lower than benevolent love (the love that is appropriate to have toward humans) and there can be cases in which benevolent love can generate a more authoritative imperative for us to sacrifice the life of a non-human animal. As Fan notes, "In emergency situations like the burning down of the stables, we should not compute whether we should rescue a horse that has worked hard for us or a human being who is a total stranger, or whether we should save a dozen horses or a single human stranger." (Fan 2010: 84) One point that should be noted is that the examples Fan gives here are about *allowing* one or more non-human animals to die, for the sake of saving a human life, rather than actively killing non-human animals to save a human life. Those who think that there is a significant moral difference between doing and allowing may agree with Fan's verdict in the examples, but may still claim that sympathetic love requires one to never actively kill any non-human animals. Nevertheless, Fan's argument that it can be permissible to kill a non-human subject because the requirements generated by sympathetic love can be overridden by the requirements generated by benevolent love is plausible enough. If my children and I were lost in a forest and the only means of ensuring their survival as well as mine was to kill a local deer for food, benevolent love could override my sympathetic love for the deer, and require me to kill the deer to keep my family alive. But if in a similar situation, even if the only way to keep my children and myself alive were to kill a random human being that we happened to meet for the sake of consumption or to steal the food he had in his possession, I would still be obligated to refrain from killing this person. The relevant issue, however, is whether or not given the requirements of sympathetic love, it is permissible to kill a non-human animal for the sake of ritualistic sacrifice. Since the focus of this paper is not the moral permissibility of non-human animal sacrifice but its necessity for the Confucian tradition, let us grant that (3) is true.

As Fan himself points out, (4) is really the crucial premise of this argument. But as stated, we can interpret it in two ways. The first is that the sacrificial use of non-human animals is necessary for each and every act that manifests reverence toward gods, spirits, and humans:

> **Action Requirement:** If an act manifests reverence toward gods, spirits, and humans, then it must involve the use of non-human animal sacrifice.

I don't think Action Requirement is what Fan has in mind, especially because it is so implausible. There are clearly ways of manifesting reverence toward gods, spirits, and humans that do not involve the use of non-human animal sacrifice, e.g. through prayer or other forms of worship. More will be said about such practices in Section Two.

The second reading, which I take to be the one Fan is aiming at, is that if one is to cultivate and sustain the virtue (here understood as a character disposition to feel and act in a proper way) of reverence toward the gods, spirits, and humans, one must engage in non-human animal sacrifice:

> **Virtue Requirement:** One can obtain and sustain the virtue of reverence only if one practices non-human animal sacrifice.

There is, of course, a difference between what is necessary for cultivating or obtaining the virtue of reverence and what is necessary for sustaining it. But in this paper I will not distinguish the two. Concerning the Virtue Requirement one could also ask more detailed questions, for example, how often must one practice non-human sacrifice to cultivate or sustain the virtue of reverence? Such practical questions, I will also leave to one side.

So what reasons does Fan offer in support of the Virtue Requirement? To support this claim, Fan begins by identifying some of the key features of the attitude of reverence. The first key feature is a special sense of fear that "reflects a sense of appropriate awe in that it is inevitably related to our beliefs about the ultimate reality that lies beyond our control and our comprehension." (Fan 2010: 90) This feeling of fear or awe is directed toward entities that are "higher or greater" than us (Fan 2010: 90). But while it is understandable to think of someone as standing in awe of gods or spirits, how can such an attitude be directed toward other humans or even our ancestors? Fan provides us with an answer through a Confucian metaphysical account in which all humans are descendants of ancestors who were originally generated by Heaven:

> The Confucian understanding is that our original ancestors were generated by Heaven, the ultimate reality, as noble beings who are close to the gods of Heaven and the spirits of the earth. Our ancestors exist as the most spiritual forms of humans, watching over the fates and lives of us, their descendants. Accordingly, we must stand in awe of them and give them deep respect. (Fan 2010: 91)

Following along this line of reasoning, Fan argues that we need to also show reverence toward other human beings because "there is something essential to us that we receive from our ancestors, namely our spirits, which are higher and greater than our material bodies." (Fan 2010: 91)

I don't think this argument shows that we must have reverence, in the sense that Fan is using it, toward other humans for two reasons. The first is that as the argument is described we need to only have reverence for the spiritual component of human beings rather than, strictly speaking, human beings. For example, if one holds the view that human beings are animals or biological organisms (the view now known as "animalism" in contemporary metaphysics) and that all biological organisms must be constituted by a body, then it seems like one would not be required, strictly speaking, to revere other human beings.[7] The second, more important reason, is that since *every* human being possesses the ancestral spirit, the argument is inconsistent with one of the key elements of reverence, namely, the requirement that one looks upon an entity as higher or greater. It does seem a bit strange to claim that we ought to *revere* every human being, although it doesn't seem at all strange to claim that we ought to *respect* every human being. One possible reason is that the source of our respect for other human beings is our shared humanity – we can come to recognize that every human being is "one of us" possessing equal dignity or worth and therefore demands respectful treatment. In this way, no human being is either higher or lower than any other. The reason why it seems much more plausible to revere deities or spirits is because they represent something that *is* higher than us, "that lies beyond our control and our comprehension."[8] The same doesn't seem to hold for other humans generally. I submit, therefore, that reverence, in the sense at issue, is an appropriate attitude to have toward gods or spirits (where by "spirits" we may also include ancestral spirits) but not toward other human beings in general.[9] Accordingly, from this point on, I will direct my attention only to the claim that the ritualistic use of

[7] For an interesting defense of Animalism see Olson 2003.

[8] Of course, to an atheist all of this may sound nonsensical. But one simply needs to entertain the possible world in which there are such deities and ask whether reverence toward them would at least be intelligible in such a world.

[9] I say here "in general" because it may be that children can (perhaps fittingly) have his form of reverence toward their parents by seeing them as beings that are "higher" than them and lies beyond their control and comprehension. I thank P. J. Ivanhoe for bringing up this point.

non-human animal sacrifice is necessary for the cultivation of the virtue of reverence toward deities and spirits.[10]

Another key aspect of this attitude, according to Fan, is that it requires us to manifest such reverence through concrete rituals in two major ways: (a) "to shrink oneself" before the revered entity, or (b) to sacrifice for the revered entity the most valuable things one possesses. Fan goes on to say:

> Obviously, the most valuable thing one can offer is life, and the life of animals serves this purpose exactly in sacrifice. It is hard to imagine that something else could replace animals in this place because the killing and offering of animals in such rituals takes on a tremendous significance: it adds the dimension of our awe to deities and humans to the rituals as well as manifests the profound seriousness of the rituals. (Fan 2010: 92)

It is perhaps true that the most valuable thing one can offer is life, if one means by "life" one's own life. But it is unclear why the most valuable thing one can offer is the life of non-human animals, especially given the present circumstances in which for many who belong to the middle class and above, buying a non-human animal for sacrifice will not impose a heavy burden. Instead, one might think that certain moral or spiritual sacrifices, involving a significant amount of one's time and energy, are more valuable than having to sacrifice the life of a non-human animal. What is being required here is perhaps better captured by the notion of *self*-sacrifice, sacrifice that requires the giving of one's self. Now what counts as self-sacrifice will depend on the individual and what she finds difficult to give up – the goods that lie closest to her heart – which could very well be non-human animals. But it seems more likely that self-sacrifice will involve other gestures connected to deeper, more personal goods.

One point that Fan may want to make is that the sacrificial use of non-human animals is the only way to express the appropriate sense of awe

[10] What my paper leaves open, then, is that the sacrificial use of animals is necessary for the Confucian tradition because it is necessary for cultivating the attitude of respect towards humans. If non-vegetarian guests arrive, is it possible to serve them a purely vegetarian meal without disrespecting them and undermining one's general attitude of respect toward all human beings? I think so. As long as one explains to the visitors in a respectful manner the reasons for not serving meat and presenting a vegetarian meal that is clearly the product of time and effort, I do not think that either the hosts or guests must come away with any less respect for each other. One can even explicitly offer other gifts in place of the meat to the guests such as a more elaborate dessert or higher quality tea or wine.

to deities or spirits and to enable us to deeply appreciate the profound seriousness of the rituals. But it isn't quite clear why other rituals or practices cannot meet this demand. In the next section I will argue that practices found within other traditions that I believe can also be found in the teachings of Confucius, provide a way for Confucians to maintain the deep respect that one must hold toward deities and spirits.

II. CULTIVATING THE VIRTUE OF REVERENCE WITHOUT NON-HUMAN ANIMAL SACRIFICE

In order to show how the Confucian tradition might discard the practice of non-human animal sacrifice, without endangering the tradition's integrity, it would be useful to clearly state what would need to be true if, indeed, the Confucian tradition could go on without the sacrificial use of non-human animals. Fortunately, Fan articulates for us just this desideratum: "Moreover, if sparing animals from the rituals does not detract from the virtues of devotional and benevolent love to humans, sympathetic love to animals should lead us to spare animals." (Fan 2010: 85)

Although Fan leaves out of the quote above devotional and benevolent love to gods and spirits, I'm fairly certain that he means to include them since elsewhere in the article he also takes reverence toward them as one of the important reasons for why non-human animal sacrifice is necessary within the Confucian tradition. Moreover, since reverence is not an appropriate attitude to hold with regard to other humans, as I argued above, I will focus only on the use of non-human animal sacrifice and its connection to the virtue of reverence toward deities and spirits. So the desideratum is this: show how the Confucian tradition can discard the use of non-human animal sacrifice in rituals without impeding the virtue of reverence toward deities or spirits.[11] I believe that there are strong reasons for thinking that this desideratum can be satisfied and in this section I will discuss some of the resources found within other religious traditions as well as Confucianism that have allowed their adherents to cultivate the virtue of reverence toward God or deities.

Let me begin with the Christian tradition, which came to explicitly reject the practice of non-human animal sacrifice. While the exact

[11] Here I simply assume that Fan thinks of the "virtues of devotional and benevolent love" as equivalent with the virtue of reverence.

historical reasons for why the early Christians did not continue the practice of non-human animal sacrifice remains open, it is clear that at least up until 70 A.D. Christians not only were well aware that the sacrificial use of non-human animals was one possible form of worshiping God, but some Christians, possibly including St. Paul, even participated in the sacrificial rituals.[12] At some point in the 2nd Century, however, Christians came to explicitly reject the practice of non-human animal sacrifice for a variety of reasons.[13] Nevertheless, they did not abandon the view that the highest duty of human beings was to worship and revere God, and a number of early Christians, if we are to take their writings as well as their willingness to sacrifice their lives as evidence, expressed a profound reverence for God, the kind of reverence that Fan takes as necessary for Confucians, albeit toward a different object. So both Confucians and Christians hold at least this much in common, that one of the essential aspects of the tradition is to express reverence toward certain entities: God in the case of Christianity, and deities and spirits, in the case of Confucianism.

Now the following question is significant for our discussion: were the early Christians still able to cultivate the virtue of reverence toward God even without the practice of non-human animals sacrifice? I think the answer is, yes. Of course, one way to express reverence toward God, exercised by the pagans and ancient Jews, is the sacrifice of non-human animals as offerings. But a number of other practices have been employed by Christians to express reverence. Three practices especially have become integral to the Christian tradition: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. In order for such practices to truly foster a deep spirit of reverence, they must be exercised both mindfully and with the right intention. Neither simply going through the physical motions, nor partaking in the exercises for external benefits such as the admiration of others, will enable one to develop the virtue of reverence. Such ideas also chime with the teachings of Confucius: "If I am not fully present at the

[12] See Petropoulou 2008: Ch. 6. Much of my understanding of the history of non-human animal sacrifice within Christianity is indebted to her book.

[13] One reason is the theological belief that because God is perfect, God is lacking in nothing and so the sacrifice of non-human animals has no value. Another reason seems to be the desire to distinguish themselves as Christians from both Jews and pagans. For more on these reasons see Petropoulou 2008: Ch. 6. From a Christological point of view, since Christians view Christ himself as the ultimate sacrificial offering, they may also have found the need to sacrifice non-human animals as no longer necessary.

sacrifice, it is as if I did not sacrifice at all." (*Analects* 3:12)[14]

I believe that these three practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, when performed with the kind of mindfulness that Confucius advocated, enables one to go a long way toward fostering and sustaining the virtue of reverence that is required by the Confucian tradition.[15] But I think that besides these *particular* practices which can help one to cultivate deep reverence, Christianity also emphasizes the importance of reorienting one's *whole* life toward the service of God so that even the most mundane, everyday actions can be made into an opportunity to revere and glorify God. Call this *everyday reverence*.[16] Many Christian thinkers emphasize the importance of not only making sure that the large-scale, ceremonial actions are performed to express one's reverence toward God, but also making sure that one's daily life which consists of a multitude of small, seemingly inconsequential actions, are also directed toward the glorification of God. In his commentary on the Thessalonians, St. Thomas Aquinas offers the following way to satisfy St. Paul's exhortation to "Pray without ceasing":

> "Pray constantly" means to pray continuously. But then prayer is considered under the aspect of the effect of the prayer. For prayer is the unfolding or expression of desire; for when I desire something, then I ask for it by praying. So prayer is the petition of suitable things from God; and so desire has the power of prayer. "O Lord, thou wilt hear the desire of the meek" (Ps. 10: 17). Therefore, whatever we do is the result of a desire; so prayer always remains in force in the good things we do; for the good things we do flow forth from the desire of the good. There is a commentary on this verse pointing out: "He does not cease praying, who does not cease doing good."[17]

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[14] Slingerland 2003.

[15] A question that would have to be addressed is to what extent Confucians could incorporate these three practices into the Confucian tradition. I don't see any reason for thinking that they cannot all be carried over into the Confucian tradition. In fact prayer, broadly construed, already appears to be a component of the Confucian tradition.

[16] In this book on reverence, Paul Woodruff also notes how pervasive reverence is: "... reverence is all around us, even in the most ordinary ceremonies of our lives. It is as if we have forgotten one of the cylinders that has been chugging along in the vehicle of human society since its beginning." (Woodruff, 2001: 12-13)

[17] This is the second of three ways that Aquinas offers for satisfying St. Paul's exhortation. The first way is to always make sure that one prays at the appointed time for prayer. The third way is to give alms which may cause others to pray for you continuously. See Duffy 1969.

Aquinas recognizes that to "pray constantly" cannot mean to continuously repeat verbal prayers whether vocally or within one's mind. That would be psychologically too demanding and would impede one's ability to carry out the daily tasks necessary to live a well-functioning human life.[18] What Aquinas suggests is that we may think of prayer in terms of the effects of prayer – or as he puts it, "under the aspect of" the effects of prayer. In this light, we can see prayer as being carried forward in its effects long after the particular vocalized form of prayer has ceased. So when our prayer is directed at the attainment of the good, we are simultaneously expressing our desire for the good, and since that desire is what moves us to do what's good, prayer, understood in terms of its effects, is carried on through those actions that aim at and achieve the good.

I think that we can draw upon Aquinas's insight and apply it to the Confucian tradition. If one was to genuinely desire to express one's reverence toward the deities and spirits by structuring one's life in accordance with the Way, we can take that desire for reverence as being manifested through those actions that accord with the Way, even if those actions were not intentional under the description, "I'm now doing this for the sake of the Way." In living one's life in accordance with the heavenly mandate by being attentive to what one does in everyday life, one can express one's reverence toward the deities and spirits. What better way to honor the deities and spirits than by living rightly?[19]

To put things more concretely, we may take each day as an opportunity to pay tribute to God (or for Confucius, the deities and spirits) through small acts of sacrifice in the midst of our ordinary life. This can occur in a variety of ways, for example, by doing a favor for someone that one doesn't like, or by attentively performing one's duties even when they are difficult to do. That how we conduct ourselves in our day-to-day life has significant psychological consequences is supported by empirical evidence. Recent research revealing the regrets of divorced men and women listed lack of "affective affirmation" consisting of small gestures

[18] I will come back to this objection below.

[19] One problem, however, might be that while exemplifying the requirements of the Way in one's life is a good thing, it is unclear how by doing so, one also would be expressing reverence toward the deities and spirits. After all, the Way and the deities, even if metaphysically connected in some way, remain distinct objects. I think given the Confucian metaphysical picture there is no genuine problem since every virtuous action that comports with the Way also fulfills the desires of the deities and spirits.

such as compliments, hugs, or simple words of gratitude as one of the top five regrets.[20] In order to develop a good relationship with one's spouse, it is not only important to make sure that one remembers to treat her or him well on special occasions (e.g. birthday, anniversaries, etc.) but also on a daily basis through local, concrete actions.[21]

Besides small acts of sacrifice, we may also express reverence through everyday actions by manifesting a spirit of gratitude. An action that expresses gratitude toward the deities or spirits seems to me to be a prime example of a reverential action.[22] Appreciating the goods that one enjoys as a gift from the deities and spirits, especially one's ancestors, is an important way, I think, of showing reverence. One way to make this a daily practice would be to actively appreciate every meal as a gift and consuming the food with a spirit of thankfulness.

So through *everyday reverence*, by performing acts of small sacrifice, carrying out one's daily affairs with gratitude, and attentively trying to live in accordance with the Way, one can cultivate and sustain the virtue of reverence. Reflecting once again upon the notion of sacrifice, dedicating one's entire life to following the Way can itself, I think, be an exemplification of self-sacrifice *par excellence*. Of course, how one carries out such a commitment will individually vary depending on the details of one's circumstances. So if we take an expanded notion of what sacrifice can involve, the opportunities for sacrifice is almost limitless, especially given the multitude of ways in which we can work for justice

[20] These findings are part of a 25 years long research on marriage and divorce funded by the NIH. Interestingly, it is men who appear to need more affective affirmations during marriage. See Orbuch 2012.

[21] One might object here by saying that the example is disanalogous since the affective affirmations seem to be necessary for the sake of the other person, rather than the cultivation of a particular disposition for oneself. Although it is certainly true that the affective affirmations clearly help one's partner develop a more positive attitude, I think that they are also clearly important for the person who is also expressing the affective affirmation. It seems quite reasonable to think that by expressing affection in a sincere way through verbal and physical actions, the subject doing the expressing also cultivates a more positive attitude toward his or her partner through those very acts. We may think of this as a kind of "performative reinforcement."

[22] According to Barbara Fredrickson, gratitude, like other positive emotions, "broadens and builds" our personal character by enriching our intellectual and emotional resources for carrying out tasks and meeting future obstacles. (Fredrickson 2004) This can also help reinforce and strengthen one's commitment to living according to the Way by providing the necessary tools for dealing with those difficulties and challenges that disrupt a person's path toward living a virtuous life.

and peace in this world. This idea that we may manifest reverence through sacrificial acts of virtue is prominently featured in the Old Testament:

> This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; Setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own.[23]

The sacred texts of other religious traditions also confirm the importance of trying to make one's daily activities an expression of one's devotion to the deities. So we find in the Bhagavad Gita: "It is true, this world is enslaved by activity, but the exception is work for the sake of sacrifice. Therefore, ... free from attachment, act for that purpose" (III,9). "Whatever you do, or eat, or sacrifice, or offer, whatever you do in self-restraint, do as an offering to me," says Krishna (IX, 21).[24] Krishna is here also exhorting everyone to exercise reverence through everyday actions. Every action provides an opportunity to express reverence toward Krishna, and it is only by engaging in an act with a spirit of sacrifice, that one can achieve genuine freedom and no longer be "enslaved by activity."

We also find the significance of our daily affairs emphasized within the Confucian tradition:

> Master Zeng said, "Every day I examine myself on three counts: in my dealing with others, have I in any way failed to be dutiful? In my interactions with friends and associates, have I in any way failed to be trustworthy? Finally, have I in any way failed to repeatedly put into practice what I teach?"[25]

The emphasis here is on our daily interactions with others through which we can treat them with the respect that they deserve. Master Zeng realizes that much of our character formation depends upon how we deal with others within the context of ordinary life and that we must continually remind ourselves to conduct our daily affairs with propriety. We can also find this idea in the teachings of Confucius himself:

> Confucius fell ill, and Zigong went out to make a divination. Confucius remarked, "When I take my seat I do not dare to put myself first, I dwell as if practicing austerities, and I eat and drink [sparingly] as if preparing

[23] *New American Bible*, Isaiah 58: 6-7.

[24] These are passages that come out of Robert Adams's splendid book, *Finite and Infinite Goods*.

[25] *Analects* 1.4.

> to perform a sacrifice. I have been performing my own divination for quite some time now."[26]

Commenting on this passage Edward Slingerland notes, "The theme in this version is similar: one should live one's entire life in a disciplined and reverent manner, rather than adopting discipline and reverence only when one wants to curry favor with the spirits or receive special guidance from heaven." (Slingerland 2003: 76) That is to say, we must make each day a unified expression of our reverence toward the deities, and not only on special occasions. This practice certainly requires both an active awareness of one's daily actions as well as a continuous effort to act rightly. Carrying out each day in this manner would require a practice like the one Master Zeng recommends, examining oneself daily and reflecting upon whether or not one's actions successfully embodies the Confucian spirit.[27]

If a Confucian, even having abandoned the ritual of non-human animal sacrifice, were to truly take the advice of Aquinas, the Bhagavad Gita, Master Zeng, and Confucius, by examining one's daily actions thoroughly and mindfully, and find simple ways to express devotion to the deities and spirits throughout the course of one's day, it is difficult to see how such a person could fail to cultivate the virtue of reverence that Fan is advocating.

One worry, which I noted earlier, was that carrying out one's daily life in this extremely conscientious manner could become too restrictive and close a person off from exhibiting the level of spontaneity that seems important and perhaps even necessary for any healthy and flourishing life. What is being advocated here, however, is not to make sure that during the course of every action, one always brings to surface an occurrent belief like: "and by this I am now revering the deities." Attempting to always do this would, indeed, make anyone's life oppressively confined and too psychologically taxing. Rather, the idea is to reorient one's life so

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[26] This passage appears in a lost fragment from the *Zhuangzi* that is preserved in the *Imperial* Readings. Compare with 7.35 of the *Analects*.

[27] The focus on cultivating a certain kind of character through constant monitoring of one's everyday life is emphasized well by P. J. Ivanhoe: "for Confucians, the freedom of human agency is more a matter of steering than rowing. Their goal is to cultivate a greater awareness, attentiveness, and care for our thoughts and feelings, our actions, speech, comportment, and demeanor, the clothes we wear, the music we play and listen to, and how we conduct ourselves in our interactions with fellow human beings, other creatures, and the greater natural world" (Ivanhoe 2013: 76-7).

that even when one is engaging in minor tasks or small acts of sacrifice, one does them with the implicit belief that they are being done for the sake of honoring the deities or spirits. What this involves may require developing what Robert Audi calls "the disposition to believe" to affirm that one's ultimate goal in performing a particular act is for the sake of expressing reverence toward the deities or spirits.[28] One can imagine, for example, a loving father whose purpose of working as a plumber during the day is structured around his deeply grounded concern to materially provide for his family. But if we focus in on a particular moment while he's at work, for example, fixing a leaky faucet, we may be unable to find any occurrent thoughts about his family. Mark Berkson aptly captures this phenomenon in his account of Xunzi on rituals: "While the body is involved in the moment-to-moment postures and sensory awareness of sights, sounds, smells, textures, and utterances, the mind is directed toward larger contexts of meaning ... which leads to a deeper appreciation of the ritual act." (Berkson 2003: 170) The key insight that Berkson provides for us here is that even simple actions can involve a more reflective conception of what we are doing as part of a larger narrative structure, even though from the external point of view, the agent may appear to be carrying out a fairly mundane activity like fixing a leaky faucet. For a Confucian, this larger narrative could be taken as structuring one's life according to the Way. And even though the thought that the final end of all of one's pursuits is the attainment of the Way may not rise to the surface of an agent's mind during the course of every activity, the endorsement of this vision can play a powerful regulative role in determining both what one does and doesn't do, and the way in which one chooses to carry out an action.

Taking up this Confucian attitude of structuring one's whole life according to the Way will, of course, require significant attentiveness

[28] Audi makes a distinction between dispositional beliefs (sometimes referred to by philosophers as "tacit" or "implicit" beliefs) and dispositions to believe. He criticizes philosophers for over-attributing beliefs to agents and argues that what most people think of as dispositional beliefs are in fact dispositions to believe. Dispositions to believe, unlike dispositional beliefs are not a species of belief but the "readiness to form a belief" that requires an intermediate process of coming to form a belief through the instantiation of one of the realizers for that disposition. I think that developing the disposition to believe that every act is ultimately done for the sake of achieving the Way would avoid the problem of excessive psychological burden while still allowing for the agent's desire to obtain the Way to structure her life as a whole. See Audi 1994.

and effort. However, the tendency for most of us is not to be excessively attentive and careful about our everyday lives, but to go through them mechanically, with little focus or engagement. Being more attuned to what we are doing on a daily basis, and trying to act in ways that manifest reverence, can help us become more attuned to the world, and consequently, help us live more meaningful and satisfying lives.[29]

There is of course a limitation on what kinds of activities can serve as an opportunity to practice *everyday reverence*. Certainly what one perceives as evil or malicious is excluded. It is also perhaps a bit silly to think that one can embody reverence even in going to the bathroom, watching a movie, or taking a nap. But although not every action presents an equal opportunity to express one's reverence toward the deities and spirits, the main point here is that the opportunities for expressing reverence in one's daily affairs is much wider than one might think. Even in doing something as ordinary as watching a movie, one can try to avoid movies that do not achieve any genuine goods, or are detrimental to one's character. It is perhaps the accumulation of such seemingly simple, inconsequential actions that end up determining what kind of person one becomes.

III. TRADITION AND REVISION

Nothing that I have said in this paper implies that Confucianism can simply discard every large-scale ritual without incurring significant loss. It is quite reasonable to think that Confucianism needs to carve out the space for occasions in which its members can ceremonially express the deep reverence they have toward the deities and spirits. But, as I have argued in this paper, I think such ceremonies can be carried out without the use of non-human animal sacrifice and still express the kind of reverence that Fan wants to preserve within the Confucian tradition.

Any healthy tradition must keep alive the possibility of reform.[30] But the difficulty lies in understanding whether a reform destroys the

[29] In his illuminating account of happiness, Daniel Haybron notes attunement as one of the central elements of happiness (Haybron 2008: 115-120).

[30] There are, however, some Confucians who may claim that Confucianism has achieved maximal perfection and cannot be revised to be made better. I find the claim highly implausible and not one that Confucians need to accept. In fact, the fact that a tradition is fixed or static may be evidence for thinking that the tradition is dying or dead. See MacIntyre 1984.

tradition by altering its very essence, or if it only revises and develops elements that already are inherent in the tradition. In the modern age, the prevailing attitude has been that the only good arbiter for evaluating the worth or permissibility of a practice is neutral, impartial reason that is independent of all attachments to local traditions or particular forms of life. On this view, we must, if we are genuinely concerned with morality, adopt what Henry Sidgwick called "the point of view of the universe" and judge whether or not a certain practice, or even a particular tradition, ought to go on. A number of philosophers, most notably, Alasdair MacIntyre, have rejected this view, arguing that there is no neutral vantage point from which to operate.[31] We all belong, in one form or another to a particular tradition and we cannot but make judgments from within that tradition. This is clearly an epistemological view, and one that need not fall into metaphysical relativism about value. All it claims is that even if there are objective values, we can only access them through traditions, traditions that hopefully have developed in ways that allow their members to grasp moral truths.

I think that if we are to take any robust tradition such as Confucianism seriously, we cannot simply view traditions as vehicles by which we disseminate values that have been checked and processed by the instruments of impartial reasoning. If this is all that traditions are good for, then it is difficult to see why we ought to adhere to any tradition in the first place. One of the prerequisites for being a genuine member of any

[31] See MacIntyre 1988: 349-369. Of course, MacIntyre's account of traditions has also been the subject of criticism. Most recently, Tom Angier argues that MacIntyre's conception of traditions is based too closely on the way that traditions within scientific enquiry operate, thus giving moral traditions a rather procrustean picture, misrepresenting moral traditions "as homogeneous, tightly integrated systems" that results in an overestimation of "the extent to which they are, in general, rivals incapable of communicating or interacting" (Angier 2011: 18). P. J. Ivanhoe also criticizes MacIntyre for modeling his view of moral tradition on the paradigm of scientific traditions, and unduly accepting a Hegelian picture in which eventually there will be a "unified moral order," akin to the unified order that we observe in science, through the process of conquest by one tradition over another (Ivanhoe 2011: 168-169). I think both Angier and Ivanhoe are right in criticizing MacIntyre for taking the analogy between scientific traditions and moral traditions too far. I would note though that MacIntyre does reject the aspect of Hegelianism that claims there will come to be one absolute and complete moral tradition: " ... the Absolute Knowledge of the Heglian system is from this tradition-constituted standpoint a chimaera. No one at any stage can ever rule out the future possibility of their present beliefs and judgments being shown to be inadequate in a variety of ways" (MacIntyre 1988: 361).

significant tradition is a sense of loyalty and trust, which requires one to give at least some independent weight to the practices endorsed by one's own tradition, even if, in the end, one comes to reject the particular practices found within the tradition, or in extreme cases, abandon the tradition altogether. Good traditions allow us to begin our enquiries from a starting point that itself is the product of historical development, enabling us to work with resources and tools that can help us to continue the process of revision and argument.[32] The epistemological model on which traditions are built is not that of Cartesian foundationalism, but of Neurath's ship: even while we know that the ship we are riding on is damaged, we must keep afloat on it, slowly repairing it in time, plank by plank.

One possibility that I have not addressed in this paper is the existence of reasons internal to the Confucian tradition that makes the practice of non-human animal sacrifice essential, reasons that are only accessible to those who understand the tradition "from the inside." This is a point that I think needs emphasis, especially because we all too readily denounce practices of other traditions without understanding that there may be "goods internal to those practices" that may be crucial for the tradition's survival.[33] In fact, I believe that focusing on this point would be one possible way for Professor Fan to respond to my argument. Along this line of thought, he could identify certain unique goods that can only be realized through the sacrificial use of non-human animals, goods that are integral to the Confucian form of life. Perhaps one way to do this would be to capture the depth and significance of the sacrificial ritual by bringing to the surface its symbolic value. Doing this may enable those of us outside of the Confucian tradition to gain a clearer grasp of just what is at stake in carrying out the ritualistic sacrifice of non-human animals. Confucius himself clearly believed that there is something important worth preserving in the sacrificial act:

> Zigong wanted to do away with the practice of sacrificing a lamb to announce the beginning of the month. The Master said, "Zigong! You

[32] P. J. Ivanhoe rightly points out another important value that traditions promote: they enable us to see ourselves as parts of something that transcends just our own individual lives. Drawing upon the work of Xunzi, Ivanhoe remarks, "only those who recognize that most of the activities in which they engage and which they enjoy are parts of an ongoing tradition find full satisfaction in what they do. Only such people see themselves and what they do as part of a long and majestic lineage." (Ivanhoe 2013: 12)

[33] Here I borrow the concept of "internal goods" of practices from MacIntyre 1984.

> regret the loss of the lamb, whereas I regret the loss of the rite." (*Analects* 3:17)[34]

What exactly did Confucius see in the rite that was the source of regret? Confucius seems to be lamenting here about something of value that is *inherent* in the very practice of the sacrificial act, rather than some calculative benefit external to the activity. One way to capture this intrinsic significance might be to identify those aspects of the sacrifice (assuming that there are any) that make it attractive or appealing, and forge a connection to the larger narrative structure that constitutes the Confucian form of life. By doing so, it may be possible to transform what may at first appear to be simply a gruesome and violent ritualistic act into something perhaps dignified or even beautiful. I find this to be the most promising line of thought for those seeking to defend the practice of Confucian non-human animal sacrifice. I still believe, however, that the account of *everyday reverence* I have developed above could still provide a way for Confucians to abandon non-human animal sacrifice while developing and sustaining the virtue of reverence through living the kind of sacrificial life I've sought to describe and to illustrate.

None of this implies that we cannot criticize other traditions or that traditions should never revise their own rituals or practices. Nevertheless we do need to take traditions, especially those that are constitutive of a way of life, seriously, by attempting to obtain a genuine understanding of the goals and values that shape the attitudes and perceptions of those who adhere to them. We should first seek an informed account of why those within another tradition accept those values and beliefs that are constitutive of that tradition, even if initially they appear unpalatable from our own ethical point of view.[35] By doing so we can more easily

[34] Slingerland 2003. This particular passage is beautifully explored by Richard Wollheim, in which he argues that utilitarianism cannot adequately capture the kinds of value that is exemplified by significant ritualistic practices like those of the sacrificial use of the lamb. I thank P. J. Ivanhoe for alerting me to Wollheim's paper and for further discussions about how Wollheim's ideas are relevant to the issues of this paper.

[35] One could object here by drawing upon examples that involve what appear to be extremely egregious practices, e.g. female genital mutilation or ancient practices of child sacrifice, and question whether or not we should even start entertaining the possibility that such practices can be justified or valuable in some way. My view would be that although we may psychologically be unable to reflect on the validity of such practices because they may appear to us as "beyond the moral pale", we should still try to understand what those who have engaged in those practices found appealing about them. My strong suspicion is that even if we were to examine such seemingly horrendous practices carefully, we would

avoid useless misunderstandings of alien traditions and preserve the possibility of actually learning from them. Only after attempting to enter into the perspective of another's tradition, should we begin to step back and critically evaluate the tradition's values and beliefs.[36] Refutation need not be the central drive for those trying to understand another tradition. We can be sufficiently motivated by the judgment that a radically different tradition may offer a new, fresh perspective, and provide novel intellectual resources for building on our own tradition.

IV. CONCLUSION

I have argued that by drawing upon the resources of other traditions, as well as ideas that can be discovered within the Confucian tradition itself, there is a way for Confucians to preserve the virtue of reverence without having to partake in the practice of non-human animal sacrifice. To do this I have focused on the ways in which our daily lives present a variety of opportunities to cultivate and sustain a reverential attitude through small but meaningful acts of self-sacrifice. This picture of expressing reverence through everyday actions, I believe, captures the *spirit* of the Confucian sacrificial rites by preserving the core idea that such practices require one to offer up something of value to the spirits and deities. My suggestion was that by organizing one's entire life to live according to the *Dao* as an expression of gratitude toward the deities and spirits, an individual's daily activities can be transformed into sacrificial offerings that express one's reverential attitude. If we assume that the deities and spirits are closely attuned to the *Dao*, we should believe that striving to embody the *Dao* in all that we do would most satisfy what the deities and spirits really want for us. So on this account, not only would the offerings of *everyday reverence* help reinforce our reverence toward the deities and spirits but also, at the same time, bring them satisfaction as well.

I have, however, left room for the possibility that there may be reasons internal to Confucianism for preserving the sacrificial use of non-human animals that only those firmly entrenched in the tradition

still continue to maintain the judgment that they are completely unjustified. In fact, such reflection could even *strengthen* our opposition to such practices.

[36] Alasdair MacIntyre has elaborated upon the need for us to imaginatively enter into the perspective of an alien tradition in many of his works. See especially MacIntyre 1988.

can grasp. One way to do this, I have suggested, is to identify internal goods that only the sacrificial rite can achieve. Now whether or not there are such goods remains to be seen, and even if such goods were to be identified, we would still need to determine whether they are sufficient for justifying a practice we seem to have good reasons to reject. What I have demonstrated in this paper is that non-human animal sacrifice is not necessary for achieving the virtue of reverence.

Despite the commonly held view that Confucius was a parochial moralizer, unreflectively sticking to traditional practices, he was in fact quite aware of the importance of striking a balance between the need to modify and revise one's tradition, on the one hand, and of resisting changes that may unduly harm its integrity, on the other.

> The Master said, "A ceremonial cap made of linen is prescribed by the rites, but these days people use silk. This is frugal, and I follow the majority. To bow before ascending the stairs is what is prescribed by the rites, but these days people bow after ascending. This is arrogant, and – though it goes against the majority – I continue to bow before ascending."

Confucius' point is that we ought neither to support nor reject a traditional rite simply because a majority of people follow it; rather, we should reflect upon the reasons for supporting or rejecting the rite and act upon the results of such reflection.

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CONFUCIAN HEAVEN (天 *TIAN*): MORAL ECONOMY AND CONTINGENCY

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Abstract. This paper examines the Confucian concept of *tian*, conventionally translated into English as "Heaven." The secondary literature on *tian* has primarily focused on the question of what *tian* is: e.g., whether *tian* is an anthropomorphic deity or a naturalistic force, or whether *tian* is transcendent or immanent. Instead, this paper locates *tian* with respect to the ethical life of human beings, and argues that the two conflicting concepts of "moral economy" and "contingency" are main characteristics of *tian*. This paper further investigates these characteristics in Kongzi's and Mengzi's ethical thought: how they conceptualized moral economy and contingency, and how their different conceptualizations shaped their respective ethical programs: Kongzi's ethics of faith and Mengzi's ethics of confidence.

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the main reasons it is difficult to gain a clear understanding of the Confucian concept of Heaven (hereafter *tian* 天) is a paucity of information. Traditional Confucian writings seldom contain direct discussions of *tian*; these writers did not try to prove or demonstrate what *tian* is, in what place and in what form *tian* exists.[1] As Yü Ying-shih rightly observes, the Chinese tradition did not produce a discipline parallel to theology, the systematic inquiry about the nature of God, that

[1] This was especially true of the early period. When Neo-Confucian thinkers treated metaphysical issues, they were more interested in discussing the notion of *tian*, particularly in relation to *li* 理 (principle).

developed in the West (Yü 2002: 76).[2] Unlike Western theologians and philosophers, Confucian thinkers wrote as if they all knew and agreed on what *tian* is.[3] In this respect, Hall and Ames's phrase, "implicit cosmology," captures the Confucian situation accurately: "The cosmological ground of his [Kongzi's] elaborated philosophy was a starting point derived from tradition, largely absorbed intact and simply assumed in his discussions with his followers." (Hall and Ames 1987: 198) Thus, it is only we who do not know what early Confucians tacitly thought about *tian*, and it is up to modern scholars to uncover the Confucian concept of *tian* and delineate its characteristics.

The Confucian concept of *tian* derived from an earlier sense of *tian* that was characteristic of the Zhou 周 dynasty. Early writings about the Zhou founders argue that *tian* transferred its mandate to rule from the Shang 商 to the Zhou. The *tian* of the Zhou was also closely associated with Shangdi (上帝 Lord on High), a deity at the apex of the Shang pantheon.[4] However, Shangdi and *tian* appear to differ from each other in at least two ways. First, the term *di* 帝, "lord" or "ruler," suggests the strong anthropomorphic character of Shangdi, whereas the term *tian*, which has as one of its main senses "sky," implies a close affinity between *tian* and Nature. Perhaps an even more important difference comes from the distinct religious systems of the Shang and Zhou.[5] Shang kings

[2] Robert Louden makes a similar remark: "Confucius, we may say, is thus religious but not theistic." He means that Confucians relied on *tian*, i.e., a more-than-human power, for moral values and obligations, but their understanding of *tian* is nothing like the personal God of the Western religions (Louden 2002: 79).

[3] However, this does not mean that all traditional thinkers shared exactly the same meaning of *tian*. While sharing a similar concept of *tian*, thinkers conceptualized it differently.

[4] In her investigation of the identity of Shangdi, Sarah Allan (2007) challenges the common assumption that Shangdi was the god of the Shang and *tian* was that of the Zhou. According to her explanation, Shangdi was the spirit of the pole star and controlled the ten suns, which were identified with the Shang ancestral spirits. *Tian* referred to the celestial body which Shangdi and the other ancestral spirits inhabited. As a result, Allan argues that *tian* was used to refer to Shangdi as a synecdoche.

[5] Many scholars consider the emergence of the doctrine of *tianming* to signify a rupture between Shang and Zhou: a shift from religion to philosophy, from an amoral religious system to a moral one, or from a magical world view to a rational, humanistic one. However, recent scholarship suggests that there was no abrupt change between Shang and Zhou. David Keightley's works show that the Shang ritual system had already undergone significant changes between the reign of Wu Ding 武丁 (21st, circa 1200-1181 BCE) and the reign of Zu Jia 祖甲 (23rd, Wu Ding's son, circa 1170-1151 BCE).

believed that through divination they could interpret the intentions of spirits and through ritual offerings they could appease and influence the decisions of spirits. On the other hand, as the Zhou doctrine of *tianming* 天命 (Mandate of Heaven) indicates, Zhou kings believed that *tian* oversees human actions and rewards the good and punishes the bad. Consequently, unlike the Shang system, which revolved around correct ritual praxis, the Zhou system was established more clearly and directly on a moral basis. Thus, we might distinguish between a Shangdi of the Shang that was an amoral, anthropomorphic deity and a *tian* of the Zhou that was a moral, naturalistic or anthropomorphic, force.

Problems, however, arose in part because there was no dramatic rupture in usage or concept between Shangdi and *tian*. Despite the new and frequent appearance of the term *tian* in Zhou materials, Shangdi continued to be invoked and used interchangeably with *tian* in many of the Confucian classics. This overlap between Shangdi and *tian* rendered the concept of *tian* even more abstruse and complicated. Some scholars attribute the complexity of *tian* to its evolution from a more ancient Shangdi. Others speculate that the newly-introduced naturalistic *tian* of Zhou absorbed the characteristics of its forerunner, Shangdi (Hall and Ames 1987: 202-204). Whichever may have been the case, it is plain that *tian* embraces both naturalistic and anthropomorphic, and has both moral and amoral attributes. For example, in his study of the development of the concept of blind fate in early China, Chen Ning (1997b) divides *tian* into two entities: a moral deity vs. an amoral, impersonal force. On the other hand, Michael Puett, who reads *tian* as one entity, finds a tension within the notion of *tian* and portrays it as a capricious deity; particularly in the *Mengzi*, he notes, *tian* grants humans the possibility to become fully moral, but *tian* often frustrates human being's completion of the moral mission and sometimes even actively prevents it (Puett 2005: 53).[6]

In his *To Become a God*, Michael Puett also challenges the common assumption of a discontinuity or dramatic break between Shang and Zhou. By investigating the complexities of ritual practices of Shang and Zhou, he argues, "The Zhou conquest simply meant a replacement of the Shang pantheon with the Zhou pantheon, but the general ritual principles were much the same." However, I think, this does not mean we cannot find any meaningful differences between the Shang and Zhou religious systems. See Keightley 1984 and 2004; and Michael Puett 2002.

[6] On the other hand, Franklin Perkins argues that *tian* in the *Mengzi* is indifferent to moral order in a very similar way to *tian* in the *Zhuangzi* and the *Xunzi*. See Perkins 2006.

In their discussions of *tian*, Hall and Ames argue that the debate over whether *tian* should be considered an anthropomorphic deity or a naturalistic force is wrong-headed. Instead, they claim that the notion of *tian* should be discussed in terms of transcendence and immanence. According to Hall and Ames, in early China, neither Shangdi nor *tian* was ever presented as a transcendent deity that stands apart from human beings and does not intervene in the world. Unlike the transcendence of the Western deity, they argue, what matters most to Confucians was that *tian* is unquestionably immanent, meaning that *tian* is not a creative force or principle and there is no transcendental value imbedded in *tian* (Hall and Ames 1987: 204-208). Yü Ying-shih, on the contrary, proposes "inward transcendence" as a distinctive form of transcendence and argues that in the Chinese tradition, transcendence is seated within human hearts, not exclusively in the external world (Yü 2002: 68-69). Moreover, disagreeing with Hall and Ames, Kelly Clark in a recent article tries to prove that in Kongzi's thought the transcendent is still operative and important and the concept of *tian* is keenly anthropomorphic (Clark 2009: 236).

Despite all the differences in these studies on *tian*, their primary focus is more or less on the question of what *tian* is: anthropomorphic deity vs. naturalistic force, transcendent vs. immanent. What is absent or inconspicuous in the secondary literature on *tian* is human beings. For traditional Confucian thinkers, *tian* was meaningful, for the most part, in its relation to human beings. Accordingly, their discussions of *tian* were not set apart from humans; *tian* concerned how people become fully human, how they live worthy and satisfactory lives, and how they achieve a harmonious society. Hall and Ames correctly point out that the anthropomorphism of *tian* was not an essential issue for early Chinese thinkers (Hall and Ames 1987: 202). Whether a deity or force, *tian* was at the center of Confucian ethical thought. Therefore, a critical question for us to ask is how Confucians conceived of *tian* in their ethical life: in what ways *tian* relates to and acts on human beings and what kind of attitude human beings have toward *tian*.

In this respect, Hall and Ames's definition of *tian* is insightful and telling. By projecting the traditional Chinese feudal structure onto *tian*, they point to the correlation between *tian* and the world; just as an emperor is identified with his empire, *tian*, as ruler of the world, refers to the world itself. In light of this, they redefine it, "*Tian* is rather a general designation for the phenomenal world as it emerges of its own

accord." (Hall and Ames 1987: 207) That is to say, *tian* refers to the world where human beings live their lives. What is distinctive about their view is that according to their description of the immanent cosmos of early China, the world had no pre-existing value or order that humans should discover and follow; the world is so of itself.[7] In my view, however, the world that Confucians perceived and in which they lived was not an uncolored blank sheet as they claim. Confucians viewed the world strictly in *moral* terms and their conception of *tian* will shed light on their particular way of understanding the world.

In what follows, I will first explore the Confucian way of thinking about the world through their conception of *tian*, and in doing so, I will characterize *tian* in terms of two conflicting concepts: "moral economy" and "contingency." Based on this general outline of *tian*, I will further investigate the ways in which Kongzi 孔子 and Mengzi 孟子 conceived of *tian*, how they differ in their conceptualizations of moral economy and contingency, and why they differ in such a way.

II. *TIAN*: MORAL ECONOMY AND CONTINGENCY

In his brief survey of early Confucian conception of *tian*, Ivanhoe remarks, "Some important early Confucians ground their ethical claims by appealing to the authority of *tian*, 'Heaven,' insisting that Heaven endows human beings with a distinctively ethical nature and at times acts in the world." (Ivanhoe 2007: 211) Not only early Confucians, but also almost all subsequent Confucian thinkers, except for a few such as Xunzi 荀子, believed that our moral nature is given by *tian* and following this moral nature is commanded by *tian*, despite all the variant understandings of *tian* and human nature (性 *xing*). Kongzi declared, "*Tian* has given me this virtue"[8]; in the *Doctrine of the Mean* (中庸 *Zhongyong*), it is said, "What *tian* decrees, this is called [human] nature"[9]; and Mengzi said, "To

[7] In his review of Hall and Ames's book, Philip Ivanhoe disagrees with their description of the immanental cosmos of Kongzi and Kongzi's role as a creative innovator. According to Ivanhoe, Kongzi was not a flexible innovator but a transmitter of tradition; Kongzi discovered order that had already been laid down by the former sages. Therefore, unlike Hall and Ames, Ivanhoe considers that in Kongzi's cosmos, moral values are already in the world. In response to this, Hall and Ames would answer that the tradition itself was a creation of the former sages. As I will examine in the following, the world of Confucians, however, was not value-free. See Ivanhoe 1991.

[8] 天生德於予 *Lunyu* 7.23.

[9] 天命之謂性 *Zhongyong* 1.

preserve one's mind and nourish one's nature is the way to serve *tian*."[10]

Then, does *tian* just command us to pursue virtue and leave us completely to ourselves? Ivanhoe points out that *tian* acts in the world *at times*; but, in some sense it might be more accurate to say that *tian* is acting in the world *at all times*. If we follow Hall and Ames's definition, *tian* is not only the ruler of the world, but also refers to the world where human beings live their lives.[11] In this scheme, human beings cannot live their lives without having any relation to *tian*. In one way or another, *tian* is constantly concerned with the world and with people. In the following, I will examine two different but closely related ways that *tian* is related to human beings: moral economy and contingency.

To begin with, early Confucians believed that *tian* rewards the good and punishes the bad. As Poo Mu-chou (1998: 38) observes, the justice of *tian* was never questioned in the *Book of Documents* (尚書 *Shangshu* or 書經 *Shujing*). King Tang 湯, the founder of the Shang dynasty, said, "The Way of *tian* is to bring good fortune to the good and disaster to the dissolute."[12] His minister, Yi Yin 伊尹 admonished the heir-apparent, saying, "Shangdi alone follows no fixed path, sending down all blessings upon the good-doer and sending down all miseries upon the evil-doer."[13] In addition, the justice of *tian* is suggested sometimes even without invoking a distinct agent of *tian* or Shangdi. Yu 禹, the legendary founder of the Xia 夏 dynasty, said, "Accordance with the right is auspicious; following what is opposed to it is inauspicious, and these follow like shadows or echoes."[14] In the former two cases, there is an active agent to reward and punish. In contrast, in the latter case, there is no such an agent; the good prosper and the bad suffer, just as shadow follows an object and an echo follows sound. Despite this difference, these cases reveal a shared belief that there is a certain connection between one's moral worth and the outcomes of one's own actions.

Particularly in the early period, favorable outcomes that were expected to be brought by moral excellence were specific goods, such as longevity and kingship, which I call "non-moral" goods.[15] One of the most conspicuous examples is the doctrine of *tianming* (Mandate

[10] 存其心 養其性 所以事天也 *Mengzi* 7A1.

[11] *Tian* has multiple layers of meaning: for example, *tian* refers to the whole world, the way the world operates, and also the agent behind such operations.

[12] 天道福善禍淫 "The Announcement of Tang" 湯誥.

[13] 惟上帝不常 作善降之百祥作 不善降之百殃 "The Instructions of Yi" 伊訓.

[14] 惠迪吉 從逆凶 惟影響 "The Counsels of the Great Yu" 大禹謨.

of Heaven): a virtuous person flourishes by becoming king, whereas a tyrant comes to a tragic end, losing his power. Accordingly, Shun 舜, a man of utmost virtue, was appointed to the throne from a humble position, and King Wen's 文 illustrious virtue led Zhou, a small vassal state, to rule the whole world in place of Shang.[16] By contrast, tyrants like King Jie 桀 and King Zhou 紂, notorious for their depravity and debauchery, brought ruin upon themselves as well as their states.

In addition to kingship, usually accompanied with power and wealth, longevity is another kind of non-moral good bestowed on good people. For example, Shun not only enjoyed power, wealth, and honor, but he also lived an extremely long life. What is important here is not the factual accuracy of this legend, but people's belief in it; furthermore, this belief is not about Shun *per se*, but about virtuous people like Shun living long lives. Kongzi expressed this belief in his own words in the *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects*), "Benevolent people live long lives,"[17] and in the *Doctrine of the Mean* he also said, "Given his great virtue, [Shun] could not help but live a long life."[18]

I call this "moral economy": a general, broadly conceived, connection between moral worth and non-moral outcomes.[19] However, moral

[15] Non-moral goods refer to all sorts of things, such as wealth, health, power, status, and honor, which do not belong to moral goods, that is, virtues. The distinction between moral and non-moral goods can be understood in terms of Alasdair MacIntyre's distinction between external and internal goods in his prominent chess game example (MacIntyre 2007:188-191). In her study of Kongzi's concept of the good life, Amy Olberding uses Linda Zagzebski's terms "admirable" and "desirable" to designate these two classes of goods (Olberding 2013: 419).

[16] These two stories, Shun's ascension to the throne and King Wen's conquest of Shang, are the two most momentous narratives of Confucian political theory: both stories go against hereditary succession, instead, following moral excellence as the standard of political authority. According to Mark Csikszentmihalyi, these two stories of nonhereditary succession represent the dual modes of political legitimation by moral standard: Shun's story, in the time of peaceful government, and King Wen's story, in the time of violent rule (Csikszentmihalyi 2003: 224). The doctrine of *tianming* applies to both stories. However, the doctrine of *tianming* was originally a Zhou invention, allegedly that of the Duke of Zhou. It seems that as the doctrine of *tianming* came to prominence as the norm for dynastic changes and imperial succession, the story of Shun was subsumed under the powerful rubric of the *tianming* discourse.

[17] 仁者壽 *Lunyu* 6.23.

[18] 故大德 必得其位 必得其祿 必得其名 必得其壽 *Zhongyong* 17.

[19] I am indebted to Philip Ivanhoe for discussions that helped me to develop my particular sense of "moral economy." It is important to note that things that are counted as favorable non-moral goods differ in time. For example, kingship had been considered

economy is a comprehensive term; there are various forms and kinds of moral economy. First, moral economy has a broad spectrum in terms of the tightness of the connection between moral worth and non-moral outcomes: at one end of the spectrum, this connection is so tight and straightforward that there is an almost automatic link between them, and at the other end, this connection is so loose and opaque that it passes beyond human comprehension and becomes almost non-existent. For instance, Mozi 墨子 believed in a mechanical connection between moral actions and non-moral outcomes, whereas Kongzi believed in a less evident and less straightforward connection.[20] Second, moral economy can be subdivided into different types depending on the way that the relationship between moral worth and non-moral outcomes is explained and characterized. For example, in the case of Mozi, it is largely through divine retribution that this connection is secured. On the other hand, Mengzi relied more on rationalistic and causal accounts to explain this connection, which we will examine later.

Despite all its various forms and modes, the crux of moral economy lies in the *necessity* involved in the connection between moral worth and non-moral outcomes; that is, regardless of causes or agency and regardless of duration, one's moral excellence will bring favorable outcomes in the end. Moral economy is none other than the belief in moral necessity that good people prosper and bad people suffer, eventually and ineluctably.[21]

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as one of the important non-moral goods in early period, but by the time of Kongzi and Mengzi, political position substituted for kingship. Moreover, as society became more complicated and diversified, the connection between moral worth and non-moral goods was difficult to maintain. For instance, in Zhu Xi's case, he replaced specific items of non-moral goods with a more abstract form of benefit or well-being. In addition, different moral goods are valued in different societies. For this issue, see Alasdair MacIntyre's seminal article, "The Nature of the Virtues" (MacIntyre 2007: 179-203).

[20] For example, the famous chapter "Explaining Ghosts" 明鬼 in the *Mozi* highlights a system of a strict moral economy. According to Mozi, spiritual beings, as deputies of *tian*, are directly involved in rewarding and punishing human beings.

[21] Chen Ning uses the term "moral determinism" to describe this belief that the good is to be rewarded and the bad is to be punished (Chen 1997b: 142-143). However, he seems to be more interested in the effect of this belief, that is, the emphasis on man's moral responsibility, rather than the belief itself. Nevertheless, I think the term "determinism" is inappropriate or misleading in describing this moral belief. In his study on fate and fatalism, Robert Solomon distinguishes determinism from fatalism; determinism involves "logical, scientific, or causal necessity," whereas fatalism involves "narrative necessity." What Solomon means by narrative necessity is that certain actions or events or outcomes should happen, regardless of causes or agency, and they are necessary in terms

This simple belief in moral economy, however, is not something new or unique; it has been prevalent in many culturally and religiously different traditional human societies. The Buddhist doctrine of *karma* and Christian teachings on heaven and hell are simply two among many. Furthermore, the belief in moral economy has not completely disappeared even in the scientific and rationalistic minds of modern people.

However, it is worth emphasizing that moral economy was important in the thoughts and lives of traditional Confucian thinkers. Particularly, early Confucians firmly believed that virtuous living would bring one certain non-moral goods, such as health, wealth, power, and honor. And, *tian* was the foundation of this moral economy; either as an agent – to reward the good and punish the bad, or as a way the world works – the good prosper and the bad suffer. This is one of the most important attributes of *tian* in relation to human beings. *Tian*, as a source for ethical warrant, not only provides us with a moral nature but also maintains the moral economy of the world, giving good fortune to the good and bad fortune to the bad.

Unfortunately though, moral economy does not always function; good people sometimes suffer and bad people often get by or even succeed. This is why some of the poems in the *Book of Poetry* (詩經 *Shijing*) called into question the justice of *tian*.[22] Many scholars point

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of the overall plot or purpose. On the other hand, Solomon explains, "Determinism is the science-minded thesis that whatever happens can be explained in terms of prior causes and conditions." Unlike fatalism, which highlights the significance of events in the overall plot, determinism is interested in giving a causal account for events. However, Solomon notes, fatalism is often confused with determinism because fatalism does not negate causal explanations. As I pointed out, Mengzi also provided a kind of causal account for the relationship between moral worth and non-moral outcomes. However, Mengzi's ultimate purpose was that by giving causal explanations he tried to emphasize the necessity involved in this connection. In other words, like the relationship between determinism and fatalism, moral economy does not necessarily oppose causal accounts. If we apply Solomon's term, moral economy involves moral necessity. See Solomon 2003.

[22] Poo Mu-chou rightly observes that some poems in the *Book of Poetry* express an ambivalent attitude toward *tian*: "What is interesting is that while on the one hand the poems reveal a strong need for the protection of Heaven, on the other hand they show a sense of skepticism about the justice of Heaven" (Poo 1998: 38). He further adds that this is quite a distinctive phenomenon since in the official and formal writings found in the *Documents* or in bronze inscriptions, the justice of *tian* was never doubted. According to his explanation, unlike the *Documents* and bronze inscriptions, which were produced mainly by and for the ruling class, the *Book of Poetry* reflects the religious mentality of commoners. However, I do not think that this clear demarcation of the popular and

out that as a result, the problem of theodicy was introduced in early China.[23] One of the most puzzling questions throughout Confucian history was Kongzi's failure in his political mission. Even with his moral excellence, Kongzi was unable to become a sage king, and this led Han 漢 Confucians to claim that Kongzi was indeed an uncrowned king (素王 *suwang*).[24] Furthermore, Kongzi himself was deeply troubled by the fates of several good but unfortunate people during his own lifetime: his favorite disciple, Yan Hui 顏回, died young even before Kongzi himself, and another disciple, Bo Niu 伯牛 suffered a fatal illness.

I call this failure of moral economy "contingency": a case in which a connection between moral worth and non-moral outcomes is somehow broken so that the world is felt to be beyond human comprehension and beyond human control. Cases that fall outside moral economy all belong to the category of contingency: such as the suffering of the good and the prosperity of the bad, including Kongzi's political failure and Yan Hui's untimely death, cases in which one's virtue did not guarantee favorable non-moral outcomes.

What is more intriguing is that Confucians equally appealed to *tian* for the failure of moral economy, i.e., contingency. As a consequence, *tian* is responsible not only for moral economy but also for contingency. When Yan Hui died, Kongzi opined, "Ah! *Tian* has left me bereft! *Tian* has left me bereft!"[25] When Mengzi failed to meet Duke Ping of Lu 魯平公, he explained to his disciple, "My not meeting the lord of Lu was due to *tian*."[26] Particularly for such occasions, when one's moral worth did not produce favorable non-moral outcomes, Confucians often subscribed to *ming* 命, usually translated into English as "fate."[27] For instance, upon the

elite religion would provide an accurate depiction of religiosity in early China. Rather, I think that skepticism toward the justice of *tian* was largely shared by both classes. Poo also acknowledges that the notion of moral *tian* created a schism within the religion of the ruling class.

[23] Yearley 1975: 432-433; Eno 1990: 27; and Chen 1994.

[24] For a discussion of various images of Kongzi during the Han, see Csikszentmihalyi 2002.

[25] 噫 天喪予 天喪予 *Lunyu* 11.9.

[26] 吾之不遇魯侯 天也 *Mengzi* 1B6.

[27] The following example indicates that the close relationship between *tian* and *ming*: Zixia 子夏, a disciple of Kongzi, famously said, "Life and death are a matter of *ming*; wealth and honor depend on *tian* (死生有命 富貴在天 *Lunyu* 12.5)." In his study of the excavated text from Guodian 郭店, Dirk Meyer explains the way that a new concept is introduced through parallelism in the Warring States period. In light of Dirk Meyer's

illness of Bo Niu, Kongzi lamented, "It is all over! It is a matter of *ming*."[28]

There has been much discussion on the term *ming*, trying to pin down its precise meaning. Some scholars distinguish *ming* 命 from *tianming* 天命, arguing that *ming* refers to "fortuitous fate," whereas *tianming* refers to "moral imperative." Some scholars find inconsistency in the meaning of *ming*: *ming* refers to "moral imperative" or "fortuitous fate." Another group of scholars insist on the consistency of the meaning of *ming*, even though they recognize the two different usages of *ming* in Confucian texts; what they try to do is either choosing one of the two meanings or reducing one to the other.[29] However, in my view, it is not that the two different meanings – moral imperative and blind fate – are inherent in the term *ming*, but that the seeming inconsistency in the meaning of *ming* is due to the ambivalent characteristics of *tian*.

Looking at the term, *ming* originally means "to command," and when this term is used in Confucian moral discourse, it implicitly refers to *tianming*, "the command of *tian*." That is to say, *ming* is coming from *tian*: *tian* is the subject who gives commands and humans are the recipients of such commands. As Tang Junyi aptly points out, *tian* and human beings are interrelated through *ming:*

> The term '*ming*' represents the interrelationship or mutual relatedness of Heaven and man. ... Now, since *ming* as such is to be perceived in the interrelationship of Heaven and man, we can say that it exists ... in the mutuality of Heaven and man, i.e., in their mutual influence and response, their mutual giving and receiving. Past commentators on the term '*ming*' have always fallen into one or the other of two extremes – regarding it either externally in Heaven only, or internally in man only. (Tang 1962: 195-196)

Accordingly, *ming* is not an independent entity; *ming* is a relational concept between *tian* and human beings. To put it another way, without understanding the characteristics of *tian* and its relationship to human beings, we cannot have a complete understanding of *ming*.

In order to understand this complex notion of *ming*, we should keep in mind that *tian* generally supports a moral economy of the world,

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explanation, the parallel pattern in the above quotation suggests that *tian* and *ming* are interchangeable, which means that these lines imply, "Life and death depend on *tian*, and wealth and honor are matter of *ming*." (Meyer 2011: 58)

[28] 亡之 命矣夫 *Lunyu* 6.10.

[29] For a brief summary of the previous scholarship on Kongzi's view on *ming*, see Chen 1997a.

but at times it does not; *tian* is also responsible for the contingency of the world. From the perspective of human beings, *tian* commands us to be good through our moral nature, and *tian* will either reward us correspondingly or not. Accordingly, *ming*, the command of *tian*, is felt to be a moral imperative when it normally brings us the commensurate non-moral outcomes according to our moral worth, but *ming* is also felt to be a fortuitous fate when our moral worth does not bring us such outcomes. Consequently, the world governed by *tian* seems to be under our control at certain times, but at other times, the world is beyond our control and comprehension.

Benjamin Schwartz notes this particular configuration of the Confucian world when he states:

> When Confucius tells us that at the age of fifty he knew the *ming* of Heaven, he may mean that he has a clear understanding of what it is that is not in his control as well as of what is his true sphere of autonomous action. (Schwartz 1985: 126)

According to Schwartz's explanation, the *ming* that Kongzi understood at fifty was neither moral imperative nor fate. Rather, it was both: the comprehensive reality, the reality that is composed of the two realms, controllable and uncontrollable. On this account, *ming* is not a simple term, which has two distinct meanings. More precisely, *ming* is a complex concept relating to the whole of reality; *ming* is none other than the fine line that divides reality into two realms, within and beyond human control. What should be noted here is that when Schwartz states that at fifty Kongzi understood "what it is that is not in his control," his control does not mean Kongzi's physical or magical power; it strictly refers to his moral power, the capacity of his moral action.[30] Therefore, the part of the world within human control specifically refers to the sphere where his moral action in some way exerts influence (moral economy), and the part of the world beyond human control refers to the sphere where such influence has no impact (contingency).[31]

[30] When we say moral action in the early Confucian context, it is more broadly conceived than the way contemporary moral philosophers do. For early Confucian thinkers, all human actions are moral actions; that is, every human action has moral value and is worthy of evaluation, either as good or bad, right or wrong. Henry Rosemont makes a salient point in this respect: "In all strictness we should not call the Confucian position a theory of moral actions. Therefore, I will refer to it as a moral theory of human action." (Rosemont 1976: 53)

This particular understanding of the world is also revealed in Kongzi's lamentation upon Bo Niu's illness: "It is all over! It is a matter of *ming*. How could such a man have such an illness! How could such a man have such an illness!"[32] In the first part, Kongzi's appeal to *ming* draws attention to the contingency of the world: Bo Niu's virtue did not ensure favorable outcomes and there are things that humans cannot control. However, in the second part, the repetition of his lament, "How could such a man have such an illness!" evinces his strong belief in moral economy: a good person like Bo Niu is supposed to live a long and healthy life. In other words, the cases of contingency *conversely* reflect the belief in moral economy. It is thus worth noting that moral economy and contingency are not unrelated to each other; they are linked with each other like two sides of the same coin. In the Confucian world, moral economy and its failure together constitute a comprehensive reality.

Through this, we can understand the way Confucians conceived of the world, which is quite different from our own. Suppose, a modern physician had a chance to look into Bo Niu's illness, the physician would ask what his family history is and whether or not he was exposed to any infection, but he would never ask whether Bo Niu is a good person. It is absurd for him to connect a patient's moral character with his physical condition.[33] However, for early Confucians, such linkage was natural: for them, a good person is supposed to live a long and healthy life, as well as a life of affluence and high-position, overall a flourishing life.

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[31] However, some scholars interpret "the realm within human control" more narrowly than I describe above. For example, Edward Slingerland holds that the area of human control refers to the realm of self-cultivation. This indicates that in Kongzi's view, what is firmly in our own hands is only our pursuit of virtue and the remaining is beyond our control. Then, is this an accurate description of Kongzi's vision?: we should cultivate virtue and accept whatever comes to us. I agree that this is a basic tenet of Kongzi's teaching. However, if we have a closer look at his ethical thought, his picture is more complicated. We can say that he believed that the project of self-cultivation is in our own hands. In addition to this, he also believed that our virtues will normally bring favorable non-moral goods, even if the connection between moral worth and non-moral outcomes is not always guaranteed. In sum, for Kongzi, we can control our pursuit of virtue and also through our virtue we can exert influence in the important, non-moral areas of human life, albeit not necessarily. See Slingerland 1996: 568.

[32] 亡之 命矣夫 斯人也而有斯疾也 斯人也而有斯疾也 *Lunyu* 6.10.

[33] If moral character, broadly conceived, includes things like a desirable life style, with regular exercise and not smoking or not heavy drinking, then we can say that even a modern physician connects a patient's moral character with his physical condition and that one's moral character does play a role in one's physical condition.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case; but, even the failure of moral economy, i.e., the contingency of the world, was not regarded as a sign of randomness. Along with the workings of moral economy, its failures were also comprehended in moral terms: Bo Niu should not have such an illness. To sum up, Confucians viewed the world strictly with *moral* eyes.

These two poles of moral economy and contingency were an underlying assumption for most Confucian thinkers, and they tried to cope with the problem of contingency in the world of moral economy. Kongzi and Mengzi were no exceptions, but they differed in their ways of understanding moral economy and contingency. In what follows, I will examine Kongzi's and Mengzi's ethical thought: how they conceptualized moral economy and contingency, and how their different conceptualizations shaped their respective ethical programs: Kongzi's ethics of faith and Mengzi's ethics of confidence.

III. KONGZI AND MENGZI: MORAL ECONOMY AND CONTINGENCY

First of all, even though both Kongzi and Mengzi maintained a belief in moral economy, they lived in a contingent world; they found good people often in miserable situations. Nevertheless, they had significantly different understandings of moral economy and contingency. Simply put, Kongzi thought that moral economy *can fail*, whereas Mengzi believed that moral economy *never fails*. First, I will outline Kongzi's conceptualization of moral economy and contingency and then compare it with Mengzi's.

A good way of understanding Kongzi's conceptualization of moral economy and contingency is through an analogy found in *Lunyu* 9.22: Kongzi said, "There are instances that sprouts fail to produce blossoms, are there not? There are instances that blossoms fail to produce fruits, are there not?"[34] For a variety of reasons, sprouts often wither without

[34] 苗而不秀者 有矣夫 秀而不實者 有矣夫 *Lunyu* 9.22. Even though it is not clear in what context this analogy is employed, it is interesting that Kongzi's analogy is very similar to that of *karmic* process. The *Nikāyas* often employs the same analogy: *karma* (action) is a seed, *karmic* result is its fruit, and *karmic* process is its fruition. Once we plant a seed, we have to wait until it bears fruit. In the meantime, however, many factors such as soil, wind, rain, and temperature affect the ripening of fruit. Accordingly, the exact same action (the same seed) could have different outcomes. Furthermore, since there are so many variables in the process of fruition, it is hard to expect when and how and why certain *karmic* results come about. More importantly, what is at stake in the

putting forth blossoms and flowers often fade without bearing fruits. In a similar manner, the seeds of a good deed sometimes fail to produce the corresponding fruits, just as in the cases of Bo Niu and Yan Yuan. Kongzi expressed Yan Hui's death as *buxing* 不幸 (unfortunate) and a deceiver who manages to survive as *xing* 幸 (fortunate).[35] The words "fortunate" and "unfortunate" both indicate unexpected outcomes, that is, the contingency of the world. This suggests that moral economy can fail.

However, of great importance is the underlying assumption behind Kongzi's analogy that sprouts, normally, are supposed to bloom and flowers, normally, are supposed to bear fruits. Likewise, good deeds, normally, are expected to bring favorable outcomes and bad deeds, normally, are expected to incur unfavorable outcomes. For Kongzi, these are the norms. Therefore, the longevity and healthy state of virtuous people is a standard path, and the untimely death of bad people is nothing to be surprised about.[36] In Kongzi's view, the world revolves around the principle of moral economy, but with some anomalies. Thus, when exceptions may occur, even if regularly or with great frequency, they are deviations from the normative principle of moral economy.[37] Kongzi set moral economy as the norm and marginalized its occasional failures as being mere exceptions to the rule.

What is of even greater importance is that despite the fact that Kongzi admitted exceptions to the rule, he was determined to adhere to the norms of moral economy and to disregard or even reject exceptional cases as legitimate or meaningful counterexamples. For instance, concerning cases in which good results come from bad actions, Kongzi declared, "Wealth and honor attained through immoral means have as much to do with me as passing clouds."[38] He is saying that even if

doctrine of *karma* is not the comprehension of mysterious *karmic* operation, but the belief in inevitability of *karmic* consequences: the belief that the good will prosper and the bad will suffer, no matter what the exact *karmic* process is. This is moral necessity and a strict moral economy.

[35] *Lunyu* 6.3, 11.7, and 6.19.

[36] According to Ivanhoe, in Kongzi's view, those who do not follow the Way are better off dead. See Ivanhoe 2002: 223.

[37] If exceptions occurred with greater regularity than the norms, it would be hard to believe in the justice of *tian*. However, the very thing that makes it hard to believe is, ironically, what makes the belief firm and complete, more or less, like the Book of Job. Moreover, Kongzi's belief was in the normativity of moral economy rather than the actual realization of moral economy.

[38] 不義而富且貴 於我如浮雲 *Lunyu* 7.16.

a certain action brings us favorable non-moral goods, if that action is not ethically proper, those favorable goods derived from it are not the proper objects of enjoyment. They are as insubstantial and unreliable as passing clouds. For him, these exceptional cases are not worthy of consideration partly because they do not conform to the norms of moral economy.[39]

In addition, concerning cases in which bad things happen to good people, Kongzi did not pay much attention to the fact that moral economy failed. For example, if we look at some poems in the *Book of Poetry*, poets reproached *tian* for being unjust and unkind for allowing such cases.[40] However, while Kongzi did attribute these cases to *tian* or *ming*, he did not harbor a grudge against *tian*.[41] Instead, he turned his gaze to people in such situations and looked at how they behaved. Hence, he praised Yan Hui for being content in the midst of poverty: "How admirable Hui is! Living in a mean dwelling on a single bowl of rice and a ladle of water is a hardship most men would find intolerable, but Hui does not allow this to affect his joy. How admirable Hui is!"[42] Consequently, Kongzi did not take the occasional failure of moral economy as a serious threat, just as it is natural that sprouts sometimes fail to bloom. Much more important was his own determination to live up to the principle of moral economy; even though the world did not always operate according to the principle of moral economy, he organized his own world meaningfully around moral economy and appreciated the development of his virtue.

Mengzi, the successor of Kongzi, however, made a significant change in the mode of moral economy: moral economy was no longer an object of belief, but rather became a self-evident truth. Unlike his predecessors, who assumed that there is a necessary connection between moral worth and non-moral outcomes, Mengzi tried to give a logical and plausible account for the workings of moral economy. For example, when King Hui of Liang 梁惠王 asked what kind of person could unite the world, Mengzi answered that a person who does not like killing people could

[39] Of course, the reason Kongzi pursued virtuous living is because it is the proper way of living. This is a view from the perspective of an individual moral agent. On the other hand, the above quotation is explained from the perspective of the way the world works (moral economy), and I think these two kinds of explanation do not necessarily contradict each other.

[40] For instance, see "Jie Nan shan" 節南山 (Mao 191).

[41] 子曰 不怨天 *Lunyu* 14.35.

[42] 賢哉 回也 一簞食 一瓢飲 在陋巷 人不堪其憂 回也不改其樂 賢哉 回也 *Lunyu* 6.11.

unite the world. In his explanation:

> Does your Majesty not know about young rice plants? Should there be a drought in the seventh or eighth month, these plants will wilt. If clouds begin to gather in the sky and rain comes pouring down, then the plants will spring up again. This being the case, who can stop it? Now in the state amongst the leaders of men there is not one who does not like killing people. If there was one who does not, then the people in the state will crane their necks to see him coming. This being truly the case, the people will turn to him like water flowing downwards with a tremendous force. Who could stop it?[43]

When the world is filled with cruel and brutal rulers, people naturally long for a benevolent leader as if they were plants waiting for rain in drought. When a virtuous person appears, people are drawn to him like water flowing downward. This is self-evident because people like and are attracted to those who care for them and hate and seek to avoid those who harm them; particularly in times of tyranny, their yearning for a virtuous leader intensifies.

This seemingly apparent correlation between virtue and its natural consequences, however, had not caught the eyes of Mengzi's contemporaries and predecessors, or at least, it was articulated neither in the *Documents* nor in the *Lunyu*.[44] The doctrine of *tianming*, which is also about virtuous people's becoming rulers, highlights the agency of *tian*; it was primarily owing to *tian* that virtuous people prosper and tyrants suffer. This suggests that without the belief in a moral *tian*, its moral economy could not successfully sustain itself. Mengzi, however, shifted his attention from the agent behind moral economy to the workings of moral economy itself and backed up his picture of how things work with logical and plausible accounts. As a consequence, his conception of moral economy became natural and so of itself.[45] For Mengzi, the operation of moral economy itself was *tian*.

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[43] 王知夫苗乎 七八月之間旱 則苗槁矣 天油然作雲 沛然下雨 則苗浡然興之矣 其如是 孰能禦之 今夫天下之人 牧 未有不嗜殺人者也 如有不嗜殺人者 則天下之民皆引領而望之矣 誠如是也 民歸之 由水之就下 沛然孰能禦之 *Mengzi* 1A6.

[44] It is not that Mengzi's predecessors negated this apparent relationship between virtue and its outcomes. Rather, they were simply more interested in *tian* as an agent.

[45] Franklin Perkins also points out this aspect: Mengzi did not rely on any direct intervention of *tian*, but more on the natural causal relations between a virtuous ruler and his success. See Perkins 2006: 304-305.

Despite this rational justification, Mengzi's moral economy also encountered frequent obstacles. Like Kongzi, Mengzi himself did not succeed in his political career, and so like Kongzi, he admitted contingency in his moral universe.[46] However, Mengzi's notion of contingency has significantly different ethical implications from that of Kongzi's. In Kongzi's view, contingency, however frequent or infrequent it might be, connotes the failure of the normative principle of moral economy. In contrast, Mengzi's contingency does not hint at all that the moral economy can fail. Moral economy is always at work, but there are other, external conditions, that contribute to the shaping and timing of final outcomes.

For example, Mengzi's disciple, Gongsun Chou 公孫丑, once asked why the illustrious virtue of King Wen did not enable him to succeed in replacing the tyrant King Zhou.[47] As a matter of fact, it was King Wen's son, King Wu 武, with the assistance of his younger brother, the Duke of Zhou 周公, who finally defeated King Zhou. Gongsun Chou's question betrays doubt, or at least, ambivalence toward the belief in moral economy: the eminent virtue of King Wen did not guarantee him favorable and expected outcomes in his lifetime. Without hesitation, Mengzi offered three specific reasons for this seeming failure of moral economy: 1) the long tradition of the Shang, founded by the sage King Tang and inherited by several virtuous rulers; 2) the assistance of worthy officials around King Zhou; and 3) the inferiority of King Wen's power in terms of land and population, compared to that of King Zhou.

According to Mengzi, these three are external conditions and they are external in that they are beyond human control. In a similar occasion, Mengzi enunciated, "These were owing to *tian* and were not something

[46] Like Kongzi, Mengzi used the same word, *xing* 幸 (fortunate), for unexpected favorable outcomes of bad action: for instance, a case in which a wicked ruler does not lose his state. See *Mengzi* 4A1.

[47] This question was prompted when Mengzi told Gongsun Chou, "To rule the state of Qi is as easy as turning over one's hand (以齊王 由反手也)." *Mengzi* 2A1. Gongsun Chou was perplexed because if ruling the state is that easy, how could it be possible that a virtuous ruler like King Wen was unable to complete his mission during his lifetime? (King Wen was also believed to live more than 100 years.) Here, his mission is to become the ruler of the world and replace the tyrant Zhou and to harmonize the world by the moral transformation of the people. Of course, Gongsun Chou did not explicitly ask why King Wen was unable to defeat King Zhou. But, it is implicit in his question that even the illustrious virtue of King Wen did not bring him the most favorable outcomes and failed to bring order to the world in his lifetime.

that could be brought about by human beings."[48] Obviously, the long tradition of the Shang and the worthy officials of King Zhou were not things that King Wen could make or change. The third reason, the size of King Wen's land and people, however, appears to allow for some measure of control, because he might have expanded his land and population. And yet, from the perspective that they were initially a given condition, inherited from his father, they are still beyond his control, even though he might change that situation in the future by his own efforts.[49] Consequently, all these external conditions, together with King Wen's virtue, contributed to the final outcome: he was not able to complete his mission, but it was brought to fruition by his son.

Not only did Mengzi articulate the existence and role of external conditions, he also put great emphasis on their significance. He quoted from an old sayings of the people of Qi 齊, "You may be wise, but it is better to make use of circumstances; You may have a hoe, but it is better to wait for the right season."[50] You must be wise and virtuous, but you also have to meet right *shi* 勢 (circumstances: spatial) and proper *shi* 時 (time: temporal) in order to succeed.[51] External conditions are important because, they often play a decisive role in determining final outcomes. However virtuous King Wen was, all the obstacles surrounding him made it difficult for him to achieve his mission during his lifetime and left success to his son.

In this respect, Mengzi's notion of contingency and that of Kongzi do not seem far from each other. Both agreed that one's virtue does not always guarantee favorable outcomes: flowers are supposed to bloom, but sometimes fail to do so due to various reasons. Nonetheless, there is a critical difference between their ways of dealing with the failure of moral economy. On the one hand, Kongzi acknowledged that flowers can fail to bloom; his focus was more on the fact that moral order can

[48] 皆天也 非人之所能為也 *Mengzi* 5A6.

[49] Therefore, when I use the word, "external condition," it does not refer to all outer conditions of humans, but specifically refers to the situation that is given: "being beyond human control."

[50] 雖有智慧 不如乘勢 雖有鎡基 不如待時 *Mengzi* 2A1.

[51] According to Robert Eno, these two terms, *shi* 勢 and *shi* 時 (with different tonal intonation), are not etymologically related, but have a close conceptual relationship. They are spatial and temporal dimensions of a single concept: "the shifting circumstances of the experienced world which for the actual field for all applied learning." See <http://www.iub.edu/~p374/Glossary.html> [accessed 6/3/2016].

be broken and how people respond to such events. On the other hand, Mengzi was much more interested in *why* flowers sometimes fail to bloom and he identified various reasons that affect the whole process. As he rationalized the process of moral economy, he did exactly the same for contingency.

Although their differences are primarily a matter of focus or perspectives, they renders their ethical systems significantly different from each other. In the case of Kongzi, moral order can be broken; on the contrary, for Mengzi, moral order is always at work. Mengzi's rationalization of moral economy makes it a self-evident truth: one's moral worth naturally induces favorable consequences. Nevertheless, the reason that moral economy *appears* to fail from time to time is because there exist other contingent factors that influence the process of moral economy. In other words, one's virtue may end up with an unhappy ending, but this does not necessarily mean that moral economy is defective or inoperative. In Mengzi's view, moral economy, albeit at times rising above the water and at times sinking under the water, is always at work. He safeguarded the workings of moral economy by separating out contingent factors from it.

Consequently, his rationalization of moral economy and his comprehension of external conditions enabled him not to show much regret or grief when his virtue did not bring favorable outcomes. To give an example:

> When Mengzi left Qi, Chong Yu asked him on the way, saying, "Master, you look somewhat unhappy. I heard from you the other day [quoting Kongzi], 'A gentleman does not reproach *tian* and does not blame other people.'" [Mengzi replied,] "That time and this time are one and the same. Every five hundred years a true king should arise, and in the meantime, there should be men renowned in their generation. From Zhou to the present, it is over seven hundred years. Judging the numbers, five hundred years have passed. Examining the time, it must be possible [that such individuals rise]. It must be that *tian* does not yet wish to bring peace to the world. If *tian* wishes to bring peace to the world, who is there in the present time other than myself? Why should I be unhappy?"[52]

[52] 孟子去齊　充虞路問曰　夫子若有不豫色然　前日虞聞諸夫子曰　君子不怨天不尤人　彼一時　此一時也　五百年　必有王者興　其間必有名世者　由周而來　七百有餘世矣　以其數則過矣　以其時考之則可矣　夫天未欲　平治天下也　如欲平治天下　當今之世　舍我其誰也　吾何爲不豫哉 *Mengzi* 2B13.

When Mengzi realized that he might not have an opportunity to assist a king, he did not show much frustration or regret, but remained confident. He might be understood as saying, "I have already reached a certain level of moral excellence, why should I be unhappy? It is not my fault that I do not meet with the opportunity." This is in stark contrast to Kongzi's response. When Kongzi realized that his political mission might not succeed, he bemoaned and wailed: "Ah! *Tian* has left me bereft! *Tian* has left me bereft!"[53] and "I am done for!"[54] Even though Kongzi had tried to perfect his virtues and succeeded to do so, when moral economy failed, he was deeply troubled and frustrated. In Ivanhoe's description:

> An admission of struggle and doubt would be more characteristic of Confucius than Mencius. Mencius never seems to experience, or at least reveal, the personal struggle and doubt we find in the record of Confucius's teachings. (Ivanhoe 1988: 158-159)

Therefore, in the *Mengzi*, we do not find any lamentation as heartfelt as that of Kongzi, but instead, a sublime moral confidence.[55] This difference between Kongzi and Mengzi originated in part from their different conceptualizations of moral economy; moral economy can fail vs. it never stop working.

To summarize, both Kongzi and Mengzi lived in a contingent world, in which one's virtue does not always guarantee favorable non-moral outcomes. Nevertheless, both of them continued to believe in moral economy, and yet, their conceptions of moral economy differed from each other. I call Kongzi's moral economy a *voluntarist* moral economy

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[53] *Lunyu* 11.9. According to Csikszentmihalyi, the most popular interpretation during the Han dynasty is that Yan Hui's death was considered as a sign from *tian* that Kongzi would not succeed in becoming the sage king. For a detailed discussion of this passage, see Csikszentmihalyi 2011.

[54] 吾已矣夫*Lunyu* 9.9. As the phoenix and the River Map (Hetu 河圖) never appeared, Kongzi considered the absence of good omen as a sign that he would not be able to implement his Way in the world.

[55] Irene Bloom seems to agree with this general portrayal of Mengzi, his sublime moral confidence. However, she points out that his confidence appears to have faded in the closing passage of *Mengzi* 7B38. She goes on to argue that in the *Mengzi*, we find the interplay of confidence and doubt, optimism and pessimism, moral idealism and sober realism, which became the core of the Confucian tradition. In general, I do not disagree with her opinion. However, as she points out, "The optimism of the opening dialogues is more typical of the text as a whole; the final monologue is, in fact, rather unusual in the *Mencius*," I think the defining characteristic of the *Mengzi,* particularly in comparison with the *Lunyu,* is more of confidence than doubt. See Bloom 2002: 233-251.

and Mengzi's a *rationalistic* moral economy, and I call their ethical systems "the ethics of faith" and "the ethics of confidence," respectively.

In the case of Kongzi, even though he believed that the world revolves around the principle of moral economy and tried to marginalize its occasional failures as mere deviations, he realized and accepted that moral economy indeed can fail. When moral economy failed, he was puzzled and frustrated because he did not comprehend (or he was not interested in) the reason why it failed. However, the harsh reality of life did not make him waver in his belief in moral economy and the justice of *tian*. What is more important was his *voluntary* choice to live up to the norms of moral economy. The source of his belief was not coming from the external world, but resided within himself: the belief that virtues are invested within him by *tian*.[56] Therefore, even if the world did not follow the principle of moral economy, he was able to keep pursuing virtues. Moreover, he did not blame *tian* for injustice probably because in his view the issue was our inability to comprehend the profound intention of *tian*.

On the other hand, Mengzi's rationalistic moral economy never fails. His moral economy is a self-evident truth, just as shadow follows an object and an echo follows sound. Even though there are external conditions, which facilitate or obstruct the workings of moral economy, he believed that one's moral excellence will bring favorable outcomes in the end, albeit not in the near future or even in one's lifetime. Therefore, Mengzi advised Duke Wen of Teng 滕文公 "If you do good deeds, then amongst your descendants in future generation there will rise one who will become a true king."[57] Unlike Kongzi, this is not a volitional belief,

[56] 天生德於予 *Lunyu* 7.23. *Lunyu* 7.23 and *Lunyu* 9.5 describe the situation where Kongzi was in danger by the people of Kuang and by Huan Tui. As a matter of fact, the exact implication of these two passages is hard to pin down. Some traditional commentators interpreted that since *tian* had given virtue to Kongzi and *tian* did not intend to destroy culture, the people of Kuang and Huan Tui could not harm Kongzi. As it actually turned out, Kongzi survived these dangerous situations. However, my interpretation is different from this. Given Kongzi's view that virtues do not always produce corresponding outcomes, counterfactually, Kongzi might have been harmed in those situations. Accordingly, these passages are less likely to demonstrate the mysterious protection of *tian* and the marvelous effects of virtue. Instead, my interpretation is that Kongzi expressed his firm determination that any circumstances, even one that is life-threatening, can neither change the way he is nor his ardent pursuit of virtue: Kongzi might be understood as saying, "Whatever might happen to me, I will not give up my pursuit of virtue."

[57] 苟爲善 後世子孫 必有王者矣 *Mengzi* 1B14.

but a strong conviction based on his rational understanding of the way the world operates. Of course, Mengzi continued to advocate Kongzi's ethics of faith and famously declared that human nature is good, but at the same time, his ethical system received a solid support from his confidence in the workings of moral economy. For him, moral economy is something comprehensible by human beings, and his confidence enabled him to remain unperturbed amidst the vicissitudes of life: one's virtue will prevail in the end.

The difference between Kongzi's ethics of faith and Mengzi's ethics of confidence is also rendered explicit in their uses of two terms; "to understand *tianming* (*zhi tianming* 知天命)" and "to establish *ming* (*liming* 立命)," respectively.[58] As is well known, Kongzi recounted that he understood *tianming* at the age of fifty. There has been a controversy over what Kongzi actually understood at fifty, but David Schaberg gives an insightful observation. According to Schaberg, the command of *tian* was not yet known and this unknown language of a future command is how Kongzi understood *tian* (Schaberg 2005: 44). This indicates that Kongzi's treatment of *ming* is mainly a matter of knowledge. As I said earlier, Kongzi's attitude toward *tian* seems to hint at the incomprehensibility of *tian*, or the limitation of human comprehension. We should follow our moral nature and cultivate our virtues, but whether or not we are able to finish out our full life span and live a life equipped with various non-moral goods is ultimately up to *tian*.

On the other hand, Mengzi's attitude is more of action, "to establish fate." He believed that there is a possible and meaningful way to construct and maneuver one's life; one's pursuit of virtue is not merely satisfactory in itself, but also the best means to take us to a life with various non-moral goods. In Mengzi's ethics of confidence, the arbitrariness involved with contingent *tian* and its subsequent anxiety was considerably reduced. As he started to naturalize *tian* and rationalize moral economy, *tian* became something that could be comprehended and thus acted upon. Mengzi's ethical program moved toward optimism, confidence, and human control.

IV. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have tried to understand the Confucian concept of *tian* through the two conflicting concepts of moral economy and contingency

[58] *Mengzi* 7A1.

and argued that these two concepts reflect the Confucian way of understanding the world. Confucians viewed the world with moral eyes; part of the world that is beyond human control and comprehension (contingency) and part of the world that is under human control (moral economy). Based on this general outlook on *tian*, I argued that Mengzi developed an ethical system that is quite distinctive from Kongzi's; for Mengzi, moral economy is always at work. What, then, motivated Mengzi to make such different claims about moral economy and contingency? And what were the ethical consequences of such claims?

Mengzi was an ardent follower of Kongzi, but he was also known for his distinctive position as a defender of Confucian teachings. I think that Mengzi's strong confidence in moral economy was largely a response to Mozi's attack on the Confucian notion of *ming* (fate or contingency). As Franklin Perkins points out, Mozi did not directly criticize early Confucians for being fatalists; rather, he was more worried about the dangers their more contingent view of *ming* was likely to bring about (Perkins 2008: 427). One of the possible dangers with such a view is that in a contingent world, it is difficult to ascribe moral responsibility to individuals. In making this claim, Mozi argued that it was tyrants like King Jie and King Zhou who created the belief in fate in order to avoid their responsibilities for the fall of their states and this belief was spread and perpetuated by people who were lazy and poor.[59] Mozi warned that where the necessary connection between one's moral action and its outcomes is broken, people shirk their responsibilities and neglect their duties, ending up in miserable and disastrous situations.

In order to respond to this external criticism, Mengzi needed to secure the tight linkage between moral worth and non-moral outcomes. On the one hand, by rationalizing moral economy, he was able to recover a strong faith in the workings of moral economy, and on the other hand, by separating out contingent factors, he was able to elucidate the proper sphere of human endeavor. Accordingly, even in a contingent world, he was able to place an unparalleled emphasis on each individual's moral responsibility. Throughout the *Mengzi*, he consistently insisted that everything is up to individual: "What proceeds from you will return to you again,"[60] "There is neither good nor bad fortune which man does not

[59] *Ming* was a creation of the evil kings and was perpetuated by poor people. It was not something that the benevolent spoke of (命者 暴王所作 窮人所術 非仁者之言也). "Against Fate III" 非命下 (37.10).

[60] 出乎爾者 反乎爾者也 *Mengzi* 1B12. This is a quotation from Zengzi 曾子.

bring upon himself,"[61] and "When *tian* sends down calamities, there is hope of weathering them; when man brings them upon himself, there is no hope of escape."[62] Mengzi's answer to Mozi's criticism is summed up in the following phrase: "Look for it within yourself!"[63] Even if Mengzi admitted the contingency of the world, his ethical system did not tolerate people who shirk their responsibility. I think his rationalistic moral economy presented a reasonable and in many ways compelling response to Mozi.

Acknowledgement. This work was supported by the Academy of Korean Studies Grant funded by the Korean Government (MEST) (AKS-2011-AAA-2102).

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[61] 禍福無不自己求之者 *Mengzi* 2A4. A similar theme is also found in *Mengzi* 4A8.

[62] 天作孼 猶可違 自作孼 不可活 *Mengzi* 2A4 and 4A8. This is a quotation from "Taijia, Part 2" 太甲中 of the *Documents*.

[63] 反求諸己 *Mengzi* 2A7

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INVERSE CORRELATION: COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

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Abstract. Kitarō Nishida introduces the concept of "inverse correlation" (Jp. *gyakutaiō* 逆対応) in his final work, *The Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview,* which he uses to illuminate the relation between finite and infinite, human and divine/buddha, such that the greater the realization of human limitation and finitude, the greater that of the limitless, infinite divine or buddhahood. This essay explores the applicability of the logic and rhetoric of inverse correlation in the cases of the early Daoist Zhuangzi, medieval Japanese Buddhist Shinran, and modern Protestant Christian Kierkegaard, as well as broader ramifications for contemporary philosophy of religion.

There lies deep within my heart and mind, a source of tranquil repose beyond the reach of the waves of grief or joy.

Kitarō Nishida, from his *Journals*

"[Father] Paneloux is a man of learning, a scholar. He hasn't come in contact with death; that's why he can speak with such assurance of the truth – with a capital T. But every country priest who visits his parishioners and has heard a man gasping for breath on his deathbed thinks as I do. He'd try to relieve human suffering before trying to point out its excellence."

Dr. Rieux in Albert Camus, *The Plague*

I. INTRODUCTION

In his final work, *The Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview* (*Bashoteki ronri to shūkyōteki sekai kan* 場所的論理と宗教的世界観),

the Japanese philosopher Kitarō Nishida invokes the concept of 'inverse correlation' (Jpn. *gyakutaiō* 逆対応) to express his understanding of the nature of the self. According to Nishida, the greater the self's realization of its own finite nature, the greater the positive realization of the infinite; the greater the self-realization of limited human particularity, the greater the self-realization of the limitless divine universal:

> From a human perspective, the human-divine relationship is effectively encapsulated in the statement by Zen master Daitō, "Separated by aeons yet not apart for even an instant; facing each other all day long yet never encountering each other for even an instant." It captures the contradictory self-identity of the divine-human relation. This is the world of the absolutely contradictory self-identity [of opposites], of negation-as-affirmation, [and affirmation-as-negation]. It must be this world of inverse [mutual] determination, of *inverse correlation*. Thus our religious mind and heart arise not from the [human] self but [in response] to the call of God or of Buddha. This is the working of the Divine or of the Buddha, arising from the Source of the self (Nishida 1989: 340; *italics* mine).

This statement represents the culmination of Nishida's philosophy, the result of a lifetime of work, and his synthesis of Asian and Western thought, in particular Buddhism and Continental Philosophy. Nishida's thought at the end of his career differs greatly from its origins as enunciated in his maiden work, *An Inquiry into the Good* (*Zen no kenkyū* 善の研究) (Nishida 1992), which focuses on 'pure experience' (*junsui keiken* 純粋経験) as the basis for his philosophical anthropology. Nevertheless, there is continuity in the trajectory of Nishida's thought.

Nishida considered 'pure experience' the basis for individual subjectivity, not the other way around. 'Pure experience' was more like an unbounded field that gave rise to individual particularity, and served as the precursor to the 'place of absolute nothingness' (*zettai mu no basho* 絶対無の場所), none other than the 'place' articulated in *The Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview.* In between *An Inquiry into the Good* and *The Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview,* Nishida went on to explore a wide range of themes including self-awareness (*jikaku* 自覚), active intuition (*kōiteki chokkan* 行為的直観), the absolutely contradictory self-identity [of opposites] (*zettai mujunteki jiko dōitsu* 絶対矛盾的自己同一), and the historical world (*rekishiteki sekai* 歴史的世界).

For the purposes of the present essay, there are two key aspects that stand out. First is the focus on individual subjectivity that begins with *An Inquiry into the Good*. Second is the developing concern for the social and historical world that culminates in *The Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview*. The former represents the existentialist thread that runs through Nishida's thought, and his insistence that the individual come to grips with her own concrete existence in the here-and-now. The latter represents an increasingly Hegelian strain that defines the significance of the self as inseparable from the unfurling of history.

From his philosophical writings to his more informal essays and journal entries, it is evident that Nishida considered it essential that he himself embody to the best of his ability the philosophy he put down on paper, and that his philosophy be an expression of his lived existence. He was a serious practitioner of Zen Buddhism, and he repeatedly took himself to task for what he perceived to be his insufficient practice and ethical behavior (Yusa 2002). He also agonized over the tumultuous situation in Japan as the Second World War came to a close, and he completed *The Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview* in May 1945, just two months before his death, and just four months before the end of the war. As a leading intellectual holding an influential position as Professor of Philosophy at Kyoto Imperial University (present-day Kyoto University), he also felt responsible for articulating his, and Japan's place within the larger historical order. Nishida was the putative founder of the Kyoto School of Philosophy, made up of a number of his colleagues and students who drew upon his thought and that of the colleague who succeeded him, Hajime Tanabe. Nishida, along with other members of the Kyoto School, came under intense criticism before, during, and after the war for pronouncements that were regarded as supportive of and in line with Japanese militarism.

The Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview is as much Nishida's existential attempt to come to grips with the utter negation of self in the face of brutal historical circumstances as it was his philosophical project of expressing the self logically, as the synthesis of perceived opposites: life and death, East and West, Asian Buddhism and Continental Philosophy, individual existence and world history. At the heart of this project of attempting to resolve contradictory opposites was his concept of inverse correlation: the more dire the state of the self, the greater the potential for realization of the infinite.

Nishida's articulation of inverse correlation is instructive on several counts. First, it assists in elucidating a recurring pattern of logic in religious discourse where finite and infinite are correlated as polar opposites. Second, it brings into relief the rhetorical function of this type of discourse, in unmasking false consciousness. Third, it brings into relief the problem of taking a religious moment, which in its original context was designed to subvert the dominant narrative, but which is now used to form the core of a new master narrative. Examining these three aspects of Nishida's 'inverse correlation' will both show how Nishida's thought has broader philosophical relevance beyond the particular bounds of his Buddhist-Continental synthesis as well as further illuminate the thorny problem of Nishida's wartime ideological complicity with Japanese militarism.

In order to present these points, this essay begins with an explanation of the broader meaning of inverse correlation. Then, the concept of inverse correlation is applied to three articulations of religious thought: Søren Kierkegaard's (1813-1855) definition of the religious paradox of Christian faith consciousness, Zhuangzi's (ca. 4th century BCE) description of the Daoist adept who lives in the Dao, or the Way, and Shinran's (1173-1262) expression of the Pure Land Buddhist path of the foolish being (Jpn. *bonbu* 凡夫) embraced by boundless compassion (*mugai no daihi* 無蓋の大悲, *muen no ji* 無縁の慈).[1] Finally, Nishida's concept of inverse correlation is revisited in light of its broader applicability to our contemporary world. While there are major differences among the philosophical anthropologies of these thinkers as well as their larger worldviews, and some of these will be noted, the present focus remains more on the similarities of their applications of inverse correlation in their religious and philosophical logic, their rhetorical effects, and the ramifications of invoking their subversive transformations.

[1] Many are familiar with the fact that some of the early introduction of Nishida's work's to the West presented it as a philosophical articulation of Zen Buddhist experience. As Robert Wargo notes, however, such a characterization of Nishida tends to distort the significance of his work as a philosopher (Wargo 2005: 5). Furthermore, as Christian theology and Shin Buddhist thought are arguably more influential in Nishida's formulation of the concept of "inverse correlation" than Zen, they provide more apt resources for comparison as is done here. There are plentiful resources available for those who wish to explore the relation between Zen and Nishida's philosophy (Yusa 2002).

II. INVERSE CORRELATION AS ACTUAL AND RHETORICAL

Generally speaking, people tend to look for positive correlations, for example, increased pay for higher performance at work, higher reward for more effort, greater appreciation for larger self-sacrifice. In certain arenas, however, there is an inverse correlation. For example, in economics, where a novice might expect a rise in interest rates with an increase in bond prices, the reverse is true; there is an inverse correlation between the price of bonds and interest rate yields: the higher the bond price, the lower the interest rate yielded; the lower the price, the greater the interest rate yield. The reason for this is simple; when the interest rate yield on newly issued bonds rises, the price on similar, previously issued bonds must drop to match the effective interest rate yield in order to be saleable. When the interest rate drops on newly issued bonds, then the price on previously issued bonds with similar par value (maturity value) can rise to take advantage of the interest rate differential between the new bonds (lower rate) and the existing bonds (higher rate).

The point of the example is this: What initially seems obvious to the novice eye turns out to be false, based on an assumption of positive correlation. What to a novice seems counter-intuitive turns out to be true, once one digs beneath surface expectations and carries out an actual analysis, revealing the *inverse correlation*. There are examples of inverse correlation in the realms of philosophical and religious thought, rhetorically playing off of the element of overturned expectations. For example, in the "Sermon on the Mount," Jesus states, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven .... Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (KJV: Matthew 5:3-5). This statement enunciates a correlation that is the inverse of the usual expectation: Those who are spiritually well endowed are closer to realizing the realm of the Divine, and those who proactively seek God's Kingdom will inherit it.

There are two ways to understand this kind of inverse correlation. First is in terms of actual inverse relations: finite and infinite, temporal and eternal. The greater the realization of finitude, the greater is the realization of infinitude; the greater the awareness of the ephemeral, the greater the awareness of timelessness. Second is in terms of rhetorical subversion: unmasking the false consciousness of assumed positive correlation through the rhetorical use of inverse correlation. Where a person assumes he is spiritually well endowed, Jesus unmasks his pretentions by stating the opposite. It is possible to interpret the statement

by Jesus cited above in both ways. On the one hand, the more that a person realizes her finite capacity (poor, meek), the more she opens to the infinite scope of the divine (heaven, earth). On the other hand, this is a statement made by Jesus to his followers in order to unmask their false consciousness (assumption of spiritual wealth).

That is, Jesus seeks to expose the conscious presumption of his audience, their assumption that they *are* spiritual, that they *are* the presumptive heirs to the earthly realm as the manifestation of spirit. In this case, the problem he identifies is the gap between the self-conscious identification of his audience with spiritual wealth versus their actual state of spiritual poverty. One of the traditional interpretations describes this in terms of pride; according to Augustine's exegesis on the "Sermon," "Pride is the beginning of all sin." Yet, in framing Jesus' pronouncement merely in terms of pride, one might easily overlook the rhetorical sophistication of the inverse correlation in this statement, designed to expose the gap between consciousness and fact, or between conscious assumption and actual state of being (even though the analysis of this gap is implicit in the concept of "pride").

Furthermore, one can argue that the rhetorical effectiveness of this statement rests upon three levels of signification: individual, social, and universal. The focus of Matthew 5:3-5 is on the social or communal, insofar as Jesus is speaking directly to his community of followers, warning/admonishing them for their spiritual pride. Yet, the full scope of this statement cannot be understood without taking into the account the individual and universal implications of his statement.

For example, if a particular individual is listening to Jesus's statement and only hears its communal significance, then he may fail to understand that it is meant directly for him. He may fail to take full responsibility for recognizing the overweening pride that prevents him from receiving the holy spirit into his heart. If he only hears the social, communal significance of the message, then he may think, "We as a community must do better," but he may not realize that he must reflect and act upon his own spiritual lack.

Similarly, an individual may be receptive to hearing the social significance of Jesus's statement for his immediate community but fail to understand its potential significance at the universal level, that is, for all people in history. In that case, she may fail to reflect sufficiently on her own deep sense of responsibility and think it sufficient to work out problems on a local level. The universal level of significance assumes that

at some level, each person is answerable to all humanity, and perhaps even beyond, to all beings. Christianity, insofar as it takes the form of a so-called "world religion," implies that Christians take seriously this universal dimension.

The concept of inverse correlation discloses a possible tension in the historical unfolding of any religious movement. On the one hand, statements of the kind cited above, as attributed to Jesus, enunciate the inverse relationality of finite and infinite. On the other, they demonstrate the necessity of exposing false consciousness. If only the former, the inverse relationality, were operational, then no effort would be required to realize the divine, since the idea that the meek "shall inherit the earth" would merely be a statement of fact. However, if a change in consciousness is required, from false to true, as well as a corresponding change in behavior, then a great deal of effort is required.

In the Biblical story of Jesus, one can see inverse correlations conveyed as matters of both fact and of rhetorical subversion. Jesus as the Son God, or the finite incarnation of the infinite, is presented as actual, an existential reality. Such statements as Matthew 5:3-5 cited above may be interpreted as operating at the levels of both actual fact and rhetorical subversion. Rhetorical subversion, unlike bare facts, necessarily operates socially, as language and discourse. Jesus was a highly subversive figure, and his rhetoric frequently functioned in such a way as to subvert the narrative of the dominant religious and political order.

Problems arise in the operation of inverse correlation when its rhetorically subversive function is overlooked or misapplied. For example, when in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008, Lloyd Blankfein, Chief Executive of Goldman Sachs, stood in St. Paul's Cathedral in London, and declared that as a banker he was "doing God's work," he immediately became the object of derision and ridicule (Bryan 2009). Here, in the sacred precincts of Christianity, where the discourse of inverse correlation had become tradition, Blankfein had now unexpectedly come out with a declaration of positive correlation, where he equated wealth and self-enrichment of the wealthy with the work of the Divine, a statement all the more galling for those who held Blankfein and other heads of major financial institutions at least partially responsible for the impoverishment of tens of millions of ordinary people around the world while he and a few others profited to the tune of billions.

As religious institutions develop and become large financial and political entities themselves, they face similar criticisms. Although they

are supposed to be doing "God's work," they often come to be seen as enhancing their own wealth and power rather than humbling themselves in service to and in inverse correlation with the greater glory of the Infinite.

III. SØREN KIERKEGAARD AND CHRISTIAN FAITH AS INVERSE CORRELATION

One of the seminal figures to make this point in the modern West was Søren Kierkegaard, who advocated for the meaningful religious existence of individual human beings over and against a corporatized view of religion in which individuals were only considered religious within the larger sweep of history, as members of religious institutions and communities that were deemed to be the primary carriers of historical significance. Kierkegaard criticized the latter as mere "Christendom," a world in which simply being born into a Christian family carried the assumption of faith:

> That we are all Christians is something so generally known and assumed that it needs no proof but may even be about to work its way up from being a historical truth to becoming an axiom, one of the eternal intuitive principles with which the babe is now born, so that with Christianity there may be said to have come about a change in man, that in "Christendom" a babe is born with ... the principle that we are all Christians (Kierkegaard 1968a: 107).

In contrast with this Kierkegaard emphasized the existential struggle to live a life of true faith:

> In the passionate moment of [faith]-decision, ... it seems as if the infinite decision were thereby realized. But in the same moment the existing individual finds himself in the temporal order, and the subjective "how" [of faith-decision] is transformed into a striving, a striving which receives its impulse from the decisive passion of the infinite, but which is nevertheless a striving [on the part of the believer] (Kierkegaard 1968b: 71).

Kierkegaard is well-known for his criticism of a certain kind of popular Hegelianism that was in vogue in Europe during his lifetime.[2] Kierkegaard

[2] For the purposes of the present essay, Kierkegaard's criticisms are better understood as directed toward a stereotyped view of Hegel rather than a full analysis of Hegel's

railed against what he regarded as the System of Christianity in which individuals were treated as mere cogs in the turning wheels of a much larger historical unfolding in which Divine Spirit supposedly revealed itself. He was equally critical of those who considered themselves Christians just because they were part of "Christian" culture: merely attending church, recognized for their civic contributions as part of a "Christian" life of virtue and so forth, what he polemically called "disgusting hypocritical priestly fudge" (Kierkegaard 1968a: 126). Rather than "being" Christian, Kierkegaard emphasized the task of "becoming" Christian; rather than a commodified "thing," a difficult path of faith: "But the eternal is not a thing which can be had regardless of the way in which it is acquired; no, the eternal is not really a thing, but is the way in which it is acquired."

Thus Kierkegaard introduces an inverse correlation between outer Christendom and inward striving, such that the emphasis on the appearance of being Christian has according to him come at the expense of truly becoming Christian, that the striving to attain faith has been sacrificed in the name of "Christendom." This inverse correlation, expressed socio-historically in relation to Kierkegaard's immediate circumstances, discloses its broader, more universalistic significance in relation to his philosophical anthropology, as articulated in *The Sickness Unto Death* (Kierkegaard 1980). In this work, written under the pseudonym Anti-Climacus, Kierkegaard gives a psychologically nuanced analysis of, first, despair, and then, sin-consciousness. For him, sin is the willful expression of despair, and yet, as it shall become evident, this dark condition of willful despair holds the key to realizing true selfhood.

The basis of this analysis is Kierkegaard's view of the self as a *self-relating synthesis in a state of constant becoming:* "The self is a relation that relates itself to itself ... A human being is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, ... of freedom and necessity .... A synthesis is a relation between two .... In the relation between two, the relation is the third as a negative unity" (Kierkegaard 1980: 15).

This passage, which opens *The Sickness Unto Death*, has been the subject of much discussion. For our purposes, the key lies in the self as *synthetic relation*. First, there are two aspects to the self, of finitude and infinitude, necessity and freedom. The finite aspect is the self that

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thought proper. Jon Stewart provides a helpful examination of Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel Reconsidered (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

is bound to this world, that must eat and sleep, that is bound to desire, and that must die. The infinite aspect is the self as the creation or self-expression of the Divine, of infinite potentiality and unlimited freedom. The self, in this view, is neither wholly finite nor wholly infinite but a synthesis of the two. As an analogy, no human being has broken nine seconds in the 100-meter dash, or run a mile under three minutes. Yet, every track and field record has been broken, most in recent history, such that no known limit has ever been reached. Technology has its limits, but no one has discovered the limits of developing medical cures, of computing power, or of increasing automobile fuel efficiency. Ethically, no human being has been morally perfect (with, for many Christians, one notable exception: Jesus Christ), yet no one has found the limits of perfectibility. In Kierkegaard's view, human beings are constantly in the process of relating their limited, finite accomplishments to their infinite potentiality, in the attempt to achieve ever greater heights.

In addition to the self's activity of relating its opposing aspects – finite and infinite, necessity and freedom – is yet another level of relating, constituting the third aspect of the self, which is the *self relating to itself:* "If, however, the relation relates itself to itself, this relation is the positive third, and this is the self" (Kierkegaard 1980: 15). This self-relating of the self to itself is the self-consciousness of the self as synthesis of finite and infinite, the self relating finite to infinite. Ultimately, this self-relating is not only a matter of consciousness, of self-consciousness, it is also will, in the sense of rendering the synthesis, of finite and infinite. As an analogy, a runner decides that he must increase his initial sprint to achieve a faster time in the 1000-meter run. Such a decision involves both conscious recognition and the will to execute the contents of this recognition.

The problem, for Kierkegaard, is that human beings virtually never execute the act of the *self relating itself to itself* perfectly or completely. The self either overemphasizes the finite aspect or the infinite aspect, thus falling into despair. That is, one either becomes overly bound to the finitude of the self or to the infinitude of the self. For example, if one believes that one must always place the fulfillment of economic needs above all else, then one becomes a drudge, a slave to work, falling into despair over the finite needs of the self. Alternatively, if one dreams up fanciful scheme after scheme, yet is never able to act on any of them, then one becomes lost in imagination, falling into despair over the availability of infinite possibilities and freedom.

Once the self becomes aware of its own imbalance, either favoring the finite aspect or the infinite, it should be able to correct itself. Yet, it either willfully ignores this imbalance, or willfully tries to correct itself in an inappropriate manner. This willfulness deepens the pathology of the self from despair to sin, since the self knowingly goes against itself as a synthesis of finite and infinite. For example, an alcoholic who knows he needs to stop drinking in order to regain his health but knowingly continues drinking commits the sin of willingly binding himself to the finite aspect of the self, ignoring his infinite capacity to renounce drinking. Or, a person who recognizes her alcoholism and forces herself to stop drinking by sheer force of will eventually breaks and returns to drinking because all she can think about is drinking, even if it is the thought of "not drinking"; according to Kierkegaard, this is like the sin of "willing to be oneself."[3]

Consciousness, by its very nature, is more bound up in the finite aspect than the infinite, as it functions primarily in the discursive realm, even as it ranges towards the infinite in imagination. Only when the finite, conscious self understands itself as the self-expression of the infinite can it come into proper relation to the whole of the self as synthesis. Yet, consciousness cannot let go of itself, its own willfulness. Sin-consciousness is the self's own recognition of its inability to let go of its bondage to finite self-consciousness. In genuine sin-consciousness, the gateway to the infinite opens up, such that the self comes into proper relation to the infinite, or the Divine. Thus, sin-consciousness opens the way to faith-consciousness: "Faith is: that the self in being itself and in willing to be itself rests transparently in God, [the Infinite]"(Kierkegaard 1980: 82). The self, abiding in the finite realm, must maintain consciousness; yet, it must recognize its inherent limitation in the face of the infinite. Sin-consciousness is self-consciousness expressed as humility in relation to the infinite; while functioning in the finite, discursive realm, the self relates itself to itself by recognizing its grounding in the Infinite, thus coming to rest "transparently in God."[4]

[3] For this reason, in Alcoholics Anonymous, there is emphasis on the finite self's helplessness to overcome alcoholism, and the need to rely on a "higher power," i.e. infinite aspect of the self, in order to begin on the road to recovery.

[4] Kierkegaard defines this as "religiousness A," faith in God. The ultimate faith for him is "religiousness B," faith in Christ. Since the sinner cannot believe in himself, he must find salvation through the belief that someone other than he has attained the perfect synthesis of finite and infinite. Kierkegaard's Christian view is that this is found in Christ

The inverse correlation in Kierkegaard's philosophical anthropology is that the deeper the realization of sin-consciousness, the greater the realization of faith-consciousness, and consequently, the greater the realization of true selfhood. It should come as no surprise that for Kierkegaard, as a Protestant Christian, his philosophical anthropology accords with Jesus' own statement of inverse correlation cited earlier: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven .... Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Recognition of one's own spiritual impoverishment, i.e. sin-consciousness, becomes the gateway to the realm of the Infinite, the Kingdom of Heaven. The universalistic scope of this philosophical anthropology of the finite-infinite self is evident in the statement, "I ... assume that there awaits me a highest good, an eternal happiness, in the same sense that such a good, [the eternal happiness of faith,] awaits a servant-girl or a professor" (Kierkegaard 1968b: 19). Yet, in this statement, there is also a hint of irony, for the "professor" is often the butt of Kierkegaard's jokes, the conceptual "system-builder" who creates enormous edifices of thought but has only a shack to live in, spiritually speaking: "In relation to their systems most systematisers are like a man who builds an enormous castle and lives in a shack nearby" (Kierkegaard 2003: 98).

As one of the pioneers of Existentialism, Kierkegaard exalted the significance of individual existence over and against historical consciousness. Yet, he did not ignore history. Rather, he railed against the spiritual torpor of his times, in which he implicated the "professors, the system-builders." "They do not live in their own enormous systematic buildings. But spiritually, that is a decisive objection. Spiritually speaking, a man's thought must be the building in which he lives – otherwise everything is topsy-turvy" (Kierkegaard 2003: 98). Thus, Kierkegaard's use of inverse correlation in relation to his historical circumstances was to declare that, as a Christian, he saw his fellow "Christians" as un-Christian; a Christian who was a "Christian" in name only was not a real Christian. In fact, the greater the investment in declaring oneself "Christian," the more diminished one became in the inward process of deepening faith.

In his philosophical works, Kierkegaard employed an elaborate strategy of pseudonymous authorship to depict different spheres or modalities

as the "Son of God," and that faith in Christ inspires the believer to move towards the life of Christ, even as he cannot escape his condition as a sinner.

of existence including varying degrees of religious consciousness. The exception to this was his final work *Attack Upon Christendom,* which he wrote in his own name; he showed his true colors and claimed the ideas of his final oeuvre as his own. As Gregor Malantschuk notes, "With his last writings Kierkegaard wants to be instrumental in destroying the 'phenomenon' Christendom in order to make room for the dawn of the new" emergence of genuine faith (Malantschuk 1971: 371). Just as Matthew 5:3-5, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," carries historical commentary about the larger corruption of society, Kierkegaard's Existentialist inverse correlation returns himself as an individual author to the stage of history through his *Attack Upon Christendom.*

IV. ZHUANGZI AND THE REALIZATION OF THE DAO, THE WAY, AS INVERSE CORRELATION

The early Daoist thinker Zhuangzi, like Kierkegaard, regards the core of religion as a dynamic path, or Way (*Dao*) of cultivation, rather than set of doctrines or system of ideas, and it is in this context that the Daoist Way of inverse correlation becomes evident.

The *Zhuangzi* along with the earlier *Laozi* constitute the foundational texts of early Daoism. Although attributed to its supposedly eponymous author, it is now well established that the *Zhuangzi* was compiled over time and represents the work of many hands over several centuries. Nevertheless, there is also widespread agreement that the seven "Inner Chapters" are consistent enough to be the work of a single individual, and that many of the other twenty-six chapters constitute variations and resonant treatments of themes related to the inner chapters (Roth: 1991). The present discussion includes episodes from these seven chapters but also includes an episode from the other chapters that accords with much of the discussion in the inner chapters.

For Zhuangzi, the Dao, or the Way, carries at least three senses: the way of Nature, the way of human beings, and the way to express the Way. The way of Nature includes the entire cosmos, which Zhuangzi and the early Daoists regard as inherently harmonious. For human beings, the ecological environment untouched by human artifice constitutes the most accessible manifestation of cosmic harmony: the cyclical change of seasons, the flow of water from high to low, the daily cycles of sunrise and sunset, and so on. It is these harmonious patterns that enable human

beings to pursue settled agricultural life, plan for various activities throughout the year, raise families, and live out the natural life cycle of what it means to be human.

Zhuangzi is not opposed to human culture *per se.* Farming is culture, cooking is culture, playing simple musical instruments such as drums can also be culture. For Zhuangzi, however, there is a difference between human culture as a natural expression of Nature, and human culture that has lost touch with, that has fallen out of sync with, its harmonious rhythms. Nowhere is the divide between human culture in harmony with nature versus that out of sync with nature more evident than in the episode of Woodworker Qing.

In this episode, Qing sets out to make a ceremonial bell stand. Zhuangzi's Daoist path to making the most beautiful, suitable bell stand is not to apprentice under a master, or to engage in a long course of study using manuals and techniques. Rather, the Dao requires him to forget and leave behind any thought of human culture and all its trappings, the king and his court for which the bell stand will be used, any recognition for his work, including the remuneration he might receive, even his awareness of himself as a craftsman. Through a cleansing or purifying process involving physically fasting for several days, Qing is said to clarify his mind to such an extent that he can see the working of Nature in sync with the requirement to make a bell stand.

> When I have fasted for five days, I no longer have any thought of congratulations or rewards, of title or stipends .... And when I have fasted for seven days, I am so still that I forget I have four limbs and a form and body. By that time, the ruler and his court no longer exist for me. My skill is concentrated and all outside distractions fall away. After that, I go into the mountain forest and examine the heavenly nature of the trees. If I find one of superlative form, and I can see a bell stand there, I put my hand to the job of carving; if not, I let it go. This way, I am simply matching up 'Heaven' [Cosmos/Nature] with 'Heaven' (Watson 2003: 129).

According to Zhuangzi, Woodworker Qing engages in a process of undoing and keeping at bay the pernicious effects of human culture in order to be able to see clearly the rhythms of Nature as it interfaces with the human realm. At that point, however, the act of carving the bell stand is no longer a human activity in the conventional sense of human cultural production. Rather, it is as if Qing has become transparent to the

workings of the Cosmos itself. It is Nature carving itself through the hand of Qing and the tree. The key to Qing carving the bell stand is *un-doing* the interference of cultural artifice to release the self-constellating power of Nature to create the bell stand, to allow It to work through Qing.

This passage gives the impression that the carving of the bell stand is entirely a natural act requiring no human artifice, as if the bell stand was meant to be in the same way that the Sun was meant to rise, and flowers to bloom. Complications arise, however, when considering the use of the bell stand. Zhuangzi's Daoist protagonists, like Qing, tend to be low on or outside the social hierarchy, regarded as an advantage in avoiding the entanglements of power and competition, living simple lives close to nature, and working with their bodies so that they can live in rhythm with the Way. Yet, the bell stand, apparently meant to be in the larger scheme of things, is designed for use in the King's court, the center of elite social and cultural power and discursive entanglements. In this sense, the bell stand becomes indicative of a potential contradiction: How can Woodworker Qing, the Daoist adept, create a bell stand that is emblematic of and reinforces the oppressive structures of human artifice alienated from the flow of the Dao in Nature?

In order to examine this problem, we turn to another episode, this time from the inner chapters, entitled, "Caring for Life."[5] Here, we find Cook Ding, the Daoist butcher, who so skillfully carves an ox that his knife has not required sharpening for nineteen years.

> "What I care about is the Way, which goes beyond skill. When I first began cutting up oxen, all I could see was the ox itself. After three years, I no longer saw the whole ox. And now – now I go at it by spirit and don't look with my eyes. Perception and understanding have come to a stop and spirit moves where it wants. I go along with the natural makeup, strike in the big hollows, guide the knife through the big openings, and follow things as they are. So I never touch the smallest ligament or tendon, much less a main joint" (46).

[5] This discussion of the episode of Cook Ding and following comparison with the episode involving King Xuan and the ox from *Mengzi* 1A7 derives from my work with students in REL 407/507 The Bull in the China Shop, a course on comparative animal ethics I taught in 2009. This course was made possible by the generous support of the Coleman-Guitteau Professorship, Oregon Humanities Center, University of Oregon 2009-10. In particular, I am indebted to my collaboration with Eric Tojimbara, currently a doctoral candidate in Asian Languages and Cultures, UCLA.

Here "skill" is associated with contrived human culture, with training acquired solely in the human realm of instruction. Cook Ding "goes beyond skill," letting his spirit guide him in carving the ox. Like Woodworker Qing, Cook Ding has purified himself – mind and body – of discursive entanglements: "Perception and understanding have come to a stop," and he is able to "go along with the natural make up .... So I never touch the smallest ligament." His ox carving is emblematic of Zhuangzi's Daoist approach, flowing with the deep oneness of the Way, not fighting against its grain.

Like Woodworker Qing, Cook Ding is socially working in the service of someone much higher in status. In this case it is Lord Wenhui, who has tasked Ding with butchering the sacrificial ox. A question similar to that involving Qing arises in connection with Ding: Is the butchering of the ox for a high-ranking noble in accord with the Dao? A clue to this question can be found in the title of this chapter, "Caring for Life," the same phrase with which the exchange between Ding and Wenhui is brought to a conclusion: "I [Wenhui] have heard the words of Cook Ding and learned how to care for life!" (47)

What is the meaning of "life" in this phrase, "caring for life"? At first glance, it might be taken to mean the life of Lord Wenhui, since Cook Ding is presumably preparing a meal for him. Yet, this is obviously not the ultimate meaning, as it must refer at a deeper level to the life of the Dao, the Way. In either case, it cannot be the life of the ox which is butchered. To justify the butchering of the ox for the sake the Dao, one must find that killing the ox and eating its meat must be part of the larger pattern of the Dao, just as making the bell stand must be part of the larger cosmic harmony that Woodworker Qing taps into.

There may yet be further dimensions to Cook Ding caring for the life of the Dao in butchering the ox. In order to understand this, one must place the *Zhuangzi* within its larger historical context. The work of early Daoists such as Laozi and Zhuangzi arose partially in response to perceived excesses of the dominant philosophical paradigms of their time, in particular Confucianism. The Confucians emphasized discursive learning, centralized government, and focused their efforts on creating a harmonious social order. Where they emphasized tradition, learning, and doing, the Daoists emphasized nature, unlearning, and undoing. Laozi came after Kongzi (Confucius) whom he criticized (mostly implicitly); Zhuangzi followed the second great Confucian Mengzi (Mencius).

In a well-known passage in the latter's eponymous work, *Mengzi,* there is an exchange between Mengzi and King Xuan who is seeking Mengzi's counsel on how to be a good ruler (1A7). In order to teach King Xuan, Mengzi recalls a conversation he overheard concerning King Xuan's decision to substitute a lamb for the sacrificial ox. Mengzi criticizes Xuan for departing from tradition but praises him for taking pity on the ox. King Xuan's compassion showed that he had a good heart, but his failure to follow Confucian ritual protocol, refusing to sacrifice the ox and replacing it with the less valuable lamb, resulted in his subjects criticizing him for being miserly. "The heart behind your action is sufficient to enable you to become a true King. The people all thought that you grudged the expense, but, for my part, I have no doubt that you were moved by pity for the animal" (Lau 1970: 55). Mengzi goes on to encourage King Xuan to cultivate his heart-mind (*xin* 心) by correcting his mistake and extending his compassion to his subjects. Finally, Mengzi advises Xuan to "stay out of the kitchen" so that his sense of compassion will not be dulled: "The attitude of a [Confucian] gentleman towards animals is this: once having seen them alive, he cannot bear to see them die, and once having heard their cry, he cannot bear to eat their flesh. This is why the gentleman keeps his distance from the kitchen" (Lau 1970: 55). In other words, leave the butchering of the ox to the lowly cook so that the King can cultivate the virtue necessary to care for the life of his subjects.

Against this background, it becomes clear that Zhuangzi created Cook Ding as a subversive figure in relation to the expectations for a person of virtue. There is an *inverse correlation* between Mengzi's guidance to the King regarding care for the life of his subjects, on the one hand, and Zhuangzi's Cook Ding showing Lord Wenhui how to care for life, on the other. Where the usual Confucian expectation is that the King lead by the power (*virtus*) of his compassion, Zhuangzi presents the lowly Cook Ding as the exemplar of the Way. From Zhuangzi's vantage point, the lowly butcher shall inherit the Dao, and the one who seems unvirtuous (lacking compassion) turns out to be most virtuous in the Way. Similarly, in the episode of the bell stand, there is an inverse correlation between the ruler as the expected paragon of virtue and Woodworker Qing as the lowly craftsperson. Qing is of such low status that he is not even the bell-maker, only the maker of its stand. Yet, in attaining the Dao, he has completely forgotten that "the ruler and his court" exist; he has left society behind to become one with the Dao in Nature.

The force of applying the inverse correlation is meant to be both rhetorical and actual. The intrigue in both the episodes of Cook Ding and Woodworker Qing derives from the unexpected rhetorical inversion whereby normally peripheral figures are placed at the center of action, and those of the lowest status are elevated as Daoist exemplars. Yet, Zhuangzi does not present these figures as merely metaphors for the Dao. The devaluing of the ruling intellectual elite, and the valorization of craftspeople working intuitively with their bodies, living simply and close to nature – this is designed to be the actual early Daoist vision of Zhuangzi. In a passage that is all about inversion he states, "There is nothing in the world bigger than the tip of an autumn hair [thinning hair], and [the great] Mount Tai is little. No one has lived longer than a dead child, and [the legendary sage] Pengzu died young. Heaven and Earth were born at the same time I was, and the myriad things [of creation] are one with me" (Watson 2003: 38). That is, one must turn expectations upside down to show that, ultimately, everything is one in the Dao beyond words.

We will return again to Zhuangzi below, but to further examine the implications of this type of inverse correlation, we now turn to the Pure Land Buddhist thinker Shinran, founder of Jōdo Shinshū, known as Shin Buddhism in the West.

V. SHINRAN AND THE PURE LAND BUDDHIST WAY AS INVERSE CORRELATION

Shinran was a proponent of an emerging Pure Land Buddhist movement in Medieval Japan that is known today as Shin Buddhism, the largest sect of Japanese Buddhism. Like Zhuangzi, Shinran rejected what he perceived to be the overly intellectualized, ritualized, artificial culture of the establishment, but the object of critique in this case was what Shinran regarded as the aristocratic Buddhism of his day, out of touch with the majority of commoners, rather than the bureaucratic Confucianism addressed by Zhuangzi in early China. Shinran was part of a lay-oriented movement that was persecuted and outlawed by the imperial court and established Buddhist clerics, and he and a number of other priests were exiled into the countryside, far from the imperial palace and center of Buddhism in the environs of the capital of Kyoto. Although Shinran and others were pardoned and allowed to return when the authorities felt that

the momentum of their movement had dissipated, he refused to return to the capital and instead lived among the peasants in the countryside who he felt were more genuine and closer to the true spirit of Buddhism. Like the Daoist craftspeople and farmers depicted by Zhuangzi, what Shinran saw in the peasants were simple folk without pretense living close to the earth, in rhythm with nature, closer to being one with the cosmos than the scholastic monks of the capital whom he saw as corrupt.

Despite the positive characteristics Shinran attributed to them, these farmers and fishermen had their difficulties. Whereas Zhuangzi as a Daoist diagnosed the problem of his time as disharmony with the Dao caused by mental static in the form of too much thinking and wrong-headed thinking, Shinran as a Shin Buddhist saw suffering caused by attachment and blind passion. In the larger view of Buddhism, there is nothing wrong with desire, only desire blinded by attachment to preconceived ideas about what the reality of the self is or should be. This is what in Shin Buddhism is called blind passion (Jpn. *bonnō* 煩悩; Skt. *kleśa*), or desire driven by attachment. Liberation from the bondage of this blind attachment is effected through the realization of emptiness (Jpn. *kū* 空; Skt. *śūnyatā*), understood as the true nature of the self and all reality as devoid or empty of any mental fixations. While emptiness in itself is colorless, odorless, formless due to lacking any conceptually identifiable characteristics, the release into emptiness is experienced as liberation and illumination from the dark abyss of blind passions. Thus, in Shin Buddhism, emptiness is expressed as the awakening of infinite light, or Amida Buddha (Skt. Amitābha Buddha). The awakening of infinite light is also referred to as the realization of great compassion (Jpn. *daijihi* 大慈悲; Skt. *mahā-karuna*) because when one flows with the feeling ("com-passion") of emptiness, one is released from blind passion.

This dynamic between what Shinran calls the "foolish being" (Jpn. *bonbu* 凡夫, Skt. *pṛthagjana*) filled with blind passion and the boundless compassion of Amida Buddha is to be realized in the central practice of Shin Buddhism, the chanting of the Name of Amida Buddha, rendered in Japanese as Namu Amida Butsu. It is one of many forms of contemplative practice found throughout Buddhism and derives from the Sanskrit, *Namō-amitābha-buddha,* which means, roughly, "I, this foolish being, entrust myself to the awakening of infinite light." For Shinran, the repetitive chanting of the Name of Amida Buddha leads to the realization of emptiness, experienced as infinite light and boundless

compassion enveloping the foolish being. Whereas Amida Buddha is the personified expression of emptiness, the Pure Land, the realm of Amida, is the spatial expression, akin to nirvana.

The inverse correlation in Shin Buddhism lies in the dynamic of this practice: the deeper the realization of blind passion, the greater the realization of boundless compassion. According to Shinran, these are not of two different natures as both are equally "empty." He likens them to ice and water. Once the ice of blind passion is embraced by the warmth of boundless compassion, they become as one in the ocean of light (CWS I: 371; Shinran 1969: 429): "The greater the ice [of blind passion]; the greater the water [of boundless compassion]" (CWS I: 371; Shinran 1969: 429). Ultimately, the power of the chanting practice derives not from the limited self-consciousness of the Shin Buddhist practitioner but rather arises from emptiness or boundless compassion itself, as the spontaneous action of reality illuminating, embracing, and dissolving the ego-centered self-consciousness of the foolish being from within her own depths. For this reason, Shinran also refers to emptiness and Amida Buddha as "other power," or the deepest reality of the self that is "other than ego," or other than "self power."

Shinran was a prolific writer who composed most of his works between the ages of seventy-four and ninety. The most well-known work associated with him, however, is the *Tannishō,* a collection of his statements including commentary, a text purportedly compiled posthumously by his follower Yuien. This is the most widely read work of Japanese Buddhism, and within it, the most famous statement occurs in "Section III":

> Even a good person attains birth in the Pure Land [realization of the realm of emptiness], how much more so the evil person [who is burdened with the karmic weight of blind passions].
>
> But the people of the world constantly say, even the evil person attains birth, how much more so the good person. Although this appears to be sound at first glance, it goes against the intention of ... other power. The reason is that since the person of self power, being conscious of doing good, lacks the thought of entrusting the self completely to other power, he or she is not the focus of [boundless compassion], ... Amida Buddha. But when self power is overturned and entrusting to other power occurs, the person attains birth in, [or realizes,] the land of True Fulfillment [the Pure Land of emptiness] (Shinran 1969: 676; Unno 1996: 6).

Here, Shinran states the inverse correlation most precisely. The presumption is that a person who performs karmically good actions and purifies himself moves closer to the realization of emptiness and other power free from the entanglements of ego-centered self power. What such a person fails to recognize is the darkness of blind passion and attachment within. Only in the moment of recognizing himself as a foolish being filled with blind passion does he become open to the illumination of emptiness and boundless compassion. Like an alcoholic who sees problems in everyone but himself, the "good person" is the one furthest away from the awakening of infinite light. Yet, just like the alcoholic who recognizes that he is the most foolish one of all, having earlier failed to see his own addiction, and thereby takes the most crucial steps towards recovery, the "evil" one who comes into the awareness of his own blind passion is the one who simultaneously is able to enter into the ocean of light.

However, the foregoing statement by Shinran from the *Tannishō* is not only a universal statement of Shinran's philosophical anthropology but is made by him in the specific socio-historical context of the emerging lay-oriented Shin Buddhist movement. Shinran had become increasingly disenchanted with the pretensions and artificiality of the aristocratic priesthood in and around the capital. For him, the unlettered, simple peasants of the countryside were much closer to the realization of Amida's great compassion, the very people who were considered "evil" and inferior in the eyes of the ruling priesthood for their lack of education and culture. Shinran called his followers "honored friends of the way, fellow practitioners," (Jpn. *ondōbō, ondōgyō* 御同朋御同行), these farmers and fishermen, often illiterate, who came to follow his practice of chanting the Name of Amida Buddha. Among those who counted themselves followers of Shinran's Shin Buddhism, there were also hunters, butchers, and merchants, considered karmically inferior by the establishment priesthood because they made their livelihood off of the death of other creatures, either by killing or selling them, or both. Shinran aligned himself with them, as he states in *Teaching, Practice, True Entrusting, and Realization* (*Kyōgyōshinshō* 教行信証), "This is the Dharma of attaining buddhahood through immediate transcendence [in the moment of realizing great compassion through saying the Name of Amida], for those of us who are inferior, filled with blind passion, hunters and merchants alike" (Shinran 1969: 121).

On the one hand, Shinran's statement from the *Tannishō,* "How much more so the evil person," carries universal significance insofar as everyone may be regarded as having some degree of attachment and blind passion. On the other, this statement is aimed directly at the aristocratic priesthood, "the good person," in order to unmask its hypocrisy, and at the same time valorizing the lowly peasants, fishermen, and hunters who are made to carry the label of "the evil person," but without whom there is no food for the majority including most in the priesthood who were not vegetarian.

As in the case of Cook Ding from the *Zhuangzi* and Jesus' statement from Matthew 5:3-5 from the *New Testament,* the application of inverse correlation in the above passage from the *Tannishō* is intended to function rhetorically and to provide an actualizable vision. These visions operate both at the universal level of potential applicability to all people everywhere and at the local level of specific socio-historical circumstances. Failing to take into account any of these aspects potentially leads to distortions or misapplication.

VI. INVERSE SELF-CORRELATION AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL: KIERKEGAARD, ZHUANGZI, SHINRAN

Each of the authors examined above articulates an inverse correlation in which the self – variously Christian, Daoist, and Shin Buddhist – has its false consciousness unmasked through an unexpected rhetorical inversion. This is designed to lead to a truer, more genuine self-realization in light of the larger reality of the self, whether it be God the Infinite, the Dao beyond conceptual opposites, or the Shin Buddhist awakening of infinite light. Each articulation, however, takes place within a specific context. First, each author presents a philosophical anthropology or model of selfhood distinctive to his own religious and philosophical perspective. Second, there are diverse historical circumstances: modern Danish Protestant, early Chinese Daoist, and medieval Japanese Shin Buddhist. The authors identify different delusions that they see as plaguing the consciousness of the inhabitants of their historical contexts. Each author deploys a logic of inverse correlation based on a rhetorical strategy specifically designed to unmask the purported false consciousness of his context and to point the way to true consciousness or awareness. Thus the universalistic vision of each thinker is mediated

by the inverse correlation dictated by his socio-historical circumstances. Yet, as indicated in the initial discussion of Matthew 5:3-5, the consideration of inverse correlation in each context remains incomplete unless one addresses the individual level of realization or meaning along with the universal and socio-historical levels.

As it turns out, each of the authors examined here – Christian Existentialist Kierkegaard, Daoist Zhuangzi, and Shin Buddhist Shinran – reflects on his own individual realization. In referring to themselves, they do not necessarily hold themselves up as paragons of faith, self-cultivation, or awakening, respectively. Rather, to varying degrees, they self-reflexively express their failure to live up to their own ideals. Yet, in doing so, do they merely admit to shortcomings, or are they once again invoking varieties of inverse correlation that in fact serve to reinforce the validity of their overall frameworks of religious and philosophical thought?

Kierkegaard. The peculiarities of Kierkegaard's own life story have been amply documented: his engagement to and break up with Regine Olsen; his pretending to be one of the "common folk" by standing on street corners; and his similar attendance at theater productions, but only the beginnings and endings so that he would not waste time better spent on his philosophical reflections and writing. While during his lifetime he received little notoriety beyond his immediate intellectual circle in nineteenth-century Copenhagen, Kierkegaard recognized his own philosophical brilliance and predicted that academics around the world would be making a living off of interpreting his writings! Yet, of his own faithfulness in relation to Christianity he stated, "I have never fought in such a way as to say: I am the true Christian, others are not Christians. No, my contention has been this: I know what Christianity is, my imperfection as a Christian I myself fully recognize – but I know what Christianity is .... My tactics were, by God's aid, to employ every means to make it clear what the requirement of Christianity truly is," that is, what is means to become a true Christian (Kierkegaard 1962: 153-155).

On the one hand, Kierkegaard is merely following through on the logic of his own inverse correlation. Only by confessing his falling short of faith does he actually confirm his faith. On the other, this confession is given in the context of his explanation of his pseudonymous authorship, dislocating himself in relation to the authorship. That is, he rejects any identification of his own religious attainment with that of any of the

pseudonymous authors. There is one exception to this dis-identification; in his journals, he does give an assessment of his own faith in relation to the pseudonyms: "I would place myself higher than Johannes Climacus, lower than Anti-Climacus" (Kierkegaard 2003: 175).

Thus, we find Kierkegaard the believing Christian placing himself at a complex intersection of historical existence, pseudonymous authorship, and religious and philosophical thought. First, as a Protestant Christian, he simply makes a statement of his sin- (and faith-) consciousness: "My imperfection as a Christian I myself fully recognize." Second, nevertheless, he sees his own realization as lying between that of Johannes Climacus (John the "Climber") and Anti-Climacus (The Anti-Climber, or "Descender"); that is, he places himself as not yet having attained the highest realization of faith, one that can look down on all others, yet higher than the rather philosophical and ironical Johannes Climacus who describes the intricacies of faith while not yet having fully attained it. Third, as a privileged intellectual who lived off of the inheritance from his father, Kierkegaard is not the common person who he often extols as having greater potential faith than the professional philosopher who creates magnificent conceptual edifices which he cannot inhabit because of his spiritual impoverishment.

While this is not the place to delve fully into the problem of Kierkegaard the man in relation to Kierkegaard the author, the key points for our purposes are as follows: Faith is not blind; faith-consciousness has its own sophistication. Yet, no amount of intellectual gymnastics by itself can yield faith, for it requires a commitment to belief and decision that is readily more accessible to those who are not preoccupied with conceptual determinations: Faith is "an objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness ... the highest truth attainable for an existing individual" (Kierkegaard 1968: 40). Kierkegaard saw himself as imperfect, a sinner, but he did think highly enough of himself to consider that he was approaching the embodiment of faith he attributed to the pseudonymous author Anti-Climacus.

In all of this Kierkegaard seems to equivocate. He wants to valorize the faith of the common person, but he also aspires to the highest, most sophisticated articulation of embodied faith. He debunks the intellectual pretensions of the priesthood and professional philosophers, but he is not willing to give up the life of the privileged intellectual. The more he emphasizes simplicity of faith, the more complex his conceptual articulation; the more he critiques professional intellectuals, the more

he embraces his role as public intellectual. Perhaps this equivocation, as problematic as it is, might also be his strength, insofar as it resonates with those who see themselves as living in the age of the intellect yet who also yearn for a simpler life of faith – open to the divine infinite but well-grounded in the necessities of existence. In the end, these polar contrasts may be seen as a) revealing a deep contradiction in Kierkegaard, or b) as inverse correlation. In the case of the latter 'b)': the simpler the faith, the greater its conceptual articulation; the greater the debunking of professional philosophers, the greater his respect for "true" philosophy, what he calls "Socratic" ignorance/wisdom. Whether Kierkegaard falls more into either 'a)' or 'b)', it is hard to say. As we shall see, this problem of the relation between conceptual knowledge and its transcendence is presented from another perspective in the *Zhuangzi.*

Zhuangzi. Like Kierkegaard, there is a complex relationship between Zhuangzi the author and Zhuangzi as he appears in his own eponymous work. In the *Zhuangzi,* he appears as a simple farmer, married with children. He depicts himself as one among the many Daoist adepts, living close to nature, removed from the entanglements of power and discursivity, in rhythm with the Dao. Yet, the *Zhuangzi* is the work of a highly trained intellectual, at a time when most Chinese did not have access to the elite education necessary to produce such a literary classic. Very simply, it would have been virtually impossible to be a full-time farmer and sophisticated literati.

One of the most telling passages concerning Zhuangzi's own awareness of his own limitations in relation to living in the Dao occurs when he has a dream in which he finds himself conversing with a human skull. In this dialogue, he finds out that he has not attained freedom from his entanglements in the distinction between life and death, that he has not yet fully attained the freedom of the Dao:

> When Zhuangzi went to Chu, he saw an old skull, all dry and parched. He poked it with his carriage whip and then asked, "Sir, were you greedy for life and forgetful of reason, and so came to this? Was your state overthrown and did you bow beneath the ax and so came to this?...
>
> When he had finished speaking, he dragged the skull over and, using it for a pillow, lay down to sleep.
>
> In the middle of the night, the skull came to him in a dream and said, "You chatter like a rhetorician and all your words betray the entanglements of a living man. The dead know nothing of these!...

> Among the dead there are no rulers above, no subjects below, and no chores of the four seasons .... A king facing south on his throne could have no more happiness than this!" (Watson 2003: 116)

For all his philosophizing on the Dao beyond opposites, including that of life versus death, Zhuangzi finds that he still carries unspoken desires for life that keep him entangled in this world. Could this be the scholar-author Zhuangzi indirectly confessing that he is not the free-flowing farmer who blends effortlessly with the rhythms of Nature and the Dao?

If so, this could also cast new light on the earlier episode of Woodworker Qing. For in that episode, Qing must go through a preparatory phase, fasting and purifying his mind and body of any entanglements in this world before the Dao could flow through him, so that he could carve a bell stand as though it were the hand of Nature itself that effortlessly and transparently carved itself through his hand and the tree-meant-to-be-a-bell stand. That is, one way to imagine closing the gap between Zhuangzi as the author-literati and Zhuangzi as the farmer-Daoist adept would be if, reflecting on his mental entanglements, he engaged in a purifying regimen like that of Qing. This would stand in contrast with other figures such as Cook Ding who have no need of such preparation, free of the burdens of too much wrong-headed thinking as plagued those like Zhuangzi with his cumbersome intellectual apparatus.

Here we have the Daoist inverse correlation applied to Zhuangzi himself as an individual: The greater his reflections on himself as entangled in mental confusion, the greater the unfurling of the Dao before him, with the mediation of the skull-dream and a purifying regimen like that of Qing.

The text of the Zhuangzi leaves open to the imagination of the reader how Zhuangzi-the-author might have located Zhuangzi-the-Daoist in relation to all of this. Was he a literati and gentleman farmer who dabbled in a little of both scholarship and agriculture, bridging the gap with some self-purification exercises? Was he a scholar who only imagined the pristine world of Daoist adepts who lived simply in attunement with the natural Dao? Or, did he largely leave behind the world of learning and "high" culture to live like a Daoist recluse, away from the urban centers, nestled among the farmers in their villages? These are themes that find resonances and bear further exploration in relation to the medieval Japanese founder of Shin Buddhism Shinran.

Shinran. Shinran, once exiled from the religious and cultural center

of Kyoto and its environs out into the countryside, lived and worked among the peasants in the countryside from the age of approximately thirty until sixty, when he decided to return to Kyoto. Yet, he never stepped foot in a temple again, and lived out the last thirty years in his brother's modest house, writing virtually all of his works during that time until his death at the age of ninety, in 1262. At the very end of his *magnum opus,* the "Afterword" to the *Kyōgyōshinshō,* which he completed at the age of seventy-four, he stated, "I am neither monk nor layman" (Shinran 1969: 340).

At one level, the text of the "Afterword" makes clear that he was referring to his social and historical circumstances, in which he had been stripped of his priestly status, returned to lay status, but in which he continued to wear his robes in defiance along with his wife Eshinni, who also wore her robes. They thus carried out their ministry as outlaws, and he was "neither monk nor layman." At another level, this was his philosophical expression of emptiness and oneness, that in the truth of emptiness beyond conceptual distinctions, there are no religious distinctions of rank between monks and laity. Finally, it can be said that this was his expression of his own individual religious awareness, that he was not qualified to be considered either a good monk or a good Buddhist layman, that he was a foolish being, illuminated by the awakening of infinite light.

This confessional reading of his statement, "I am neither monk nor layman," accords with much of what he wrote throughout his oeuvre. For example, at the end of one of his hymns, he writes,

Yoshi ashi no moji o mo	Those who do not even know
shiranu hito wa mina	the characters for good and bad
Makoto no kokoro narikeru wo	All have honest, real hearts.
Zen'aku no ji shirigao wa	Those who pretend to know what is good and bad
Ōsoragoto no katachi nari	Are just putting on a show.
Zehi shirazu jashō mo wakanu	I do not know what is really right or wrong,
Kono mi nari	Orthodox or heterodox.
Shōji shōhi mo nakere domo	Though without the slightest mercy or compassion,
Myōri ni ninshi wo konomu nari	I want to be recognized and teach others (Shinran 1969: 462)

This stark statement gives recognition of his profound karmic foolishness, that he freely expresses in the embrace of boundless compassion. This is the standpoint expressed in the "Epilogue" to the *Tannishō,* the posthumous record of his statements compiled by his follower Yuien: "When I ponder the five profound aeons of contemplation carried out by Amida and expressed in the Vow [to bring all beings to the realization of oneness], I realize it is for myself, Shinran, alone" (Shinran 1969: 694). The hymn and this statement from the "Epilogue" express the inverse correlation of teacher and follower, outlaw priest and foolish laity, of Shinran as an individual foolish being and the illumination of limitless compassion.

Each of these three thinkers, Kierkegaard, Zhuangzi, and Shinran, contended with the circumstances of his times, the framework of his religious and philosophical thought, and his own individual limitations. While there is a great deal of diversity in the various factors that constellated their individual, social, and universal visions, they share in the fact that the effective force of their thinking and the impact of the paths they took derive in no small measure from the risk and courage attributed to each in facing and unmasking the delusions and false consciousness of those who held sway over the dominant intellectual and religious trends of their times, and of taking a stand on their own truths. The rhetorical force of their inverse correlations depends to a significant extent on the idea that they embodied their visions of inverse correlation, visions that were supposedly realized because they removed themselves from the dominant center and willingly occupied peripheral positions from which they could criticize the hypocrisy of their era, and seek out a path that was, to varying degrees, free from the corruption of the age.

VII. NISHIDA AND INVERSE CORRELATION

We began this examination of inverse correlation with reference to the work of the philosopher Kitarō Nishida. The concept of "inverse correlation," found in *The Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview,* his last major work, completed just two months before his death in 1945, expresses a theme that runs throughout his work. From his early formulation of "pure experience" through the "place of absolute nothingness" and on to "inverse correlation," Nishida was concerned to

resolve the problem of contradictory, polar opposites: subject and object, individual and universal, human and divine/buddha. As James Heisig states,

> Nishida crowned his treatment of God [or the ultimate] ... with a new idea introduced in his final essay, that of *inverse correspondence* [inverse correlation]. In logical terms, it is an extension of his idea of identity as the function of opposition, so that the stronger the opposition, the more deeply rooted the identity. The model of the application of this idea to religion is already present in his earlier remarks about how the sinner is the one who is most conscious of the moral ideal because the contradiction is constellated in him, and that "the more one is an individual the more one is confronted with the transcendent" (Heisig 2001: 103).

The intent here is not to retrace the arc of Nishida's thinking, as others have amply done (Heisig 2001: 29-106; Maraldo 2015). Rather, what this account provides is another way to frame the basic philosophical and religious problems with which he was grappling. As a philosophical thinker, he was seeking logical coherence and consistency, albeit one that had different parameters from what had formed much of the mainstream of modern Western philosophical discourse. "Inverse correlation" constitutes a culminating expression of his search for the right logical formulation. As well, however, "inverse correlation" helps to define the concrete framework of the existential and historical character of an actual life; the rhetorical force of Nishida's conception of inverse correlation derives from its socio-historical grounding in the possibilities of lived experience, similar to the ways in which Kierkegaard, Zhuangzi, and Shinran invoke the same kind of formal logic to express their philosophical and religious understanding. As James Heisig states, Nishida's conception of the ultimate such as "God was never merely an idea, but always an experienced" reality (Heisig 2001: 103). Thus, Nishida's concern with formal logical consistency was always inextricable from the subjective concern for lived existence in history.

Although "inverse correlation" in its explicit form can only be found at the very end of Nishida's work and life, it is arguably implicit from the very beginning. Understanding this can help one to better grasp Nishida's work as a whole as well as its broader ramifications, in particular the effects of the manner in which one succeeds and/or fails to take into account one's concrete socio-historical circumstances in applying the

formal logic of inverse correlation.[6]

At the early stage of his maiden work, *An Inquiry into the Good,* Nishida had not yet formulated the formal logic of the identity of opposites. Robert Wargo asserts that it was the problem of logical incompleteness in his formulation of "pure experience" that led Nishida to go on to formulate his logic of the place of absolute nothingness and the absolutely contradictory self-identity [of opposites] (Wargo 2005). In the middle period of his development of this logic of the absolutely contradictory self-identity [of opposites], Nishida was concerned as much with the consistency of the application of this formal logic as he was with its content, at times applying this logic to symmetrical pairs of polar opposites, such as subject and object, or materialism and idealism, at other times to asymmetrical pairs, such as individual and universal, in which the latter is the larger category while standing logically in perfect opposition to "individual." In his final work, *The Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview,* Nishida shifts more toward asymmetrical formulations with an emphasis on the specific religious content of his logic, where the individual is confronted with the Divine or Buddha as absolute, as transcending the particularity of the individual.

Nishida defines "pure experience" as that which is realized "prior to the separation of subject and object": "Pure experience is identical with direct experience. When one directly experiences one's own state of consciousness, there is not a subject or an object, and knowing and its object are completely unified" (Nishida 1992: 3-4). As Wargo indicates, such a "pure experience" remains logically incomplete as the explanatory basis for all of reality because it is entirely self-referential, and any argument to establish it as the basis for reality ends up being circular. Some degree of circularity is unavoidable in any foundationalist view of reality. Wargo argues, however, that the "place of absolute nothingness" can be understood as a necessary postulate for establishing the grounds for polar opposites to co-exist in identity without positing a foundational

[6] Nishida's successor at Kyoto University, who was also his rival, Hajime Tanabe, criticized Nishida for his lack of attention to the social dimension and developed his "logic of species" (Jp. shu no ronri 種の論理) in response (Heisig 2001: 122-133). However, Tanabe's formulation tended to be rather abstract and to suffer a lack of grounding in the specific historical circumstances and realistic possibilities of the moment. Tanabe attempted to be more specific in his call for the Japanese to engage in national repentance in the wake of World War II in Philosophy of Metanoetics, but there, too, his grandiose scheme tended to lack a sufficient sense of realism (Heisig 2001: 134-156).

substrate. By its very nature, nothingness cannot be a substantial or real foundation. Rather it must be realized or embodied as that which is beyond all oppositions. Furthermore, this nothingness is realized without eliminating individuality; in fact, the realization of absolute nothingness only serves to heighten the realization of individual particularity. As John Maraldo states, "Rather than a mere absence of being, meaning, or function, absolute nothingness ... is the foundation of the world and of the self,... [yet] it is an uncommon kind of foundation in that it functions through self-negation. It cannot be called 'absolute' unless it negates any particular determination of it and simultaneously enfolds them all .... The world is one yet many; individuals are many yet one in their mutual determination" (Maraldo 2012: 3.1).

Of the episodes examined earlier, that of Woodworker Qing serves as a possible illustration of both "pure experience" and "absolute nothingness" as the place of the self-identity of absolutely contradictory opposites. First, by the time Qing has completed his fasting regimen, he has entirely forgotten himself and the categories that separate him from the world around him. At the same time, he has neither disappeared nor fallen unconscious. In fact, he is more vividly aware than ever, so that he can see with the eyes of Heaven (Nature) which tree is meant to be carved into a bell stand. Through the negation of "self" as a separate entity, he is manifesting the "pure experience" of the world to itself. Heaven, or the Cosmos as a whole, Nature as a whole, is a kind of place of nothingness, insofar as there are no humanly constructed categories intervening in the direct perception of reality. Nevertheless, Qing is vividly aware of multiplicity (trees) in the oneness/nothingness of pure experience. In carving the tree into a bell stand, he and the tree as individuals are "many yet one in their mutual determination": it is "'Heaven' matching up with 'Heaven.'"

Philosophically speaking, however, there is potential trouble brewing in the pristine setting of the woods in Nature. The bell stand, as humble as it is, is still an integral component of the centralized, discursive, center of power that is supposedly out of sync with the simple rhythms of nature. The bell stand, meant to hold the grand bells of the ruler and his court, is emblematic of the movement of human history that serves to reinforce the centrality of human society with all its complexity, not the simple life lived close to the earth. Can the functioning of the bell stand really be as natural as the changing of the seasons, or even the farmer tilling his fields? If not, then perhaps the bell stand is intended to be a provisional,

temporary construction in the larger cosmic scheme: Once the king or the ceremonial master recognizes its spiritual quality, they will gradually be drawn away from the artifice of the king's court toward a simpler life in the Dao? Or, is there a conceit here that cannot easily be explained away? Can one undo the complexities of human technology and artifice once they are in our possession? And what about Zhuangzi the scholar-author? Can he engage in a regimen similar to Qing, unlearn his high learning, and become the simple farmer he depicts himself to be?

These are not only questions for Zhuangzi, but perhaps also for us in the twenty-first century. It is the intellectual class, the scholars, who have been the driving force behind the remarkable technological advancements that pervade our lives. Yet, as the result of our own technological artifice, we may have set in motion a series of self-destructive processes that we as a species may have great difficulty overcoming. Is there a way to gain access to a more balanced life in harmony with the rhythms of the natural world while living in the world of social and technological complexity? What happens if we are in the process of destroying the very thing that gives us relief and solace away from the hustle and bustle of our computing and communications devices?

As a Protestant Christian thinker, Kierkegaard tends to emphasize that there is no return to a life of harmony in nature. The despairing self, unable to pull the opposing aspects of the self together in a happy synthesis of finite and infinite, becomes willful in its refusal to even recognize its own broken state, and this willfulness is what defines the self as sinful. The only path to truth and authenticity is to recognize the self in its profound sinfulness, in the light of belief, not in the self, which has failed, but in Christ, the sole exception to human sinfulness. The utter failure of the self is a self-negation, a kind of realization of nothingness that creates an opening for the power of faith in Christ to enter and inspire the self. The implication is that this inverse correlation can have a transformative effect, such that the believer can now move toward a positive realization of self as synthesis of the opposites, finitude and infinitude. Does such a self become qualified to "inherit the earth," as found in Matthew 5:3-5?

Kierekgaard, as one of the founding figures of Existentialism, asserted the primacy of the individual over against history, but he returned to the historical stage to affirm its significance at the end of his life with his work, penned in his own name, *Attack Upon "Christendom,"* in which he criticized the corporatized Christianity being preached as

little more than "disgusting hypocritical priestly fudge" (Kierkegaard 1968: 126). Although giving voice to his views under greatly differing circumstances, Kierkegaard is echoing the voice of Jesus when he stated, "But all their works they do for to be seen of men [for show] .... And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi" (KJV: Matthew 23:5-7).

Yet, as we have seen, Kierkegaard's own subject positionality in relation to his own historical circumstance was complex and ambiguous. On the one hand, he staked out a position on the periphery of the dominant order and aligned himself with the common person in order to criticize what he perceived to be the hypocritical spiritual materialism of the priesthood and those in positions of authority and power. On the other, he was a privileged intellectual who arguably only pretended to be one of the common folk, and who was able to pursue his philosophizing only because he had the time and leisure not available to many others. Yet, he ended his life destitute, having expended his resources so that he could give voice to his own convictions. Was he more like the privileged scholar, living in an ivory tower, pretender to faith, or was he a genuine voice of dissent and of faith in an age of corruption? And as a figure who has been highly influential in the development of Protestant thought, has the effect of Kierkegaard's philosophical reflections been, on the whole, edifying and transformative in a historical sense?

As Nishida's thought developed, he moved away from the conception of pure experience and increasingly addressed what he called the "historical world" (*rekishiteki sekai*). This eventually came to include the reflections on the role of individual nations and peoples, and the relations among a diversity of polities. He was beginning to adopt a Western-style view of historical progress and envisioned a special role for Japan in potentially helping to create a new world. Yet, whether unbelievably naïve or tragically complicit, the nationalistic and imperialistic tone of his formulations too easily dovetailed with the militarism of Japan during the first half of the twentieth century: "The imperial household [of Japan] is the alpha and omega of the world. The quintessence of our polity as a nation is the imperial family. It is the center from which all living, breathing development proceeds .... It is said to be like a family, and I agree with that. This is the beauty and strength of our polity" (Heisig 2001: 97). The troubling implications of such a statement are amplified many times by the fact that he was Professor of Philosophy

at Kyoto Imperial University, arguably one of the most influential intellectuals of his time. James Heisig argues that the intent of Nishida's statement was not to assert Japan's place or supremacy in a Western-style view of historical progress as manifest destiny. Rather, Nishida gave this formulation more as a symbolic or mythological expression of the communal expression of timelessness reflective of the inward realization of absolute nothingness (Heisig 2001: 97-98). Complementary to such a view, Michiko Yusa and others have documented how in various ways and in his personal life Nishida was deeply troubled by, wrestled with, and sought to subvert Japanese militarism (Yusa 2002). Regardless, it is hard to dispute that Nishida's public statements not infrequently jived too easily with the imperialism of Japanese military leaders.

Familial metaphors are often used to great effect in the context of towns, cities, institutions, and even nations. Here, it is not just that the metaphor is being invoked at the national level at a time of militaristic expansionism. There is a great difference between the discourse of 'family' invoked on behalf of a besieged community in the face of an oppressive, dominant culture and one that is expressed on behalf of the ascendant aggressor over what at the time were weaker nations. Where Nishida's own philosophy seemed to dictate a logic of inverse correlation in the relationship between the religious dimension and any particular body at the level of concrete particulars, he invoked a positive correlation, one that asserted pride and accomplishment rather than the humility and lack that allows one to open to and requires the sustenance of the infinite.

Of the three figures examined above – Kierkegaard, Zhuangzi, and Shinran, the one with the most evident influence on Nishida's formulation of inverse correlation is Shinran. The most direct statement of inverse correlation cited earlier, "Even a good person attains birth in the Pure Land, how much more so the evil person," is taken from the *Tannishō,* a posthumous collection of statements attributed to Shinran. Nishida is said to have cited the *Tannishō* as one of his two most treasured sacred scriptures (Nishitani 1991: 26), and as Daniel Friedrich has shown, Shinran's thought was a major influence on Nishida throughout his life, and especially in his final work, *The Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview* (Friedrich 2006: 32). Shinran's view of history was the opposite of the kind of progressive view of history found in the Modern West. Instead, he subscribed to the view of *mappō,* the final degenerate age of the Dharma, or Buddhist teachings when they became ineffectual and society became corrupt. Shinran saw himself living in such an age,

said to last ten thousand years, which might as well have been an eternity for Shinran and his followers.

This view of history correlated closely with Shinran's distancing himself from the dominant culture of corruption and instead identifying with the marginalized culture of farmers and fisherman among whom he lived and worked with his family until the age of sixty. For Shinran, the farther from the center of corruption, and the nearer to the life lived close to the earth, the better. Yet, in his own way, like Zhuangzi and Kierkegaard, Shinran saw himself unable to free himself of entanglement in the desire for fame and recognition that is part and parcel of the life of the literati and intellectuals: "Those who pretend to know what is good and bad are just putting on a show. I do not know what is really right or wrong, ... [and] though without the slightest mercy or compassion, I want to be recognized and teach others" (Shinran 1969: 462).

Among Nishida's contemporaries at Kyoto Imperial University, there were scholars who recognized what they believed to be the corrupting hand of the government's imperialistic ideology inserting itself into the academic culture of the institution. One of them was a legal scholar named Hiroshi Suekawa, a follower of Shinran's thought (Unno 1998). While Suekawa and his colleagues researched a wide range of legal issues and lectured about them, when they veered into territory that was considered too liberal and left-leaning, the Ministry of Education intervened, forbade certain topics of research, and suspended one of the faculty members. In what came to be known as the Kyoto University Incident of 1932, the entire faculty of the Law School resigned including Suekawa. In the post-war period, Suekawa went on to become one of Japan's leading legal scholars, editing the *Complete Six Codes of Law* (*Roppō zensho* 六法全書), the authoritative encyclopedic compendium of law that continued to be revised and published until 2013. He became a leading advocate of human rights, the rights of Koreans in Japan, *burakumin* outcasts, and labor unions. He eventually became Chancellor and President of Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, known for its evening division that made degree programs available for those who worked full time. This is not to say that Suekawa was a saint or did not have his critics; in keeping with his Shin Buddhist orientation, Suekawa saw himself as a foolish being with blind passions:

> Suekawa conceived human beings as both spontaneous expressions of deepest, boundless life and as the creators of their own karmic destiny,

> as buddha-nature and karmic nature, as "created and creator," to use a phrase he cited frequently. He saw in Shinran someone who traversed this difficult intersection of two natures, which he saw in himself as well as in others: "I think [Shinran] throughout his life grappled [with these questions]. I don't think he ever reached a point where he felt, 'I'm enlightened, I've found final spiritual repose.'" In his later years, Suekawa is often said to have uttered, "Bandits in the mountains are easy to defeat, but bandits in the heart are difficult to destroy" (Unno 1998: 82-83).

Rather, what his actions demonstrate is that, even in Japan which had a totalitarian regime until the end of World War II, there were intellectuals who found a way to follow a logic of inverse correlation more in keeping with Shinran's own view of society and history, one that was inclusive but recognized the virtues of and the need to empower those on the periphery.

The point here is not to extol Suekawa over Nishida. Suekawa was not a philosopher and could not make the philosophical contributions that Nishida made. Rather, in considering the possibility that the individual self exists in relation to a larger reality, whether it be the Dao, God, Amida Buddha, or Absolute Nothingness, Nishida's conception of inverse correlation provides the logical form that is implicit in many of these cases. Furthermore, we can see that the rhetorical effectiveness of the inverse correlation depends in significant part on the individual awareness of and situatedness or subject positionality in relation to the given socio-historical circumstances. More specifically, philosophers, as public intellectuals, may benefit from reflecting on the ways that Zhuangzi, Kierkegaard, Shinran, and Nishida may have variously examined or failed to examine their own strengths and weaknesses in relation to the cosmic order of reality, nature, the dominant social order, those who were marginalized or existed on the periphery, their own institutional settings, and their response to the contradictions and constellating factors of their selfhood. In the case of Nishida, here was a pioneer who ventured into uncharted territory and attempted to map out not only his own life but to survey the possibilities for Japanese philosophy in a global context. It can be argued that we are also facing new territory philosophically, as the human species in the twenty-first century potentially faces enormous challenges that are qualitatively different from those faced in the twentieth century. There may be darkness ahead, but the fact that thinkers before us have faced

this darkness should give us courage, knowing that they dared to invoke a logic of inverse correlation that held the promise of an even greater illumination. As Nishida states,

> From a human perspective, the human-divine relationship is effectively encapsulated in the statement by Zen master Daitō, "Buddha and I, separated by aeons yet not apart for even an instant; facing each other all day long yet never encountering each other for even an instant." It captures the contradictory self-identity of the divine-human relation. This is the world of the absolutely contradictory self-identity [of opposites], of negation-as-affirmation, [and affirmation-as-negation]. It must be this world of inverse [mutual] determination, of *inverse correlation*. Thus our religious mind and heart arise not from the [human] self but [in response] to the call of God or of Buddha. This is the working of the Divine or of the Buddha, arising from the Source of the self (Nishida 1989: 340; italics mine).

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KJV: *The Holy Bible*, King James Version

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IN DEFENSE OF RITUAL PROPRIETY

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Abstract. Confucians think ritual propriety is extremely important, but this commitment perplexes many Western readers. This essay outlines the early Confucian Xúnzǐ's defense of ritual, then offers a modified defense of ritual propriety as a real virtue, of value to human beings in all times and places, albeit one that is inescapably indexed to prevailing social norms in a non-objectionable way. The paper addresses five likely objections to this thesis, drawing on but going beyond recent Kantian defenses of courtesy and civility. The objections concern cultural relativity, insincerity, separating style from substance, elitism, and possible incoherence in the virtue itself.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is difficult for contemporary Westerners to comprehend the intensely serious concern early Confucian texts display for *lǐ* (禮), customarily translated as "ritual" or "rites" when referring to the practices involved, and "ritual propriety" when referring to the virtue of performing those practices well. In what follows I first lay out what I take *lǐ* to be, then explore both why the early Confucians (i.e., those referred to as *Rú* in Chinese sources) care so much about it, and why until recently contemporary Western philosophers seemed to care so little. The situation has changed, however, with a spate of thoughtful and compelling essays, often from a Kantian perspective, arguing for the moral importance of courtesy, civility, and/or politeness as crucial ways to express obligatory respect for other people. Building on this work, I argue that ritual propriety is a real virtue (actually a complex of skill and virtue), of general value to human beings in all times and places, albeit one that is inescapably

indexed to prevailing local social norms in a non-objectionable way. I draw primarily throughout from the thought of the early Confucian Xúnzǐ (3rd century BCE), who provides arguably the most systematic justification for ritual in the early Confucian textual corpus.

II. CONFUCIAN RITUAL PROPRIETY

The word *lǐ* (禮) in classical Chinese has both narrow and wide senses. Its narrow sense covers the sorts of practices generally referred to by the English "ritual": for example, sacrifices to honor ancestors, mourning rituals, court ritual regulating the interactions of lords and ministers, rites of passage into adulthood marked by ceremonial donning of the appropriate hat, and marriage rites. But often *lǐ* has a much broader sense, far beyond the usual meaning of "ritual," and includes all matters of interpersonal etiquette as well as personal appearance, deportment, dress, and speech; it also refers to proper behavior during musical performances, hunting trips, chariot driving, battle, and various communal dances, meals, and festivals, among other activities. The word thus covers all aspects of appropriate interpersonal behavior and regulates how all the most significant human practices are conducted.[1]

Lǐ thus includes both a wide range of specific *rules* that regulate practices and behavior, as well as what might be called "the spirit of the

[1] Early Rú sources (i.e., "Confucian" texts from the Warring States [403-221 BCE] through the Hàn [202 BCE-220 CE] eras) contain a wealth of discussion of *lǐ*, but English language interpreters of the tradition habitually ignore many of the relevant texts, focusing only on the *Analects*, the *Mèngzǐ*, and the *Xúnzǐ*, supplemented in the recent past by archeologically recovered texts from the Warring States and Hàn eras. Despite this, the tradition as it developed at the time lavished attention on ritual, compiling and carefully transmitting textual materials as expansive and varied as *The Rites of Zhōu* (周禮), covering the supposed governmental organization of the revered *Zhōu* dynasty; the text now known as *Ceremonies and Etiquette* (儀禮), which describes in detail the ceremonial life of members of the *shì* 士 class, which was made up of the minor aristocracy and literate government functionaries; *The Record of Ritual* (禮記), a vast collection of texts mostly related to ritual, often (despite the title) providing more theoretical analyses than simple descriptions of ceremonies, although a fair number define technical ritual terminology; and the *Elder Dài's Ritual Records* (大戴禮記), a more fragmentary collection from later in the Hàn dynasty. For English language overviews of these texts' contents, composition, and textual history, along with fuller bibliographical references, see Loewe 1993. Judging by the effort expended on these texts and their commentaries, as well as the attitudes toward and discussion of ritual practice in the *Analects*, *Mèngzǐ*, and *Xúnzǐ*, *lǐ* was judged to be of critical importance by the early Confucians.

rules," the guiding values that ritual practice is supposed to cultivate and exemplify. This spirit often seems to hinge on a sense of appropriate, refined *style* for action – a way of doing things that incarnates ritual propriety – and so includes but goes beyond explicit rules for action that can be written propositionally. The fundamental character of Confucian ritual propriety might be summarized as acting in a way that is respectful, deferential, or even reverent toward others, depending on the nature of one's relation to them; restrained, formal, and generally but not always serious; alert and self-possessed; and caring and solicitous, incarnating the crucial virtue of benevolence. Ritual presumes a richly articulated and hierarchically differentiated society, with a variety of specific stations and relationships, both familial and extra-familial, all deserving of appropriate recognition and respect.

For example, in Book 10 of the *Analects*, the text depicts Confucius in the following way: "At court, when speaking with officers of lower rank, he was pleasant and affable; when speaking with officers of higher rank, he was formal and proper. When his lord was present he was cautious and alert, moving slowly and gracefully" (10.2); and "He would not sit down unless his mat was straight [or: correct]" (10.12). These depictions of the master may be read as counsel or even as strict injunctions, but what they suggest are as much a way of feeling and acting as they are a set of straightforward physical maneuvers to fulfill. As Confucius himself remarks sarcastically when discussing proper filial behavior, "Nowadays being 'filial' just means being able to provide food to one's parents; but even dogs and horses are provided with food. If you are not respectful, where is the difference" (2.7)? In the next passage, responding to another disciple's questions about filiality, he says: "What is difficult is the expression on one's face. If there is work to be done, younger brothers and sons will do it, and when there is food and wine to be drunk, elders are given precedence, but can this be all that is meant by filiality" (2.8)? In other words, certain respectful actions to serve others are required by ritual, but performing such acts is only the beginning. One must do them out of a feeling of genuine concern and respect, or even love when serving one's parents, and display the proper physical comportment and facial expression so that others see what is motivating the ritual actor. Anything less does not fully exemplify virtue or the Way. Ritual, in this conception, is both a presentation of the self as virtuously caring, and a way of properly treating and often serving others.

Why the early Rú should care as much as they do about ceremonies, interpersonal etiquette, and carefully styled performances of care and respect, however, has continued to baffle contemporary Western interpreters. Consider a story from the *Mèngzǐ* that the text tells twice for similar purposes (3B1 and 5B7). Defending his own fastidiousness in refusing to meet with rulers who summoned him without appropriate ritual politeness, Mèngzǐ says:

> Once, Duke Jǐng of Qí was hunting, and he summoned a gamekeeper with a plumed staff. The gamekeeper did not come, so the duke was going to have him executed. Kǒngzǐ commented, 'an intent noble does not forget that he may end up in a ditch. A courageous noble does not forget that he may lose his head.' What did Kǒngzǐ find commendable in the gamekeeper's action? It was that he would not come when it was the wrong kind of summons. (5B7)[2]

After a brief discussion of the proper way for a duke to summon a gamekeeper (with a leather cap), as well as the signals for other sorts of people, Mèngzǐ echoes Kǒngzǐ and lauds the gamekeeper's resolve to risk his life over this point of protocol. He concludes his argument by saying that "Wanting to consult a worthy person without using his Way to do it is like wanting someone to come in but shutting the door in his face. Righteousness (*yì* 義) is the road, and ritual (*lǐ* 禮) is the door. Only a noble person is able to follow this road and go in and out through this door" (5B7). Mèngzǐ here presents ritual as the means by which one *joins* or *enters* the Way, the path of righteous living, and as something absolutely required for interpersonal communication and activity with those who are good. The deeper implication is that ritual is something cultivated human beings must constantly practice in order to actually fulfill the deeper demands of righteousness or justice (*yì* 義).

Mèngzǐ here quite clearly makes ritual as essential to the Confucian Way as a righteous concern for morality and justice, but even a reader as perceptive as Van Norden finds this stance, the resultant praise of Mèngzǐ and Kǒngzǐ, and the willingness of the gamekeeper to risk his life for such a point of etiquette, to be baffling, in need of creative interpretation. Van Norden suggests that given the cultural significance of ritual at the time, such a maneuver might be a way of recalling the Duke to his own role specific responsibilities, and thus "taking a stand ... against the unlimited

[2] Translation slightly adapted from Van Norden (2008: 140). For another version of this story, as Van Norden notes, see *Zuǒ Zhuàn*, Duke Zhāo 20 (Legge 1872: 684).

authority of the duke" (Van Norden 2008: 140). But in Mèngzǐ and even Kǒngzǐ's eras, sticking up for the importance of ritual in all situations was a rearguard, conservative stance, trying to insist on something that was no longer widely practiced, and so such an interpretation seems anachronistic at best, even while it captures the moral significance of the gamekeeper's action well. Van Norden also suggests that Kǒngzǐ's praise "may be intentional hyperbole" of this "humble official's quixotic fastidiousness," designed to inspire others who are tempted to violate more serious principles (Van Norden 2008: 140). While this is certainly possible, I think we can make good sense of the text as a straightforward endorsement of the critical value of ritual in human life. It is also worth noting that the gamekeeper is risking only his own life, not anyone else's, and Mèngzǐ elsewhere implies that it is obvious that one should suspend even basic ritual rules (such as the requirement that men and women not touch each other in public) to save someone else when his or her life is in jeopardy (4A17). For the Rú, such "discretion" or "weighing" (*quán* 權) of situational factors in the implementation of ritual requirements is a crucial aspect of practical wisdom. Mèngzǐ and other early Confucians clearly distinguish between taking a principled stand for ritual, even at great risk to oneself, and foolish or quixotic punctiliousness.

Despite this, it is no surprise that Van Norden and other contemporaries see such ritual behavior as extreme and misguided. While earlier Western thinkers as familiar as Kant and Hume thought such matters very important, etiquette in particular has come under sustained attack since the late 18th century, in a way that has undermined and denigrated it as a self-conscious human concern (at least in the modern West). As Amy Olberding has argued, elite Europeans from the Renaissance to the French Revolution used to care a great deal about etiquette, ceremony, and public ways of recognizing and honoring people, but philosophers in particular no longer explicitly attend to these realms of social life as genuinely important and valuable, with rare exceptions. Olberding suggests that a number of factors contributed to these shifts: rapid economic changes destabilized class structures and allowed previously "common" people to seek higher social status by adopting the manners of their supposed superiors; literature on etiquette both reflected and contributed to these trends, and in effect "feminized" the concern with manners, as a responsibility of ambitious Victorian wives, rather than elite male moral theorists discussing the virtue of courtesy; and moral theory itself became ever more concentrated on autonomy, so that

respect for authority became internalized as respect for one's own rational judgment, and respect for cultural traditions of appropriate behavior came gradually to seem backward, unjustified, and far less serious than morality itself. At the same time, Romanticism celebrated strong and "authentic" feelings against traditional or rational restraints on its expression, for example through seemingly insincere politeness; and Europeans became ever more aware of the diversity of human cultures, which undermined the authority of particular cultural traditions of etiquette as local and hidebound.[3]

It is no surprise, then, that etiquette (and by extension the Confucian concern for "ritual" that includes it) has seemed to many contemporary ethicists to be parochial, unserious, and simply not as significant as true, universally and rationally binding moral obligations. And yet, this "modern" conception of morality has been under sustained attack for several decades now, often by those espousing what has come to be called virtue ethics, whose advocates have hoped to articulate a more capacious conception of ethics as concerned with all of life, rather than focusing solely on obligations founded on respect for autonomy or the principle of utility.[4] Perhaps partly inspired by these developments, multiple philosophers in the Kantian tradition have over the last fifteen years begun to argue that obligatory respect for persons as ends in themselves morally *requires* agents to act politely when addressing others. Only in this way can people properly respect others as ends in themselves.[5] Before delving further into this literature, however, let us first examine early Confucian justifications for ritual.

Early Confucian sources clearly regard ritual as crucial to human flourishing, although they frequently simply display this conviction, without arguing for it. When they do explain ritual's importance, their arguments tend to cluster in two areas. First, several texts exemplify

[3] On these matters, I have been instructed by Olberding's fascinating work (2014), as well as the responses to her paper by participants, especially Dean Zimmerman, at the 2nd Rutgers Workshop on Chinese Philosophy in 2014. For a historical overview of these issues, which argues that Lord Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son* (1774) was the last "courtesy book" that fused what now look like the separate subjects of morality and courtesy, see Curtin 1985.

[4] The classic statement of this dissatisfaction is Anscombe 1958. Other monuments to the trend include MacIntyre 1984 and Williams 1985, among many others. There are of course a variety of efforts to add nuance to obligation-centered accounts of morality, for example through the ranking and analysis of "prima facie" duties.

[5] For exemplary studies in this vein, see Buss 1999, Calhoun 2000, and Stohr 2012.

a broad sense of ritual as something that should pervade the whole of life, shaping not only special ceremonies, but also all matters of personal appearance and deportment, including dress, speech, and action, as well as the interpersonal etiquette governing all social interactions. This vision is most obvious in the *Analects* and the *Xúnzǐ*. Second, recent scholarship has articulated an alternate tradition of Confucian ritual theorizing that stresses the uniqueness of particular ceremonies as distinct from everyday life, which is visible in parts of the *Lǐjì*, or *Record of Ritual*, as well as the excavated text *Xìng Zì Mìng Chū* (性自命出: "[Human] Nature Emerges from the Decree").[6] In these texts, ritual provides a kind of perfected alternative world where humans can act "as if" all were beautiful, harmonious, and orderly, even though everyday social and political life falls far short of these ideals. While both of these justificatory strategies are worthy of attention, I here focus on the first, which aims to have ritual pervade social life and transform the character of that shared existence. The fullest, most explicit defense of this sort of vision can be found in the *Xúnzǐ*.

Lǐ (禮) plays many roles in Xúnzǐ's social thought.[7] On the individual and familial levels, it is a method for personal formation and moral development, as well as a way of expressing and effectively implementing one's just treatment of and benevolent care for others. Ritual is also an essential basis of state power and genuine political authority, Xúnzǐ thinks, because it is much more effective at knitting the people and government together than mere regulations or threats of force. It does this by cultivating trust and mutual goodwill among the populace, as well as confidence in the social order itself (15/72/9-12).[8] Ritual also disciplines elites, training them into responsibility for the common good, and shaping the competition for status and honor in socially beneficial directions, while also moderating elite consumption of resources and leading to more just distributions overall (10/42/23-29, 10/43/9-16).[9] On Xúnzǐ's account ritual even governs the harmonious interrelationship

[6] For discussion, see Puett 2008 and 2010, Seligman et al. 2008, and Ing 2012.

[7] The next five paragraphs are adapted from Stalnaker 2006.

[8] References to the *Xúnzǐ* are given in the form chapter/page/line, and refer to the ICS Concordance Series version of the text (Xúnzǐ 1996). Translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

[9] I here gloss over details in Xúnzǐ's account of the *relation* of ritual to other methods of administrative control that he advocates, such as regulations and punishments. For discussion, see especially Sato 2003, as well as Stalnaker 2012.

of humanity with heaven and earth, i.e., the natural environment; it is the linchpin of what P. J. Ivanhoe has called Xúnzǐ's "grand ecological vision" (2014). In sum, for Xúnzǐ, ritual is the key to harmonious and flourishing life, both human and non-human. It orders human life, shaping agents' motivations into more virtuous and refined forms, and moderating conflicts over resources and prestige so that we may live together in fruitful harmony. It is thus his general prescription for the misrule, unrest and chaos of his age.[10]

Xúnzǐ clearly conceives of *lǐ* in the pervasive sense outlined above. He writes:

> When all exertions of blood and vital energy, intention, and reflection follow ritual, then order will permeate [the community]; if they do not follow ritual, then there will be agitation and chaos, [alternating with] slackness and laziness. If people's eating and drinking, clothing and dwelling, and movement and stillness follow ritual then they will be harmonious and moderate; if not they will be offensive and excessive, producing illness. If people's expression and appearance, bearing and deportment, approaches and withdrawals, and walk follow ritual, then they will be elegant; if not they will be arrogant and obstinate, low and wicked, common and wild. Thus people without ritual will not live, undertakings without ritual will not be successful, and states and families without ritual will not have peace. An Ode says: "Rituals and ceremonies completely correct, laughter and talk completely appropriate." This expresses it. (2/5/12-15)

What now seem to be fundamentally optional matters of personal aesthetic taste are for Xúnzǐ bound up in an integrated order encompassing personal and communal life as well as the ecology of our environment. Clear and correct standards for such things are available and can be known – human existence should be *yǎ* (雅), "elegant," and manifest *wénlǐ* (文理), "refined form and good order."

But how could anyone think that attending to one's manner of walking, one's clothes and abode, could be so essential that without it we cannot live as human beings? Obviously Xúnzǐ recognizes that many in his own day lacked correct ritual deportment and yet survived.[11] Xúnzǐ's point is more subtle. He thinks that to have a truly humane existence,

[10] In what follows I concentrate on the first person perspective, but Xúnzǐ is at least as interested in an objective, 3rd person perspective on ritual's effects on social order. On these issues, see especially Sato 2003.

that is, one properly regulated by and as far as possible incarnating ideals of goodness and beauty, we must have ritual in his wide sense. Why? On Xúnzǐ's account, to flourish as human beings we need to live in community with others. To achieve this we must have good social order, he thinks, and to be orderly, hierarchy must be involved. In order for such an arrangement to be based on more than fear and intimidation on the one hand, and/or greed on the other, it needs to develop and rely on other emotions and desires: respect for the truly worthy, love for one's family, and loyalty to good leaders. But since on his account our raw dispositions are relatively better suited to being ruled by fear and greed, work must be done to heighten other sensibilities and reshape our dispositions.

This is where ritual as a practice of personal formation fits into Xúnzǐ's view. Through imitating classical models in the details of life, both personal and interpersonal, Xúnzǐ thinks we can cultivate the refinement, sensitivity, and subtle judgment of the sagacious Zhōu kings. When much of our existence is ritualized in this way, we are then sharing a superior form of life. Our every gesture and word is pregnant with meaning, beautiful, and appropriate. At the same time, this habitation of classical forms serves as a training in virtue by developing one's "taste" for the delights of good form in many aspects of life, and slowly retraining one's dispositions accordingly.

Although the two sorts of practice differ in various ways, Xunzian personal formation through ritual seems to share significant commonalities with the process of becoming an excellent musician or dancer.[12] In such practices, one must learn many basic rules and learn how to execute certain sorts of movements – and, eventually, performances – so that they are beautiful and good according to the standards of the practice in question.[13] Several related things happen

[11] Xúnzǐ does appear to think that the moderation essential to a ritualized existence is much healthier, in a psychophysical sense, than a life without ritual, which would be marked by erratic excesses and deficiencies.

[12] These ideas are hardly original; on these issues, I have learned the most from conversations with Jack Kline. For other accounts that make similar points, see e.g., Lai 2003; Kline 1998; Ivanhoe 2000: 6-7, 29-37; and Kupperman 1968 and 2002.

[13] It is worth noting that early Chinese thinkers, like many ancient Greek philosophers, did not see the "beautiful" and the "good" as separate categories of evaluation. For the Greeks, what is *to kalon*, "fine," is both good and beautiful. Similarly, for Xúnzǐ what is *měi* 美 is both good and beautiful. I thank P. J. Ivanhoe for comments on this issue.

as practice deepens. As one gains greater expertise, one begins to understand the rationale for aspects of the practice that initially seemed arbitrary, painful, or irritating. Skill of this sort, however, is just as much physical as mental – one learns how to play the violin beautifully with one's fingers and hands as much as with one's mind; one learns with both body and mind how to move smoothly and easily through various sorts of ritually regulated interactions. One also comes to appreciate better the subtleties that differentiate poor, middling, and fine performances. In the case of Xunzian ritual, a student must develop facility with appropriate speech, allusion and phrasing, bodily movement, and facial expression. One must also be both able and disposed to use these abilities in a timely and sensitive way, responding to subtle cues from others both artfully and effectively. In tandem with this growing sensitivity, one gradually develops what can only be called artful style in one's practice, although here again there would presumably be a range of achievement. Perhaps most crucially, as ritual mastery increases, one gradually delights more and more in the beauty of the art one is creating through performance, and in one's own and others' abilities to perform so well.

Such delight reflects and relies upon an appropriately cultivated sensibility about human action and behavior. This cultivated sensibility suggests that ritual as a whole could also be compared to cooking, in that it makes an art form out of everyday activities, providing a tradition through which one can demonstrate one's refinement to others, precisely as one honors and serves them in pleasing ways. And while there are many cookbooks filled with explicit rules and directions, these are only the scaffolding on which true mastery can be developed, which goes far beyond rule following. This cultivated stylistic sensibility surfaces most notably when rituals must be adjusted, or when a novel situation occurs that requires an improvisatory response to unusual circumstances or conflicts. Such a response can take the form of what appears to be unprecedented symbolic actions that reflect concern for the dignity and importance of others, as well as crucial values like loyalty, trustworthiness, or benevolence.[14]

[14] For an example, see *Mèngzǐ* 4B24, where an archer refuses to kill his master's master with his own *dào* of archery, despite being on an official mission ordered by his king; instead, the man knocks off the tips of several arrows, fires them off into the sky, and returns home. Although this example comes from Mèngzǐ, given Xúnzǐ's emphases on both refined form and the cultivated ability to respond to unprecedented changes, this seems like the sort of behavior he would approve.

For Xúnzǐ, then, the word *lǐ*, or "ritual," refers to a widespread set of social practices, the skill or art of performing those practices well, and the virtue of understanding how and desiring to be ritually proper in one's interactions with others, and even in one's activity when alone (3/11/4-12). Ritual propriety is an essential art of living well, on Xúnzǐ's account. It makes it possible to treat others as they should be treated, and to take effective leadership roles in communities and organizations. It knits groups together by making justice more fully beautiful and attractive, and provides a widely shared language of interaction to express benevolence and respect. It is a skill of performance, as well as a virtue, something that people master only over time via assiduous practice, with the help of teachers who are demonstrably much better at ritual than beginners are.

III. OBJECTIONS AND RESPONSES

Kantian defenders of polite behavior generally argue that the forms of etiquette, when properly understood, are effective, culturally sanctioned ways of expressing the respect and care due to other rational beings as ends in themselves. They communicate respect even more effectively than would explicitly telling someone "you have dignity." The authority of the "principles of manners" underlying specific etiquette rules is thus a specifically moral authority, compelling the allegiance of thoughtful people. These principles of mutual respect also help to sort out which social conventions deserve more observance and which less, and guide people as they make exceptions to common rules in unusual circumstances (e.g., Stohr 2012: 20-34).

Xúnzǐ clearly considers the dictates of ritual to be morally right in a very similar manner. He speaks frequently of *lǐyì*, ritual and morality, as a compound, and argues explicitly that this integrated system of social norms is necessary for humans to live in harmonious order, rather than chaos (e.g., 23/113/3-14, 9/39/1-13).[15] Ritual, in other words, provides specific guidance that reflects the broader values and aims of morality, on Xúnzǐ's account. It is worth noting that for Xúnzǐ, one of the primary purposes of social order is to appropriately recognize moral merit, so that society's hierarchy is morally just, and thus acceptable, indeed admirable, to the human beings who must live within this order

[15] The best overview of Xúnzǐ's conception of *yì* is Hutton 1996.

(9/39/1-13). As I explore more fully below, Xúnzǐ's emphasis on what is often called proportional equality (i.e., that each person is evaluated and rewarded impartially, in accord with their achievements and deserts) generates intriguing differences with Kantian accounts of politeness that aim to recognize and sustain a more egalitarian vision of moral equality between rational agents who are all equally dignified members of the "kingdom of ends."[16]

This general approach, justifying politeness as morally obligatory respect for persons, allows both Kantian defenders of politeness, and neo-Xunzian defenders of ritual propriety, to respond convincingly to three common objections to etiquette conventions. The first centers on the cultural relativity of etiquette. A critic might ask how any culturally relative practice, such as bowing, or shaking hands while looking someone in the eye, or wearing a suit to a job interview, or saying "please" and "thank you" at the dinner table, could be morally obligatory, when in other cultures different procedures are required. In brief, a defender of ritual could reply as follows. The principles of respect for persons that make up good manners are instantiated as differing conventional modes of expression in various cultures. Precisely because such conventions should be widely shared in a given setting to function properly as expressive ways of communicating respect, one is indeed bound to follow the local conventions for such expression, even with the knowledge that such conventions vary almost as much as the conventions regarding human languages. While this response does not dispose of all interesting and problematic boundary cases, it does show that what is at issue in real disputes about conventions of polite behavior, such as European disputes about women choosing or being required to wear a veil in public, is a serious underlying disagreement about morality itself; the cultural variability of etiquette is not in itself a problem.[17]

Another common criticism of the value of politeness is what might be called the "style vs. substance" objection, which could be put as follows:

[16] For a helpful overview of differing conceptions of equality, see Gosepath 2011.

[17] See Stohr 2012: 23-42, for a helpful discussion of these and related problems raised by this justificatory strategy. Xúnzǐ is of course not nearly as cognizant of cultural diversity as Stohr is, and he generally considers ritual propriety to be a universal standard, from general principles of respect for the holders of social positions and roles, to specific injunctions and requirements. But a neo-Xunzian defense of ritual could I think accept this strategy without real difficulty, and argue for the moral superiority of specific points as needed.

morally obligatory respect and benevolence require only saying and doing the right things, not doing them in a particular way, as politeness or ritual propriety dictate. The specific *manner* of respecting or caring for others is, in other words, morally irrelevant, and thus hardly obligatory. As Sarah Buss argues, however, this misunderstands human beings by failing to notice that we are embodied, social creatures who are richly attuned to each other's subtle bodily and emotional cues, which etiquette aims to cultivate and use for good. As Xúnzǐ argued long before, Buss (1999) notes that conventions of polite behavior train us to see each other as beings worthy of respect, cultivating appropriate feelings that can track our considered judgments about how people should be treated. Not only that, but "caring" given without appropriate politeness is at the very least ambivalent, and often harmful, because of the rudeness with which needed (or even unneeded) help is offered.[18] Effective beneficence requires accompanying ritual propriety to succeed. Reflecting on the value of ritual propriety helps us to see what is wrong with unnecessarily brusque caring for the sick, for example, and highlights the difficulties of properly expressing sympathy for others' distress. Skillful politeness is required to carry out such actions well.[19]

A third objection is also easily defused. A critic of politeness or ritual propriety might argue that propriety requires insincerity or even hypocrisy, which is bad, since propriety demands that we act as if we care about and enjoy each other even when we do not. Such performances do violence to our true feelings, which ought to be expressed, according to this sort of criticism. Xúnzǐ (and Kǒngzǐ) agree that the best ritual action is fully sincere, reflecting the true, virtuous feelings of the participants. But Xúnzǐ explicitly allows for a desirable form of emotional insincerity when less than fully virtuous people comply with the requirements of ritual. Such compliance with conventional expressions of care and respect is good because (1) it effectively cares for and respects others, treating them as they deserve to be treated; and (2) it accurately reflects the agent's considered commitments to the value of respect, beneficence, and ritual propriety, even if his or her disordered feelings or desires do not fully match this commitment. The objection presumes that one's immediate

[18] Margalit 1998 makes this point well. I thank P. J. Ivanhoe for this reference.

[19] Buss is particularly alert to the way in which the moral requirements of respect and care provide grounds for criticism of existing etiquette conventions. Following Kant on perfect and imperfect duties to others, Stohr 2012 separates her discussions of respect (20-42) and beneficence (114-131), but makes similar points.

feelings deserve more respect and obedience than one's considered choices and aspirations, which is a peculiar stance to take, especially if one thinks, like Xúnzǐ, that full human virtue requires assiduous effort and practice to cultivate. Continence need not be the enemy of virtue; on a Xunzian account of personal formation, it is a necessary stage on the way toward virtue. And thus the sort of insincerity practiced by aspirants to ritual propriety is both socially beneficial and morally admirable.[20]

More intriguing problems start to arise when we consider objections that show some of the differences between Xúnzǐ-inspired ritual propriety and Kantian politeness. A number of problems coalesce around the charge of elitism. It may seem that many etiquette rules either aim, or effectively function, to distinguish social elites from those with less status, despite the moral irrelevance of such degrees of status. Elaborate Victorian table settings, for example, seem to require considerable wealth to even set, and the sort of dinner parties that include silver fish forks and crystal goblets for wine can only be enjoyed by the wealthy and their guests. Anything of this sort must be optional at most, a reasonable person might suppose.

Stohr argues compellingly that such rules for table etiquette are relatively unimportant, except insofar as they express and cultivate the virtue of hospitality (2012: 147-165). She also makes the astute argument that the purpose of politeness is to make others feel welcome and comfortable, and even more importantly, to reinforce the moral equality of all human beings. Thus she argues that scolding others for misusing forks (or similar "mistakes") is in fact a notable form of rudeness, as an attempt to assert social dominance and put others at a disadvantage (Stohr 2012: 32-36, 147-148). While Xúnzǐ agrees that specific ritual injunctions gain their point as part of a practice that cultivates and expresses both virtue and good social order, he is not exactly a Kantian with regard to moral equality.

Like other early Confucians, Xúnzǐ contends that all human beings have equal moral potential, but he thinks there are significant differences

[20] Stohr (2012: 70-91) makes similar arguments in more detail, drawing in interesting ways on the sociology of Erving Goffman. For an argument that Kantian liberals must engage in various kinds of hypocrisy as they support a tolerant regime, see Judith Shklar's analysis of liberal hypocrisy, which she classes as a tolerable "ordinary" social vice (1984: 45-86). I thank P. J. Ivanhoe for reminding me of this discussion. For an analysis of how the complex legacy of Augustine led to modern Western anxieties about hypocrisy, see Herdt 2008.

in the degree to which different people realize this potential through personal commitment and practice (23/116/13-14; 8/33/18- 8/34/9). There is thus a hierarchy of moral achievement, according to Xúnzǐ, and one of the primary purposes of ritual and morality is to appropriately recognize and reward the "worthy" (*xián* 賢), and distinguish different classes or grades of people (19/90/3-5). Indeed, Xúnzǐ argues that the ability to draw distinctions, and consequently order ourselves socially, is the defining characteristic of human beings:

> What makes human beings truly human? I say it is because they make distinctions .... Now the xīngxīng ape resembles a human being in form; it too is a featherless biped. But the noble man sips xīngxīng soup and eats xīngxīng meat. Therefore, what makes human beings human is not that they are featherless bipeds; it is because they make distinctions. Even though there are parents and offspring among animals, they lack the proper affectionate relationship between father and son, and though there are males and females, they lack the proper separation between the sexes. Therefore among human ways of life none lack distinctions. Of distinctions, none is more important than those concerning social hierarchy, and of the ways to distinguish social hierarchy, none is more important than ritual. Of rituals, none is more important than those of the sage kings. (5/18/13-18)

Xúnzǐ thinks the rituals he advocates are valuable precisely because they allow us to order ourselves well within society. But this is not merely a pragmatic case for ritual. Xúnzǐ argues that morally justifiable social order needs to reflect differences in achievement and merit in order for people to accept it. Consider the following:

> How can people form communities? I say it is through hierarchical divisions. How can hierarchical divisions be enacted? I say by means of just social norms (*yì* 義). Thus if people use just norms to divide themselves then they will be harmonious; if harmonious, they will be unified, if unified they will have greater strength, with greater strength they will be powerful, when powerful they will triumph over things, and thus may gain palaces and houses to live in. Thus when people properly follow the sequence of the seasons, employ the myriad things, and universally benefit the world, there is no other reason for this but that they have obtained these hierarchical divisions and norms of justice. (9/39/11-13)

The social norms by which human groups live need to be right or just in order for communities to be harmonious, Xúnzǐ thinks, because people will feel much greater loyalty and commitment to a morally well-ordered community. Only this will allow us to band together effectively as groups. And Xúnzǐ argues that justice requires that people be rewarded according to merit, i.e., achievement, rather than family background or any other basis.[21] Xúnzǐ is thus a strong advocate of proportional equality, and believes one of the great values of ritual is that it supports such fair distribution.

Given these views, how might a neo-Xunzian defender of ritual propriety respond to charges that ritual propriety fosters elitism, denigrating "common" people and bolstering unjust social hierarchies? A critic might, more specifically, charge that (a) only the wealthy can spend time cultivating ritual propriety; non-wealthy people must spend most of their energy simply surviving; and (b) Xunzian ritual is essentially concerned with reinforcing hierarchy, which is a dubious, unnecessary exercise when hierarchies of status and power have so much support already; these should be abolished or undercut, not supported, in an egalitarian society. To the first, I think a Xunzian could respond that the core of ritual propriety concerns how we treat each other, starting within families, and extending out toward others. Key social virtues such as care and appropriate respect for family members (and others), as well as hospitality to guests, do not require opulent furnishings or clothing to accomplish. While such luxuries are pleasant and Xúnzǐ thinks all people desire them (4/16/5-6, 11/53/12-13), the core of ritual and morality do not actually require lavish expenditures. Xúnzǐ argues clearly that virtue is much more valuable than riches or high position (8/29/14-8/30/3), which suggests that he thinks it is possible to cultivate ritual propriety without wealth.[22] Perhaps only the starving would be incapable of ritual propriety without extensive prior practice and commitment; but for this

[21] Xúnzǐ's commitment to a meritocracy of virtuous achievement is plain in numerous passages, including 9/35/3-12, 9/35/22-9/36/3, 9/38/5-7, 10/43/1-5, 11/52/18-21, 12/61/13-12/62/10, 18/85/5-15, etc. I provide an overview of Xúnzǐ's social views in Stalnaker 2012: 101-103. The classic discussion of his views in English is Rosemont 1970-71.

[22] We should also note that Xúnzǐ's account of ritual aims to place clear limits on consumption by elites, by specifying appropriate sumptuary standards for various official ranks; and seeks to reorient human attention from satisfaction of desires and straightforward economic "benefit" to higher goods, shaping people to desire a reputation for virtue more than simple wealth.

they would hardly be blameworthy, on a Xunzian picture. Political elites in such a society would be responsible for such grave disorder, from Xúnzǐ's point of view.[23]

Xúnzǐ certainly thinks rituals do and should reinforce social hierarchies – if they are actually just. I have argued this in greater detail elsewhere, but early Confucians, including Xúnzǐ, contend that deference to superiors in various sorts of hierarchies contributes greatly to harmonious social order, and is in fact morally praiseworthy.[24] Their argument for this position becomes clear in the details of their analysis of relating to moral superiors, i.e., teachers, and social or political superiors, i.e., political figures who wield military or governmental power, or parents and elders. Xúnzǐ is adamant that morally cultivated individuals have a duty to act on their own conscience, for example when he argues that one should "follow the Way, do not follow one's lord" (13/64/8, 29/141/19), and "follow what is right, do not follow one's father" (29/141/19). On a Xunzian account, ritual practices provide a socially authorized way to honor and respect others, including both superiors and inferiors, but also serve to call superiors in particular to remember the moral underpinnings of their authority, and to their role-specific duties to wield power benevolently and justly. The idea is that respectful treatment focuses on the holder of a dignified *office*, not the person who holds that office apart from his official role responsibilities. He is explicitly critical of inherited class distinctions and familial nepotism, and aims to replace them with merit-based distinctions between people based on their justly earned social roles and offices.[25] Thus Xúnzǐ thinks ritual allows us to not only honor those who are genuinely worthy of

[23] One could perhaps argue that Xúnzǐ's account of funeral rituals in chapter 19 show that non-elites with limited financial resources could not truly fulfill the demands of ritual in the crucial instance of mourning one's parents. Given the total range of the evidence, I think we should probably say that full performance of cultural arts like music and some forms of ritual does require some wealth, on Xúnzǐ's account, but that someone could still make do with more limited resources and adequately perform ritual requirements even in crucial situations like funerals, even if such a situation is less than ideal and not fully satisfying to cultivated human desires for ritual recognition of key life events. And regardless of Xúnzǐ's own views, a modern defender of ritual propriety would need to take such a line.

[24] For an analysis of these issues that focuses more on Mèngzǐ's ideas, see Stalnaker 2013. I discuss Xúnzǐ's views of legitimate social hierarchy in Stalnaker (unpublished), and address the special case of obedience to superiors in the military in Stalnaker 2012.

[25] See the textual references in note 19 above.

admiration and deference, but also provides the necessary communicative tools to engage in constructive social criticism – which is obligatory, on his account, not optional, at least for those who are morally mature.[26]

On balance, then, Xunzian ritual propriety functions to criticize and undercut morally dubious hierarchies of wealth and family connections, albeit gently, through polite, reasoned criticism, and in conjunction with careful selection of good office-holders. The hierarchies it aims to support are primarily based on moral merit.[27] The criticism, then, aims at the wrong target; unless *all* hierarchies are morally repugnant, which is hard to fathom, then it seems right to suggest that the proper recognition of morally relevant differences in status is actually good, a strong point in favor of neo-Xunzian ritual propriety.

Properly responding to differences in social status, especially office or role membership, and also to degrees of respect-worthiness, allows ritual propriety to address a real difficulty generated by Kantian defenses of politeness. As Stohr argues, Kantian politeness aims to cultivate and recognize the moral equality of different people. But this goal creates a noticeable degree of anxiety over any deviations from equal moral status, at least on Stohr's account. She writes: "Kant believed that our ability to maintain respectful relationships with people depends on our being able to engage with each other as equals. When that equality becomes unbalanced, it threatens the relationship and the associated respect" (Stohr 2012: 87). This may not seem problematic at first blush, but on Stohr's own account this Kantian conception renders a number of crucial human relationships potentially alarming and threatening

[26] Xúnzǐ's sense of the circle of those who are sufficiently morally cultivated to offer criticism of public officials may be much smaller than any contemporary person's would be. The textual issue is how to square his strong statements about following one's own judgment rather than social authorities like lords and fathers, which supports a wide circle, with his equally strong statements about the need for following a teacher and the model of past sagely exemplars (1/1/3-5, 2/8/1-4, 4/15/14-17, 23/113/9-10, etc.), which seem to accent the need for a high degree of cultivation before engaging in such critical independence.

[27] I say "primarily" because Xúnzǐ does seem to support certain early Confucian social hierarchies that are not based on moral merit, but instead on the greater prestige in his context of males over females, and the elderly over the young. But any contemporary neo-Xunzian defender of ritual propriety should obviously not defend male dominance, and should probably assimilate respect for the aged to care for the infirm, and respect for the wise. For an introduction to contemporary reflection on the relation of Confucian and feminist thought, see Li 2000.

to one's self-respect, including family relationships (often unequal), relationships of teachers and students (by definition unequal), and even friendships. This cannot be a fully adequate account of politeness, let alone the more capacious virtue of ritual propriety.

Ironically, Stohr's account of Kantian politeness generates unnecessary difficulties by running together different kinds of respect, which makes hierarchical relationships seem much more dangerous than they are. Immediately after the passage quoted above, Stohr addresses "the destabilizing effects revealing our flaws can have on our friendships" (Stohr 2012: 87). She then proceeds to quote Kant: "From a moral point of view it is, of course, a duty for one of the friends to point out the other's faults to him; this is in the other's best interests and is therefore a duty of love. But the latter sees in this a lack of the respect he expected from his friend and thinks that he has either already lost or is in constant danger of losing something of his friend's respect, since he is observed and secretly criticized by him" (Stohr 2012: 87, citing Kant 1991: 262). Stohr accepts this as insightful analysis of a real tension in social life, which politeness addresses. But this is a strange amalgamation of two different kinds of respect: what Stephen Darwall (1977) has called "recognition respect" and "appraisal respect." We owe recognition respect to all other human beings as "ends in themselves," that is, as moral agents capable of responsible action in pursuit of chosen ends. We owe appraisal respect only to those people who manifest excellence in some sphere, in proportion to the value of that excellence.[28] It is unclear, on Kantian premises, how moral imperfections (of character, say) could jeopardize the right of the imperfect person to my recognition respect.[29] Moral criticism of one's friends here seems both a duty and a real moral error, on Kant's account. We need to see that, when interpreted in a way that makes mutual criticism suspect, the desire to maintain moral equality of status interferes with crucial dimensions of human relationships, in this case friendship.

[28] The situation is somewhat more complicated than this short summary suggests. For a fuller analysis of Darwall's views of respect in relation to Confucian ideas, see Stalnaker 2013: 451-5.

[29] It is also unclear how respecting another's moral agency is actually better served by refraining from offering criticism, at least in cases of real friendship, where both parties know each other well enough to have reasonable hopes of making insightful judgments of each other's acts and character. The sort of pride that would be threatened by such behavior seems deluded. I return to this theme below.

Similar difficulties crop up when Stohr analyzes beneficence, where she provides another quotation from Kant, who she says "was especially sensitive to the potentially destabilizing effects that beneficence can have on a relationship," and who thus fears that doing a good turn for another will be threatening to his or her self-respect (Stohr 2012: 129). She summarizes: "The feeling of being in someone's debt, Kant thought, is one that self-respecting people want to avoid having and that truly considerate people want to avoid creating" (Stohr 2012: 130). We should thus disguise our gifts and beneficent actions so that others will not recognize such actions as what they are, so they will not feel indebted to us (Stohr 2012: 130).

From a Confucian point of view, this is a bizarre aversion to central aspects of relationships of ongoing mutual care and concern – that is, to central features of the most important relationships people have, including family relationships and friendships. Kantian politeness, at least as represented by Stohr's account, seems excessively reticent about both supportive care for others, and critical engagement with them even when this is clearly warranted. Xunzian ritual propriety provides a repertoire of symbolic gesture and action that can help us not merely cope with relationships between unequals of various sorts, but flourish, and enjoy the fruits such relationships can provide, especially over time as reciprocal care and criticism help both parties live well. It simply is not a problem that human beings have ongoing relationships of mutual indebtedness, and any moral theory that makes such relationships seem problematic is excessively individualistic.

Stohr seems to accept at least part of this line of thought, for example when she suggests that reciprocity of beneficence is a good standard for long-term relationships, although she notes that in practice some inequalities of beneficence may be inevitable in certain cases (she mentions serious illness; Stohr 2012: 129-131). But on her own account, Kantian politeness seeks to avoid or at least disguise such beneficence and criticism in the majority of cases. An admirable contemporary form of ritual propriety would need to provide resources both to recognize everyone's shared human dignity, and to appropriately respond to moral merit and demerit across the wide range that people exhibit. Recognizing differential levels of respect-worthiness, even with regard to moral character, seems both possible and desirable, albeit with cognizance of the difficulty of discerning differences of character. But appropriately recognizing the respect-worthiness of teachers, parents, and public

office-holders, among others, requires a richer symbolic repertoire of language and action than the tight focus on moral equality alone that Stohr's conception provides.[30] All of this suggests that contemporary ritual propriety must recognize and respond to equality of basic human dignity, as well as to differentials of achievement where they are morally significant.

The greater range of ritual propriety, as compared to Kantian politeness, suggests a final possible criticism worthy of analysis and response. A critic might wonder whether "ritual propriety" does not name a single virtue, but rather runs together too many disparate things, since it combines interpersonal politeness with proper ceremonial bearing, along with apparently extraneous concerns like proper clothing and body posture. This is an interesting and subtle objection. Xunzian *lǐ* does include these various aspects, and in this he is typical of most early Ru theorizing about ritual.

Bryan Van Norden, in his fine work on virtue ethics in early Chinese thought, has analyzed Mèngzǐ's four main virtues in terms of their relation to "spheres of action and experience" discernible in human life generally (2007: 350-354). Van Norden argues that ritual propriety should be seen as the excellence proper to "the production and appreciation of the beautiful" (2007: 351). While this view of the matter accurately captures the early Confucian concern with good form, expressed as the desire to make human existence *měi* 美, "fine" and "beautiful" (e.g., *Xúnzǐ* 1/3/17; 1/4/16), this way of putting things risks failing to attend to crucial social constituents of most rituals.

In my view, the core aim of the virtue of ritual propriety is the proper performance of human relatedness, which allows the other virtues, especially including benevolence and righteousness, to operate in such a way that relationships are nurtured and cultivated to be strong and good. Respect and benevolence in particular need to take appropriate form to work properly with creatures like us, who are alert to subtle social and bodily cues from each other in myriad ways. Thus bodily comportment and personal appearance, even dress, as well as speech, are all significant components of our self-presentation to others, and

[30] Again, it is worth noting that the neo-Xunzian sort of ritual propriety I am advocating recognizes the possibility of *unworthiness* in office holders, as well as worthiness, as outlined above regarding ritual propriety as a mode of social criticism of elites.

affect how those others understand and respond to our actions and words. These vectors of human interaction are thus all appropriate areas of concern for the virtue of *lǐ*. The pleasing beauty of such appearances, and graceful style in performing ritual requirements, contributes greatly to accomplishing these ends.

Xúnzǐ clearly values ceremonies highly, and singles out death rituals, musical performances, and banquets for attention and analysis in chapters 19 and 20. The more ceremonial moments of Xunzian ritual appear to serve two crucial functions: they mark critical transitions in relationships between people (marriage, death, the transition to adulthood), and they provide communal occasions for harmonious delight in beautiful or otherwise pleasing shared activities, which strengthen interpersonal bonds by building mutual care and respect. Thus a concern for ceremonies of the sort the early Ru value is also an appropriate object of this virtue's operation. Even in the contemporary United States people invest considerable attention and resources in marriage, graduation, and funeral ceremonies. Such rituals can and should be much more than occasions for conspicuous consumption – and often are. Ritual propriety is the complex of cultivated skill and virtue that allows us to perform our duties well on such crucial occasions. Our many varied relationships with each other require the practical, symbolic resources provided by ritual traditions, as well as the virtue of gracefully performing such rituals, whether momentous or quotidian.[31]

This defense of ritual propriety as a real virtue is inevitably incomplete. I have failed to address all possible objections, including important objections related to contemporary pluralistic societies that fail to share robust ritual traditions across all sectors of the populace, but do share them in certain subgroups.[32] But I hope to have made a real start, sufficient to suggest the power of this general justificatory strategy, and to evoke the attractiveness of ritual propriety as a virtue for contemporary people, a virtue that does not suffer from the ambivalence about human relatedness embedded in recent Kantian defenses of politeness.

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[31] P. J. Ivanhoe (2013: 31-44) gives an astute analysis of the value of rituals and ritual propriety in contemporary life, drawing in particular on the Confucian *Analects*.

[32] Van Norden (2007: 354-355) recognizes this as an important problem, but can find no "principled solution" to it. The issues regarding ritual propriety in relation to pluralism and "multiculturalism" are sufficiently complex that they would need lengthy treatment of their own to be adequately addressed.

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CHANCE AND NECESSITY IN ZHU XI'S CONCEPTIONS OF HEAVEN AND TRADITION

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Abstract. Discussion of the relationship between chance and necessity in the West goes back at least to Democritus in the fifth century BCE, and was highlighted again in the twentieth century by Jacques Monod in *Chance and Necessity*. Monod contrasted "teleonomic" (directional but not directed) biological evolution with "teleologic" (purpose-driven) Biblical theology. This article uses that distinction in examining Zhu Xi's concepts of Heaven (in particular the "mandate" or "givenness" of Heaven) and tradition (focusing on the normative Confucian tradition, the "succession of the Way" or *daotong*). The result sheds light on the unique combination of rationality and transcendence in Neo-Confucian thought.

I. INTRODUCTION

Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130-1200) conceptions of Heaven and tradition were central to the philosophic framework of his system of Confucian thought and practice. Heaven (*tian* 天) provided an absolute point of *synchronic* orientation that legitimized the system by anchoring his values in the natural world. His conception of the Confucian tradition – the "succession of the Way" (*daotong* 道統) – functioned as a *diachronic* anchorage in the continuous "outflowing" (*liuxing* 流行) of the "principle of Heaven" (*tianli* 天理), or the natural ordering process. Given these central roles, an examination of the two concepts can shed fresh light on some of the basic features of Zhu Xi's system – in particular, the way it combines a rationalizing tendency with an openness to transcendence.

EUROPEAN JOURNAL FOR PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION 8/1 (SPRING 2016), PP. 143-162

Zhu's understanding of Heaven and tradition are both revealed in the campaign he waged in the 1170s to persuade the "Neo-Confucians" of the Song dynasty (960-1279) that Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017-1073) had been the first true Confucian sage since Mencius (Mengzi 孟子), 1400 years earlier. This was an iconoclastic campaign, as the prevailing wisdom at the time was that Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032-1085) had been the first to revive the Confucian *dao* 道 in the Song. Cheng Hao and his brother, Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107), were in fact the core during the 11th century of what became the Cheng-Zhu school of Confucianism (so-called after them and Zhu Xi), and until Zhu Xi's campaign Zhou Dunyi was relatively uninfluential. While the Cheng brothers had studied with him for about a year when they were teenagers, Zhou's philosophical influence on them appeared to be minimal.[1] Therefore, when Cheng Hao died and Cheng Yi, in his eulogy, said that his elder brother had been the first to apprehend and revive the heart of Mencius' teachings, very few questioned the claim. Yet Zhu Xi, with his friend Zhang Shi 張栻 (1133-1180), eventually overturned this consensus by arguing that Heaven had "chosen" Zhou Dunyi to revive the true Confucian tradition – what Mencius had called the "Way of the Sages" (*shengren zhi dao* 聖人之道) and Zhu Xi called the "succession of the Way" (*daotong* 道統).[2]

II. HEAVEN

Early Confucian conceptions of Heaven varied from a mysterious, semi-personalistic source of life and moral authority (e.g. for Confucius/Kongzi 孔子, 551-479 BCE) to a completely amoral realm of the natural world (e.g. for Xunzi 旬子, 3rd century BCE). Mencius (4th century BCE) occupied a middle ground on this spectrum, retaining the moral concern of Heaven's Mandate (*tian ming* 天命) but speaking of *ming* (mandate, decree) more abstractly. For Mencius, *ming* 命 refers to the conditions of life that are beyond human control – what is simply "given," like the assumptions of a geometric theorem. The realm of *ming* includes

[1] Probably the only direct influence was Cheng Yi's special appreciation of Confucius' disciple Yan Hui 顏回, whom Zhou Dunyi also admired. Cheng's essay, "What Master Yan Loved to Learn," was written only a few years after the brothers had studied with Zhou, and contains some parallels with Zhou's *Taijitu shuo* 太極圖說 (Discussion of the *Taiji* Diagram).

[2] For a thorough discussion of the whole issue see Joseph A. Adler, *Reconstructing the Confucian Dao: Zhu Xi's Appropriation of Zhou Dunyi* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014).

the brute facts of our lives, such as where, when, and to whom we are born, which determine some of the parameters or limiting conditions within which our lives unfold.[3] From the perspective of the individual, *ming* is the realm of necessity: that which we cannot control. Human nature (*xing* 性) is also given or endowed by Heaven (as in the first line of the *Zhongyong*[4]), but according to Mencius the goodness of human nature is given only in potential form, as certain moral feelings or dispositions (the "four beginnings"), which must be actively cultivated into the "four constant [universal] virtues." So *xing*, for Mencius, concerns an area of life over which we do have some control.[5]

The Neo-Confucians of the Song followed Mencius in thinking of Heaven in mostly naturalistic terms, yet still with a moral dimension. However, both *tian* and *ming* were partly reinterpreted: Heaven was the source of the cosmic order (*li* 理), which comprised both the natural order (*tianli* 天理) and the moral order (*daoli* 道理).[6] In the human being, one's nature (*xing*) was the instantiation of that order.[7] The good nature that Mencius had discussed was now called more specifically the "nature of Heaven-and-earth" (*tiandi zhi xing* 天地之性) or the "original nature" (*ben xing* 本性).[8] *Ming* (the given) continued to refer to the realm over which we have no control, but was now understood in terms of *qi* (psycho-physical-spiritual stuff), specifically the "endowment of *qi*"

[3] For good discussions of *ming* see Michael Puett, "Following the Commands of Heaven: The Notion of *Ming* in Early Chinese Thought", in Christopher Lupke, ed., *The Magnitude of Ming: Command, Allotment, and Fate in Chinese Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), pp. 49-69; and Stephen R. Bokencamp, "Simple Twists of Fate: The Daoist Body and its *Ming*", ibid., pp. 151-168.

[4] "What is given (*ming*) by Heaven is called the nature." *Xing* (nature) as Mencius uses it primarily denotes human nature (*ren xing* 人性), but the word itself means the "nature" of any thing, although not a static essence (more on this below).

[5] *Mencius* 2A.6, 6A.6. Mencius discusses the relationship of *xing* and *ming* in 7A.2 and 7B.24, both of which will be discussed below.

[6] The Song Confucians did not use these terms consistently with these meanings (often they are synonymous); these are my usages.

[7] Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi said, "The nature is just principle/order" (性即理也). For Cheng Yi see, e.g. *Henan Chengshi Yishu* 22A, in *Er Cheng ji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), p. 292. For Zhu Xi see, e.g., *Zhongyong zhangju*, in Zhu Jieren, Yan Zuozhi, Liu Yongxiang, eds, *Zhuzi quanshu* 朱子全書 (Zhu Xi's Complete Works), 27 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chuban she; Anhui jiaoyu chuban she, 2002), 6:32 (hereafter *Zhuzi quanshu* 2002).

[8] This terminology came from Zhang Zai in the 11th century and was picked up by Zhu Xi in the 12th century.

(*qi bing* 氣稟) given by Heaven, or the "physical nature" (*qizhi zhi xing* 氣質之性).[9]

Zhu Xi was less optimistic than Mencius had been concerning the ordinary person's possibility of becoming a Sage (*shengren* 聖人). Mencius, he said, had focused only on the "original nature" and its moral potential, while ignoring the physical nature in which the moral nature was embodied. That physical nature was responsible for feelings or dispositions (*qing* 清), not all of which were good. Selfish human desires (*renyu* 人欲), for example, obstructed the mind's ability to apprehend its moral nature. Until and unless the mind (*xin* 心) could become fully aware of its inherent morality it could not act as a proper guide for human behavior, and so the person could not put into effect in practice his or her moral nature, becoming an "authentic" (*cheng* 誠) human being. Thus the concept of the physical nature was the Cheng-Zhu answer to the problem of theodicy, in Mencian terms: if human nature is good, why is there evil?

III. THE *DAOTONG*

Since the continuity of the Confucian tradition depended on the appearance of sages who could fully actualize their moral potentials, the problem of the gaps in the tradition – for example the roughly five hundred year gap between the founders of the Zhou dynasty (11th century BCE) and Confucius – was the cultural reflection of the problem of theodicy.[10]

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[9] For *qibing* see Zhu's commentary on Zhou Dunyi's *Tongshu*, section 7 (*Zhuzi quanshu* 2002, 13:104). For *qizhi zhi xing* see Zhang Zai, *Zhangzi quanshu* (Sibu beiyao ed.), 2:18b. Translating *ming* in a general sense as "given" is justified by Zhu Xi's use of the phrase *tianming, tiantao* 天命天討 (Heaven gives, Heaven take away/punishes) in his commentary on *Mencius* 1B.4. The phrase is an allusion to *Shujing*, "*Gao Yao mo*" 皋陶謨, 2:「天命有德，五服五章哉。天討有罪，五刑五用哉。」 In Legge's typically florid translation: "Heaven graciously distinguishes the virtuous - are there not the five habiliments, five decorations of them? Heaven punishes the guilty - are there not the five punishments, to be severally used for that purpose?" Available at: <http://ctext.org/shang-shu/counsels-of-gao-yao> [accessed 6/3/2016].

[10] Mencius also notes five hundred year gaps between Yao (and Shun) and Tang (founder of the Shang dynasty), and between Tang and King Wen of the Zhou (*Mencius* 7B.38; see also 2B.13) – a dispensational theory of history, as Mark Csikszentmihalyi points out (in his *Material Virtue: Ethics and the Body in Early China* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 192-200). Since Mencius was born roughly one hundred after Confucius died, that puts Zhou Dunyi at another five hundred year interval, i.e. roughly 1500 years after Confucius. However, I am not aware of Zhu Xi ever pointing this out.

Therefore it was explained by the same mechanism: the physical nature. For members of the Cheng-Zhu school in the 11th and 12th centuries CE, the most troubling gap was the most recent one, for it weakened their competitive position vis-à-vis Chan Buddhism and Daoism. Both of these traditions claimed, in different ways, to have direct access to the *dao* (more on this below). The Confucians, therefore, needed to do the same, but this required that they identify someone who had revived the Confucian *dao* since its occultation since Mencius. Cheng Yi made that claim for his brother shortly after Cheng Hao died:

> After the demise of the Duke of Zhou, the Way of the sages was not carried on, and after the death of Mencius the teaching of the sages was not transmitted. When the Way was not carried on there was no good government for a hundred generations, and when the teaching was not transmitted, there were not true scholars for a thousand years. Even without good government, scholars could explain the way of good government for the edification of men and transmission to later generations, but without true [Confucian] scholars the world fell into darkness and people lost their way, human desires ran amok, and heavenly principles were extinguished. The Master [Cheng Hao] was born 1,400 years after Mencius and was able to recover the untransmitted teachings that survived in the classics, resolving to enlighten the people with this Way.[11]

Cheng Yi's account was accepted by the great majority of the brothers' many followers, including those in the early Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279). It was questioned only by members of the Hu family of Hunan, who instead championed Zhou Dunyi as the first sage of the Song. Hu Hong 胡宏 (1106-1161), for example, said, "Master Zhou revealed Mencius' untransmitted learning to the elder and younger Chengs, returning at once to the brilliance of the myriad ancients."[12] This view was conveyed to Zhu Xi by Zhang Shi, who had been a student of Hu Hong. Beginning in 1169, Zhu and Zhang conducted a campaign to make Zhou Dunyi the first true Confucian sage since Mencius, replacing Cheng Hao – this despite the fact that the teachings of the Cheng brothers formed the core of Zhu Xi's celebrated "synthesis" of Song Confucian

[11] Cheng, *Er Cheng ji*, 640; translated by Wm. Theodore de Bary, *Neo Confucian Orthodoxy*, pp. 3-4. Cheng Yi outlived his brother by twenty-two years.

[12] Hu Hong's "Preface to Zhou Dunyi's *Tongshu*" (Penetrating the Scripture of Change), in *Hu Hong ji*, pp. 160-62.

orthodoxy. Part of this campaign was their support for a series of new or rebuilt shrines to Zhou Dunyi, for which they wrote commemorative dedications explicitly identifying Zhou as the first sage since Mencius. Zhu Xi wrote seven of these and Zhang Shi wrote five.[13]

In addition to shrine dedications Zhu Xi wrote at least nine other pieces making the claim that Zhou Dunyi had first revived the Way of the Sages. One of these is especially useful as a window into Zhu's understanding of heaven and tradition: the "Record of the reconstruction of Zhou Dunyi's library/study in Jiangzhou," written in 1177.[14] In this piece he deals not only with Zhou Dunyi but also with the question of the ontological status of the Way during periods when it is neither being practiced nor taught. As mentioned above, these gaps threatened to invalidate the Song Confucians' claim to have authentic access to the ultimate "principle of the Way" (*daoli*). They thereby weakened the Confucian position in their competition with contemporary Buddhists and Daoists for the hearts and minds of Song literati, since both of those groups had ways of justifying their claims to afford direct access to the *dao*. Chan Buddhism, which was extremely popular among Song literati,[15] claimed to have an unbroken lineage of "patriarchs" (actually "ancestors," *zu* 祖) dating back to the Buddha, through whom the "mind to mind transmission" of the Buddha's Dharma gave them direct access to the enlightened mind of the Buddha. Similarly, Daoists claimed that their psycho-physical-spiritual practices of visualization, meditation, and manipulation of *qi* throughout the body enabled them to transform that *qi* into spiritual embodiments of the Dao. Therefore Zhu Xi argued that the Confucian "learning of the Way" (*daoxue* 道學) likewise enabled people to "hear the Way" despite the long gaps in its historical propagation:

> The Way has never been lost from the world. It is only that its being entrusted to man [to carry out] has sometimes been interrupted and

[13] See Adler, *Reconstructing the Confucian Dao*, pp. 50-53, 58.

[14] *Jiangzhou chongjian Lianxi xiansheng shutang ji* 江州重建濂溪先生書堂記, in *Hui'an xiansheng Zhu wengong wenji*, 78: 3739-3741 [hereafter *Wenji*], in *Zhuzi quanshu* 2002.

[15] Zhu Xi himself seriously studied Buddhism before becoming a student of Li Tong 李侗 (1093-1163). He once visited the most famous and influential Chan Buddhist of the Song, Dahui Zonggao 大慧宗杲 (1089-1163), who called him "Layman Zhu" (*Zhu jushi* 朱居士) – suggesting that Dahui considered Zhu to be (unofficially) a member of the lay *sangha*. See Shu Jingnan 束景南, *Zhu Xi nianpu changbian* 朱熹年普長編 (Zhu Xi's Chronological Record, Extended Edition), 2 vols. (Shanghai: Donghua shifan daxue chuban she, 2001), p. 188.

sometimes been continuous. Thus in its practice in the world there have been periods of clarity and periods of obscurity. This is all the result of the Decree of Heaven (*tianming* 天命); it is not something that the power of human wisdom is capable of achieving.

Of the variety of individual things produced and supported by the two [modes of] *qi* [i.e. *yin* and *yang*] and the Five Phases, in their mixed and confused rising and falling and coming and going throughout Heaven above and earth below, nothing lacks a definite pattern/order/principle (*li*). The greatest of these are the human nature [consisting] of humanity, rightness, propriety and wisdom,[16] and the human relations of master and servant, father and son, elder and younger brother, husband and wife, friend and friend.[17]

This being the case, the cyclical flow [of the *dao*] includes everything without exception.[18] So how can we think that the [alternation of] order and disorder from ancient times to the present is [evidence for] the existence and perishing [of the *dao*]?[19]

In the circulation of *qi* there are inequalities [in terms] of homogeneity and heterogeneity, discontinuity and unity, so in the human endowment there are differences [in terms] of purity and turbidity, dullness and clarity. Therefore, how the *dao* is entrusted to man and carried out in the world is only due to what Heaven confers and humans receive. It is certainly not due to the clever and presumptious individual's ability to speculate and conjecture. [For example] the River Chart (*Hetu* 河圖) came out [of the Yellow River] and the Eight Trigrams were drawn; the Luo Writing (*Luoshu* 洛書) appeared and the Nine Regions were arranged.[20] Confucius, in reference to the flourishing and decline of "this

[16] The "four constant virtues" in *Mencius* 2A.6 and 6A.6.

[17] The "five human relations" in *Mencius* 3A.4 and *Zhongyong* 20.

[18] That is, the *dao* is the dynamic flow of cosmic order (*li* 理), which is immanent throughout the natural and social worlds.

[19] That is, although social and political order can break down, it is nevertheless the case that things happen for reasons. Thus the presence of disorder in society does not mean that the natural and moral order (*li*) has ceased to exist.

[20] Paraphrasing *Yijing*, *Xici* (Appended remarks) A.11.8 (*Zhouyi benyi*, 3:15a). The River Chart was a numerological diagram that appeared to the mythical sage Fuxi on the back of a dragon horse coming out of the Yellow River, and was used by him in his creation of the hexagrams and divination system of the *Zhou Yi* (or *Yijing*, Scripture of Change). The Luo Writing was a similar drawing that appeared to the mythical Yu the Great (founder of the Xia dynasty) on the shell of a spirit-tortoise as he was controlling the flooding of the Yellow River, and figured into his laying out of the Nine Regions of ancient China. Both diagrams had been associated with the *Yijing* ever since the Han

culture" (*siwen* 斯文),[21] never failed to attribute it to Heaven. It is clear that the Sage did not deceive us in regard to this.

As for Master [Zhou] Lianxi, if he did not receive the propagation of this *dao* conferred by Heaven, how did he continue it so easily after such a long interruption, and bring it to light so abruptly after such extreme darkness?

With the decline of the Zhou and the death of Mencius, the propagation of this *dao* was not continued; even less so from the Qin through the Han, Jin, Sui and Tang, until our Song. Then the Sage-ancestor [Taizu, founding father of the Song] received the Mandate. The Five Planets were in conjunction in Kui 奎, marking a turning point in culture.[22] Only then did the heterogeneous *qi* homogenize and the divided [*qi*] coalesce; a clear and bright endowment was received in its entirety by one man, and the Master [Zhou Dunyi] appeared. Without following a teacher, he silently registered the substance of the Way, constructed the Diagram and attached a text to it,[23] to give an ultimate foundation to the essentials.

At that time, the Cheng [brothers] were among those who saw and knew [Zhou Dunyi], and they subsequently expanded and clarified his teaching. They caused the subtlety of Heavenly principle, the manifest human relations, the multitude of phenomenal things, and the mystery of ghosts and spirits all to be fully joined together into one [system]. Thus the tradition of the Duke of Zhou, Confucius, and Mencius was brilliantly illuminated again in that era, and determined literati were able to study and respectfully practice [the Way], without losing its correctness, like those who appeared before the Three Dynasties [Xia, Shang and Zhou]. Ah! Such grandeur! Were it not for what Heaven conferred [on Zhou], how could we participate in this? ...

I have been fortunate to have heard the teachings of the Chengs, and consequently read the Master's writings and saw how he was as a man. ... I have inquired into how the Master received the Way from

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dynasty. See Joseph A. Adler, trans., *Introduction to the Study of the Classic of Change* (Provo: Global Scholarly Publications, 2002), pp. 1-14.

[21] See *Analects* 9:5: "If Heaven intended this culture to perish, it would not have given it to those of us who live after King Wen's death" (trans. Slingerland, *Confucius*, p. 87).

[22] Kui, or "Straddler" in Schafer's translation (*Pacing the Void,* 76), one of the twenty-eight "lunar lodges" (*xiu* 宿), was associated with Wenchang 文昌, the god of literature and civil service examinations (Williams, *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs*, pp. 213-214).

[23] Zhou's "Discussion of the Supreme Polarity Diagram" (*Taijitu shuo* 太極圖說).

> Heaven and transmitted it to others, in order to likewise transmit the events of his life, to enable later gentlemen to contemplate, examine, and promote it. ...[24]

Zhu Xi's chief concerns here are the question of access to the *dao* across the long span of time since Mencius and the place of Zhou Dunyi in the lineage of Confucian sages. But in the course of addressing these points he reveals a set of assumptions about Heaven (*tian* 天) and tradition – specifically the "transmission of the succession of the Way" (*daotong zhi chuan* 道統之傳) – and it is these ideas that are the focus of the present paper.

Zhu Xi's answer to the question of the metaphysical status of the Way during periods when it is not being practiced or taught is that even during these gaps it still resides in human nature (*xing*), and in fact is immanent in the *li* that orders the universe. This is the result of Heaven's decree (*tianming*), which is to say that it is natural, necessary, and beyond human control. He makes this claim about Heaven *six times* in the above text. The point has an important bearing on what it means to be a Confucian sage. In one respect there seems to be an element of chance, in terms of Zhou Dunyi having been born when the five planets were in conjunction in a region of the heavens associated with the god of literature and examinations – the business of *ru* 儒 (scholars). It is also significant that Zhu stresses that "what Heaven confers and humans receive ... is certainly not due to the clever and presumptious individual's ability to speculate and conjecture" – seemingly minimizing the uniqueness of the sage. In Zhu Xi's *Yixue qimeng* 易學啟蒙 (Introduction to the study of the *Yijing* 易經) he says something similar about the primordial sage, Fuxi 伏羲, the creator of the hexagram divination system. Fuxi, being the first sage, could only have perceived the *dao* on his own. His ability was natural and spontaneous (*ziran* 自然), which is to say that it was "given by Heaven."

> How could this have been achieved by the Sage's cogitation and wise deliberation? [I.e. it was not.] It was simply the naturalness of the particular phases [allotment?] of *qi*, formed into the patterns and images seen in the [River] Chart and [Luo] Writing, that exposed this to his mind, and he lent his hand to it.[25]

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[24] *Wenji*, 78:3739-3741.

[25] Zhu Xi, *Yixue qimeng*, p. 1203.

Here too we might be tempted to say that it is simply a matter of chance. But later in the *Yixue qimeng* he says of the River Chart and Luo Writing, "They both originate from the intention (*yi* 意) of Heaven."[26] The same was true of Zhou Dunyi:

> Only the Master's Learning of the Way was profoundly excellent; he received its transmission from Heaven. He succeeded Confucius and Master Yan [Hui], and in turn enlightened (*qi* 啟) the Chengs. He enabled students of that generation to perceive a thousand generations of past sages and worthies, as if hearing their voices and seeing their faces [like Chan students with their masters]. Giving and receiving in a direct line, ordering all affairs, handing down the eternal without failing to be correct, his merit was extremely abundant. Since Mencius there have been none [like him].[27]

Similarly:

> Only the Master received Heaven's gift and continued the succession of the Way (*daotong*), in order to connect the beginnings and ends and to help us later men.[28]

And Zhu Xi's student, Zhen Dexiu 真德秀 (1178-1235), put it this way:

> Man could not have achieved this without the aid of Heaven. Likewise with the learning of the Four Masters, how could they have offered such novel views and put forward new interpretations, such as their predecessors had not been able to arrive at, were it not simply due to Heaven?[29]

What we have in these texts is a curious combination of chance and intentionality. Attributing the rare appearance of sages to Heaven is exactly like attributing something to "an act of God," which implies something beyond human control but (if taken literally) a willful act of a purposeful deity. In both cases the attribution can be taken literally or metaphorically. The Cheng-Zhu Confucians understood it

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[26] *Yixue qimeng*, p. 1210.

[27] "*Feng'an Lianxi xiansheng ciwen*" (Commemoration of the shrine to Master Lianxi at Feng'an, 1179), *Wenji* 86:4038. See also Shu , *Zhu Xi nianpu changbian*, p. 623.

[28] "*Shu Lianxi guangfeng jiyue ting*" (On Lianxi's pavilion of the light breeze and clear moon), *Wenji* 84:3984.

[29] Zhen Dexiu, "*Nanxiong zhouxue si xiansheng citang ji* (Record of the memorial hall to the Four Masters at the Nanxiong provincial school); the Four Masters are Zhou Dunyi, the Cheng brothers, and Zhu Xi. Translated by de Bary, *Neo-Confucian Orthodoxy*, p. 10, with Wade-Giles changed to *pinyin* romanization.

metaphorically. The seemingly chance occurrences were neither random nor willful. In the "Record of the reconstruction of Zhou Dunyi's library" Zhu Xi says, "nothing lacks a definite *li*," which is to say that everything happens for a reason. Therefore it is not random. And while Heaven seems to have a will or a mind (Cheng Yi had spoken of "the mind of Heaven and Earth to produce things"[30]), that seeming intentionality is revealed in *natural* processes. In other words, natural, non-intentional processes result in events that may seem to be intentional but are not – like the modern understanding of biological evolution, which is *directional* (teleonomic) but not *directed* (teleologic).[31] The classical "Mandate of Heaven" (*tianming* 天命) similarly straddled this line between intentional and non-intentional action. Most people probably understood it as the willful choice of Heaven – conceived at least partly as a personalistic deity – to remove the authority to rule from one family and confer it on another, like the Biblical God choosing a person to be his prophet, or a Chinese deity possessing a spirit-medium.[32] But as we shall see, the Neo-Confucians rationalized *tianming*, much as they did the popular notion of "ghosts and spirits" (*gui-shen* 鬼神). They accepted the existence of ghosts and spirits but understood them as natural, not supernatural, phenomena. For example, Zhu Xi said that ghosts and spirits are natural manifestations of *qi*: "*Gui* and *shen* are nothing more than the growth and dispersion of *yin* and *yang*."[33]

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[30] This is from Cheng Yi's commentary on hexagram 24 (Fu, Return) of the *Yijing*, in *Er Cheng ji*, p. 819. See Smith, et. al., *Sung Dynasty Uses of the I Ching*, p. 247. Cheng Yi also said, "The Way spontaneously produces all things" (*Er Cheng ji*, p. 149; see also Chan, *Source Book*, p. 553). "The mind of Heaven and Earth" (*tiandi zhi xin* 天地之心) had earlier appeared in the "*Liyun*" 禮運 chapter of the *Liji* 禮記 (Record of Ritual), section 20.

[31] Jacques Monod makes use of the teleonomy/teleology distinction in his landmark book, *Chance and Necessity: An Essay on the Natural Philosophy of Modern Biology* (NY: Knopf, 1971). Democritus, in 5th century BCE Greece, had identified chance and necessity as the basic principles of physics. See G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 411-413.

[32] See de Bary's discussion of the prophetic nature of "repossessing the Way" in his *The Trouble with Confucianism*, and my review of the book in *Journal of Chinese Religions,* no. 21 (1993), 137-142, where I discuss the "prophetic" issue.

[33] Quoted in Hu Guang, *Xingli daquan shu* 性理大全書 (Great Compendium on Human Nature and Principle; 1415) (Siku quanshu ed.), 28:2a, 2b, p. 609. See my discussion of this in Joseph A. Adler, "Varieties of Spiritual Experience," in Tu Weiming and Mary Evelyn Tucker, eds, Confucian Spirituality, vol. 2 (NY: Crossroad, 2004), pp. 122-128.

As early as the classical Confucian philosopher Xunzi some had understood Heaven to be simply the natural world (surely Xunzi was not the only person to do so). Although Zhu Xi likewise leaned toward the naturalistic side of the spectrum, he still retained an apparent suggestion of a moral will in his statements about Heaven, unlike Xunzi. His view of the appearance of sages like Fuxi and Zhou Dunyi is, I think it is fair to say, a Neo-Confucian analogue of *revelation*. Unlike Biblical revelation, it is not the deliberate action of a personal deity; hence terms like "the intention of Heaven" and "the mind of Heaven and Earth" are more metaphorical than literal. Yet the unfolding of "Heaven's principle" (*tianli*, the natural order) does have *something like* purpose or intentionality. Again, it is teleonomic, not teleologic; it has direction but no director. This can be seen in Zhu Xi's conception of *ming* 命, "mandate, decree, command," to which we now turn.

IV. ZHU XI ON *MING*

There are two aspects to Zhu's understanding of *ming*: the internal and the external.[34] The internal *ming* is the individual's allotment of *qi*; more specifically, the quality of one's *qi*, one's "given" psychophysical constitution. Each person is born with a unique endowment of *qi*, which may be relatively clear and fine or relatively cloudy and impure. The relative clarity of one's *qi* – and it is crucial to remember that the mind/heart (*xin* 心) is composed of *qi* – determines the degree of difficulty one will have in apprehending and understanding moral principle (*li*), both in the mind itself and in external things. Externally, *ming* refers to the circumstances in which one is born: whether one has a family and community with the means to physically, emotionally, and intellectually nourish one – variables that depend in part upon the state and its rulership. These factors were addressed by Mencius, who implied that those who fail to develop their moral natures do so because of the poor quality of these social environmental factors.[35] Taken together, these

[34] Michael Nylan suggests this schema in her article on "Ming" in the *Routledge Curzon Encyclopedia of Confucianism*, pp. 428-429.

[35] Mencius never says this explicitly, at least in the record we have of his teachings, but it is the clear implication of what he does say. In his only recorded explicit response to the nature/nurture question (which is also the problem of theodicy in this context), he merely says that those who fail to nourish their moral natures do so because they fail to think, or fail to recognize the importance of their moral natures (*Mencius* 6a:15). This,

internal and external dimensions of the given conditions of human life, over which we have no control (the realm of necessity), are the limiting factors in the process of self-transformation leading potentially to sagehood, and therefore also the limiting factors in the probability of sages appearing in any given era.

Zhu Xi focused primarily on the internal *ming*, i.e. the individual's endowment of *qi*, in his discussions of the individual process of self-transformation. But the rare appearance of sages who can continue the *daotong* is due to external *ming*, and it is the latter (external) that determines the former (internal). The external factors that determine one's configuration or allotment of *qi* at the time and place of one's birth even include the positions of the planets, as he mentions in his "Record of the reconstruction of Zhou Dunyi's library," and the weather:

> If the sun and moon are clear and bright, and the climate temperate and reasonable, the man born at such a time and endowed with such *qi*, which is clear, bright, well-blended, and strong, should be a good man. But if the sun and moon are darkened and gloomy, and the temperature abnormal, all this is evidence of violent *qi*. There is no doubt that if a man is endowed with such *qi*, he will be a bad man.[36]

Heaven is the source of these variables over which we have no control; they are what "Heaven decrees/gives" (*tianming*). But Heaven is also the source of the moral nature (*xing*), which is part of the natural order (*tianli*). *Tianming* is the impersonal "givenness" of necessity; *tianli* is the spontaneous, self-directing ordering process inherent in the natural world of *qi*. It is because *li* is the *ordering* process that *li* is inherently good: order *per se* is good in Confucian thought. This may be why Cheng Hao could make the seemingly unorthodox claim (for a Neo-Confucian) that even evil acts are *li*: they are *li* because they happen for reasons.[37]

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obviously, only pushes the question back a step: why do some fail to think? The answer is an insufficiently nurturing social environment.

[36] *Zhuzi quanshu* 朱子全書 (Zhu Xi's "Complete Works"), comp. Li Guangdi 李光地 (1714; rpt. Taibei: Guangxue, 1977, 2 vols) (hereafter *Zhuzi quanshu* 1714), 43:4b. This translation by Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 624-625, with "*qi*" substituted for "material force."

[37] See Wing-tsit Chan, comp., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 529. Chan's attempt to explain the apparent contradiction doesn't convince me. Furthermore, thinking of *li* as the "ordering process" rather than as static "pattern" makes sense of Zhu Xi's frequent references to *li* "flowing forth" (*liuxing* 流行); e.g. *Yulei* 9:308, 27:985, 28:1023, 31:1126, 36:1331, *Wenji* 36:1568, etc.

In the human being, the natural ordering process, the "flowing forth" (*liuxing* 流行) of *li*, is the proper development by which one's moral potential is cultivated into full-fledged moral virtues, and is called the nature (*xing*).[38] But this proper development is not inevitable (obviously); it can be short-circuited by both internal and external factors. The internal self-limiting factors result from a less than fine endowment of *qi*; externally they include environmental factors, some of which can be avoided. Zhu Xi's comments on two passages in the *Mencius* are particularly illuminating on this point. In the first of these Mencius introduces a distinction between "proper" (*zheng* 正) and "improper" (*feizheng* 非正) *ming*. According to *Mencius* 7A.2:[39]

> Mencius said: Though nothing happens that is not due to *ming* 命, one accepts willingly only what is proper (*zheng* 正).

Zhu Xi comments:

> At people's birth what is auspicious and inauspicious, unfortunate and fortunate, are both what is given (*ming*) by Heaven. But only that which is beyond one's control is proper *ming*. So the superior person cultivates himself and waits for it. That is why he willing accepts it.

Here Zhu Xi underscores the idea that *ming* "proper" refers to what is beyond our control, like the time and place of one's birth, or one's parentage. Mencius continues:

> Therefore one who understands *ming* does not stand under a crumbling wall.

Zhu Xi:

> "*Ming*" here means proper *ming*. A crumbling wall is one that is about to fall. If one understands proper *ming* one doesn't stand in a dangerous spot to accept the misfortune of annihilation.

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[38] I am following A. C. Graham and Roger Ames in understanding the nature of a thing not as a fixed essence but as its natural course of development. For Graham see "The Background of the Mencian Theory of Human Nature" (1967; reprinted in Graham, *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature* (Singapore: Institute of East Asian Philosophies, 1986) and in Xiusheng Liu and Philip J. Ivanhoe, eds., *Essays on the Moral Philosophy of Mengzi* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002). For Ames see "The Mencian Conception of *Ren xing* (人性): Does it Mean 'Human Nature'?" in Henry Rosemont, Jr., ed., *Chinese Texts and Philosophical Contexts: Essays Dedicated to Angus C. Graham* (Chicago: Open Court, 1991), and "Mencius and a Process Notion of Human Nature," in Alan K. L. Chan, ed., *Mencius: Contexts and Interpretations* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002).

[39] Zhu Xi, *Sishu jizhu* 四書集注 (Sibu beiyao ed.), *Mengzi* 7:1b.

That is, if one understands proper *ming* one knows that being killed by a falling wall does *not* fall into that category because it is not inevitable; one can choose to be careful and avoid it.
Mencius:

> To die after fulfilling one's Way is proper *ming*.

Zhu Xi:

> If one fulfills one's Way then what is of auspicious or inauspicious value is always beyond one's control.

To do one's best, to fulfill one's moral potential (*de* 德), is to act in accordance with what we can *metaphorically* call Heaven's "moral will" or "command" (*tianming*). That is all one can and should do. If despite having done this one suffers misfortune, that is beyond one's control. It too is due to Heaven because whatever causes the misfortune is not a random event; there is a principle (*li*) to it. But it is not the proper, natural result of one's moral behavior, and it is not the natural course of development of one's moral nature, so it is not one's proper *ming*.
Mencius continues:

> To die in fetters is not a proper *ming* (*fei zheng ming*).

Zhu Xi comments:

> "Fetters" are the punishment of a criminal, so this says that dying from a criminal offence and standing under a crumbling wall are both human choices; they are not done by Heaven.

Again, one can avoid dying in fetters by making proper choices, so this too is not one's proper *ming*.

The point of the distinction between proper and improper *ming* is that, of those things that happen *to* us, some are inevitable and necessary and others can be avoided by wise choices. Both of these categories are due to Heaven; or in Zhu Xi's terms, both are part of the natural order (*tianli*). But the avoidable misfortunes are not the natural course of development of one's Heaven-given nature. This natural course of development, I suggest, is the "real" mechanism (according to Zhu Xi) that is metaphorically called "obeying Heaven's will/command." I understand it as follows:

According to Mencius we are born with certain natural feelings or dispositions (*qing* 情), such as the "four beginnings" (*si duan* 四端), which, when cultivated, develop into full-fledged virtues (*de* 德).

The four beginnings are one's moral potential – "potential" not in the sense of mere possibility, but more like the concept of "potential energy" in physics. Potential energy, such as when I expend physiological energy by lifting an object, is something that actually exists: my physiological energy is converted into the potential energy now present in the object. When I let go of the object its potential energy is converted into kinetic energy as it falls, since energy is neither created nor destroyed. The moral potential of the four beginnings is also like a vector: it has both magnitude and direction. An acorn doesn't grow into a maple tree; it has a particular directionality; its normal course of development is to grow into an oak tree, and that is its *xing* ("nature"). For an old oak tree to die naturally and return to the earth would be its proper *ming*. Similarly, the natural, unimpeded development of our moral potential in its inherent directionality *tending towards virtue* is human nature, and "to die after fulfilling one's Way is proper *ming*." Here the words "fate" or "destiny" can loosely, metaphorically be applied to *ming*, although I think they are misleading as translations. If there are external limiting factors, such as inadequate education or (in the case of Ox Mountain in *Mencius* 6A.8) cattle grazing on a green mountain and stripping it bare, that is not proper *ming*. So to act according to the innate moral tendencies "given" to us by Heaven (i.e. natural), and to overcome the psycho-physical and environmental limitations that are also "given" to us, is to realize one's "proper" *ming*. Since we have the choice whether and how thoroughly to overcome our limitations and realize our innate tendencies, Mencius prefers to regard their development as *xing*. In 7B.24 he says:[40]

> The mouth's relation to tastes, the eye's to colors, the ear's to sounds, the nose's to smells, and the four limbs' to ease are natural (*xing* 性). Yet *ming* is also there [i.e. they are given], so the *junzi* 君子does not call them *xing*.

Zhu Xi's comment:

> Master Cheng said: These five desires are natural, but they are alloted (*fen* 分) and cannot always be what we desire, so they are given (*ming*).

One's sensory functions are natural, innate, and part of what defines being human; to this extent they are part of our "nature." But one who is devoted to pursuing the Confucian *dao* – i.e. a *junzi* – recognizes that one has no choice about them, and so applies the distinction described above to them, distinguishing between what we have choice about and

[40] *Sishu jizhu*, *Mengzi* 7:19b.

what we do not. By this definition our sensory functions are *ming*: they are both "given" and necessary. Mencius continues:

> Humanity between father and son, rightness between master and servant, ritual propriety between guest and host, wisdom between worthies, and the sage in the Way of Heaven are given (*ming*). Yet *xing* is also there, so the *junzi* does not call them *ming*.

Zhu Xi comments:

> Master Cheng said: Humanity, rightness, ritual propriety, and wisdom are the Way of Heaven. In humans they are bestowed in what is given (*ming*); they are the density and clarity of the [physical] endowment [or the "physical nature," *qizhi zhi xing* 氣質之性]. But they are also the goodness of human nature (*xing*), which can be learned and fulfilled. Therefore we do not call them *ming*.

Here Mencius and Zhu Xi implicitly apply Mencius' claim that the goodness (actually the moral potential, as described above) of human nature is natural, which is to say that it is "given by Heaven." As the first line of the *Zhongyong* clarifies, "What is given by Heaven (*tian ming*) is human nature (*xing*)." And as Confucius had said, "Heaven gave birth to the virtue (*de*) in me."[41] To say that human nature is given (by Heaven) is to say that *xing* is *ming*. But since we *do* have choices whether or how thoroughly to cultivate the moral potential of our nature, we should consider it *xing*, not *ming*.

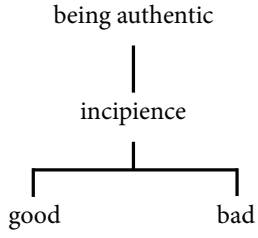
V. *TIANMING* AND *DAOTONG*

Since both the individual's fulfillment of his/her moral nature and the appearance of sages who can propagate the Way are matters of *tianming*, we can apply this notion of proper *ming* to Zhu Xi's understanding of the Confucian tradition (*daotong*). When he says that the "periods of clarity and periods of obscurity" in the propagation of the Way are "all the result of the Decree of Heaven (*tianming* 天命)," he is saying that the "proper *ming*" would be for the Way always to prevail. But "chance" events intervene, preventing the *dao* from prevailing. (Again, I am not using "chance" in the sense of randomness, but more like the chance coincidence of two independent lines of causation.) These chance events would be the inverse of the chance events that give rise to sages like

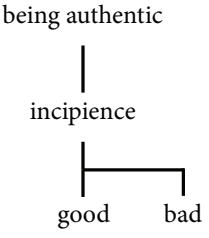
[41] *Analects* 7:22.

Zhou Dunyi. That is, just as a unique configuration of *qi* in a certain time and place gave rise to the sage, in other times and places it did not. Therefore the world is like a person standing under a crumbling wall (to use Mencius' example), and it suffers the consequences: long periods without sages. These consequences are not random – i.e. they do have rational causes – but neither are they what is "meant" to happen, in the teleonomic (directional but not directed), not teleogical, sense. That is, the interruptions in the transmission of the Way are *divergences* from the natural course of events, like disease in an organism, or a flourishing oak tree that is felled by a logger.

Zhu Xi's understanding of the natural course of development of a person's moral potential, which is metaphorically called Heaven's will or decree (*tianming*), is illustrated in a diagram drawn by a student of his in a letter to Zhu. The student was Zhao Zhidao 趙致道, who in the letter is contrasting Hu Hong's incorrect theory of evil with Zhou Dunyi's correct one:



This demonstrates Mr. Hu's error.



This clarifies Master Zhou's idea.

In the diagram on the right, the straight line from "authenticity" (*cheng* 誠) through "incipience" (*ji* 幾) to "good" (*shan* 善) is the natural course of development of the Heaven-given nature. The "bad" (*e* 惡) is like a "parasitic growth" on a tree or an illegitimate descent-line in a family, as Zhao Zhidao explains in the letter, and Zhu Xi emphatically agrees.[42] Therefore good and evil do not have equal status, as Hu Hong's model implies. This is what I mean by "divergence" from the natural course of events. On the cultural level, the gaps in the transmission of the Confucian tradition are divergences from "Heaven's will" in the same sense.

[42] *Wenji* 59:2863. For a complete translation of the letter see *Reconstructing the Confucian Dao*, pp. 234-236.

The rationalizing tendencies of Cheng-Zhu Confucianism have long been recognized. But their naturalistic, humanistic worldview was flexible enough to acknowledge the existence of gods, ghosts, and ancestors and to incorporate them into its natural philosophy. Likewise, it could accommodate a sense of transcendence, symbolized by Heaven, that was *not* supernatural. As Xunzi had suggested in the 3rd century BCE, both the literate elite and common people could use the "language" of ritual offerings to ancestors, but the former (in Xunzi's view) understood it in psychological terms while the latter understood it as having to do with the literal existence of spirits. The Cheng-Zhu Confucians similarly used the language of a willfull Heaven but understood Heaven's will as the natural, "proper" development of the nature of things. The breadth and non-dualism of this way of thinking enabled Chinese intellectuals to contemplate and affirm all aspects of human experience, including religious experience. There was no sharp distinction, for example, between rationality and intuition, or thinking and feeling, because both elements in these pairs were functions of the "mind/heart," or *xin*. They constructed a worldview in which rationality does not preclude or conflict with a sense of awe and an appreciation of mystery. As Zhu Xi put it,

> *Yang* ... is the beginning of things; *yin* ... is the end of things. If we are able to trace back to their beginnings and understand how they are generated, then we can turn to their ends and understand how they die. This is the ineffable mystery (*buyan zhi miao* 不言之妙) of the orderly process of creation, flowing from past to present throughout heaven and earth.[43]

This way of thinking allows for "ineffable mystery," but does not segregate it to a spiritual realm that is ontologically distinct from the mundane, physical realm. The ineffable mystery of creation is inherent in the world, not extrinsic to it. Christian process theologians, such as John Cobb and Gordon Kaufman, have said very much the same thing, based primarily on the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. Other modern

[43] Zhu Xi, *Zhuzi Taijitu shuo jie* 朱子太極圖說解 (Master Zhu's commentary on the "Discussion of the Supreme Polarity Diagram"), in Zhang Boxing, comp., *Zhou Lianxi xiansheng quanji* 周濂溪先生全集 (Zhou Dunyi's Collected Works) (1708; rpt. in *Zhengyi tang quanshu* 正義堂全書 [Baibu congshu jicheng ed.]), 1:31a. The paragraph above is adapted from my article, "The Heritage of Non-theistic Belief in China," in J. Gordon Melton and Mark Vandebrake, eds, *Forging a Secular World: A History of Modern Unbelief* (forthcoming).

thinkers, such as Thomas Berry, have written in a similar vein about "the great cosmic liturgy of the natural world," a liturgy fully based on scientific understandings of the physical world, life, and evolution.[44] Zhu Xi's conceptions of Heaven and tradition are revealing windows into a premodern worldview of similar breadth and subtlety.

[44] Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), p. 19.

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE: *TIAN* IN DAOIST RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

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Abstract. This essay is an overview of the role of Heaven in Daoist religious thought prior to the Tang Dynasty. Lao-Zhuang teachings portray Heaven as helper of the perfected person, who has parted with the human and thereby evinces a heavenly light. The *Huainanzi* compares possessing Heaven's Heart to leaning on an unbudgeable pillar and drawing on an inexhaustible storehouse, enabling one to shed mere humanity as a snake discards its skin. The *Heguanzi* homologizes Heaven and Taiyi and by the Six Dynasties period some Daoist canonical sources give the face of Laojun to Heaven/Taiyi, increasing the anthropomorphization of Heaven.

I. ON METHOD AND PROCEDURE

If we are to consider the nature and role of Heaven (*tian* 天) in Daoist religious thought as expressed in tradition and ritual, we must begin by clearing away some brush related to methodology and sources. Ours will be the description of a double process. On the one hand, arriving at a serviceable understanding of Daoist identity from the late Warring States to the end of the Han dynasty requires that we appreciate the extreme fluidity and multiplicity of overlapping lineages of masters and their disciples. There is no single identifiable time at which we can declare the arrival of "Daoism" and before which there was only proto-Daoism. Instead, we have the confluence of various lineages, as though they are strands of a rope, overlapping and gaining ever more identity and strength in the doing so. Moreover, the texts which contain themes, emphases and concepts we associate with the family resemblances we call Daoism of this period are themselves are almost unanimously agreed

to be composite anthologies of materials having their matrix in various lineages. Accordingly, any reasonable attempt to provide an overview of Heaven in Daoist religious thought must take into account the currently available sources and the nature of their intertexuality and interrelationships.

On the other hand, the notion of Heaven is itself not merely diverse in content within this tangle of lineages, but also in process of change throughout the period within the broader terrain of Chinese culture as a whole. We cannot overlook the contexts and shifts occurring in the notion of Heaven in wider Chinese religious culture, especially those taking place in Han religion, because these find their way into emphases and sentiments expressed in Daoist teaching and captured in the anthologies of its representative early texts.

Finally, although this is not the place to rehearse the arguments for the guiding assumption of this study's approach to Heaven in Daoism, I will state directly that I take it as now so widely and robustly substantiated as to be beyond reasonable doubt that however understood as an identifiable tradition, Daoism developed from its very beginnings as a dynamic worldview of transformation, which was never purely a rational philosophy or pragmatism, but always included features and practices that may be broadly characterized as religious.[1]

II. HEAVEN IN THE LAO-ZHUANG MATERIALS

If we look to the Lao-Zhuang materials found in the *Daodejing* (道德經 a.k.a. *Laozi* 老子, hereafter *DDJ*) and the *Zhuangzi* (庄子, hereafter *ZZ*), ascribed to Zhuang Zhou (c. 369-289 BCE) for an understanding of Heaven in the early lineages that would grow into Daoism, we must avoid a common mistake: the failure to distinguish the cosmological uses of "heaven and earth" (*tiandi* 天地) from "Heaven" (*tian* 天) when it is being used as an ontological operator of religious import.[2] "Heaven

[1] For those interested in reviewing the evidence for not making a hard and fast distinction between Philosophical Daoism (*Daojia* 道家) and Religious Daoism (*Daojiao* 道教), consult Donald Harper (2001), Sarah Allan (2003), Livia Kohn and Roth (2002), and Ronnie Littlejohn (2009).

[2] We are quite confident that both the *DDJ* and *ZZ* are composite works not written by single authors. Throughout the classical period, there were many strands and lineages of teachers and disciples, as well as multiple oral and written versions of transmitted materials that came together to form these two texts. The finds at Mawangdui and

and earth" is most often an expression for "reality," "nature," or "the cosmos". "Heaven" standing alone is often used as an ontological, not a cosmological concept, and it is this use in which we are most interested in the present study. To illustrate this difference, consider the often cited "Heaven and earth are not *ren* (仁, humane, compassionate); they treat the myriad creatures as straw dogs" (Ch. 5, *DDJ*).[3] As it stands in our present *DDJ*, this is a comment, however one might finally decide its interpretation, about the flow of reality and not about Heaven in its ontological use.[4] In fact, it seems that in every instance of the association of "heaven and earth" together in *DDJ*, including those which are poetic parallelism such as, "Heaven is long lasting; earth endures" (*DDJ* 7), heaven is being used as a cosmological concept.[5]

But contrast this with the use of Heaven in the ritual interrogations[6] in *DDJ* Ch. 10:

> Embracing the soul and holding on to the One,
> Can you keep it from wandering?
> Concentrating *qi* (氣) and attaining the utmost suppleness,
> Can you become like a child?
> Cleaning and purifying your mind's profound vision (*xuanlan* 玄覽),
> Can you leave no flaw?
> ...
> Opening and closing Heaven's gate,
> Can you play the part of the feminine?
> Comprehending all within the four directions,
> Can you reside in non-action (*wu-wei*)? (Ivanhoe 2002)

Guodian and the textual criticism of LaFargue (1992, 1994) have left little doubt about this with respect to the *DDJ* and form and literary critical studies by A.C. Graham (1986), Liu (1994), Roth (1991) and Littlejohn (2009) have supported the same claim for *ZZ*. While there was certainly no unified, coherent school we can call Lao-Zhuang in the classical period, the term is used in this paper to capture the family resemblances between lineages and their transmitted teachings as these are reflected in *DDJ* and in *ZZ*, Chs. 1-7, 8-10, and large segments of Chs.17-28.

[3] This is the most frequently misunderstood passage about heaven and earth in the *DDJ*.

[4] In my own view, this passage is not meant to teach that heaven and earth are indifferent to human concerns, but that it should be taken as part of the overall critique of the Confucian value concepts ren and yi (義) which we see throughout *DDJ*. Alternative positions are taken by Moeller 2006: 135-37 and Perkins 2014.

[5] See also *DDJ* Chs. 23, 25, 32, and 45 for other examples of this use.

[6] Keightley (1985) uses the term "nonexploratory interrogation" for this form of logion.

Although other interpretations are certainly possible, "Heaven" in "opening and closing Heaven's gate (*tianmen kai he* 天門開闔)," may well be functioning as a nominative for a numinal or ontological reality from which the adept, if receptive (feminine) either through ritual activity or meditation (i.e., opening the gate), can walk away in utmost suppleness, like a child and possessed of a pure profound vision, residing in *wu-wei*. Moreover, in the only passage in *ZZ* that mentions Heaven's gate, the text seems to make the numinality of a direct experience of Heaven clear.

> [It] comes out from no source, it goes back in through no aperture. It has reality, yet no place where it resides; it has duration yet no beginning or end. Something emerges, though through no aperture – this refers to the fact that it has realty. It has reality yet there is no place where it resides – this refers to the dimension of space. It has duration but no beginning or end – this refers to the dimension of time. There is life, there is death, there is a coming out, there is a going back in – yet in the coming out and going back its form is never seen. This is called Heaven's Gate (*tian men* 天門). Heaven's Gate is emptiness (天門者，無有也)[7] ... it is here that the sage hides himself.[8] (Watson 1968: 256-57, my modifications)

In this passage, the adept may well be transmitting a memory of the experience of opening Heaven's gate and he wants to affirm its reality, although he is unable to ascribe any form to it (i.e., give it any name or empirical description implying temporality or spatiality). If this interpretation is right, then the insistence on the inability to describe the form or image encountered when Heaven's gate is opened reminds us of the discourse of the piping of Heaven in *ZZ* Ch. 2 in which its source master says that all things "have some True Master, and yet I find no trace of him. He can act – that is certain. Yet I cannot see his form. He has identity but no form" (Watson 1968: 38).

Other passages in which I suggest Heaven is used in this ontological sense in the *DDJ* include the following:

> In bringing order to the people or in serving Heaven, nothing is as valuable as frugality. (*DDJ* 59)

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[7] 無有is often rendered "nonbeing". I have chosen "emptiness". It could also simply be "blank."

[8] The complete passage is 出無本，入無竅。有實而無乎處，有長而無乎本剽，有所出而無竅者有實。有實而無乎處者，宇也；有長而無本剽者，宙也。有乎生，有乎死，有乎出，有乎入，入出而無見其形，是謂天門。天門者，無有也，萬物出乎無有。有不能以有為有，必出乎無有，而無有一無有。聖人藏乎是。

> One who shows compassion even in attack will be victorious, his defenses will be secure. For Heaven will save such a person and protect him with its compassion. (*DDJ* 67)
> Those good at battle are never warlike [in disposition]
> Those good at fighting never become enraged.
> Those good at overcoming their enemies never challenge them.
> Those good at employing others puts themselves in a lower position.
> This is called the virtue (*de* 德) of noncontention;
> This is called the power of employing others;
> This is called matching up with Heaven, the highest achievement of the ancients. (*DDJ* 68)
> Who knows why Heaven dislikes what it does?
> Even sages regard this as a difficult question. (*DDJ* 73)
> Heaven's net is vast;
> Although its mesh is not fine, still, it misses nothing. (*DDJ* 73)
> The Way of Heaven (*Tiandao* 天道) shows no favoritism;
> It is always on the side of the good. (*DDJ* 79)

In all these instances, Heaven is presented as a numinal power which enables one to reside in *wu-wei* and protects those who are one with it. Heaven misses nothing; just as in Chapter 48, the one who is unified with *Dao* does nothing (*wu-wei* 無為) but leaves nothing undone. Heaven is always on the side of the good; giving the adept confidence that although he may not know why Heaven likes and dislikes what it does, the course of reality is toward the good. For the person able to open its gate perhaps in ritual or meditation and encounter Heaven, he will reside in its Way in *wu-wei*. In these passages, Heaven is portrayed as worthy of service and able to act as an agent[9] which will save and protect an individual who seeks to "match up to it," and one can be assured that any appearances to the contrary, Heaven's net misses nothing in its preference for the good.

We may wonder whether we can identify a family resemblance between this understanding of Heaven in *DDJ* and its use in the *ZZ*. While this task requires rather more detail than I can provide in this study, some apparent similarities horizon from the ZZ strata known as the "Inner Chapters" (Chs. 1-7), the "Daode" essay in Chapters 8-10, and the later material added by Zhuangzi's disciples (Chs. 17-27).[10]

[9] Both Philip J. Ivanhoe (2007) and Robert Louden (2002) have argued for the agency of the use of *tian* (i.e., Heaven) in a Confucian context.

[10] For an explanation of this textual critical division of *Zhuangzi* see the similar, but not altogether identical, approaches in Littlejohn (2009: 26-42) and Roth (2008).

In ZZ's "Great and Worthy Master" chapter (*Da zongshi* 大宗師), which opens with a discourse on the *zhenren* (真人 i.e., True Man, Perfected Person), it is this kind of person who "knows what Heaven does" and has thereby reached the peak (Watson 1968:77). But is there really a Heaven that guides the *zhenren* and empowers his *wu-wei* action? The master transmitting this text puts the question in this way: "How, then can I know that what I call Heaven is not really man, and what I call man is not really Heaven?" The answer to this question is not as clear as we would like, but one way of interpreting it is to affirm that we must look at the *zhenren* who lives with Heaven as his companion in order to know the answer (Watson 1968: 80). Only when we encounter the *zhenren* and his distinctiveness can we recognize that something more than man is being displayed in this person.

In the Zhuangzi disciples strata of the *ZZ*, Heaven again plays a significant role in both the empowerment and identification of the *zhenren* as revealed in the following passage from the chapter "Geng-sang Chu" (庚桑楚).

> He whose inner being rests in the Great Serenity will send forth a Heavenly Light (*tian guang* 天光). He who sends forth a Heavenly Light, people will see as a *zhenren.* When a person has trained himself to this degree, he achieves constancy. Because he possesses constancy, he has parted with the human, Heaven is his helper. Those who have parted with the human may be called the people of Heaven; those whom Heaven aids may be called the sons of Heaven. Those who would try by learning to attain this goal seek for what cannot be gotten by learning. Those who by effort seek to gain it are trying to get what effort cannot deliver. Those who aim by rational argument to reach it employ reason for what it is unable to achieve. Knowing what knowledge is unable to attain is the highest attainment. Those who fail to obtain this goal face Heaven's destruction.[11]

In this passage, the *zhenren* have parted with the human. Given what we know about Lao-Zhuang teachings more generally, we may take this to mean at a minimum that the *zhenren* have set aside human distinctions and preoccupations.[12] Heaven has become the *zhenren's* helper, like

[11] My translation of 宇泰定者，發乎天光。發乎天光者，人見其人。人有修者，乃今有恆；有恆者，人舍之，天助之。人之所舍，謂之天民；天之所助，謂之天子。學者，學其所不能學也；行者，行其所不能行也；辯者，辯其所不能辯也。知止乎其所不能知，至矣。若有不即是者，天鈞敗之。

a guide for the blind or someone who carries a paralytic. The *zhenren* are part of the people of Heaven (天民).[13] Additionally, in the Daoist folklore meant to express a more literal meaning of this text, the *zhenren* as transcendents (*xian* 仙) were said to emit a luminescence, sometimes a purple *qi*.[14]

A parallel version and extension of these teachings on Heaven can be found in Confucius's dialogue with Zi-gong in the "Great and Worthy Master" chapter of *ZZ*. In this passage, Confucius explains to Zi-gong what was so unique about the men who did not practice the funeral rituals for Zi-sang Hu.

> "Such men as they," said Confucius, "wander beyond the realm; men like me wander within it. Beyond and within can never meet ... Even now they have joined with the Creator (*zaowu* 造物) as men to wander in the single breath (*qi*) of heaven and earth…They borrow the forms of different creatures and house them in the same body ... .they roam beyond the dust and dirt, they wander free and easy in the service of inaction (*wu-wei*)."
> Zi-gong said, "Well then, Master, what is this realm you stick to?"
> Confucius said, "I am one of those men punished by Heaven." (Watson 1968: 86-87)

We should not take the exchange between Zi-gong and Confucius as traceable to the historical Confucius. It is a creation of some Daoist master designed to set in sharp relief the difference between their Way (*dao*) and that of Confucius, just as do so many other passages in which Confucius is a key figure in *ZZ*.[15] However, it reinforces the Daoist use of Heaven we have been describing and nests well within the Lao-Zhuang sentiments which emerged from the late 4th century BCE down to the mid-2nd century BCE.

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[12] For a sampling of the examples of the human distinctions in morality, law, and sociality set aside by the *zhenren* see the *DDJ* (Chs. 18, 37, 38) and *ZZ* (Watson 1968: 37-38, 45-46, 68-69, 72, 74).

[13] The theme of being the people of Heaven suggests affinities with the later movement of the Way of Heavenly Masters (*Tianshi* 天师) manner of calling themselves and their followers the "seed people" (*zhongmin* 種民).

[14] For example, the tradition that Yi Xi saw a purple numinal ether rising from Laozi as he approached the path to leave for the West (Schipper 1985: 821).

[15] For a more complete discussion of the various ways in which Confucius is portrayed in *ZZ* see Ronnie Littlejohn (2010).

The connection between these two passages from the chapters "Geng-sang Chu" and "Great and Worthy Master", although they are probably found in different strata of *ZZ*, is important to an understanding of Heaven in Lao-Zhuang thinking. The *zhenren* that Zi-gong observes have "parted with the human" and roam in *wu-wei,* united with the Creator. And, as for Confucius, he has pursued life as one going off to his execution at the hands of Heaven (天之戮民也 translated above as "punished by Heaven") because he has sought by learning what cannot be attained in that manner and pursued through the effort of morality what cannot be achieved through such means. Accordingly, he is like a condemned man walking to his own execution.

When Zi-gong presses Confucius for more information about these persons who stand out from others, Confucius is made to reply using a standard conceptual vocabulary taken from the *Analects,* but with a distinctively Daoist focus, in this way: "He stands aloof from other men, but he is in accord with Heaven! Hence it is said, 'The small person (*xiaoren* 小人) of Heaven is the superior man (*junzi* 君子) among the people; the superior man among the people is the small man of Heaven!'"[16] This is the kind of person who has become spirit like (*shen yi*神矣). He cannot be harmed by the circumstances of life and he lives in a state of power unavailable to the ordinary person (Watson 1968: 33, 46).

In what I have labeled as the Zhuangzi Disciples strata of *ZZ* material the text says, "The True Man (*zhenren*) of ancient times used Heaven to deal with man; he did not use man to work his way to Heaven" (Watson 1968: 277). Such a person makes all things equal and acts in spontaneity (Watson 1968: 182). "Hence it is said: The Heavenly is on the inside, the human is on the outside. Virtue (*de* 德) resides in the Heavenly. Understand the actions of Heaven and man, base yourself upon Heaven and take your stand in virtue, and then, although you hasten or hold back, bend or stretch, you may return to the essential and speak of the ultimate" (Watson 1968: 182-83).

While we have been concentrating on the logia in *Zhuangzi* that may be most confidently associated with the Lao-Zhuang lineages, there is another layer in the text that should not be neglected: the Yellow

[16] My translation of 天之小人，人之君子；人之君子，天之小人也. "Superior person (*junzi*)" is the term used for the ideal person in Confucianism according to the *Analects.*

Emperor-Laozi (*Huang-Lao* 黃老) logia found in Chapters 11-19, 22.[17] In both Chapter 12 of this material entitled "Heaven and earth" (*Tiandi* 天地) and Chapter 13, "The Way of Heaven" (*Tiandao* 天道) "heaven" shows up most often as "heaven and earth" used in a cosmological sense. The same is true of Chapter 14 "The Turning of Heaven" (*Tianyun* 天運), with the important exception of the exchange between Cheng of North Gate and the Yellow Emperor which I interpret below.

In this account, it appears that Cheng has apprenticed himself to the Yellow Emperor and on the banks of Lake Dongting he experiences an alternative state of consciousness described as follows.

> Cheng of North Gate said to the Yellow Emperor, "When Your Majesty performed the *xianchi* 咸池 music[18] in the wilds around Lake Dongting, I listened, and at first I was afraid. I listened some more and felt weak, and then I listened to the end and felt disoriented. Overwhelmed, speechless, I couldn't get hold of myself."
>
> "It's not surprising you felt that way," said the Emperor. "I performed it through man, tuned it to Heaven, went forward with ritual principle, and established it in Great Purity ... now with clear notes, now with dull ones, the *yin* and the *yang* blend all in harmony, the sounds flowing forth like light, like hibernating insects that start to wriggle again, like the crash of thunder with which I awe the world. At the end, no tail; at the beginning, no head; now dead, now alive, now flat on the ground, now up on its feet, its constancy is unending, yet there is nothing that can be counted on. That's why you felt afraid.
>
> ... You stood dazed before the four directioned emptiness of *dao*, ... It flowed and scattered, and bowed before no constant tone ... Wordless, it delights the heart-mind. Therefore, Shennong sang its praises thus:

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[17] My own delineation of the Huang-Lao logia in *ZZ* is as follows, with pagination referring to Watson's translation: Chs. 11; 12a, 126-28; b, 128-29; 13a, 142-148; 14a, 154-55; c, 156-58; e, 161-62; f, 163-64; g, 163-65; h, 165-66; Ch. 15; Ch. 16; 18a; 19a, 22a. The principal indicators that we are dealing with the Huang-Lao lineage in these sections of *ZZ* are the prominent role given to the Yellow Emperor, the style and preferred concepts (i.e., recurrent use of *wu-wei*), and the embrace of rulership expressed in *wu-wei* in this logia. In the *ZZ,* all the logia in which the Yellow Emperor is a main character are in the materials I have identified as having their source in Huang-Lao master-disciple lineages. For a fuller discussion see Littlejohn (2009: 33-37).

[18] It is not certain what this music was. One interpretation takes *xianchi* 咸池 as a place (i.e., salty pond), but it seems possible that this is the name of a kind of ritual music, although not one necessarily associated with court rituals.

> 'Listen you do not hear its sound; look – you do not see its form. It fills all heaven and earth, enwraps all the six directions" (Watson 1968: 156-58).

This is a puzzling passage capable of multiple interpretations. I suggest that because the Yellow Emperor had tuned his music to Heaven, Cheng's consciousness was opened and became receptive, able to melt into the empty void that brought him freedom and the command of spontaneity following the wordless teaching. In short, the ritual music opened Heaven's Gate for Cheng. And as Barrier Keeper Yin says, "A man like this guards what belongs to Heaven and keeps it whole. His spirit has no flaw, so how can things enter in and get at him?" (Watson 1968: 199)

III. HEAVEN IN YELLOW EMPEROR-LAOZI TEXTS

As the Yellow Emperor-Laozi lineages gained strength, a number of texts were produced.[19] The *Huainanzi* (淮南子, *Masters of Huainan*, hereafter *HZ*) is a text representing a collection of some of these Daoist sensibilities. While it is a composite work gathering teachings from many sources, substantial sections use the vocabulary, allusions, and intellectual frame of the Huang-Lao Daoist lineages.[20]

Considerable attention is given to cosmological theory in the *HZ*, where there is a consistent and sustained effort to develop a comprehensive account of the Five Phase (*wuxing* 五行) explanatory system.[21] Chapter Three, "Heaven's Patterns" (*Tian wen* 天文) is one of the clearest examples of this development with descriptions of the Five Phase correlations beginning each of the sections of 3.7-3.11 and making use of quotes from the *Prognostications of the Five Planets* (*Wuxingzhan* 五星占). Everything from compass directions, to music, to the body's organs is correlated with the Five Phases in *HZ*.

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[19] For a discussion of some of these see Littlejohn (2009: 65-67).

[20] Some traditions say the *HZ* was written collectively by the "Eight Gentlemen" (*bagong* 八公) of Huainan and that Liu An was its General Editor, rather than its sole author. According to Ban Gu, the work was originally in three sections: an "inner book" (probably the current 21 essays we now possess); an "outer book" (larger than the "inner" but with an unspecified number of chapters); and a "middle book" of more than 200,000 characters discussing the techniques for becoming a spiritual transcendent (*shenxian* 神仙) by the use of "the yellow and white" (i.e, alchemy, *huangbai* 黃白). In the first complete English translation of the text made in 2010 by John Major and others, Harold Roth is identified as offering the most cogent defense of the Huang-Lao provenance of the text (Major, et al., 2010: 29-32).

[21] i.e., wood, metal, fire, water, and earth.

Even so, there are clear ontological uses of Heaven in the text as well. For example, the sure signs that Heaven's tendencies (*ming* 命) are not being followed is the futile practice of harsh punishment, as well as animal and natural catastrophes in the remembered years of the Qin (Major et al., 2010: 2.13, 6.8-9). In contrast, the *HZ* insists that sages, "act in accord with Heaven; in their death, [they] transform with other things. In tranquility, [they] share the potency of *yin*; in activity, [they] share the surge of *yang*. The sages roam freely, discern the flawless, do not get mixed up with things, know without studying, see without looking, complete without acting, differentiate without judging" (Major et al., 2010: 7.6, 7.7).

HZ returns to the theme that the abandonment of the human is necessary to grasp Heaven which we have seen to characterize the descriptions of the *zhenren* in the Geng-sang Chu chapter of *ZZ*.

> The Perfected [i.e., *zhenren*] lean on the unbudgeable pillar, walk on the unblocked road, draw from the inexhaustible storehouse, and study with the undying teacher .... People like them embrace simplicity, guard Essence (*jing* 精); like locusts molting and snakes shedding their skin [they leave this world and], wander in Vast Clarity. They lightly rise up and wander alone and suddenly enter the Obscure. Even the phoenix cannot be their match, how much less the barn swallow! Power and station, rank and reward, how could these be sufficient to perturb their heart-minds." (Major, et al. 2010: 7.10)

In the *HZ's* portrayal of the *zhenren's* abandonment of the human, the analogies are illuminating and novel. Parting with the human and aligning with Heaven is a process compared to a snake shedding its skin or a locust molting. In another image, the *Zhenren* are set apart from other persons just as the phoenix is beautifully and nobly different from other birds. Here we can remember the *ZZ's* teaching in the Geng-sang Chu chapter that such a person emits a "Heavenly Light" and even the common people can recognize them as *zhenren*.

However, if the "Heavenly Light" emitted by the *zhenren* is among the most distinctive of themes using the concept of Heaven in the *ZZ*, certainly the exhortation to possess a "Heavenly Heart" (*tianxin* 天心) developed in the "Exalted Lineage" (*Tai zu* 太族) chapter of *HZ* is that text's most unique contribution to the understanding of Heaven (*tian*) in Daoism.

The "Heavenly Heart" concept appears only in the "Exalted Lineage" chapter of *HZ* and only a scant five times.[22] In this chapter, to possess Heaven's Heart is to act as Heaven does and move as Heaven moves. When the sage embraces Heaven's Heart, his voice transforms the world and he possesses the moral efficacy (*de* 德) that coheres all things in heaven and earth (Major, et. al., 2010: 20.3). Since under the principle of action-response (ganying 感應) constructed in the *HZ* in which everything in the cosmos is linked in constant resonance, possessing the Heavenly Heart means that one person can affect the entire world.[23] The *HZ* teaches that when Shennong made the first *qin* [stringed instrument] it was in order to help people return to their Heavenly Hearts. Conversely, when history devolved from the age of primordial Great Peace (*taiping* 太平), it was because people drifted from their Heavenly Hearts. As a model for the ruler in *HZ*, the Yellow Emperor is made to express his Heavenly Heart in this way, "Broad and infinite, I follow Heaven's Way, and my *qi* is identical with the Origin" (Major, et al., 2010: 20.17).

Having said this, the most important shift in regard to the Daoist concept of Heaven to be found in the *HZ* is its use of the concept Taiyi (i.e, the Great One *Taiyi* 太一) assigning it the functions we have seen before as ascribed to Heaven.[24] Concentrating one's *qi* in the *HZ* is a method

[22] The term is used in the "Yao Lue" (要略, "An Overview of the Essentials") chapter of the work, but only as this final chapter in the book offers its summary of the teaching in the "Exalted Lineage" chapter.

[23] On the concept of *ganying,* see John Henderson (1985: 22-28); and Charles LeBlanc (1985). The Song dynasty Daoist lineage "School of the Heavenly Heart" (*Tianxin pai* 天心派) should not be confused with this emphasis in *HZ.* The School of the Heavenly Heart emphasized the arts of exorcism and has little connection with the line of inquiry we are pursuing in this paper. Nevertheless, when Rao Dongtian, the founder of this school had his initial encounter with the spiritual being (*shen ren* 神人) who guided him to the place where he unearthed the lineage's founding text, *Correct Rites of the Heavenly Heart* (*Tianxin zhengfa* 天心正法), still bearing the amulet-seals of Zhang Daoling, he was told by this being that if he possessed the Heavenly Heart his voice could shake the world; a locution that certainly calls to mind this passage from *HZ.* See *Case History of Fouqiu, Wang and Guo, the Three Perfected from Mt. Huagai* (*Huagai shan Fouqiu Wang Guo san zhenjun shishi* 華盖山浮丘王郭三真君事實, DZ 778), 5.313. On this text see Judith Boltz (1987: 78-81). Dongtian's name (lit. "grotto heaven" 洞天) is homonymous with "To make heaven shake" (*dongtian* 动天). For more on this movement and its allusions to the Heavenly Heart see Robert Hymes (2002: 26-46) and Johannes Kurz (2006-7: 105-08).

[24] There are several authoritative studies of Taiyi. A recent essay accessible to English speaking readers is Li (1995-6).

for communicating with Taiyi. Robert Eno associates oneness with Taiyi with an experience of alternative consciousness that re-presents one's primordial spirit (*yuanshen* 元神, Eno 1990). In the *HZ*, the Purple Palace is Taiyi's abode, Xuanyuan (a constellation related to the Dipper) is the Heavenly Prince's lodge, and the *zhenren* is never apart from Taiyi (Major et al., 2010: Ch. 3).

The concept of Taiyi predates *HZ* considerably. Based on our current sources, Taiyi first appears as the ultimate celestial being in divinations of the late fourth century BCE that were found at Baoshan (包山). There Taiyi is portrayed as a celestial ruler over a court which includes numinal beings such as the Arbiter of Fate [Siming 司命, mentioned also in the "Perfect Happiness," *Zhe le* 至樂 chapter of *ZZ*] and spirits of rivers and mountains, doorways, dwelling and directions (Csikszentmihalyi 2004: 67; see also Li 1993). However, a firmly established anthropomorphic view of Taiyi seems not to have been fixed in the 4th century BCE. Taiyi is still used as a cosmogonic principle in *The Great One Generated Water* (*Taiyi sheng shui* 太一生水), a text recovered at Guodian and dating to the second half of the fourth century BCE.

Taiyi is a concept also given a prominent place in the *Heguanzi* (鶡冠子) in ways that are very much like that found in the *HZ*.[25] In the text, Taiyi is closely associated with both the celestial pole and the Dipper.[26] In *Heguanzi's* chapter "Grand Galaxy" (*Taihong* 泰鴻) there is this ode to Taiyi.

> Love your essence (*jing*精) to nourish energy (*qi*):
> Inner governance is the means of ascending to Heaven.
> Heaven is where divine illumination is rooted.
> Taiyi creates from the formless, gives taste to the tasteless, and details

[25] *Heguanzi* has long been considered an apocryphal work ascribed to a religious prophet active in Zhao (south Shanxi to Hebei) in the mid-3rd century BCE. However, the discovery of the early Han textual cache at Mawangdui has revealed strong affinities between the terminology of this text, the *DDJ*, and the Yellow Emperor-Laozi (Huang-Lao) materials in *ZZ*. *Heguanzi* also makes use of the literary trope of dialogue between numinal spirits (i.e., *shen* 神) found in many Yellow Emperor texts, suggesting that *Heguanzi* may derive from the same ideational context. Materials of a political nature in the document recommend a date for its composition on the eve of the reunification of China under Qinshihuangdi (c. 221 BCE). On questions regarding authenticity, date, and ideological affinities of *Heguanzi* see Graham (1989). The first full English translation of the text is Marnix Wells (2013).

[26] In a late Han engraving, Taiyi is enthroned on the Dipper.

> the principles (*li*) of heaven and earth. He is the governor of *Dao*, and upholds justice. He rides on *Dao's* virtue (*de* 德)
> (Ch.11, Wells 2013: 165, 166).

The teaching in this passage is that one who possesses inner governance can ascend to Heaven where illumination results through an encounter with Taiyi.

Gil Raz argues that the Taiyi cult developed in the area of Chu (current Shandong region), from where the *Songs of Chu* (*Chu ci* 楚辭) which form a main source of *HZ's* Chapter Three also came (2012: 57).[27] Taiyi was a high deity in Chu and during the rule of Qinshihuang the *fangshi* (方士) assisting him in the quest for immortality integrated Taiyi into a religious system conflating Taiyi and Heaven. According to *fangshi* teaching, the Yellow Emperor had climbed Taishan and venerated Taiyi there. (Bujard 2008: 779).

Arguably, the greatest innovation in Han religion most generally was the elevation of the cult of Taiyi by the Han court in 133 BCE. Emperor Wu, acting on the advice of the *fangshi* Miu Ji (謬忌), was the first ruler on record to construct a state altar to Taiyi and to elevate Taiyi above the Five Emperors, giving him the title Heavenly Ruler and Great Emperor Taiyi (*Tianhuang dadi Taiyi* 天皇大帝太一)[28] (Lagerwey and Kainowski 2009: 23-25, 28). Twenty years later, in 113 BCE, the emperor himself sacrificed to Taiyi at a new altar in the imperial residence at Ganquan (Bujard 2008: 777).

What all this meant to emerging Daoism specifically was that Heaven and Taiyi were homologized with the overarching *dao* and in effect placed at the top of the fledging beginnings of the Daoist pantheon. Heaven was not bleached of its ontological use, but by association with Taiyi it became all the more like an anthropomorphic spirit being; and at the same time, Heaven gave Taiyi benefit of its moral attributes which, as the patron of immortality, Taiyi in its early forms had lacked before (Csikszentmihalyi 2004: 67). This practice of conflating numinal powers shows up in the extended appellations used in Chinese. For example, during Wang Mang's (9-23) reign, the suburban sacrifices were addressed to Luminous

[27] The great poet of Chu tradition Qu Yuan (屈原) wrote of the celestial spirit "Great One Sovereign of the East" (Donghuang Taiyi 東皇太一).

[28] There is a silk painting discovered in the Mawangdui tomb finds (prior to 168 BCE) now in the Changsha Museum portraying Taiyi exalted above a court of spirit beings and dragons.

Heaven Shangdi Taiyi (*Huangtian shangdi taiyi* 皇天上帝太一) (Bujard 2008: 794). This title includes "Heaven," "Shangdi," and "Taiyi," all of which are names for supreme numinal powers in various times in Chinese intellectual history. Taiyi is the supreme deity named in two stele inscriptions to the transcendent *zhenren* Wangzi Qiao and the deified Laozi erected at the command of Han Emperor Huan (r. 147-167).

IV. HEAVEN IN THE DAOIST TRADITIONS OF THE TWILIGHT OF THE HAN

Worship of Taiyi represented an attempt to conjure the powers of Heaven and bring in the era of Great Peace. Masters steeped in these changes eventually expressed themselves in the apocalyptic movements associated with the founding of Daoist communities and governing districts known as the Yellow Turbans and the Way of the Heavenly Masters (*Tianshi dao* 天師道). In its description of the Great Peace (*Taiping*) rebellions the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* says that these movements combined worship of a Yellow Center Taiyi (*Zhonghuang Taiyi* 中黃太一) and Heavenly Taiyi (*Sanguo zhi* 三國誌, 1.10; Zhang Lu's biography).

Regrettably, however, all the candidate Daoist texts from this period pose multiple problems to the scholar: authorship, date, textual modification, text disappearance and "reappearance", and intertextuality. Most of the Way of the Heavenly Masters' texts are lost and those in the Ming dynasty Daoist canon, while very likely preserving teachings and sentiments from the last decades of the Han dynasty, also contain a good bit that appears to be of a later context. Accordingly, it is presently impossible to name with absolute certainty the texts which we should include in a study of Heaven in Daoist religious thought in the last years of the Han.[29]

Even so, we can have confidence that some texts reflect substantially the ideational context of the Yellow Turbans/Way of Heavenly Masters period. The *Great Peace Classic* (*Taiping jing* 太平經, DZ 1101), which we cannot trace with certainty further back than the sixth century, is almost

[29] For some of the best recent work on Heavenly Master's texts see the papers of the International Conference on the Texts of Early Heavenly Master Taoism, Nov. 3-4, 2001, Chinese University of Hong Kong <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~earlychina/research-resources/conferences/early-heavenly-master-taoism-conference.html> [accessed 2/3/2016].

certainly from a much earlier time and Barbara Hendrische holds that there is no good reason to doubt the *History of the Later Han* statement that Zhang Jue 張角 (d. 184), leader of the Yellow Turbans movement, had seen and made use of the text in the second century (Hendrischke 2004: 144). Zhang Jue proclaimed the project of achieving Great Peace by promoting Heaven's original intentions. Accordingly, he called upon his followers to establish the new Yellow Heaven of Great Peace through the power and instruction of "The Great One (i.e., Taiyi) of the Central Yellow" (*Zhonghuang taiyi* 中黃太一) (*Sanguo zhi* 1.10; Seidel 1969: 58). In this way, the merger of Heaven and Taiyi alluded to in the *HZ*, and found in *Heguanzi* and Han religion generally, continued in the *Great Peace Classic*. Hendrischke comments on this work's teachings on Heaven in this way.

> By submitting to Heaven's will, men are good; that is, they are self-disciplined, considerate, cooperative, filial, loyal and obedient. To this catalogue are added the virtue of being "with heart" and prohibitions against self-reliance and resentment. The authors stress that seeking life provides social as well as personal benefits since, out of fear of death and Heaven's anger, the believer will become aware of moral rules and thus contribute to social order and peace. (Hendrischke 2012: 53)

Reflecting the thought of southern Celestial Masters in the 200s, the text *Essential Precepts of Master Redpine* (*Chisongzi zhongjie jing* 赤松子中戒經, DZ 185) lays out a celestial administration responsible for moral retribution and governing the underworld earth prisons of *fengdu* (酆都). Taiyi, through lesser officials such as the Arbiter of Fate (*Siming*) governs human life by recording deeds and issuing cosmic responses to them. Numinal officials who examine persons apply the perfected talisman of Taiyi to the forehead of a person in order to reveal all their deeds, motivations, and intentions.[30] The *Classic of the Limitless Transformations of Lord Lao* (*Laojun bianhua wuji jing* 老君變化無極經, DZ 1195), which dates probably to the early Eastern Jin (317-420) states that Laojun created the world and has continued to appear in various manifestations to direct rulers (e.g., the Yellow Emperor) and deliver the people from disease and distress.[31] So, by the fourth century,

[30] For a somewhat more extended discussion of this text, see Littlejohn (2009: 108-10).

[31] This work is a long poem of 369 verses in its present form. The first 112 verses narrate the many transformations of Laozi (i.e., Laojun (老君).

Daoist lineages, here represented by one of the few surviving texts of Heavenly Masters, have reached the point of associating Laozi with Taiyi and Heaven.

Why do we see such a convergence of identities? Naturally, there are many approaches to answering this question. Historically and culturally, we may say that the late Han Daoist movements of the Yellow Turbans and Heavenly Masters attempted to provide their own distinctive worldview, revising the Taiyi cult by substituting the worship of Laozi (i.e., Laojun) within the community designed to establish communication with him. Likewise, we should not neglect the budding Daoist defense strategies against the growing influence of Buddhism in many regions, including especially Louguan Tai. Indeed, the *Classic of the Limitless Transformations of Lord Lao* already contains the structure for the "revelation" that Laozi converted the barbarians in the West in his transformational state as the Buddha, which became a part of the Daoist arguments related to the primacy of their teachings over Buddhism.[32] However, while these interpretations are important, they do not reach to the religious phenomenology of the development that puts the face of Laozi onto Heaven/Taiyi.[33]

If we are to approach an understanding of this move we cannot begin by making a false step. That is to say, we cannot pose the question the way it is often done: why did Daoism move from its early belief expressed in *DDJ* in *dao* as the process of reality, and the skepticism about who is the player of the piping of the music of reality in the *ZZ,* all the way to this apotheosis of the figure of Laozi into the deity Laojun/Heaven/Taiji? Asking this wrongheaded question will lead us astray from the beginning. As shown above, there has been within lineage texts displaying a family resemblance to Daoism a continuous history of use of "Heaven" as an experienced presence, albeit one that cannot be given form and is quite beyond categorization through the intersection of the categories of space and time. But nonetheless, oneness with Heaven is the source of the power to *wu-wei*. Heaven is a reality to be served and likewise offers protection. Heaven is always on the side of the good and misses nothing. Oneness with Heaven does not come by use of reason or knowledge; it requires parting with the distinctions made by our human categories of

[32] Most famously, this is the position of *Laozi's Conversion of the Barbarians* (*Laozi huahu jing* 老子化胡經) in the Buddhist canon, no. 2139 of the Tasho edition.

[33] For a discussion of the history of the deification of Laozi, see Jao (2001).

valuation, sensibility and reason. The *zhenren* has the heart of Heaven and emits Heaven's light in a manner to be noticed by all people.

The movement toward the Taiyi cult in the Han was a turn away from identifying the ultimate with the human, no matter how worthy of valorization the ancestral five monarchs of pre-Han religion were. But the turn toward personalizing Taiyi as Laojun was a result of the lived spiritual phenomenology of the Heavenly Masters adherents. Their rituals and practices opened Heaven's Gate for them and what they experienced was interpreted through the concepts and sensibilities of their distinctive histories as analogous to a person, specifically Laozi. If we try to interpret the introduction of Laojun as the face of Heaven/Taiji strictly as a political or cultural phenomenon, we have only a thin veneer which at best implies that the Heavenly Masters libationers and community members were not very self-aware, and at worst that some leaders of the movement were intentionally manipulative and deceptive. To my way of thinking we are on more solid ground if we look to the religious experiences of engaged adepts for an explanation of the evolution of the concept of Heaven in Daoist thought.

V. HEAVEN IN DAOISM OF THE SIX DYNASTIES

By the time of the Lingbao (i.e., Numinous Treasure 靈寶) lineage of Daoism in the Six Dynasties (220-589), Taiyi is worshipped as a celestial power who monitored human morality with the aid of eight numinal scouts and envoys (*ba shizhe* 八史者), taking control of human destinies as Heavenly Emperor (*Tiandi* 天帝). On special days of the year, he receives reports on the moral conduct of individuals and shortens or lengthens their lives accordingly, additionally bringing them auspicious fortune or deserved disaster.[34] Lingbao talismans were explicitly conceived of as contracts with Heaven/Taiyi (Toshiaki 2004: 228). Additionally, Taiyi, in his form as Heaven, is frequently mentioned in the grave writes that document the mortuary liturgy of the Celestial Masters. However, Daoist practice never quite abandons totally the use of Heaven in favor of either the appellation Taiyi or Laojun.

As an illustration of what I mean, consider the frequent use of the phrase "ascension into Heaven's Great Net" for entry into a spiritual state.

[34] See *Esoteric Essentials of the Most High,* 9.4a-11b (*Wushang biyao* 無上祕要, DZ 1138). This was the first Daoist "encyclopedia" and was probably created by Louguan Tai masters to aid in debates with Buddhists in the last quarter of the 6th century.

Perhaps the association with a net here is because phenomenologically the spiritual awareness being named is experienced as being captured, gathered, or caught up and is not the result of an act of the will or even a state completely within the control of the seeker.[35] Among Six Dynasty texts, this phrase figures prominently in several. Although showing signs of Buddhist influence, the principal powers mentioned in the "Most Exalted Numinous Treasure's Marvelous Classic of Primordial Yang" (*Taishang lingbao yuanyang miaojing* , 太上靈寶元陽妙經, *DZ* 334) are most probably Daoist and the distinctive form of spiritual transformation in the text is Daoist, not Buddhist. The spiritual entities mentioned include the awe-inspiring Heavenly Worthy of Primordial Beginning (hereafter HWPB, *Yuanshi tianzun*元始天尊) who performs the functions in the Lingbao belief system elsewhere associated with Heaven and Taiyi and serves as the model for transformation by ascending to Heaven's Great Net on the ritual seventh day of the seventh month. When he does so, he confides the supreme, orthodox method (*zhengyi* 正一) of the Way to Lord Lao (*Laojun* 老君) who is commissioned to provide a "great manual" (d*a zhigui* 大指歸) for the seekers of the Way (10.19a). The summary of this method in the text shows the influence of Yellow Emperor-Laozi medical and cosmological texts and extends beyond action/response (*ganying*) to include among the practices enabling ascent into the Great Net of Heaven and its transforming effect (ruding 入定) the following: swallowing essences (*tunjing* 吞精) and energy (*yanqi* 咽氣), inhaling and exhaling (*tuna* 吐纳), absorbing and mounting (*fuyu* 服御). Taking the HWPB as the model for such ascent, the text suggests that this experience cannot occur on just any day, but is ritualized to be sought on the seventh day of the seventh month (10.5) (Schipper and Verellen 2004: 245).

Another Six Dynasty text giving prominence to ascending to Heaven's Great Net is *The Register of [the Heavenly Worthy] of Primordial Beginning, the Superior Zhenren and Hosts of Immortals* (*Yuanshi shangzhen zhongxian ji*元始上真眾仙記, DZ 166), a late 4th century text representing itself to be a revelation to Ge Hong (葛洪, 283-343). This work provides a Daoist creation account as well as the genealogy of the HWPB and other spirit beings, and an account of various immortals and the functions they have. Then, in the 8th century anti-Buddhist

[35] Of course, there is also the allusion to *DDJ* 37 in which we are told that the mesh of Heaven's net is wide, but does not let anything escape.

text, *Scripture of Jade Purity of the Great Dao of the Most High* (*Taishang dadao yuqing jing* 太上大道玉清經 DZ 1312), "Jade Purity" refers to the heaven of the Palace of the Clouds, where dwell the Heavenly Worthies of Great Compassion (2.17, 10.1-2), the Supremely Great Dao (8.14) and numerous *zhenren* in the service of higher numinal spirits. All these beings are presented as saviors of humanity, who use the "expedient means" (*fangbian li* 方便力) of great compassion and rules of conduct (*jieke* 戒科). What is important to notice is that although such methods are meant to relieve the suffering of persons, they are all inferior to the individual's own ascent into Heaven's Great Net, where the seeker may visit (*ye* 謁) the HWPB (Heavenly Worthy of Primordial Beginning). The expression "*ye*" for this visitation is a term employed when one speaks of paying respects to a superior, ancestor, or revered place or person. Entering the presence of the HWPB is just such a visitation.

In this experience of visitation, there is both an immediate cognitive realization of the wordless teaching (*bu yan zhi jiao* 不言之教, Cf. *DDJ* 43) and communication by the spirit alone (*yi shen jiao* 以神交, 6.7). Additionally, there is an awareness of void (i.e., the Heavenly Worthy of the Void, *Xuwu tianzun* 虛無天尊), entry into a domain of silence (i.e., The Way of Silence of the Most High, *Taishang mingji daojing* 太上冥寂道镜), the perception of a great space "where there is nothing to see" (*Taixu daojing*太虛道镜), and an overwhelming sense of great peace (i.e., the Heavenly Worthy of Great Peace, *Taiping tianzun* 太平天尊). Instead of taking these titles as names for deities, they may well represent expressions of the phenomenology of the experience of the numinosity known as the entry into Heaven's Great Net. In this sense, they may be best understood as facets of an inner spiritual awareness and transformation.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

We have traced in a brief way the role of Heaven in early Daoist religious thought prior to the Tang Dynasty. In so doing, we took note of the significant contribution made in the classical period by the Lao-Zhuang logia in the *DDJ* and *ZZ*. In this tradition, Heaven is sometimes used as a nominative for a numinal reality that, while it is inexpressible through our categories of space and time, nevertheless possesses agency and is capable of acting in a manner that is describable as being always on the

side of the good. Heaven is worthy of being served and individuals are encouraged to match themselves up to its operations. The outcome of such an alliance is that an individual will emit a "Heavenly Light" in his deeds and people will realize he is a *zhenren*. The texts make clear that such an alliance cannot be achieved by moral effort, rational argument or proof, or great learning. It is the result of abandoning the human for the Heavenly. Such individuals will not only be recognized as *zhenren*, but they live as though they are wandering beyond this realm, joined in novelty with the Creator.

By the time of the mature expressions of Yellow-Emperor Laozi Daoism in the *HZ* the persons who part with humanity and its distinctions and align with Heaven are compared to the molting locust or snake shedding its skin. They are as highly distinguished among humans as is a phoenix among mere barn swallows. They not only emit a "Heavenly Light" but they possess "Heaven's Heart". So, when they act and speak, they transform the world around them.

In the later years of the Han, Heaven and Taiyi were closely identified and portrayed as a celestial ruler governing the longevity of humans' lives and their success and well-being through a court of numinal powers. In at least one version of Heavenly Master's tradition, Heaven/Taiyi was given the face of Laojun, increasing the anthropomorphic nature of Heaven's description. In the Lingbao version of Daoism, a similar extension of appellations occurred and Heaven became the Heavenly Worthy of Primordial Beginning.

Surely there are manifold historical, cross-cultural, and even regional explanations for the permutations in understanding of Heaven in Daoist religion. Yet, we have seen various family resemblances in each of the new or modified appellations used of Heaven. These point to lived experience of a numinal reality and presence that could not be reduced to human conceptions and language, but the alignment with which (whom?) could enable the transformation of persons and enable their efficacious *wu-wei* conduct.

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CONFUCIANISM, BUDDHISM, AND VIRTUE ETHICS

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Abstract. Are Confucian and Buddhist ethical views closer to Kantian, Consequentialist, or Virtue Ethical ones? How can such comparisons shed light on the unique aspects of Confucian and Buddhist views? Oriented by these questions, this essay tackles three tasks: provides a historically grounded framework for distinguishing western ethical theories, identifies a series of questions that we can ask in order to clarify the philosophic accounts of ethical motivation embedded in the Buddhist and Confucian traditions, and critiques Lee Ming-huei's claim that Confucianism is closer to Kantianism than virtue ethics and Charles Goodman's claim that Buddhism is closer to Consequentialism than Virtue Ethics.

I. INTRODUCTION

Like ancient Greek dialogues and treatises, Confucian and Buddhist texts contain views and concepts that are appealing, but hard to understand and assess. They were, of course, composed in foreign linguistic and cultural contexts, but even if we can overcome those barriers, few historical texts develop arguments and theories in the ways that contemporary philosophers do. Consequently, western-trained moral philosophers who realize that these texts have philosophically interesting and important ideas embedded in them are usually tempted to view them through the lens of contemporary theory. By doing so, we presumably hope to clarify and assess the philosophic views the underlie Confucian and Buddhist texts. More ambitiously, we can hope to find novel views that we will want to appropriate or endorse.

EUROPEAN JOURNAL FOR PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION 8/1 (SPRING 2016), PP. 187-214

Now in viewing Confucian and Buddhist texts through the lens of western theory, we must be wary of the ways that western presuppositions can distort our perception,[1] and resist any temptation to emphasize how western views are better than Confucian and Buddhist ones. If we can avoid these pitfalls, then cross-cultural inquiry and comparison can be a fruitful enterprise. Ideally, it will allow us to acknowledge background assumptions that hold sway in western thinking and thereby enjoy what Hans-Georg Gadamer's calls *Hegelian experience* – an interpretive experience that teaches us to question our unacknowledged background assumptions and thereby transforms our possibilities for thinking about how to live.[2]

As someone trained in western philosophy but long interested in Buddhist and Confucian thought, I think this is a goal worth aiming for, and I have been excited by the on-going discussions about whether Confucian and Buddhist views are more like Kantian, Aristotelian, and Consequentialist ones. I think that these are just the sorts of cross-cultural questions that can help us appreciate the unique features of Confucian and Buddhist views. To fruitfully pursue comparative questions, however, we need to start with a firm, shared understanding of different types of western ethical theory, and I worry that recent debate has been hampered by a lack of such shared understanding. With this worry in mind, this essay offers a substantive framework for contrasting western ethical theories and explores its implications for recent comparative claims. Specifically, I provide a framework for distinguishing western conceptions of ethics and then critically discuss two comparative claims: Lee Ming-huei's claim that Confucianism is closer to Kantianism than virtue ethics, and Charles Goodman's claim that Buddhism is closer to Consequentialism than virtue ethics. However, before proceeding, I want to pause and consider some skeptical worries that have been raised about the value of comparative work.

II. IS COMPARATIVE WORK TENABLE?

In their bracing article "Were the Early Confucians Virtuous?" Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont Jr argue that it is unwise to view Confucian

[1] See Dale S. Wright's *Philosophic Meditations on Zen Buddhism* for discussion about how Buddhism was misunderstood when read through the lens of Romanticism, and an interesting discussion of cross-cultural hermeneutics.

[2] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 346-362.

ethical texts through the lens of western theory. Their argument proceeds in two steps. First, they argue that the type of philosophic reflection that we find in Confucian texts is fundamentally different from, and better than, the dominant form of philosophic theorization found in the west. Second, they argue that because Confucian philosophic reflection is better than western theorizing, we should simply abandon western views and adopt a new, broadly Confucian approach that they call role-ethics. According to Ames and Rosemont, cross-cultural comparisons are at best a waste of time.

To assess their case for role ethics, we can usefully distinguish three lines of argument that Ames and Rosemont weave together. The first focuses on the *topics* that Confucians discuss: Ames and Rosemont helpfully point out various specific ways in which western and Confucian views of human excellence differ because they focus on different ethical examples and topics. For example, they claim that while western ethical thought centrally focuses on questions about the value and virtue of abstract individuals, Confucian thought focuses on questions about the excellence of concrete, socially-embedded people who are enacting specific roles and the value of the communities, relationships, and modes of experience that these people collectively generate. There may be some truth to this as a broad stereotypical generalization but a western theorist can just agree with Ames and Rosemont and call for more theoretical work to focus on roles, relationships, the ways that social and cultural forces affect people's character, and so forth. If the call to develop role-ethics is just a call to focus more attention on roles and other related topics that Confucians discuss, then there is no reason to think that role-ethics should be fundamentally different from extant western ethical theory. Ames and Rosemont would just be calling attention to a dusty and neglected room in the house of western theory.[3]

There is, however, more to the call for role ethics. While discussing various topical differences, Ames and Rosemont also push their second and third lines of argument: that western ethics presupposes a false view of the individual self and that it deploys a defective methodology for philosophic ethics. I will discuss these in turn.

[3] In fact, most of the topics that Ames and Rosemont want philosophers to discuss more are topics that western virtue ethicists and feminist moral philosophers have successfully pushed people to discuss over the past several decades.

The claim that the individual self is a pernicious western invention or myth and that Confucian thinking does without this myth is intriguing, but hard to assess. I think Ames and Rosemont are unhappy about various psychological, social, and cultural pathologies that we could call the pathologies of modern individualism, and while I agree that there are various regrettable features of modern western life that we could aptly describe in that way, I also have trouble seeing how the relevant psychological, social, and cultural phenomena are rooted in philosophical views about our being individual selves. To make headway here, we would need to tease apart various strands of individualism, discuss whether they are pathological or not, and figure out how and why various specific presuppositions about our being individual selves might leave us subject to pathological individualism.[4] This not a task I can fully tackle here, of course, but I can briefly discuss two of the main presuppositions about our being individual selves that Ames and Rosemont target.

First, and most basically, there is the idea that we are individuals who exist at different times and in different role-contexts, who are the bearers of mental states, and who have individual self-conceptions.[5] Following Ivanhoe (2008: 7-12), I take it that Confucians do presuppose that we are individual selves in this sense. For example, Confucians seem to regularly make evaluative judgments of people's motives and intentions. And they also seem to judge people's *general* character, which is manifest in different role-contexts, and to deploy abstract concepts in these judgments (e.g. *Ren* seems to be a concept that is used to abstract from excellence in fulfilling specific roles well and to form a more general judgment). Of course the background assumption that we are individuals who exist at different times may have been put into question as Buddhist ideas influenced the later Confucian tradition, but there seems to be little reason to read any such skepticism into the tradition as a whole.

[4] Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self* would provide an interesting background against which to assess Ames and Rosemont's overall argument because he nicely distinguishes different conceptions of the individual and different forms of modern individualism (some bad, some good, and some the best of a bad lot), and he is sensibly skeptical about whether we can or should reject all of the things that give rise to modern individualism.

[5] Ames and Rosemont (2011: 33) argue that, "just as we might be skeptical of positing the existence of some ontological ground – God, substance, and so on as the "soul" of the totality – so too can we question whether we need to posit an individual self (nature, soul, person, character) behind the many roles we live."

Finally, like Ivanhoe, I have trouble seeing how conceiving of ourselves as individuals with mental states and with traits that are manifest across various role contexts has to encourage pathological individualism.[6]

Second, Ames and Rosemont argue that, unlike most western philosophers, Confucians never claim that individuals have moral value or rights in virtue of some special, *non-socially understood* feature or property they have.[7] To see that this is a common theme in western ethics, consider the Kantian view that rational agents have a special dignity that is grounded in their humanity, and the Utilitarian view that all animals deserve moral consideration in virtue of their sentience. Now neither humanity nor sentience is a social feature that results from virtuous enculturation into roles and relationships, so these theories do claim that individuals have moral value or rights in virtue of some special, *non-socially understood* feature or property they have. So if Confucians do not make analogous claims, that is indeed an interesting fact.

There are, however, two problems with the claim that, thankfully, Confucians avoid positing non-social bases of individual rights or moral significance. First, it is hard to see why this sort of individualist view of basic ethical value, which is embedded in many progressive social-political movements in the west, supports pathological individualism. *Pace* Ames and Rosemont,[8] individualist views of basic ethical value are completely compatible with philosophic opposition to pathological forms of psychological, cultural, and political individualism. We can accept, for example, that all sentient creatures deserve basic ethical consideration in virtue of their sentience and *also* hold that it is ethically essential, perhaps even more important, to recognize the great value of fulfilling roles well and achieving virtuous social comportment and community. In addition, we can contend that healthy self-understandings or self-conceptions are fundamentally rooted in social factors, and that respect for persons therefore requires respect for good roles, relationships, and communities. In short, we can simply supplement individualist views about basic moral value or rights with "anti-individualist" ethical views that recognize the importance of roles, virtuous communities, and so forth.

[6] Cf. Ivanhoe on the independence of *Ren* from specific role concepts like *Good Son* – as he point out, we presumably need some kind of independence to get social critique going.

[7] Ames and Rosemont (2011: 27)

[8] Ames and Rosemont (2011: 27-28)

Next, we should note that some contemporary Confucians explicitly endorse the idea that individuals have basic ethical value or moral rights in virtue of their special, non-socially understood features. In particular, Kantian interpretations of Confucianism take this line when they argue that the four sprouts (of compassion, shame, deference, and knowledge of right and wrong)[9] are essential human psychological features that provide a priori access to culturally transcendent moral truths and that this grounds a Confucian account of moral autonomy.[10] The suggestion that this sort of autonomy grounds the moral value or rights of individuals shows up, for example, in Lee Ming-huei's "personalist" approach to political philosophy. Roughly put, Lee holds that all individuals have a special moral value in virtue of the fact that they have the four sprouts and that good institutions are those that enable people to develop these sprouts in ways suggested by the later Confucian tradition.[11] So there is certainly plenty of room to argue that Confucian and western ethical views are closer here than Ames and Rosemont suggest.

On the basis of these points, I tentatively conclude that neither western assumptions about individual selves nor topical differences in ethical reflection bar the way to useful cross-cultural comparison. This leaves me with the third and final strand of argument that I see in Ames and Rosemont, namely their attack on the common aims and methods of western ethics. Regarding aims, I see them as making two points. First, while western ethicists typically aim to help people think and talk more clearly and coherently about ethics, Confucians aim to help people become more self-reflective and to inspire them to improve.[12] Second, while western ethical reflection aspires to knowledge of trans-cultural and trans-situational moral or ethical truths, Confucian reflection focuses

[9] Lee calls these "the four buddings".

[10] This general line of interpretation is descended from Wang Yang-ming and his incorporation of the Buddhist idea of original Buddha-nature/inherent enlightenment, which was in turn picked up and developed by Mou Zongsan and, later, Lee Ming-huei. My understanding of this tradition is indebted to exchanges with P. J. Ivanhoe.

[11] My understanding of Lee's political philosophy comes from Elstein (2014: Chapter 5). In the communitarian-liberal part of the chapter Elstein seems to expresses confusion about what the transcendent part of Lee's story is. Presumably it is the four sprouts, which as Elstein himself nicely points out earlier in his chapter, Lee takes to be *a priori* and culturally transcendent. Of course Elstein could come back and ask how to develop those sprouts, whether they have inherent standards for mature development, and how developed sprouts will lead to specific critiques of standing norms.

[12] Ames and Rosemont (2011: 20)

on developing local, pragmatically useful forms of understanding and appreciation.[13] In addition, they offer a pair of related methodological contrasts. First, they claim that while western ethics makes central use of abstract concepts such as *virtue* and *autonomy*, Confucian thought sticks with more concrete concepts such as *mother* and *prince*.[14] Second, they claim that while western ethics focuses on giving reasons, developing theories, and assessing arguments, Confucian ethics focuses on providing an insightful and inspiring phenomenological vision to guide people.[15]

Something rings true when we consider these contrasts in the light of contemporary academic philosophy. Most moral philosophers do focus on arguments, reasons, and theories, and they tend to work to systematically deploy well-defined abstract terms instead of developing rich phenomenological accounts of concrete situations. Moreover, while their aims are more diverse than Ames and Rosemont suggest, few academic moral philosophers focus their efforts on improving their readers' moral character and edifying moral philosophy is not highly valued in the academy.

So if they do not primarily aim to edify readers, what alternative ends are contemporary moral philosophers pursuing? There are various answers to this question, but three main aims stand out. First, some conceive of moral philosophy as a broadly theoretical endeavor; they aim to understand the fundamental structure of moral reality or to understand morality in all of its linguistic, psychological, social-cultural, and political dimensions. Second, there are those who pursue coherent and well-founded ethical thought because they want to improve public debate about the Right or Good; they hope that the collective efforts of moral philosophers will feed into political processes or debates in the public sphere and lend legitimacy to democratic processes. Finally, third, there are moral philosophers who focus on reasoning, arguments, and theories because they think this sort of rational reflection is collectively conducive to living well, freely, or morally. For example, they may think it will help people answer questions about why they should be moral, or how to think more clearly about the specific moral issues they face.

Given the diversity of aims already animating contemporary moral philosophy, I think we can initially respond to Ames and Rosemont's

[13] Ames and Rosemont (2011: 34)
[14] Ames and Rosemont (2011: 18-19)
[15] Ames and Rosemont (2011: 20, 34)

methodological critique in roughly the way that we responded to their claims about topical differences. We can simply grant that not enough moral philosophers are in the business of edifying readers and agree that it would be good if more professional philosophers or people trained in philosophy focused on that.[16] Now I don't know how Ames and Rosemont would respond, but I suspect that they would insist that if and when philosophers take up this aim, they should be prepared to abandon their emphases on rational argument and abstract theorizing and focus more on phenomenological description. In effect this would be to say that philosophers should agree to convert, at least for the purposes of composing edifying work, to something more like Ames and Rosemont's role-ethics.

To assess this suggestion, we need to think a bit more carefully about what edification involves, and the start would be to admit that different ethical views are going to give us different accounts of ethical edification because they presuppose different conceptions of good ethical motivation and human excellence. Since Ames and Rosemont are committed to developing a broadly Confucian view, we should presumably ask whether, given a Confucian ethical view, phenomenological investigation, rational theorization, or both are likely to be conducive to moral or ethical improvement. And to answer that question, we need to first clarify Confucian conceptions of good motivation – for example, their conceptions of good character (*Ren*) and human excellence (*Junzi)*. So, ironically, I propose that we should make use standard western philosophic methods to understand the nature of the Confucian moral ideal and then assess the suggestion that when we aim to edify, we should abandon standard philosophic methods in favor of the ones that Ames and Rosemont prefer. With that proposal in mind, I turn now to questions about how to compare western ethical theories with Buddhist and Confucian ones and to debates about whether Confucian and Buddhist views are more similar to Aristotelian, Kantian, or Consequentialist ones.

[16] Of course there are exceptions to the generalizations I have been making. Slingerland (2014), Ivanhoe (2013), and Irvine (2013), for example, are recent examples of public edifying philosophy; but as Ames and Rosemont suggest, we could use more work in this vein.

III. A FRAMEWORK FOR COMPARISON

A lot of recent debate about the nature of Buddhist and Confucian ethical views has centered on claims that these views are similar to western forms of virtue ethics, especially Aristotelian virtue ethics. This idea is initially appealing because Buddhism and Confucianism are both ways of life and they involve practices of self-cultivation or character transformation that aim to make us better human beings. Western philosophy, on the other hand, has not been substantively connected to a way of life for some time,[17] but ancient Greek and Roman philosophies *were* ways of life and they also centrally involved practices of self-cultivation or character transformation that aimed to make people better human beings;[18] so there is a natural appeal to comparisons of Buddhist, Confucian, and western Classical ideas. In addition, Buddhist and Confucian texts, like Greek and Roman ones, discuss the good traits and states that various practices are meant to inculcate, and they discuss various bad traits and states that the practices are designed to overcome. So we can rightly conclude that the Buddhist and Confucian traditions presuppose and discuss various conceptions of human virtue that we might fruitfully compare with ancient Greek and Roman conceptions.

This train of thought is compelling, and there are good reasons to compare these traditions if we are interested in thinking about what it would be like to pursue philosophy as a way of life, but we should not confuse that claim with the superficially similar claim that Buddhist and Confucian ethical views are more similar to Greek or Roman ones, than, for example, contemporary Kantian ones. More generally, we cannot conclude that Buddhist or Confucian texts presuppose a philosophic understanding of ethics that is closer to Aristotle or the Stoics than to Kant or contemporary Consequentialists from the fact that Confucians and Buddhists focus a lot of attention on virtue and character development. This inference is blocked because Kantians and Consequentialists can and do provide accounts of virtue and specific virtues and vices. In fact, thanks to the virtue ethics movement in 20th century moral philosophy,

[17] This shift is reflected in the evidence that professional ethicists are not especially ethical provided by Schwitzgebel (2013). In my view, that evidence is unsurprising, given the non-edifying aims of professional philosophers, which were canvased in the last section, and the fact that academic philosophy is no longer regularly connected to philosophic communities and practices of self-cultivation.

[18] Interesting discussions of ancient practices of self-cultivation and the idea that ancient philosophers were pursing ways of life include Hadot (1995) and Sellars (2009).

just about all contemporary moral philosophers recognize that an adequate ethical theory should have what we can call a virtue module. So the mere fact that Buddhists and Confucians presuppose or develop virtue modules of their own tells us nothing about their distinctive moral philosophies.

What we need to make headway at this point is a framework for comparing philosophic accounts of morality, preferably one that allows us to highlight the differences between the accounts of virtue that have been given by Aristotelians, Kantians, and Consequentialists. To begin, I suggest that we follow T. M. Scanlon (1982, 1992, 1995) and distinguish between philosophic conceptions of morality and the first-order normative judgments that they support. A philosophic conception of morality identifies some primitive or fundamental evaluative facts and then provides an account of good moral or ethical motivation by appeal to those facts. First-order normative judgments, on the other hand, determine whether specific actions or activities are good or required.

In the most straightforward instance, a philosophic conception will picture well-motivated agents as being in some way directly responsive to the fundamental evaluative facts, but there are also indirect conceptions, which identify well-motivated agents as the ones that we should approve of given full knowledge of the fundamental evaluative facts. For example *welfarists* hold that the only fundamental evaluative facts are facts about welfare – facts about what makes living things better or worse off. A *direct-agency* welfarist pictures good ethical agents as people who register and respond well to the facts about welfare in their environment, presumably by promoting and valuing improvements in the lives of living things and impeding and disvaluing harm to living things.[19] But an *indirect-agency* welfarist identifies a well-motivated agent by comparing the different ways in which people could be motivated and picking the one that would best promote the welfare of living beings and impede their being harmed. It might turn out, for example, that the relevant sort of agent is mainly motivated by the divine commands outlined in some religion and that he or she only sometimes notices and directly responds to facts about how living beings are faring.

The distinction between direct-agency and indirect-agency welfarists illustrates that we cannot figure out what philosophic conception

[19] Not all welfarists accept that we should promote maximal overall welfare. Kraut (2009), for example, defends direct welfarism but rejects that idea.

of morality someone is operating with just by learning about the conception of a well-motivated agent that they endorse. One person can endorse a divine command conception of good moral motivation on indirect welfarist grounds, while another endorses it because she thinks that divine commands are among the fundamental evaluative facts and that a well-motivated agent is directly responsive to them. Similarly, we cannot move from first-order facts about the actions or policies that someone considers good or required to conclusions about their philosophic conception of morality. Kant and Scanlon, for example, each reject welfarism and hold that good moral motivation involves direct responsiveness to *two* types of fundamental evaluative facts – facts about welfare and facts about moral rightness and wrongness – but there is dispute about whether their philosophic conceptions of morality support or undermine first order Utilitarian claims, e.g. the claim that we are required sacrifice the few to save the many.[20]

With these general remarks as background, let us turn to virtue ethics and the best way to understand the difference between Kantian, Aristotelian, and Consequentialist conceptions of virtue. To begin, we can usefully consider Lee Ming-huei's recent attack on virtue ethical interpretations of Confucianism. Lee rejects all such interpretations and argues that Confucianism is best understood as a deontological view that is similar to Kant's. His overall argument is framed by a distinction between deontological and teleological conceptions that is influenced by Kant and various Kant scholars. Unfortunately, he does not clearly distinguish between fundamental evaluative facts and good motivation in the way we have, but he seems to assume that our conception of good motivation will be direct. Next, he holds that a philosophic conception of ethics is teleological just in case it is welfarist and it is deontological just in case it posits some facts about moral or ethical goodness that are not reducible to facts about welfare. On this scheme, Kant and Scanlon will, plausibly, be classified as deontologists because they insist there are fundamental facts about moral rightness and wrongness that are not reducible to facts about welfare.

With the teleological-deontological distinction in place, Lee expresses puzzlement about how virtue ethics could constitute a third form of

[20] For discussions of whether the philosophic views developed by Kant and Scanlon entail first order Utilitarian views see Cummiskey (1996), Brand-Ballard (2004), and Parfit (2013).

ethics; he claims that, "because the distinction between teleological and deontological ethics is exhaustive and mutually exclusive, logically it is not possible that there exists a third type of ethics."[21] Now Lee's puzzlement is understandable because he says that a conception is deontological just in case it rejects welfarism and posits a second, ethical type of fundamental evaluative fact. But we should be wary of describing all theories that posit a second, distinctively ethical kind of good with the word 'deontological'. Doing so implies that all of these theories explain the ethical good by appeal to some fundamental conception of the *moral law* and that they picture the distinctively ethical evaluative facts as facts about what is *morally right* and *morally wrong* or what is *moral obligatory* and *morally forbidden*. To see that this is a mistake we need only recall that the virtue ethics movement famously began with calls to abandon those very ways of thinking about the fundamental ethical facts.[22] By extension, we should expect virtue ethicists who posit a second, distinctively ethical good to reject those deontological strategies for characterizing the ethical good and to pursue some other ones.

To see the need to be careful in carving up philosophic space here, we can usefully turn to Kant's explicit discussion of the issue in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. At a pivotal moment in that work (5:59-5:62) Kant asserts that any adequate philosophic conception of morality must distinguish between two kinds of good: moral or ethical goodness and welfare (i.e. what is good *for* someone). His discussion of the distinction is not as clear as one might like, but he says enough to get a rough idea. Concern for prudential good is concern, Kant says, for someone's "well-being or woe" (5:60). Concern for ethical or moral goodness on the other hand is concern for what makes people and actions fit targets for ethical emotions. For example, positive emotions such as healthy self-respect, pride, or admiration are fit just in case they respond to ethical goodness and negative emotions such as ethical shame, guilt, resentment, and contempt are fit just in case they respond to ethical badness. More generally, Kant seems to assume that ethical goodness is the kind of goodness that makes things worthy of ethical approval and that ethical badness is the kind of badness that makes things worthy of ethical disapproval. Ethical goodness so understood is clearly different than welfare, because things can be good for us without being ethically good,

[21] Lee (2013: 51)

[22] See Anscombe (1958)

and bad for us without being ethically bad. For example while being in a coma is certainly bad for you – it detracts from your welfare – it does not make you more worthy of ethical disapproval (or approval).

Now after distinguishing the ethical good from welfare, Kant goes on to contrast two ways in which one can understand or explicate the nature of the ethically good. The first approach is to posit some substantive conception of the ethically good and hold that both discernment of the ethical good and motivation by awareness of it depend on one's contingent character or, in Kantian lingo, one's empirical, sensible character. Kant rejects that view as heteronomous and adopts the (second) autonomous view, according to which the criterion of ethical good and evil is supplied by an a priori rational law of willing – an *a priori moral law* that allows one to discern and be moved to embody good and evil regardless of one's character or experience. Against this backdrop, it is no surprise to find Kant thinking that the fundamental ethical facts, which cannot be reduced to facts about welfare, are facts about what is morally right and morally wrong or what is moral obligatory and morally forbidden.

For our purposes, there is no need to consider Kant's questionable arguments in favor of his deontological conception of the ethical good; it is sufficient to note that Kant himself distinguishes two ways of understanding the ethical good and that only the second is well described as deontological. Only the second, autonomous conception of the ethical good makes use of the concept of a moral law in order to ground our understanding of the ethical good, and that leaves open the possibility that virtue ethicists can offer a third type of view that is neither deontological nor teleological. Put otherwise, Lee is wrong to claim that there are only two kinds of ethical theories, deontological and teleological, and that all theories that recognize the distinction between the ethical good and welfare are deontological.[23]

To make further headway in our thinking about the nature of virtue ethics and questions about whether the philosophic conceptions of ethics presupposed in Confucianism and Buddhism are closer to Kantian

[23] Recently Kant scholars have discussed whether Kant's theory should be called teleological because of the central role it assigns to the ethical *good*. Of course we can use technical terminology however we want, but in line with my discussion of Lee's framework I would favor calling Kant's theory deontological because he thinks we should use the idea of an a priori moral-rational law in order to understand the ethical good. Cf. Reath (2003: section II) for a related discussion of Paul Guyer's teleological interpretation of Kant.

deontology or Aristotle's view, I will now take a closer look at how Kantian and Aristotelian views differ. In short, I believe that Aristotle distinguishes the ethical good from welfare in just the way Kant insists any plausible theory must and that his philosophic conception of ethics shows us how to develop a non-deontological, virtue ethical alternative to welfarism. I should admit at the outset that historical interpretation is a tricky and contested business and that I will be presenting a speculative reconstruction of Aristotle's view, not a detailed exegetical argument. With that said, I now claim that Aristotle explicitly distinguishes between ethical goodness and welfare just like Kant. Specifically, at *Nicomachean Ethics* 1104b31, Aristotle distinguishes three types of good - the noble, the advantageous, and the pleasant – and Aristotle's nobility (*ta kalon*) is a distinctively ethical kind of goodness that makes people and activities worthy of ethical approval. By extension, I think we can understand Aristotle's famous example of a virtuous man choosing to sacrifice his life in order to protect his city as an example of someone who chooses the ethical good (acting virtuously) over his prudential good (staying alive).[24] More generally, Aristotle holds that true nobility is a great ethical good and that good motivation involves direct responsiveness to this good and not just facts about welfare and pleasure; on his view, I suggest, rational discernment of the ethical good structures and guides the practical agency of a virtuous person, and this enables him to embody *ta kalon* in his activities and interactions with others.[25]

Now given this reading of Aristotle, he and Kant make analogous distinctions between ethical goodness and welfare and they also seem

[24] The Greek word translated as 'advantageous' is *sumpheron* not *eudaimonia*, and the Latin *utilitas* is derived from *sumpheron*, so it seems plausible to think that Aristotle's concept of advantage is close to Kant's concept of well-being. As Engstom (1998), explains, the concept of the highest good is the closest thing in Kant's system to Aristotle's *eudaimonia*. Thanks to Matt Walker for helping me with the Greek.

[25] The suggested reading of Aristotle is no doubt contentious, and a welfarist could point out that the virtuous person who sacrifices himself does so in order to promote the (common) good of the city. I agree, but think that when Aristotle says the virtuous person acts for the sake of the noble, this implies that he would sacrifice himself for the common good *because* doing so is noble or fine. Kraut (ms.) carefully discusses relevant Aristotelian texts and argues, roughly, that the value of the noble always "supervenes" on some welfare-based good(s). His view seems compatible with the claims I make in the text, but also with a resolutely welfarist interpretation of Aristotle. Finally, although I don't agree with her principle-based understanding of the noble, my interpretation of Aristotle is indebted to Korsgaard (1996).

to agree that good motivation involves direct, rational responsiveness to the value of ethical goodness, but their specific conceptions of ethical goodness, rational responsiveness to ethical goodness, and ethical approval are very different. Moreover, I believe that if we attend to these differences we can both see why it makes sense to call Aristotle's view a form of virtue ethics and see how to best approach questions about whether Buddhist and Confucian views are more similar to Aristotle's or Kant's.

First, take their conceptions of ethical goodness. Kant holds that the ethical good is the good will, which acts out of respect for the dignity of the moral law. We can ignore the various hard to understand nuances of Kant's view here and focus on three of its main features. First, he holds that any normal, mature agent can instantiate the ethical good at will. The good will is, we might say, always within volitional reach. Second, Kant thinks that to instantiate the ethical good, one must rationally respond to the inherent dignity that all agents have and that this involves willing for reasons that they could appreciate and rationally endorse. Third, Kant holds that the ethical good is moral and that it therefore does not involve non-moral excellences of character such as wittiness or non-moral personal excellences such as courage in the pursuit of one's projects.

When we turn to Aristotle, we get a very different picture of the ethical good. He holds that the ethical good is *ta kalon*, often translated as the fine, the noble, or the beautiful. He tells us that virtuous people are those with noble character, who perform virtuous activities in a noble or fine way, and that those activities thereby reflect the agent's rational appreciation of the value of *ta kalon*. Here again, we can bracket questions about how to understand the nuances of this view, and focus on how it contrasts with Kant's. First, Aristotle locates the ethical good in activities and character traits, not in the will, and he denies that any mature agent can embody the ethical good at will. Aristotelian nobility is not always in volitional reach. Second, Aristotle does not posit any sort of inherent dignity or think that virtue requires acting for reasons that all rational agents can appreciate. On the contrary, he thinks that the virtuous can appreciate aspects of the fine that vicious or base people cannot, and that they will therefore act for reasons that the base cannot appreciate or endorse. Finally, third, nobility is not restricted to the moral domain and it does involve non-moral (e.g. *aesthetic*) excellences of character such

as wittiness and non-moral personal excellences such as courage in the pursuit of one's projects.

Next, we can contrast Aristotelian and Kantian conceptions of rational responsiveness to the ethical good. As noted, Kant and Aristotle disagree about whether any mature agent is capable of rational discernment and embodiment of the ethical good, and this shows up in three more specific ways. First, Kant thinks we can discern *and* rationally respond to the value of the ethical good regardless of our contingent emotional dispositions, while Aristotle thinks we need to have virtuous emotional dispositions in order to discern and respond to the ethical good. Second, Kant thinks we can have a conflicted psychology but still discern and embody the ethical good, but Aristotle denies this. On his view, one needs a relatively harmonious psychology in order to discern and rationally respond to the ethical good. Finally, third, Aristotle thinks one needs a good upbringing and instruction in order to discern and embody the ethical good, while Kant is more egalitarian and thinks even those who are poorly raised and uncultivated can discern and embody the ethical good.[26]

Now to see why it makes sense to describe Aristotle's view as a form of virtue ethics, it will help to say something brief about Kant's theory of virtue. Given common misconceptions, the first thing to emphasize is that Kant *does* have a conception of virtue and that he says quite a bit about virtue and the development of character (e.g. good emotions and traits). The second thing to say, though, is that virtue plays a decidedly secondary role in Kant's ethical theory. He holds that anyone can adopt a good will and that adopting such a will involves adopting various moral ends, one of which is the perfection of one's moral character – roughly one's ability to embody respect for persons and "wide" benevolence.

[26] A full comparison would also consider the conceptions of ethical approval and disapproval that Kant and Aristotle adopt. Kant holds that people of good will merit respect and self-contentment and that people with evil wills merit guilt and resentment. When it comes to judging ethical worth, Kant holds that we are all competent to rationally judge our own worth and that we should never rely on others' input or ideals from religious traditions when assessing ourselves. In addition, he argues we should never judge other's worth. Aristotle's views differ on all fronts. He holds that noble agents merit honor, pride, and love and that ethically unworthy agents (with base characters) merit derision and shame. When it comes to judging worth, he holds that noble and virtuous people are better at judging worth than those who are base. Consequently, he holds that the virtuous should go ahead and judge both their own worth and that of others, and that we should allow our assessments of worth to be influenced by the judgments of virtuous friends and teachers, especially if we are ourselves sub-virtuous.

So one's ethical worth will certainly be affected if one does not seriously *intend* to improve one's character, but Kant nonetheless denies that our ethical worth or the ethical worth of our actions is affected by how virtuous our character is at any time. So while Kant does give an account of moral virtue, understood as a contingent form of character excellence that involves good emotional dispositions and skills, and commends the pursuit of this virtue, he denies that one needs virtue to discern or embody the ethical good or to merit unreserved ethical approval.[27] Moreover, it is important to emphasize that Kant's conception of virtue is *moralized* and that Kantian virtue consequently does not contribute to welfare or flourishing in the way that Aristotelian virtue does. Kantian virtue does not require robust psychic harmony, non-moral character excellences, or non-moral personal excellences; some of the central aspects of Aristotelian virtue that presumably contribute to one's welfare.[28]

These observations about Kant's account of virtue highlight the more central role that non-moralized virtue plays in Aristotle's theory and allows us to see why his conception is aptly called virtue ethical. Kant and Aristotle each reject welfarism, posit a distinctively ethical good, and conceive of good ethical motivation as direct responsiveness to the ethical good. But while on Kant's theory neither good moral motivation nor the ethical good are to be explained by an account of virtue, understood as a contingent form of character excellence that involves good emotional dispositions and skills, on Aristotle's theory *both* the ethical good and good moral motivation are to be explained by appeal to virtue. Moreover, Aristotle's conception of virtue is not moralized, so he thinks that good ethical motivation, which embodies rational responsiveness to the ethical good, involves psychic harmony, non-moral character excellences, and non-moral personal excellences. So perhaps we can best characterize Aristotle's philosophic ethics as a form of non-moralized virtue ethics and characterize Kant's view as

[27] There is a slight complication because Kant sometimes says that the highest good is the concept of a state in which happiness or well-being is proportioned to virtue, and this implies that those with virtuous character are more worthy of happiness and approval than those who have good wills but are only working toward virtue. I think this is an artifact of Kant's loose usage of 'virtue' and that Kant's considered view would be that in the state rightly called the highest good, happiness or well-being is proportioned to moral worth, not virtue, but I also think there is a serious tension in Kant's work here.

[28] Baxley (2010) provides an excellent discussion of Kantian virtue and its compatibility with psychic disharmony.

deontological (non-virtue ethical) and moralized.[29]

IV. APPLYING THE FRAMEWORK TO CONFUCIANISM

With this general discussion of philosophic theories in mind, we are in a position to better assess Lee Ming-huei's recent attack on virtue ethical interpretations of Confucian ethics. Lee rejects these interpretations and argues in favor of a Kantian one, but, as we have seen, his arguments rest on the implausible assumption that philosophic conceptions of ethics must be either teleological or deontological. Now that we have a clearer grip on the availability of virtue ethics as a substantive third option, we can see that Lee's first argument in favor of his Kantian interpretation is unsound. This argument, which Angle (2014) calls 'the heterogeneity argument', draws our attention to passages in which Confucians appear to distinguish between the ethical good and welfare. For example, Lee cites *Analects* 4.16 in which we read, "The Master said, 'The mind of the superior man is conversant with righteousness; the mind of the mean man is conversant with gain.'"

In discussing this argument Angle does not attack the background assumption that only deontologists distinguish the ethical good from welfare. Instead, he argues that the translation may be contentious, and that some might reject the idea that Confucius is distinguishing the ethical good from welfare here.[30] Now I cannot speak to the exegetical issues directly but, in the light of our preceding discussion of Kant and Aristotle, we can simply grant that Confucius is distinguishing two types of good and point out that this shows nothing about whether Confucian thought is more similar to Kant's or Aristotle's. To determine whether Confucius' theory is deontological or virtue ethical, we need to ask whether the Confucian ethical good (*Ren*) is more similar to Aristotelian nobility (*ta kalon*) or to the Kantian good will.

[29] Could there be a plausible deontological virtue ethical conception, given the way I am using those terms? Well, Scanlon's view comes close because he thinks of ethical goodness and badness as moral rightness and wrongness but also holds that one needs contingent emotional dispositions to discern and embody the ethical good. But, like Kant, he adopts a moralized conception of virtue. In any case, I think that the hybrid structure of Scanlon's theory actually makes it harder to defend than more resolutely Kantian deontological theories such as Korsgaard's and Darwall's, or more resolutely virtue ethical views.

[30] Angle (2014: 235-236). In footnote 18 Angle mentions that some philosophers might question Lee's framework assumption, but he does not develop this line of response.

In hope of best advancing debate in this area, I want to start with some general remarks about Lee's overall interpretation of Confucianism and why he thinks Confucianism constitutes an improvement over orthodox Kantianism. On Lee's Confucian view as I currently understand it,[31] all mature human beings are endowed with the four sprouts: "the dispositions of compassion, of shame and dislike, of yielding and deference, and of discriminating right and wrong" (Lee 2013: 52). These sprouts or "buddings" provide us, Lee contends, with a priori *rational* access to transcultural values. This view of the four sprouts is modeled on Kant's view that respect is a rational but sentimental form of responsiveness to the moral law,[32] but it expands the scope of our sentimental rational access to a priori ethical truths. Now despite being originally endowed with these sprouts, not all human beings are well-motivated people (*Ren*) or excellent human beings (*junzi*), so we need an account of what it is that a well-motivated person has, over and above the four sprouts, that other people lack, and we also need an account of ethical development or cultivation. In my view the best way to engage with Lee, and to press him to defend his Kantian interpretation over a virtue ethical one, is to focus on those issues.

The contrasts we have drawn between Kant and Aristotle suggest numerous lines of inquiry here. Here are three main ones:

> Q1: Is *Ren* in the volitional reach of all mature human beings because they have the four sprouts? Is good intention/will sufficient for *Ren* or do we need contingent good character to embody *Ren*?
>
> Q2: Is *Ren* moralized? Does it include psychic harmony, non-moral character excellences, or personal character excellences?
>
> Q3: Does *Ren* involve acting on reasons that cannot be discerned or fully appreciated by less than fully virtuous people? Is possession of the sprouts sufficient for discernment of *Ren* and motivation by *Ren*'s value? Or does one need contingent good character to appreciate what is *Ren* and the value of *Ren*?

Of course I can't pretend to answer these questions here, and I recognize that different Confucian texts and authors may suggest different answers.

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[31] In addition to Lee (2013), I am relying on the discussions of Mou Zongsan's and Lee's work in Elstein (2014) and Billioud (2011).

[32] See Reath (2009) for debates about how to understand the rational sentiment of respect in Kant.

What I can do is discuss two texts to which Lee appeals in order to support his Kantian, deontological interpretation.

First, Lee appeals to *Analects* 12.1 in order ground what Angle (2014) calls his 'autonomy argument'. Lee's appeal to this passage might help settle our questions about whether *Ren* is more like Kant's good will or Aristotle's nobility because it suggests that *Ren* is something people achieve through their own efforts. More specifically, Lee would presumably contend that *Analects* 12.1 supports the deontological idea that the ethical good, *Ren*, is within the volitional reach of normal or mature agents. Here is the passage:

> Yen Yuan asked about *ren*. The Master said, 'To subdue one's self and return to propriety, is *ren*. If a man can for one day subdue himself and return to *ren*, the world will turn to *ren* along with him. To be *ren* comes from the self; does it then come from others?"

Read closely, however, this passage doesn't seem to support the claim that Confucian *Ren* is within the volitional reach. It *does* imply that to achieve *Ren* one needs to subdue oneself and return to propriety and that these are not things that someone else can do for you, but that does not entail that just anyone can subdue himself, return to propriety, and thereby achieve *Ren*. At the very least, this effort seems to require strong commitment and perseverance, even for exemplars such as Confucius:

> At fifteen, I set my heart on learning. At thirty, I stood firm. At forty, I was free of delusions. At fifty, I understood the Mandate of Heaven. At sixty, my ear was attuned. At seventy, I could follow my heart's desires without overstepping what is proper. (*Analects* 2.4)[33]

Consider an analogy. In order to perform a beautiful symphony, the musicians may need to subdue themselves and focus on the music, and it might well be that this is not something that others can do for them. But not just any group of people with instruments in their hands can subdue themselves and return to the music and thereby produce a beautiful symphony. People who are easily distracted, lack a discerning ear, or lack musical training will not be able to pull it off; having a manageable mind, discerning ear, and musical training are all necessary background conditions that enable good musicians to produce beautiful music by subduing themselves and focusing on the music. By analogy, although

[33] Thanks to PJ Ivanhoe and an anonymous reviewer for suggesting the relevance of this text.

Analects 12.1 suggests that autonomous effort is *necessary* for achieving *Ren*, it need not suggest that such effort is sufficient. Achieving *Ren* may require subduing oneself and returning to propriety oneself but it may also require contingent good character and experience as background enabling factors, and this is just what a virtue ethical view would predict.[34]

We have just seen that *Analects* 12.1 need not be read in a deontological way, and that it therefore does not support Lee's Kantian interpretation, but I think a second passage he cites actually tells quite strongly in favor of a virtue ethical reading of the ethical good. The specific passage is *Analects* 17.21 in which Zai Wo proposes to shorten the mourning period after his parents die and Confucius criticizes him for this. As Lee points out, Zai Wo's rationale seems to be that the shortened mourning period would be good for him – that it would promote his welfare – and Confucius' criticism of Zai Wo implies that a better man would choose the ethical good (*Ren*) over the prudential good (welfare). Lee naturally takes this to tell in favor of his deontological reading, but at this point in our discussion, we can see the need to focus on what the passage tells us about the nature, not just the existence, of the Confucian ethical good. Here is a pertinent extract:

> ... a superior man, during the whole period of mourning, does not enjoy pleasant food which he may eat, nor derive pleasure from music which he may hear. He also does not feel at ease, if he is comfortably lodged. Therefore he does not do what you propose. But now you feel at ease and may do it.

Now as Slingerland (2001) and Angle (2013) discuss, one *might* think this passage suggests a virtue ethical conception, not a Kantian, deontological one because, while the ethical good (*Ren*) is pictured here as involving feeling, Kant is often thought to associate the ethical good with reason and duty, not feeling and inclination. In response, Lee could make two points. First, as Angle suggests[35], he could point to the fact that Kant has a theory of virtue; Kant thinks that a person with an ethically good will necessarily intends to improve her empirical character, including her

[34] As Ames and Rosemont (2013: 21) indicate, some passages also suggest that the presence of cultural exemplars is a relevant necessary enabling factor. For example, they point to Analects 5.3: "The Master remarked about Zijian, 'He is truly and exemplary person. If the state of Lu had not other exemplary persons, where could he had gotten this from?'"

[35] Angle (2013: 240-241)

inclinations and dispositions to feel. Second, Lee could point out that on his view *Confucian* Kantianism improves on the original precisely by broadening the scope of the rational sentiments; while Kant recognizes reason only in the way that respect for the law strikes down self-conceit, Confucian Kantians recognize reason in all four of the sprouts, which give humans a priori access to the moral truth. So it is a serious mistake to assume that Confucian Kantians associate the ethical good with reason and duty, not feeling and inclination.

Despite the foregoing points about the role of reason and feeling in Kantian Confucianism, I still think that *Analects* 17.21 supports a virtue ethical understanding of the Confucian ethical good. To see why, notice two points. First, in the passage quoted above, the difference between the superior man and Zai Wo hinges on what they take pleasure in and what they feel comfortable doing, and these are not factors that are reliably under people's volitional control. Kantians do characteristically hold that the ethical good requires *intending* to improve such factors, but they deny that our worth depends on our success. In the passage, however, Confucius is apparently expressing ethical approval of the person because he *has* one sort of empirical character instead of another, so this passage tells in favor of a virtue ethical reading. Second, notice that at the end of the passage Confucius says that because of his poorer character, e.g. his disposition to enjoy food and drink during part of the mourning period, Zai Wo should go ahead with his proposal and shorten his mourning period. This implies that if Zai Wo had better character and could embody the ethical good by upholding the customary mourning period, then he should do that, but that since the ethical good is not within his volitional reach, he might as well choose the (ethically sub-par) option that is least costly to his welfare. This, again, does not sit well with a Kantian understanding of the ethical good.

To buttress the claim that *Analects* 17.21 suggests a virtue ethical understanding of the Confucian ethical good, rather than a deontological Kantian one, we can helpfully reflect on the deontological idea that the ethical good involves willfully living up to a *moral law*. Talk of a moral law implies that someone has the authority to demand that you live up to it and that you should feel guilty if you fail to do so. Moreover, as Darwall (2006) has recently emphasized, those facts support the view that if you are subject to a moral law, then you can live up to it by holding yourself responsible for doing so; if you are subject to a moral law, then compliance is within your volitional reach. Now turn back to Confucius

and Zai Wo. If Zai Wo cuts short his mourning period, as Confucius encourages him to do, then he fails to embody the ethical good (*Ren*). If Zai Wo were, however, subject to a moral law demanding that one embody *Ren*, then being *Ren* would be in his volitional reach and Confucius' recommendation would be vicious. If *Ren* were grounded in a moral law in the way that is characteristic of Kantian deontology, then Confucius should have told Zai Wo to stick to the customary period out of respect for the law and intend to cultivate better character. Moreover, Confucius should have expressed just as much ethical approval for that version of Zai Wo as for someone who exhibits psychic harmony during the mourning period, i.e. someone who is not pained by forgoing music and food during the mourning period.[36] But this Kantian Confucius is not the one we find in *Analects* 17.21. I suspect it is not one we find elsewhere in the Confucian cannon either, but I will be happy to be corrected as I learn more about various Confucian views; my aim here has only been to clarify how Lee and his Anglophone critics might more fruitfully debate whether Confucianism is best understood as a form of deontology or virtue ethics, and I hope the framework I have given can do that.

V. APPLYING THE FRAMEWORK TO BUDDHISM

In this short, final section, I want to shift gears and begin to apply the framework we have developed to debates about the nature of Buddhist Ethics. In particular, I want to hone in on Charles Goodman's attack on virtue ethical interpretations of Buddhism and his contention that Buddhist ethics is best understood as a form of Consequentialism. We have not previously explicitly discussed Consequentialism and it is a doctrine that comes in numerous varieties, but the rough idea is that people's actions, intentions, and characters should be ethically evaluated based on the consequences that they actually produce, they could be reasonably be expected to produce, or that they generally tend to produce. The relevant consequences are usually conceived of as outcome states – states of affairs, philosophers say – and they can be evaluated according

[36] Of course Lee could also appeal to the four sprouts to fill out this story, but I don't see how this could undercut the main point. If the basic sprouts are sufficient for being able to embody *Ren* and *Ren* requires acting out of good character, then it is hard to believe that all humans have the four sprouts.

to a variety of evaluative schemes. For simplicities' sake we can stick with an impartial welfarism-maximizing form of consequentialism according to which intentions, motivations, and characters are ethically good if they produce, or generally tend to produce, overall welfare increases (impartially weighed), and that they are ethically bad if they produce, or generally tend to produce, woe (impartially weighed). On this view, virtue ethicists and Kantians are both wrong to posit two fundamental kinds of good and to then picture good ethical agency or character as some sort of direct responsiveness to these goods. On the contrary, our consequentialists argue, only facts about what is good or bad for living things are fundamental and an ethically well-motivated agent is just one whose agency or character either directly or indirectly promotes a better world, measured in welfare terms.

With this rough characterization of welfare consequentialism in hand, we can turn to one of Goodman's main arguments that Buddhism is best understood as a form of consequentialism, rather than a form of virtue ethics. Specifically, consider this claim:

> ***Strongly Altruistic Agent***: Mahayana and Vajrayana saints are radically impartial and altruistic but Aristotle's virtuous agent is not, so Mahayana and Vajrayana ethics do not fit well with Aristotelian virtue theories.

This claim captures one main line of argument in Goodman's book, *Consequences of Compassion*. He gives numerous examples of Buddhist texts recommending that we act so as to bring about the most welfare or that we admire people who sacrifice themselves in order to benefit others; but our discussion of philosophic conceptions of ethics at the start of section III casts doubt on the idea that these first order normative views and views about the nature of good ethical agency or character show that Buddhist ethics is a form of philosophic consequentialism. As mentioned in section III, a philosophic conception of ethics identifies some primitive or fundamental evaluative facts and then provides an account of good moral or ethical motivation by appeal to those facts, but philosophers with very different views of the fundamental evaluative facts can embrace similar or identical views of good agency or first order views about which actions are required or good. For example, there is no reason at the outset to doubt that someone could embrace either a Kantian deontological or neo-Aristotelian virtue ethical conception of the fundamental evaluative facts and also hold that a well-motivated

agent who directly responds to the fundamental facts will embody radical impartiality or altruism at the first order level.

To move beyond a bare challenge to Goodman here, we can usefully consider Aristotle's function argument and the possibility that it grounds Aristotle's conception of the ethical good in something like the way the moral law grounds Kant's. On this view, Aristotle appeals to a background account of human nature or the human condition, uses that to identify a conception of a well-functioning human being, and then uses that to ground his conception of the ethical good (*ta Kalon*). Roughly, the noble human being deserves ethical approval because he is an admirably functioning human being. Now given this (admittedly contentious) understanding of Aristotle's function argument, we can see how an Aristotelian might be converted to the Buddhist first order ethical view. All we need to do is assume that on some theory of human nature a well-functioning human being will be one who is radically impartial and altruistic. If our Aristotelian comes to accept that theory, then she will agree that it is noble to act like a Buddhist saint and to do so because it is the noble thing to do. Roughly, she will think that to embody the welfare-independent ethical good one must be radically impartial and altruistic.

Interestingly, this basic idea bears at least some resemblance to the views developed in the Tathagatagarbha Buddhist traditions of Tibet and East Asia, which posit an inherent Buddha nature or potential. Perhaps this tradition would provide a strong analogue to Aristotelianism insofar as it would have us identify virtue with the realization of our characteristic potential to become a Buddha. Perhaps we could locate something like a function argument in the texts of this tradition, and perhaps that traditions' influence on later Confucianism would help support a neo-Aristotelian reading of the Confucian tradition. Once again I have to leave these as further questions to pursue within our framework.

The main point to emphasize at this juncture is that to settle questions about the philosophic nature of Buddhist or Confucian ethics, we need to go beyond the first order ethical views and conceptions of good motivation that are commended in the tradition, and try to figure out *why* Buddhists commend the views that they do. We need to try to identify the fundamental evaluative facts they posit, not just how they hope people are motivated or act in the light of those facts.

As a closing remark about Buddhism let me add that this task will be especially hard when we turn to Mahayana Buddhist views that endorse

the doctrine of two truths. Very roughly, these views hold that *no* conceptually articulated beliefs or views are absolutely true, but that we may well be pragmatically justified in espousing or even holding these beliefs and views if doing so will be beneficial. To see the problem that this view poses for Goodman, we need to note that he interprets Buddhists as holding (i) that there are some fundamental evaluative facts, (ii) that we should try to promote the good ones in maximal and impartial fashion, (iii) and that this we should do so because ordinary beliefs about persons and personal identity – which we ordinarily take to justify partiality – are merely conventional truths to be seen through. The last of these claims, about personal identity, is a good fit with the two truths doctrine; on the relevant Buddhist views, belief in, or claims about, personal identity are conventionally justified but not absolutely true, and insight into their fundamental non-truth is essential to overcoming suffering. The problem for Goodman, however, is that something similar seems to be true of our beliefs about the welfare of living beings being good and pain being bad; these are presumably conventionally justified beliefs, but not true absolutely. And if this is right, we have to ask why Buddhists should take belief in fundamental evaluative facts any more seriously than they take belief in the self. Put otherwise, Goodman seems hold that when engaging in ethical theorizing I should treat personal identity as a conventional view *to be seen through because it is merely conventional*, but that I shouldn't do the same when it comes to conventional views about welfare or pleasure being intrinsically good. And it is hard to see how to defend such a stance. On the other hand, if we see through all views about the fundamental evaluative facts because they are all merely conventional, then the Buddhist view looks closer to value nihilism than, say, welfarism consequentialism. That is not to say that the view must be false. Perhaps this is just a stark case in which engagement with Confucian and Buddhist views give us a chance to recognize and question background western assumptions about the sorts of philosophic ethical views that we can take seriously.

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JEONG DASAN'S INTERPRETATION OF MENGZI: HEAVEN, WAY, HUMAN NATURE, AND THE HEART-MIND[1]

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Abstract. This essay offers an introduction to Jeong Yakyong's (Dasan's) ethical philosophy as revealed by his commentary on the *Mengzi*. Following Mengzi, Dasan insisted that the Confucian Way was grounded in the will of Heaven but looked back to early views about the Lord on High and described ethical life in terms of an everyday, natural order decreed by the Lord on High. Not only did he see a wide range of human emotions as indispensable and central to the good life, he also insisted that Heaven and the Way must be understood in terms of their manifestations in this world.

I. INTRODUCTION

Jeong Yakyong 丁若鏞 (1762–1836), more commonly known by his pen name Dasan 茶山, is widely regarded as one of the towering intellectuals of the late Joseon period.[2] He is greatly admired for his work

[1] This work was supported by a grant from The Academy of Korean Studies funded by the Korean Government (MEST) (AKS-2011-AAA-2102). Thanks to Youngsun Back, Erin M. Cline, Richard Kim, Sungmoon Kim, Michael R. Slater, and Justin Tiwald for helpful comments on earlier drafts.

2 For an excellent introduction to Jeong Yakyong's philosophy, see Mark Setton, *Chong Yagyong: Korea's Challenge to Orthodox Neo-Confucianism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997). For a study which explores his personal and philosophical relationship with Catholicism in great depth, see Shin-ja Kim, *The Philosophical Thought of Tasan Chŏng*, Tobias J. Körtner and Jordan Nyenyembe, tr. (New York: Peter Lang, 2010) and Don Baker, "Thomas Aquinas and *Chŏng Yagyŏng*: Rebels Within Tradition," *Tasan Hak* ("Journal of Tasan Studies"), 3:2 (2002): 32-69. For an insightful and concise introduction to Dasan's philosophy that helpfully locates it within its historical context, see Michael C. Kalton, "Chong Tasan's Philosophy of Man: A Radical Critique of the Neo-Confucian World View," *Journal of Korean Studies*, 3 (1981): 3-37.

on philosophy, science, and politics as well as for his government service and poetry. This essay focuses on his ethical philosophy as revealed by his comprehensive commentary on the *Mengzi* 孟子 (K. *Maengja*).[3] Dasan sought to rescue Mengzi's philosophy from what he saw as the metaphysical excesses of Song-Ming neo-Confucians, whose interpretations of this and other Chinese classics had become orthodox in Jeoson Korea, and return to the letter and spirit of Mengzi's original teachings.[4] As will be clear from what follows, much of what Dasan argued for can be understood as, in some sense, a more naturalized account of ethics, and such an account offered a dramatic alternative to the orthodox view. While such a description is helpful for understanding Dasan's philosophy, we must avoid misrepresenting the nature, aim, and extent of his naturalizing tendency. His system of thought clearly differs in important ways from most contemporary forms of naturalism; it offered an alternative to the highly abstract metaphysical system of orthodox neo-Confucianism and not supernaturalism. Like Mengzi, Dasan insisted that the Confucian Way was grounded in the will of Heaven 天 (Ch. *tian*; K. *cheon*); he looked back to even earlier classical precedents and argued that the Way originated from and consisted in the will of the Lord on High 上帝 (Ch. *Shangdi;* K. *Sangje*). And so his "naturalism" was grounded in a deeper theological vision; he saw ethical life as expressly and intimately dependent upon and inseparable from the tasks of discovering and fulfilling an everyday, natural order decreed by Heaven. He advocated a decidedly this-worldly religious vision, one that bears important similarities to familiar forms of deism.[5]

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[3] Dasan's commentary, entitled *Maengjayoui* 孟子要義, is available as volume 7 of Chŏngbon Yŏyudang chŏnsŏ 定本與猶堂全書 (Seoul: *Tasan Haksul Munhwa Chaedan*, 2012). I have also benefitted from consulting Yi Jihyoung 李篪衡 ed., *Dasan Maengjayoui* 茶山孟子要義 (Seoul: *Hyundaeshilhaksa* 現代實學社, 1994). I use only Korean Romanization for all Korean proper names and sources and only *pinyin* for all Chinese proper names and sources. I provide both *pinyin* and Korean Romanization for all terms of art.

[4] This quality of Dasan's thought is also seen in contemporary thinkers in both China and Japan. For a discussion of this phenomenon, see my "New Old Foundations for Confucian Ethical Philosophy: Itō Jinsai 伊藤 仁斎 (1627-1705), Dai Zhen (戴震) (1722-1776), and Jeong Yakyong (丁若鏞) (1762-1836)," Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies, 11.1 (June 2014): 77-133.

[5] Like Western deists, Dasan thought people could come to see and appreciate the role of God in the world using the capacities with which they were endowed. Like deists, he did not believe God acts directly in the world nor did he seek to have a personal relationship with God. Moreover, like deists, Dasan was led to posit Shangje's existence

As a result, not only did he see a wide range of human emotions as playing an indispensable and central role in the good life ordained for human beings but he insisted that Heaven and the Way 道 (Ch. *dao*; K. *do*) must be understood in terms of their manifestations in this world. I shall return to Dasan's conceptions of Heaven and the Way in my conclusion after I have presented his views about human nature 性 (Ch. *xing;* K. *seong*) and the heart-mind 心 (Ch. *xin; K. shim*).[6]

II. DASAN'S INTERPRETATION OF MENGZI'S PHILOSOPHY

One of the most prominent themes in Dasan's writings about human nature is his criticism of the orthodox view that human nature itself is principle 理 (Ch. *li; K. i*), which in its original state is absolutely pure, good, and unitary. This claim about the original state of human nature is the central feature of the extravagant metaphysical claims that Dasan criticized and rejected. He raises objections to this view throughout his writings and his criticisms are clearly laid out in his commentary on a famous passage from the *Mengzi,* 7A4, which says,

> The myriad things are all here within me. There is no greater joy than to reflect upon oneself and find integrity. Nothing brings one closer to benevolence than exerting oneself in the effort of sympathetic concern."[7]

Dasan begins by noting the interpretations offered by two prominent neo-Confucian commentators.

> The *Collected Commentaries* (compiled by Zhu Xi), says, "This passage talks about the original state of principle. Every one of the great and minute normative principles is present within one's allotment of nature." Cheng Fuxin (1256-1340) says, "Within any thing one can find the principles of all the myriad things."

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for primarily theoretical or explanatory reasons – specifically, in order to provide a metaphysical foundation or basis for the Confucian Way. Western deists also wanted to explain the origins of the universe and the existence of natural laws; while these were not a primary concern of Dasan's he did, as we shall see below, argue that without God we could not explain the orderly structure of the world. Thanks to Michael R. Slater for discussions on this topic.

[6] I translate *xin/sim* consistently as "heart-mind" in order to bring out Dasan's particular use of this term to refer to an innate human capacity and tendency not only to cognize but to evaluate actions and states of affairs. The same term often is translated as "mind" or "heart."

[7] For the passage and Dasan's commentary, see *Maengjayoui*, pp. 231-2.

These prominent neo-Confucian commentaries present the orthodox view, according to which each and every thing – no matter how simple or complex, how noble or base – contains within it all the myriad principles of all the things of the world, just as each drop of water can reflect the image of the moon shining in the heavens. All things share this common and complete set of principles as their original nature本性 (Ch. *benxing*; K. *bonseong*) and are differentiated as the particular things they are by their different material endowments of 氣 (Ch. *qi*; K. *gi*). As we will see, Dasan takes issue with just about every aspect of the orthodox view, but in this passage he takes special aim at the idea that all things share a common set of principles, what I elsewhere have referred to as the "all in each" view.[8] Immediately following the two neo-Confucian commentaries quoted above, Dasan remarks,

> One need not take "the myriad things" in the extravagant way these commentators do. The principles of the myriad things within Heaven and earth are in each of these things themselves. How could all these principles be inside of me? Dogs have the principles of dogs. Oxen have the principles of oxen. These clearly are not in me. Why should we force an exaggerated interpretation of the phrase "are all here within me"?

Rather than taking the passage from the *Mengzi* as making a metaphysical claim, Dasan interprets it as presenting claims about the moral psychology of human beings and relates it to other well-known Confucian teachings from the *Analects*.

> This passage talks about the one thread of conscientiousness 忠 (Ch. *zhong*; K. *chung*) and sympathetic concern 恕 (Ch. *shu*; K. *seo*). I like beauty and so know that other people like beauty too. I like owning property and so know that other people like owning property too. I like peace and ease and so know that other people like peace and ease as well. I dislike being lowly and disgraced and so know that other people dislike being lowly and disgraced. I like to be in the lead when walking on the road, entering a gate, ascending a platform, or taking my seat. In winter I like to be the first to be warm; in summer I like to be the first to be cool. When hungry I like to be the first to eat; when thirsty I like to be the first to drink. The desires that arise in response to the myriad things and affairs we encounter in our everyday lives *are all here within me*. I do not have to inquire into the feelings or examine the expressions on the faces

[8] "The Historical Significance and Contemporary Relevance of the Four-Seven Debate," in *Philosophy East and West*, 65:2 (April 2015): 401-29.

> of others in order to know that other people are the same as I am ... This is what Kongzi called the "one thread." He meant that he could thread together the mad variety of the myriad things with a single word: *shu/seo* ("sympathetic concern").[9] The learning of Kongzi and Mengzi is as plain and familiar as this but former Confucians[10] described Kongzi's teaching about the "one thread" and Mengzi's understanding of the "myriad things" in excessively extravagant terms, offering high-blown theories about principles permeating throughout Heaven, earth, and the myriad things and being fully present in every mote of dust. Vague and vast, [their explanations] are boundless and without end, causing those in subsequent times to be confused and not know where to put hand or foot. Is this not regrettable!

Dasan makes the apparently quite sensible but important point that the myriad things are not "in me" in any literal sense, but I can understand my ethical relationships and obligations to the world by consulting my empathetic and sympathetic abilities and using these to develop proper moral judgment.[11] In the last line of the passage above, Dasan makes clear that the metaphysical excesses of earlier Confucians have led people to ignore their natural moral sensibilities and thereby left them bereft of the resources needed to engage in the work of moral cultivation. Dasan continues his commentary in a way that makes clear that the moral obligation to care for or show benevolence toward others does not extend beyond our fellow human beings, which is to reject the common neo-Confucian claim that we share principle with and therefore are morally related to and responsible for all things in the universe.

> Those who reflect upon themselves and find integrity are conscientious (*zhong/chung*). If I can find the things I bestow upon others within myself and am in every case conscientious, there is no greater joy than this. Benevolence [always] involves two people. [The relationship between] father and son involves two people; [the relationship between] ruler and minister involves two people; [the relationship between] a person and his superior involves two people. The "myriad things" referred to earlier do

[9] *Analects* 4.15. Cf. 15.3.

[10] The reference here is to neo-Confucians of the Song through Ming dynasties, such as the two cited above.

[11] Dasan offers a complex and subtle account of *seo*, which entails using it to empathize and sympathize with others in ways that help to extend, curb, and shape one's own standing beliefs and feelings so these are more in accord with the Way. See my "New Old Foundations for Confucian Ethical Philosophy."

> not lie beyond the relationships between human beings, and so Mengzi concludes by saying that nothing brings one closer to benevolence than exerting oneself in the effort of sympathetic concern.

Dasan presents an outline of his conception of human nature and what it means to claim, as Mengzi famously did, that human nature is good, in his commentary on *Mengzi* 3A1, which describes how Mengzi taught Duke Wen of Teng about the goodness of human nature by invoking the examples of the sage kings Yao and Shun.[12] As is often the case, Dasan begins by quoting earlier commentaries and then goes on to present his own view.

> The *Collected Commentaries* says, "*Nature* is the principle that human beings receive from Heaven at birth. It is purely and completely the highest good and contains nothing bad."

Dasan begins by sorting out different aspects of the self.

> Spirit and form mysteriously join together to form a human being. Spirit is without form and moreover without name. It is without form, and so we refer to it by borrowing the name "spirit" (which is the "spirit" of "ghosts and spirits"). The heart-mind is the storehouse of blood and acts as the pivot or axis for the mysterious joining [of spirit and form], and so we refer to it by borrowing the name "heart-mind" (the heart-mind originally refers to one of the five viscera like the words liver and lungs). With death spirit leaves the form and thereupon is called the soul. Mengzi referred to it as the Greater Self;[13] Buddhists refer to it as the Dharma Body; in written sources it has no single name. Former Confucians[14] called it nature, but their use of the term is confused and unclear. People today continue to be confused about it and misunderstand its meaning. When one is alive we call it nature; when one is dead we call it soul. Really, though, nature and soul are different. Nature is not a perfectly appropriate term for the Greater Self of we human beings.

Here we see Dasan working to distinguish the special senses of core Confucian terms of art. He is particularly interested in describing how people often use terms such as nature or heart-mind as rough and ready ways to refer to the Greater Self of human beings and how these refer

[12] For the passage and Dasan's commentary, see *Maengjayoui*, pp. 89-96.

[13] Dasan is using a term from *Maengja* 6A15, the Great Self 大體 (Ch. *dati*; K. *daechae*) to single out the morally disposed part of the self, which, as we shall see, he goes on to describe as consisting of a variety of innate inclinations or sensibilities.

[14] Cf. note #9.

specifically to the *embodied state* of the human soul. He continues this passage by making clear his use of the term nature.

> What I call nature is primarily desires and preferences. For example, it is said that Xie Anshi[15] liked music. Duke Zheng of Wei[16] liked frugality. Some like mountains and rivers. Some like books and paintings. These examples all show that desires and preferences constitute the nature; the meaning of the term nature originally was like this. And so, when Mengzi talked about human nature he did so in terms of desires and preferences. He said, 'The mouths [of people] show shared desires in regard to tastes; their ears show shared desires in regard to sound; their eyes are pleased by the same beauties.'[17] These examples are all used to make clear that the nature shows a shared preference for what is good. Is the basic sense of nature not concerned with desires and preferences? All people prefer wealth and beauty; they all prefer comfort and ease.

With the proper meaning of the term nature clearly in view, Dasan moves on to describe and illustrate what Mengzi meant by his claim that human nature is good. The basic idea is that human beings have a complex innate sense of what is good and an inherent tendency to prefer what is good.

> What does it mean to say that human nature is good? Mengzi used the example of Yao and Shun to make clear that human nature is good. I will use Jie[18] and Zhi[19] to make clear that human nature is good. A thief bores through your wall and makes off with your possessions; he is happy and satisfied. The next day, though, when he runs into his neighbor or sees an upright official he will feel deeply ashamed. The old expression has it that even a thief can become good; this supports the claim that human nature is good. In one place there was the son of a certain Mr. Yin who became a robber; when I persuaded his brothers to proclaim benevolence and righteousness to him, this robber began to sob freely. In another place there was the son of a Mr. Zheng who was a bad man. I caught a fish in a stream and had him chop it into minced meat. After doing so, Zheng prostrated himself upon the ground, blushed, and began

[15] Xie Anshi 謝安石 lived in the Jin Dynasty; his ancestral home was Yang Xia 陽夏. He was born with and became famous for possessing a kind of spiritual vision, which he later cultivated by living an ascetic life.

[16] Duke Zheng of Wei 魏鄭公 is the main figure in a book of admonitions written by the Tang Dynasty author Wang Fangqing 王方慶.

[17] *Mengzi* 6A7.

[18] Emperor Jie was the last ruler of the Xia Dyansty and was renowned for his cruelty.

[19] Robber Zhi is a famous, unrepentant thief and robber.

> to enumerate his transgressions saying, 'I am a bad man; I am a merciless killer!' There are innumerable cases like these. If human nature were not good, how could there be such cases? (This is to use the 'heart-mind of shame and contempt'[20] to make clear that human nature is good.)

The idea here is that human beings have an innate sense of shame and if they reflect upon what they do will feel contempt toward certain actions and states of affairs. This is one of the four sprouts 四端 (Ch. *siduan*; K. *sadan*) that constitute the Greater Self. If properly developed, it becomes the virtue of righteousness, roughly the disposition to avoid acts and deplore states of affairs that are dishonorable. Dasan goes on to offer other, further illustrations of the Greater Self.

> In a village there was a son who was not filial. When people who didn't know this praised him for being filial he was pleased. He was pleased because in his heart-mind he knew that it is good to be filial. In another village was an adulterous woman. When people who didn't know this praised her for being chaste she was pleased. She was pleased because in her heart-mind she knew that it is good to be chaste. Greedy officials or corrupt government servants skim the tax revenues, engaging in all manner of illicit activity, but when some crafty villain commends them for being pure and honest they are pleased. Flattering officials or smooth talking ministers perpetuate falsehoods and deceptions, engaging in all manner of illicit activity, but when some crafty villain commends them for being loyal and upright they are pleased. In all such cases their heart-minds delight in the good and are ashamed of what is bad; even though they know they do not deserve to be commended, they still take pleasure in hearing such praise. What is called the goodness of human nature is just this. If it were not true [that human nature is good] then clearly all the people in the world would find following what is bad as easy as sliding down an embankment while following the good would be like climbing up it. Mengzi's teachings about the goodness of human nature would be empty talk; would anyone believe it? The *Book of Poetry* says, 'The natural disposition of human beings is to love this admirable virtue.'[21] In this line, 'natural disposition' refers to human nature. Since it makes a point of talking about *loving* virtue, doesn't this show that the meaning of human nature concerns desires and preferences? The disposition of human nature is to love the good just as the disposition of water is to flow

[20] One of the "four sprouts" Mengzi claimed constitute the core of our good nature. See *Mengzi* 2A6.

[21] *Mao* 260.

> downward or the disposition of fire is to climb upward. When human beings were first born, Heaven decreed that they have such a nature, and even though they are greedy, licentious, cruel, and murderous, engaging in all manner of illicit activity, nevertheless, this nature does not change. If they see a loyal minister or filial child they admire them as good; in this all people are alike. If they see a greedy official or corrupt government servant, they hate them as bad; in this all people are alike. (This is to use the 'heart-mind of approval and disapproval to make clear that human nature is good.)[22]

In the passage above, Dasan provides examples that show people have an innate sense that disapproves of bad actions or states of affairs and approves of good actions or states of affairs, their own or those of others. His aim is to show that even people who engage in immoral or illicit activities know in their heart-minds that what they do is wrong; moreover, they disapprove of other people doing or promoting what is wrong and delight in seeing the good. This not only shows that they have an innate sense of moral approval and disapproval but also makes clear that this sense is a kind of *desire* and not merely a cognitive ability, something that inclines or disposes us in the direction of the good and makes us uncomfortable to do what is bad. Nevertheless, one must attend to and engage the morally good inclinations that are part of our nature. Recognizing that we also have less laudable desires and inclinations, we must choose and hold fast to the good. It is delusional and dangerous to proclaim that our natures are purely and perfectly good; this is mistaken and will lead us to ignore the important role of choice, the difficulty of commitment, and the hard work of cultivation.

> If they accord with and activate this (i.e. the good) aspect of their nature, then even greedy, licentious, cruel, and murderous people can suddenly be moved to righteousness. Could they do this if human nature were not good? It is now firmly established that when discussing human nature we must be referring primarily to desires and preferences. If, when discussing this tenuous, spiritual, formless thing, we claim that it only consists of the highest good and is without the slightest trace of what is bad, then what do we say about a new born infant, which only knows how to cry and wail, seeks to be suckled, and wants to be held; can we stubbornly insist that it is purely good? If we talk about it in terms of

[22] One of the "four sprouts" Mengzi claimed constitute the core of our good nature. See *Mengzi* 2A6.

> its capacity for autonomous choice, then we can say that it can become good or it can become bad. Yang Xiong[23] took this to be human nature and so declared it to be a mixture of good and bad. If we talk about it in terms of the self-centered desires associated with its physical form then not only can it become good or bad but also it is difficult to become good and easy to become bad; following the good is like climbing up an embankment, while following the bad is like sliding down one. This is not exaggeration. Xunzi[24] took this to be human nature and so declared it to be bad. The teachings of both Yang and Xun do not claim existence for what does not exist nor do they malign white by calling it black; nevertheless, it is important to be clear that what they focused on was different from what Mengzi did. The Buddhists teach about 'enlightening the mind and seeing the nature';[25] they praise and laud this conception of nature in a variety of ways. And yet, the basic idea of their teachings is very different from what Mengzi talked about with his teaching about the goodness of human nature. What they talk about is the tenuous, spiritual, and mysterious nature of the thing itself; what Mengzi talked about is the way in which people delight in the good and are ashamed of the bad just as water is disposed to flow downward. How could they be taken as talking about the same thing?

Further along in this same section of commentary, Dasan invokes the well-known distinction between the Heart-mind of the Way 道心 (Ch. *daoxin*; K. *doshim*) and the Human Heart-mind人心 (Ch. *renxin*; K. *inshim*) but conceives of them differently than what was common among neo-Confucians.[26] For thinkers like Zhu Xi, the Heart-mind of the Way essentially consists of all the pure and perfect moral principles;

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[23] Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE) argued for such a view in work such as his *Model Sayings* (Fayan 法言).

[24] Xunzi 荀子, whose courtesy name was Qing 卿, was the third great Confucian philosopher of the early phase of the tradition. His dates are around 310-219 BCE.

[25] This kind of view is most famously represented by the four-line description of Chan, traditionally attributed to Bodhidharma but actually composed sometime in the Tang dynasty:

A separate teaching, outside the tradition;
Not residing in words or letters.
Directly pointing to the mind;
See one's nature and become a Buddha.

For a discussion, see Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History, Volume I: India and China* (New York: MacMillan, 1988), pp. 85–86.

[26] These terms first appear in the "Declarations of the Great Yu" chapter of the *Book of History* (書經). See Legge, *The Shoo King*, p. 61.

it is our original nature or heart-mind. For Dasan, the Heart-mind of the Way is not a complete or perfect repository of moral principles but our Heavenly endowed, nascent moral conscience, a real but difficult to describe aspect of humanity, a spark of the divine among our all-too-human inclinations.[27] In contrast, the Human Heart-mind is the readily recognized corporeal heart-mind with all its sundry thoughts and desires.

> If the nature includes both good and bad and Mengzi talked only about human nature being good, then he did not understand human nature. If Mengzi did not understand human nature, then who did? Based upon the claim that 'The nature of righteous principle is the basis for the good, while the material nature is the basis of what is bad; when these two natures are combined we have the complete nature.' [If we accept this] then Yang Xiong's theory that human nature is a mixture of good and bad is the correct view. If we just talk about the material nature, then Xunzi's theory that human nature is bad is the correct view. In this case, the tradition of Kongzi and Zisi is found in Xunzi and Yang Xiong; why then do people look to Mengzi as the true inheritor of this tradition? The classics say, 'The Human Heart-mind is precarious; The Heart-mind of the Way is subtle.'[28] People today take the Human Heart-mind to refer to the material nature and the Heart-mind of the Way to refer to the nature of righteous principle. They do not understand that the words heart-mind and nature refer to different things. The word nature refers only to liking and disliking. How can one take the heart-mind to be the nature? It is the nature of deer to like mountain forests. It is the nature of pheasants to dislike being raised in captivity. If these creatures unfortunately end up in captivity, to the end of their days, their heart-minds will like the mountain forests. If they catch sight of a mountain forest they will immediately feel an overwhelming longing to be there. This is what is called nature. Heaven endowed these creatures with this nature when it gave them life and caused them to follow this nature in fulfilling their particular ways of life. If human beings did not have the particular nature

[27] One can compare Dasan's view with the theological concept of the *imago dei* if one understands by the latter the idea that human beings, and in Dasan's case only human beings, are endowed with a special quality (their Greater Self or Heart-mind of the Way) that allows God or God's plan to be manifest in the world. Dasan's view is like Calvin's idea that God's eternal law is inscribed upon our heart-minds. Thanks to Michael R. Slater for noting this comparison.

[28] See note 26.

> they do, though they wanted to perform even the slightest good act, to the end of their days they would never be able to do so. Since Heaven has endowed them with this nature, they always are able to awaken and manifest it. Whenever they entertain the thought of doing what is bad, it is because they vacillate between allowing [self-centered] desires to come forth and blocking and preventing [them from coming forth]. It is clear that the ability to block and prevent [self-centered desires from coming forth] is part of the original nature that they received as Heaven's command.

So human nature simply refers to the distinctive set of desires and preferences human beings are endowed with and experience. There is nothing about these desires and preferences that could justify calling human beings good; these simply define our natural appetitive and affective state. What justifies calling human beings *good* is that they find it easier to embrace and develop their good inclinations and more difficult to follow what is bad. This is something they realize only if they regularly reflect upon what they do, if they exercise the heart-mind in its proper function. Following good inclinations leads people to more satisfying and happy lives; giving into and pursuing their bad inclinations leads to being dissatisfied and haunted by the inner voice of conscience. In Dasan's view, people can never simply abandon themselves to wickedness; they can never be truly evil, for by nature they are creatures who cannot make wickedness their good.[29] They will always feel responsible for the choices they make, for unlike every other animal they have morally sensitive heart-minds and are free to choose what to do; given their nature, they will either enjoy the satisfaction of having chosen well or suffer the dissatisfaction of knowing that they have chosen and acted against their better nature.

> Heaven has bestowed upon human beings the power of autonomy; if they desire to do what is good, they will do good; if they desire to do what is bad, they will do bad. [What they do] varies; it is not fixed or predetermined; the power [to decide] lies within each person. [In this respect] humans are unlike other animals, which have heart-minds that are fixed and predetermined. And so, when human beings do what is good it really is to their credit and when they do what is bad it really is their fault. This power of the heart-mind [to choose] is not human

[29] In this respect, Dasan's view is not wholly unlike Kant's claim against the possibility of radical evil as presented in *Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone*.

> nature.[30] Yang Xiong mistakenly thought this was part of human nature and as a consequence he said our nature is a mixture of good and bad; it is not that we originally lack such and he simply made it up. Bees are creatures that cannot but protect their queen, but those who describe such behavior don't take them to be displaying *loyalty* because their heart-minds are fixed and predetermined to act in this way. Tigers are creatures that cannot but visit harm on other creatures, but those who enforce the law don't prosecute them according to the statutes because their heart-minds are fixed and predetermined to act in this way. Human beings are different; they can choose to do what is good or choose to do what is bad; the control rests within them; their actions are not fixed and predetermined. And so, when they do what is good, this is to their credit; when they do what is bad, this is their fault. If the possibilities of doing either good or bad are from the start mixed together, then it seems as if the culpability [of those who do what is bad] should be mitigated. The reason one cannot escape responsibility for the wickedness one has done is because human nature is good. Since it is truly the case that it is human nature to delight in doing what is good and to be ashamed of doing what is bad, if one works against this nature and does what is bad can one escape one's responsibility?

For Dasan, one of the worst consequences of the orthodox neo-Confucian view is that it encourages an evasion of moral responsibility. It seems to say that whatever is bad does not truly belong to human nature, but instead is a consequence of the grosser material form within which our nature unfortunately is lodged. For Dasan, this is to ignore the fact that human nature includes both good and bad and that it is *up to us* to engage our heart-minds, reflect on what we do, and exercise our Heavenly endowed power of free choice to promote the good. The only way to do this is to resist following what is bad and instead work out of our good inclinations and endeavor to promote the good in our actual everyday lives. If we persevere in this way to develop ourselves, we will discover that a life of moral endeavor is the most satisfying, natural, and happy life creatures like us can enjoy. While Dasan insists that such a life follows a divine plan designed by Sangje, he did not see any role for sanctification or grace in this process, which distinguishes him from

[30] Human nature is simply our unselfconscious natural dispositions; these have no power to steer themselves. In contrast, the heart-mind is aware and has the power of choice.

thinkers like Aquinas with whom he shares many similarities. Heaven's gift was given to human beings at birth and this alone is sufficient for their moral and spiritual fulfillment.[31]

For Dasan, another related and equally objectionable feature of the orthodox view is that it fails to distinguish human beings from other creatures and things. We have seen hints of this criticism already in Dasan's arguments about the distinctive existential stance of human beings. Unlike mere things or other creatures, humans cannot avoid responsibility for themselves and what they become.[32] Dasan made this point repeatedly and in different ways throughout his commentary on the *Mengzi*. For example, consider his interpretation of 4B19, which says, "The difference between human beings and the birds and beasts is ever so slight. Common people abandon this difference; cultivated people preserve it."[33] Dasan comments on this by saying,

> The *Xunzi* says, "Water and fire have *qi* but lack life. Grass and trees have life but lack awareness. Birds and beasts have awareness but lack [an understanding of what is] right. Human beings have *qi*, life, awareness, and [an understanding of what is] right." What this says is that when it comes to the different natures that things receive, in general, there are four classes, and human beings and birds and beasts are the closest to one another in kind. In having ears that hear and eyes that see they are no different. In having noses that smell and tongues that taste they are no different. In having desires for food, sex, peace, and ease, they are no different. The only difference between them is that [only human beings] possess the Heart-mind of the Way and yet the Heart-mind of the Way is something without physical form or substance. It is exceedingly minute and subtle. (The *Book of History* says, "The Heart-mind of the Way is minute and subtle.") If you depart from this and abandon it, then you are like the birds and beasts; how then could you distinguish yourself from them? This is why we should clutch Mengzi's most pertinent warning tightly to our breasts![34]

[31] In these respects, as well as others, Dasan remains firmly within the Confucian tradition. He believed that concerted effort of the right kind would eventually transform a person into a perfectly moral being.

[32] Dasan's claims here bear some significant resemblance to Sartre's contrast in *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* between things that are in themselves (*en soi*), like tables and chairs, and those that are for themselves (*pour soi*), like human beings, and his accompanying notion of bad faith.

[33] For the passage and Dasan's commentary, see *Maengjayoui*, pp. 144-5.

Dasan goes on to explicitly and clearly distinguish his interpretation from the orthodox view, which was derived from Song and Ming dynasty neo-Confucians.

> Neo-Confucians of the Song and Ming all take nature to be principle. And so, the *Collected Commentaries* says, "When human beings or other creatures are born they all equally receive the principles of Heaven and earth as their nature." This is the so-called "original nature"; original nature admits of no differences or gradations of greatness or smallness, loftiness or meanness; such differences and gradations exist only because endowments of material form and substance can be pure or impure, one-sided or correct. And so, once principle is lodged in *qi* it cannot but follow that things are not the same. This is what the *Collected Commentaries* means when it says, "Among all creatures only human beings receive correct and proper physical form and *qi* and so differ in this minute way from the rest." If one considers this claim, then what makes human beings different from birds and beasts is *qi* and not nature or spirit. Common people abandon their form and *qi* while cultivated people preserve their form and *qi* – how can this be taken as the main idea of Mengzi's teachings? The form and *qi* are bodily and material. They flourish when one is alive and decay away after death. How could common people alone succeed in abandoning these? Neo-Confucians say, "The way in which the original nature lodges in form and *qi* is like the way water takes on the shape of the vessel into which it is poured. If the vessel is round then the water becomes round; if the vessel is square the water becomes square." This clearly takes the nature of human beings and the nature of other animals as a single thing. It is only because of its furry hide that one becomes an ox, because of its feathered frame that another becomes a chicken, or one's naked skin that one becomes a human being.[35] Mengzi, though, argued that there were both similarities and differences between the natures of dogs, oxen, and human beings, and he defended this view vigorously in his battles with Gaozi.

[34] The phrase about "clutching (it) tightly to one's breast" is from chapter eight of the *Doctrine of the Mean*. Kongzi said of his disciple Yanzi, "Whenever he got hold of one good thing, he *clutched it tightly to his breast* and never let it go."

[35] The idea is that the pelt of the ox, the feathers of a chicken, and the naked skin of a human being serve as the different vessels that shape the common nature poured into all of them.

Dasan develops his views about the Heart-mind of the Way and how it distinguishes human beings from all other creatures and things in his commentary on *Mengzi* 4B28, which says, "The difference between cultivated people and common people is that the cultivated maintain their heart-minds."[36] Contrary to what many neo-Confucians claim, Dasan insists that in this passage, Mengzi is not encouraging us to maintain or preserve some original, pristine state of mind but rather to never lose sight of and hold fast to our nascent moral sense in the midst of an ongoing struggle to avoid the bad and pursue the good.

> Maintaining the heart-mind in ancient times was different than in contemporary times. In ancient times, *maintaining the heart-mind* meant to protect the heart-mind when it was about to be lost. In contemporary times, *maintaining the heart-mind* means to make a concerted effort not to forget. An earlier passage[37] says, "The difference between human beings and the birds and beasts is ever so slight. Common people abandon this difference; cultivated people maintain it." Whenever Mengzi talked about maintaining the heart-mind he was talking about maintaining what is *ever so slight*. In an even earlier passage[38] it says, "Those who are great do not lose their child-like heart-mind." This is talking about maintaining what is *ever so slight*. A later passage[39] says, "What one does throughout the morning and day fetters and destroys the [good effects of the] evening *qi*." This is talking about destroying what is *ever so slight*. What is *ever so slight* is the Heart-mind of the Way. If some part of the Heart-mind of the Way is maintained, one is a human being; if no part of the Heart-mind of the Way is maintained, one is a bird or a beast; if the Heart-mind of the Way is fully maintained and never forgotten, one is a sage. As for whether it is maintained or not, the struggle is over this alone [the Heart-mind of the Way]. If you want to maintain this then whenever you serve your parents, elders, or ruler, whenever you are with your friends, caring for the people, or teaching others, do your utmost to be conscientious and trustworthy and do not allow even a trace of deception or insincerity to come into play; only then can you say that you have not lost it. To "maintain" it means to protect it when it is about to be lost. [The word "maintain" should be

[36] For the passage and Dasan's commentary, see *Maengjayoui*, pp. 156-7.
[37] *Mengzi* 4B19.
[38] *Mengzi* 4B12.
[39] *Mengzi* 6A8.

> understood in the way we understand "King Huan of Qi maintained the state of Wei."[40]] In later times, people talk about maintaining in the midst of stillness and maintaining in the midst of silence and about having no thoughts or deliberations, not speaking or laughing, closing the eyes and collecting the heart-mind and focusing one's gaze on the *qi* and images[41] before they have come forth, all in order to make the original state of the heart-mind tenuous, clear, and transparent and without a single speck of defilement so that one can find what is "vigorous and lively."[42] This is the difference between ancient times and the present.

We must maintain and follow the Heart-mind of the Way as we pursue the path of cultivation and resist the temptations of the Human Heart-mind, which often blindly follows short-sighted, self-centered desires. For Dasan the Confucian Way was a struggle between conflicting desires and the key to winning lies in attending to and holding fast to the former. Dasan believed that the Human Heart-mind does not first evaluate and then freely choose to follow what is bad; it simply is led along by things. If we exercise the Heart-mind of the Way to evaluate the different desires that move us, Dasan thought we would reject the bad and cleave to the good. The key to success lies in consistently exercising our moral minds, what he called following *Mengzi*, "this heart-mind."[43] He makes these points clearly in his commentary on *Mengzi* 6A15.[44]

> The Greater Self is spiritual and luminous; it is without form. The Lesser Self is the physical body; it has form. Those who act in accord with the Greater Self follow their nature; those who act in accord with the Lesser Self follow their desires. The Heart-mind of the Way always wants to nurture the Greater Self; the Human Heart-mind always wants to nurture the Lesser Self. Those who delight in Heaven and understand fate succor and nurture the Heart-mind of the Way. If one can "overcome

[40] In 658 BCE, King Huan of Qi came to the rescue and defended the state of Wei from attack by barbarians.

[41] *Qi* (氣) and the images (*xiang* 象) are metaphysical constituents of the universe that exist before there are distinct and discernable things.

[42] Zhu Xi uses this expression in a number of places in his works to convey the lively and vibrant character of the Confucian Way (often in contrast to Buddhism). He uses this phrase to describe a line drawn from the *Book of Poetry* which is quoted in chapter 13 of the *Doctrine of the Mean*, "Hawks soar across the heavens; fish frolic in the depths."

[43] The term "this heart-mind" (Ch. cixin, K. chashim 此心) is first seen in the *Mengzi* but commonly was used by neo-Confucians to refer to the innate moral mind.

[44] For the passage and Dasan's commentary, see *Maengjayoui*, pp. 209-10.

> the self and return to ritual propriety"[45] the Human Heart-mind will be controlled and compliant. This is what determines whether one will be good or bad. It is not correct to talk about the ears and eyes in terms of the Lesser Self. Whenever we come in contact with things, we do so through the ears and eyes. The ears receive sounds and convey them to the heart-mind, while the eyes receive sights and convey them to the heart-mind. These are simply their functions. The ears and eyes simply carry out their allotted functions, but when have they ever had the power to compel *this heart-mind* to follow what they convey to us? If what they convey benefits the Greater Self, then to act in accord with what they convey is to act in accord with the Greater Self; to distance oneself from what they convey would be to act in accord with the Lesser Self. If what they convey benefits the Lesser Self, then to act in accord with what they convey is to act in accord with the Lesser Self; to distance oneself from what they convey would be to act in accord with the Greater Self. This is how things are. Whether one behaves properly when it comes to acting in accord with or distancing oneself depends on whether one exercises the function of the heart-mind, which is to reflect. If one reflects, one will not be able to act in accord with the Lesser Self and distance oneself from the Greater Self, nurture the Lesser Self and harm the Greater Self. If one fails to reflect, one will not be able to avoid indulging one's heart-mind and one will not behave properly when it comes to acting in accord with or distancing oneself. Is not the ability of the heart-mind to reflect a blessing? This is why Mengzi praises it by saying, "This is what Heaven has granted us."

III. CONCLUSION

We have seen how Dasan consistently criticizes the orthodox interpretation of Mengzi's philosophy for imposing an ornate and mistaken metaphysical theory that was never part of his way of thinking. Dasan explicitly traced the origin of this mistaken theory to Daoist and Buddhist sources and blamed earlier neo-Confucians for importing such views into Confucian philosophy and thereby corrupting the tradition and profoundly distorting its message. He makes these and subsequent points in his long commentary on *Mengzi* 7A1, which says,[46]

[45] *Analects* 12.1.

[46] For the passage and Dasan's commentary, see *Maengjayoui*, pp. 226-9.

> To develop completely one's heart-mind is to understand one's nature. To understand one's nature is to understand Heaven. To maintain the heart-mind and to nourish one's nature is how one serves Heaven. When dying young or living long do not cause one to be of two heart-minds, to cultivate the self, awaiting whatever is to come, this is how one establishes one's true destiny.

Dasan's comments by saying,

> Neo-Confucians of later ages regard principles as the origin of all the myriad things in the universe, whether they are with or without shape, spiritual and luminous or corrupt and benighted. They make no distinction between what is great or trivial, what is primary or secondary. This is their so-called theory of how all things originate from one principle, separate into a myriad of manifestations, and in the end return to unite into one principle. Such a view is no different at all from the Buddhist Zhao Zhou's[47] theory that the myriad dharma all originate from one dharma [of Emptiness]. This is because in their youth, many scholars of the Song dynasty immersed themselves in Chan Buddhism. When they later returned to Confucianism, this influence remained mixed in with their theories about human nature and principle.

Dasan continues by arguing that the neo-Confucian conception of principle not only is not authentically Confucian but also without merit.

> When Zisi wrote the *Doctrine of the Mean*, he said clearly, "What Heaven decrees, this is called nature."[48] Mengzi said, "To develop completely one's heart-mind is to understand one's nature."[49] Now if you take the heart-mind, nature, and Heaven, and refer to all three of them as one principle, then Zisi's claim [would be saying] "What principle decrees, this is called principle"; wouldn't this be trivial?[50] The same would go for Mengzi's claim [which would be saying] "To develop this principle completely is to understand principle; to understand this principle is to understand principle." To bind the myriad things to a single principle

[47] This refers to Zhaozhou Congshen 趙州從諗, a great Tang Chan Buddhist teacher. See Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History, Volume I: India and China* (New York: MacMillan, 1988), pp. 167-8.

[48] This is the opening line of the *Doctrine of the Mean*.

[49] This is the opening line of Book Seven of the *Mengzi*.

[50] Michael R. Slater has suggested that Dasan's argument that the orthodox view amounts to a tautology, which would make moral assertions virtually meaningless, can be understood as analogous to what in the West is known as the Euthyphro Problem.

> and revert to an undifferentiated state leaves one without a way to deliberate about or distinguish among the myriad affairs of the world. All that would remain would be to maintain a vast and undifferentiated frame of heart-mind, silent and without motion, regarding this as the highest and most sublime state of being. How can this be regarded as the original view of the Confucian school? What exactly is principle? Principle is without love or hate; principle is without likes or dislikes; it is vacant and empty, without name or form and yet is said to be the endowment that we human beings receive as our nature. It is hard indeed to regard this as the Way!

In addition to making hash of Mengzi's teachings about nature and the heart-mind, the orthodox neo-Confucian account undermines and distorts his original view of Heaven. Dasan continues his commentary by quoting two of the greatest representatives of the orthodox view on this topic,

> Zhang Zai said, "Under the aspect of the great tenuousness, we have the name Heaven. Under the aspect of the transformation of *qi*, we have the name Way. When we combine the tenuous and *qi*, we have the name nature. When we combine nature and sensation, we have the name heart-mind." (Zhu Xi said, "The transformation of *qi* is the creative transformation of *yin* and *yang*. Water, fire, metal, wood, and earth all belong to the great tenuousness. All of these lie within the first circle of the [*Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate*].[51]")

Taking issue with them, he offers an alternative view of Heaven, insisting that Heaven is alive, intelligent, bright, and active. Some regard Dasan's views about Heaven as the result of his exposure to and knowledge of Roman Catholic philosophy. There is no doubt that this tradition influenced his thinking, but it is mistaken to regard him as imposing Catholic views onto Confucianism. He was inspired by Catholicism, but he drew upon and his thought very much follows the trajectory of the early Confucian tradition. This is clearly the case in his insistence that Heaven is alive, intelligent, bright, and active; his point is that only such a deity, concerned with human welfare, can serve as the origin of the Confucian moral order. Dead, immobile, and insensitive principle,

[51] The *Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate* 太極圖 (Ch. *Taiji tu*), as adopted and explained by Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017-73), offered a schema illustrating Confucian cosmology. Zhu Xi is claiming that all of the fundamental modes of existence lie within the original and formless phase.

which neo-Confucians claim is the ordering principle of the universe, simply cannot fill the roles of the Lord on High.

> The master of Heaven is the Lord on High. At times he is referred to as "Heaven" in the same way that we sometimes refer to the ruler of a state as "the state." The core idea is that he is someone whose commands cannot be rejected. The "Heaven" that is the blue form [above] is nothing more than a vault-like canopy above us; its nature and status is nothing more or greater than earth, water, and fire. How could *this* be the basis and origin of the nature and Way for human beings? The first circle of the [*Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate*] is not found in any of the six classics. Does it contain any creatures with refined intelligence or only those things that lack the capacity to know? Is it a vast, vacuous, and unfathomable realm? Among the world's creatures, those without refined intelligence are incapable of serving as masters.[52] And so if the head of a household is dull, stupid, and lacking in wisdom then the various affairs within the house will be in disarray. If the head of a district is dull, stupid, and lacking in wisdom then the various affairs within the district will be in disarray. How much more extensive would be the disarray if the one principle of the vast and vacuous great tenuousness were the source and origin of the master of the myriad things in Heaven and earth! Are the affairs in Heaven and earth well regulated? The *Book of Poetry* says, "Manifesting bright [virtue] below; glorious and awe-inspiring on high!"[53] It also says, "Vast, vast the Lord on High; governor of the people below,"[54] "The Lord on High in August Heaven, will not allow me to survive,"[55] "Heaven enlightens the people like blowing on a flute or ocarina,"[56] "August Heaven is brightly aware; it accompanies you in all your travels. August Heaven is luminously attentive; it is beside

[52] The following discussion is aimed at showing how only a sentient and powerful Lord on High could serve as the master (*zhuzai* 主宰) of the meaningful and orderly world we observe around us. Dasan is implicitly criticizing Zhu Xi here who insists that principle (li 理), which is neither sentient nor active, is master of the myriad things. For a discussion of some of the ways in which Zhu Xi struggled with this issue, see Yung-sik Kim, *The Natural Philosophy of Chu Hsi (1130-1200)* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2000), pp. 108-21, 307. Thanks to Justin Tiwald for pointing this implicit criticism out to me.

[53] *Mao* 236.

[54] *Mao* 255.

[55] *Mao* 258.

[56] *Mao* 254.

> you when you stray and indulge yourself."[57] Stand in awe of the majesty of Heaven and forever preserve its favor"[58] and "Respect the anger of Heaven; do not fool around or be idle."[59]

Concluding his commentary on this passage from the *Mengzi*, Dasan insists that the interpretation he offers, which understands Heaven as a benevolent deity who endows us with the beginning of moral understanding and inclines us to follow this as the Way, is far more sensible and accessible than the orthodox view.

> When former sages talked about Heaven, it was, as in the examples above, something real, accessible, and clear. When people talk of Heaven today, it is, as in the cases of Zhang Zai and Zhu Xi, something mysterious, vague, and indistinct. How can it be known? The Way is what people go by; what one follows from birth until death is called the Way. What one follows from birth until death is called the Way is like traveling from Chu to Qin is called the way. The *Doctrine of the Mean* says, "The Way is such that you cannot leave it even for an instant."[60] This is like traveling from Chu to Qin, while you are on the way [from one to the other], you cannot leave it even for an instant. In a similar fashion, the Way is not far removed from human beings, and yet Zhang Zai takes the transformation of *qi* to be the Way. Since the creative transformation of *yin* and *yang* and the alternations and movements of metal, wood, water, fire and earth are not what I myself go by, how can they be my Way? If one cites the line about how "the alternation of the *yin* and the *yang*, this is called the Way"; looking at the source (which is the *Book of Changes*), we see that this text talks about the Way of Heaven and not the way of human beings and this line talks about the way of change not the Way of Heaven. How could the Way which directs the nature of we human beings come down to the alternation of the *yin* and the *yang*? The heart-mind is a name for the greater part[61] of we human beings; nature is the desires and preferences of the heart-mind. As for the tenuousness, *qi*, and sensation [that Zhang Zai talked about], I fear I lack a clear understanding of such things.

As is evident from the passages quoted throughout this essay, Jeong Dasan presented his interpretation of Mengzi in the form of

[57] *Mao* 254.
[58] *Mao* 272.
[59] *Mao* 254.
[60] *Doctrine of the Mean*, 1.
[61] A reference to *Mengzi* 6A15.

a commentary upon this classic text. Moreover, he appealed to the full range of Confucian classics in order to support his reading of the *Mengzi*. In addition to such textual and philological evidence, he crafted careful and powerful philosophical arguments criticizing the orthodox view and demonstrating the superiority of his own account. He regarded his project as an effort to reveal and discard the pernicious influences of Daoist and Buddhist thought that had infiltrated and perverted the original message of Confucianism. His goal was to restore the original sense, methods, and aims of Mengzi's teachings, and in many respects one can plausibly argue that he succeeded in this task. Nevertheless, he also extended and enriched Mengzi's original vision as he sought to defend it in his own unique historical and cultural context. Dasan's distinctive views about human nature and the heart-mind, of Heaven and the Way offer prominent examples of such elaborations.

‘THE MAXIM OF THE MOON’ AND THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF: AN ETHICAL REVISION OF THORNHILL-MILLER’S & MILLICAN’S SECOND ORDER RELIGION

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I. INTRODUCTION

Branden Thornhill-Miller and Peter Millican have provided us with a fine dialogical study of rational religious belief and its limits.[1] They argue that unavailability of conclusive evidence of perceived supernatural agency and contradictions between various religious belief systems render all religious traditions irrational. However, they also recognise that empirical research shows that religious belief may in some cases have beneficial individual and social effects, therefore they put forward a hypothesis of a ‘second-order religious belief’which would be rational, because it would rely one the Fine-Tuning Argument alone and would not be bound by the orthodoxies of any specific religious tradition. One key aspect of religious belief that receives no mention, apart from a note in two footnotes (143 and 144, p. 47), is its moral dimension, its lived experience. This omission is significant as it undermines the very point they want to avoid in evoking the ‘Maxim of the Moon’ which they borrow from Buddhism, a religious tradition that values daily practices over a rational debate. Their lack of engagement with ethics can make Thornhill-Miller’s and Millican’s hypothesis of a rational ‘second-order theistic view’ unappealing to religious believers. Since both authors want to reach religious believers (as well as non- or un-believers), their position requires revision.

[1] Branden Thornhill-Miller and Peter Millican, ‘The Common-Core/Diversity Dilemma: Revisions of Humean Thought, New Empirical Research, and the Limits of Rational Religious Belief ‘, *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* Vol. 7, no. 1 (2015): 1-49. Subsequent references to this work are included parenthetically in text.

In his extensive reply to Thornhill-Miller and Millican, Janusz Salamon argues that their position appears to be incoherent, since their second order religious belief based solely on the Fine-Tuning Argument cannot serve as a source of existentially relevant sense of meaning, neither can it deliver any other practical benefits, such as comfort in times of grief which Thornhill-Miller and Millican (p. 45) identify as the motivation of religious commitment.[2] He also challenges one of their central claims, based on Hume's insight, that religious pluralism undermines rationality of all religious traditions, by pointing to the possibility of an epistemically coherent pluralistic interpretation of the fact of religious diversity (Salamon 2013, pp. 249-278, Salamon 2003, pp. 167-180) and to the possibility of an inclusivist account of religious experience (Salamon 2010, pp. 141-175, Salamon 2004, pp. 7-22). He suggests that Thornhill-Miller's and Millican's hypothesis of second order religion "may be refined by taking into account a view of axiologically grounded religious belief" which Salamon calls 'agatheism', since it identifies God or the Ultimate Reality with the ultimate *good* (*to agathon*) (Salamon 2015, p. 197).

For many religious believers relating to the ultimate good takes place through engagement in practices, including moral practices. This study aims to expand Salamon's agatheistic position and divert Thornhill-Miller's and Millican's attention to the sphere of morality. It shall start by exploring the relationship between theistic and non-theistic reasons for being moral and will suggest that settling in this question is more relevant to Thornhill-Miller's and Millican's debate than the Fine-Tuning Argument. It will argue that both believers and un-believers, even if they express their motivation for being moral in different terms, they both strive to be moral. Morality or moral formation, a concern for any decent human being, whether religious or not, can be a more fruitful starting point for Thornhill-Miller's and Millican's dialogical project. Dialogue at the level of morality or the lived experience of rational religious beliefs could result in more existentially relevant propositions. It could also help them to address the two biases to which they draw our attention, egocentric and confirmation, which they claim, are most powerful and persuasive biases as they can distort 'human perception,

[2] Janusz Salamon, 'Atheism and Agatheism in the Global Ethical Discourse: Reply to Millican and Thornhill-Miller', *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 7, no. 4 (2015): 197-245.

interpretations and judgments' (32). It's worth noting that different religious spiritualities have powerful resources for addressing these biases and for purifying perceptions, illuminating interpretations, and altering or improving judgments. Religious stories, spiritual exercises, rituals, engagements with the works of art can be more effective in addressing our narcissistic tendencies and improving our behaviours. However, for Thornhill-Millers and Millican to take on board these points would require amongst other things (to which we alluded above) a more positive approach to imagination than they seem to hold when they endorse Hume's distinction between imagination and rationality. For many theistic and non-theistic philosophers imagination is a key faculty for making sense of our world and it includes both rational as well as emotional elements. Engaging with the Maxim of the Moon, to which we shall turn next, in an imaginative way can open up a number of possibilities which Thornhill-Miller and Millican seem to overlook.

II. THE 'MAXIM OF THE MOON': A MORAL READING

Thornhill-Miller and Millican explain that the 'Maxing of the Moon' warns us 'against the blinding force of human cognitive bias by suggesting that all our pursuits of knowledge – including all our religions – are like 'fingers pointing at the moon'. They say that 'too often we mistake our own finger for the moon and allow it to eclipse our view' (48). They are right to warn us about our biases and dangers of projecting our own concerns on what is in front of our eyes, however close or distant we are to that object. But, there is another way of reading the fingers-Moon relationship. One indeed might get stuck and not see beyond one's finger and miss the Moon but one might also get inspired by others who point to the Moon and see the Moon for what it is: one's fingers are not alone in the scenario. The shift in our vision can take place thanks to a more attentive other who can challenge our perception, interpretation and judgement. Sometimes it is enough that one person changes her position in order to see more clearly and others move too in order to have a clearer vision. The point is that there is much more dynamism in the activity of pointing to the Moon than Thornhill-Miller and Millican see. It is a relational activity in the same way as the lived experience of rational religious belief is. Inspired or energized by others, we might eventually reach a moment when we see the Moon and recognise our

dependency on it. We may even realize that the Moon is not as distant and its influence on the lives of finger-pointers is visible or felt here and now. Thornhill-Miller and Millican rightly wonder 'how much of the moon is genuinely revealed by our cultural religious pointers, and how much eclipsed by them'. They are also right to suggest that if all fingers are removed there could be something sterile and unreal. They propose a third way of dealing with the Moon maxim – 'another vision of the moon, as a luminous, second-order ultimate reality of some kind that yet lies beyond the comprehension of all our individual efforts to point to it' (49). This paper argues that the fourth way of relating to the Maxim of the Moon is to focus on those who 'point their fingers' at a reality that is never fully comprehendible yet which influences the lived experience of these agents. Thornhill-Miller's and Millican's divisions into neat cultural religious and supernaturalist finger-pointers in the direction of the Moon or the Ultimate reality (Salamon's agatheism) existentially (in a sense of the moral experience of religious or non-religious individuals) is not as tidy. There are both theists and non-theists who believe that God (or the Moon as in the maxim we have been considering) are unnecessary for the discussion of morality and there are those (theists) for whom God is essential element in the discussion. The next part of this paper will explore a sample of these different views. Its aim is to illuminate our reading of the Maxim of the Moon.

III. THEISTS AND NON-THEISTS ON MORALITY

Bernard Williams in his *Morality: Introduction to Ethics* argues that any appeal to God in morality 'either adds nothing at all, or it adds the wrong sort of thing'[3]. The influential opinion of Otto Pfleiderer, calling for a clear separation of ethics from religion, emerged on the eve of the First World War in Berlin[4]. Richard Holloway (former bishop of Edinburgh in the Church of Scotland) in his *Godless Morality: Keeping Religion Out of Ethics* agrees with Williams's point that religion 'adds nothing' or that it adds 'the wrong sort of thing'[5]. A Kantian follower, Christine Korsgaard

[3] Bernard Williams, *Morality: Introduction to Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972, p. 65.

[4] Otto Pfleiderer, 'Is Morality Without Religion Possible and Desirable?', *The Philosophical Review*. 5(1896): 449.

[5] Richard Holloway, *Godless Morality: Keeping Religion Out of Ethics*, Edinburgh: Cannongate Books, 1999.

in her *The Sources of Normativity*, has developed a 'transparent ethical theory', which claims to be neutral to both theism and atheism (similar position to the third way of approaching the Moon which Thornhill-Miller and Millican endorse), and whose success is dependent on the idea of transparency understood as a third person perspective (this third person, rather than the moral agent or the one with whom the moral agent interacts, determines whether the act is right or wrong)[6]. This theory has received mixed reactions. Ton Van Den Beld, who in his 'The Morality System With and Without God' takes on board Korsgaard's theory as well as both theistic and atheistic approaches, argues that even if at one level of human interactions all these approaches articulate what morality is about, in the end it is a theistic metaphysic that is capable of providing the resources for dealing with 'inescapable and (sometimes) for the agent costly obligations'[7]. John Cottingham also favours the theistic explanation of morality when it comes to dealing with the issues of unconditional obligations. However, his view (unlike Van Den Beld's) is, to a large extent, sympathetic to the atheistic position when it comes to 'good-making properties' which exist in our observable world, in front of our eyes, so to speak[8]. A similar (observation-based) point is made by Philippa Foot in her 'Natural Goodness', in which she proposes to see human goodness as analogous to the goodness of a plant or an animal; just as we can say that there is something wrong with a rabbit who fails to behave as rabbits do, so we can say that there is something wrong with a person who has no interests in being, for example, honest[9]. We are called to be moral by virtue of being human. Shameless or immoral people, we can say, are failing to be human. They are failing to see or failing to act upon what is in front of their eyes (there may be all kinds of reasons for that failure, some might be related to the weakness of the will, others to ignorance or to a deliberate decision not to 'look'). Cottingham considers whether it is enough to say that what we need for morality are 'purely natural features in virtue of which things count as good' (Cottingham 2009, p. 37). Non-theistic philosophers who base their approaches to moral theory on arguments from natural sciences

[6] Christine M. Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

[7] Ton Van Den Beld, 'The Morality System with and without God', *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 4(2001): 383.

[8] John Cottingham, *Why Believe?*, London: Continuum, 2009, p. 37.

[9] Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003.

clearly support this view. Some philosophers (Peter Railton, for example) attempt to answer the normative question of ethics by looking at the notion of 'well-being' in naturalistic terms and attempts to answer it at the level of social explanation. Social scientists too are contributing new insights to our understanding of, for example, the idea of moral character, which according to Gilbert Harman, has no possibility of having stable traits[10]. Another psychologist Darcia Narvaez draws from neuroscience in her discussions of the moral mind and 'multiple moralities'[11]. These thinkers claim that morality can be worked out on the basis of what is observable. This doesn't mean that our evaluations are always correct; clearly, there are disagreements when it comes to assessing what we see. Cottingham says that 'it is right that our pursuit of goodness is not a matter of seeing some mysterious extra quality in addition to the observable features of actions and objects, but rather involves a careful investigation and assessment of their relevant good-making properties' (Cottingham 2009, p. 39). In other words, atheist and theist have the same tools for assessing morally right or wrong actions: ordinary observation of the world around us and ordinary reasoning about what we see are what is needed for making right moral decisions. However, Cottingham claims that while this is true there is something missing in this view. This missing bit is what he calls 'conclusive' or 'unconditional' reason for choice – 'one that requires our compliance' (Cottingham 2009, p. 39). It is worth noting that that Van Den Beld makes a similar point with his idea of 'inescapable' and 'costly' obligations.

Cottingham explains his position by asking such questions as: '... in a random or impersonal universe, why should the fact that an action oppresses the weak and helpless be a reason – a conclusive reason – against performing it?' (Cottingham 2009, p. 39). In other words, what is this thing that establishes this odd connection between what is observable in front of our eyes and this strong normative power which requires us to act? According to Cottingham, the theist has an answer: 'If God himself is in his essential nature merciful, compassionate, just and loving, then when we humans act in the ways just mentioned we are drawn closer to God, the source of our being, and the source of all

[10] See Harman, *No Character or Personality*, http://www.princeton.edu/~harman/Papers/Character.pdf

[11] Darcia Narvaez, 'Triune Ethics: The Neurobiological Roots of Our Multiple Moralities', *New Ideas in Psychology,* 26 (2008): 95-119.

that is good' (Cottingham 2009, p. 41). He explains that 'such acts command our allegiance in the strongest way, since they bring us nearer to the 'home' where our true peace and fulfillment lie; and, conversely, in setting our face against them, we are cutting ourselves off from our true destiny, from the ultimate basis of joy and meaningfulness in our lives'(Cottingham 2009, p. 41).

Both Cottingham and Van Den Beld insist that God is what makes us go this extra mile for the sake of the other as the conclusive unconditional and inescapable obligation. This point is well illustrated in Agnieszka Holland's latest film *In Darkness*[12]. Based on the real story of Leopold Socha, the sewer worker in Lvov in occupied Poland (now Ukraine) during the Second World War, it presents a man, Robert Wieckiewicz, who hides Jews in secret underground passageways. Initially, despite the obvious dangers associated with helping Jews to survive, Wieckiewicz chooses to assist a Jewish family. We learn that he does so because he wants to earn the extra money that the family, who seem to be wealthy, offer him for this assistance. He doesn't come across either as a moral hero or a devout religious believer. In fact when we encounter him for the first time, he is a greedy man and a chancer. When there is no more money left to pay for his services, Wieckiewicz nevertheless doesn't stop what he is doing and, as we see in the film, he is genuinely concerned for the life and well-being of those in the sewer. He can't articulate his motivation but he is clear when he says that he can't walk away. For him, the obligation to stay and take a risk is unconditional. (Socha was posthumously awarded Israel's *Righteous Amongst Nations* title for what was considered to be heroic behaviour).

Rowan Williams proposes that in order to do something as extraordinary as what we see in Socha's case, one has to subscribe to the idea of a transcendent source of value. In the interview recorded in the *New Statesman* in 2010, Williams argues that 'to make sense of unconditional rights or claims, we need to be clear that there is such a thing as universal human nature and that it has some intrinsic dignity or worth. To try and ground this independently of the idea of a transcendent source of value seems to me not finally feasible'[13]. Williams refutes relativism and

[12] Agnieszka Holland, *In Darknes,* film released in 2012.

[13] Rowan Williams, Interview with Archbishop Rowan Williams, *New Statesman*, 19 July 2010. http://www.newstatesman.com/religion/2010/07/interview-religious-human [accessed 9 November 2012]

believes that morality needs a notion of the sacred. He explains that for the Christian this means 'understanding all human beings without exception as the objects of an equal, unswerving, unconditional love' (Williams 2012).

Fiona Ellis in her *God, Value, and Nature* attempts to show that the naturalist can accommodate the idea of unconditional moral obligations, and that he has no need to say that the world we inhabit – the natural world – is random, impersonal, and meaningless[14]. This kind of naturalist is to be distinguished from the scientific naturalist, for he denies that the scientist has the monopoly on reality, and allows that there are values which cannot be comprehended adequately in scientific terms. This kind of naturalism is familiar to the work of David Wiggins and John McDowell, its framework remains secular, but Ellis argues that the position can be extended in a theistic direction, and that Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy offers a way of lending justice to this move. Levinas, known for his 'ethics of the other', proposes that the only way we can relate to God is by being moral; a true meeting of the other in turn puts us in touch with Infinity.

It is important in this debate to ask how *does* a belief in God affect our moral responses? Elisabeth Anscombe says: 'give up religion, let religion completely fade away and there will still be morality'[15]. Human beings have always had morality. However, having stated this she immediately poses another important question: 'what morality'? Is her question suggesting that if we remove the concept of the sacred or a transcendent source of value we won't have this conclusive and unconditional reason to choose? Or does she mean that religion (through its narrative, communal practices, appeals to Scripture, codes of behavior, etc.) is the mechanism for drawing our attention to this unconditional or inescapable obligation to which Cottingham and Van Den Beld refer? Is she anxious that without religious beliefs we are in danger of losing the link to that sense of unconditional obligation? If we have no belief or understanding that such acts as the acts of mercy, compassion, justice, and love (which we find in God who acts in this way towards us) call for our commitment, do we become impoverished as human beings? It seems that religion is

[14] Fiona Ellis, *God, Value, and Nature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

[15] Elisabeth Anscombe, 'Morality', in Geach, M. and Gormally, L., (eds), *Fatih in Hard Ground: Essays on Religion, Philosophy and Ethics by G.E.M. Anscombe*, (St Andrews Studies in Philosophy and Public Affairs), Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2008, p. 11.

capable of providing us (even if religious institutions don't always foster this provision) with a kind of space in which we can form our motivation and become passionate about morality. For example, a religious believer who believes that God is loving, when she realizes what she is receiving from God feels (this phrase is used intentionally here) compelled (in love) to give love. This doesn't mean that being a religious follower she will succeed in enacting love but she will have the right motivation for acting. Our world history shows that religious people are not immune to moral failure. But it seems that the reason for this state of affairs doesn't lie in religion per se but in our shared human condition which is capable of both moral success as well as moral failure. Becoming moral is a long and often difficult journey and the Moon maxim is rightly warning us from reducing this journey to a purely cognitive affair.

IV. RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND MORALITY: CONCLUDING REMARKS

So, 'how *does* a belief in God affect our moral responses?' It seems that in the deepest core of religions (we have in mind Abrahamic faiths in particular) we are called to be moral so that we can fulfill our God given potential to be truly human. Religious beliefs and morality are closely intertwined. For many religious believers there is more to their faith than the beliefs in miracles or afterlife. This wider notion of a rational religious belief is not adequately appreciated by Thornhill-Miller and Millican. In fact their approach to religious beliefs, for many religious believers will seem reductionist. Religious faith for many believers is broader and less staunch and neat. Religious faith, most of all, gives outlook about what is important. At the level of *motivation*, it shapes moral identity of religious believers and influences their decisions. But, religious faith doesn't give them the *moral tool* of right behaviour in every aspect of their daily life. A belief in the Transcendent who is the Triune God and who is Love may offer to a religious believer a *perspective* on life in general. It may help him or her to form an inner attitude to what they do with their life but it doesn't automatically translate into knowing whether they should spend more money on taking a depressed friend out for supper or whether to give money to this or that charity. These are individual moral dilemmas which an atheist, theist, or non-theist has to resolve. For the theist, there is no special line of communication from God from which God will call me and let me know what to do. Their relationship with God shapes who

they are but doesn't automatically translate into right decisions. Religious faith is often less certain than what Thornhill-Miller and Millican seem to suggest in their paper. The vast majority of religious believers live constantly with a tension between doubt and certainty, but they live with the hope that God somehow holds everything together, and (as the Moon in the Maxim) influences their existence. Religious faith fills religious believers with hope that they will be able to recognize and act upon unconditional obligations but their individual religious beliefs are not a guarantor that they will. Many religious believers (including the author of this paper) don't see miracles in the way Thornhill-Miller and Millican describe. Miracles are more extraordinary in the mundane: love, peace, natural world, a smile on the face of a refuge, a joy of music, the pleasure of friends, the moments of prayer – these are what we see as sparks of God in their existence. For many religious believers the notion of afterlife is a total mystery. In Christianity, the Kingdom of God is amongst us (not in some distant future). Salvation is embodied and present in every act of humanization; every act of dehumanisation calls for salvation. Bringing the human and the moral into the discussion of a religious belief would be a welcome move and the next step in the valuable dialogue which Thornhill-Miller and Millican initiated and Salamon is taking forward.

The above sample of possible ways of approaching of the relationship between religion and morality illustrates not only the complexity of the topic but also points to the wealth of responses and arguments which can inform or extend Thornhill-Miller's and Millican's approach. We haven't fully resolved the religion-morality question and are leaving it in the state as Plato's *Euthyphro* which ends with an unresolved dilemma. Socrates points out that Euthyphro, his dialogue partner, who is an expert on religious matters, cannot clearly explain whether something is pious or, in the language of the Divine Command Theory, morally right, because God commands it or God commands it because it is pious or morally right. The dialogue ends when the frustrated Euthyphro leaves. Perhaps the unresolvedness here is significant. For the theist, it gives not only a sense of consolation that the question of God and morality is indeed complex and perhaps we should not feel bad that we can't grasp it fully. Furthermore, it invites us to accept that although God becomes knowable to us (in Christianity through Incarnation), God is also a Mystery. Finally does it really matter whether God commands something because it is good or it is good because God commands it? Can we be satisfied with the idea that God commands or that God is in charge? As in the

Maxim of the Moon, the Moon is there whether we see it or not. Perhaps a more important question for working out in detail is how God's commandments or God's will are mediated to us. The answer to this question is necessary if our discussions on particular moral matters are to be constructive. Thornhill-Miller and Millican provide space for such a discussion in their second order theistic view.

It seems that there are religious reasons for being moral: because being moral is the will of God or it is to imitate God or it is an act of love for God. For example, it makes no sense if religious believers subscribe to their religious stories but fail to realize that life is a good gift or that every human being is precious or that the natural environment is to be respected or that that the poor, the weak, and the marginalized are to be especially protected. This, for many religious believers, is the 'logic' of their faith. And, this logic is not alien to those who don't subscribe to the theistic framework. A moral framework based on rationality and love is possible for theists, non-theists and atheists. However, as Richard Harris, in his *Re-Enchantment of Morality: Wisdom for a Troubled World,* argues religion makes morality attractive[16]. So perhaps it is time to re-discover the wisdom of religious traditions, look for new and creative ways to re-enchant morality, ignite the passion for morality, and expand our interpretation of the Maxim of the Moon.

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Robert Audi. *Rationality and Religious Commitment*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

Robert Audi is one of the most prominent contemporary philosophers, and his reputation is based on philosophical work that is not directly religious. However, later in his career he has engaged with more theological and religious questions. This book collects together his mature thinking about these matters in a concise form. To a great extent, Audi applies now to religion what he wrote a decade earlier in *The Architecture of Reason*.

Those who have read Audi before know what to expect: rigorous, uncompromising analysis, which is sometimes hard going but always rewarding. This is stylistically a prime example of how analytic philosophy of religion should be done. The book opens with a long series of careful distinctions. The first half of the book tries to tackle the question, what does it mean when we speak about rationality of religious beliefs. The rest of the book is committed to certain questions that produce challenges to religious belief, such as ethical disagreements, religious pluralism, the problem of evil and naturalism.

First Audi makes a basic distinction between rationality, reasonableness, justification and knowledge. Being rational basically means having the capacity to reason and being able to give adequate responses to experiences in both theoretical and practical sense. Rationality is more permissive than justification, which entails some public grounds that point towards truth. Being rational means thus merely being consonant with reason. Reasonable acts do not necessarily require justification, and sometimes things that have some minimal justification can be unreasonable. Audi, however, defines reasonability as something that is rational and at least minimally justified. Knowledge is a property of true justified beliefs. Audi claims that it is possible to have religious knowledge but that is not the topic of this book. He clarifies: 'my strategy ... is to consider whether religious commitment can be rational, particularly in the sense in which rationality is consonance with reason, and then to pursue the question whether, given the grounds on which it may be rational, it is also reasonable.' (p. 44)

Audi's strategy differs from, for example, Swinburne's and Plantinga's ways of arguing for theism. The book is dedicated to William Alston and you can see Alston's influence throughout (also the other two gentlemen are given approving comments along the way). Audi aims to prove that there are no *prima facie* obstacles for theism and that theism can defeat the defeaters that challenge its rationality. In other words, Audi tries to draw the borderlines of rationality and point out that theism is within those borders. It might be true that theism is ultimately wrong, and there are other, competing, things within the same borders as well, which might turn out to be true. But when we start arguing about worldviews, this is the starting point that all disputants should recognize. A modest point, but still valuable one.

Audi argues that the traditional theistic proofs succeed in proving that there is at least *some* rational support for theism. If the concept of God is coherent and the existence of God is at least possible, it is not *prima facie* irrational to have theistic beliefs. Yet, it is possible and rational to hold different and mutually opposed worldviews because persons may have 'different evidential and ratiocinative perspectives' (p. 106). Justification of beliefs is for Audi context-specific and he returns to the questions of pluralism and disagreement multiple times along the way. His solution seems to fall in line with other prominent Notre Dame philosophers, such Peter van Inwagen and Gary Gutting. In sum, we should not surrender to sceptical challenge, which sets the bar of rationality too high. This leads inevitably to looser standards of rationality, but as limited human beings we really cannot do any better. The dangers of relativism are confronted by stressing the need of ongoing reflection and dealing with the defeaters. Audi is pluralist, but not relativist.

The book is filled with acute and commendable points that would deserve closer scrutiny (such as his brilliant treatment of different aspects and dimensions of belief, faith, acceptance and hope) but the heart of the book is well expressed in the following quote that illustrates Audi's sensibility:

> Rational religious commitment lies somewhere between a headlong confidence in what we passionately wish to be true and a timid refusal to risk disappointments, between the safety of according to religious beliefs the easy confidence we have in things that bombard the five senses, and the sceptical detachment that comes from suspending judgment on whatever is not plainly evident to all, between a merely aesthetic

> participation in religious practices and a dogmatic codification of an outlook on the world, between non-cognitivist attenuation of religious texts and tenets and rigid literalism in understanding them, between apathy and conformism, between scepticism and credulity. Rational religious commitment may be elusive; it differs in many ways from one person to another; and even in single life, it may change much over time, for better or, sometimes, for worse. But if our notion of rationality is not too narrow, if our religious lives are well integrated, if our sense of the mutually enriching interconnections between the religious and the secular is sufficiently keen, and if we do not try to justify needlessly strong cognitive attitudes, we may hope both to construct an adequate theory of rational religious commitment and to progress toward a lasting reconciliation of faith and reason. (pp. 298-296)

This sensibility that tries to balance different elements in one's religious outlook is something that you rarely see. Audi makes a relevant point that too often philosophy of religion concentrates on beliefs and evidence when religious lifestyle consists of several other things than mere propositions. Yet Audi steers away from pure pragmatism and non-cognitivism. Truth and justification are relevant topics in religion but they should not be the only ones. Religion consists of propositional, behavioural, attitudinal and emotional dimensions: 'An overall religious commitment is a commitment to act in certain ways as well as to accept a certain outlook on the world; and it requires doing a certain range of deed, cultivating or nurturing certain attitudes and emotions, and maintaining an openness to responses from other people.' (xi) For Audi, religious life is a balancing act, which is necessarily rather elusive and multiform. Religious commitment is a 'life-choice' rather than just 'cognitive choice'. This necessarily rules out all straightforward solutions to demonstrate the truth or falsity of religious (or any) worldviews.

In addition to trying to provide general rules of public discourse, Audi seeks to sketch a form of religious cosmopolitanism, which results from the integration of relevant dimensions of one's life in a single whole. By integration Audi means that our belief system should be internally coherent, our beliefs should cohere with our desires and emotions and our actions should be grounded in our beliefs and desires. Integration aims at 'theoethical equilibrium', where person's religious, scientific, ethical and aesthetic convictions are constantly changing as they react to new challenges but ideally moving towards greater coherence. This includes also taking into account competing views and cultures. In practice this

means sharing resources with them, gaining more understanding and engaging in co-operative practices.

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Rob Lovering. *God and Evidence*. Bloomsbury, 2013.

In his book 'God and Evidence: Problems for Theistic Philosophers' Rob Lovering surveys and criticizes various views held among theistic philosophers which he calls defenders of a philosophical Alamo; with theists outnumbered 15% to 85%. The 15% can further be divided among three categories: theistic inferentialists, theistic noninferentialists and theistic fideists. He defines theistic inferentialists as: '(...) philosophers who believe that (a) God exists, (b) there is inferential probabilifying evidence of God's existence, and (c) this evidence is discoverable not simply in principle, but in practice.' (p. 3); theistic noninferentialists as: '(...) philosophers who believe that (a) God exists, (b) there is noninferential probabilifying evidence of God's existence, and (c) this evidence is discoverable not simply in principle, but in practice.' (p. 3); and theistic fideists as: '(...) philosophers who believe that (a) God exists, (b) there is no discoverable probabilifying evidence of God's existence, but (c) it is acceptable – morally, if not otherwise – to have faith that God exists.' (p. 3). For the distinction between inferential and noninferential evidence he quotes John Bishop: 'A proposition's truth is inferentially evident when its truth is correctly inferable (...) from other propositions whose truth is accepted; a proposition's truth is non-inferentially (basically) evident when its truth is acceptable (...) without being derived by inference from other evidentially established truths.' (as quoted by Lovering on p. 6). Later on, the noninferential evidence seems roughly to coincide with religious experiences.

The main problem for theistic inferentialists, according to Lovering, is that they have not succeeded in convincing their atheistic academic peers and this is a problem for their defining beliefs. He goes on to list a number of possible solutions which he dismisses as inadequate. The 'adequate' solutions Lovering proposes are that one or more of theistic inferentialists' defining beliefs are false or that one or more of the defining beliefs is cognitively meaningless and thereby neither true nor false.

The most interesting part of the book is the discussion of theistic noninferentialists. Lovering's problem for theistic noninferentialists is the 'problem of the hiddenness of God'. He borrows this idea from John Schellenberg who argued that the fact that to many people God is hidden, renders the existence of God unlikely. Lovering then goes on to state Michael J. Murray's 'soul making defense of divine hiddenness' and argues that it falls short because God's hiddenness causes some of us to lose our ability to develop morally significant characters through inculpable ignorance of the moral status of actions. If God is hidden, so are his commandments and therefore absence of God implies absence of knowledge of morality. Inculpable ignorance undercuts moral soul-making because developing morally significant characters with knowledge of the moral status of actions is impossible. By this line of reasoning, Lovering claims to have refuted Murray's argument.

Theistic fideists face a moral problem. Lovering does not claim that believing in God without evidence is wrong in itself, but it is when it causes harm to others. Given his 'inculpable ignorance argument' from section two, Lovering's appeal to common sense morality is somewhat surprising. It appears that the moral status of actions is not hidden for Lovering (Lovering being an atheist) while God is. So apparently God's hiddenness does not necessarily imply hiddenness of morality and moral soul-making is possible when God is hidden. In cases where a belief will affect others, one should proportion his beliefs to the evidence because this is the only doxastic practice that has proven itself to be nonarbitrarily reliable. Finally, Lovering adds a number of problems for all three varieties of theistic philosophers. The most interesting of these is his (not so new) argument for the impossibility of divine omniscience. He argues the notion of omniscience is incoherent because a being which has all possible propositional knowledge cannot know what it is like not to know something; and therefore lacks experiential knowledge.

In his first section Lovering misses the point that theistic inferentialists' defining beliefs do not state that the evidence will convince (the majority of) all philosophers. Lovering's use of the word 'probabilifying' signals that the evidence will leave room for rejection because the evidence is not conclusive. It is not unlikely that nontheistic philosophers apply different or higher standards for evidence (e.g. that the evidence be scientific). Furthermore, Lovering's argumentation seems to presuppose that the burden of proof is on the theist (maybe because they are the minority position in philosophy). Especially Alvin Plantinga has argued against

this position. The 'inculpable ignorance argument' is interesting because it rekindles he discussion on the relation between moral norms and the existence of God. By claiming the moral status of actions is hidden when God is hidden he seems to deny people are able to know what actions are morally right or wrong without God. Lovering thus defends the claim that if we do not know whether God exists, we do not know which actions are morally right or wrong (or neutral). This seems further than most atheists are willing to go. Concerning theistic fideists, he does not elaborate on how belief in God without evidence harms others and why the evidentialist doxastic practice does not. Strangely enough, Lovering makes no mention of Alvin Plantinga or other proponents of reformed epistemology, whereas they represent the most widely discussed theory of why belief in God without evidence is a decent approach.

Lovering's book is interesting, not so much for his overview of theistic positions which he does not develop enough, but for his own arguments against theism. Especially his 'inculpable ignorance argument' has real potential for rekindling the debate about the hiddenness of God.

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Paul M. Gould. *Beyond the Control of God: Six Views on the Problem of God and Abstract Objects* (Bloomsbury Studies in Philosophy of Religion). Bloomsbury, 2014.

In the introduction of *Beyond the Control of God?: Six Views on the Problem of God and Abstract Objects*, Paul Gould introduces an inconsistent triad that philosophers who endorse both the existence of abstract objects and theism will have to face (p. 2). The inconsistent triad goes as follows:

- Abstract objects exist. [Platonism]
- If abstract objects exist, then they are dependent on God.
- If abstract objects exist, then they are independent of God.

By God, Gould specifies that he has in mind 'a personal being who is worthy of worship (which is in line with perfect being theology)', and by abstract objects, he has in mind such terms and predicates as 'property', 'proposition', 'relation', 'set', 'possible world', 'number', and the like (p. 1). Gould thinks that by denying one of the options in the above triad, one

will have to formulate a way to avoid certain undesirable consequences (p. 4). Thus, the rest of the book contains essays (and responses) expressing six different views, in regard to which tenet in the triad one should reject and how one can overcome the undesirable consequences of rejecting that particular tenet.

The first view that is discussed is Keith Yandell's God and propositions view. This view endorses that both God and mind-independent (including independent of God's mind) propositions exist (p. 21). Yandell's first concern is to demonstrate that there are no Scriptural reasons for thinking that this view is incompatible with the existence of the God of Christianity. He argues that Col 1:16-17, which express that God has created all things in heaven and on earth, does not rule out the existence of abstract objects, as the point of this passage and others like it is to demonstrate that 'thrones or power or ruler or authorities' do not pose a threat to God's sovereignty (p. 24). Taken with the fact that abstract objects are neither in heaven nor on earth, this passage has nothing to say about the existence of abstract objects (p. 24).

Yandell's main reason for why abstract objects cannot be tied to God in any way is that there is no way to know if God is a necessary being. The argument that Yandell focuses on that attempts to demonstrate that God is a necessary being, is Plantinga's modal ontological argument, which like Plantinga, he concludes could rationally be accepted but fails to act as a proof that God is logically necessary (p. 29). Yandell thus, thinks he has made a plausible case for rejecting (2) in the triad. In response, both Welty and Craig mention that there are other reasons for thinking that God is a necessary being, and thus, even if one granted that the ontological argument didn't succeed as a proof for God's logical necessity, it wouldn't follow that God isn't a necessary being (pp. 39-41).

The next view is Gould's and Brian Davis' view of modified theistic activism. In their essay, the authors attempt to make plausible that conceptualism holds with respect to propositions, but that it doesn't hold as it pertains to properties and relations (p. 52). In regard to establishing the former, Gould and Davis first argue that propositions are truth bearing intentional objects as propositions are about things (p. 52). Gould and Davis briefly entertain a nominalist approach of having sentences or linguistic items fill the role of propositional truth bearing, but they reject such a strategy based on their reasoning that the parts of a sentence or linguistic items still aren't about anything (p. 56). Gould and Davis proceed to argue that it doesn't appear that such

aboutness can be accounted for in Plato's heaven either, as the forms in Plato's heaven are impotent to account for the intentional nature of propositions (p. 56). Thus, propositions should be understood as divine thoughts and concepts.

Though Gould and Davis think that the best explanation for how propositions are grounded is in the mind of God, they reject that properties and relations could be grounded in this way as it would make every material object to be a collection of divine concepts (p. 59). Thus, for the authors, the best way to view properties and relations is through the understanding that propositions are divine conceptions and properties and relations exist in a strictly Platonic realm and exist there because God created them (p. 61). In rejecting (3), Gould and Davis argue that they can avoid the undesirable consequence of falling prey to the bootstrapping objection, (this is the objection that argues that God can't create properties unless He already has those properties of being able to create them), by arguing that God has certain properties that exist a se and inhere in the divine substance (p. 62). It is notable to report however; that Gould and Davis fall short in convincing all of the other authors that they have avoided falling prey to such boot strapping.

In the third view, theistic conceptual realism, Welty argues in a similar way (though in more detail) to Gould and Davis, that propositions should be considered as divine thoughts or ideas. In using an inference to the best explanation approach (IBE), Welty analyzes what theory best can account for the nature of propositions. He argues that a theory must capture the following six conditions: objectivity, necessity, intentionality, relevance, plentitude, and simplicity (pp. 84-87). The two main nominalistic theories Welty entertains are linguistic nominalism and set-theoretic nominalism. The former theory according to Welty argues that propositions are linguistic tokens of some sort (p. 89). Welty argues that this theory lacks the scope to explain the plentitude and necessity of propositions as 'there simply aren't enough human sentences to go around and human sentences exist just as contingently as human thoughts'. In regard to the latter nominalist theory, Welty explains that it attempts to supply 'sets' of concrete objects as candidates for propositions (p. 90). Welty argues that this isn't plausible for several reasons, concrete objects lacking intentionally or aboutness being one of the primary reasons for its implausibility (p. 90).

After establishing that nominalism lacks the scope to explain the needed facts surrounding the nature of propositions, Welty quickly

explores why old fashioned Platonism also fails. He argues that traditional Platonic realism multiplies ontological kinds beyond explanatory necessity. This is because Welty's conceptual realism posits only thoughts that functionally fulfil the role of abstract objects, while a Platonist will have to postulate a different kind of entity altogether (p. 90). With this much argued for, Welty thinks he has shown why rejecting (3) is the most plausible solution to the above triad. As William Lane Craig points out however, the plausibility of his arguments rest on propositions existing at all, and one could avoid his argument by endorsing deflationary theory of truth (p. 101). Whether this is a good response to Welty, it will be up to the reader to decide.

Moving on to Craig's anti-Platonist position, in arguing for his anti-Platonist view, contra Yandell, Craig spends a good deal of time going through the biblical warrant for thinking that God both exists a se and is responsible for everything that exists. 1 Cor. 8:6, 1 Cor. 11.12, Jn 1.1-3, and the Nicene Creed make up his main biblical support (p. 113-115). It should be noted that Craig more so than any of the other contributors focused on the biblical evidence.

The rest of Craig's chapter focuses on how rejecting (1) of the triad wouldn't entail any undesirable consequence. Craig argues that the indispensability argument is the chief challenger to nominalism and thus, Craig gives arguments for why he thinks this argument fails (p. 116). In responding to Craig's view, Welty argues that one could easily modify the argument to avoid a lot of Craig's criticism of the indispensability argument and Gould and Davis argue that there are other problems outside of the indispensability argument that would still give the anti-Platonist trouble (p. 129-131).

The last two views are probably the most similar out of all of the views. Both Scott Shalkowski and Graham Oppy either endorse or are sympathetic to nominalism and deflationary theory (pp. 162, 174), and both argue that the truths about realism are irrelevant to the existence of God (pp. 144, 175). Though Oppy focuses more on how there isn't one view that makes theism more or less likely and Shalkowski spends a greater time arguing for why realism about abstract objects is false, there is little substantive difference between the two views. In fact, the biggest difference that comes out between the contributors is on if the universe is necessary (p. 189), though as one can imagine, this isn't too central to either contributor's argument.

Overall, it seems that the crux of the debate between the realists about abstract objects and the anti-realists is if endorsing a deflationary theory of truth is a plausible substitute for endorsing the existence of propositions. Welty, Gould, and Davis for example, make very compelling arguments for divine conceptualism that are based on the character of propositions; however, as Craig points out (p. 101), one could deny the existence of propositions altogether and avoid the consequence of their arguments. Of course, Welty, Gould, and Davis responded briefly (and their responses were given even briefer responses) to the anti-realists in the book who argued this way, but due to the format of the book, there was hardly any room to make a thorough response (or a counter response). This being so, I think a lot of readers who do not yet have an opinion on deflationary theory, will go away unsure of what position to prefer and those who already have an opinion, aren't likely to be challenged to rethink their current position. The brief responses (and even briefer counter responses) aren't thorough enough to make the winner of this debate obvious.

With this stated however, I think the book clearly gives an articulate and updated account of each position. Moreover, if this book is seen as an introduction to this debate, I think it will help the reader understand the current questions that need to be asked, in addition to equipping the reader with the basic tools to answer them. In concluding, it would behoove anyone who wants a good introduction into this field to read this book.

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Hugh J. McCann. *Creation and the Sovereignty of God* (Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion). Indiana University Press, 2012.

In *Creation and the Sovereignty of God*, Hugh McCann defends a conception of God akin to what medieval thinkers like Aquinas and Anselm adopted, arguing 'that God is an absolutely perfect being, who as creator exercises complete sovereignty over all that was, is, and will be. This sovereignty ... extends not only over all that comprises the physical world, but also over human decisions and actions, over what is moral and what is not, over conceptual reality, and even reaches to God's own

nature' (p. 1). McCann's intent is to provide a thorough explanation of the nature of God's relationship to the different spheres of creation, along with an explanation of God's relationship to his own nature. In what follows I will provide a brief summary of the major portions of each chapter, while reserving my critique for McCann's treatment of causation in chapters 1 – 2, and human agency in chapter 5. With regards to issues of causation, I will argue that McCann's objections to event-causation are misguided and unnecessary to his project as a whole; concerning human agency, I will argue that his adoption of libertarianism over competing views lacks demonstration.

McCann's primary aim in chapters 1 – 2 is to provide a plausible portrayal of God's relationship to the created world. In chapter 1 McCann proposes an abductive version of the cosmological argument, attempting to show that a personal, self-existent creator is the best explanation of two facts about the world: (i) that the universe exists, and (ii) that this type of universe exists. The majority of the first chapter focuses on analyzing alternative explanations for (i) and (ii). The naturalistic alternative is insufficient because of its impotence in explaining the contingency in the world, for 'even if contingent beings can derive their existence one from another, this will enable us to explain the existence of one such being only by assuming the existence of others' (p. 16). McCann says only a being or cause that exists *a se*, or of itself, has the necessary transcendency to account for the existence of the universe. McCann closes out the chapter by providing a preliminary argument against event-causation (arguing more thoroughly in the following chapter). His argument is a response to an assumption within the naturalistic hypothesis: 'earlier states of the universe produce later ones, in the sense of conferring existence on them, and so explain their existence. So once the universe is in place it will never be necessary to invoke anything more than natural causation to explain its continuation.' (p. 18) In response, McCann says,

> But this assumption is completely false. There is, first of all, no process by which past events confer existence on future ones. Indeed, it is difficult if not impossible even to imagine such a thing. Suppose an event e causes another, e', and that the causation is direct: that is, it does not occur through the mediation of intervening events that e causes, and which in turn cause e'. If so, then whatever we make of the claim that e causes e', it cannot be that there is something the former does to generate the latter. (p. 18)

In chapter 2 McCann attempts to show how God can be causally responsible for the existence of every event in the universe, without leading to the view that all experience of causal interactions are mere illusion. In addition to rejecting event-causal views, McCann also discounts occasionalist views of causation – every event in the universe is the direct product of God's causal activity – for the view implies that there are no genuine interactions between created entities, which is highly inconsistent with normal experience. Rather, according to McCann, when God acts to create the universe, he also acts to sustain the entirety of the universe; in fact, the act of creating is the same act of sustaining.

Now, in chapter 2, like chapter 1, McCann argues that event-causal views should be rejected, and while he provides more argumentation in chapter 2 than chapter 1, the additional arguments do not really support his claim in chapter 1 that the naturalistic alternative of the cosmological argument should be rejected because of its dependence on event-causation. The major problem I see with McCann's attack against event-causal views is that he seems to identify event-causation with Humean regularity theories. That is, event-causation is specified just as a constant conjunction of a temporally prior event to a temporally posterior event in proximate or contiguous physical space. The existence of the posterior event is caused or brought about by the prior event, even though no necessary causal link is evidenced between the two events. Now if this is all there is to event-causation then McCann does a laudable job in showing why such regularity views should be rejected. However I see no reason why someone, naturalist or theist, who affirms an event-causal view to explain the interactions in the physical world must adopt such a Humean position concerning event-causation. For instance, someone could adopt a Kimian view of event-causation in order to avoid most, if not all, of McCann's objections. A Kimian event-causal view states that an event just is an exemplification of a property by an object at a time, and causation between events amounts to the changing of the exemplification of properties by an object from $T1$ to $T2$ (Jaegwon Kim, 'Causation, Nomic Subsumption, and the Concept of Event' in *The Journal of Philosophy,* Vol. 70, No. 8 (1973), 217-236). Rather than arguing against such a position, McCann seems to be aware of the plausibility of this view as applied to God's relationship to the interactions of the physical world: 'On one widely held account, an event or state may be understood to consist in an entity's exemplifying a property at a time. So if God creates substances

with their properties then it is he, and not prior occurrences, that is responsible for the existence of the events and states in which substances participate.' (p. 29) Now if McCann is willing to adopt such a view of causation while at the same maintaining that the naturalistic alternative is dependent on a faulty view of causation, McCann needs to show why the naturalist cannot adopt this Kimian form of event-causation; I see nowhere in McCann's book in which he attempts this. Because of such, it seems as though McCann should have conserved his attack against the naturalistic alternative to arguments showing the naturalistic alternative's inability to explain general contingency in the world.

In chapter 3 McCann moves on to the issue of God's relationship with time, defending the position that God is timeless or eternal. McCann spends the majority of the chapter arguing that God's timelessness does not diminish God's omniscience or demonstrate that temporal becoming in the created world is merely illusion. God's relationship to the world of temporal becoming is described as an immediate availability of all created reality to God's awareness. From issues concerning time, McCann progresses to an examination of God's relationship to evil and suffering. The bulk of chapter 4 focuses on the merits of the free will defence against the problem of evil from Boethian, Open, and Molinist points of view. God's providence is insufficiently meagre on a Boethian or Open position; the Molinist view fails because of its dependence on middle knowledge, which even if such knowledge exists for God (which McCann doubts), using such knowledge to create the world would strip God of any spontaneity in acting toward created agents, thus limiting his freedom.

It is in chapter 5 that McCann discusses human agency, and rejecting event-causal and agent-causal positions, McCann defends a libertarian, non-causal position which can be characterized by three necessary components of human agency: (i) 'the operations of free will cannot be the product of independent event-causal conditions' (p. 101); (ii) there must be a phenomenal quality like spontaneity, which is apparent to the agent performing the action; and (iii) there must be intentionality from the agent to the acts of will he or she performs. Against such a view of agency, McCann raises a couple of versions of the infamous 'luck' objection which appears ubiquitous in literature on libertarianism. The first version argues that agents cannot have sufficient control over their actions, and the second argues that a sufficient explanation cannot be given for the particular actions performed. McCann argues that God's

act of will in creation can be supplied to refute each version of the objection without compromising any of the necessary features of agency mentioned earlier. When God creates the world, along with the agents there in, he is also creating the actions the agents perform. Thus the act of creating agents cannot be divorced from the act of creating agents performing their acts of will. McCann believes that such a tight relation between God's will and the created agents' will is too close to hold God's will as an independent or external cause of the created agents' actions. He also thinks that such a relation does not do away with the created agents' ability to engage in acts of will that are intentional and spontaneous. Because the created agents' act of will are grounded in God's act of will, there is a sufficient explanation for the agents' actions; further, since God is not to be considered an independent or external cause of the agents' acts of will, there is no danger in claiming that the agents are sufficiently in control of the act of will they perform.

My first reaction to chapter 5 is that while McCann's responses to both versions of the luck objection are interesting and persuasive, I see no reason why someone who affirms an event-causal form of libertarianism could not also adopt McCann's position. Assuming the plausibility of McCann's proposal that God's causal activity can be supplied to respond to both versions of the objection, it is not obvious why someone should adopt a non-causal view of agency over a Kimian form of event-causation. For instance someone might argue that God's act of will to create the world (and the agents in the world) could amount to his creating these agents exemplifying their acts of will at each moment they exercise such acts. Such a view is not apparently inconsistent with McCann's position or a Kimian view.

My second reaction to McCann's treatment of human agency is that he spends little to no space arguing for the plausibility of a libertarian position over its competitors. Libertarian freedom is by no means the dominant position in contemporary action theory, even if it is the dominant position among theists. The problems with libertarianism are vast and many believe are more significant than competing compatibilist positions. And while McCann responds to particular objections to libertarianism, someone who affirmed theological determinism may not find the sections defending libertarianism particularly persuasive.

In chapters 6 and 7 McCann constructs his own theodicy focused around God's intention to defeat evil. 'Indeed, I think a very plausible approach to theodicy is to adopt the view that one of God's major

enterprises in creating the universe is the defeat of evil. If that is so, then the process of sin and repentance is of value in the plan of creation not just because it allows rational creatures to enter into authentic friendship with God, but also because it fits into a larger project of defeating moral evil.' (p. 125) Suffering also provides God an occasion to defeat evil, providing the agents who endure it the occasion to grow in virtue and thus resemble their creator. Thus McCann argues the sin and suffering in the world are in fact necessary to allow God to defeat evil, hence further showcasing his sovereignty by allowing created agents the ability to experience and respond to hardships in such a way to become virtuous agents.

In chapter 8 McCann affirms that the actual world is the best possible world God could create, not because this world ranks highest in relation to all other possible worlds, but because this is the world that God in fact created. Assuming the medieval doctrine that God is pure act, McCann argues that there is no deliberation or preparatory process prior to creation in which God evaluates his options for the world he will create. Rather, God simply acts in creating the world and since such an act is a proper expression of the perfection and goodness of who God is, such a world will be the best possible.

Chapters 9-11 concern God's relationship to the abstract realm. First, McCann attempts to explain the basis for the underlying moral order of created agents by proposing a version of divine-command theory. The imperatives God commands are known to humans through normal experience, and humans can know these imperatives through experiential means because such imperatives were 'built' into humans at their creation, and thus, are part of their very nature. According to McCann, the imperatives 'are not superimposed on creation but embedded in it, a dimension of reality that arouses our will as naturally as the descriptive nature of things awakens our intellect' (p. 191). Next, McCann argues in support of a fairly robust ontology of abstract objects like properties, propositions, numbers, etc., while rejecting the extremes of Platonism and nominalism. When God creates the world of the concrete, he also brings about the world of the abstract since the concrete particulars of creation give rise to the entities of the conceptual realm. Universals, thus, are real, but their existence is also dependent on the existence of the objects and events that make up the concrete world. Finally, with regard to the abstract objects that relate directly to God, McCann defends a doctrine of divine simplicity; God is best

thought of as a primordial event in which all of his properties or features (omniscience, omnipotence, etc.) are together present in the pure act that is God. Just as one event can be described in more than one way – the act of *Booth committing treason* and the act of *Booth killing Lincoln* – so the event that is God can be described as *him being omnipotent* or *him being omniscient*. Both descriptions are true and refer to one and the same actual state of affairs, God himself.

In sum, *Creation* as a whole has a host of positive features which contribute to its overall value. While much of the content might be on the level for an intermediate or advanced philosophy reader, McCann's ability as a communicator allows for the possibility that a lay student comprehend the majority of the content. Further, McCann provides a thorough defence of a medieval conception of God, taking his time to show the coherence of some of the morally difficult doctrines such as timelessness and simplicity. I recommend this book for anyone looking for a defence of the God of Augustine, Aquinas, and Anselm.

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Corey L. Barnes. *Christ's Two Wills in Scholastic Thought: The Christology of Aquinas and Its Historical Contexts* (Studies and Texts 178). PIMS, 2012.

In the stream of scholarship on Thomas Aquinas' thought, Corey L. Barnes' study of the wills of Christ stands out as a good example of historical theology: a careful reading and evaluation of the sources, clear and accessible presentation of the historical influences and opponents, and a comprehensive analysis. The author is now assistant professor of Religion at Oberlin College, Ohio. *Christ's Two Wills* originated at Notre Dame University, Indiana, as a doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Joseph Wawrykow. The book version included more material, notably the last chapter where Aquinas is put in dialogue with Giles of Rome, Peter Olivi and John Duns Scotus.

Central to the whole debate on Christ's two wills is the correct interpretation of Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane (Math. 26:39). Barnes' draws attention to a difference between patristic and medieval approaches to this issue (chapters one to four). Generally speaking the

Church Fathers were concerned with the number of wills in Christ: were there two or one? By contrast, the medieval theologians focused on the nature of the human will; the early medieval theologians (e.g. William of Auxerre), for example, on the non-contrariety of the two wills, whereas from Albert the Great a new departure is evident in the claim that there is a kind (non sinful) contrariety in the two wills often preserving conformity of the human will with the divine (pp. 79 ff.). Barnes' research is valuable for highlighting the subtle differences in nuances and terminology between the various medieval writers. An important development is the distinction between will of sensuality and will of reason in the human will.

Moreover, most medieval theologians had not read the early church councils and formulae and were therefore driven by 'vastly different purposes' than the patristic writers (p. 18). As is well known, Aquinas is an exception since he was able to study the acts of the great church councils and central patristic authorities (around 1260). This profoundly influenced his presentation in the *Summa Theologiae,* as Barnes shows.

Having established Aquinas' relation to earlier theologians, not the least Albert, the scene is set for chapter five which is an integrated reading of the whole Christology of *Summa Theologiae* III, qq. 1-26. The key concept is 'fittingness' (*convenio*), which systematically informs the whole of the larger *Summa*. Qualifying his understanding of fittingness against other scholars (Chenu, Torell, Persson and Corbin) Barnes sides with his supervisor, Wawrykow, arguing that fittingness is modelled on the notion of wisdom (pp. 183 ff.). Wisdom, says Barnes, pertains to the intellect (why?) and the will (how?). In Christology fittingness is used first to show the 'why' of the incarnation in the first three questions and then the 'how' in the rest of the treatment.

Finally, I will make two critical points. First, Barnes' maybe most final and interesting chapter is all too short. Here he juxtaposes (primarily) John Duns Scotus' views with that of Aquinas' on the two wills of Christ. After a brief presentation of Scotus' view Barnes answers an objection of Richard Cross who has argued that Aquinas' view of the two wills results either in causal over-determination or in an impossibility of distinguishing between ordinary human natures' secondary causality and Christ's. Cross defends Scotus' distinction between 'causal' and 'predicative' aspects of incarnational agency which are not, in his view, marked by the dilemma Aquinas ends up in. (The causal aspect locates the causal origin of the *theandric* acts in the natures and these acts are

predicated of the (remote) subject of the Logos.) Having compared and contrasted the two doctors, Barnes concludes by saying that the differences between the angelic and the subtle doctor are not that great after all and that these can be explained by different terminology and starting points. Even though the analysis is careful, the reader is left with the feeling that at least another chapter would have been required to reach such an irenic conclusion.

Secondly, (and one that maybe explains the first point) one detects a somewhat hesitant and overly careful approach to scholastic terminology. The introduction contains some seemingly uncalled for apologies for studying scholastic Christology and engage in metaphysical reasoning. At one point, the author suggests, that by studying the actions of Christ, instead of the metaphysics, we can be freed of from metaphysical speculation. I think this is misleading: Scholastic theology is constantly engaged in metaphysical reasoning and a proper study of Christology needs to stay engaged (as Barnes' *actually* does, despite his apologetic remarks) since scholastic treatments of causal concepts in Christology are entrenched in metaphysical concepts.

Such remarks aside, Barnes' study is exemplary in its depth, clarity of exposition and grasp of the sources. Finally, the author has the laudable desire to have his work stimulate contemporary theological thinking by looking at medieval theological thinking.