



Confucian Moral Thinking

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There are many problems associated with studying non-Western philosophy from within a Western philosophical framework.<sup>1</sup> There is abundant literature on the differences between the two systems, in their categorization of fields and topics of study, their ways of life, their concerns, their methodologies, and their forms of thought. Apart from the initial difficulties often encountered in translation, one needs also to understand and analyze a philosophy within its historical context. This is especially true of the study of ways of thinking about morality, since moral norms are connected with and rooted in assumptions and in the value systems specific to sociocultural contexts. Indeed, there is no equivalent of the term 'moral' in classical Chinese.<sup>2</sup> The definition of abstract and metaphysical concepts without simultaneously considering their practical manifestations is nonexistent in the classical Confucian tradition. It will be shown in this essay that, within the Confucian context, moral rules do not have ultimacy in human life in the sense that moral norms cannot be construed as universal, impartial, objective principles. This, as Rosemont suggests, is unlike the case of contemporary 'Western' moral philosophy:

... the term 'morals' is almost uniformly taken as circumscribing the culturally specific concept-cluster listed above [i.e., freedom, liberty, autonomy, individual, utility, rationality, objective, subjective, choice, dilemma, duty, rights, and ought], now referred to as "rights-based" theories and principles. In the several and varied accounts put forward by writers in this field, moral issues involve the weighing of rational arguments on behalf of putative universal principles, which are possible options for guiding the specific actions of freely choosing, autonomous individuals. In this field the early Confucians, along with most other nonwestern thinkers, will not be found; nor, for that matter, will Aristotle. . . . It is by no means just the early Chinese we will fundamentally misunderstand if we impose the concept cluster of contemporary western moral philosophy on ancient texts.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from presuppositions made regarding human free will, individualism, and autonomy, 'Western' views often construct morality on an individualistic basis whereby more weight is assigned to the character, virtue, or behavior of the individual moral agent than to the interests and lives of other agents. They focus on what each person, qua moral agent, does, rather than on what the community as a whole does together. The latter is one of the primary characteristics of Confucian thought.

Thus, in examining a philosophy that crosses cultural and linguistic boundaries, one should be aware, first of all, that one is already limited by the vocabulary and discourse of one's own philosophical framework. In addition, the following points have also to be noted:

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- (a) that philosophies have to be situated within their historical contexts;
- (b) that categories must be applied with caution; and
- (c) that “it does not follow that [another] philosophy, in order to be philosophy, must cover the same problems [as the one/s in the tradition in which the philosopher has been trained].”<sup>4</sup>

The title of this essay, “Confucian Moral Thinking,” suggests an examination of the ways in which thoughts about being moral are structured and how they are justified—or fail to be justified—and, generally, how moral values and norms are constructed and conceptualized within the larger philosophical framework of the Confucian system itself.

In this essay, I show that some common criticisms of Confucian moral philosophy from some Western philosophical perspectives are mistaken in the sense that they fail to observe the principles covered in (a), (b), and (c) and, more specifically, in the sense that these criticisms are superficial because they arise from an evaluation of one system in terms of the value structures of another, thereby superimposing one set of evaluative structures over another. In doing so, I am not, however, arguing for Confucian moral philosophy as a “better” or a “more perfect” moral system. Rather, I show that, with a deeper understanding of the Confucian system as a whole, *different* problems arise—problems that are in fact *inherent* in the system and not merely based on cultural relativity or on evaluative perceptions of the world.

In the first section, I describe each of several Confucian concepts that are relevant to the Confucian moral outlook. It is essential that these concepts be understood and analyzed within the conceptual framework of Confucian thought. The concepts discussed here are: *cheng-ming*, *jen*, *li*, *hsiao*, *shu*, and *tao*. The explication of these concepts serves a second purpose: it demonstrates, I contend, an important and different system of categorization of moral philosophy from that of contemporary Western moral philosophy.

The second section discusses two specific problems with the Confucian way of thinking about morality and demonstrates how, with some modification, the severity of these problems might be mitigated. Then, on a more optimistic note, I suggest how Confucian thought might be relevant, and indeed contribute, to moral thinking in contemporary contexts.

## I. Concepts and Categories in Confucian Philosophy

Confucius constructed an idealized community based on what he thought were the merits of the hierarchical Chou feudal system. Book 4 of the *Shu Ching*,<sup>5</sup> titled “The Great Plan,” sets out in detail a(n) ideal model for feudal government based on the perfect character of the king and on his perfect governmental measures—a distinctly Confucian theme. Section 5 of this book reads in part:

正名, 仁,  
禮, 孝, 恕, 道

周  
書經

The sovereign having established (in himself) the highest degree and pattern of excellence, concentrates in his own person the five (sources of) happiness, and proceeds to diffuse them, and give them to the multitudes. Then they, on their part, embodying your perfection, will give it (back) to you, and preserve and practice it. . . .

This text describes a situation in which the ruler is almost solely responsible for the social, material, and moral conditions of the country. It is taken as a foregone conclusion that if the sovereign is a good one, the multitudes will respond appropriately, the result being happiness, order, and peace throughout the country. His good rule ensures well-ordered hierarchies not only in the political arena but also in the moral, social, and familial settings. The idea that these different levels of order in a country are interconnected and interdependent is expressed in different ways in the *Shu Ching* passage quoted above. They include the following observations:

- (a) there cannot be order in the family and in the larger social setting if the emperor fails to order the state;
- (b) a good emperor will, through his character and deeds, effect changes, not only in the living conditions, but also in the behavior of the masses;
- (c) an emperor who cannot play his role in his family can never rule the country well.

One can immediately identify the many presuppositions and assumptions in this short paragraph; I now move on to discuss, in greater detail, the important concepts in Confucian moral philosophy that underlie the ways of thinking outlined above.

A. *Cheng-ming*. The term *ming*, which is literally translated as “name,” although “label” better captures its Confucian usage, has practical implications in Confucian theory: if names are not in order, then words and language cannot be properly used; this, in turn, leads to the situation whereby deeds cannot succeed (*Analects* 13:3). The concern here is not with metaphysical theories of how ‘names’ function as signs or symbols or with how these symbols are connected with reality but, rather, already assumes an important connection between language and reality. Indeed, this connection is significant in a moral sense, for the theory of *cheng-ming* pertains to human relationships; the thrust of this doctrine is that terms used to designate the range of human relationships carry with them not only descriptive content but also evaluative force (*Analects* 13:3.1–5). For example, Confucius said in *Analects* 4:5.2 that the *chün tzu* (the Confucian ‘gentleman’) without virtue cannot fulfill the requirements of that name. This means that moral virtue is already ‘built into’ the concept of *chün tzu* such that the term has a moral ‘loading’; it has evaluative force such that one who does not act according to the requirements im-

正名

君子

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plied by the name should not be addressed as such. Chad Hansen proposes that the Confucian doctrine of rectification of names was intended to have a regulative function:

The terms and names involved in the rectification of names are those that function in the traditional code: *man, king, brother, son*. The purpose of the rectification is to create an ideal language for moral discrimination, evaluation and action. . . . Thus while in early Western philosophy there is a kind of assumption that the primary role of language lies in describing the world and communicating ideas or beliefs about the world, Confucian . . . 'rectification of names' operates on the presupposition that the primary function of language is to instil attitudes guiding choice and action. Language use should be manipulated as a means of social control.<sup>6</sup>

Hansen's interpretation of the theory is consistent with the sayings in the *Analects* regarding *cheng-ming*. Particularly interesting is his stress on the *regulative* function of the theory; this is entirely consistent with another aspect of the theory: its evaluative function. Thus it is a prescriptive theory:<sup>7</sup> individuals have to live *appropriately* according to the titles and names, indicating their ranks and statuses within relationships, by which they are referred to. These terms prescribe how values upholding the various roles are to be realized within the fundamental reality of the lived human world. Whatever the interpretation of the underlying theory of the ontology of names, what was important to Confucius was that a relationship had to be construed as a role which carries rank, status, and social position, and, consequently, as encapsulating behavioral requirements.

君君,臣臣,父父,  
子子

For Confucius, this moral theory is rooted in the natural order of a community. Thus, Confucius' advice to the ruler to first rectify names is not meant to urge a change in the usage of names, but rather to ensure that the names in question are applied to persons fitting the moral stations associated with those names, or to ensure that persons have to change in order to live up to the name they carry. Terms such as 'father', 'ruler', 'friend', and so on bring with them implications of relationships, and have normative import. Therefore, in an ideally well-balanced and ordered society, "*chün chün (chün tzu), chen chen (official), fu fu (father), tzu tzu (son)*" (*Analects* 12:11). Translation of this last passage is difficult, given that the original saying in Chinese is itself vague. A plausible interpretation consistent with other themes in the *Analects* is to consider the first term of each pair as the name or noun, and the second as the verb; each noun-verb pair signifies that the people filling the various positions carry out their duties in a way befitting their labels: the minister ministers, the father fathers, and so forth. The second term of each pair thus describes an activity: that of prince-ing or that of son-ing. The point in this passage, therefore, lies in verbalizing the noun. The

person referred to by the name lives, necessarily, according to his designation.<sup>8</sup>

The well-governed polity is, at the same time, the well-ordered society because the members each understand their roles and accordingly fulfill what is required of them. There is overwhelming emphasis, in many Confucian texts, on not behaving in ways that are considered “out of place” in accordance with one’s status. This idea of acting appropriately—say, as wife, son, or younger brother—was a theme so deeply entrenched in Confucian philosophy that the *Analects* records an instance when Confucius himself commented that the adult-like abilities of a child were indeed inappropriate:

A boy from the village of Ch’üeh used to come with messages. Someone asked him saying, “Is he improving himself?” The master said, “Judging by the way he sits in grown-up people’s places and walks alongside of other people older than himself, I should say that he was bent upon getting on quickly rather than upon improving himself.” (14:47)

This negative example of development describes the boy acting in a way that is beyond what is appropriate in a proper child-adult relationship. What makes his behavior inappropriate is that he attempts to “walk alongside,” or, in other words, assumes equal status with people older than himself and, as such, does not know his place, or simply chooses to ignore it. In either case the behavior calls for reproach because such violations have the potential to undermine the finely-balanced homeostatic model of the Confucian community. The well-regulated society is one in which people carry out their responsibilities appropriately according to their particular places in the social structure; it is only with the cooperation of each individual within the community that the common good can be attained. On the other hand, it is also important to remember that excellence for the human person can only be attained within the communal context. The symbiotic relation between individual and communal good is predicated upon the Confucian belief that, as human beings, we share the one common human nature, which has its locus essentially and thus meaningfully *only* within the communal context; *jen* is this shared human nature.

*B. Jen.* The etymology of *jen* consists of, on one half, the character signifying ‘human’, and on the other, the character signifying ‘two’. It suggests not only relatedness between at least two beings belonging to the human species, but, more importantly, their interdependence. In this connection, *jen* is described as reciprocity (*shu*) (*Analects* 12:2). It is recorded in *Analects* 1:4 of one of Confucius’ disciples that his self-examination consisted in evaluating his relationships with others, this practice being based on the idea that the individual in relation to others

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constitutes an important element in self-evaluation. The ideas of human relatedness and reciprocity are based on the Confucian view of human beings as sharing a similar nature and, consequently, as being similar-in-kind. This is because *jen* covers more than the merely moral, and the one sense of *jen* that is consistent with *all* its uses in the *Analects* is that it is the substratum, the source, of all human virtue, of which the moral is but a part. *Jen* is moral in nature but also at the same time transcends mere morality. Describing it as 'human virtue' is consistent with the idea that it is both endowed and yet to be developed. *Jen* appears to represent the ultimate moral achievement in personal, social, and cultural life. It is the manifest characteristic of the human person once s/he has cultivated the virtues and embraced its various aspects in living out life. The meaning of *jen* integrates other important concepts such as love, community, interrelatedness, and the power to create within the relationships into which one enters.

Because different human relationships have their own contexts of meaning and appropriateness, it is not possible to generalize over the infinite manifestations of human virtue within the context of human relationships. Difficulties in interpreting *jen* arise from the fact that Confucius used the term differently in different contexts. It could be argued, furthermore, that Confucius' lack of definition of *jen* demonstrates that he wanted the scope of *jen* to apply indefinitely. It seriously narrows the Confucian enterprise to think of it merely as a moral philosophy and consequently to characterize it according to the categories appropriate only to moral philosophy in the Western philosophical tradition. Consequently, the individual-society distinction exists only on the theoretical level; *jen*, because it is manifest as *shared humanity*, can only be cultivated and developed within the context of the human community.<sup>9</sup> In this connection, because *li* (propriety) uphold the hierarchies and powers that propel human social life and further facilitate human social behavior, they are inseparably linked with *jen* throughout the *Analects*.

禮 C. *Li*. *Li* are necessary for the maintenance of roles and statuses within the Confucian hierarchical order. They dictate right behavior and decorum within relationships and guide relationships such as the ones between children and parents (*Analects* 2:5), subject and ruler (*Analects* 3:18), and prince and minister (*Analects* 3:19). *Li* serve to mark out differentiated roles; they support and uphold these hierarchies:<sup>10</sup> actions were considered appropriate or inappropriate according to one's status in a particular relationship.

*Li* as used by Confucius also retain a sense of ritual behavior—as the term was originally used to denote—a sense of ritual that focuses on more than the merely formal and which has deeper moral and cultural significance. This is indicated in Confucius' comment in *Analects* 15:4

that Shun, one of the sage-kings, had governed efficiently without exertion; he did nothing except to face south—the ruler's ritual posture. Indeed, in this passage, the two aspects of *li*—ritualistic and social—are assimilated such that the ruler who governs according to *li* does so effortlessly and yet efficiently. The similarities between *li* in the ritualistic and in the social senses are important in the articulation of the conception of *li* in the *Analects*. We turn to these similarities.

First, the performance of a ritual is disciplined and is carried out according to the rules pertaining to ritual, which is often highly contextualized. Likewise, *li* as norms of appropriateness governing social behavior involve discipline in individual action according to what counts as normative within the context of the community.

Secondly, the practice of ritual assumes interaction between at least two parties—often between the human and the divine. On the more practical level, *li* guide *human* interaction and also presuppose at least two parties, and “the problem of *li* does not even occur when one has absolutely nothing to relate to.”<sup>11</sup>

Thirdly, ritual behavior is patterned and therefore, as the term ‘ritual’ itself denotes, becomes polished after some practice and is also done with a certain ease. Acting according to *li* within the social sphere allows one to participate in social ‘ceremony’: one becomes socially competent and interacts with others—understanding what is required by various roles within various relationships—with seeming effortlessness. Fingarette<sup>12</sup> presents *li* as having some ‘magical’ quality in the sense that when it is practiced, relationships function smoothly and social life is seen as “ceremony.” Although Fingarette’s thesis has been variously criticized,<sup>13</sup> it does provide an interesting perspective from which to understand the mechanism of *li*. Furthermore, it is hard to dispute his point that *li* is significantly related to the cultivation of meaningful relationships because *li* have deeper significance than the purely external aspects of performance of actions.

Fourthly, a very important similarity between ritual and social interaction as guided by *li*, according to Confucius, is the ‘spirit’ with which one performs that action: “by its essentially humanistic-religious and artistic origin, by its very nature, an act of *li* is *expressive* and *indicative* of one’s cultivated, native human emotion or feeling, which Confucius called *jen*.”<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, it is recorded (in *Analects* 3:12) that Confucius sacrificed to the spirits of the dead (ancestors), and to the gods, as if they were present; he also commented that if he did not participate in the ritual, then it is as if he did not sacrifice at all.

Finally, *li* has an *aesthetic* aspect, just as many rituals do. Rituals can be modified and, indeed, are varied and variable and manifest differently as they pertain to each different situation and to each particular relationship, although they may provide general guidelines for each kind of

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relationship. For example, Confucius recounts how he modified various *li* in relation to worship in the ancestral temple, in *Analects* 9:3.<sup>15</sup> It is thus not appropriate to categorize *li* in terms of 'rightness' or of 'moral correctness'. The focus is rather on the value of human action, and, in that context, on whether one has acted appropriately in a situation *given the nature of the relationship*. Thus, *li* both involve a sense of moral *appropriateness* in evaluating human action and center distinctly on human relationships. The idea of appropriateness, in turn, connotes the element of refinement and culture; in *Analects* 8:2.1, *li* are viewed as being necessary to social behavior and, indeed, as providing an aesthetic sheen to human interaction:

Respectfulness, without *li*, becomes laborious bustle; carefulness, without *li*, becomes timidity; boldness, without *li*, becomes insubordination; straightforwardness, without *li*, becomes rudeness.<sup>16</sup>

經權

The reading of *li* offered in this article allows individual initiative and input into one's interpretation of what might be appropriate in particular situations. Like many contemporary renditions of Confucian thought, it reads into the notions of *li* flexibility in the application of oneself to the variety of situations in human life. A. S. Cua, in explaining this flexibility, refers to what Wing-tsit Chan terms the *ching-chüan* principle: *ching* is "an invariable rule, a standard of conduct, constant, recurring"; while *chüan* pertains to "exigency, circumstances, that which is irregular, and opposed to *ching*, that which is constant or normal—from this comes, therefore, the idea of temporary."<sup>17</sup> Applied to moral theory, Cua suggests, the doctrine of *ching-chüan* is a theory of the normal and the exigent, or the exceptional. While the former is an "invariable rule in the sense of a rule regularly and invariably applied to situations or actions that fall within the scope of its application," the latter applies in situations in real life that "appear to fall outside the scope of the application of rules." Cua's description allows a certain flexibility in moral practice that strict deontological and rule-based theories will not admit since flexibility invariably leads to a sense of arbitrariness with regard to the application of a rule or principle. The argument for a reading of *li* as not purely formalistic, yet not totally contingent on the whims of the moral (or immoral) agent, is further substantiated in the next section, in which a connection is drawn between *jen* and *li*.

*D. Jen and Li.* *Li* and *jen* were linked together inseparably in the *Analects*, and it needs to be noted that there is little or no suggestion that either of the two concepts had fundamental precedence over the other. Confucius emphasised *both* the importance of *li* to *jen* (*Analects* 12:1: to control oneself according to *li*, that is *jen*) and of *jen* to *li* (*Analects* 3:3: "If a man is not *jen*, what has he to do with *li*?" ) without assuming the

primacy of either concept. In the light of these passages, Tu Wei-ming's statement that "*jen* as an inner morality is not caused by the mechanism of *li* from outside. It is higher-order concept which gives meaning to *li*"<sup>18</sup> is problematic because it suggests that *jen* is more fundamental in a significant way: it is a higher-order concept from which *li* derives meaning.

Contrary to Tu's statement, however, Confucius stated to Yen Yüan, in *Analects* 12:1: one learns to be *jen* through conducting life according to *li*. Although Confucius did use *jen* in the sense of 'inner' component to the 'outer' manifestation of *li* in passages in the *Analects*, he wanted to eliminate this distinction when it came to practical action in the sense that to embody one without the other would be meaningless (*Analects* 8:8, 20:3). The relation between *li* and *jen* could perhaps be described as approximating to the relation between form and substance in Western philosophy. Cua suggests something to this effect:

*Li* appears to be the *convention* that defines the form and possibility of moral actions. In this sense, *li* defines the conventionally accepted *style* of actions, i.e. the form and possibility of moral achievement within the cultural setting, or what may be termed 'cultural lifestyle'. . . . In a more contemporary idiom, we may express this idea in terms of the *tie* or *contact* of an individual agent's actions with the cultural form of life which gives them the locus of identification and the possibility of moral achievement.<sup>19</sup>

Although Confucius was more concerned with social expedience than with moral absolutes, he did not believe that moral norms are therefore reducible to social norms. Such a reduction is avoided in Confucianism because its emphasis is on good human relationships based upon an affirmation of the value of human life. And that which upholds the *value* of the human is not merely subject to social consensus and to the status quo. To that effect, Confucius rejected the practice of *li* without comprehending its meaning and understanding its significance, arguing that such practice is mere empty formalism: "In ceremonies, be thrifty rather than extravagant; in funerals, be deep in sorrow rather than shallow in sentiment" (*Analects* 3:4.3; also, 3:26, 17:11). Superficiality is condemned, not only at a personal level but, more importantly, at the level of the community. The good villager, "who, though he acted as if he were following the Confucian norms, was actually only following convention without consciously engaging in moral practice at all."<sup>20</sup> Such a man Confucius despised as being a "thief of virtue."

*Li*, therefore, derives from a variety of sources, including one's personal virtue, a communally shared knowledge, and established values. These established standards have evolved from the ethical and aesthetic insights of those who have experienced similar situations in the past, and, therefore, Confucius comments that he is not an innovator but a transmitter. Adapted to current situations, *li* has a polyphonic meaning

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and means more than mere social convention. Indeed, it could be characterized as “an aesthetic expression of natural human feeling,” denoting “only those patterns or norms of social behaviour that tend to mutually exalt the character and dignity of the participants.”<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, *li* allows the development of *jen* in a social context and, consequently, opens the way for one to engage in self-analysis through appropriately perceiving oneself as a social being. By acting according to *li*, one internalizes the various codes of conduct that are appropriate in one’s social environment and that pertain to the various roles one plays. *Li* function as the catalyst for transmitting the *jen* in each person as the basis for harmony in the community. Accordingly, personal virtue is subsumed under communal virtue. Such social harmony can only be realized if the members of a community recognize and act in a morally responsible manner in their response to others. According to the Confucians, and especially to Mencius, this begins within the family context.

孝 E. Hsiao. A large proportion of Confucius’ sayings focus on *hsiao* (filial piety); it is often referred to when discussing virtue. At one point it is even referred to as the root of *jen* (*Analects* 1:2)—an assertion of the priority of *hsiao* in the order of human relationships. *Hsiao* could be considered as a duty of obedience and respect to one’s parents. On the other hand, it has been emphasized that *hsiao* begins with one’s parents: one learns how to be filial by observing one’s parents; Confucius said, in *Analects* 2:6, that *hsiao* means “parents are anxious lest their children get sick.” This places the primary part of the responsibility of being filial on the parents, although what is demanded of children is different from what is demanded of parents. This two-sided definition of filial piety presupposes mutual responsibility in a relationship. The starting point of filial piety is actually the responsibility of parents to demonstrate to their children the concern and love appropriate to the parent-child relationship. It is to these demonstrated qualities that the children appropriately respond.

The basis for asserting the priority of *hsiao*, upon which other relationships are modeled, is the idea that one’s immediate family is the natural starting point for valuable and meaningful relationships. The Confucians felt that the relationships into which one entered needed to be differentiated according to priority and type of responsibilities involved. *Hsiao* is not the mere formality of extending courtesy to one’s parents, for it “does not consist merely in young people undertaking the hard work, when anything has to be done, or serving their elders first with wine and food. It is something much more than that” (*Analects* 2:8).

Philosophy East & West Care and concern within the family is developed, and this has far-reaching effects, felt beyond family boundaries:

What is meant by “In order rightly to govern the state, it is necessary first to regulate the family,” is this:—It is not possible for one to teach others, while he cannot teach his own family. Therefore, the ruler, without going beyond his family, completes the lessons for the state. There is filial piety:—therewith the sovereign should be served. There is fraternal submission:—therewith elders and superiors should be served. There is kindness:—therewith the multitude should be treated. . . . [W]hen the ruler, as a father, a son, and a brother, is a model, then the people imitate him.<sup>22</sup>

It is assumed that the attitudes and emotions that are characteristic of happy family life are stable and strong. Filial piety is a principle of social action and also a moral virtue within Confucian thought; from the primary context of familial attachment one learns the significance of engaging with others in a meaningful and responsible way, affirming the interrelatedness of human beings.

*F. Shu.* An integral aspect of Confucian moral life is the interrelatedness of human beings. Confucius emphasized *shu*, reciprocity, as an expression of one’s mutual responsibility in a relationship. In living the Confucian life, one has to respond *appropriately* to those with whom one has a relationship; one is responsive to other people and mutually responsible for one’s relationships according to the role(s) one might fill in that relationship as, say, an educator or a business partner.

恕

Life as a totally independent, nonrelated individual is unacceptable in Confucian thought (*Analects* 18:6), and, as argued previously, an account of virtue or value that emphasizes personal excellence in isolation is deemed meaningless. The articulation of what it means to act in the manner of *shu* occupies a central position in the *Analects*; it is, in short the “golden rule”: Do not do to others what you do not wish to be done to yourself (*Analects* 5:11).<sup>23</sup>

The golden rule assumes a similarity-in-kind among human beings such that, through the interpolation of personal wants and interests, one is able to work out another person’s wants and interests. (Whether such a postulation is warranted is highly questionable and is, indeed, inconsistent with Confucius’ vehement insistence that people are, and should be, socially differentiated.) This theme of *shu* is not a call to unending dedication to the cause of others while one neglects one’s own, because the self is, clearly, the starting point and, especially for the *chün tzu*, the locus of virtue. Confucius also stresses a loyalty to oneself (*chung*), relating *chung* and *shu* as the ‘*i-kuan*’,<sup>24</sup> allegedly the single theme that best captures Confucian moral dynamics. Wing-tsit Chan comments, regarding 4:15:

忠  
一貫

... Confucianists have not agreed on what it means. Generally, Confucianists of *Han* and *T’ang* times adhered to the basic meaning of “thread” and

漢 唐  
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understood it in the sense of a system or a body of doctrines. *Chu Hsi*, true to the spirit of Neo-Confucian speculative philosophy, took it to mean that there is one mind to respond to all things. . . . All agree, however, on the meanings of *chung* and *shu*, which are best expressed by Chu Hsi, namely, *chung* means the full development of one's [originally good] mind and *shu* means the extension of that mind to others.<sup>25</sup>

The determination of what counts as appropriate response has to be worked out within the framework of the *nature* of the relationship. Thus *shu* encompasses a moral aspect based on one's appropriate responses according to one's role in a particular relationship. It is in this light that 'reciprocity' seems to be an inadequate translation of *shu* because 'reciprocity' suggests an equivalent 'pay-back' response. This is, however, clearly not what *shu* means—for example, in a teacher-pupil relationship, where it would be extremely peculiar for the teacher to *expect* to be taught by a pupil (although that might be a by-product of teaching) in response to the teacher as an educator.

In Confucian thought, the existing inequality of people in terms of their personal development is constituted by differences in social, moral, and relational terms. Ch'u expresses the different statuses within ancient Chinese society that were articulated in the Confucian system:

The distinctions between noble and humble, superior and inferior were . . . based upon the talent and virtue of each member of the society, and constituted a type of social selection conditioned by social success. In addition, further differences found expression in the kinship system. These were based on criteria of generation, age, degree of relationship, and sex. Status and modes of behavior in the larger society were determined by the fact of superiority and inferiority, in a family, by the degree of nearness and remoteness, superiority and inferiority, and seniority and juniority. The primary rights of consumption belonged to the father as against the sons, to the elder brother as against a younger brother, all types of labor or services being demanded from the junior groups, thus establishing relationships of subordination and superordination. The so-called rules of filial piety and brotherhood, and also of feminine behavior, were based on this.<sup>26</sup>

This concept of difference could perhaps be made sense of in the light of another idea—the *tao*; Confucius advised that those whose *tao* are different should not lay plans for one another (*Analects* 15:39). *Tao* here seems to refer to a perspectival worldview.

*G. Tao.* The meaning of *tao* is especially difficult to discern. This is connected with the fact that *tao* has no one meaning even within the Confucian tradition itself. What can be said about it, though, is that it does not have the metaphysical dimensions of absoluteness, of all-encompassing reality, and so on, that the term connotes in Taoist thought. *Tao* as used by the classical Confucians has a range of mean-

ings, from the personal to the cosmological. Within the arena of human action, however, *tao* seems to denote an open-ended enterprise of the development of the self *within* the larger sociocultural context (and which, especially in Neo-Confucian philosophy, was related to the cosmological order). More generally, *tao* can be conceived of as the shared similarity of humankind, *jen*, and, in particular, as different orientations toward human life within the world order, constituting one's specific point of view and consequently affecting one's perception of the world.

Sandra A. Wawrytko, in "Confucius and Kant: The Ethics of Respect," offers a more metaphysical and absolutist conception of *tao*, explaining it in terms of the Kantian Moral Law.<sup>27</sup> According to Wawrytko, there is a similarity between *tao* and the Moral Law that is based on the idea that both refer to a universal and unwavering standard. In turn, this is based on the idea of respect for persons in the two philosophies: while respect for other persons, according to Kant, arises from the recognition that people are rational beings, Confucius taught that respect between persons must temper the superior-inferior relationships within society. In addition, Wawrytko emphasizes both the concept of righteousness (*i* or *yi*) in Confucian thought as the Mean and the role that

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Although Wawrytko's study is an interesting one, she has dangerously narrowed the Confucian concept of *tao* in rendering it as being analogous to the Kantian Moral Law. While Kant's Moral Law is not unconnected with his views on human nature, it is primarily a moral theory. In Confucian philosophy, one could never successfully separate, and understand a 'moral' portion independent of the larger philosophical context. Implicit in Confucius' teachings is the belief that personhood is not and cannot be compartmentalized: the self is at once social, moral, political, and intellectual. Wawrytko misunderstands the realm of the moral in Confucian thought while at the same time vastly reducing and narrowing the scope and applicability of concepts such as *tao*.

In this connection, it is useful to understand the self-cultivation process as an open-ended one—what Hall and Ames term "person-making."<sup>28</sup> Hall and Ames offer a lucid argument against construing *tao* as some order of transcendent principle. They argue that such a conception results in an impoverishment of Confucius' conception of the human being and further contradicts Confucius' perception of person-making as an open-ended activity. I will not reproduce Hall and Ames' argument here, though I agree with them. That the *tao* is not some predetermined objective 'path' is clearly demonstrated in Confucius' statement in *Analects* 15:28 that it is the human which renders value to the *tao*, and not the *tao* that makes the human magnificent.

Schwartz also understands *tao* as encompassing a range of different

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meanings and scopes. He writes, "in its most extended meaning, it refers to nothing less than the total normative sociopolitical order with its networks of proper familial and proper sociopolitical roles, statuses and ranks, as well as to the 'objective' prescriptions of proper behaviour—ritual, ceremonial, and ethical—that govern the relationships among these roles. On the other side, it obviously and emphatically also embraces the 'inner' moral life of the living individual."<sup>29</sup>

This means that moral norms as such within Confucian philosophy are not accorded ultimacy. Instead, being a relationship-based philosophy, what is important is that one acts responsibly *within* one's social and cultural environment and *according* to the roles one occupies in the variety of relationships one engages in. The distinctiveness of each person, although all share in the same quality of *being jen*, rests in the (successful) integration of all the relationships one engages in; this integration might aptly be described as the process of *becoming jen*. Thus, for example, I am at once a daughter, friend, wife, teacher, employee, colleague, and so on. This does not mean, however, that each person is completely constituted by the roles s/he plays. Rather, the quality and meaning of a satisfactory Confucian life is based on *how* one fulfills the responsibilities within each relationship.

Thus, the Confucian life is a dynamic process whereby one's way of life changes according to how one's relationships might have changed (though changing relationships are, obviously, not the only cause of change in ways of life). Tu Wei-ming describes the dynamics of this process, distinguishing between Confucian and un-Confucian ways of understanding personhood:

The dramatic image of the modern person who assumes a variety of social roles is definitely unConfucian. The idea of my assuming the role of son in reference to my father and simultaneously assuming the distinct and separate role of father in reference to my son is unnatural, if not distasteful. From my own experience . . . I have always been learning to be a son. Since my son's birth, I have also been learning to be a father and my learning to be a son has to take a new significance as a result of becoming a father myself. Furthermore, my being a son and a father is also informed and enriched by being a student, a teacher, a husband, a colleague, a friend, and an acquaintance. These are ways for me to learn to be human.<sup>30</sup>

As Tu writes, *how* one conducts oneself in the range of relationships one engages in constitutes ways of *being human*. Each individual is a necessary and distinct node within a web-like network of different relationships, and these different relationships, in different combinations and permutations, make for the distinctiveness of each human life. Affirmation of the *quality* of life as such can only be achieved within the network of human relationships.

The next section discusses two specific problems with the Confucian conception of the ideal community and constructs some possible replies before moving on to suggest the relevance to contemporary moral philosophy of some Confucian ways of thinking about morality.

## II. The Confucian Community

One potential problem with classical Confucian thought is that there is a belief in maintaining differentiation among people. Although it is a fact that there are hierarchical structures operating in any society, to insist that there is actually a *moral* aspect in maintaining hierarchy and social inequality would seem grossly unpalatable, especially to those who uphold the rights of individuals and the respect for difference and who thus see a need to eliminate inequality in favor of more egalitarian structures. For there is a great gap between the mere observation of a feature of a particular community and the suggestion that there is indeed some value in preserving or enforcing that feature.

Problematically, at times, Confucius did seem to be protecting the nobility, for he did make the remark: “*Li* is not applicable to the common people; punishment is not applicable to the *ta-fu* (officials),”<sup>31</sup> thus drawing a sharp distinction between those who were, supposedly, able to exercise responsibility over themselves and others who were not. In addition, when in 513 B.C. the state of Chin set out to publicize the penal laws, Confucius criticized, saying, “Chin is going to ruin. It has lost its (proper) rules (of administration). . . . [P]eople will study the tripods, and not care to know their men of rank. And what profession can the superiors keep?”<sup>32</sup> This complaint of Confucius’ reflects the ideology of nobles who felt that this move threatened their authority as a ruling class.<sup>33</sup>

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However, to contend that Confucius sought to uphold the hierarchy and to protect the elite minority provides only part of Confucius’ rationale regarding good government. The contention is inadequate because it ignores his insistent emphasis, appearing many times in the *Analects*, that it was *especially* the ruling nobility, with their pronounced responsibilities, who needed to be morally responsible for their conduct. What could actually be criticized, instead, is Confucius’ idealism—not unlike that of Plato—in thinking that there could be a philosopher-king, or *chün tzu*, who was a paradigm of virtue and moral responsibility and who could, through his moral achievements, influence the ruled majority.

Obviously more particularistic than any deontological moral theory or universalisability criterion could admit, the Confucian prescription forces one to make choices and to accord different priorities to the variety of people one comes across. Distinguishing between people is not advocated crudely, as a means to effect discrimination, but rather as a means to work out one’s responsibilities, whether as partner, friend, or colleague. It seems, in the light of Confucian theory, naive to insist that

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all should be treated equally, or loved equally, or to try to achieve a social setting in which relational values are not accorded any significance played down or eliminated. A Confucian scholar who was himself brought up within the Western philosophical tradition, Benjamin Schwartz comments that he shares the Western prejudices against hierarchy and authority. However, he also admits that

it is important to understand a different mindset where people take pride in living within the hierarchical station in which they find themselves. Even in the West, this was the case in, say, Shakespeare's work: hierarchy, status, and authority are accepted. And the need for hierarchy, status, authority, and rote behavior in our society may be a fact that we cannot live up to. In this respect, perhaps the nations of East Asia are more honest.<sup>34</sup>

A positive aspect of the Confucian emphasis on hierarchy is that it places greater responsibility on those on the higher rungs of the hierarchy. In fact, most of Confucius' sayings were directed at the *chün tzu* and not at the rest of the people. What this means is that rather than demanding that the people allow themselves to be subordinated, Confucius is reminding the leaders of the immense responsibilities they have on their hands. Thus, importantly, the appropriate response on the part of the governed ensues as a *consequence* of appropriately fulfilled responsibilities on the part of the governing, and not vice versa. De Bary notes that such reminders of responsibility are not out of place:

[W]hen Confucius speaks of the *chün tzu* as someone especially careful and restrained, one who is punctilious about not overstepping the bounds of what is right, it is not because he expects ordinary men to exercise the same circumspection or constrain themselves to the same degree, but because *those he addresses have a heightened visibility and potentially more far-reaching influence on others, to say nothing of their role in directing others' labors and in the distribution of material goods.*<sup>35</sup>

If (moral) responsibility is an integral component of social hierarchy, as passages in the *Analects* suggest, it then follows that those on the lower levels of the hierarchy could actually participate in the process of requiring that their superiors live and act responsibly. This idea is persuasive in the context of political leadership.

A second problem with Confucius' construction of the ideal community is that it is built upon a family-type structure. Not only is such a construction idealistic; it is also (morally) inappropriate to assume that all relationships *should be* similar to family ones. It ignores the empirical fact that family relationships involve a whole, different set of values, loyalties, caring, feeling, and closeness, which are different from non-familial relationships. Values and feelings that are appropriate within the family context—for example, that between mother and child—are often inappropriate in others—such as that between employer and employee.

From the moral perspective, it would be a peculiar kind of society, indeed, if all people were related in family-type bonds. It is questionable whether it is morally expedient for the individual to be subjected to demands of obedience and to have his or her life determined to such a large extent not only by those within the family but by those outside it as well, particularly given the type of obligations involved in family relationships of a Confucian kind.

There is an inherent inconsistency within the Confucian system because, while it seeks to emphasize the special and fundamental status of the family, it yet advocates that all other relationships should be like familial ones. A society that aims to function in the Confucian sense as a large family is unworkable because it wants to maintain, at the same time, both a demarcation between family and nonfamily and the extension of family to nonfamily. Thus, a more general problem with Confucian philosophy is that while Confucius wants to retain the idea of *existential* human equality and similarity-in-kind, he yet believes in social differentiation. Cua expresses the situation thus: "The problem of *jen*-realization is thus a problem of *equalizing* the status of humanity without obliterating existing social distinctions."<sup>36</sup> Confucius did not deal satisfactorily with this problem.

The last-mentioned problem is the more apparent when one notes that, within Confucian thinking, it seems that immoral means are justified in order to protect members of the family. In discussing the case of sheep-stealing as an example, Confucius remarked that "the father conceals the misconduct of the son and the son conceals the misconduct of the father. This is uprightness" (*Analects* 13:18.2). It emerges from this passage that the *criminality* of stealing is not at issue, or is, at least, of lesser importance than one's duty and obligation to the family. As Confucius notes, a son who sees his parents doing wrong should only gently remonstrate and remain reverent (*Analects* 4:18); the son mentioned in 13:18, who was otherwise "upright," inappropriately bore witness against his father, thus inverting the order of obligation by placing moral principle over obligation.

It might seem that the Confucian system of family relationships allows for a parental authoritarianism that could easily hinder or stifle the development of the child as a responsible acting and thinking being, especially if compromises of moral values are required. The example quoted above of concealing wrongdoings, if extended to the sphere of the larger community setting, could lead easily to an unprincipled, subjectively constructed, chaotic community—if that could be termed a community at all—infused with authoritarianism and subjection.

Admittedly, Confucian thought as expressed in the *Analects* is idealistic in assuming that parents and rulers (and other people accorded positions of responsibility) are moral. However, a weaker, and more

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plausible, interpretation of Confucian theory is that it is prescriptivist, and that the point Confucius is actually making is that it is especially important that people with increased responsibilities *should* be moral. Understood thus, the theory is extremely relevant in that it highlights the enormous amount of social and moral responsibility that is and should be borne by, for instance, educators, predominantly in the upbringing of the young, but not necessarily restricted to that domain.

The idea that particular duties and responsibilities are necessary behavioral corollaries of particular roles has central emphasis in Confucian thought, and is one area in which the Confucian conception of morality has valuable suggestions for our contemporary world. Indeed, though particularly Confucian, this strain of thought is not uniquely so. For instance, A. I. Melden says, in *Rights and Right Conduct*, that the term 'father', for example, has a moral component such that the mere biological connection whereby one person fertilizes the ovum from which another develops does not consequently mean that the former is a father to the latter.<sup>37</sup> More is required for the concept of a father, Melden argues, since it makes sense to say such things as "He was like a father to me." A paradigm case of a father, therefore, is "a male parent who plays his social and moral role with respect to his offspring in the circumstances of family life."<sup>38</sup>

Such analysis is particularly useful in our contemporary context. We need to reassess notions of care in the light of the high incidences of family breakdowns and of merged families in modern society. In this area, some Confucian ideas could be useful, particularly the one reminding those who play parental roles of their responsibility to set up contexts of care from which value and meaning are derived. Adopting this idea as a primary tenet, one could broaden the minimal coverage of family relationships by Confucius in the *Analects* (dealing only with the father-son relationship) to include other relationships, such as mother-daughter or grandfather-granddaughter, in the light of existing relationship norms and expectations. Such a move, if successful, would assure the continuing relevance of Confucian ideals to contemporary situations.

In addition, there must be a relatively freer and more liberal understanding of what *li* entail. Confucius himself, as recorded in the *Analects*, did at times modify existing practices. Furthermore, because norms governing relationships are largely cultural anyway, there must be room for adapting *li* to the intersubjective contexts within particular communities. It would hardly be appropriate to insist that the relationship norms of the ancient Chinese world apply to the here and now, given especially the noticeable lack of discussion of female status and roles; there is no feminine equivalent of what it means to excel, as in the case of the *chün tzu* paradigm.

*Li* must appeal to communally shared knowledge as well as to established standards and cultural values. Ideally, *li* would allow for the manifestation of ethical and aesthetic aspects of human interaction such that it could be said that they are “the conductual means used in the present situation and social context to continuously create culture,” and which thus serve as a “heuristic vehicle” for the “cultivated expression of human feeling (*jen*).”<sup>39</sup>

Understood thus, the Confucian system presents a viable alternative, and a challenge, to systems in which individual autonomy is overvalued. It implicitly asserts that there are serious defects in an ideology that emphasises autonomy at the cost of cooperation. It argues that there is, within any society, a delicate balance between individuality on the one hand and communality on the other; that one of the arduous tasks of politics is to work out some areas that are appropriately self-determined and other areas that require public consensus; and, importantly, that the development of the self can only be meaningfully sought and attained in a context wherein the common good is also emphasized.<sup>40</sup> A commendable aspect of Confucian thought in this respect is its emphasis on family values and its attempt to reach back to the family as the source of *moral affection* and, hence, of ways of caring for others:

A father, for example, has the duty to care for his children by providing resources for the satisfaction of their needs and education; and the son has the duty to care for his father when the latter is sick or disabled because of old age. Moreover, these reciprocal obligations are to be performed with an attitude of reverence or respect styled with an expression of affectionate concern. It is this caring attitude that lies at the heart of extensive moral concern. Other human beings, not in the status of being one’s parent or brother, can also be cared for as one’s parent or brother. This is possible because of the analogizing of one’s affection and thought. . . . We can thus speak of extensive moral concern as essentially a form of analogical projection of familiar relationship.<sup>41</sup>

That Confucius proposed the concept of the individual as a related self rather than define it atomistically does not diminish the moral responsibility of the self. Instead, moral responsibility and, accordingly, human excellence are construed in a different way. Tu Wei-ming conceives of the developing self in an illuminating way; he sees the self as the center of relationships, from which concentric circles of influence emanate, moving gradually from the family, as the innermost ring, to the community, country, and world.<sup>42</sup> Seeming practically idealistic at the individual level because of the limits of time and space, and of the nature of human commitment, such a process of gradual inclusion could conceivably be realized in a community of developing selves; this idea of cooperation is deeply ingrained in Confucian thought.

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Fingarette outlines the contribution of the members of a community to what he feels is a distinctively *human* community. He writes:

To become civilized is to establish relationships that are not merely physical, biological or instinctive; it is to establish *human* relationships, relationships of an essentially symbolic kind. . . . "Merely to feed one's parents well" . . . "even dogs and horses are fed" (2:7). To be devoted to one's parents is far more than to keep the parents alive physically. . . . To obey the whip is to be not much more than a domestic animal; but to be loyal and faithful to those who rightly govern, to serve them and thus to serve *in* the human community, to do this out of one's own heart and nature—this is to be a true citizen of one's community.<sup>43</sup>

The human person or self is conceived of in terms of its social interdependency with other human persons. Given that communal life is the *only* locus of meaning for the human, what is integral is that the self has to be cultivated within the present society—within the life here and now—in conjunction with all others in that society. Life in this community is a dynamic, unceasing one because we need constantly to be working on and developing different relationships with different people, in the quest for the common good.

What has been suggested here as an application of a Confucian way of thinking about morality, and about human life in general, is importantly connected with issues of personal identity, self esteem, and human *being*. Within the context of the Confucian emphasis on communality, the cultivation of a good life—for the individual within the developing society—is a holistic process. Humans are reciprocally connected, and attention must be given to collective welfare. Together with creativity, culture, success in relationships, and social and political order, what we call morality is a means to the affirmation of human life together with other human beings as beings *similar-in-kind*. The interrelatedness of human beings, their mutual concerns for each other, and their shared interests in their community are forces that could enhance social development and excellence. These characteristics of human life together serve as means toward the good life for the individual in particular, and for the development of and an increase in the quality of the human condition in general.

Such an ideal needs to be worked out between people—human beings in their interrelatedness—who share similar cultural presuppositions, evaluative structures, and forms of life, people who are committed to and involved in the development of their community. It is only within such an arena of human interdependency and mutual concern that the Confucian good life ceases to be a mere theoretical ideal and becomes a possible reality. In the words of Tu Wei-ming, "ontologically we are irreducibly human, and existentially we must struggle to remain human."<sup>44</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 – Phrases like ‘Western philosophy’ or ‘Western philosophical tradition,’ which I use throughout this essay, are but gross general terms for philosophy done in the so-called Western world. For want of a better term, however, I use these phrases to denote philosophy primarily in the Anglo-American tradition. I also use the terms ‘Western’ and ‘non-Western’ philosophy as if there were two internally homogeneous and consistent systems. This is an assumption that is made, however, not as a reflection of the actual situation but rather for the sake of convenience.
- 2 – See Henry Rosemont, Jr., “Rights-Bearing Individuals and Role-Bearing Persons,” in *Rules, Rituals and Responsibility*, Mary Bockover, ed. (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1991).
- 3 – Henry Rosemont, Jr., “Against Relativism,” in Gerald J. Larson and Eliot Deutsch, eds., *Interpreting across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 62–64.
- 4 – These three points are suggested by Joseph Wu, in “The Paradoxical Situation of Western Philosophy and the Search for Chinese Wisdom,” *Inquiry* 14: 1–18. Wu also notes that his points are to be taken as suggestions—as the fishing pole with which we catch the ‘fish,’ namely, Chinese philosophy.
- 5 – James Legge (in *The Confucian Classics: Shu Ching*), comments, in a footnote, that Confucius’ construction of Chinese history in the *Shu Ching* was not meant, first and foremost, to be an accurate historical account but, rather, to suit the purposes of his philosophy. Confucius’ *Shu Ching* concludes the story of the Chou dynasty at 770 B.C.—which historically ended at 249 B.C.—the beginning of a period of weak and ineffective rulers. Legge writes, “Between King P’ing and King Mu there had reigned seven sovereigns of the house of Chou; and it is remarkable that not a single document of the reign of any of them was incorporated by Confucius [into the *Shu Ching*]. . . . This fact is sufficient to prove that Confucius did not compile the *Shoo* as a history of his country, or even intend that it should afford materials for such a history. His design . . . was to bring together such pieces as might show the wonderful virtue and intelligence of ancient sovereigns and statesmen, who should be made models for those of future ages” (p. 613). 平 穆
- 6 – Chad Hansen, *Language and Logic in Ancient China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983), p. 77. Karyn L. Lai

- 7 – Hall and Ames prefer to translate *cheng-ming* as “ordering of names” because the term ‘rectification’, they feel, might connote some sense of making things accord with some transcendent reality; see their *Thinking Through Confucius* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), pp. 268–275.
- 8 – The implications of such a theory of names or titles are philosophically interesting. They are not unproblematic, however. One of the most obvious difficulties is that the theory assumes an objective, ontological basis of the normative moral import of ‘names’. Secondly, it suggests universally held notions of relationship terms and their corresponding behavioral requirements, and that these notions are equally accessible to everyone.
- 9 – Because Confucius himself never defined the term either metaphysically or ontologically, it has been variously interpreted in English as benevolence, love, humanity, humaneness, etc. None of these translations into English, however, is adequate to capture the meaning of *jen* as *shared humanity*. Refer to Wing-tsit Chan, “Chinese and Western Interpretations of *Jen*,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 2 (1975): 107–129.  
 My conception of the Confucian self is strongly influenced by Tu Wei-ming’s characterization of the individual, in Confucianism, as “a centre of relationships,” and of ultimate self-transformation (or self-cultivation) as a communal act. See his “Ultimate Self-transformation as a Communal Act,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 6 (1979): 237–246; also, his *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1985).
- 10 – Chu T’ung T’su, in *Law and Society in Traditional China* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1965), pp. 226–247, describes the function of *li* in their variety of manifestations and also the many violations of *li*.
- 11 – Tu Wei-ming, “Li as a Process of Humanization,” *Philosophy East and West* 22 (1972): 190.
- 12 – Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).
- 13 – I question Fingarette’s thesis on several counts, too—one of them being the seemingly simplistic examples he uses, and also his account of *li* in terms of “performatives.” I also feel he has not drawn a tight enough connection between *jen* and *li*, which, if done, would provide further support for his thesis.

Philosophy East & West 14 – Henry Skaja, “*Li* (Ceremonial) as a Primal Concept in Confucian

- Spiritual-Humanism," *Chinese Philosophy* 3; *Confucianism and Other Schools* (Taipei: Chinese Culture University Press, 1984), p. 51.
- 15 – There are countless examples in the *Analects* of the spontaneity, imaginativeness, and mastery required in the practise of *li*: 6:13, 13:5, 2:4, 7:36–37, 8:1, 8:2, 13:26, 15:21.
  - 16 – Legge's translation, in *Confucian Classics*.
  - 17 – Antonio Cua, "The Concept of Paradigmatic Individuals in the Ethics of Confucius," *Inquiry* 14 (1971): 50–51. Cua in this article argues for a relatively liberal interpretation of Confucian moral theory, dealing with the idea of the *chün tzu* as a paradigm that is not bound by strict obedience to principles.
  - 18 – In Tu Wei-ming, "The Creative Tension between Jên and Li," *Philosophy East and West* 18 (1–2) (January–April 1968): 33.
  - 19 – A. S. Cua, "The Concept of Paradigmatic Individuals," p. 44.
  - 20 – Tu Wei-ming, "The Creative Tension between Jên and Li," p. 37, citing *Analects* 17:13.
  - 21 – Henry Skaja, "Li (Ceremonial) as a Primal Concept," p. 49.
  - 22 – *Ta Hsüeh* (Great learning), chap. 9, pts. 1–8, in Legge, *The Four Books* (Hong Kong: Culture Book Company). 大學
  - 23 – This formulation has often been dubbed the "negative formulation of the golden rule," or the "silver rule." Legge remarks, in his commentary on the passage, that this is the lesser version of the positive version, which reads "Do to others as you wish to be done to yourself" (*ibid.*). Robert Allinson provides an interesting analysis of this so-called "negative version," arguing for its appropriateness in Confucian philosophy, in "The Confucian Golden Rule: Negative Formulation," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 12 (1985): 305–315.
  - 24 – Translated by Wing-tsit Chan as "one thread," in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 27.
  - 25 – *Ibid.*
  - 26 – C'hu T'ung Tsu, *Law and Society in Traditional China*, p. 229.
  - 27 – In *Philosophy East and West* 32 (3) (July 1982): 237–257.
  - 28 – Hall and Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius*, pp. 232–237. They demonstrate the variability of *tao* according to its different manifestations as recorded in the *Analects*:

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- (1) different *tao* of different historical periods (*Analects* 15:25, 3:16);
- (2) the *tao* of different peoples: exemplary beings (*Analects* 14:28, 19:12, 11:20), Kings Wen and Wu (*Analects* 19:22), the masses (*Analects* 8:9), family members (*Analects* 1:14, 6:12, 1:11, 4:20);
- (3) the *tao* of music (*Analects* 15:42);
- (4) the *tao* of archery (*Analects* 3:16);
- (5) the cosmological *tao* (*Analects* 5:13).

30 – Benjamin Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 62.

30 – Tu Wei-ming, *Confucian Thought*, p. 58.

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31 – *Li Chi* 3: 3b, in Legge, *Texts of Confucianism*, 3:90.

32 – *Tso Chuan* 53: 6b–7a, in Legge, *Chinese Classics* 5, pt. 2, p. 732.

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33 – Ch'ü T'ung Tsu, *Law and Society in Traditional China*, pp. 170–172.

34 – Benjamin Schwartz, in *The Confucian World Observed*, ed. Tu Wei-ming et al. (Honolulu: Institute of Culture and Communication, East-West Centre, 1992), p. 55.

35 – William Theodore de Bary, *The Trouble with Confucianism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 29 (italics mine).

36 – Antonio Cua, "Confucian Vision and Human Community," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 11 (1984): p. 228.

37 – A. I. Melden, *Rights and Right Conduct* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1959), pp. 36–50.

38 – Ibid.

39 – Henry Skaja, "*Li* (Ceremonial) as a Primal Concept," p. 63.

40 – My remarks here are inevitably preliminary because of the essentially empirical and contextual nature of such issues.

41 – Antonio Cua, "Confucian Vision and Human Community," p. 229.

42 – Tu Wei-ming, "Ultimate Self-transformation as a Communal Act," pp. 237–246; also, his *Confucian Thought*.

43 – Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred*, p. 76.

44 – Tu Wei-ming, in "Pain and Suffering in Confucian Self-Cultivation," *Philosophy East and West* 34 (4) (October 1984): 17.