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# Discussing the Relationship between Individual and Community

## From the Perspective of Confucianism

Edited by
Zhongjiang Wang

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# About the Editor

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Zhongjiang Wang is a Professor in the Philosophy Department of Peking University and is also the Executive Director of the Institute for Advanced Humanistic Studies. His research interests include Chinese philosophy in the Pre-Qin period, Confucianism and Taoism, excavated documents and modern Chinese philosophy. He has published over 20 academic books and more than 170 articles in the field of Chinese philosophy. He received the award of "The Yangtze River Scholar" in 2012.

*Editorial*

# The Individual and the Collective: From the Confucian Perspective

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Human existence as an autonomous individual or an interdependent member of a community is not an exclusive choice. However, in different periods of time, both past and present, and in different societies, both open and closed, there often exist opposition and conflict between these two modes of existence. For example, communitarianism resists what it perceives to be atomic individualism, while liberalism resists what it views to be monopolizing collectivism. Yet, the exploration and pursuit of the synergy and harmonious development of these two modes have always been among the goals of ethics and religious studies.

What ideas, theories, and wisdom does Confucianism provide regarding how individuals can exist independently and as members of a community? In modern China, Confucianism is often seen as a collectivist ideology suppressing individuality, advocating human inequality, or being ethically inadequate in dealing with a society of strangers. However, it is also defended as a set of values that opposes political power via the virtues of intellectuals and Confucians, affirms individual dignity and personal independence, and advocates for the equality of all humanity. These divergent perspectives prompt us to continue interrogating the following enquiry: What is the true nature of Confucianism in the relationship between the individual and the collective?

Confucianism, as an ancient and enduring school of thought, is both an ideological system in Chinese history and the value beliefs and faith of Confucians. It has a dual and complex relationship with political power. Being instrumentalized in the real world, it justifies autocratic rule and is an ideal from the perspective of Confucians that can be used to criticize the irrationality of reality and establish Confucians' personal pursuits. Yet, at the level of ideas and value beliefs, Confucianism seeks synergy between the individual and the collective, viewing self-cultivation and improvement, as well as participation in public affairs and the establishment of a good order, as different aspects of an individual's holistic mission. Apart from the Confucian advocacy of human inequality during the Han and Tang dynasties, the human nature theories of Confucianism in the pre-Qin, Song, and Ming dynasties emphasized human equality overall. Confucian ethics of benevolence 仁, sincerity 诚, justice 义, and beliefs in self fulfillment 成己 as well as the fulfillment of things 成物 are universally applicable and effective for living a good individual and collective life. Confucianism is suitable for both traditional societies of acquaintances and modern societies of stranger. Scholars such as Frederick W. Mote, Tu Weiming, and Roger T. Ames have provided different perspectives and arguments on these issues.

Scholars and researchers participating in this Special Issue have explored Confucian concepts, theories, and thoughts on the relationship between individuals and the collective from different perspectives and aspects, deepening and expanding upon pertinent topics and views in this field and making valuable contributions that are both commendable and appreciated. I would like to express sincere thanks to all the peer reviewers and editors involved in this Special Issue and to Assistant Professor Pi Mimi for assisting in the editorial work of this Special Issue.

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*Article*

# The Multiple Dimensions of Confucian Relational Ethics and the "Way of Being With"

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**Abstract:** To reduce Confucian ethics to a "hierarchy of association" or to say that it is incapable of dealing with the problems of strangers is to only see that Confucian ethics stipulates different treatments for kin relations and the sexes. However, this fails to see the multiple different dimensions of Confucian ethics. In fact, the Confucians established universal relational ethics, rationality of social engagement, and a "way of being with" in the interpersonal relationships that are obtained between the self and others. This kind of ethics was not only effective in ancient society, but it is also effective at dealing with the problems of the modern "society of strangers": it has a universal applicability. Beginning from two Confucian stories, and drawing on records of Confucius and his disciples in the *Analects* alongside supporting passages from the *Mengzi* and the *Xunzi*, this essay elucidates the notions of how self and other should treat each other, how wise people should know themselves and others, how benevolent people should love themselves and others, to argue that Confucianism possesses a universal relational ethics and a "way of being with", and that the multiple dimensions of Confucian ethics cannot be reduced to just one.

**Keywords:** self; other; confucianism; relational ethics; multi-dimensionality

## 1. Introduction

Understanding Confucian theories with their deep history and broad genealogies requires that we adopt a comprehensive way of thinking. It requires that when we understand one of its dimensions, we do not ignore its other dimensions, and that when we understand one of its narratives or theories, we do not ignore its other narratives or theories. One summarization of Confucian ethics says that the relational system that it founded is a kind of "hierarchical mode of association" (*chaxu geju* 差序格局)[1] (Fei 1985) and one suspicion cast on this kind of Confucian ethics says that it cannot respond to a modern society of strangers.[2] (Zhao 2007) However, these kinds of understandings only recognize one Confucian characteristic while concealing its other characteristics. This is to deny the value of Confucianism and limit its validity to the society of ancient China. It is a fact that Confucianism has a special ethical theory of kin relations and also recognizes the differential arrangement and order maintained by *li* 禮 (ritual, rites). However, it is also a fact that Confucianism emphasizes the equality of human nature, free will, and the development of personal character and, in addition, that it has a universal ethical theory of interhuman relationality.[3]

In order to illustrate the importance of exploring Confucian relational ethics and the question of its universality we need to situate our discussion within the context surrounding the debate on whether or not Confucian ethics is a particularism or a universalism. The modern world that values diversity reflected on and criticized the universalism of the Enlightenment era and thereby proposed new kinds of justice and reason (See MacIntyre 1989). People either focus on ethics with different kinds of universality, or they focus on ethics of difference, or they think that Confucian ethics is an instance of particularism (Zhang 2009, pp. 483–92), or they think that Confucianism is a kind of universal ethics (Yu

2006, pp. 160–77). The debate revolving around the question of whether or not the ethics represented in the Confucian notion that "relatives cover for relatives" (*qinqin xiangyin* 親親相隱) has been a heated one (See Guo 2004, 2011; Deng 2020) that does not seem to be ending anytime soon (Di 2019). During the Eastern Zhou (770–256 BCE), Confucianism was faced with challenges from Daoism, Legalism, Mohism, and other schools of thought and those original debates are still going on today. An example is the debate on which of Confucianism's "love has ranks" (*ai you chadeng* 愛有差等) and Mohism's "impartial love" (jian'ai 兼愛) is universalist, and which is particularist (Shen 1992, pp. 23–48). Non-Chinese scholarship regarding Confucian ethics' universality mainly focuses on the degree of difference between positions. Joseph Levenson cast much suspicious on Confucianism's modern transformation in the face of all that challenged it (See Levenson 1968) and Du Weiming 杜維明 thinks that both Chinese and non-Chinese scholars have not carried out enough work in response to this. In terms of this, the arguments proposed by Fei Xiaotong 費孝通 and Zhao Tingyang 趙汀陽 are just two examples where Confucianism is defined as a particularist set of ethics. Therefore, this article, which understands Confucianism as a universal set of ethics, is in part a response to such scholars who would see it understood as a particularist set of ethics.

The overall argument of this article is that Confucian relational ethics is an interpersonal "way of being with" (*xiangyu zhi dao* 相與之道)[4] and a "way of social interaction" (*jiaowang zhi dao* 交往之道). It is established on the universal world of relations that obtains between people. Confucianism established this ethical theory not only in order to face relatives, friends, and acquaintances, but also strangers, too. This ethical theory is broadly applicable to all kinds of interpersonal relationships between self and other.[5] Confucian relational ethics is plural rather than singular. Confucius' 孔子 different presentations of the same ethical theory across different concepts and his different answers to the same questions of his different disciples all show the plurality of dimensions to Confucian ethics. This means that Confucianism cannot allow the human equality that obtains in its universal relational ethics to be concealed by kin relationships or its differentiating *li*.

## 2. The "Way of Being With" in Two Confucian Contexts

Confucian ethics can be summarized as a relational ethics or a "way of being with". One of its theoretical forms particularizes human relations as those between father and son, husband and wife, older and younger brothers, ruler and ministers, and friends. These are normalized through such ideas as "familiarity" (*youqin* 有親), "duty" (*youyi* 有義), "(sexual) differentiation" (*youbie* 有別), "seniority" (*youxu* 有序), and "trust" (*youxin* 有信). (*Mengzi* 3A4) Three of these five relations are family or kin relations, and the other two are hierarchical political relations or social relations. In ancient society, the scope and space for human activities was small and social mobility was not very possible; therefore, social interaction was limited. For most of the time, people lived within the social circles defined by their families, villages, towns, friends, and acquaintances. Thus, the representations of Confucian ethics are connected to the ways in which people lived in ancient society. However, the space of Confucian ethics was never limited to the small circle of human communities or the relationships between people familiar with each other. Instead, there is another way of describing Confucian ethics: the universal ethical values and norms established in interpersonal relations, that is, the relationships that are obtained between the self and others.[6] This is correlate with the Confucian call for a community where "all is one family within the four seas" or where there is a "great unity throughout the whole world".

There are two passages which have not been given enough attention but nonetheless provide an appropriate point of entry for understanding this set of Confucian relational ethics. The first of these is contained in the *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 (Outer Commentary of Han Family *Odes*):

Zi Lu said: "When people are good to me I am good to them in turn; when people are not good to me I am not good to them in turn". Zi Gong said: "When people

are good to me I am good to them in turn; when people are not good to me then I guide them to be better". Yan Hui said: "When people are good to me I am good to them in turn; when people are not good to me I am good to them nonetheless". These three asked the Master about their differing opinions. Confucius said: "You's (i.e., Zi Lu) idea is that of the uncultured Man and Mo peoples; Ci's (i.e., Zi Gong) idea is that of friends; and Hui's idea is that family relations. (Han 2012, p. 102)

This is a story where Confucius answers the questions of his three disciples, Zi Lu, Zi Gong, and Yan Hui.

In other situations where Confucius and his disciples are answering questions, it is usually Confucius who raises the question before his three disciples answer. This story from the *Hanshi waizhuan* does not provide us with a particular scene. According to its similarities with stories recorded in other texts we can infer that Confucius asked the question "How should one best treat others?" at some point when they had all gathered together. Zi Lu, who was fond of acting first regardless of consequences, answered first with "When people are good to me I am good to them in turn; when people are not good to me I am not good to them in turn". Following him was Zi Gong's answer: "When people are good to me I am good to them in turn; when people are not good to me then I guide them to be better". Finally, Yan Hui answered with "When people are good to me I am good to them in turn; when people are not good to me I am good to them nonetheless". The answers that Confucius' three disciples provided to his one question are all very different. It is possible that Confucius did not immediately say anything and therefore his disciples actively sought his opinion on their answers. Thus, Confucius provided his appraisal: "You's idea is that of the uncultured Man and Mo peoples; Ci's idea is that of friends; and Hui's idea is that family relations". It is obvious that Confucius divided their answers into three categories ranking them from highest to lowest—from family relations, to friend relations, and finally to relations between strangers. We will refer to the ethical story contained in this passage as "Story A".

The second story regarding the Confucian ethical context recounts Confucius questioning his three disciples on what they think "wise persons" (*zhizhe* 智者) and "benevolent persons" (*renzhe* 仁者) are like:

> Zi Lu entered, and Confucius said: "You! What is a wise person like? What is a benevolent person like?" Zi Lu replied: "A wise person allows others to know themselves (i.e., the wise person), a benevolent person allows others to love themselves (i.e., the benevolent person)". Confucius said: "This can be considered a scholar-official". Zi Gong entered, and Confucius said: "Ci! What is a wise person like? What is a benevolent person like?" Zi Gong replied: "Wise persons know others and benevolent persons love others". Confucius said: "This can be considered a scholarly gentleman". Yan Hui entered, and Confucius said: "Hui! What is a wise person like? What is a benevolent person like?" Yan Hui replied: "Wise persons know themselves and benevolent persons love themselves". Confucius said: "This can be considered an enlightened gentleman". (*Xunzi* "Zidao")[7] (X. Wang 1988, p. 533)

In comparison with the above story, this appears to be an interview that takes place inside a room between Confucius and his disciples where he allowed each to answer one by one. Confucius raised two questions: "What is a wise person like?" and "What is a benevolent person like?" He provided an appraisal of each answer on the spot. Each student provided a different answer and Confucius' response to them also ranks them differently—from the lowest "scholar-official", to the middling "scholarly gentleman" and to the highest "enlightened gentleman". However, Confucius does not explain what the differences between these three ranks are nor does he generally use this method to distinguish different types of personalities or characters. The ideal personalities of Confucianism are usually "scholar-officials", "gentleman", "worthies", and "sages". According to what is said in

the "Ai Gong" chapter of the *Xunzi*[8] (Lou 2018), the three ranks here can be correlated with "scholar-officials", "gentlemen", and "worthies". We will refer to this passage and its ethical context as "Story B".

What kind of problem and meaning do these two ethical stories of Confucius and his disciples present? First, the questions that Confucius raised and the answers that his disciples provided all revolve around the mutual relationships of "self" and "other". In terms of Story A, Confucius most likely asked the general question of how one should treat others. In Story B, Confucius was not concerned with how one should generally treat others, but instead asked the more particular questions of what wise and benevolent people are like. However, each of Confucius' three disciples answered in terms of the relationship between self and other. Even though Yan Hui's answer deals with how one should treat oneself, from the perspective of Confucian "moral learning for oneself" (*weiji zhi xue* 為己 之學),[9] his answer cannot be understood in terms of a "self" isolated from others.

Second, we need to adopt a comprehensive perspective on the "way of being with" expressed by Confucius' three disciples in regard to the self/other relationship and Confucius' appraisal thereof. Not limiting ourselves to these two stories, we can see that in other places Confucius and his disciples engaged in similar rounds of questions and answers (it is always Zi Lu who leads the way, followed by Zi Gong and then Yan Hui, and they each have three different answers; at the same time, Confucius' appraisal always praises Yan Hui as the best, followed by Zi Gong with Zi Lu last). The different instances of Confucius and his disciples' discussions often have different emphases, such as Confucius' definition of concepts such as benevolence (*ren* 仁), appropriateness (*yi* 義), propriety (*li* 禮), wisdom (*zhi* 智), trustworthiness (*xin* 信), filiality (*xiao* 孝), dedication (*zhong* 忠), respect (*jing* 敬), and others. The different expressions of Confucius' ethical theory in different contexts imbue it with a certain abundance and diversity of meaning. This is why we must adopt a sufficiently holistic perspective.

Third, there is a general meaning to the "way of being with" that obtains in the relationship of self and other that is expressed in the two Confucian contexts provided by Story A and Story B. Confucius' appraisal is relative where he does not assign superiority and inferiority or affirm one to the exclusion of the other. Placing each in their proper temporal context and ethical tradition we can understand each as representing different "ways of being with". There is a weight to the lower and upper limits of ethical values as well as a distinction between what is normal and what is abnormal. The altruism that treats others as oneself, loves others as oneself, and that sacrifices oneself for others is situated at the upper limit of ethical values and is applicable in abnormal situations. Doing no harm to others and being good to others, according to a basic understanding of ethical norms, can be understood as being situated at the lower limit of ethical values and is applicable in normal times. Ethical values situated at the lower limit and applicable in normal times are primary in establishing a good life, and secondary to these is those of the upper limit that are applicable in abnormal times. If we flip this around then we will fall into the trap of utopianism. Despite its rather strong rationalism and being criticized as a utopianism, the ethical interaction and "way of being with" of Confucianism is a holistic hybrid of lower and upper limit ethical values.

Below, we will discuss the way of social interaction represented by the two Confucian stories described above in terms of the totality of Confucian ethical theory to determine whether or not it can be reduced to a kind of "hierarchical mode of association" and whether or not it can respond to the problem of interactions with strangers, that is, whether or not it has to claim to be a universal set of ethics.

## 3. "Self" and "Other": How Should People Treat Each Other?

The "way of being with" presented in Story A described above gives us a multifaceted relationship between the self and others. It includes four different modes: (1) altruistic, (2) punitive, (3), tolerant and (4) Utmost Good (*zhishan* 至善). Put in traditional language, these four modes are expressed by "repaying virtue with virtue" (*yi de bao de* 以德報

德), "repaying wrongs with wrongs" (*yi yuan bao yuan* 以怨報怨), "repaying wrongs with uprightness" (*yi zhi bao yuan* 以直報怨), and "repaying wrongs with virtue" (*yi de bao yuan* 以德報怨). The "altruistic mode" or "repaying virtue with virtue" is expressed differently in different ethical traditions (and has even been developed in modern ethics). A layman's understanding of this mode says that when you are good to me then I will be good to you. In Story A, each of Confucius' disciples say that "When people are good to me then I am good to them in turn", we can call this a "theory of repaying good with good" (*yi shan bao shan lun* 以善報善論). What this means is very clear: when others are good to me then I will in return be good to them. In other words, when other people treat me well, then I will repay them by also treating them well. This is an ethical "ought" and justice. Not repaying the goodness of others with goodness or repaying them with ill behavior is indicative of an ethical lack and is even an ethical evil.

Altruism is established on the good intentions and actions of both parties. In this kind of altruistic mode, the doer of "good" is the other, and the receiver of "good" is the self. Whether or not others are good to me is a matter of the others' intentions, choices, and actions, and whether or not I am good to them in turn is determined by me. In terms of moral reason, others who do good usually do so to gain something from the one they do good to and the one who is beneficiary of the good of others will repay them. Additionally, if one does indeed repay the good of others with good, then the altruistic ethical value between self and other is realized. The case is the same even if I am the doer of good and the other is the beneficiary of the good. Thus, we can deduce the proposition that "If I want others to be good to me then I *must* be good to others first". Mengzi 孟子 expresses this idea thus: "He who loves others is enduringly loved by others; he who respects others is enduringly respected by others". (*Mengzi* 4B28) This is an even more direct deduction of the proposition that "However, I am is however the other is". For Confucianism, self-cultivation and discipline are primary where demands are first made of oneself regarding how others are treated before anything is expected in return from others. Even though we have failed to meet our expectations, we still cannot lightly blame others but instead must reflect on whether or not we truly did treat others well. If we have indeed done so, then we can know how to respond. Mengzi's altruism is closely connected to this.

Confucius' disciples' "repay good with good" is just one expression of Confucian ethical altruism[10] and we can easily relate it to the altruism expressed by Confucius' "repay virtue with virtue" and the *Liji's* 禮記 (Book of Rites) "ritual values reciprocity in interpersonal conduct" (*li shang wanglai* 禮尚往來; literally "ritual values goings and comings"). Confucius' "repay virtue with virtue" uses "virtue" to express the altruism between benefactor and beneficiary. The saying "ritual values reciprocity in interpersonal conduct" comes from the "Quli 曲禮" chapter in the *Liji*: "It is not ritually proper to give and not be given back to; neither is it ritually proper to not give back when one is given to". This expresses the altruistic relationship of benefactor and beneficiary in terms of particular rituals. The "Quli" chapter divides ethical values into two ranks: "The ruler values virtue and those below him take giving and repaying as their duty". According to this, the highest value is "valuing virtue" (*guide* 貴德) followed by "giving and repaying" (*shibao* 施報). In comparison with "giving and repaying as their duty", the ethical value expressed by "valuing virtue" means that the ruler only benefits others but does not demand repayment. This is an ethical value that is higher than "giving and repaying" but which cannot in the end wholly replace "giving and repaying". The "Quli" chapter's saying that "ritual values reciprocity in interpersonal conduct" is a definition of "giving and repaying". The theory of giving and repaying in a broad sense also includes ideas on punishment and revenge.[11] Thus, the *Liji's* "ritual values reciprocity in interpersonal conduct" represents a narrow theory of giving and repaying. Even though "repaying the good with good", "repaying virtue with virtue", and "ritual values reciprocity in interpersonal conduct" are all different expressions, they more or less all belong to the altruistic mode. This is one important area of the Confucian "way of being with".

The altruistic mode is common to all three of Confucius' disciples as well as a mode that he approved of. In Story A, the disparity in Confucius' appraisal of his three disciples' answers is because they each gave expression to different modes of the "way of being with": punitive, tolerant, and the Utmost Good. Zi Lu's idea that Confucius said was that of the "uncultured Man and Mo peoples" can be said to represent a "theory of repaying wrongs with wrongs" or what is commonly known as "an eye for an eye". This is a relational mode that is geared towards punishment or vengeance. This is a mode of "being with" that gives others a taste of their own medicine, that is, it unreservedly repays one bad deed with another bad deed. Its most extreme form is vengeance. To repay bad deeds with bad deeds is actually to punish the doer of bad deeds, it is to realize responsibility for the perpetrator's bad deeds and exact a certain cost. This is an effective method for maintaining ethical norms and restoring social order; it is ethically correct. What right does the perpetrator have to harm others? Punishment is not limited to ethics, instead, according to Robert Axelrod, the personal benefit of rational people is best obtained by adopting an attitude of "repaying deeds in kind". The main mechanism of the law is punishment, it is just that legal punishments are not soft ethical punishments but are much harsher. Criminal law forces the perpetrator to lose their freedom and civil law compensates the victim.

Zi Lu's idea of repaying bad deeds with bad deeds involves a general theory of ethical punishments. Confucius' criticism of him shows that he entirely rejected this kind of idea. The so-called "uncultured Man and Mo peoples" refers to tribal peoples in the southern and northern parts of ancient China and serve as a metaphor for savagery and barbarism. However, theories of punishments are not limited to barbaric societies, instead, they are also found in civilized societies as well. One of the reasons why Confucius criticized Zi Lu so harshly is because the answers provided by Zi Gong and Yan Hui were far better. Another reason for his criticism is because he believed that one should "repay wrongs with uprightness".

However, Confucius did not actually reject punishment in its entirety. Two passages recorded in the *Analects* 論語 clearly show this: "The Master said: 'It is only those who are benevolent who can both be good to others and bad to others'" (4.3) and "The Master said: 'I have yet to see someone who is overly fond of benevolent conduct and despises poor behavior. Those who are benevolent cannot be praised any further; despising poor behavior is already to be benevolent, it is so that the ill deeds of others do not find their way to oneself". (4.6) For Confucius, someone who is benevolent is someone who can "despise others". Why can benevolent people despise others? The reason that Confucius gives is because they are "not benevolent" (*buren* 不仁). These kinds of people should be despised and moreover, despising them is a means of being good to them. Despising people who behave poorly is actually a kind of punishment. This is certainly not to be considered "repaying virtue with virtue" and neither can it be said that it is "repaying wrongs with uprightness". It is hard to see how Confucius' criticism of Zi Lu's theory of punishment in one case and his praise of it in another are compatible with each other.

The theory of giving and repaying that we described above in terms of altruism and punishment has a classical provenance. The "Tanggao 湯誥" chapter of the *Shangshu* 尚書 (Documents) understood this in terms of the justice of an anthropomorphized deity and utilized this theory to argue for the legitimacy of the Shang dynasty replacing the Xia dynasty. There are many poems in the *Shijing* 詩經 (Classic of Poetry) that express a similar idea of repayment, such as the "Yi 抑" poem (no. 256) that says: "There are no words that do not have a response and no virtue that does not have a reward". The "Mugua 木瓜" poem (no. 64) also says: "She gave me a *mugua* fruit and in return I rewarded her with a jade ornament", thereby giving expression to the feelings of repayment. This Confucian theory of giving and repaying is an extension of this way of thinking. The *Xunzi*, *Kongzi jiayu* 孔子家語, *Hanshi waizhuan*, and the *Shuoyuan* 説苑 all record Confucius as saying: "*Tian* rewards whoever does good with blessings; *tian* punishes whoever does bad with misfortune". The *Zhongyong* 中庸 also records that Confucius uses Shun as an example to illustrate his theory that good deeds are necessarily rewarded: "Thus, whoever is greatly virtuous

will necessarily have an official position, an official salary, and a good reputation . . . thus, whoever is greatly virtuous will be given the mandate". The "Wenyan 文言" appendix of the *Zhouyi* 周易 (*Book of Changes*) also promotes the necessary relationship of giving and repaying: "The family that accumulates good deeds will have a surplus of beautiful goods and the family that accumulates bad deeds will have a surplus of calamities". These all belong to the Confucian theory of giving and repaying and are consistent with that found in Story A. It is an expression of philosophical causality in the world of ethics.

Zi Gong's idea that one should not seek retribution against those who do one harm belongs to the tolerant mode and, on the whole, belongs to Confucius' theory of "repaying wrongs with uprightness". In order to understand Zi Gong's tolerant mode, we need to consider his saying that "when people are not good to me then I guide them to be better" alongside Confucius' appraisal thereof and his notion of "repaying wrongs with uprightness". In response to an anonymous questioner asking what "repaying wrongs with virtue" is like, Confucius answered: "How should one repay wrongs with virtue? Wrongs should be repaid with uprightness and virtue should be repaid with virtue". (*Analects* 13.34) It is possible that this passage is incomplete. Nevertheless, according to Confucius' answer, we can infer that he imagined two questions: "How to repay wrongs?" and "How to repay virtue?" For Confucius, the ethical value of "repaying wrongs with uprightness" is greater than the punishment dealt by "repaying wrongs with wrongs" but is lesser than that of "repaying wrongs with virtue". This is thus a compromise situated between the two and is similar to Zi Gong's "I guide them to be better".[12] For example, in terms of the father-son relationship, the father's care and the son's filiality belong to the theory of "repaying virtue with virtue". However, if the son is not filial then the father can seek retribution; at the same time, if the father does not render care, the son cannot easily seek retribution. For Confucius, when it is the father who has done wrong, then the son needs to adopt a stance of "subtle remonstrance" that both "repays wrongs with virtue" (as seen in his praise of Shun's filiality) and "repays wrongs with uprightness".

The "idea of friends" (*pengyou zhi yan* 朋友之言) implies friendliness and good intentions. However, what kind of opinions or ideas belong to "friendliness" requires our analysis. There are three measures for making friends according to Confucius: (1) making friends with upright people, (2) making friends with trustworthy people, and (3) making friends with educated people. (*Analects* 16.4). In addition to this, Confucius also has a principle of encouraging friends to better themselves: "Be honest in pointing out the faults of others and guide them well. If they cannot be guided then stop. Do not therefor humiliate yourself". (*Analects* 12.13) In comparison with these two standards, Zi Gong's "guiding" is a means of getting along with friends who treat one poorly by "being honest in pointing out their faults" and "only going with them as far as is appropriate". The phrase being translated here as "guide them to be better" is in the original Chinese *yin zhi jintui* 引之進退. The latter two characters (literally "advancing and retreating") have the meaning of taking an official position, retreating from political life, or being relieved of one's government post. It also refers to whether or not one's conduct accords with ritual stipulations as well as acting only after considering and measuring up a situation. Zi Gong's "guide them to be better" can be understood to be in accord with "ritual" and to be a serious matter whose proper application in social situations requires serious care. It is quite natural for people who have been mistreated or harmed to have feelings of resentment or anger towards those who have done them wrong and want to punish them. Contrarily, tolerance is when I have a strong power of self-control and do not seek to punish those who have done me wrong but instead tolerate, accept, and keep respectful distance from them. Not only is this the case, but I will also amicably guide them and hope that they change for the better—"turning enemies into friends". This requires a higher-level ethical value that is more tolerant and that even repays wrongs with virtue.

Feelings of friendliness are a valuable virtue that, in being more intimate relations, transcend normal human relations; such relationships are not easily founded. Friends have been said to be another self, to be "birds of a feather", but in the same way that

one will complain about oneself, for two individuals to come together as "best friends" (*zhiji* 知己, *zhixin* 知心) both require they be of the same mind and that they mutually respect each other's differences. The Confucians talk about friendship in many places and focused on the development of the feelings of friendship and excluded being friends with "pretentious", "flattering", and "glib" people. (*Analects* 16.4) They also maintain that one "should not be friends with someone who is not as good as you" (*Analects* 1.8) It is already difficult to make friends with someone one has no previous enmity towards, let alone anyone else! Confucius understood Zi Gong's idea to "guide" those who have done him harm as one of the methods for making friends. This is the "way of being friends" that does not consider the special cases of previous wrongdoings but is instead tolerant and helpful; therefore, it is a standard of friendship higher than common friendship. Tolerance is a human virtue and unless one has an open-mind and capacious perspective, it is very hard to achieve a tolerant attitude. Therefore, it has a much lesser degree of socialization than the punitive mode.

Yan Hui's idea that one should treat others well even if they treat one poorly constitutes the Utmost Good mode of "repaying wrongs with virtue". It is not only ethically higher than Zi Gong's tolerant mode but also more ideal. It is also what Confucius praised as the "idea of relatives" (*qinshu zhi yan* 親屬之言). Family feelings are the most natural of human emotions and primarily find expression in the family or the household. The Confucians affirmed this ethical value and moreover hoped that the ruler-people relation of the political realm would become a father–son relationship, that all peoples "within the four seas" would become siblings, and that all peoples would become one family. Confucius' praise of Yan Hui's position shows that he also maintained a stance of "repaying wrong with virtue" rather than one of "repaying wrongs with uprightness". It is the hardest to tolerate and accept others who have done one harm let alone treat them even better than before. It is difficult to achieve this among families and friends and even more so among strangers. Yet, as a human ethical value, there is a place where it can find certain application. The Confucians greatly hoped for this to take place during the Warring States period. The legendary Shun was seen by the Confucians as a classic example of someone who enacted this ethical value. He was very unlucky in that his father, step-mother, and younger brother all treated him poorly and did him great harm on several occasions. He nevertheless found a way each time to escape danger and in return to continue to treat them well.

If we rank the four Confucian "ways of being with" in terms of their ethical value, then the mode of Utmost Good is the highest, followed by the tolerant and altruistic modes, and then finally with the punitive mode at the bottom. In terms of practice, those ranked higher are more difficult for people to enact. Fortunately, the healthier a society is, the more widespread is the altruistic mode and the opportunities for the punitive, tolerant, and Utmost Good modes become rarer. The sicker a society becomes, the more the punitive, tolerant, and Utmost Good modes are necessary in order to deal with the greater number of people who do bad deeds. Altruism is constructive in that it is the best method for establishing and maintaining good social order. The remaining three modes are wasteful in that they expend resources to make up for lacks or failures. Punishment is mostly a supplement of altruism; tolerance and the Utmost Good use a great deal of good intention and energy to save those who harm themselves and others. These four are all necessary in any society, it is just that the degree to which each one is needed is determined by what kind of society it is.

## 4. "The Way of Mutual Knowing" of the "Wise": "Knowing Oneself" and "Knowing Others"

What is a wise person supposed to be like? When Confucius asked his three disciples this question they responded according to their own ideas and his positive response to each of their answers shows that he was satisfied with them. In Story B, the "way of being with" of the "wise person" and the "benevolent person" is such that people know each other and love each other. These two deal with the Confucian concepts of "wisdom" and

"benevolence" as well as with the concepts of "knowing" and "loving".[13] The answers provided by the three disciples and Confucius' appraisal thereof constitute three different kinds of "wise people" and "benevolent people" in addition to three different kinds of "ways of being with". These three kinds are allowing others to know oneself, allowing oneself to know others, and allowing oneself to know oneself. Let us first take a look at the three different "ways of being with" of "wise persons".

In comparison with "the benevolent" and "the brave" or simply just in comparison with the former, the Confucian notion of "the wise" has several different meanings.[14] Several instances in the *Analects* record such passages as "The wise are not confused" (9.29), "The wise enjoy water" (6.23), "The wise are happy" (ibid.), "The wise move" (ibid.), and many more. These different usages of "wise/wisdom" all point up its different characteristics: "the wise are not confused" means that people understand the affairs of the world rather than are confused by them; "the wise are happy" and "the wise enjoy water" refer to people's contentment and enjoyment of water; "the wise move" implies that people enjoy activity and vitality. However, for the Confucians, "wise/wisdom" mostly refers to human intelligence and rationality and at the same time is closely linked to the recognition and selection of ethical values and virtues. "Wise people" are rational people as well as virtuous people. According to Story B, wise people are those who are capable of allowing others to know the wise person, are capable of knowing others, or are capable of knowing themselves. The "wise person", firstly, has been limited to those who have achieved an intelligent and thorough comprehension of others in their relationship therewith rather than generally referring to someone who has knowledge of the things of the world. Secondly, because Confucius' disciples have a different understanding of what a wise person is, therefore, in terms of the mutual recognition that obtains in interpersonal relationships, each define the "wise person" in a way that illustrates different kinds of "ways of being with" or "ways of mutual knowing".

It is a feature of "the way of being with" that in interpersonal relationships each person in the relationship needs to recognize and understand the other person. Between "knowing others" and "knowing oneself", it is Zi Lu's "wise person" that is capable of allowing others to know oneself. People desire to be known and affirmed by others, those who are your "best friend" (in Chinese "*zhiji* 知己" and "*zhixin* 知心", the former literally "knowing oneself" and the latter "knowing [one's] heart/mind") are those who understand you the best, sometimes even to the point that they are willing to die on your behalf. It is likely that those who have high aspirations and intentions or who are talented will feel resentment if they are not recognized by others. Because of this, Confucius said "Is it not the exemplary person who does not feel wronged when left unrecognized?" (*Analects* 1.1) Zi Lu thought that it was those who were recognized by others that could be considered "wise persons".

Zi Lu was renowned for his bravery even beyond the Confucians, and Confucius often criticized him for being too rash. Many of his promises and actions illustrate that he was always eager to prove his bravery to others, that he wanted others to recognize his bravery. Furthermore, Confucius even lauded bravery as a virtue, and in several places said such things as "Exemplary persons disdain the prospect of not leaving behind a reputation after they have died" (*Analects* 15.20) and "If by the age of forty or fifty years old someone has yet to make a name for themselves, what reason is there to respect them?" (*Analects* 9.23) The key is how one realizes the recognition of others or by what means one wins a reputation. The Confucians maintained that reputation must be based in fact, that one should only achieve a good reputation as a result of moral cultivation. It is often the case that when one's reputation does not match the facts it is that such a person is virtuous in name only. These kinds of people do not conduct themselves in a moral manner and thus lack anything by which to earn a reputation; therefore, they rely on their authority to establish a name for themselves. Such a reputation is neither true nor enduring, neither is it moral. This is something that the Confucians obviously criticized and rejected. Another case is where reputation and fact do not match up, in other words, even though someone has done much, they have yet to be properly recognized. This is unfortunate and obviously not something

that the Confucians were fond of happening. However, the real concern of the Confucians was not that someone having done good does not have a reputation, but instead that the reputation one does have does not align with the facts. This is why Confucius said, "Do not worry that others do not know you, concern yourself with what you can and cannot do" (*Analects* 14.30) and "Exemplary persons worry about being incapable and not whether people recognize them or not". (*Analects* 15.19)

We cannot say that Zi Lu was someone vainly searching for fame. Instead, he thought that wise people allowed others to recognize and praise them due to their possession of actual virtue.[15] If this was not the case then Confucius would not have praised his answer as being the standard of a "scholar-official". It is just that Zi Lu's position of "allowing others to know oneself" does not begin from Confucius' position that one should seek virtue in oneself before seeking it in others.[16] Zi Lu begins from a want for others to recognize him first rather than focusing on how he should conduct himself. This turns Confucius' position on its head and seems to be a bit arrogant and incompatible with Confucius' ideal as seen in such statements as "Do not worry about others not recognizing you, worry about not understanding others". (*Analects* 1.16) and "Do not worry about not having any official position, worry about the means by which you obtain one. Do not worry about others not recognizing you, worry about the means by which you gain their recognition". (*Analects* 4.14) Perhaps the reason why Confucius does not praise Zi Lu as highly as Zi Gong is because of this.

The "way of mutual knowing" of wise people is articulated as "knowing others" by Zi Gong. Confucius praises this as higher than Zi Lu's. Zi Gong's idea that "the wise know others" perhaps directly accepted Confucius' own position. *Analects* 12.22 records Fan Chi asking about "knowing", to which Confucius replies that "knowing" means "to know others". This clearly defines "wisdom" as "knowing others". The line from *Analects* 1.16 quoted above also emphasizes this point. However, why do we need to "know others"? Generally speaking, "knowing others" contains two presuppositions: First, there are differences between people, between myself and others in regard to such things as character and disposition, likes and dislikes, intentions, and values; some of these are innate and some are acquired. Second, people cannot but live within a community, oneself and others cannot but interact and engage with each other. Therefore, in order for us to interact and engage with "others" in a way that is conducive to good order requires that we understand and recognize them. My own characteristics are not those of the other people, neither are my own desires and preferences the same as other people. Even if I am good-intentioned, if I impose my own wants on others, then problems are sure to arise. The Confucian sayings that "One should extend what one wants to others" (*ji zhi suoyu yi shiyu ren* 己之所欲亦施於人) and "One should not extend what one does not want to others" (*ji suo buyu wu shiyu ren* 己所不欲勿施於人) are both limiting propositions. One should treat others in accordance with their wishes and not in accordance with one's own. It is only when we recognize and understand others that we can treat them in the ways that they desire to be treated. Our modern society that values diversity and differences should aspire to this.

Zi Gong did not concretely explain why we need to know others or how we can know others. For Confucius, it is necessary to "know others" in government so as to be able to "promote worthies" because it is only when rulers "know others" can they "use them appropriately" (*shenren* 善任). In the family, in order for one to properly serve their parents, it is necessary that they "know others". However, it is not easy to "know others". Confucius pointed out one of his previous mistakes: "In selecting people according to their words I falsely blamed Zai Yu; in selecting people according to their appearance, I falsely blamed Zi Yu". (*Shiji* "Zhongni dizi liezhuan" 史記·仲尼弟子列傳). Is this perhaps the evidence behind the *Zhuangzi's* saying that the Confucians "Understand ritually appropriate conduct but do not understand the human heart"? Actually, "to select people according to their words" and "to select people according to their appearance" are mistakes easily made in trying to understand others. This shows that truly understanding others is the only

means for avoiding such mistakes. Moreover, understanding someone's "words", that is, differentiating their opinions, is another means of recognizing them: "Without knowing what other people say there is no means to know them". (*Analects* 20.3) Just the same, by truly understanding people they will not be asked to accomplish things unsuited to them nor will ill things be said of them.

Yan Hui's "the wise know themselves" is another example of the Confucian "way of mutual knowing". That Confucius praised his idea as being higher than the others is another example that he truly delighted in him. Unlike how Confucius talked about "wisdom" in terms of "knowing others", he did not much discuss "wisdom" in terms of "knowing one's self". However, that he praised Yan Hui's view the most shows that among the various "ways of mutual knowing" it was "knowing one's self" that Confucius saw as primary. Who understands oneself the most if not for oneself? Do not the economists say that no one understands what one wants more than oneself? This being so, what is the point in saying that "knowing one's self" is the characteristic of "wisdom"? Additionally, why did Confucius praise it so highly? Neither Confucius nor Yan Hui explain what the "self-knowledge" of "the wise" is, but it goes without saying that their "knowing one's self"—much like Socrates' "know thyself"—is much more complex than what is generally acknowledged. The fact that people value this kind of "self-knowledge" shows that it is not easily achieved.

In many cases people more often than not project themselves onto others, therefore, "knowing one's self" requires first of all the reflective turn of one's attention away from others and toward oneself. The Confucians' "seek in oneself through reflection" (*fanqiu zhu ji* 反求諸己) is just this kind of inwards turn. The *Qiongda yi shi* 窮達以時 emphasizes that "Exemplary persons are sincere in their self-reflection". However, what is it that people need to reflect on and why do they need to reflect at all? The Confucian ideal is perfection through self-cultivation, therefore, reflecting on one's moral conduct is to recognize the places where one falls short. Reflecting on one's shortcomings has the goal of elevating oneself, it is in order to "align oneself with the worthies when in their presence and to reflect on oneself when not" (*Analects* 4.17) or to "be strict with one's self but lenient with others" (*Analects* 15.15) In terms of knowledge, we easily take our ignorance for knowledge, we easily think we know the truth of something when in fact we do not. Therefore, Socrates thought that "knowledge" was knowing that one does not know something. For Confucius, "knowledge" is understanding that "knowing is knowing and not knowing is not knowing". (*Analects* 2.17) It is only when one understands what one does not know that one can gain knowledge.[17] For Mengzi, knowing oneself is first of all a matter of recognizing one's moral mind and moral potential to thereby expand and realize one's moral knowledge and capabilities.

Human interaction and engagement are based on mutual knowledge. In Story B we see three different kinds of "ways of mutual knowing". These are also three different "ways of being with". It is just that their focus is different. To allow others to know oneself focuses on the other as witness, this is to see oneself in the eyes of the other; to know others is to focus on respecting others, this is to see others through one's own eyes; to know one's self focuses on the autonomy of the other, this to see a one's own self that differs from others from one's own perspective. All of this is required for human interaction.

## 5. "The Way of Mutual Love" of "The Benevolent": Self-Love, Loving Others, and Being Loved

The "benevolent person" (*renzhe* 仁者) in Story B mostly expresses a "way of mutual love" (*xiangai zhi dao* 相愛之道). It presents three different kinds of "benevolent persons" each corresponding to a different kind of "way of mutual love". What is strange about this is that it is Zi Gong's description of "benevolent persons" that is the standard Confucian answer regarding "the way of mutual love". Even though much Confucian discussion revolves around this topic of how one should love others, Confucius nevertheless appraises it as being in between the lowest and highest values. Zi Lu's ("allowing others to love

oneself") and Yan Hui's ("benevolent persons love themselves") models are both quite rare and Confucius praises the former as of low value and the latter as of high value. It is easy to understand why Zi Lu's model does not match up with Zi Gong's; however, it is not so easy to understand why Confucius praised Yan Hui so highly. Below we will connect this passage with other Confucian texts in order to better understand Yan Hui's "theory of self-love".

Previously, this was the only instance in the Confucian texts where the term "love oneself" (*ziai* 自愛) appeared. However, fortunately, the Jianshui Jinguan Han bamboo *Qi lunyu* 齊論語 (*Qi Analects of Confucius*) provides us with a record of Confucius using this term: "Confucius said: 'Loving oneself is the pinnacle of benevolence; respecting oneself is the pinnacle of wisdom.'" If this is the origin of Yan Hui's theory, then we can say that his and his master's concept of "benevolence" not only contains a "theory of love" (*renai lun* 仁愛論) but at the same time also contains a "theory of self-love" (*ziai lun* 自愛論).[18] We can further ask the following questions: why did Yan Hui give more prominence to "loving oneself"? Why did Confucius praise it as being a value higher than "the benevolence of loving others" (*airen zhi ren* 愛人之仁)? What is the relationship between "self-love" and Confucius' so-called "moral study for oneself"? What is the relationship between "loving oneself" and "loving others"?

It would seem that "self-love" is easily confused for selfishness and egoism in the same way that the "moral study for oneself" is. Yang Zhu 楊朱 is famous for his notions of "acting for oneself" (*weiwo* 為我), "valuing one's self" (*guiji* 貴己), "focusing on one's self" (*zhongji* 重己), and "placing oneself first" (*xianji* 先己). His saying that he "would not pluck out a single hair even if it would benefit the whole world" has been understood as representing a kind of selfish and egoistical stance. Mengzi forcefully criticized him, even arguing illogically that this "acting for oneself" is to lack a ruler and to be no more than a simple animal. Mozi 墨子 understood "self-love" as bad. This is because, for Mozi, "self-love" is not just selfishness for one's own benefit, it is selfishness for one's own benefit at the expense of others. This kind of "self-love" leads to struggle and disorder. Mozi's logic is very clear:

> If the father loves himself and not his son, then he will take from his son for his own gain; if the older brother loves himself and not his younger brother, then he will take from his younger brother for his own gain; if the ruler loves himself and not his ministers, then he will take from his ministers for his own gain. Why is this? It is all because they do not mutually love each other. (*Mozi* "Jian'ai I") (Sun 2001, p. 99)

To put it in Aristotelean terms, this is a kind of bad self-love. The "self-love" and "for oneself" of the Confucians obviously have nothing to do with this kind of selfish and egoistical "self-love" that is harmful to others. Instead, their "self-love" and "for oneself" are exactly the opposite: they are purely good, they have the goal of loving oneself in the best way possible and at the same time expanding their love to the greatest number of people possible.

Yan Hui's idea of "self-love" is the same as Confucius'; it is also the same as the "for oneself" in Confucius' notion of "moral study for oneself". In the same way that Confucius criticized the "for others" in the "moral study for others", their concern was for internal moral development and self-realization that takes form within and is applied without as a unity (Cheng 1990, pp. 1004–5).

*Xunzi* also has a good explanation of this:

> The learning of the ruler enters his ears and appears in his heart-mind spreading through his four limbs to find expression in action and rest. Even though he speaks softly and moves subtly, his speech and actions can all be taken as standards for conduct . . . The learning of the ruler is that by which he beautifies his person. (*Xunzi* "Quanxue")

For Confucius, cultivating one's person, nourishing one's nature, and completing oneself is an end itself and cannot be reduced to a means to gain something else. If we instrumentalize it, then it becomes "moral learning for others" and has nothing to do with the learning intimately linked to one's own life. It is only good words and good actions that are the best for oneself as well as for others. The "for oneself" and the "completion of oneself" (*chengji* 成己) that begins from it is also what is best for "completing others" (*chengren* 成人) and "completing things" (*chengwu* 成物). The love that is best for oneself is also the love that is best for others.

Yan Hui's "theory of self-love" is Confucius' way of treating others through dedication and empathy (*zhongshu zhi dao* 忠恕之道) that "extends oneself to others" (*tuiji jiren* 推己及人). The alternative composition of the character for "benevolence" (*ren* 仁) that is composed of "body/person" (*shen* 身) over "heart/mind" (*xin* 心) stems from the love and concern that one has for one's own person. Confucius' way of treating others through dedication and empathy is also the way of "extending oneself to others" as is expressed in such terms as "establishing oneself" and "establishing others", "achieving in oneself" and "achieving in others", and "applying what one wants" to others and "not applying what one does not want" to others. If a person is going to understand "loving others" then that person needs to understand that they themselves require love first. In terms of the similarities and commonalities of human beings, whoever understands that one oneself requires love will be able to understand that others also require love. In light of this "shared feeling", such persons will not only love themselves but will also love others and they will not only cherish themselves but will also cherish others. It is just as the *Daxue* 大學 says: "The ruler only seeks in others what he already has in himself and what he himself does not have he does not seek in others". The *Zhongyong* 中庸 also contains a similar idea but expresses it in the negative: "Treating others through dedication and empathy is not far from the way, it lies in not doing to others what one does not wish done to themselves". Someone who is numb to the needs of others not only lacks self-love but also lacks love for others. So-called cold and emotionless people are also like this. In terms of emotional intelligence, a person should love oneself and respect oneself at the same time as being warm and open to others. However, it is the case that there are people in society who neither love nor respect themselves. It is up for debate whether these kinds of people are actually incapable of loving and respecting others or not. It is quite possible the other people will not love someone who does not love themselves. This is what Yang Xiong 楊雄 inferred: "People must love themselves before they can love others; people must respect themselves before they can respect others" (*Fayan* "Junzi") (Yang 1992, p. 326).

Yan Hui's "self-love" is similar to Aristotle's theory of *philautia*. For Aristotle, someone who loves themselves well or truly is a good person. As one of Aristotle's Chinese translators remarks, such a person "should be one who loves themselves the most because reason chooses what is best for oneself and appropriates the greatest good for oneself. Such people wish the noble to triumph over everything else; they are true lovers of the self" (Aristotle 1990, p. 201). This kind of person always undertakes affairs in a just manner, with self-control, or in accordance with all kinds of virtues. They are such persons as that can satisfy the *logos* in their spirit, listen to their intellect, and can even sacrifice themselves in times of need for the public or their country (Aristotle 2017, p. 301). Aristotle's theory of *philautia* is at the same time a theory of love of others because those who truly love themselves do well in making friends, are happy to abandon their wealth on behalf of their friends, and willingly distribute the good to them. These kinds of people are able to love their friends and enter into deep relationships with them. It is just that such love and friendship are, for Aristotle, matters of reason and wisdom whereas for Yan Hui it is a matter of the ethical value of benevolence. Yan Hui's "self-love" includes a more general "love of others" that understands others through true love of oneself.

The Confucians have various answers to the question of "what is benevolence?" However, it can be said that Zi Gong's definition that "benevolence is loving others" (*renzhe airen* 仁者愛人) is the most direct and easily understandable (but not easily achieved). *Analects*

12.22 records Confucius as defining "benevolence" as "loving others" and "wisdom" as "knowing others". Thus, Zi Gong's definition can be said to be the standard one and is not only accepted by the Confucians but the other masters as well. For example, Mengzi also claims that "benevolence is loving others" (*Mengzi* 4B28). In addition, the *Xunzi* records a certain Chen Xiao's 陳囂 confusion regarding how the use of state apparatuses can be unified with "loving others" to which Xunzi responds:

> This is not something you understand. Benevolence is loving others, and because one loves others therefore one despises when harm is done to them. Appropriateness is following the correct patterns, and because one follows the correct patterns therefore one despises when they are disordered. (*Xunzi* "Yibing") (X. Wang 1988, p. 279)

"Loving others" and "indiscriminate love" (*jian'ai* 兼愛) appear throughout the *Mozi*; the "Heavenly and Earthly" chapter of the *Zhuangzi* records Confucius as saying "As for *dao*, it covers and holds up the ten thousand things vastly like a great sea! . . . Loving others and benefitting things is called benevolence".

Finally, let us discuss Zi Lu's "benevolent people allow others to love themselves". This model does not appear to be saying that one first loves others in order to obtain their love in return. What it is actually saying is that a person being loved and treated well by others is a result of loving and being good to others first. This is just what Mengzi means when he says that "Those who love others are enduringly loved by others; those who respect others are enduringly respected by others". (*Mengzi* 4B28) There is a passage on *li* 禮 recorded in the "Records of Jin" section in the *Guoyu* 國語 that gives clear expression to the "causality" of the loving others/being loved by others relationship:

> The "Treatise on Rites" says: "If you are going to make a request of someone else, then you must first do something for them. If you desire others to love you, then you must first love them. If you wish others to defer to you, then you must first defer to others. It is wrong to ask something of others when you yourself lack virtue". (Xu and Wang 2002, p. 338)

While we are not certain what this "Treatise on Rites" (*lizhi* 禮志) mentioned here is, we see a similar expression in the excavated manuscript *Chengzhi wenzhi* 成之聞之 found at Guodian:

> Therefore, the exemplary person does not overly give back in recompense nor do they make requests of those of distant relations, they reflect on themselves and thereby know others. Therefore, if one desires to be loved by others then they must first love others. If one desires to be respected by others then they must first respect others.

According to these texts, we can see that it is not likely that someone who does not love others first will be loved by others. That Confucius affirmed Zi Lu's saying shows that he did not mean that a person being loved by others does not imply that they themselves do not love others. (It is just that Zi Lu's wording easily leads us to such a misconception.)

We can imagine that it is the case that the reason a person is loved by others is because they are friendly and get along well with others. Does this not match with the Confucian "way of being with" contained in the notions of "allowing" (*shi* 使), that is, in the notion that one must behave a certain way first in order to be treated in a certain way by others? Winning the emotional resonance of others through one's own virtue is not only good for oneself but also good for others as well. This is what is meant by "completing others" and "completing oneself". There can be exceptions to this, however. Someone who loves others is not always loved by others in return nor is it the case that someone who does not love others is not loved by others. Yet, another of Confucius' disciples, Zengzi, does not accept this kind of exception. He provided an inference of necessity:

> If I am not loved by those whom I travel with then that is necessarily due to my own failure to love them. If I am not respected by those whom I interact with then that is necessarily due to my own failure to take the lead. If I am not trusted by

those whom I have financial matters with then that is necessarily due to my own failure to be trustworthy. These three are all matters of my own conduct; how could I blame others? Those who blame others are poor and those who blame contingent conditions (*tian* 天) are ignorant. How could it not be going too far to demand of others what one oneself has lost? (X. Wang 1988, p. 356; Z. Wang 1990, p. 27) (*Xunzi* "Faxing")

## 6. Conclusions

There are many different kinds of ethics in both the East and the West, among which is Confucianism with its enduring and far-reaching genealogy. How is it possible that it can be said that this kind of ethics can only provide social arrangements based on a person's identity so that each person receives specific treatment allocated to their social status, or that this kind of ethics is incapable of facing and responding to a modern society of strangers? Is it possible that this kind of ethics truly contains a deficit that makes it untenable? Or have we entirely misunderstood it? Or have we expanded whatever lack it does have to the point that even its positive features have been concealed or denied? I think that the third case is most likely. If we examine the Confucian ethics of "three relations" in terms of human rights, then we will not defend criticisms of Confucianism's inequality of the sexes; how much more so when we take into account the historical rejections of Confucian ethics by Daoism and Buddhism? The problems of Confucian ethics are not limited to this, others include the excessive demands of its so-called "inner sage and outer king" or the dilution of its ethics of "world peace" centered on self-cultivation and familial order. Confucian ethics certainly orders society based on the differences brought about by ritually stipulated conduct and regulations and it also certainly puts great emphasis on the "filiality" of family relations and the establishment of relational norms based on paradigmatic social relations. However, this is only one part of Confucian ethics and not the whole thereof. There is still much room for Confucian ethics to expand: this mainly revolves around its understanding of interpersonal relationships and those universal relations that obtain between self and other. Beginning from the too-often neglected Confucian stories discussed above in combination with a great deal of Confucian ethical ideas from other sources, we have come to recognize a more universal and diverse "way of being with" and a world of rational interactions that goes beyond the standard Confucian regulation of social relationships. This is what cannot be forgotten let alone denied no matter the case. Otherwise, we will truly be unable to understand why Confucianism is what it is and the profound and vast influence it has been able to achieve.

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## Notes

[1] According to Fei Xiaotong's diagnosis, the Confucian ethics of a "hierarchical mode of association" differs from the Western "organizational mode of association" in that it maintains the order of private family and clan relationships and is incapable of adapting to modern society that is composed of strangers (Fei 1985, pp. 6–7, 21–53). All translations of first- and second-hand Chinese materials are the translator's.

[2] For example, Zhao Tingyang 趙汀陽 concludes that "Fei Xiaotong's analysis of Confucianism's 'hierarchical mode of association' has revealed that there is an internal difficulty when it comes to social cooperation. That is, the system of Confucian morality has been unable to establish a universal ethical structure. In other words, Confucian ethics is not a pure ethics that transcends its actual practice. Its universal principle always disappears in particular situations. Confucianism's status as the dominate force in Chinese history has made it unable to reflect on its own theoretical incompleteness, and this internal difficulty or paradox is evident in the face of modern challenges" (Zhao 2007). See also 柯小剛 Xiaogang Ke (2011) who responds to Zhao. The term "stranger" is an interdisciplinary concept that involves sociology, psychology, ethics and many more fields of study. That there were strangers in traditional societies does not need to be mentioned, especially for those people who all lived in cities. However, the connotation of the term "stranger" is much broader when it comes to modern society, and it especially refers to people who live in cities and the great number of social interactions that they entail. People are packed tightly in cities, and they rub shoulders

with people they do not even know or even pay attention to at all. This is a state of affairs that those who lived in the country and in villages of ancient society could not imagine. When Zhao Tingyang says that Confucian traditional ethics is incapable of adapting to a society of strangers, he is referring to people who live in modern cities. For more on the concept of "strangers", see T. Huang (2018), Simmel (2008), Yan (2018), and Gong and Zheng (2011).

3   Ethics is mostly a product of the relationships of human interactions, it is a moral standard and measure for normative human behavior. Regarding relational ethics, see (removed for peer review). For more on interpersonal relations and roles in Confucian ethics, see Roger Ames (2011, pp. 41–255), Bryan van Norden (2011, pp. 18–47), Behuniak and Ames (2005, pp. 287–304), 陳來 Lai Chen (2014, pp. 30–99), and 黃勇 Y. Huang (2019, pp. 79–186).

4   This "being with" is is to be differentiated from Heidegger's *mit sein*, which is translated in Chinese as *gongzai* 共在.

5   I am using the concepts of "self" and "other" in a broad sense. The relationship between "self" and "other" gives expression to the general relationship between people.

6   By claiming that Confucian ethics is universal, I mean that it is not an ethics limited to a particular time and place, i.e., ancient Chinese society, but instead can find application in all times and places, including the modern world.

7   This story is also found in the "San Shu" (Three Forbearances) chapter of the *Kongzi Jiayu* 孔子家語 with minor textual differences.

8   Xunzi said: "Confucius said: 'Human beings have five modes: being vulgar, being scholarly, being gentlemanly, being worthy, and being greatly sagacious" See Lou (2018, p. 602).

9   So-called "moral learning for oneself" is opposed to "moral learning for others" (*weita zhi xue* 為他之學) in that the former emphasizes the value of moral cultivation as its own reward whereas the latter emphasizes moral cultivation as a means to gain reputation or other benefits. See Section 4.

10   *Guanzi* "Baxing" also has the expression "He who is good to others is done good to by others" (Li 2004, p. 459).

11   The Confucian appeal to a "theory of fortune and misfortune" where good deeds are repaid with fortune and bad deeds with misfortune by the powers of a semi-anthropomorphized supernatural will is another expression of this kind of idea.

12   For more on "repaying wrongs with uprightness", refer to Y. Huang (2019, pp. 81–108).

13   The characters for "knowing" (*zhi* 知) and "wisdom" (*zhi* 智) were often interchangeable in the classical Chinese corpus.

14   The Confucian concept of "wisdom" (*zhi* 智) is polysemantic. Generally, it means intelligence and rationality, but it also has a sense of ethical recognition and awareness.

15   *Analects* 5.14 records: "Li Zu was worried that he would hear something new to practice before he had practiced something he had already heard" (Cheng 1990, p. 324).

16   According to Confucius' saying that "Exemplary persons look to themselves while petty persons look to others" (*Analects* 15.21), Zi Lu appears to first "look to others".

17   *Lüshi chunqiu* "Xianji" 呂氏春秋·先己 has an alternative logic: "Thus, those who desire to triumph over others must first triumph over themselves; those who wish to debate with others must first debate with themselves; and those who desire to know others must first know themselves" See Xu (2009, p. 72).

18   Laozi also maintains a theory of "self-love". Chapter 72 says: "Love oneself but do not overly value oneself". This distinguishes between "self-love" that is good and "valuing oneself" that is bad.

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*Article*

# From the Order of Zong Fa (宗法) to the Order of Ren Lun (人倫)—Confucianism and the Transformation of the Paradigm of Early Chinese Communities

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**Abstract:** The form of community established by early Confucianism, represented by Confucius and Mencius, can be called the Ren Lun (人倫) community. This community order contains two interdependent dimensions: at the ethical level, it is primarily dominated by the parent-child relationship, with filial piety as its core dimension; at the moral level, its essence lies in the consciousness of human nature centered around Ren (仁), Yi (義), Li (禮) and Zhi (智) as its core, which goes beyond a mere universal human nature. This differs from the order of the Zong Fa (宗法) community in the Western Zhou Dynasty, whose axis is the way of brotherhood, with a vertical lineage connecting ancestors and descendants, in order to achieve unity and cohesion among the horizontal brother tribes. In the Zong Fa (宗法) community, morality and ethics are undifferentiated, and there is no distinction between individual and collective virtues, as well as ruling virtues and edifying virtues. The spiritual principle of the Zong Fa (宗法) community is Qin Qin Zun Zun (親親尊尊), which is both continuous and different from Ren Yi (仁義), revered by early Confucianism. Ren Yi (仁義) is extracted from Qin Qin Zun Zun (親親尊尊), but as a value principle, it possesses a higher universality. Qin Qin Zun Zun (親親尊尊) is a systemic principle closely tied to Zhou Li (周禮), while Ren Yi transcends the system as independent moral principles.

**Keywords:** Zong Fa (宗法); ethics; Qin Qin (親親) and Zun Zun (尊尊); Ren Yin (仁義)

## 1. Introduction

Early Confucianism, established by figures like Confucius and Mencius, laid the foundation for the dominant order in traditional Chinese society for over two thousand years, from the Qin Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty. When we say that traditional Chinese society is based on ethics, it refers to the order of Ren Lun (人倫). As a kind of prototype of orders, the order of Ren Lun (人倫) is distinct from the Greek order of the polis, the Hebrew order of revelation and the modern order of "social" centered around individual aggregation. The fundamental relationships in this order of Ren Lun (人倫) are the Five Relationships (五倫): "the relations between parents and children there is affection; between ruler and minister, rightness; between husband and wife, separate functions; between older and younger, proper order; and between friends, faithfulness" (父子有親，君臣有義，夫婦有別，長幼有序，朋友有信)" (*Mencius*, "Teng Wang Gong"I,《孟子·滕文公上》), which summarizes the essence of this order. However, tracing the origin of this ethical paradigm requires examining the social and historical conditions in which it emerged and the soil on which the order was established. This leads us back to the Zhous order of Zong Fa (宗法). Whereas the transition from the order of Zong Fa (宗法) to the order of Ren Lun (人倫) involves the differences between the way of Duke Zhou and the way of Confucius, the most significant aspect is the transformation from the Three Dynasties' paradigm of order with Zhou as the main body to the new paradigm initiated by Confucius.

## 2. The Order of Zong Fa (宗法) Community: The Way of Elder Brothers Leading Younger Brothers

The evolution from lineage to clan constituted a key transition phase in the transformation of society from the Xia and Shang dynasties to the Western Zhou Dynasty (Chao 1996, pp. 233, 235, 255, 277; Y. Chen 2014, pp. 129–40). With the development of lineage society, the population continued to increase, leading to the differentiation of branches within lineage organizations. In the context of a vast number of states coexisting where each state represented a distinct lineage, the unity and integration among the branch lineages faced challenges. The intensification of lineage differentiation further exacerbated this issue. The series of institutions, including the order of Zong Fa (宗法) in the Zhou Dynasty, emerged in response to the natural differentiation within lineage organizations, which resulted in the weakening of overall collective strength. In the political structure of the state of Zhou (known as the "Inner State" or "Zhong Guo中國") and the "myriad states" (known as the "Outer States" or "myriad states" or "vassal states"), the ruling Zhou clan faced not only continuous natural differentiation within the clan organization but also the necessity of recognizing the existing situation of "one state" among "myriad states" by adopting a "feudal" system, which itself further reinforced the differentiation of the Zhou clan.

In order to counteract the tendency of differentiation and political centrifugal forces caused by differentiation, the people of the Zhou Dynasty employed various systems such as Zong Fa (宗法) and the act of bestowing surnames. These measures aimed to bring fragmented clan organizations back under the control of the ruling group, achieving the greatest possible unity within the ruling elite. This emphasis on unity was repeatedly emphasized by the people of the Zhou Dynasty as they learned from the lessons of the downfall of the Shang Dynasty. Chen Jie astutely pointed out that when the Zhou people, during the natural differentiation of kinship groups, used systems such as bestowing surnames to achieve cohesion within the clan, "this is precisely the key difference between the differentiation of lineages within a clan society and a kinship society." Once the institutions of orders, such as the order of Zong Fa (宗法), were established, the social structure underwent a transformation. The natural differentiation and branching of lineage organizations based on the principle of equality were reshaped into hierarchical divisions within clans (J. Chen 2007, pp. 293–94). Both in the lineage society and clan society, various sizes of kinship groups existed based on blood relations, which determined the closeness or distance among individuals.

However, the distinguishing feature of clan society lies in its structure. Through the continuous ritual activities and the presence of a shared ancestor as a symbol, the differentiated lineages within the clan are integrated as distinct "branches" on the same "clan tree." This integration is achieved by the transmission of ancestral symbols through the legitimate eldest son of the clan (嫡長子), who becomes the bearer of the ancestral symbol.

Thus, it forms the backbone of the practical order of Zong Fa (宗法), where "the family members" (宗人) govern "all clan members" (族人). Through the integration of ancestor worship and the legitimate eldest son, the emphasis is placed on the rightful inheritance of the ancestral lands, people and ancestral temple by the legitimate eldest son. This highlights the esteemed position of the legitimate eldest son and establishes a hierarchical relationship between the legitimate eldest son and other members of the clan, emphasizing their respective positions of honor and subordination.

As a result, the legitimate eldest son becomes the subject of liability for "bringing together the clan" (uniting and consolidating the clan 收族). Therefore, in the order of Zong Fa (宗法), all members within a clan are of the same lineage and constitute integral parts of the same clan community. Under the leadership of the legitimate eldest son, individuals can take care of each other's good fortune and misfortune, exchange surplus goods to obtain what they lack, maintain order and hierarchy between the young and the old, differentiate between close and distant relationships without complete separation and have different social statuses without interfering in each other's affairs. The act of "bringing to-

gether the clan" (收族) creates a sense of kinship within the same clan, making individuals from the same clan appear as if they are from the same family, and individuals from the same family appear as if they are one entity.[1]

Therefore, in the clan society established during the Zhou Dynasty, the relationship between numerous sub-clans derived from the same mother clan ceased to be equal. Instead, it became a system where a revered individual (the legitimate eldest son) (宗子) and the people who revered him (clan members) (族人) were established through the system of primogeniture. The establishment of the system of major and minor lineages (大小宗制度) led to the overarching authority of the major lineage over numerous minor lineages. Within the minor lineages, distinctions were made between lineages that traced their ancestry back to the great-grandfather, the great-great-grandfather, the grandfather, and the great-uncle, each having their own lineage leader to oversee them.

This formed a hierarchical and differentiated structure of leadership, resembling a branching tree, with varying levels of authority. This structure represents a form of unity among kinship groups that is integrated from smaller units to larger ones, building upon each other in a bottom-up manner. It overall enhances the Zhou people's ability to consolidate and unite through institutionalized systems like Zong Fa (宗法), thus mitigating or even resisting the weakening of state power caused by the natural proliferation of lineage branches. Indeed, facing the trend of lineage society's proliferation and the diminishing cohesive force of blood ties as the society grew larger, the Zhou people had to transform the original lineage-based organization into the institutionalized system of the kinship community of Zong Fa (Guan 2010, p. 28).

The Zong Fa (宗法) communal system utilizes blood relationships to integrate clan members into the order of the Zong Fa (宗法) community based on the principle of Qin Qin (親親). However, Qin Qin (親親) is not the sole principle of the order of Zong Fa (宗法). Relatively speaking, the principle of Zun Zun (尊尊) is the core principle of the Zong Fa (宗法) community. In terms of the spontaneous evolution from lineage to clan, the continuous division of lineages provides the foundation and possibility for the establishment of minor lineages.

However, from the perspective of the legislator's creation, it is only through the establishment of major lineages that the branching of lineages can separate from the structure of lineage society and become minor lineages in the Zong Fa (宗法) community. This is because the leadership of the major lineage over the pluralistic minor lineages and clan members is no longer solely based on kinship (親親之仁), but rather on reverence for ancestors. With the inclusion of the concept of righteousness (Yi 義), the process of receiving members into the major lineage extends beyond the scope of kinship and blood relations. Only the major lineage transcends pure kinship and blood relations while still encompassing them. In other words, it combines the principles of kinship (親親之義) and political reverence (尊尊之義). It is through this combination that Zong Fa (宗法) became the shaping principle of a political-ethical community.

The principle of Qin Qin (親親) has limitations and boundaries when it comes to achieving clan cohesion. In the *Book of Rites*, "Sang Fu Xiao Ji" (《禮記●喪服小記》), it is recorded as follows: "Among relatives with blood ties, the closest are the father above and the son below. From these three generations of relatives, it expands to five generations, including the grandfather above and the grandson below. It further expands to nine generations, including the great-grandfather above and the great-grandson below. The degree of mourning attire is arranged based on these degrees of kinship, with each generation reducing mourning attire from the father upwards and from the son downwards. As for nondirect lineage relatives, the more distant the blood relationship, the greater the reduction in mourning attire until there is no familial bond."[2] The sequence of blood relations, starting from oneself, includes the father above and the children below, collectively forming three generations. It expands further by extending upward to the grandfather and downward to the grandchildren, thus expanding from three generations to five generations. It further expands by extending to the great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather through the

lineage of the grandfather, and to the great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren, thus expanding from five generations to nine generations. This represents the hierarchical pattern of kinship based on Qin Qin (親親). Starting from oneself, the kinship sequence expands from three (father-self-child) to five (grandfather-father-self-child-grandchild) to nine (great-great-grandfather-great-grandfather-grandfather-father-self-child-grandchild-great-grandchild-great-great-grandchild). As the kinship becomes more distant, the mourning attire gradually becomes lighter until it is no longer worn.

Indeed, it can be observed that from an individual's perspective, the expansion of kinship extends from oneself to father and children and further expands to include grandfather and grandchildren. In this process, the principle of Qin Qin (親親) is followed, gradually extending from close relationships to more distant ones. From the perspective of the Zong Fa (宗法) system, individuals within a clan should revere the legitimate eldest son of the major lineage (大宗宗子) who shares a common progenitor, as well as the legitimate eldest sons who share the same great-great-grandfather, great-grandfather, grandfather and father—collectively referred to as the legitimate eldest sons of the four generations (四類小宗宗子). The principle of Qin Qin (親親) applies to minor lineages, but when considering the distance of kinship, after six generations, individuals become like strangers to each other.

Therefore, the saying goes, "After five generations, ancestors will be excluded from the scope of worship (五世則遷)." However, within the major lineage, the principle is based on showing respect to the noble ones (尊尊). With the addition of the principle of Zun Zun (尊尊), treating others with the principle of Zun Zun (尊尊) and collectively honoring sons other than the legitimate eldest son as the legitimate eldest son itself, the major lineage does not dissipate even when the close blood ties come to an end.

As a result, it can endure for many generations without undergoing changes (百世而不遷). At the point where the kinship ties within the minor lineage reach their limit, the major lineage can still fulfill its function of uniting the clan (收族). Therefore, as Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 mentioned, "Ancestors who were once included in the ancestral worship of a minor lineage, if they exceed four generations, will be excluded from the scope of worship within the minor lineage. Their worship will be limited to the ancestral worship of the major lineage (過是則遷，唯統於大宗耳)" (F. Wang 1996, p. 833).[3]

In the order of the Zong Fa (宗法) community, the primary subject is actually the sibling relationship. In fact, the order of Zong Fa (宗法) lies exact in the relationship among brothers, which entails the hierarchical leadership of younger brothers and clan members by the eldest son of the main branch in both major and minor lineages. Cheng Yaotian astutely pointed out: "The way of the clan is the way of brothers. In the households of nobles and scholars, it is the way of elder brothers to govern younger brothers, and the way of younger brothers to serve and respect elder brothers" (Cheng 2008, p. 137). The term "Zong" (宗) itself means "master" or "chief." Therefore, "Ji Bie Wei Zong" (繼別為宗) refers to the situation where the person who inherits his father's position and is revered as an ancestor by his descendants becomes the common master of the younger brothers. This person, as an ancestor revered by his own descendants, is regarded as a father figure, just like his brothers who are also revered as fathers by their own sons. Among their children, each has an eldest son who inherits their respective father's position and is revered by their younger brothers. This is what is called a minor lineage. As for the many descendants who inherit the position, they are revered as ancestors by the descendants who inherit the position of the common master. All minor lineages lead their younger brothers and revere them, and this continues from generation to generation (Cheng 2008, p. 137).

This implies that, while the typical understanding of Zong Fa (宗法) focuses on the vertical relationships between successive generations, in practice, it primarily deals with the relationships among brothers of the same generation but different lineages. The degree of closeness or distance between brothers is determined by the number of lineages they are removed from a common ancestor, such as a shared father, grandfather, great-grandfather and so on. This results in varying degrees of kinship, such as full brothers,

cousins (from paternal or maternal side), second cousins, third cousins and so forth, indicating different levels of closeness or distance between them. The more distant the blood relationship between brothers, the more they need to rely on ancestral worship and other means to strengthen their bond through honoring increasingly distant ancestors (from father to grandfather, then from grandfather to great-grandfather and so on, all the way to the founding ancestor). It is the duty of the legitimate eldest sons of both major and minor lineages to carry out these tasks of uniting and maintaining the kinship among brothers of different lineages. They unite the present brothers in the name of their past ancestors, forming different Zong Fa (宗法) communities based on the degrees of blood relationship, whether close or distant.

In this regard, the core of the way of Zong Fa (宗法) lies in the horizontal relationships rather than the vertical ones. It is primarily based on the bonds between brothers rather than on the relationships between fathers and sons. The relationship between major and minor lineages is not a generational one of the same lineage but rather a relationship among brothers based on the distinction between "Di" (嫡 direct line) and "Shu" (庶 collateral line). More accurately, the vertical father–son relationship serves as the background for the horizontal relationship among brothers. It is through the vertical relationship that the horizontal relationships are structured and organized. The focus is on the horizontal relationships rather than solely on the vertical ones (Y. Chen 2019a, pp. 113–205).

The phrase "Filial piety, which emphasizes filial devotion to parents, can be extended to foster brotherly friendship and love" ("孝乎唯孝，友於兄弟")[4] in *Book of History*, "Jun Chen" (《尚書·君陳篇》), reflects the essence of the spirit of the Zong Fa (宗法) society. "Xiao" ("孝") entails treating one's ancestors with respect and care, while "You" ("友") involves treating one's brothers well. In essence, the institution of Zong Fa (宗法) combines the concepts of "Xiao and "You," integrating them through religious ancestral rites that express reverence for ancestors. It further translates the principles of fraternal love into practical rituals and ceremonial practices within the social system of rites and music.

The inscriptions on bronze artifacts record the ideals of "filial piety towards parents and brotherly love towards siblings, only in this manner" ("孝友惟型" ("Li Yi", *Jun*, Volume 2 the second part 《曆彝》,載《攈》卷二之二)), "only when a ruler can both be filial towards parents and befriend his brothers" ("惟辟孝友" (*Shi Qiang Pan*《史牆盤》)) and so on. These writings specifically emphasize the relationship among brothers. In the surviving literature from the Zhou Dynasty, there are also many records that mention the relationship between brothers. For example, "Now this king Ji, in his heart was full of brotherly duty" ("維此王季，因心則友，則友其兄") in *Book of Songs*, "Huang Yi" (《詩經·皇矣》), "Such great criminals are greatly abhorred, and how much more (detestable) are the unfilial and unbrotherly" ("元惡大憝，矧惟不孝不友") in *Book of History*, "Kang Gao" (《尚書·康誥篇》), and so on. During the Zhou Dynasty, it was common for people to use the character "You" ("友") in personal names. Examples include Taishi You (太史友), Neishi You (內史友), Duke Zheng Huan You (鄭桓公友), Duo You (多友) and many others. The word "You" ("友") is indeed associated with the bond of "brotherhood." In the context of the Western Zhou Dynasty, "You" ("友") had the meaning of "brother," referring to kinship brothers outside of one's immediate family. Sometimes, even one's own biological brothers could be included in the designation of "friends" ("朋友") (Zhu 2004, pp. 292–97). The Zuo Commentary (《左传》) recorded the events of the fifteenth year of Duke Wen's reign: Shi Yi had the following statement, saying, 'Brothers should strive individually to achieve perfection. They should assist each other in times of need, celebrate joyous occasions together, offer condolences in times of disaster, pay respectful homage during ceremonies, and express sorrow during funerals. Although their emotions may differ, they should not sever the bonds of friendship and love between them. This is the moral duty towards one's relatives.'. These indicate that the primary relational subject of the order of Zong Fa (宗法) community is primarily the horizontal brotherly relationship.

The system of minor lineages, which emerged during the later period of the Shang Dynasty, already assumed the role of connecting vertical generational relationships, such as "children inheriting their fathers". However, this type of connection was limited. In the Zhou Dynasty, the system of major lineages expanded the scope by tracing back to more distant ancestors, thus incorporating not only brothers, second-order brothers, third-order brothers and their respective small families whose blood ties had already weakened into the same community of Zong Fa (宗法).

This kind of implement elder-brother governance over younger brothers is achieved through two main factors. On one hand, it is accomplished through respecting and honoring ancestors, and on the other hand, through the respect for the legitimate eldest son of the major lineage (大宗宗子). The more ancient the revered ancestors are, the larger the unified family group becomes. The legitimate eldest son of the major lineage serves as the core of this extended family. So, *Book of Rites*, "Sang Fu Xiao Ji" (《禮記●喪服小記》), records: "because they honored the ancestor, they reverenced the Honored Head; their reverencing the Honored Head was the way in which they expressed the honour which they paid to the ancestor and his immediate successor". The purpose of reverencing the Honored Head and honoring the ancestor is not for the sake of the deceased ancestors themselves but rather to foster unity among the living brothers within the major lineage who have grown increasingly distant from one another. *Book of Rites*, "Da Zhuan" (《禮記●大傳》), records: "They honoured the Ancestor, and therefore they reverenced the Head. The reverence showed the significance of that honour". Further, "Where the starting-point was in affection, it began with the father, and ascended by steps to the ancestor. In the consideration of what is right, it began with the ancestor and descended in a natural order to the deceased father. Thus, the course of humanity (in the matter of mourning) was all comprehended in the love for kin. From the affection for parents came the honoring of ancestors; from the honoring of the ancestor came the respect and attention shown to the heads of the family branches. Through this respect and attention to those heads, all the members of the kin were kept together. This unity led to the dignity of the ancestral temple. From that dignity arose the importance attached to the altars of the land and grain. This importance resulted in the love of all the people with their various surnames. From that love came the proper administration of punishments and penalties, leading to a sense of repose among the people. Through that restfulness all resources for expenditure became, sufficient. Through the sufficiency of these, what all desired was realized. The realization led to all courteous usages and good customs; and from these, in fine, came all happiness and enjoyment".

If we consider "Da Zhuan" (《大傳》) as an explanation of the "Sang Fu" (《喪服》), what is the elucidation of the significance of the "Sang Fu" (《喪服》) to the order of Zong Fa (宗法) community? In the chapter "Qi Shuai Qi" of "Sang Fu Zhuan" (《喪服傳》 "齊衰期"), it states, "The major lineage is the supreme and legitimate authority of the clan. Animals recognize their mothers but not their fathers. People in rural areas may ask, 'What significance do parents hold?' However, those in urban areas understand the importance of honoring their fathers. The officials and scholars recognize the importance of honoring their grandfathers. Princes honor their great ancestors, and the emperor honors the origins of his ultimate progenitor. The noble and esteemed individuals extend their reverence through the ancestral lineage to the distant past, while the humble individuals show reverence along the ancestral lineage to the recent past. The major lineage represents the highest and legitimate authority. It serves as the cohesive force for the clan and should not be severed".

In the chapter "Qi Shuai San Yue" of "Sang Fu Zhuan" (《喪服傳》 "齊衰三月"), it states, "Respecting ancestors is the reason for honoring the legitimate eldest son of the major lineage. Honoring the legitimate eldest son of the major lineage is the guideline for respecting ancestors." It is evident that the veneration of ancestors and the respect for the progenitor of the major lineage ultimately revolve around the act of uniting the clan, which is centered around the legitimate eldest son of the major lineage. This purpose de-

termines that the essence of the order of Zong Fa (宗法) community lies in utilizing vertical generational relationships to handle horizontal brotherly relationships. Consequently, the primacy of brotherhood within the order of Zong Fa (宗法) community becomes essential.

The transformation of the order of Zong Fa (宗法) reforms the clan community, reversing the differentiation of the clan into the unity of Zong Fa (宗法) community. However, whether in a clan society or a Zong Fa (宗法) society, individuals are subordinate to the community and do not exist separately from their identity as members of the community. Accordingly, in the Zong Fa (宗法) society, ethics and morality are not differentiated. It simply involves incorporating individuals into the community, and there is no individual consciousness that seeks to separate from the community. Therefore, in the Zong Fa (宗法) society, the consensus achieved through ritual and ceremonial activities permeates the collective unconsciousness of its members. Within it, there is no distinction between becoming an individual and becoming a member of the community. In fact, becoming a member of the Zong Fa (宗法) community is the way of being human, and determining the meaning of individual existence is finding one's place within the "tree of Zong Fa" ("宗法樹").[5]

### 3. The Father–Son Relationship and Filial Piety in the Order of Ren Lun (人倫) Relationships' Community as a Central and Fundamental Axis

The background of the establishment of the Ren Lun (人伦) community is the disintegration of the Zong Fa community. As the creation of the Western Zhou Dynasty, the Zong Fa was closely associated with the feudal system. The feudal system of the Zhou was divided into two levels: first, the king of the Zhou divided the children of the royal family into vassal states, the son of heaven gave them a surname 姓, and the recipients of the title became vassals by acquiring a surname and establishing a state; and second, the vassals were given shi (氏) (a branch of the family name), and the recipients were given land to establish a Aristocrat's House and became ministers. The condition for the possibility of feudalism was that the Zhou people continued to expand, so there was surplus land and population, which could be distributed to the sons and younger brothers of the king; on the other hand, the population to be rewarded was based on the clan. The grantee received a rewarding surname or shi (氏) from a superior ruler and thus became a legitimate eldest son (宗子) in a patriarchal Zong Fa (宗法) community. In other words, the eldest son inheritance system in the feudal system is actually the application of the patriarchal Zong Fa system, so the patriarchal system is also called the Zong Fa feudal system. Once the Zhou had no surplus land and population to distribute, and once the basic unit of society had diverged from the patriarchal clan to the small main family, then the patriarchal community and its ethical form of life became untenable.

In fact, during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods in which Confucius and Mencius lived, the patriarchal clan system had declined, and the backbone family, with five or seven members as the main body, constituted the basic unit of society. The monogamous family, formed by ordinary men and women, came to the forefront of history, and with the establishment of the system of the "bianhuqimin" (编户齐民), this kind of small family constitutes the foundation of society. Whereas the Zong Fa system demonstrated the political connection between the old brother's state and the young brother's state, the human relationships within the main family lost their political function of unifying the different states and became an ethical field for social ordering. For example, filial piety was no longer a way for people in different families within the same clan in the patriarchal system to remember their common ancestor, but a way for small families to respect for patrilineal parents of the family (L. Wang 2007, pp. 175–213).

During this period, there was a simultaneous process of territorial expansion by states. In other words, the expansion of nations and the shrinking of families were two different aspects of the new order. When contemplating the social and ethical order, one cannot ignore this structural political and social transformation. The concept of the Ren Lun (人倫)

community, as conceived by Confucius, Mencius and other Confucian scholars, can be understood within this context to some extent.

When the order of Zong Fa (宗法), as embodied by the major-minor lineage system (大小宗制度), is replaced by the nuclear family as the central unit, it signifies a shift in the ethical axis. The core of the Ren Lun (人倫) community based on the nuclear family is the father–son relationship, which is different from the Zong Fa (宗法) community that centers around the brotherhood. Therefore, with the emergence of Confucianism and the teachings of Confucius and Mencius, a change can be observed where the father–son relationship replaces the brotherhood as the core of order construction. In the Zong Fa (宗法) community, while the father–son relationship is important, it primarily serves as the background for the brotherhood. Through tracing the common ancestry of the brothers to a shared paternal ancestor, a greater sense of unity can be established among brothers within the same era. This is the primary concern of the system of the Zong Fa (宗法) community. The nuclear family, on the other hand, does not function as an independent entity but rather as a component of the clan system. The fundamental unit of social order is the clan, not the nuclear family. During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, with the rise of the nuclear family as an independent entity, the fundamental unit of social order shifted from the clan to the family. Adapting to this structural change, the ethical framework centered around the father–son relationship replaced the Zong Fa (宗法 kinship-based) ethics centered around brotherhood. As a result, the father–son relationship transitioned from the background to the foreground, becoming the paramount relationship within human society.

With the foundation for maintaining political and social stability being established upon the family, and with the father–son relationship becoming a central and fundamental axis in ethics, filial piety naturally became the core of the human ethical order. Paternal kindness and filial piety originally constitute a bidirectional and interactive ethical requirement. In this order of Ren Lun (人倫) community, each individual can find their own ethical obligations. For instance, in the father–son relationship, kindness is the father's duty, while filial piety is the duty of the son. The order of Ren Lun (人倫) demands that everyone fulfills their respective obligations, which is an undeniable responsibility. *Book of Rites*, "Li Yun" (《禮記●禮運》), records: "What are 'the things which men consider right?' Kindness on the part of the father, and filial duty on that of the son; gentleness on the part of the elder brother, and obedience on that of the younger; righteousness on the part of the husband, and submission on that of the wife; kindness on the part of elders, and deference on that of juniors; with benevolence on the part of the ruler, and loyalty on that of the minister".

"Li Yun" (《禮運》) summarizes human ethics in terms of five relationships: father and son, brother, husband and wife, elder and younger and ruler and minister. Similarly, "Mencius" summarizes human relations as "father and son have relatives, monarch and minister have righteousness, husband and wife are different, seniors and children are orderly, and friends have trust." Similarly, in Chapter of "Tengwengong Shang" (《滕文公》) in the book of Mengzi (《孟子》), human ethics is refined as "Father and son have kinship, ruler and minister have righteousness, husband and wife have distinction, seniority and childhood are in order, and friends have trust." The Five Relationships (五倫) in "Li Yun" has "elder and younger" but no "friends," while in "Mencius," it has "friends" but no "brothers," and "brothers" may be included in the "elder and younger" relationship.

The Book of Zhongyong (中庸) summarizes the Five Relationships in terms of father and son, ruler and minister, husband and wife and brother and friend, which has been widely accepted in later times. What is highlighted in the Five Relationships are the reciprocal and differentiated responsibilities of the two parties to the interpersonal relationship, i.e., the Five Relationships place ethical demands on each of the parties to the interpersonal roles. For example, the father's duty to be loving to his children corresponds to the child's duty to be filial to his father.

Although there are more than these five kinds of interpersonal relationships, the Five Relationships constitute the most basic human relationship after all, and other interpersonal relationships can be either reducible to or extend from the Five Relationships. However, all the provisions of the Five Relationships are the entirety of Ren Lun (人倫). Strictly speaking, Ren Lun include two dimensions: one is the Five Relationships (五倫), which define people's different roles, positions, and corresponding responsibilities in society, family, and politics; and the other is The Wu Chang (五常), including the five virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and faith, define the characteristics that make a human being different from other beings. This is the content of the universal human nature understood by Confucianism, which transcends any specific era and specific societies. The Five Relationships is a person's "Wei Fen" (位分) in society, while the Five Chang is his "Xing Fen" (性分) in the cosmos (Y. Chen 2019b, pp. 29–41).

The differentiation between the Five Relationships (五倫) and the Five Chang (五常) in Ren Lun (人倫) is an essential aspect of Ren Lun that differs from from Zong Fa (宗法), which, as a form of organization, is intended to integrate individuals into different levels of patriarchal community. This is essentially a hierarchical community centered on the king, in which the subordination of human beings to the membership of the community is emphasized, rather than the nature of human beings as human beings; although Zong Fa (宗法) can develop interpersonal relationships corresponding to the Five Relationship, it is difficult to develop the Five Chang as universal human beings.

Moreover, there is a qualitative difference between the interpersonal relationship model of the Five Relationships and the Zong Fa system. The former is centered on the small family, while the latter is centered on the clan to establish an individual's identity and position in a political-ethical society; moreover, in the Five Relationships, the ethical dimension takes precedence over the political dimension, while the Zong Fa system has a political function that takes precedence over the ethical function. Among the essential differences between the Zong Fa and the Five Relationships, there is another point that deserves attention: although the Zong Fa is based on the name of fathers, ancestors, etc., it is the political brotherhood that becomes the primary concern, whereas the first of the Five Relationships is the father–son relationship in the family. The transformation from Zong Fa (宗法) to Ren Lun (人倫) has transformed the fundamental meaning of filial piety. It is no longer the reverence of brothers of the same clan for the dead common ancestors but rather the filial piety of children to their parents.

Moreover, filial piety runs through their parents' lives and continues after their deaths. The reason why the relationship between benevolence and filial piety constitutes a fundamental issue in Confucian thought on Ren Lun (人倫) lies in the fact that the two centrally manifest the relationship between the Five Chang (五常) and the Five Relationships (五倫), and when the two are integrated into each other, then the relationship between benevolence and filial piety, between the Five Chang and the Five Relationship, is no longer either one or the other; rather, there is an element of you in me, and me in you, and the requirement to become a certain kind of social role and the requirement to become a human being, as the two dimensions of Ren Lun, are combined together here.

The requirement to become a particular role, such as a son of some kind, combined with the requirement to become a human being, together construct the Confucian way of filial piety. The essence of filial piety is not simply to obey and comply with one's parents' wishes. Absolute obedience to parents is not directly related to filial piety, nor is it the key aspect of being filial. The true essence of filial piety lies not in blindly obeying parents but rather in offering respectful advice and counsel in a gentle and considerate manner when there are differences or disagreements. *Book of Rites*, "Ji Yi" (《禮記●祭義》), emphasizes: "What the superior man calls filial piety requires the anticipation of our parents' wishes, the carrying out of their aims and their instruction in the path (of duty)." This is consistent with the statement of Confucius recorded in the *Analects*, "Li Ren" (《論語●裏仁》): "In serving his parents, a son may remonstrate with them, but gently; when he sees that they

do not incline to follow his advice, he shows an increased degree of reverence, but does not abandon his purpose; and should they punish him, he does not allow himself to murmur".

Indeed, advising and remonstrating with one's parents to prevent them from engaging in unjust actions is an integral part of filial piety. The true essence of filial piety lies in carrying on the aspirations of one's parents (以子繼父). The meaning of "carrying on" (繼) in this context has been pointed out in *Book of Rites*, "Zhong Yong" (《禮記●中庸》), as: "Now filial piety is seen in the skillful carrying on of the wishes of our forefathers, and the skillful carrying forward of their undertakings." The essence of filial piety lies in carrying on the aspirations, carrying forward of the undertakings and continuing the legacy of our ancestors, ensuring that their unfulfilled aspirations and accomplishments are not lost, and further developing and glorifying them. In this way, it becomes the inherent meaning of filial piety to bring honor to one's ancestors and family. In other words, what is emphasized here is not only the sense of time and historical consciousness that is generated through generations but also the awareness of historical continuity between successive generations. Through this awareness, individuals are integrated into the familial process of historical continuity, and the unity of "father and son" is realized through subjective aspirations and objective endeavors.

Originally, filial piety referred to the relationship between children and their parents and ancestors. However, through this vertical relationship, the subject of filial piety has shifted toward the individual's relationship with oneself. *The Classic of Filial Piety* (《孝經》) states: "Our bodies—to every hair and bit of skin—are received by us from our parents, and we must not presume to injure or wound them. This is the beginning of filial piety. When we have established our character by the practice of the (filial) course, so as to make our name famous in future ages and thereby glorify our parents, this is the end of filial piety." The starting point of filial piety lies in respecting one's own body and life, while the ultimate goal of filial piety is to establish oneself and leave a positive legacy for future generations. Whether at its starting point or its endpoint, filial piety becomes a requirement that children impose on themselves. This requirement does not imply absolute obedience to parents, but rather directs individuals toward self-realization in terms of personal character and conduct. In other words, although filial piety appears to be rooted in familial relationships within the household, it is elevated to a universal spiritual dimension that defines the essence of being human.

Whereas emphasis on filial piety can be observed within the framework of the order of Zong Fa (宗法), it is important to note that in this context, filial piety is not directed toward children's reverence for their parents but rather toward the religious-like awe that the living have for their deceased ancestors. In the context of the Western Zhou Dynasty, filial piety was not primarily an ethical principle for maintaining the father–son relationship, but rather a responsibility of the rulers and the eldest sons of the main lineage, with the purpose of "honoring ancestors, respecting the ancestral temple" and "preserving the clan and maintaining the family." In the communal structure of the Western Zhou Dynasty, the term "filial son" referred to the legitimate sons of the lineage rather than the illegitimate ones. During the Western Zhou period, filial piety was directed toward ancestral spirits and not toward living individuals. When discussing filial piety toward fathers, it was understood as an extension of the broader principle of honoring ancestors and respecting the ancestral temple: " To fulfill filial piety towards ancestors" ("Chou Er Zhong" 《儔兒鐘》), "To fulfill filial piety towards deceased parents or ancestors" (Xi Zhong Zhong 《兮仲鐘》), "To fulfill filial piety towards previous generations who possessed cultural and moral virtues" (*Book of History*, "Wen Hou Zhi Ming" 《尚書·文侯之命》), "It was to show the filial duty which had come down to him" (*Book of Songs*, "Wen Wang You Sheng" 《詩經·文王有聲》).

In the Zong Fa (宗法) community, the fundamental principle of filial piety was primarily focused on showing respect to ancestors (尊尊) rather than immediate family members (親親). The concept of "filial piety not towards one's father" ("無父之孝"), as discussed by Mozi, was its essence that remained (Zha 2006, pp. 10–97). The following statement

from *The Classic of Filial Piety* (《孝經》) also bears the imprint of the concept of filial piety within the order of Zong Fa (宗法): "…To preserve the altars of their land and grain is the filial piety of the princes of states. …To preserve their ancestral temples is the filial piety of high ministers and great officers. …To preserve their emoluments and positions, and to maintain their sacrifices is the filial piety of inferior officers." It is evident that the filial piety emphasized within the order of Zong Fa (宗法), with its focus on respecting ancestors and fulfilling social responsibilities, differs significantly from the filial piety advocated by Confucius and Mencius, which emphasizes the importance of parent–child relationships. The change of the object of filial piety from the dead ancestors in the Zong Fa society to the living father in the family corresponds to the structural changes in society since the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period. Luo Tai's research on tombs shows that with the decline of the primacy of Zong Fa organizations, the importance of ancestor worship decreased during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods, the tree-like structure of the patriarchal society gradually transformed into a loosely knit society and the rites, which were used in the Western Zhou to maintain the patriarchal organization, were transformed into an ecumenic ethical regime. In this context, filial piety is no longer a way of political cohesion and community building but an expression of personal virtue (von Falkenhausen 2006, pp. 290–301, 397–99).

## 4. From the Principle of Qin Qin Zun Zun (Emphasis on Immediate Family Relationships and Respect for Ancestors親親尊尊) to Ren Yi (Benevolence and Righteousness仁義): The Continuity and Transformation of the Order of the Community

In response to the prominent role of brotherhood within the order of the Zong Fa (宗法) community, the basic principles of the order were "Qin Qin" (親親emphasizing the importance of immediate family relationships) and "Zun Zun" (尊尊emphasizing the reverence for ancestors). This is also the spiritual foundation of the Zhou ritual system (周禮). In "Discussions on Yin and Zhou Institutions," Wang Guowei argued that the rituals and institutions of the Western Zhou Dynasty were derived from "Qin Qin" (親親) and "Zun Zun" (尊尊) (G. Wang 2009, p. 314).

Under the political structure of a family-centric system ("家天下"), the principle of Qin Qin (親親) ensured the familial nature of the ruling group. This was achieved through practices such as the enfeoffment of noble descendants and granting surnames and clan names. These measures aimed to unite the Zhou clans within quasi-blood-related families. For ruling members who did not have direct family ties, family connections were established through means such as intermarriage.

In this sense, the principle of "Qin Qin" (親親) facilitated political and social cohesion and unity through the connecting function of family ties. *Yi Li*, "Jin Li" states: "In a large state with the same surname, one would be called Bo Fu (伯父) to those of the same surname; for those of a different surname, one would be called Bo Jiu (伯舅). In a small state with the same surname, one would be called Shu Fu (叔父); for those of a different surname in a small state, one would be called Shu Jiu (叔舅)."[6] It can be seen from this that the principle of "Qin Qin" (親親) establishes a strong connection between Tian Zi (天子) and the feudal lords. The foundational significance of the principle of "Qin Qin" (親親) in the system of Zong Fa (宗法) can also be observed through the mourning rituals (system of Sang Fu喪服制度) that are closely related to the order of Zong Fa (宗法). Wu Chengshi regarded the statement "in the case of the nearest kindred, there is a break in it at the end of a year" ("Zhi Qin Yi Qi Duan" 至親以期斷) in the *Book of Rites*, "San Nian Wen" (《禮記●三年問》) as the "the principle of principles" in mourning rituals (system of Sang Fu喪服制度). The phrase "Zhi Qin Yi Qi Duan" (至親以期斷) refers to the duration of mourning, which is based on a period of one year as the basic unit. The five stages of mourning are centered around close relatives, with the mourning period as the main axis, and additional rituals or changes in mourning practices are determined accordingly (Wu 1998, pp. 316–29). This mourning ritual (system of Sang Fu喪服制度) itself demonstrates the importance of the principle of "Qin Qin" (親親) in the order of Zong Fa (宗法). In a certain sense, the order

of Zong Fa (宗法) can be seen as a kinship community formed by the aggregation of the principle of Qin Qin (親親).

However, within the kinship community constructed by the principle of Qin Qin (親親), the principle of Zun Zun (尊尊) takes precedence as the first-order principle. As a result, situations often arise where the respect shown to a clan elder surpasses the affection between father and son. The principle of Qin Qin (親親) between father and son gives way to the hierarchical principle of Zun Zun (尊尊) among clan members. In terms of kinship relations, both the legitimate sons (宗子) and the illegitimate sons (庶子) are considered close relatives, sharing the same father. They should be equal as father and son, but their respective legitimacy status determines the hierarchy among brothers.

This can be observed from the mourning rituals closely associated with the order of Zong Fa (宗法). The father mourns for the eldest son for three years, while mourning for the other children lasts for one year. This illustrates that the legitimacy status creates distinctions of hierarchy among brothers. For someone who belongs to a large clan without an heir and adopts a son to carry on the lineage, their biological father may indeed be a close relative, but compared to the adoptive father who ensures the continuation of the lineage, the biological father's mourning period is downgraded, while the adoptive father receives the most solemn mourning attire. The biological father is thus considered inferior to the adoptive father. Within the framework of a family-centric system ("家天下"), it is necessary to strengthen the principle of Zun Zun (尊尊) to establish order within the Zong Fa (宗法) community.

The principle of Qin Qin (親親) and Zun Zun (尊尊) in the order of Zong Fa (宗法) shares a historical continuity with the early Confucian emphasis on Ren Yi (benevolence and righteousness仁義) as the core principles of humanity. *Book of Rites*, "Da Zhuan" (《禮記●大傳》), states: "Where the starting-point was in affection, it began with the father, and ascended by steps to the ancestor. Where it was in a consideration of what was right, it began with the ancestor, and descended in natural order to the deceased father. Thus the course of humanity (in this matter of mourning) was all comprehended in Qin Qin (親親)."

This is a direct correlation between Ren (benevolence仁) and Qin Qin (親親), and between Yi (righteousness義) and Zun Zun (尊尊). The *Book of Rites*, "Zhong Yong" (《禮記●中庸》), expresses it more directly: "Ren (benevolence仁) is the characteristic element of humanity, and the great exercise of it is in loving relatives (親親). Yi (righteousness義) is the accordance of actions with what is right, and the great exercise of it is in honoring the worthy. The decreasing measures of the love due to relatives, and the steps in the honor due to the worthy, are produced by the principle of propriety".

Based on the above discussion from the *Book of Rites*, Guo Songtao pointed out: "People in both large and small lineages hold their ancestors in high esteem as the source of their existence. Yi (righteousness義) is closely connected to ancestors, which is why ancestors are considered significant. Ren (benevolence仁) is discussed in terms of mourning rituals, while Yi (righteousness義) is discussed in terms of the ancestral system" (Guo 1992, pp. 430–31). The interplay between the Zong Fa (宗法) system and ritual practices signifies the intertwined nature of the principles of Qin Qin (親親) and Zun Zun (尊尊). Wang Guowei emphasizes: "The people of the Zhou Dynasty employed the principle of Zun Zun (尊尊) to manage the principle of Qin Qin (親親). This was reflected in the establishment of the system of distinguishing between the legitimate and illegitimate, where the status of legitimate and illegitimate sons was determined based on their relationship to the father. Conversely, they also managed the principle of Zun Zun (尊尊) through the principle of Qin Qin (親親), which was reflected in the establishment of the ancestral temple system. These interrelated principles formed the basis for the Zhou people's establishment of the system of rituals and music" (G. Wang 2009, p. 313).

However, it does not mean that the principles of Zong Fa (宗法) and the mourning ritual are based on the principles of Ren Yi (仁義). It is simply stating that the early Confucian principles of Ren Yi (仁義) are actually a further refinement and purification of the

principles of Qin Qin (親親) and Zun Zun (尊尊) within the system of ancestral worship. The order of Qin Qin (親親) and Zun Zun (尊尊) are principles that are embodied through the system, and they are always intertwined with the Zhou Dynasty's ritual system and cannot be artificially separated. On the other hand, Ren Yi (仁義) are spiritual principles that go beyond specific institutions. Correspondingly, adhering to the principles of Qin Qin (親親) and Zun Zun (尊尊) is actually following the Zhou rituals that have permeated both the customs and institutional levels. On the other hand, starting from the principles of Ren Yi (仁義) is based on values and moral principles, extending to the secular and non-institutional level of individual autonomy in later generations. Therefore, Qin Qin (親親) and Zun Zun (尊尊) are ways of incorporating individuals into the ancestral system and the entire Zhou ritual. In contrast, the principle of Ren Yi (仁義) transcends the dimensions of customs and institutions.

Whereas the principles of Ren Yi (仁義) originated from the ancestral system of the Zhou Dynasty, once established, they possess a universal significance that goes beyond the confines of the order of Zong Fa (宗法). In fact, the unfolding of this universalization occurs through the liberation from the binding of Qin Qin (親親) and Zun Zun (尊尊) associated with the current order of Zong Fa (宗法). Ren (仁) is the treatment of individuals as human beings, and it shares a continuity with the principle of Qin Qin (親親).

This has been recognized by various schools of Confucian thought throughout history: Ling Tingkan 凌廷堪 has profoundly revealed the relationship between the way of benevolence and righteousness and the system of mourning clothes (Ling 2009, pp. 15–16). Zhang Shouan 张寿安 also has a lot of inventions about this. She argues that the foundation of the Confucian ritual order is the tension structure between Qin Qin (亲亲) and Zun Zun (尊尊), and that both thought and system depend on the balance of Qin Qin and Zun Zun to be stable; more importantly, Qin Qin and Zun Zun are the concrete implementation of benevolence and righteousness (Zhang 2005, p. 138). Zeng Guofan 曾国藩 emphasized more clearly: "The former kings created the ritual system, by beautifying and tempering people's love, to make rituals in harmony with benevolence, and to establish hierarchical institutions to express people's awe, so that rituals are in harmony with righteousness, although the content of rituals it is ever-changing, but fundamentally it is based on benevolence and righteousness" (Zeng 2011a, pp. 216–18). In Zeng Guofan's view, not everyone can understand benevolence and righteousness, and this was fully taken into account when the ancient kings established rituals, so benevolence and righteousness were internalized into the customs, rituals and systems of the living world, so that people could be infected by institutionalized benevolence and righteousness without realizing it (Zeng 2011b, p. 175). In this sense, benevolence and righteousness are not only the foundation of the ritual system but also the end of the ritual system.

However, it is equally important to recognize their differences. The principle of Qin Qin (親親) applies only to blood relatives up to the sixth generation, while Ren (仁) implies a love that extends to every individual or all humanity. Although there may be hierarchical differences in the way love is expressed, treating individuals as human beings is inherently impartial. In a broader sense, Ren (仁) can encompass Qin Qin (親親), as Qin Qin (親親) is just one aspect of loving others. The concept of "Qin Qin, Ren Min" (be affectionate to his parents, and lovingly disposed to people generally 親親、仁民) mentioned by Mencius can both be included within the concept of Ren (仁). In the same way, Zun Zun (尊尊) is out of respect for the revered, and the revered is considered honorable.

However, Yi (義), as a principle of what is morally right and appropriate, can encompass the principle of Zun Zun (尊尊) within itself. This means that the principle of Zun Zun (尊尊) can be subsumed under the principle of Yi (義). Consequently, Ren Yi (仁義), as humane principles within the order of the Ren Lun (人倫) community, signify the fundamental principles that define humanity. The specific manifestations of Qin Qin (親親) and Zun Zun (尊尊) within the order of Zong Fa (宗法) become expressions of these universal principles within a particular social structure, such as the Zhou Dynasty's Zong Fa (宗法) society.

In this way, the principle of Ren Yi (仁義) transcends the principle of Qin Qin (親親) and Zun Zun (尊尊), becoming an independent principle beyond the existing political and social system. This demonstrates both the continuity and the differences between the social order of Ren Lun (人倫) and the order of Zong Fa (宗法). In short, Qin Qin (親親) and Zun Zun (尊尊), as the foundations of the order of Zong Fa (宗法), still serve as ways to integrate individuals into the community, while Ren Yi (仁義) point toward universal human nature. Here, one can find a universal human consciousness that goes beyond specific communities and societies. This implies that within the order of the Zongfa (宗法) community, becoming a person is synonymous with becoming a member of the community, without any differentiation. However, within the order of order of the Ren Lun (人倫) community, there is a differentiation between becoming a person and becoming a member of the community. If Xiao (filial piety孝) is seen as the virtue that integrates the individual into the community, then Ren (benevolence仁) represents the universal essence of being human. It is no longer tied to the status of being a community member.

In conclusion, the transition from the order of the Zong Fa (宗法) community of the Western Zhou Dynasty to the order of the Ren Lun (人倫) community in the early Confucianism of Confucius and Mencius signifies a paradigm shift in the order of society. This shift is closely related to structural changes within the political and social sphere, as the basic unit of society shifted from the clan to the nuclear family. Consequently, the contemplation and construction of order had to seek new starting points. Early Confucianism laid the intellectual foundation for the social order of the Ren Lun (人倫) community. Over the following two thousand years, although the family remained the foundation of the social structure and the traditional Chinese political system operated under the framework of a family-centric system ("家天下"), these two elements provided institutional support for the social order of the Ren Lun (人倫) community.

In turn, objectively speaking, early Confucianism played a role in laying the foundation for the traditional order over the course of two millennia. Simultaneously, the moral virtue of the Ren Lun (人倫) community, which is Ren (仁), and the ethical virtue of filial piety are combined within the structure of the community. This intertwining of the construction of community order and universal human nature occurs on the premise of differentiation.

## Notes

[1] Please refer to Xue Xuan (薛瑄)'s summary of the functions of Zong Fa (宗法). See (Li 2010, p. 311).

[2] *Book of Rites*, "Sang Fu Xiao Ji" (《禮記●喪服小記》). According to the interpretation of Zheng Xuan(鄭玄), "One's own father is positioned above oneself in the hierarchy, while one's children are positioned below. Together, they form three generations. Expanding from the father to the grandfather and from the children to the grandchildren constitutes five generations. Expanding from the grandfather to the great-grandfather and from the grandchildren to the great-grandchildren and beyond, it amounts to a total of nine generations". The word "殺" means "as the blood relation becomes more distant, the level of mourning attire gradually decreases".

[3] Please refer to "Great Commentary (《大傳》)" of *The Book of Rites* (《禮記章句》) in his book.

[4] In Chapter "Wei Zheng" (《為政篇》) of *The Analects of Confucius* (《論語》), this statement is quoted with the word "Hu" ("乎"), but the version annotated by Huang Kan (皇侃本) and the version carved on stone during the Han Dynasty (漢石經本) quotes this statement with the word "Yu" ("於").

[5] Patriarchal-based Zong Fa (宗法) was one form of ethical life in the Western Zhou period, but in turn, ethics was not equal to or limited to patriarchal-based patriarchy, but had broader connotations.

6    Similar to this, in *Book of Rites*, "Qu LiII" (《禮記●曲禮下》) it is stated: "Chief among the five officers are Bo (伯), to whom belong the oversight of quarters. If they are of the same surname as Tian Zi (天子), he styles them 'Bo Fu (伯父)', if of a different surname, 'Bo Jiu (伯舅)'…The head prince in each of the nine provinces… If he be of the same surname as himself, Tian Zi (天子) calls him 'Shu Fu (叔父)', if he be of a different surname, 'Shu Jiu (叔舅)'".

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*Article*

# Individual and Unity (*Heti*): The Generative Structure of Human Relations from the Confucian Perspective

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**Abstract:** In terms of the comprehension of modern order and values, understanding individuals and their relationship with the community has always been an important perspective. Scholars have noticed that traditional Confucian thought in China contains a profound understanding of individuals and their relationship with the community. In the Confucian perspective, an individual's significance lies in human relations, with the "family" constituting the foundation and core of these. This study presents the unique structure of the "family" in Confucian ethics and its generative significance. A literature analysis of Confucianism reveals that it places significant importance on the husband–wife relationship. The husband–wife relationship is a unity (*heti*) in the order of human relations, where spouses enjoy equal status and respect. The union of husband and wife propels the generational progression of the entire human relation system, making the husband–wife relationship a core node in the continuity of human ethical order. In this generative structure woven by human relations, the individuals are always subordinate to the human relationships they are involved in. The primary significance of the individual lies in the roles and corresponding responsibilities assumed within various human relations. Previous discussions on Confucian ethics have failed to clearly unveil the generative structure inherent in the concept of the family. The Confucian understanding of the individual and their relationship with the community can only be accurately grasped by clarifying this aspect.

**Keywords:** individuals; human relations; husband–wife; generative structure; responsibilities

## 1. Introduction

The concept of the "individual" forms the foundation of modern social order and values. The rights and freedoms of individuals have been fully expressed in various aspects of modern life and hold irreplaceable positive significance. However, as scholars have noted, if rights are one-sided or if excessive emphasis is placed on the rights and freedoms of individuals while neglecting the social attributes that individuals acquire in the "community", a series of negative consequences that jeopardize modern civilization may arise (Rosemont and Ames 2020, pp. 6–8; Sun 2019, pp. 67–69). Therefore, we need to think more deeply about the relationship between the "individual" and the "community" as well as how to make a reasonable settlement for the "individual" in the "community" in which the "individual" lives. Some scholars have noticed that the Chinese Confucian tradition contains a profound understanding of the "individual" and its relationship with the "community" (Rosemont and Ames 2020, pp. 4–9; Wang 2022, pp. 22–31). The combing and clarification of this Confucian thought can provide a useful reference for us to solve the problems caused by the concept of "individual".

When discussing the relationship between the individual and the community in the context of Confucianism, the concept of "family" is indispensable. In recent years, with the publication of Professor Zhang Xianglong张祥龙's book (Zhang 2018), *Jia Yu Xiao: Cong Zhongxijian Shiye Kan*家与孝：从中西间视野看 (*Family and Filial Reverence: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*), more and more mainland Chinese scholars have started to discuss the notion of family in the Confucian tradition. In overseas Confucian studies, scholars such as Daniel

A. Bell, Roger T. Ames, and Robert Neville have also maintained a continuous interest in the matter of family (Rosemont 2021, p. 212). Based on a comparison between Chinese and Western intellectual traditions, previous scholars recognize the significance of valuing family as an important and fundamental feature of Confucian ethical thought. For modern China, "home" holds a special significance. Since the New Culture Movement, Chinese academic circles have deeply reflected on the oppression of individuals and the corruption of society that the traditional concept of "family" may cause (Sun 2019, pp. 102–6). This is also a positive result of cultural reflections including the New Culture Movement. However, while being critical and vigilant, we also need to have a more comprehensive understanding of the traditional concept of "home", discovering and revealing the positive factors that may be contained in it.

In the following discussion, we will first see that in Confucian ethics, the husband–wife relationship presents a distinct meaning and structure. Husband and wife are not related by blood like parents and children or siblings, but they participate in the order of human relations in a "combined" way and enjoy the same status. This dense structure implies that such a relationship holds particular significance for the order of human relations. The second part of this article will further examine the meaning of this husband–wife union, which propels the generational progression of the entire human relation system, making the husband–wife relationship a core node in the continuity of human ethical order. After clarifying this generative structure, the third part of this paper will further show that the individual is always subordinate to the relationships in which they are involved. The individual's primary significance lies in the roles and corresponding responsibilities they assume within various human relations.

## 2. Unity of Husband and Wife

With the development of related research, the complex connotations contained in the concept of family have gradually become clearer. Generally speaking, a family is composed of relationships such as those between a husband and wife, parent and child, and siblings. Based on these basic human relations, the family can also extend to larger structures of clans and lineages. Confucianism has provided detailed explanations on the conduct and behavior that individuals should follow while occupying ethical roles, such as *xiao*孝 and *ti*悌, which have also become focal points in modern Confucian studies. However, it is important to note that the ethical requirements of different family roles not only reflect important aspects of Confucian thought but are also built upon a fundamental ethical structure. Although the relationships between husband and wife, parents and children, and siblings may seem familiar, there is a subtle structure underlying these family relationships that carries significance in terms of human relations. This is where the Confucian tradition has shown a keen insight.

Among the three basic relationships that constitute a family, the parent–child and sibling relationships are based on blood ties, compared with which the distinct characteristic of the husband–wife relationship is apparent. The establishment of the husband–wife relationship does not depend on inborn blood relations but is instead chosen and molded during a later life stage. In fact, no matter in the design of the ritual system since the Zhou Dynasty or in the discourse of Confucianism, the human relations formed by blood have a natural closeness.[1] Does this mean that the constructed husband–wife relationship is not as close as the parent–child or sibling relationship maintained by blood? Confucianism clearly rejects this notion, as we can see later. In the ritual system inherited and upheld by Confucianism, the husband–wife relationship is established through the wedding ceremony. In "Hunyi昏义", a chapter of *Liji*礼记 that extensively expounds on the rites of wedding ceremonies, a crucial definition of this close relationship of husband and wife is provided:

> After this they went down, and he went out and took the reins of the horses of her carriage, which he drove for three revolutions of the wheels, having handed the strap to assist her in mounting. He then went before, and waited outside his

gate, when she arrived, he bowed to her and gave place to her as she entered. They ate together of the same animal, and joined in sipping from the cups made of the same melon; thus showing that they now formed one body, were of equal rank, so as to express mutual affection.[2]

降出，御妇车，而婿授绥，御轮三周，先俟于门外。妇至，婿揖妇以入，共牢而食，合卺而酳，所以合体同尊卑，以亲之也。(Kong 1999a, p. 1619)

Before analyzing the excerpt, it should be noted that "Hunyi" is not long and does not provide explanations for every aspect of the wedding ceremony. It is evident that within its limited length, it selectively discusses what the author considers to be the most important details. The excerpt above highlights the significance of the husband–wife's "*heti tongzunbei yi qin zhi*合体同尊卑以亲之 (forming one body, being of equal rank, so as to express mutual affection)", which is a crucial aspect portrayed by the wedding ceremony. It explains how the wedding ritual embodies "*heti tongzunbei yi qin zhi*".

First, it is clear that the essence of this excerpt is the statement "*heti tongzunbei yi qin zhi*". The preposition "*yi*以" indicates that "*heti tongzunbei*" is a way to express "*qinzhi*", and the establishment of a close relationship is the ultimate goal. It is important to note that in ancient China's ritual system, the affection between husband and wife was not achieved through the modern sense of free love. Bound by the principles of "*nannv youbie*男女有别 (establishing the distinction to be observed between man and woman)" (Kong 1999a, p. 1620) and "*wu mei bu jiao*无媒不交 (no interaction without a matchmaker)" (Kong 1999a, p. 1417), unmarried men and women were not allowed to have private contact, let alone intimacy. Therefore, the wedding ceremony served as the initial direct contact between husband and wife and marked the beginning of a close relationship.

Second, regarding the etiquette focused on in "Hunyi", there are multiple details aimed at fostering affection between husband and wife but not all emphasize "*heti tongzunbei*". According to the ceremony described in "Shi Hunli士婚礼" (Jia 1999, pp. 60–92), the contact between husband and wife begins on the day of the wedding reception. The groom arrives at the bride's house and after completing the ceremony in the ancestral temple with the bride's father, he escorts the bride out. At this point, the groom symbolically performs the role of charioteer by presenting a cord to assist the bride in boarding the carriage. Once the bride is seated, the groom leads the procession in three revolutions before stopping. Zheng Xuan believed that this ceremony expresses the meaning of "*qin er xia zhi*亲而下之 (demonstrating affection being inferior)" (Jia 1999, p. 79). After this symbolic ceremony, the groom and bride proceed in separate carriages. The groom arrives first and waits outside the house. When the bride arrives, the groom greets her with a bow and gives place to her as she enters. The ritual of washing upon entering the house also includes a demonstration of the affection between husband and wife. During the washing, there is a description of the "maidservant and charioteer pouring water interchangeably" (Jia 1999, p. 80). Zheng Xuan's annotations explain that "maidservant" refers to the female attendant accompanying the bride, while "charioteer" refers to the male attendant accompanying the groom. "Pouring water interchangeably" means that the maidservant pours water for the groom in the southern basin, while the charioteer pours water for the bride in the northern basin (Jia 1999, p. 80). Similar arrangements can be seen in the rituals of undressing and preparing the sleeping mat before bedtime. The maidservant attends to the groom, while the charioteer serves the bride. According to Zheng Xuan's annotations, the groom and bride express their affection for each other, but due to the "modesty and shame when first meeting as husband and wife", their affection cannot be expressed directly. Therefore, they employ the arrangement of interchanging attendants to "communicate their intentions" (Jia 1999, p. 80).

Furthermore, although many other details in the wedding ceremony are designed to express affection between husband and wife, what is emphasized and explicitly highlighted in "Hunyi" is "*heti tongzunbei*" between them. This begs the question, what is "*heti tongzunbei*"? We can understand its meaning through the symbolic significance of specific rituals explained in that chapter. The "feast sharing" and "nuptial cup sharing" rituals

play a significant role in embodying the concept of "*heti tongzunbei*". After the groom and bride enter the house, they sit at a table, and the directrix offers them food and wine three times, which are consumed after a preliminary sacrificial ritual. According to Kong Yingda孔颖达's annotations, "feast sharing" means "sharing a single dressed pig and eating together" (Kong 1999a, p. 1620). "Shi Hunli" specifies using a special pig, which is symmetrically divided into two halves, with the right half referred to as the "right plump" and the left half as the "left plump". These halves are then placed together in a tripod cauldron, known as the "shared vessel" (Jia 1999, p. 69). After the meal, husband and wife rinse their mouths with wine in a process known as "yin酳". During the third round of wine offering, a pair of "cups" (a gourd divided into two halves) are used instead of goblets. The groom and bride each hold one half of the gourd to drink the wine, hence the phrase "sharing libation with nuptial cups" (Kong 1999a, p. 1620). Both the "feast sharing" and "nuptial cup sharing" rituals emphasize the idea of the husband–wife sharing a unified entity. The unity of the shared object symbolizes the unity of husband and wife. The two originally separate individuals become united through the marriage ceremony. Additionally, this "unity" is closely associated with the concept of "*tongzunbei*". "*Zunbei*" refers to the identity and status of a person in a certain order of human relations. Defining the significance of "*heti*" through the concept of "*tongzunbei*" means that the unity of the couple is a union in an ethical sense. The husband and wife participate in the order of human relations as a whole and thus share the same status and position.

However, we know that one of the main criticisms of traditional Chinese family values in modern times is marital inequality. This criticism largely obscures the concept of the husband–wife's "unity". Of course, we must acknowledge that Confucianism does uphold the idea of the husband's superiority and the wife's subordination. While this kind of superiority and inferiority in status is also manifested as the docility of women to their husbands at the level of actual behavioral relationships. However, even in the Han Dynasty, when the "Three Cardinal Guidelines" and the "Three Obediences" of women were clearly stated, it was emphasized that "The husband is *yang*阳 and the wife is *yin*阴; *yin* and *yang* cannot act independently. In the beginning, they must not act exclusively, and in the end, they must not separate their accomplishments. There is a principle of mutual inclusion" (Su 1992, pp. 350–51). Seen in this light, the husband–wife relationship embodies the principle of *yin* and *yang*. In the relationship between *yin* and *yang*, *yin* and *yang* are both indispensable to each other and to the unity formed by the combination of the two. *Yin* and *Yang* play their own unique roles in relation to each other. And our discussion of "Hunyi" here hopes to provide a more comprehensive and complete understanding of the relationship between husband and wife on the basis of this understanding. Based on the investigation of "Hunyi", we can see that the widely criticized "inequality" between couples and the "*tongzunbei*" created by weddings define the relationship between husband and wife on two different levels. The first level is that the husband and wife as a unity enjoy the same status in the whole order of human relations; the second level is the subdivided distinction of master and subordinate in this unity.

### 3. The Origin of Generation

This kind of "unity" seen in the husband–wife relationship is highly distinctive in the family ethics and the entire order of human relations constructed by Confucianism. The bond between parent and child or among siblings is not designated as a "unity", whereas the relationship between husband and wife, despite lacking a blood tie, forms an exceptionally close-knit entity. This implies that, according to Confucianism, a family is not composed of several homogeneous kinship relationships but rather has a tightly-knit core. Such a structure also suggests that the husband–wife relationship holds unique significance within the order of human relations.

In attempting to clarify the unique significance of husband–wife relationship in human ethical order, we find that Confucianism employs different sequences in its descriptions of various family relationships across different contexts. If we temporarily overlook

the scope of these discussions and the specific details involved, we can broadly categorize the Confucian narrative order into three types.

In the first type, the sequence is "father–son", "elder–younger brother", and "husband–wife" as seen in the "Wangzhi王制" chapter of *Li Ji*:

The seven lessons (of morality) were (the duties between) father and son, elder brother and younger[3], husband and wife, ruler and minister, old and young, friend and friend, and host and guest.

七教：父子、兄弟、夫妇、君臣、长幼、朋友、宾客。 (Kong 1999a, p. 435)

The "Liyun礼运" in *Li Ji* also expands upon this:

When there is generous affection between father and son, harmony between brothers, and a happy union between husband and wife, the family is in good condition.

父子笃，兄弟睦，夫妇和，家之肥也。 (Kong 1999a, p. 711)

Regarding these three types of family relationships, their order reflects the individual's development process. When a person is born, "It is not till a child is three years old that it is allowed to leave the arms of its parents" (Xing 1999, p. 242). So the first relationship they experience is that of parent and child. As they grow older, "they all know to love their elder brothers" (Sun 1999, p. 359), and they begin to deal with their sibling relationships. When they reach adulthood, they enter into the husband–wife relationship through the wedding ceremony. This sequence follows the order of time based on the individual's development experiences.

The second category consists of a sequence of five relationships: "ruler–minister", "father–son", "husband–wife", "elder brother and younger", and "friends". This is seen in the "Zhongyong中庸" chapter of *Liji*:

The duties are those between sovereign and minister, between father and son, between husband and wife, between elder brother and younger, and those belonging to the intercourse of friends. Those five are the duties of universal obligation.

曰君臣也，父子也，夫妇也，昆弟也，朋友之交也。五者，天下之达道也。 (Kong 1999a, p. 1441)

This sequence also appears in the "Tengwengong Shang滕文公上" chapter of *Mengzi* 孟子:

This was a subject of anxious solicitude to the sage Shun, and he appointed Xie to be the Minister of Instruction, to teach the relations of humanity: how, between father and son, there should be affection; between sovereign and minister, righteousness; between husband and wife, attention to their separate functions; between old and young, a proper order; and between friends, fidelity.

圣人有忧之，使契为司徒，教以人伦：父子有亲，君臣有义，夫妇有别，长幼有叙，朋友有信。 (Sun 1999, p. 1620)

This sequence apparently follows another logic. Although they differ slightly in the listed relationships and their order, both excerpts prioritize the connection between ruler and minister and father and son. We know that Confucianism has always attempted to establish a connection in father–son and ruler–minister relationships, teaching people to serve their ruler with the same attitude and approach as they serve their fathers, which is what "Daxue大学" means when it says that "There is filial piety, therewith the sovereign should be served" (Kong 1999a, p. 1599). This essentially aims to establish a relationship between the ruler and the minister by emulating the natural and stable father–son relationship or by framing the former as an extension of the latter. This reflects a political concern, under which the link from father–son to ruler–minister forms the backbone of the entire human ethical order, making the father–son and ruler–minister relationships the primary focus. The second category emphasizes this implication by placing the father–son and ruler–minister relationships at the forefront equally.

The third type is based on the sequence of "husband–wife", "father–son", and "ruler–minister", as presented in the "Ai Gong Wen哀公问" chapter of *Liji*:

The duke said, "I venture to ask how this practice of government is to be effected?" Confucius replied, "Husband and wife have their separate functions; between father and son there should be affection; between ruler and minister there should be a strict adherence to their several parts. If these three relations be correctly discharged, all other things will follow".

公曰："敢问为政如之何？"孔子对曰："夫妇别，父子亲，君臣严。三者正，则庶物从之矣。" (Kong 1999a, p. 1375)

It also appears in "Hunyi":

From the distinction between man and woman came the righteousness between husband and wife. From that righteousness came the affection between father and son; and from that affection, the rectitude between ruler and minister.

男女有别，而后夫妇有义；夫妇有义，而后父子有亲；父子有亲，而后君臣有正。(Kong 1999a, p. 1620)

The "Xugua Zhuan序卦传" chapter of *Zhouyi*周易 also includes a description of this sequence:

Heaven and earth existing, all (material) things then got their existence. All (material) things having existence, afterwards there came male and female. From the existence of male and female there came afterwards husband and wife. From husband and wife there came father and son. From father and son there came ruler and minister. From ruler and minister there came high and low. When (the distinction of) high and low had existence, afterwards came the arrangements of propriety and righteousness.

有天地然后有万物，有万物然后有男女，有男女然后有夫妇，有夫妇然后有父子，有父子然后有君臣，有君臣然后有上下，有上下然后礼义有所错。 (Kong 1999c, pp. 336–37)

This sequence also involves the politically significant ruler–minster relationship. The background of "Ai Gong Wen" clearly indicates the political concern behind this sequence. However, in this sequence, the husband–wife relationship is no longer secondary to father–son and ruler–minister relationships; instead, it takes precedence. The excerpts from "Hunyi" and "Xugua Zhuan" provide clear clues as to why this is so by extending the "husband–wife", "father–son", and "ruler–minister" sequence. "The Meaning of the Wedding Ceremony" includes "men–women" before "husband–wife", while the "Sequence of Hexagrams" goes further by incorporating "men–women", "husband–wife", "father–son", and "ruler–minister" after "heaven and earth" and "all things". More importantly, using the "from… there came…" sentence structure, these two excerpts express that the items in the sequence are not simply parallel, but that they follow the order of time. Considering the temporal significance expressed in these texts and the generative meaning that heaven and earth usually hold for all things in traditional thought, we can confirm that in the structure of "from… came…", "came" implies a generative existence and should be understood as "emergence" or "from non-existence to existence". When it comes to traditional narratives of generation, especially the generative role of heaven and earth for all things, we often interpret generation in terms of physical or material generation. However, if it is restricted to physical entities and material things, it cannot explain the subsequent generation phase of all things. If we examine some typical statements from early generative theories, it becomes evident that the process of formation of physical entities and material things is not the sole factor involved. For example, "Zhengmin烝民" in *Shijing*诗经 states that:

Heaven, in giving birth to the multitudes of the people. To every faculty and relationship annexed its law.

天生烝民，有物有则。 (Kong 1999b, p. 1218)

According to the interpretation of Mao's "Biography", "*Zheng*, the multitude. *Wu*, things. *Ze*, laws" (Kong 1999b, p. 1218). Based on this, the first sentence says that people are born, which can be understood as the formation of the human body. The second sentence points out that heaven not only generated the human body, but also accomplished all kinds of worldly affairs common to human beings, and endowed order and laws for human beings and human affairs. Substituting this kind of generative connotation of "*You Wu You Ze*有物有则" into the interpretation of the above-mentioned "Xugua Zhuan" sequence, its significance becomes clearer. In this sequence, of course, there is the process of the generation of all things and the human body, but what permeates the entire sequence as a whole is the successive construction of order and principles. The laws that govern the generation of all things in heaven and earth are implemented in humans through the distinction between males and females. Males and females form husband–wife through the institution of marriage, and husband and wife give birth to children, forming the relationship between father and son. Then, by emulating the way of attending to one's father to serve the ruler, the relationship between ruler and minister is established. With this understanding, when we revisit the fundamental "husband–wife", "father–son", and "ruler–minister" relationships, we can see that the reason why this sequence differs from the order of "father–son", "ruler–minister", and "husband–wife" is because it does not simply emphasize the logic of political order but also incorporates an understanding of generative relationships at a more fundamental level.

From this perspective of generation, husband–wife relationships undoubtedly hold crucial significance in the construction of the entire ethical order. Setting aside the preceding stages with more cosmological implications, the order that truly embodies the attributes of human relations begins with the husband–wife relationship. Furthermore, while the progression from "husband–wife" to "father–son" and from "father–son" to "ruler–minister" reflects the natural generation of human relations, what genuinely drives this process remains the procreation accomplished by husband and wife. This is also the irreplaceable significance on which the husband–wife relationship is founded.

The above only describes the linear trajectory of human relation generation. In fact, in the broader scale of the evolution of human relations, the generation of human relations is not linear but cyclically overlapping. Husband and wife bear children, and when these children grow up, they form new husband–wife relationships with others, thus completing a generation of human relations (Meng 2022, pp. 121–23). All other human relations are gradually derived from this cyclically overlapping structure, in which the husband–wife relationship is not only the starting point of a new generation of human relations but also the transition point between generations. The Confucian school clearly recognizes this point. Therefore, in discussing the significance of marriage ceremonies, "Hunyi" specifically points out:

> The ceremony of marriage was intended to be a bond of love between two (families of different) surnames, with a view, in its retrospective character, to secure the services in the ancestral temple, and in its prospective character, to secure the continuance of the family line. Therefore the superior men set a great value upon it.
>
> 昏礼者，将合二姓之好，上以事宗庙，而下以继后世也，故君子重之。(Kong 1999a, p. 1618)

The reason why marriage ceremonies carry the significance of honoring the ancestral temple and ensuring the continuation of future generations is precise because the husband–wife relationship established through the wedding serves as the transition point between different generations.

## 4. Becoming-Human (*Chengren* 成人) and Responsibilities

Through our analysis above, we can see that the Confucian school of thought has a profound understanding of the generative structure of human relations. Confucianism has realized that reproduction and the continuation of human relations both rely on a specific

generative structure. As it is indispensable for human life, this structure determines the fundamental modality of human ethical order. Under its influence, the unity of husband and wife becomes the core node of the human ethical order, and the procreation of husband and wife drives the evolution of human relations as a whole, which is mainly based on the succession of family relationships.

In this generative structure woven by human relations, the individual is always subordinate to the human relations they participate in constructing. Each individual is tied up in various human relations and constantly participates in constructing new relations as the generative process unfolds. Some scholars have discussed this from different perspectives. For example, Henry Rosemont and Roger T. Ames focused on the ethical roles that individuals have in various human relations, regarding Confucian ethics as "role ethics" (Rosemont and Ames 2020, p. 4). From the Confucian perspective, the various ethical roles that people assume are not abstract "names". Each "name" or role points to corresponding responsibilities. The "Guanyi冠义" chapter of *Liji* emphasizes the ethical roles that individuals undertake and their corresponding responsibilities when interpreting the meaning of "becoming-human" in *Guanli*冠礼 (the rite of capping):

> Treating him (now) as becoming-human, they would require from him all the observances of becoming-human. Doing so, they would require from him the performance of all the duties of a son, a younger brother, a minister, and a junior. But when these four duties or services were required from him, was it not right that the ceremony by which he was placed in such a position should be considered important?
>
> 成人之者，将责成人礼焉也。责成人礼焉者，将责为人子、为人弟、为人臣、为人少者之礼行焉。将责四者之行于人，其礼可不重与？(Kong 1999a, p. 1615)

We would like to emphasize that, in the exposition of "Guanyi", the individual's "becoming-human (becoming a grown man)" is presented through *chengren li*成人礼 (observances of becoming-human). First and foremost, "becoming-human" involves "*ze chengren li*责成人礼". The word "*ze*责(require)" is repeatedly used here, implying a sense of obligation or requirement that aligns with the normative meaning of rituals. "*ze chengren li*" refers to acting in accordance with the requirements and standards of "*chengren li*". Specifically, it is divided into the rites of being a son, a younger brother, a minister, and a junior. This means that the expectations of becoming-human are distributed among these ethical roles of being a son, a younger brother, a minister, and a junior. Meeting the requirements of becoming-human entails assuming these ethical roles and their corresponding responsibilities in accordance with the rituals. From this perspective, Confucianism does not overly emphasize individual rights. Its understanding of the individual's state of existence and ethical duties clearly differs from the modern notion of the individual and becomes one of the important characteristics of Confucian ethical thought.

After clarifying this characteristic of Confucian thought, we must still note that the understanding of ethical roles and individuals' responsibilities should not be limited to a static examination of each ethical relationship or role. The roles and responsibilities that an individual bears continually accumulate in the generation of real human ethical order. Therefore, a more in-depth investigation of relevant issues requires placing the individual within the holistic ethical perspective of Confucianism—that is, to examine them within a generative structure centered on husband–wife relationships. Next, we will examine how individuals participate in the formation of various ethical relationships and assume the corresponding responsibilities by tracing their life trajectories as a guiding thread within Confucian discourse.

As mentioned above, the union of husband and wife marks the beginning of a new generation of human relations and serves as a transition point between generations, which is where our examination of the individual begins. Bred by husband and wife, an individual comes into existence, forming a new parent–child relationship; this is expressed in the phrase "from husband and wife there came father and son" (Kong 1999c, pp. 336–37). The newborn individual begins to forge various relationships with others, albeit within

an expanding scope. In the initial three years, the infant remains primarily in the care of their parents, focusing on the parents. Later, they interact more with siblings and extended family members before gradually expanding their connections beyond the household. The issue that needs to be examined here is whether the individual's involvement in the relationships implies the completion of a specific ethical relationship. In other words, has the individual already assumed the corresponding responsibilities of their ethical roles within a particular relationship? By carefully examining the explanations in "Hunyi" and "Xugua Zhuan" referenced earlier, a subtle difference can be observed. The "Xugua Zhuan" only states that "from husband and wife there came father and son" (Kong 1999c, pp. 336–37), whereas "Hunyi" emphasizes that "from that righteousness (between husband and wife) came the affection between father and son" (Kong 1999a, p. 1620). Achieving "righteousness" and "affection" means going beyond mere participation and the construction of a relationship; it also involves maintaining the relationship in an appropriate state. This involves a developing process from initiating a relationship to reaching a proper state. This deeper understanding is further elucidated through the Confucian interpretation of "Guanli". According to the "Neize内则" chapter of *Liji*, "At twenty, he was Capped" (Kong 1999a, p. 869), which signifies the transition of an individual from the immaturity of childhood to the responsibilities of becoming-human. The excerpt from "Guanyi" listed above provides a clear explanation for this. However, it is important to note that "Guanyi" is attached to a specific caveat when talking about the individual being required to follow all the observances of becoming-human, which is "*jiangze*将责" meaning that the individual "will be required" to perform the observances of becoming-human. This indicates that the "becoming-human" required by Guanli is not an achievement in the sense of completion but only the beginning of a person's genuine assumption of ethical responsibilities.

Based on these details from "Hunyi" and "Guanyi", an individual's experience of ethical relationships can be divided into two stages by Guanli. The first stage spans from birth to the age of 20 (*ruoguan*弱冠). During this stage, the individual is in various ethical relationships but cannot assume ethical responsibilities due to their young age. Instead, they learn and experience the appropriate behaviors of various ethical roles. The second stage begins after the *Guanli*, during which the individual is expected to assume various ethical responsibilities. Of course, the rites of being a son, a younger brother, a minister, and a junior mentioned in "Guanyi" are only a few limited ethical roles that individuals may have in their early adulthood. As individuals grow up, especially after marriage, which opens up another new generation process of human relations, the ethical relationships that they construct and the ethical roles that they bear will further expand. In addition to being a husband or wife in the husband–wife relationship, individuals also become parents, elders, and superiors in new ethical relationships. With the accumulation of human relations and ethical roles, the ethical situation faced by the individual becomes increasingly complex. The assumption of ethical roles and corresponding responsibilities is always accompanied by new problems and challenges. Therefore, people need to continuously learn and practice ethical relationships. Human relations as a whole are in constant generation and evolution. In this sense, the individual's adaptation to ethical relationships, as well as the learning and refinement associated with these relationships, is infinite.

## 5. Summary

In this paper, we have revealed a generative structure of human relations in Confucianism that is centered on the husband–wife relationship. This relationship drives the continuous evolution and continuation of human relations. Meanwhile, it is also evident that the generation of ethical relationships by husband and wife is not instantaneous. The true achievement of ethical relationships unfolds alongside the individual's life trajectory. Each individual assumes various ethical roles and corresponding responsibilities in the entanglement of ethical relationships. As ethical relationships continue to evolve, individuals continuously adjust their roles in relationships to better assume their ethical responsibilities and maintain their human relations in an appropriate and ritual state.

The Confucian understanding of ethical order and its generative structure also determines that its understanding of the individual must be viewed from the perspective of ethical relationships. The primary significance of the individual is not defined by individual rights but rather by the roles and corresponding responsibilities assumed within various human relations.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## Notes

[1] Confucianism places a strong emphasis on the filial affection between parents and children, considering it as the fundamental moral principle and the basis of the ritual system. See "filial affection for parents is the working of benevolence"(Sun 1999, p. 359). Also, see "benevolence is the characteristic element of humanity, and the great exercise of it is in loving relatives. Righteousness is the accordance of actions with what is right, and the great exercise of it is in honoring the worthy. The decreasing measures of the love due to relatives, and the steps in the honor due to the worthy, are produced by the principle of propriety" (Kong 1999a, p. 1440).

[2] The English translations of Confucian literature cited in this paper are all sourced from the Chinese Text Project (https://ctext.org/) accessed on 1 June 2023. We make modifications to the translation where necessary.

[3] Confucianism generally regards the father–son and brotherhood relationships as representative of broader family relationships and considers them to hold greater significance compared to other relationships.

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# The Tripartite Dimensions of "Ren 人" (Human Beings) in Pre-Qin Confucianism in Terms of "Li 礼" (Ritual)

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**Abstract:** This study delves into the Pre-Qin Confucian understanding of "ren 人" (human beings), focusing on the tripartite dimensions of "shen 身" (body), "qing 情" (sentiment), and "xin 心" (mind) as viewed through the lens of "li 礼" (ritual). By analyzing the works of Confucius, Mencius, Xunzi, and other significant early texts, we unravel how these early Confucian philosophers reconceptualized human beings within the framework of "li 礼" (ritual). In doing so, they presented a novel perspective on the human experience that emphasized the interconnectedness of these three dimensions, transforming the way people thought about themselves and their place in the world. This research illuminates the unique contributions of Pre-Qin Confucianism to the understanding of human beings and provides valuable insights into the philosophical breakthroughs of this period in Chinese thought. Furthermore, this understanding of human beings persisted throughout the subsequent imperial history of China.

**Keywords:** Pre-Qin Confucianism; human beings; li 礼 (ritual)

## 1. Introduction

Throughout the history of human civilization, the exploration of existential questions such as "what is a human?" and "who am I?" has never ceased. The philosophical responses to these inquiries demonstrate certain similarities across time periods and regions. In an era known as the "philosophical breakthrough" and the "axial age," the philosophical perspectives and interpretations of humanity found in regions such as ancient Greece, Israel, and India diverge from those in early China, particularly in Confucianism. So, what is the Confucian response to these questions? This article primarily addresses this topic. We believe that the most prominent and influential Chinese conception of "ren 人" (human beings) lies in the concept of "li 礼" (ritual) as advocated by early Confucianism.

Before delving deeper into our discussion, it is necessary to elaborate on why we should pay attention to this particular issue. Upon reviewing literature such as Munro's *The Concept of Man in Early China* and Xu Fuguan's 徐复观 (1903–1982) *A History of Chinese Human Nature Theory*, it becomes evident that contemporary scholars tend to focus more on aspects such as human values, morality, spiritual realms, and abstract concepts within Confucian thought. Indeed, this is a vital aspect of the concept of "human being" that emerges from the breakthrough era of philosophy. Yet, an exclusive emphasis on these dimensions can lead to an overly simplified and flattened interpretation of "ren 人" (human being) from the Pre-Qin Confucian perspective, even though it might sound captivating to perceive the essence of "ren 人" as "moral," or to attribute profound abstract ideas to "ren 人" (human being). In truth, the "human being" in the eyes of early Confucianism is much more vibrant and multifaceted. The question then arises, how do we depict this vivid "Man" in words, or which key Confucian concept aligns most closely with their understanding of "human being"?

This brings us to the second query we need to address: Why do we place an emphasis on "li 礼" (ritual) here, considering it as the pre-Qin Confucian understanding of "ren 人"

(human being)? Looking back at a wealth of crucial texts, many scholars adopt a macroscopic view in understanding "li 礼", perceiving Confucian "li 礼" (ritual) as a synonym for social order and norms[1]. As applied to the individual, it becomes an "object" for the "ren 人" (human being)—a kind of external standard, system, or even means—resembling Xin Guanglai's 信广来 instrumentalist interpretation of "li 礼" (ritual). However, to be frank, this understanding can easily invoke negative associations with "constraint, control, asceticism, hierarchy, and authority" (Z. Wang 2007, pp. 5–6), creating an impression of li 礼 as oppressive or suppressive to human nature[2]. On the other hand, viewing "li 礼" solely as an external norm or tool to mold "human being" into a moral subject risks reducing it to a limited interpretation. As Schwartz points out, "Li is not merely a set of formal rituals; it also embodies the enduring elements of the universal way".

Fortunately, many scholars have noted this "injustice" in the interpretation of "li 礼". They strive to "extract" "li 礼" from these understandings confined to specific rituals or external norms, attempting to restore its close relationship with human life and its growth process. For instance, Du Weiming 杜维明 stated, "li 礼 is the process of humanization" (Du 2002, pp. 25–26), expressing the outward display of humans in a specific environment. Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光 proposed that we should not simplify our understanding of "li 礼", but instead focus on its source of rationality, as "li 礼" is the natural manifestation of human emotions and heavenly law (Ge 2013, pp. 52–53). Sterckx directly observed in Mencius' works that "li 礼" forms an integral part of a person's character. Roger T. Ames focuses on the interpretation of "li as body" found in ancient texts, interpreting "li 礼" as a "embodied living" (Ames 2011, p. 109). He asserted that in Confucian thought, a person's way of life is a specific form of behavioral manifestation, which is precisely defined as "li 礼" (Ames 2011, p. 113). This reminds us of the remarkable work conducted by Fingarette in interpreting early Confucian thought. He unambiguously asserts that the Analects' text (Lunyu 论语) supports and enriches our understanding of human as being, at its core, a ceremonial being.

We follow in the footsteps of Fingarette and many other scholars both at home and abroad, affirming that for early Confucianism, humans are considered ceremonial beings. This groundbreaking understanding and recognition of "human" is a result of the Confucian tradition since Confucius himself, which built upon the foundations of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties' civilizations. In contrast to the widespread belief that human existence and its justification (as a ceremonial being) primarily relied on external religious forces such as Heaven or gods during the three dynasties and earlier, the advent of the philosophical breakthrough era saw Confucius propose the "the root of ritual" (lizhiben 礼之本), signifying the shift in understanding "humans" from a focus on heavenly principles to an emphasis on the internal aspects of human life (B. Wang 2001, p. 68). For early Confucians, the manner and meaning of human existence were no longer tied to external divine destinies or related to religion; rather, they were deeply rooted in the life of the "human being" himself.

So, what exactly is this life and the levels within it? It is evident that many scholars have noticed the tendency of pre-Qin Confucians to explain "Man" through "Li", continuously emphasizing important dimensions such as life, process, and context. However, more detailed aspects have not been fully developed and discussed. The issues that this paper seeks to clarify and supplement include the following: When early Confucians encountered a living person, under what circumstances would they consider this individual a "human," what form of life does this denote, what characteristics does their acknowledged "human" possess, and what unique aspects of Chinese philosophy does this interpretation and construction of "human" reflect? We argue that the so-called "human" in early Confucianism is a person who exists ceremonially (man as a ceremonial being), and that their entire being, from the inside out, including their physical form, sentiments, and mind, manifests li 礼 (ritual).

## 2. The Ritual Bodily Dimension of Ren: Human Physical Existence from a Confucian Perspective

By examining ancient literature regarding the concepts of "human" and li 礼 (ritual), we can easily find that many texts, such as Yili 仪礼 (the Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial) and Liji 礼记 (the Book of Rites), contain a wealth of dynamic scenes. These works primarily detail the specific physical actions and behaviors required of individuals in various life situations. Furthermore, the Analects serves as a collection of the sayings and deeds of Confucius and his disciples. In more thought-focused texts such as "Mencius" and "Xunzi," there is a substantial emphasis on the importance of adhering to external physical requirements, which comprise a significant portion of their content. This is the pre-Qin Confucians' most direct portrayal of "human": Humans are directly present in the world, real, tangible, public, and observable. This presence, which can be directly seen by the naked eye, encompasses specific physical postures, movements, and actions, all referred to as "li 礼". In other words, only when an individual's shen 身 (body) first manifests or acts in accordance with "li 礼" are they considered a "ren 人" (human being) rather than merely an animal.

Let us delve into a detailed analysis using an excerpt from The Analects of Confucius in the chapter "Yan Yuan 颜渊":

Yan Yuan asked about humaneness. The Master said, to master the self and return to ritual is to be humane. For one day master the self and return to ritual, and the whole world will become humane. Being humane proceeds from you yourself. How could it proceed from others?

Yan Yuan said, May I ask how to go about this?

The Master said, if it is contrary to ritual (li 礼), don't look at it. If it is contrary to ritual, don't listen to it. If it is contrary to ritual, don't utter it. If it is contrary to ritual, don't do it.

Yan Yuan said, lacking in cleverness though I am, I would like, if I may, to honor these words. (Burton 2007, p. 80)[3]

In this chapter, Confucius' teaching of "mastering oneself and returning to ritual" fundamentally entails the transformation of an individual from a non-ceremonial being to a ceremonial being, thereby establishing a nexus between the body and li 礼. Confucius' specific method for achieving this metamorphosis involves refraining from hearing, seeing, speaking, or participating in activities that contravene li 礼. These four aspects correspond to human organs: Eyes, ears, mouth, hands, and feet. Within this context, the human body is further delineated into distinct physiological organs or senses, such as ears, eyes, nose, and mouth. This distinction is also present in other Confucian texts. For instance, in the "Book of Rites-Record of Music," it states "Do not permit indolence and evil to reside in your body; let your ears, eyes, nose, and mouth, as well as your mind, all act in accordance with what is right and proper." In "Mencius-Jinxin II," it reads "The mouth desires flavors, the eye beauty, the ear sounds, the nose fragrances, and the four limbs ease and comfort. These are the natural tendencies". Moreover, the Guodian bamboo slips mention "the six faculties: ears, eyes, nose, mouth, hands, and feet." However, in Confucianism, these bodily organs and their functions must be manifested through specific actions within social life and practice, serving as expressions of "ritual" (li 礼). Without adhering to these rituals, people's limbs will be uncertain of their proper placement, their ears and eyes will be unsure about what to listen to or watch, and they will lack awareness of the appropriate etiquette for greetings and interactions. In other words, a person's physical presence must embody "ritual" (li 礼) in order to be considered genuinely "human being" (ren 人)[4].

In the "Xiang Dang 乡党" chapter of the Analects, the text describes Confucius's physical presence and specific behaviors in various ritual scenarios:

1. In the local community, Confucius was submissive and seemed to be inarticulate. In the ancestral temple and at court, though fluent, he did not speak lightly.

2. At court, when speaking with Counsellors of lower rank he was affable; when speaking with Counsellors of upper rank, he was frank though respectful. In the presence of his lord, his bearing, though respectful, was composed.

4. On going through the outer gates to his lord's court, he drew himself in, as though the entrance was too small to admit him.

When he stood, he did not occupy the centre of the gateway;

when he walked, he did not step on the threshold.

When he went past the station of his lord, his face took on a serious expression, his step became brisk, and his words seemed more laconic.

When he lifted the hem of his robe to ascend the hall, he drew himself in, stopped inhaling as if he had no need to breathe. (Lau 1979, p. 101)

Chinese Song Dynasty scholar Zhu Xi 朱熹 had a profound understanding of Confucius, believing that the descriptions of Confucius' "physical movements, demeanor, and expressions" all adhered to li 礼 (ritual propriety). In fact, not only did Confucius emphasize the importance of ceremonial expression in one's body, but both Mencius and Xunzi also advocated that people's "facial expressions, posture, and limb movements" should externally manifest in a manner consistent with li 礼 (ritual). This aligns with Zhu Xi's 朱熹 assertion that "a person's physical movements must exhibit the 'form' of ritual", suggesting that a "human" possesses a ceremonial body.

This perspective could easily lead to the impression that li 礼 (ritual) and ren 人 (human) are seen from an instrumental viewpoint, as if li 礼 (ritual) were a tool for disciplining individuals and the ren 人 (human) or shen 身 (body) were a subordinate entity subjected to training, governance, and construction. These two would then present a binary subject–object relationship. However, we would like to clarify that in Confucian thought, li 礼 (ritual) is not an object that exists in opposition to people. In fact, for Confucians, li 礼 (ritual) serves as an interpretation of ren 人 (human being) or "existence." Humans are considered ceremonial beings, and for a person to be deemed "human," their physical form must first exist in accordance with li 礼 (ritual).

In *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred*, Fingarette directly compares the human body to a holy vessel, drawing upon a passage from the "Analects, Gong Zhi Chang 公治长":

Tzu-Kung asked: "What would you say about me as a person?"

The Master said: "You are a utensil."

"What sort of utensil?"

"A sacrificial vase of jade."

Fingarette, based on this text, explained the complex relationship between li 礼 (ritual) and "man": "The mere individual is a bauble, malleable and breakable, a utensil transformed into the resplendent and holy as it serves in the ceremony of life." (Fingarette 1972, p. 78) The dignity of a person is affirmed in their ritual behavior, as "man at his best is justified when we see that his best is a life of holy ceremony rather than of appetite and mere animal existence." (Fingarette 1972, p. 77) In this context, I follow Fingarette's interpretation, considering that early Confucianism views humans as ceremonial beings. A person is truly man only when their body manifests the form of li 礼 (ritual). Of course, Confucian understanding of ren人 (humans) and li 礼 (ritual) goes beyond just external form.

### 3. The Ritual Sentiment Dimension of Ren: Human Sentimental Existence from a Confucian Perspective

In early Confucianism, emphasis is placed on the direct representation and expression of human physicality. The subsequent question we must explore is why a "person" should act in such a manner? What significance and value do external bodily manifestations hold? The Confucian scholars must offer a solid foundation and persuasive reasoning for these assertions. This leads us to the second aspect of Confucian discussion concerning ren 人

(human being) and li 礼 (ritual): qing 情 (sentiments)[5]. Sentiments are directly connected to the human body and encompass various levels and components.

Firstly, the human body is divided into specific sensory organs, which inherently possess desires for external objects. As Xunzi states, Human desires are such that the eye desires to be filled with beauty, the ear with sounds, the mouth with flavors, the nose with smells, and the mind with ease and satisfaction. These five desires are inescapable in the human condition (Xunzi-Wanga 王霸). According to Xunzi, once a person has a physical body, they naturally possess desires and emotions such as love and hate, joy and anger, and sorrow and pleasures. Likewise, Mencius also discussed the specific sensory desires of taste, sight, hearing, and smell in humans. He did not actually deny these innate biological instincts and desires. For instance, he stated, "Physical appearance and complexion are things given by nature" (Mencius-Jinxin I 尽心上) and "Appreciation of beauty is a universal human desire" (Mencius-Wangzhang I 万章上) This represents the initial understanding of "sentiment" by pre-Qin Confucian scholars, focusing on physiological needs and desires.

The second dimension of human sentiment extends beyond mere desires. In pre-Qin literature, "sentiment" encompasses the "joy, anger, sorrow, fear, love, hatred, and desire" mentioned in the Book of Rites (Liji 礼记), the "love, hate, joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure" described by Xunzi, and the "grief, joy, worry, happiness, resentment, and sorrow" mentioned in Nature Derives from Mandate (Xing Zi Ming Chu 性自命出), among others. These sentiments not only include people's instinctive natural desires but also embrace moral emotions that arise from within (such as love for family members and respect for others) (Z. Wang 2011, p. 191). Pre-Qin Confucians did not advocate for "eradicating emotions and desires." Instead, they emphasized the importance of expressing one's desires and emotions in interactions with others. To illustrate the physical expression of human "desires" and "moral emotions," we can examine the account of a family member's passing as recorded in the Book of Rites (Liji 礼记).

"The distress of the heart, the painful sense of the disease, and the sorrowful sinking of the spirits, all accumulating in the breast, made it necessary to bare the breast and leap wildly, so as to move the bodily frame and compose the mind, and to allow the troubled current of the breath to subside. A woman ought not to bare her breast, and therefore she beats on her chest, and leaps with her legs apart, going on in this way as if she would break down a wall. Such is the expression of the extreme of sorrow and painful feeling." (Liji 礼记-Wensang 问丧)

As recorded in the Book of Rites (Liji 礼记), when people confront the death of a loved one, they need to engage in specific physical actions due to their overwhelming sorrow. In other words, human emotions require a release through tangible physical behaviors and expressions. Confucianism, in this context, interprets and transforms individuals' outward physical actions into representations and outlets for their inner emotional states.

Certainly, Confucianism does not advocate for a world where everyone's emotions and desires are unrestrainedly displayed. They firmly believe that unbridled indulgence in emotions and desires can only bring about tremendous disasters, such as the strong oppressing the weak, the majority suppressing the minority, the clever deceiving the honest, the brave taking advantage of the timid, the sick not receiving care, and vulnerable groups such as the elderly and orphans not receiving proper support. Therefore, Confucianism emphasizes that the expression of human sentiments should be appropriate and balanced. As Liji 礼记-Zhongyong 中庸 states, "When joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure have not yet arisen, it is called the Mean. When they arise to their appropriate levels, it is called Harmony." Here, expressing emotions "to their appropriate levels" implies adhering to "rites" (li 礼). For instance, in funeral rites, Confucianism posits that if pounding one's chest and leaping are methods to convey grief, then the frequency of these actions should be restrained and controlled to express an appropriate level of sorrow. In this context, such measured emotional expression can be referred to as "li 礼".

According to Liji 礼记-Wensang 问丧, li 礼 do not descend from the heavens, nor do they arbitrarily spring from the earth. Instead, they represent the temperate expression of people's natural sentiments, encompassing both desires and emotions. When these sentiments are conveyed through li 礼 (ritual), they assume a moral quality. The Pre-Qin Confucian interpretation and reasoning of "human" presents a particular logic: In the eyes of Confucianism, a "person" should not only display external physical expressions but also communicate genuine internal emotions. The moderate expression of sentiments (and their manifestations) can be considered as li 礼 (ritual). In essence, Confucianism views a person as a ceremonial being with ceremonial sentiments.

## 4. The Ritual Mental Dimension of Ren: Human Mental Existence from a Confucian Perspective

However, several questions arise: With innumerable situations in the world, how can people ensure that their actions are always appropriate? What makes one's definition of appropriateness valid? Who determines what is appropriate? Where does the rationale for early Confucians' belief in the proper way of living lie? Why must people exist in such a manner? In response to these questions, Confucians provide philosophical justifications. They believe that humans have the capacity to exercise restraint when expressing emotions and to perform suitable, appropriate actions in various life situations, ensuring harmony among all things. This ability to regulate oneself (jie 节) and exhibit appropriate behavior (yi 义) is attributed to the "mind" (xin 心). As such, the early Chinese Confucian understanding of "human" does not stop at sentiment. Their ideal "human" must be able to adapt and exercise self-restraint (jie节) in their physical and emotional expressions, possessing what can be called a ceremonial xin 心 (mind).

From the Confucian perspective, humans possess a mind that exerts a dominant and controlling influence over their bodies. As stated in Guodian Bamboo Slips Five Elements Text (Wuxing 五行):

"The ears, eyes, nose, mouth, hands, and feet are all servants of the mind. When the mind says 'yes,' none dare to refuse; when it says 'agree,' none dare to disagree; when it says 'advance,' none dare not to advance; when it says 'retreat,' none dare not to retreat; when it says 'deep,' none dare not to go deep; when it says 'shallow,' none dare not to be shallow."

Xunzi's "Uncovering the Hidden" (Jiebi 解蔽) chapter also claims that "xin 心 (mind) is the sovereign of the body and the master of spiritual clarity." "In these contexts, the "mind" can be initially understood as a unique human capacity for "rationality and discernment."

In Pre-Qin Confucianism, the concept of xin 心 (mind) encompasses not only pure rational thinking but also a clear moral orientation, often referred to as "moral virtues." These moral virtues, however, are categorized differently by various Confucian scholars. For instance, Mencius identifies four components of the "mind": ren 仁 (benevolence), yi 义 (righteousness), li 礼 (ritual), and zhi 智 (wisdom). In contrast, Guodian Bamboo Slips Five Elements Text (Wuxing 五行) divides the xin 心 (mind) into five components: ren 仁 (benevolence), yi 义 (righteousness), li 礼 (ritual), and zhi 智 (wisdom), and sheng 圣 (sageliness). Despite the classification differences, li 礼 is generally regarded as a central aspect of the human "mind" (xin 心) in Pre-Qin Confucian thought, representing a unique human "moral rational capacity."

This moral rational capacity refers to the ability to exercise self-restraint and adaptability in various situations. For example, Mencius posits that "the moral virtue of yielding marks the inception of propriety" (cirang zhixin lizhiduanye 辞让之心, 礼之端也), and "a respectful mind constitutes the essence of ritual" (gongjing zhixin liye 恭敬之心，礼也). In this context, "yielding and respect" (cirang, gongjing 辞让 恭敬) symbolize a rational capacity to modulate one's emotions and behavior when engaging with others and navigating the world. Simultaneously, this capacity is also moral in nature, as demonstrated by Liji 礼记-Sangfusizhi 丧服四制 which unequivocally states that "self-restraint is the essence of

ritual" (jiezhe liye 节者礼也). From a Confucian standpoint, individuals should express their emotions with discretion, striking a balance between excess and insufficiency while ensuring appropriateness and suitability. The ability of individuals to exhibit "restraint" and "regulation" (jie 节) when manifesting their inner emotions through physical actions, such as dance and jumping, is attributed to the presence of a ceremonial mind.

Understanding the human mind in terms of morality (or li 礼 ritual) raises the question of whether morality (li 礼) is innate or acquired. In the Pre-Qin Confucian school represented by Mencius, it is believed that humans possess a "ceremonial mind" (xin 心), characterized by the innate rational capacity for self-restraint and adaptation. However, for Xunzi, the "mind" (xin 心) primarily represents the cognitive and practical ability to understand and apply li 礼 (ritual). According to Xunzi, humans can recognize becoming a ceremonial being as the optimal choice precisely because they possess this rational capacity (i.e., the "mind" xin 心).

These contrasting perspectives within Confucianism seek to explain why humans exist in such a unique way. Regardless, the focus of this paper is not on whether the inclination for li 礼 in the mind (xin 心) is innate or acquired. For Confucians, the human mind must embody "li 礼", whether innate or acquired. On one hand, possessing a mind of "li 礼" enables individuals to become moral agents or ceremonial beings. On the other hand, a ceremonial mind refers to a state in which morality is manifested within one's psyche, reflecting their inner spiritual experiences and mental states.

It must be emphasized that the human mind (xin 心) discussed here is not the same as the "mind" within the dualistic framework of mind–body thought that has persisted in the West since Descartes. In fact, Fingarette has made an effort to abandon this interpretive framework while arguing that Confucians see humans as ceremonial beings. He continually highlights situational and dynamic behaviors, devoting substantial attention to demonstrating that Confucius' concept of li 礼 (ritual) pertains to behavior. Fingarette even introduces the concept of "The Locus of the Personal" to argue that, for Confucius, "it is action and public circumstances that are fundamental, not esoteric doctrine or subjective states."

However, this effort might be somewhat radical. Schwartz has rebutted Fingarette's assertion, stating:

> "The question here is not whether Confucius conceived of the mind-body problem in any dualistic Western way, but whether he attributes emotions, virtues, intentions, and attitudes to living individuals or somehow sees these mental phenomena as embedded only in concrete acts of li and whether he believes that the 'heart,' with all its capacities, has an autonomous, dynamic life of its own apart from specific responses to specific situations." (Schwartz 1985, p. 75)

Indeed, by persistently emphasizing the "outer," "public," "objective," and "observable" (Fingarette 1972, p. 53) characteristics of li 礼 (ritual) and humans, Fingarette inadvertently overlooks the equally present "mind" (xin 心) behind the visible world of ritual.

This article posits that the early Chinese Confucian concept of the "mind" (xin 心) is not solely about "cogito" or a kind of introverted mental cultivation, but rather a "direct response of the heart" (Tang 2016, p. 64). when one interacts with external matters and objects, which must be directly manifested in the body. This is a phenomenon of "psychosomatic merge "(shenxin ronghe 身心融合) (Ames 2006, p. 491). According to Mencius, "What is inherent in the noble person is ren 仁 (benevolence), yi 义 (righteousness), li 礼 (ritual), and zhi 智 (wisdom), rooted in the heart. Their life and development are seen in the face, appear on the back, and show themselves in the movements of the four limbs. The four limbs, without speaking, show it by their movements." In more contemporary terms, it could be said that for Pre-Qin Confucians, the mind must be "visualized" or made manifest in a tangible manner.

For early Confucians, people possess a ceremonial mind, which serves as the foundation for being a ceremonial being: First, this ceremonial mind can be directly and simultaneously manifested in one's bodily posture and behavior; second, we should also pay

attention to the guiding role of the rational dimension of the mind on sentiments and the body, as it is under the influence of the ceremonial mind that one can become a "ceremonial being," or a moral existence. If the understanding of "human being" before Confucius was still at the level of cosmological order, then, in the face of an ever-changing world, pre-Qin Confucians turned their focus to something more enduring than the cosmos: The "autonomous personality" (Voegelin 2001, p. 100) was discovered. Within the human mind (xin 心), Confucians found the basis and meaning of human existence.

## 5. Conclusions

From this discussion, it is clear that early Confucians reinterpreted and redefined ren 人 (human beings) through the lens of li 礼 (ritual). In their view, a genuine ren 人 (human being) must manifest the state of li 礼 (ritual) in their body, sentiment, and mind. As Confucians elucidated the nature of human in this manner, they also furnished reasons for why humans exist as they do. Whether it is Mencius' argument that this "represents the inherent nature of human life" (B. Wang 2023, p. 16) or Xunzi's claim that people transform into ceremonial beings based on rational choices, early Confucians did not rely on external forces, such as heaven or gods. Instead, they chose to employ their own rationality to dispel fears or illusions about the world (Ge 2013, p. 66), living and existing with courage and trust in their own human power. In summary, by concentrating on the self, early Confucians underscored the significance of human autonomy and agency, ultimately defining a true human as a ceremonial being with a harmonious fusion of body, sentiment, and mind. This philosophical breakthrough in the Chinese context presents a unique perspective on the concept of human beings. This is precisely what this paper aims to argue and present: The Tripartite Dimensions of ren 人 (human beings) in Pre-Qin Confucianism in terms of li 礼 (ritual).

By this stage, the Confucian construct of "human being," as defined prior to the Qin Dynasty, had effectively "triumphed" over its various rivals including but not limited to Daoism, Mohism, and Legalism. As we ventured into the Imperial Era, this understanding of "human being" as a ceremonial being exhibited remarkable resilience and vitality. For nearly two millennia, from the Qin and Han Dynasties through to the Qing Dynasty, this concept permeated the social fabric, evolving into a widespread self-perception and frame of reference for the Chinese populace. It morphed into a universal notion, persistently relevant despite challenges and critiques. Even though this concept was repeatedly tested and scrutinized, it consistently re-emerged victorious, its influence never once interrupted.

## Notes

[1]  For instance, Yu Yingshi 余英时 accentuates the significance of "li 礼", contending that the ritual traditions of the three dynasties, or "li 礼", furnished a direct historical and cultural backdrop for China's axial breakthrough. (Yu 2014, p. 16). Zheng Kai 郑开 also conducted remarkable research in this field, highlighting the political dimension of "li 礼" (see Zheng 2009). It should be underscored that this paper's contemplation and interpretation of "li 礼" are founded on previous research. Although this paper chiefly confines "li 礼" to the dimension of the individual, it nonetheless recognizes "li 礼" as an expression of order.

[2]  Similarly, it should be clarified that we do not deny the dimension of "li 礼" as a tool for moral education. This perspective of "li 礼" is very evident in the philosophy of Xunzi. For instance, consider Roel Sterckx's interpretation of Xunzi's concept of "li 礼", wherein he suggests that Xunzi turned "li 礼" into a stringent rulebook that allows for the functioning of society. However, he cautiously referred to "li 礼" in Xunzi's philosophy as "second nature." (Sterckx 2022, pp. 204–5).

3  This section is translated from Burton (see Burton 2007). For all the first-hand materials in this study, the translations draw on modern Chinese and existing English versions, thoughtfully tailored or reinterpreted based on the demands of the text, context, and content.

4  However, for Daoist scholars, they did not perceive "human being" as a ceremonial being. In Zhuangzi's writings, many characters were presented with physical disabilities; despite their physical deficiencies, these individuals were depicted as having a nobler inner spiritual state. The Daoists even posited that only when humans cease using their senses can they discover the light within (see Munro 1969).

5  The Chinese character "qing 情" possesses multiple connotations within pre-Qin philosophical texts. It can denote innate natural desires inherent to human beings, signify emotional reactions at a psychological and physiological level, describe subjective feelings towards certain matters or individuals, or convey affection towards others. In this discussion, we will initially translate "qing 情" into English using the term "sentiment," bearing the broadest sense. However, throughout the ensuing discourse, we will adapt our choice of vocabulary to the most appropriate term that aligns with the context under consideration.

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*Article*

# Towards Others: Confucian Shu's (Due Consideration) Three Types of Gongfu (Practice)

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**Abstract:** The Confucian philosophy of the Dao of due consideration 恕 (*shu*) and of "Do not impose upon others what you yourself do not desire" 己所不欲，勿施於人 undoubtedly involves the question of "others" and addresses the spiritual pursuit of individual equality, mutual agreement, and communality. Confucianism's theory of practice 工夫 (*gongfu*), while emphasizing the establishment and success of oneself, also requires the ability to make others established and successful. There are basically three paths for the virtuous subject to reach others: "taking what is near at hand as an analogy" 能近取譬 (*neng jin qu pi*), the "measure" 度 (*duo*) of considering other people's emotions on the basis of one's own emotions 將心比心 (*jiang xin bi xin*), and putting oneself in the place of others 推己及人 (*tui ji ji ren*). The present study, drawing on the long commentarial tradition, will fully explicate them as *gongfu*, that is, as concrete processes of moral practice, revealing the three paths of the Dao of due consideration from self to others, and interpreting them in relation to the dimension of the other in Confucian ethical philosophy. All three are unified and highly practical and are effective means of realizing Confucian benevolence 仁 (*ren*). They do not exist in a sequential ascending relationship. Through diligent moral practice, people can "help others to take their stand" 立人 (*liren*) and "help others to realize themselves" 達人 (*daren*) by following any one of the three types of *gongfu*.

**Keywords:** Confucianism; *gongfu* of the Dao of due consideration 恕道工夫; others; taking what is near at hand as an analogy; considering other people's feelings by one's own feelings; putting oneself in the place of others

## 1. Introdcution

In the Confucian context, "due consideration" 恕 (*shu*) mainly refers to understanding the other from one's own inner feelings in order to achieve consistency with them. As for the other dimension of due consideration, many scholars have discussed it usefully in recent years. Jiang Juyuan has pointed out that the thought of due consideration by *Ercheng* 二程 [the Cheng brothers] started from self-fulfillment 成己 (*chengji*), with the goal of helping others to achieve, the ideal of helping the world 兼濟天下 (*jian ji tianxia*), and the method of "giving justice to others" 公理施之於人 (*gongli shi zhi yu ren*), which avoids the philistine understanding of due consideration and forgives the other without forcing them (Jiang 2015, pp. 25–29). Chen Guirong also believes that the reasonable core of due consideration lies in respecting both one's own subjective consciousness and the subjective consciousness of others, which can achieve the unity of self-interest and altruism (Chen 1999, pp. 41–46). Huang Guangguo focuses on the interaction between "doing the best one can" 盡己 (*jinji*) and "putting oneself in the place of others" 推己及人 (*tui ji ji ren*), interpreting due consideration as an individual's "positive duty" (Huang 2023, pp. 38–52). Furthermore, it can show a normative system of morality model suitable for people's actual life and ideological reality for moral construction, and provide a valuable reference for standardizing the requirements of interpersonal relationships at different moral levels. Deng Xiaomang observes that the "golden rule" 金規則 (*jinguize*) of Confucianism "mainly contains a

hypothesis—people share the same mind and the same reason" 人同此心，心同此理 (*ren tong ci xin, xin tong ci li*), which presupposes that the human mind 心 (*xin*) is a pattern. However, this premise of thinking is very problematic because "people's minds are very different" and the "golden rule" cannot deal with this contradiction. Once one encounters differences, we can only see others as "not human, with minds that are divergent" 非我族類，其心必異 (*fei wo zu lei, qi xin bi yi*) and even eliminate them (Deng 2006, p. 194). Yu Zhiping's works are more able to remind people that the Confucian doctrine of due consideration contains a tendency for using the subject's self-consciousness to eliminate the violence of others, and also has the danger of compulsion, against which vigilance is required.[1] In the words of Theo Kobusch, "we find ourselves faced with the problem of how to understand the relationship between understanding or knowing, on the one hand, and forgiving or forgiveness on the other. However, this problem as such is not new; rather, it goes back to antiquity and can hardly be understood without taking into account its historical development" (Kobusch 2022, p. 79). While these discussions are worthy of our attention, this article goes deeper into the topic of whether due consideration can reach others and its interrogation in the ancient Confucian tradition. It will return to the Confucian classics and delve deeper into the original textual context to uncover the three basic propositions of "taking what is near at hand as an analogy" 能近取譬 (*neng jin qu pi*), "considering other people's feelings by one's own feelings" 以心度心 (*yi xin duo xin*), and "putting oneself in the place of others" 推己及人. These can fully unfold the specific requirements and operational processes as the practice 工夫 (*gongfu*)[2] of moral cultivation and, using the achievements of historical commentaries, can reveal the three paths of due consideration from the self to the other. Its academic value and significance lies in moving out of an abstract analytical mode studying the Dao of due consideration 恕道, no longer vague or generalized, elaborating the concept of due consideration, etymology, and pragmatic connotation, cutting into the path and way of practice, and specifically pointing out what moral individuals should "do" to move from the self to others. Furthermore, it can open space for the Dao of due consideration and present the dimension of the other in Confucian ethical philosophy. These are precisely the academic interventions that Confucianism urgently needs to construct the philosophy of the other.

## 2. The Etymology and English Translation of "*shu*", and the Definition of "*gongfu*"

The Chinese character meaning "*shu*" is rather difficult to interpret and worthy of careful study. Purely on the basis of its structure, it is composed of the elements "like" or "as" 如 (*ru*), and "mind" 心 (*xin*). Thus, it appears that *shu* must relate to others, that is, to another person or object. The use of one's own disposition and mind to treat, understand, and reach other people is the basic sense of *shu*. In due consideration, people have certainly already advanced to an objective state of selflessness 非本己 (*feibenji*). The lexicographical work of Xu Shen 許慎, the *Shuowen Jiezi* 說文解字, states: "*shu*, that is, benevolence 仁 (*ren*)", directly explaining the idea of "*shu*" with the idea of "benevolence". This is obviously influenced by Confucian thought because if one wants to put due consideration into force, one must do it in human relationships; that is, it must be related to at least two people. So, we must understand due consideration within a relational structure. Volume 2 of the *Pronunciation and Meaning of All Classics* 一切經音義 (*Yiqie jing yinyi*) claims that "due consideration, is similar to", and the meaning of "similar to" or "like" simply means that it has obtained a kind of comparative horizon. "To consider other person's feeling by my own is due consideration" (Shi 1985, p. 85). This means that one can use one's own disposition and one's own mind to experience all objects, which certainly includes others, and from this one can understand, sympathize, and ultimately reach a complete understanding of one's counterparts, which may justly be called due consideration. In the construction of the Confucian virtue system, due consideration is an indispensable and important aspect. In the practice of Confucian self-cultivation, due consideration is also the most basic link. In daily life, due consideration is both a psychological premise and a spiritual preparation that must be obtained in advance for interpersonal communication. Therefore, "only due consid-

eration can become virtue" (Toqto'a 脫脫 1977, p. 10293). Without consideration, virtue loses its foundation. The *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋繁露 of Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 quotes Shi Shuo 世碩 as saying: "The accomplishment will influence the future generations; the glory will shine for hundreds of generations. There is no virtue of the sage more beautiful than Consideration" 功及子孫，光輝百世，聖人之德，莫美於恕 (Dong 1989, p. 36). The way of due consideration of Confucianism, called by later generations the "golden Rule", is thus universally valid, applicable to different groups of people in different nations, and relevant everywhere.

As for the English translation of the word *shu*, Tu Weiming translated it as "altruism" and "reciprocity" in his book *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Confucian Religiousness*. Here, "*shu*" contains the dual meanings of altruism and mutual benefit, and the two are often used interchangeably (Tu 1989, pp. 36–42 and 117). James Legge (1814–1897) translated "*shu*" as "reciprocity", that is, "exchange" or "mutuality". He translated the sentence about "*shu*" in *The Analects of Wei Ling Kung* 衛靈公 as "Is not reciprocity such a word? What do you do not want to do to yourself, do not do to others" 其恕乎，己不所欲，勿施於人 (Legge et al. 1992, p. 210). Obviously, the translation of "*shu*" into reciprocity and exchange implies the equivalence of self and others and is also very conducive to revealing and highlighting the dimension of otherness in forgiveness and the inherent requirement that the self should treat others equally. However, its defect lies in the loss of the original meaning of empathy and understanding of the word "*shu*". Wing-Tsit Chan's book *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* uses "altruism" to translate the word "*shu*", mentioned by Confucius in *The Analects* (Chan 1963, p. 44). In *The Chinese-English Dictionary of Chinese Philosophy* compiled by Guo Shangxing and Wang Chaoming, there is a special term for "*shu*", explained as "a Confucianist term which is also translated into 'altruism" (Guo and Wang 2002, pp. 558 and 438).[3] It can be seen that it is possible to translate *shu* into due consideration. At the same time, we also admit that the Dao of due consideration 恕道 seems to include the idea of altruism. Confucius' sentence "己所不欲，勿施於人" has been translated as "According to Master Kong, if one is loyal to others and does not do to others what one does not like oneself, he would be a man of humanity." However, altruism is only one possible direction for the "superior person" 君子 (*junzi*) to practice "due consideration". It is the possible effect of the action, not the original meaning of the word. Thus, this translation does not grasp the essence of the concept. Since the basic meaning of *shu* is forgiveness and understanding, this article will argue that it can correspond to the English term "due consideration". This is because in English the word "due consideration" itself has the meaning of regard, understanding, thoughtfulness, and concern, and they can not only include the subject's own conscious understanding but also show the other direction of this ideological activity. By translating the word *shu* into due consideration, which directly touches the act of *shu* itself, we can highlight the psychological characteristics of due consideration and conduct thinking and philosophical analysis on the two dimensions of the subject and the other, thus helping us to grasp the essence of the idea.

For Confucianism to enter the world, it must develop itself in reality and build an academic foundation based on the world of daily life, with individual moral cultivation as the basic way of learning. Although Confucianism is called a doctrine, in essence, it does not aim or refer to doctrines or theoretical systems. All of Confucianism's moral standards and doctrines require "practice in affairs", which must withstand the blows and tests of daily life, and be completed with the help of mental cultivation. This is the most fundamental provision of the Confucian concept of "practice" 工夫 (*gongfu*). How to do this is the core question that the Confucian *gongfu* theory seeks to address. *The Great Learning* 《大學》 famously contends that "the ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the empire, first ordered well their own States. Wishing to order well their States, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowl-

edge lay in the investigation of things." 古之欲明明德於天下者，先治其國；欲治其國者，先齊其家；欲齊其家者，先修其身；欲修其身者，先正其心；欲正其心者,先誠其意;欲誠其意者，先致其知，致知在格物 (Legge et al. 1992, p. 3). According to Confucianism, the attainment of all external achievements is determined by an individual's spiritual ability and level. Moral people, through active and effective cultivation, form their ideal personality, raise their spiritual level, and reach the highest realm of being one with each other, one with the Dao, and one with all things in heaven and earth. The Confucian practice of due consideration does not focus on conceptual definition and theoretical analysis, but should always focus on the implementation of *gongfu*. It advocates expanding the psychological experience that occurs within the moral individual, using effective physical training and control of willpower to approach the other, striving to experience the circumstances, atmosphere, and psychological feelings of the other, and attempting to reach the other's heart through one's own heart, and seeking consensus with others that can be shared. Thus, the Confucian doctrine of due consideration is neither a theoretical system, nor is it simply a logical insight. From the perspective of the *gongfu* theory, the discussion of the Dao of due consideration focuses on one's own cultivation, seeking to achieve connection and unity with the other, without deviating from the original meaning of the Dao of due consideration. This makes it easier to achieve the goal of the Dao of due consideration, which can help others realize themselves.

### 3. Textual Context: "Do Not Impose upon Others What You Yourself Do Not Desire"

For many concepts in Confucianism, Confucius seldom provided a ready-made definition. He was rather good at elaborating and commenting on different objects and problems in specific contexts. But about due consideration, Confucius provided three explanations in *The Analects* 論語.

First, there is a clear stipulation in the chapter *Wei Ling Kung* 衛靈公. Zigong asked, "Is there one word that can serve as a guide for one's entire life？" And Confucius said, "Is it not 'understanding'[4] (*shu* 恕)? Do not impose upon others what you yourself do not desire" (*Analects* 15.24; Slingerland 2003, p. 183). The word "*shu*" and the sentence "Do not impose upon others what you yourself do not desire" 己所不欲，勿施於人 are enough for a lifetime. "Only benevolence and due consideration can be practiced for a lifetime" 唯仁恕之一言,可終身行之也 (He and Xing 1999, p. 214). It can be seen that only "due consideration" is enough to serve as a life-long code of conduct; due consideration involves others, and benevolence is the inner part, but the two are closely related, indeed one can even say that the way of due consideration simply is the way of benevolence. Therefore, David B. Wong believes that this saying can be plausibly explained, as requiring one to imagine what one would want were one in the place or circumstances of others since it would hardly be an effective way of being sensitive to what others want without noticing the relevance of their circumstances (Wong 2014, p. 178). Qian Mu 錢穆 has written: "The way of benevolence cannot be expected to be realized immediately. Only with due consideration can it be realized in the moment. Not to do to others what you would not wish done to yourself. At first glance it seems to be negative, but it is only in the moment that it is so, expand this mind [the mind of due consideration] and the way of benevolence is in it" (Qian 2002, p. 413). There is due consideration in benevolence, and there is benevolence in consideration. The two are separate and in contact at the same time. For every Confucian, one must follow benevolence and pursue it throughout their life. "*Ren* is clearly the highest human excellence treasured by the Master, and there is something about those who exhibit it that compels respect and efforts at emulation" (Larson and Rosemont 2017, pp. 96–116). Although benevolence can be the highest ideal, it can never be achieved or realized, but it can be expressed by the idea that "If I simply desire goodness, I will find that it is already here" (*Shu Er* 述而) (*Analects* 7.30; Slingerland 2003, p. 74). Benevolence is inherent in oneself. As long as the subject is conscious and works hard, it can be manifested immediately. Benevolence is neither far from one's self, nor is it far from other people, and being able to "take what is near at hand as an analogy 能近取譬" (*Yung Ye* 雍也) (*Analects*

6.30; Slingerland 2003, p. 63) is itself near at hand. It is in the real world that can be felt and touched, and it is neither mysterious nor obscure.

Secondly, there is the exposition in the chapter *Yen Yuan* 顏淵. Ran Yong 冉雍, a disciple of Confucius who was twenty-seven years younger than Confucius, having good moral conduct and the bearing of a ruler of men, asked Confucius about benevolence. Confucius said: "'When in public, comport yourself as if you were receiving an important guest, and in your management of the common people, behave as if you were overseeing a great sacrifice.' Do not impose upon others what you yourself do not desire. In this way, you will encounter no resentment in your public or private life" (*Analects* 12.2; Slingerland 2003, p. 126). Going out on business should have a feeling similar to receiving honorable guests, living in a high-ranking position, and using people as servants should be like holding a grand sacrificial event. What you do not want should not be imposed on others. Only in this way, no matter in the country or in the family, will there be no resentment from other people. *A Contemporary Reading of Confucius' Analects* 論語今讀 of Li Zehou 李澤厚 maintains that: "Not to do to others as you would not wish done to yourself" can be "opposed to 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them' of *the Bible*", but in *the Bible*, it is a "religious view of love, active, enthusiastic, sacrificing oneself to save others", which is more difficult to achieve; whereas in *The Analects of Confucius*, it is "a practical and rational view of human nature, moderation and calmness", which is easier to follow.[5] However, it is a pity that it has always been regarded merely as a form of self-cultivation. "In fact, it can be used as a traditional resource of some kind of public morality in modern society, that is, individuals all live in an equal and independent group environment based on the principle of contractual relationships, and respecting others means respecting oneself, which may not even have anything to do with personal cultivation, but is a kind of social contract, which is the origin of social morality" (Li 1998, p. 279). The Dao of due consideration originates from one's own heart, but it is a public law involving others that must be manifested in social relations.

In the third place, in contrast to "Do not impose upon others what you yourself do not desire", which stipulates the content of due consideration from a negative aspect, the *Yung Ye* chapter expounds it from a positive aspect: "Desiring to take his stand, one who is Good helps others to take their stand; wanting to realize himself, he helps others to realize themselves" 己欲立而立人，己欲達而達人 (*Analects* 6.30; Slingerland 2003, p. 63). In Confucianism, "help others to take their stand "立人 *(liren)* and "help others to realize themselves "達人 *(daren)* have already stepped out of pure self-cultivation and begun to involve other people. To establish oneself 己立 *(jili)* and to realize oneself 己達 *(jida)* are prerequisites, but at the same time as realizing oneself, this can also allow others to establish a virtuous personality, allowing others access to the realm of benevolence. Therefore, the Confucian requirements for benevolence are quite high. In essence, benevolence and due consideration are unified. Establishing others and helping them to realize themselves is the result of the expansion of the individual's own benevolence, which is a necessary stage of the objectification of the Dao of due consideration, and also the real structure of due consideration as a virtue. In the chapter *Li Ren* 里仁, Confucius said: "one who truly hated a lack of Goodness would at least be able to act in a Good fashion, as he would not tolerate that which is not Good being associated with his person" 惡不仁者，其為仁矣，不使不仁者加乎其身 (*Analects* 4.6; Slingerland 2003, p. 31). A person who is sincere and can hate non-benevolence is a benevolent person, and such a person will not associate with non-benevolent things. In the chapter *Gongye Chang* 公冶長, Zi Gong 子貢 said: "What I do not wish others to do unto me, I also wish not to do unto others." He tried his best to stop others, including his teacher, of course, from imposing anything on him that he did not want to accept. Confucius immediately scolded him: "Ah, Zigong! That is something quite beyond you" (*Analects* 5.12; Slingerland 2003, p. 44). Although Zi Gong himself could not achieve this, at least he had shown such an aspiration: since I do not want others to impose it on me, I will not impose it on others.

## 4. The Similarity between Others and Oneself: "Take What Is near at Hand as An Analogy"

The value orientation of Confucianism is to be active in the world and to produce achievements. To be active in the world is simply to face contemporary society and real people; to produce achievements does not necessarily require a foundation of meritorious deeds that attract worldwide attention, nor does it necessarily require incredible and moving deeds. Even in the most ordinary daily life, one can also be virtuous and sage. Therefore, Confucian moral laws and practices of self-cultivation do not appear lofty, vast and impractical, but rather operable and practical. In the chapter *Yung Ye* of *The Analects*, Confucius said: "Now the one of perfect virtue, wishing to be established himself, seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others. To be able to judge of others by what is high in ourselves; this may be call the art of virtue." This definition of benevolence by Confucius is made in the context of Zigong asking about "extensively conferring benefits on the people, and [being] able to assist all". Zigong asked: "Suppose the case of a man extensively conferring benefits on the people, and able to assist all, what would you say of him? Might he be called perfectly virtuous?" And Confucius answered: "Why speak only of virtue in connection with him? Must he not have the qualities of a sage? Even Yao and Shun were still solicitous about this." In politics and governing the people, if the monarch can extensively confer benefits on the people, and is able to assist all, his virtue is beyond benevolence and close to that of a sage. Even sage kings like Yao 堯 and Shun 舜 lamented the difficulty. To deliver extensive benefits to the people and relieve the suffering of the poor is obviously the inevitable result of the efforts of the one of virtue to implement the Dao of due consideration by "taking what is near at hand as an analogy" 能近取譬. The annotation of Xing Bing 邢昺 observes: "one of benevolence, when one wants to make oneself established and successful, makes others established and successful first. And one can choose an analogy according to its nearness to oneself, doing to others as he would wish done to himself instead of conversely. This can be said to be the way of benevolence" (He and Xing 1999, p. 83). It can be seen that "taking what is near at hand as an analogy" is a necessary path for the practice of due consideration, and can also be regarded as a principle of self-cultivation and practice.

In the answer by Confucius, on the one hand, the essence of benevolence is to make oneself established and successful, as well as to establish and make others successful. The former is the cause and the latter is the result. Confucianism demands of people that if they want to establish a conscious awareness of virtue and personality in their mind, that is, to understand and to reach the status of benevolence, then they should also let others do this. Whether the world is clear or dark, if you are the only one who is benevolent, then you cannot become a true Confucian, since then you are no different from the Taoist who shuns the world and the hermit who walks alone in the mountains and forests. A Confucian must have the feeling of relieving world and caring for all beings, otherwise, one will not be a Confucian. *The Doctrine of the Mean* 中庸 (*Zhongyong*) states: "Sincerity is that whereby self-completion is effected, and its way is that by which man must direct himself. Sincerity is the end and beginning of things; without sincerity there would be nothing. On this account, the *junzi* regards the attainment of sincerity as the most excellent thing. One who professes sincerity does not merely accomplish the self-completion of himself. With this quality he completes other men and things also. The completion of himself shows his perfect virtue. The completion of other men and things shows his knowledge. Both these are virtues belonging to nature, and this is the way by which a union of the external and internal is effected. Therefore, whenever he—the entirely sincere man—employs them, that is, these virtues, their action will be right" (Legge 1970, pp. 418–419). Sincerity 誠 means that one can consciously maintain unity with one's Ego (本己), Dao 道 means that one can consciously comprehend oneself and achieve oneself. A thing becomes a thing because it has and maintains the desire and requirement to be itself. "Sincerity" is the keyword and core concept of *The Doctrine of the Mean*. All things generate themselves out of their inner sincerity, and similarly, the desire and demand to become themselves

are also innate. In the process of development, all things are actually sustained by an instinct to become themselves rather than others. This is what nature endows them with and can also be called inborn, although the human being cannot know the deeper source of this desire and demand. Without the persistence and perseverance of a thing to become itself, a thing cannot become a thing. Therefore, sincerity is a virtue of Heaven, the ability and character that all things in heaven and earth continue to become themselves. At the same time, the virtue of sincerity is not only at the level of inborn nature, that is, at the level of self-improvement and self-loyalty, it is also reflected in the aspect of transforming and achieving all things. A high degree of self-consciousness of virtue is the symbol of reaching benevolence and the transformation and achievement of all things is the reflection of wisdom. All things can be generated only because they have been integrated with the inner and outer objects of human beings, so they can be used at any time without any obstacle.

According to Confucius, "taking what is near at hand as an analogy" 能近取譬indicates the basic direction, path and method of the practice of Benevolence. Nearness 近 (*jin*) refers to closeness, referring to oneself, and extending to the use of one's self, coming from one's own heart and starting from one's own psychological feelings. Nearness cannot therefore be a purely spatial concept, but must be a conscious and moral subject that exists in relation to others. Analogy 譬 *(pi)* refers to conjecture and inference and extends to metaphors, speculation, and contemplation. "When one can take what is near at hand as an analogy, one can immediately see that others are very similar to oneself. By considering our own desires and using them to infer (the desires of) other people, we discover that what others want is the same as ourselves. By then putting oneself in the place of another, this is the practice of due consideration, and the method of benevolence is within it" (Qian 2002, p. 165). The path of seeking Benevolence is not in lofty contemplation, nor in the vastness of another world, but only in starting from one's own disposition and will, that is, trying to understand others, to be considerate of others, and finally reaching others. Therefore, Zheng Ruxie 鄭汝諧, a scholar in the Song Dynasty, said: "What is benevolence? Returning to my own mind and then expanding it to the world, and being able to seek what others want with my own desires, this is the path and method to practice benevolence" (Zheng 1985, p. 30). Confucianism emphasizes activity in the world, so its learning and practice never leave daily life or concrete, living people. Confucianism is neither adept at nor disdainful towards purely metaphysical thought, nor does it indulge in noumenal spiritualities which are difficult to grasp and confirm. However, this does not mean that Confucianism lacks the capacity or ability to pursue these aspects, but rather that Confucianism believes these things to have no immediate practical benefits, and to be too far away from current life to play any role in changing social practices and customs or transforming the mind of people in the interests of unity. "Everything that is outside this body should be drawn to the body for its unity and harmony" (Yang 2006, p. 152). Confucianism's reflective methodology and its path to the practice of Benevolence always starts from the self and focuses on self-reflection, self-examination, and introspection. In this way, it is easier to gain support and to win the hearts of people. When encountering anything, we can always find reasons and problems within ourselves, rather than blaming everything, everyone else, and external objective conditions. Therefore, *Ercheng* has said: "one of benevolence is able to make people established and successful. The choice of analogy can be called the path and method of benevolence. People may seek it, actually it will be seen through self-reflection" (Cheng and Cheng 2000, p. 116). As long as we can carry out serious and strict self-reflection and introspection, we will almost always have the possibility of cultivating ourselves and coming into virtue, establishing ourselves and achieving benevolence, and so a certain kind of introspective, inner will in moral life seems more capable of withstanding the slings and arrows of history.

### 5. Understanding Others: "Consider Other People's Feelings by One's Own Feelings"

In Confucianism, another basic path to the practice of due consideration is considering other people's feelings by one's own feelings. The *Shuowen Jiezi* 說文解字 states: "Measure 度 (*duo*) is the legal system" (Gui 1987, p. 248). The original meaning of measure was to stretch the arms to measure the length of a certain distance. Later, it referred to evaluation, measurement, and calculation, and was extended to conjecture, deliberation, and contemplation. The philosophical significance of measure has attracted the attention of Confucian thinkers since as early as the Han Dynasty. The chapter *The Method of Dao* from the *New Book* of Jia Yi states: "To look at oneself through another is called measure, and vice versa is arbitrariness. To think of others through oneself is due consideration, and vice versa is emptiness" (Jia 1993, p. 371). Here, measure is first raised to a life attitude and to the concept of dealing with others and doing things. To look at oneself from the standpoint of others, or to first observe others and then think of oneself, is called "measure". Attitudes and behaviors that are contrary to Measure can be called "presumption" or "arbitrariness" 妄 (*wang*); that is, they do not consider the existence of others and do not consider any other factors except oneself. Using one's own mind and feelings to think about others, to contemplate others, and to put oneself in the place of another is called "due consideration". The contrary is called "emptiness" 荒 (*huang*); that is, to exclude others from one's own vision, when there is no place for others in one's mind, but only for oneself. The difference between measure and due consideration comes from the difference in the starting points of viewing oneself and others, but in essence, the two are the same, for they are both important virtues for treating others correctly in interpersonal communication.

Regarding the starting point, direction, object, and methodological requirements of measure, Volume 3 of *Han Ying's Interpretation of the Classics of Poetry* 韓詩外傳 states that: "The sage is the one who measures others with himself. Measuring mind with mind, measuring feelings with feelings, measuring categories with categories, it is the same from ancient to modern. So long as the category does not change, the principle will be the same" 聖人以己度人者也。以心度心，以情度情，以類度類，古久一也。類久不悖，雖久同理 (Han 1980, p. 113). It can be seen that if measure proceeds from the self, the self must have benevolence. Otherwise, one cannot reach benevolence, or rather, if one has not established their inner benevolence first, then putting oneself in the place of another will be difficult. Without the inner content of benevolence, one may even think of others as being quite as bad as oneself. The direction of measure is to start from oneself and then apply it to others, instead of blindly demanding that others come towards oneself purely for one's own sake and provide services for oneself. The object of the measure can only be others, not oneself. Those who only measure themselves are isolated from the rest of the world. The method of measure is to conduct analogy and comparison between oneself and others through our mind and our feelings. Tang Yan believes that people need to "promote kindness 善 (*shan*) with kindness, and promote benevolence with benevolence" (Tang 2023, p. 365). Therefore, measuring people is not complicated, as long as one considers other people's feelings by one's own feelings.

"Looking at oneself from the perspective of others" and "measuring others from the perspective of oneself" is a dynamic and mutually reinforcing relationship. Han Ying (韓嬰) said: "In the past, those who knew the world without leaving home, and understood the Dao of Heaven without looking out the window, were not able to see thousands of miles ahead with their eyes, nor could they hear thousands of miles away with their ears. They were just measuring others with their own mind and feelings. If you hate hunger and cold, you will know that people in the world all desire food and clothing; if you hate labor and fatigue, you will know that people in the world all desire to be pleasant and comfortable; if you hate poverty and distress, you will know that people in the world all desire to be rich and affluent. These are the reasons why the sage does not need to leave his seat and come down to correct the world. Therefore, the way of the man of virtue is simply that of loyalty 忠 (*zhong*) and due consideration!" 昔者不出戶而知天下，不窺牖而見天道者，非目能視乎千里之前，非耳能聞乎千里之外，以己之度度之也，以己之情量之也。己惡饑寒焉，則知

天下之欲衣食也；己惡勞苦焉，則知天下之欲安佚也；己惡衰乏焉，則知天下之欲富足也。如此三者，聖王之所以不降席而匡天下。故君子之道，忠恕而已矣 (Han 1980, p. 127). In fact, all knowledge and truth about the world are generated from the conscious activities of one's mind. The proverbial sage who knows the world without leaving home, and is able to understand the Dao of Heaven without looking out the window, is actually just the virtuous subject trying to exert his ability to "measure", using his own moral sympathy and imagination to understand and be considerate of others. So, of course, through "measure" it can also understand and reach everyone else in different regions and countries, and "measure" should become a useful bridge for people to overcome cultural barriers and cultural conflicts. The value of "measure" itself is universal, applicable to different objects, and can be targeted at different populations.

The measure of the Confucian is permeated with universal rationality and absolute value and is not a simple psychological guess or purely internal emotional desire. The further content of measure should be principle and righteousness, which possess the commensurability of the human mind and can be externalized and objectified. Part 1 of the chapter *Kao Tsze* 告子上 of *Mencius* 孟子 asks: "What is it then of which *they* [referring to one's minds] similarly approve? It is, I say, the principles of our nature, and the determinations of righteousness" 心之所同然者，何也？謂理也，義也 (Zhao and Sun 1999, p. 303). Here, the reason why Mencius directly downplays, omits, or excludes the emotional content of measure, leaving only principle 理 (*li*) and righteousness 義 (*yi*), may be that the former is too difficult to express, describe, and convey, so it cannot be used as a reliable basis for constructing a realistic ethical order. "Benevolence is internal, not external; righteousness is external, not internal." Benevolence is the inner spiritual pursuit, whereas righteousness is a scale and standard that can be formed externally. Although both are "similarities in the human mind", relatively speaking, righteousness seems to be more understandable and operable than benevolence and is more able to gain recognition and promotion among the masses of people.

Why then do different human minds share these "similarities"? Or why does the human mind possess the function of forming and recognizing the truth of virtue? *Commentaries and Rectifications of the Meanings of Words of Mencius* 孟子字義疏證 of Dai Zhen 戴震 explains analytically that the human mind controls the five senses of ears, eyes, nose, mouth, and tongue, and that when the five senses are opened, they can accept external stimuli, so they acquire the vitality of external objects. Since human life has inherited the vitality of heaven and earth, it can communicate with all things that are also born between heaven and earth. All things inherit the *qi* 氣 of the five elements, of Yin and Yang and of heaven and earth, so they can all have the same principle 理 (*li*). Each of the five elements has a generative or destructive relationship with the others. When in a generative relationship, vitality gains nourishment and vice versa. The way of the five elements and Yin and Yang fill heaven and earth and are also instilled in the internal organs of the human body. Thus, the external and the internal are united without conflicts. Therefore, one's mind can not only measure people but also feel things. There can be communication between heaven and human beings, between things and human beings, between others and oneself, and between subject and object (Dai 1961, p. 7). The *qi* of the five elements and Yin and Yang are natural in nature, but once recognized and understood by the human mind, they become the "Ought" of human beings. "Observing and studying carefully the nature of vitality to know its necessity, which is called principle and righteousness, we discover that the natural and the necessary are not two things. From the side of nature, if it is studied and observed to the utmost so that there is no deviation, it becomes necessity. If it is thus and there are no regrets, if it is so and yet remains stable, then it is the ultimate principle of nature. If one simply lets it go naturally such that it becomes deviant, it will lose its nature and become unnatural. Therefore, it must come to necessity to fulfill its nature. Human life is simply vitality, the mind and knowledge—and that is all!" (Dai 1961, pp. 18–9). Principle and righteousness are necessities of humanism, and although they are measured in the mind and come from people's mouths, they also reflect the essence

of heaven. Leaving nature, there can be no transcendental object as a stimulus for its occurrence. Therefore, the way of heaven and the way of humanity, the natural 自然 (*ziran*) and the normative 應然 (*yingran*), enter the world of language thinking that they are not separated or opposed but are always unified in essence. Furthermore, the formation of the interpersonal world proceeds from no more than two sources: one is the ontology of natural vitality and the other is spiritual cognition as a subjective understanding. These constitute the biological bases and epistemological premises of considering other people's minds by our own minds.

## 6. Expand: From Self to Others

A *junzi* practicing the Dao of due consideration must place himself in the place of others 推己及人. In part 1 of the chapter *King Hui of Liang* 梁惠王上 of *Mencius* 孟子, Mencius said to King Xuan of Qi 齊宣王: "Treat with the reverence due to age the elders in your own family, so that the elders in the families of others shall be similarly treated; treat with the kindness due to youth the young in your own family, so that the young in the families of others shall be similarly treated: do this, and the kingdom may be made to go round in your palm. It is said in the Book of Poetry, 'His example affected his wife. It reached to his brothers, and his family of the State was governed by it.'—The language shows how king Wen simply took his kindly heart and exercised it towards those parties. Therefore, a King carrying out his kindness of heart will suffice for the love and protection of all within the four seas, while if he does not carry it out, he will not be able to protect his wife and children. The way in which the ancients came greatly to surpass other men, was no other but this: simply that they knew well how to carry out, so as to affect others, what they themselves did" (Zhao and Sun 1999, p. 21). The benevolent government is gradually extended by the monarch, starting with oneself. One first has an internal consciousness of virtue and then external achievements and accomplishments. If one only arranges duties, rules and regulations, disciplines, and so on, one can do some things well, but one cannot really achieve benevolent governance because these are not self-conscious. Ren Jiantao believes that the way to connect others with oneself is for a person who has restrained oneself and obeyed virtue not to impose things on others that one does not like. The key to maintaining non-coercive virtue in interpersonal relationships lies in one's own judgement and action (Ren 2021, pp. 42–61). In Confucianism, the foundation and starting point of politics is morality, not anything else. Self-cultivation and family regulation constitute the premise, cause, and necessary conditions of state governance, and bring peace to all under heaven. Therefore, the monarch has to focus on both political morality and moral politicization at the same time. It has been difficult for future generations to clearly distinguish morality from politics and politics from morality. "Carrying out what you yourself do", from oneself to others, to do one's best, to be sincerely selfless, to consider other people's feelings by one's own feelings, and to help others to settle down, all this is not only an important method of individual moral cultivation but also the only magic weapon for ancient and modern monarchs to govern the state.

The basis and source of the power to expand or put oneself in the place of another lies in oneself. One has to establish oneself, make oneself successful, be self-conscious, and be for oneself. If one does not establish oneself or make oneself successful, one cannot expand oneself or put oneself in the place of another. "To arrive at things through oneself is benevolence; to put oneself in the place of things is due consideration" 以己及物，仁也；推己及物，恕也 (Cheng and Cheng 2000, p. 170). Both "arriving at things through oneself" and "putting oneself in the place of things" are inseparable from "self". If you do not have it yourself, if you are deficient in it yourself, or if you do not have the required moral cultivation, you can never practice benevolence on others. "Arriving at things through oneself" is the spiritual preparation and motivational basis for "putting oneself in the place of things". Zhu Xi 朱熹 emphasized the distinction between "arriving at things through oneself" and "putting oneself in the place of things". He believed that the two could not be equated and that there was a difference between high and low levels. "To arrive at things through

oneself is the practice of the sage that is above the person of integrity." "Arriving at things through oneself" is the first thing that must be accomplished by those who have reached the highest realm of virtue, and it is one of their basic skills. "The sage has the same feeling and will in himself, so he can arrive at others." Even if the sage is not hungry and cold himself, as long as the motive of benevolence has sprung up in his heart, he can take the initiative to experience and understand the hunger and cold of others. However, people below the level of the sage generally wait until they have the feeling of hunger and cold before they can empathize with and understand the hunger and cold of others. Knowing that this is true of me, it must be true of others. The sage does not need to expand himself or put himself in the place of another, but ordinary people must rely on expansion. If there is still a need to ponder and contemplate, it means that the moral cultivation of due consideration is not enough. These are superfluous for the sage; indeed, they appear too stiff and rigid. "To [arrive at things] through oneself is a process of nature; to put oneself [in the place of things] is a process of reflection." "Arriving at things through oneself" is of the self, flowing and manifesting from the inside, and does not need to be touched by external objects; conversely, "putting oneself in the place of things" must be attached to a certain object, and only through the circuit of self-consciousness, to other-consciousness, and then back to the self-consciousness, can one express benevolence and care for others. "To [arrive at things] through oneself is flowing out naturally"; "to put oneself [in the place of things], there will be a turning point" (Li 1997, pp. 619–20). The sage does not need to expand himself, which reduces his link to objectification, but directly allows his benevolence to flow to the outside world. That which he possesses, his spontaneity, and everything he connects with or reaches, are all the result of benevolence. The sage possesses loyalty and due consideration and is natural without any trace of artificiality, basing himself on his own heart and thus arriving at all hearts.[6] But, average people still need to diligently reflect and work hard, to be conscientious and cautious; only then can they achieve benevolence, and the tiniest misstep may lead to its loss.

The sage "[arrive at things] through himself" instead of "putting himself [in the place of things]", but how can this "[arriving at things] through oneself" appear in its own accord? In Zhu Xi's view, the sage does not need to "put himself" or "expand himself" to practice due consideration at all. As long as he possesses a sincere mind and then practices with it, he will be able to be benevolent and sage in all things he encounters. This will lead to a great moral distance from those who are still in the process of seeking benevolence. "The due consideration of the sage leaves no trace. When scholars do one thing properly, and then do another one in the same way, and then do ten things, a hundred things, a thousand things in the same way, all do it the same way, and this is to 'expand'." The sage is simply doing things as he encounters them. He is loyal to himself and to the moment, without consciously realizing that he is practicing due consideration. There is no trace of deliberate actions at all. First, he obtains the generality of the basis of Dao and then he projects it onto concrete things. Thus, the sage takes the route of understanding from a higher level and then deals with concrete things. However, it is not easy to find a so-called law that can be recognized, grasped, and rationally analyzed from the phenomena results of the due consideration of the sage. When the sage practices the Dao of due consideration, to do a thing simply means to do it, and in the process of doing things, he can always maintain a respectful, sincere, and loyal attitude without double-mindedness and without generating other thoughts. However, for those who are still studying and practicing the Dao of consideration, because they are just starting, they often expand themselves and put themselves in the place of others only when they are dealing with concrete things, blindly imitating their models. They are also deficient in mind and often do not have the capability to put themselves in the place of others. Indeed, when they are not dealing with concrete things, they do not expand themselves or put themselves in the place of others. Thus, they take the route of studying concrete real things and then understanding them from a higher level. "When scholars want to practice the Dao of loyalty and due consideration, they need to expand themselves and put themselves in the place of others before they can get to them.

When they are expanding, there is an intension of comparison. The sage does not need to expand or to put himself in the place of others, but simply 'in regard to the aged, to give them rest; in regard to friends, to show them sincerity; in regard to the young, to treat them tenderly'. The status of the sage is like a spring flowing naturally" (Li 1997, p. 626). When water reaches a point of fullness, it will overflow by itself, which is purely natural. Continuous cultivation of virtue will benefit others. This is the highest state of *junzi*'s practice of due consideration. Obviously, all those who study Confucianism lack continuous practice.

### 7. Conclusions

In summary, through a detailed linguistic and etymological analysis, we now have a very clear understanding of the concept and connotation of due consideration. In interpreting the classical texts, we have discovered three basic propositions of the Confucian Dao of due consideration—that is, "taking what is near at hand as an analogy" 能近取譬, "considering other people's feelings by one's own feelings" 以心度心, and "putting oneself in the place of others" 推己及人. We have not only located them in theoretical analysis and interpreted their meaning, but also pointed out that they are essentially a kind of moral *gongfu* requiring people to go through sufficient practical processes in order to effectively appreciate the dimension of others. This effectively breaks away from the academic model of pure abstract analysis in the study of the Dao of due consideration, emphasizing a way of entering and immersing oneself in the world of life, and pointing out how moral individuals can effectively move from themselves to others. In the Confucian philosophy of the Dao of benevolence, there should be a parallel relationship between "establishing oneself" 立己 and "helping others to take their stand" 立人, "realizing oneself" 達己 (*daji*) and "helping others to realize themselves" 達人, "doing the best one can" 盡己 and "putting oneself [in the place of others]" 推己 (*tuiji*). This can be achieved through both internal and external cultivation and mutual promotion and cannot be understood simply as a theoretical causal relationship or logical relationship between concepts. The three paths of *gongfu*, although derived from different classical textual contexts, are unified and can be used to mutually interpret one another. All three are highly practicable, and all are effective means of realizing Confucian benevolence. At the same time, these three paths can also communicate with each other without any distinction between higher and lower levels and do not constitute a progressive, continuously ascending, or deductive relationship. Choosing one of these paths, through diligent practice, the subject can gain the dimension of the other and effectively reach out to the other, that is, can "help others to take their stand" and "help others to realize themselves". In this way, it is possible to maintain a positive interactive relationship with others and to assume one's own moral obligations and social responsibilities, a noble virtue that urgently needs to be saved in real life and to be vigorously defended and promoted. Moreover, it can open up space for the Dao of due consideration and present the dimensions of the other in Confucian ethical philosophy.

### Notes

[1] Yu (2009). For this issue, please refer to Yu Zhiping's book *Achieving Humanity through Loyalty and Consideration* 忠恕而仁：儒家盡己推己、將心比心的態度、觀念與實踐 (Yu 2012, pp. 300–13, 364–94, 418–30).

[2] In this article, the term "*gongfu*" refers to the viewpoint of Ni Peimin. who holds that "*gongfu* is much more than the martial arts, and real martial arts involve far more than fighting skills. Originally used to describe human labor during the third to fourth

centuries, the term *gongfu* was later developed into a locus from which a cluster of meanings emerged, referring to the time and effort spent on something, the ability to accomplish intended results, and the result of such effort and abilities." The only way to achieve Confucian *gongfu* is through "practice" (Ni 2016, pp. xii–xiv). He also points out that "the term *gongfu* 功夫/工夫 not only wonderfully captures what the entire Confucian philosophy is about, it opens up a huge philosophical horizon with rich implications. " (Ni 2018, p. 267).

3    In terms of "loyalty and due consideration", "恕" is also translated into "due consideration", and its explanatory text is "Also translated into 'conscientiousness and altruism' or 'faithfulness and forbearance'" (Guo and Wang 2002, pp. 558 and 438). That is, "恕" can also refer to responsibility and selflessness. But, forbearance means forgiveness and tolerance, which is far from the meaning of due consideration and understanding.

4    Slingerland translates 恕 as "understanding", which is different from the " due consideration" used in this article. In order to respect the author, the quotation is written according to the original text of the translation of *The Analects* of Confucius. However, when interpreting the text, the author's position is still to use " due consideration".

5    Here, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye ever so to them" 己所欲，施於人 is expressed in *Matthew* (7:12) as "Do to others as you would like them to do to you, for this is the law and the prophets". In the Christian world, it is called the "Golden Rule". But, its earliest source is the Jewish classic *Talmud*. As a famous sacrificial priest, Rabbi, Hillel was able to summarize and refine the Jewish classics into one sentence in a very short time: Do not do to your fellow what you hate to have done to you. This is the whole Law, the rest is explanation. Later, he added that we should treat the reputation of our compatriots as our own; we should treat the property of our compatriots as our own; we should treat the body of our compatriots as our own. Compared to reputation, property, and body, Hillel's interpretation uses images and objects to facilitate the understanding and acceptance of believers, which can lead to the respect of people, property, and rights in the Western world. However, Confucius' forgiveness directly highlights the word "desire" 欲 (*yu*), which has the meaning of urge, want, and wish. It is more internal and subjective and depends more on the understanding and consideration of the moral subject. Therefore, in later Chinese culture, the understanding of others by oneself always tends to be psychological and emotional.

6    Therefore, Qian Mu has said: "The Dao of loyalty and due consideration is the Dao of Benevolence. Actually the ways are all unified in my mind, and can be connected with the minds of ten thousand people, even the minds of the people of future generations" (Qian 2002).

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*Article*

# Ming (Name) as the Bond of Individual and Community from the Perspective of Confucian Communitarianism

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**Abstract:** The relationship between the individual and the collective is one of the most important topics in Confucianism. Though this concept has been widely studied, *ming* 名 (meaning 'name'), one of its most crucial categories, has not yet been deeply explored within this theoretical domain. This article discusses four aspects of *ming* and their contributions to the relationship between the self and community. Firstly, Confucius' proposition of *zhengming* 正名 (rectifying names or the rectification of names) implies that language, especially that of rulers or gentlemen 君子 (*junzi*), has a considerable impact on both ethical and political practices. In this sense, *ming* as language establishes a relationship between rulers and the communities they govern. Secondly, in Confucius' use of *ming*, reputation also reflects the attributes of a collectivity. On one hand, reputation functions as a social evaluation system; on the other, it can also be used to shape social values. Both aspects of language and reputation can be found in Confucius' sayings, and are essentially determined by the sound attributes of *ming*. Thirdly, *ming* is interpreted to mean "role" in the later explanations and commentaries of *Analects* 13.3, which signifies that each individual has their own role in the community to which they belong. The position of a social individual is determined according to their relationship with others. Simultaneously, it is also the idea of "role" that brings a hierarchical order to family, state, clan, and "all under heaven". Finally, the relationship between *ming* and *yi* 義 (appropriateness) implies the correlation between a name and the subject to which it refers. For ethical or political participants, *yi* means that the name-bearer is bound to a series of demands regarding their behaviors and virtues, which can lead to a "thick" conception of the subject, that is, the role of a complex of virtues, duties, and even rights (albeit implicit). Although the meaning of *ming* was becoming more complicated and profound during the development of early Confucianism, it has always functioned as the bond between individual and community. In this regard, the Confucian theory of *ming* can contribute some insights toward the combination of Confucianism and communitarianism, and also toward the modernization of Confucianism.

**Keywords:** *ming* 名 (name); *zhengming* 正名 (rectifying names); individual; community; Confucian communitarianism

## 1. Introduction

In contrast with the idea of the individual, Confucianism traditionally values community. Family, clan, country, and even "all under heaven" 天下 (*tianxia*) collectively give meaning to those living by Confucianism. Studies that compare, or even combine, communitarianism with Confucianism or "Asian values" (de Bary 1998, pp. 10–12) are highly illuminating and provide Confucian intellectual resources for the discussion of political philosophy. Utilizing the most simple definition which states that "communitarianism is the idea that human identities are largely shaped by different kinds of constitutive communities (or social relations)" (Bell 2020), common ground can easily be found between Confucianism and communitarianism, such as regarding people as social beings, weighing the common good more than individual rights, and valuing the significance of community in education (Hu 2007, p. 476; S. Cao 2020, p. 117). At the same time, the differences between them have also been emphasized, such as the various understandings of "individual

rights", the various forms and scopes of community, the presence or absence of liberalism as its opposite, etc. (Wong 2004; Bell 2020). In these comparative studies, many Confucian concepts have been extensively discussed, such as "benevolence" 仁 (*ren*), "propriety" 禮 (*li*), and "filial piety" 孝 (*xiao*) (Rosemont 2015, pp. 115–36; Ames 2011, pp. 171–79). "Name" 名 (*ming*), however, as one of the crucial concepts of Confucianism, has not yet received the attention it deserves.[1] If there exists a Confucian version as the counterpart of communitarianism, it is thus inappropriate that its conceptual constellation does not contain "name". What insights can *ming* (name) offer from the perspective of Confucian communitarianism? In answer to this question, this paper will argue that *ming* could be best understood as the bond between individual and community. Since Confucius proposed the "rectification/correction of names" 正名 (*zhengming*), the Confucian conception of *ming* has evolved, and it has been given multiple meanings over the long history of Confucianism. It is the multiple aspects of *ming* that have enabled this Confucian concept to be deeply embedded in the relationship between self and community and to serve as a link between them.

Prior to formal discussion, three issues must be clarified. Firstly, when terms such as "individual" or "community" are used, it can generally be understood that they are the products of Western and modern discourse. In the Chinese language, especially in the Confucian tradition, a pair of categories that constitute such a relationship might be "self" 己 (*ji*) and "group" 群 (*qun*), which could be interpreted as the equivalence of "individual" and "community". The following saying of Confucius may be observed as an example: The Master once said, "One cannot be in the same herd with birds and beasts. If I am not with my fellow humans, with whom shall I associate?" 鳥獸不可與同群，吾非斯人 之徒與而誰與 (*Analects* 18.6; Ni 2017, p. 413).[2] This is a saying that emphasizes the social attributes of human beings. Moreover, Confucius believed that self-cultivation is an activity that must rely on the self rather than on others. For example, "To be human-hearted is dependent on oneself. How can it be dependent on others?" 為仁由己，豈由人乎哉 (*Analects* 12.1; Ni 2017, p. 279). Additionally, Confucius states: "Exemplary persons place demand on themselves, whereas petty-minded persons place demand on others". 君子 求诸己，小人求诸人 (*Analects* 15.21; Ni 2017, p. 363). Everyone, those people with moral aspirations, is inevitably dependent on the group for their own existence; meanwhile, every person has independence in what they want to do or be, especially in the field of moral cultivation, which sets the tone of Confucianism regarding the complex relationship between the collective and the self.

Secondly, whether *ming* has coherent importance in Confucianism also remains in question. As Carine Defoort claims, the modern discourse on *zhengming* was mostly established by Hu Shi 胡適, who believes there is a "rectification-of-names-ism" 正名主 義 (*zhengmingzhuyi*) in Confucianism and comprehends *ming* in the field of logic (Defoort 2021a, pp. 616–17). H. C. Loy also mentions that "*Analects* 13.3 does not present Confucius as expounding a systematically formulated doctrine" (Loy 2020, p. 330). Viewed in this way, the idea that *ming* occupies a core position in Confucianism can be seen as the result of modern academic discourse, rather than of a coherent tradition. On the contrary, some scholars value the importance of *ming* in Confucianism, even claiming that *ming* should be the "base" of Chinese philosophy (Gou 2016, p. 4). As for Confucianism, *ming* was first mentioned by Confucius in his rough claim of *zhengming*, and was continuously enriched by other masters in various ways. Specifically, Xunzi developed Confucius' claim of *zhengming* by absorbing the resources of the School of *Ming* 名家 (*mingjia*), and Dong Zhongshu, who developed the Confucian idea of *ming* in accordance with the politics of the former Han dynasty and proposed the "deep examination of names and designations" 深察名號 (*shenchaminghao*) (Queen and Major 2016, p. 343).[3] It was also during the Han dynasty that the idea of "religion/teaching of names" 名教 (*mingjiao*) was formed, and it has continued for nearly 2000 years, even echoing into modern times.[4] In certain contexts, the term "*mingjiao*" has become synonymous with Confucianism. As such, it seems to be inappropriate to deny the importance of *ming* in Confucianism. Therefore, this article takes

a cautious approach to the coherent importance of *ming* but still affirms that *ming* has a place in the development of Confucianism. Meanwhile, considering the appropriate scope of the discussion in this article and the development of the Confucian idea of *ming*, this paper will cite the literature of the pre-Qin and former Han dynasties, specifically Confucius, Xunzi, and Dong Zhongshu. Some other important classics will also be occasionally cited. In a broad sense, the reason for adopting this scope is that the views of these three Confucians represent the basic Confucian theory of *ming*. Although the idea of *ming* survived in the form of *mingjiao* after the former Han dynasty, its theoretical development was limited.

Closely related to the above issue, the clarification of the meaning of *ming* is also a prerequisite for further discussion. In Chinese tradition, *ming* firstly means "name" or "appellation" referring to things or persons. However, based on the extensive pre-Qin literature and historical commentaries, *ming* was given various meanings, such as "word"/"graph" 名字 (*mingzi*), "language"/"speech" 名言 (*mingyan*), "reputation"/"fame" 名聲 (*mingsheng*), and "role"/"station" 名分 (*mingfen*), among others. Focusing on the aspect of "rectifying names," the multiple meanings of *ming* gave rise to various conflicting and even controversial interpretations (Gou 2016, pp. 32–61). For instance, if we hold the position that Confucius did not have a systematic theory of *zhengming*, we will be prevented from giving any philosophical interpretations and also be unable to accept that Confucius proposed the notion of *mingfen* (role) when he claimed that he would firstly rectify names if he was employed by a prince Wei (F. Cao 2017, pp. 112–13; Li 2019). This view possesses some reasonable aspects; however, there is a certain process of development of ideas from simple to complex, from crude to precise. In other words, even if it is admitted that the view's coherent narrative and considerable importance are products of modern discourse (Defoort 2021b, pp. 95–96), there is still no adequate reason to completely deny the value of *ming* in Confucianism. Originally, it might be inchoate, such as Confucius' proposal of *zhengming*, but it is constantly refined and deepened in the subsequent development, just as in the work of Xunzi and Dong Zhongshu. Since this article mainly discusses how *ming* is embedded in the relationship between individual and community, the various aspects of *ming* will be included insofar as they contribute to its theme.

## 2. *Ming* as Language: The Original Conception of *zhengming*

Explorations of Confucian *zhengming* always begin with the dialogue between Confucius and one of his favorite disciples Zilu. When Zilu asked: "If the Lord of Wei were to let you administer his government, what would be your priority?" The Master said in reply: "It must be to rectify names" (*Analects* 13.3, Ni 2017, p. 300). As discussed above, there are multiple possible interpretations of *zhengming*; indeed, even the definition of *ming* is still debated. Therefore, it is necessary to draw lessons from studies that investigate the original conception of Confucian *zhengming*. For example, C. Defoort noted that the phrase *zhengming* was only seen in *Analects* 13.3, and when modern scholars who mentioned *zhengming* quoted this dialogue, it was always in a selected and shortened form, sometimes mentioning only the phrase *zhengming*. Meanwhile, the belief that Confucianism has a "rectification-of-names-ism,," which was put forward by Hu Shi, should be supported by other texts. Nevertheless, the connection between these documents and *zhengming*—whether within or without *Analects*—requires further investigation (Defoort 2021a, pp. 620–25). What enlightenment could the complete quotation from *Analects* 13.3 present? If we exclude all subsequent explanations, what did Confucius wish to present when he discussed "rectifying names?" These questions should lead to the original conception of the Confucian proposal of *zhengming*.

Consider the complete dialogue between Confucius and Zilu: after Confucius answered Zilu with the words *zhengming*, Zilu considered that what the Master had said was "far off the mark." Confucius criticized Zilu as being "boorish" for speaking of what he did not understand, and explained: "If names are incorrect, speech cannot be smooth. If speech is not smooth, affairs cannot be accomplished. If affairs cannot be accomplished, ritual propriety and music will not flourish. If ritual propriety and music do not flourish,

verdicts and punishments will not hit the mark. If verdicts and punishments do not hit the mark, people will not know how to move their hands and feet. Hence, when the exemplary person uses a name, it surely can be spoken; and when spoken, it surely can be put into action. What the exemplary person requires about their words is that there is nothing careless in them" (*Analects* 13.3, Ni 2017, p. 301). It is typical chain reasoning that connects "political affairs," "ritual propriety and music," and "verdicts and punishments" with the correction of names in a coherent sequence. Simultaneously, the "correction of names" functions as the starting point. Thus, it also indicates the link between chain reasoning and the speech or words of "the exemplary person," which aims to remind rulers to be cautious in their speech. We should at least recognize that Confucius' idea on *ming* is directly connected to language, especially the rulers' speech, pointing out the susceptibility of language to politics (F. Cao 2017, p. 114). R. Ames has pointed out that this dialogue is about "the proper and effective use of language;" meanwhile, "the efficacy of what the exemplary person has to say not only influences the immediate community but also has a profound and lasting effect on the world broadly" (Ames 2011, pp. 100–2). In this sense, *ming* in Confucianism works as the influencing factor between an individual and their community, specifically between a ruler and their people.

Another example can be found in the *Gongyang Commentary* 公羊傳 of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋, a chronicle generally thought to be composed or edited by Confucius himself. According to the record of the third year of Duke Yin, Duke Xuan of Song said to Duke Mu: "I prefer you to my son Yuyi. You would make a better lord of our ancestral house than Yuyi. Therefore, you shall be duke." After the death of Duke Xuan, Duke Mu then exiled his own two sons, Duke Zhuang and the Prime Minister of the Left, in order to pass the throne to Yuyi, who was the son of Duke Xuan. However, after Yuyi succeeded to the throne, only a short time passed before Duke Zhuang assassinated Yuyi. The author of the *Gongyang Commentary* believed that "the disaster that befell the state of Song was set in motion by Duke Xuan" 宋之禍宣公為之也 (Miller 2015, p. 15).[5] In this story, the words of Duke Xuan were intended to have a strong influence on the political prospects of the state of Song. The carelessness of Duke Xuan's words led to chaos lasting for generations, which can be interpreted to be another demonstrated proof of the susceptibility of language to politics.

Does this reasoning mean that only monarchs who govern states must carefully monitor their speech? The answer to this should be negative. Another of Confucius' sayings may be used as an example. When a disciple of Confucius named Zizhang asked how to "pursue an official position" 干祿 (*ganlu*), the Master said: "Listen broadly, guard against what is dubious, and speak cautiously of other matters, then you will invite few pitfalls . . . When one's words give few occasions for pitfalls and one's conduct gives few occasions for regrets, an official position will naturally come" 多聞闕疑，慎言其餘，則寡尤 . . . . . . 言寡尤，行寡悔，祿在其中矣 (*Analects* 2.18; Ni 2017, p. 108) The way of being an official is strongly related to prudence in speech, which concerns not only the rulers who reside at the apex of power, but every other official as well. Just as the original meaning of "gentleman" 君子 (*junzi*) extends from politics to morality in later interpretations, such a sense of the significance of language could also extend to more general situations. In other words, each person's language has an impact on the people surrounding them, even on the public as a whole.

The crucial question requiring investigation here is: why does *ming* as language have such power to affect ethical and political practice, even to influence the stability of the political situation? It is easy to attribute this to a certain "belief that language possesses a magical power which has unfailing influence on affairs both human and natural" (Bao 1990, p. 198), which was also realized by Chad Hansen, who tried to reexamine the idea of "word magic" (Hansen 1992, pp. 26, 149). However, while Confucius' *zhengming* may also be understood in this context, Hansen did not determine why *ming* has such magic power, and instead attributed it to the difference in linguistic theories (such as the "mass nouns hypothesis") in Chinese language. In fact, the answer might be hidden in the word *ming* 名

itself, according to traditional dictionaries. In Chinese, "name" as a verb refers to the act of naming 命 (*ming*), which originally means the behavior of referring to the self or things. For example, Xu Shen (許慎, 58–147) defines *ming* as "referring to oneself" 名，自命也. He said: "the glyph of '*ming*' 名 is composed of 'mouth' 口 (*kou*) and 'night' 夕 (xi). 'Xi' means darkness. Because people cannot see each other in the darkness, it is necessary to refer to themselves by mouth". 從口夕。夕者，冥也。冥不相見，故以口自名 (Xu and Duan 1981, p. 119). As can be interpreted from Xu's statement, naming behavior originated from the demand for survival and thus the need for communication in darkness. The transformation from "nameless" to "name" also means the transition from the natural state of isolation between people and things, to a state of gradual intersection and communication within a community or society. Some scholars have proposed a hypothesis of the origin of names: " . . . people did not have names in ancient times. Since people have totem worship, they simply used totems to distinguish themselves in warfare and communication activities, which is the origin of public names. It is reasonable to speculate that private names originated from the act of people referring to themselves and personal totem superstitions". (Yu 2000, p. 47) It is the demands of interpersonal communication that contribute to the origination of *ming*. In other words, the generation of *ming* is equivalent to the generation of communication, which could be seen as the origin of "community" in a broad and abstract way. Returning to the major question of this section: Why does *ming* as language have such power to affect ethical and political practice? Perhaps *ming* is intrinsically more than a purely linguistic practice, but in fact has its own ethical and political influence. As F. Cao has claimed, "there are two clues and systems of the theory of *ming* in pre-Qin period: an epistemological one and a political one" (F. Cao 2017, p. 7). *Ming*, in early Chinese thought, especially in Confucianism, was an inextricable link between language and ethical and political practice. From the family level to the state level, *ming* as language first plays a role as an interpersonal medium. Then, it works as a tool to influence and even shape the community, which could be seen as the fundamental principle underpinning *zhengming* as a Confucian proposition.

From a communitarian perspective, the meaning of *ming* as language is much more ontological. Language-based communities, for example, are of particular importance to Daniel Bell. Following Charles Taylor's "expressive theory of language," Bell advocates that "we not only speak in particular languages, but more fundamentally become the persons we become because of the particular language community in which we grew up—language, above all else, shapes our distinctive ways of being in the world" (Bell 1993, pp. 158–59). This is easy to understand with respect to the Chinese language. For example, François Jullien once observed that Chinese thought does not give birth to the whole web of semantics that is based on "being" ("être" in French) and make it possible; this prevents, at the level of language (if one may call it thus), the emergence of a series of relations and oppositions, without which, indeed, we cannot imagine that "people can think, can have a thought" in this way (Jullien and Marchaisse 2000, p. 266).[6] The particularity of language greatly affects ways of thinking and being; that is the reason why Bell is concerned with the linguistic community in particular among the various communities of memory. By focusing on *ming* as language, specific cultural narratives, such as ruler and subject dynamics, father and son bonds 君臣父子, or the values of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom 仁義禮智 can evoke a particular identity and emotion that belongs only to the Chinese people. The expressions including these clusters of concepts could be found everywhere and at any time, though sometimes imperceptibly, which ontologically shapes Chinese society both in the past and the present.

### 3. *Ming* as Reputation: The Evaluation System Based on Names

In the glyph of *ming* 名, the meaning of "*kou*" 口 is also worthy of attention, that is, "*kou*" means sound 聲 (sheng) made by the mouth. Dong Zhongshu even interpreted the activity of "naming" 名 as the same phonetic word as "crying out" 鳴, which was "call[ing] out and penetrat[ing] Heaven's will" (*CQFL* 35.1; Queen and Major 2016, pp. 343–44).

Evidently, sound 聲 (*sheng*) as the media of *ming* also reflects the collective attribute. It is easy to associate this with another meaning of *ming*, namely "reputation" or "fame" 名聲 (*mingsheng*), because "fame entails hearing sound" (Geaney 2011, p. 134). It is also the meaning mentioned by Confucius in the *Analects*. The Master said, "Exemplary persons dislike having their names not properly established at the end of their life" 君子疾沒世而名不稱焉 (*Analects* 15.20; Ni 2017, p. 362). According to the common interpretation, this saying means that Confucius was worried that the "*junzi*" would not have a good reputation in the Dark Ages. In *Analects* 1.1, the Master said: "To be untroubled when not recognized by others, is this not being an exemplary person?" 人不知而不慍，不亦君子乎 (Ni 2017, p. 79). In 9.23, the Master also said, "If one remains unheard of at the age of forty or fifty, that person might as well not be worthy of awe" 四十、五十而無聞焉，斯亦不足畏也已 (Ni 2017, p. 241). Both of the above quotations aim to comfort those virtuous persons who are not known by others; however, this in turn proves that names, especially those of gentlemen, should be heard.

In contrast to *ming* as language, *mingsheng* (reputation) works as a system of evaluation among people. In this sense, a gentleman is especially concerned about his reputation. Pursuing a good name and keeping away from a negative reputation even becomes a lifelong career. Under the influence of Confucianism, there is even a tradition of "dying for the sanctity of the name" (Pines 2019, p. 169). In addition to the above quotations from *Analects*, many examples could be found in other literature. In the *Zuozhuan* 左傳, the famous idea named "three ways to be imperishable" 三不朽 has a very profound impact: "The highest of all is to establish virtue; next to that is to establish achievements; next to that is to establish words" 大上有立德，其次有立功，其次有立言 (*Zuozhuan Lord Xiang*, 24.1; Durrant et al. 2016, p. 1125).[7] No matter which way a gentleman chooses to pursue becoming "imperishable," what he wants to achieve by this is that his reputation will remain intact for as long as possible after his death. In this expression, "virtues," "achievements," and "words" could be regarded as the essence of fame; that is, reputation works as an evaluation of the conduct and virtues of name-bearers. It is also in this sense that the connection between fame and virtue is usually mentioned in pre-Qin texts. For example, such mentions include: "Have the virtue of gentleness, and achieve one's reputation" 有溫德以成其名譽 (*Guoyu* 15.10; Xu 2002, p. 449)[8] "The loss of virtue and the destruction of reputation will eventually lead to that person's expulsion or even death" 失德滅名，流走死亡 (*Guoyu* 21.2; Xu 2002, p.580); And "A good name is the vehicle of virtue" 夫名，德之輿也 (*Zuozhuan* 24.2a; Durrant et al. 2016, p. 1127). In these examples, the relationship between fame and virtue is remarkable; however, it is not indubitable. In *Analects* 17.13, the Master defined a category of people as the "village worthy" 鄉愿 (*xiangyuan*), who are referred to as the "thieves of virtue" 德之賊 (Ni 2017, p. 398), even while their behavior is very close to that of people who possess one of the noble virtues, named "moderation" 中庸 (*zhongyong*). This confuses and sullies the fame of individuals, and is the primary reason why false or hollow names exist.

As an evaluation system, fame may also be used by rulers to govern a country. On one hand, a ruler with a good reputation has a direct influence on his state, because "a good name is the "vehicle of virtue," and "virtue is the foundation of domain and patrimony. Should one not strive to have a foundation and not let it be ruined?" 德，國家之基也。有基無壞，無亦是務乎 (*Zuozhuan* 24.2a; Durrant et al. 2016, p. 1127). Another example may be found in the *Guoyu* 國語: "When a ruler has a good name, his virtue will influence people who are far or near, and they will feel at ease regardless of their positions" 其有美名也，唯其施令德於遠近，而小大安之也 (*Guoyu* 17.5; Xu 2002, p. 495). Due to the belief that a ruler's virtue is the cornerstone of a state, as the "vehicle" of virtue, the good name of a ruler should be audible by the largest and most widespread number of people in order to expand and stabilize his reign (Geaney 2011, p. 134). On the other hand, reputation can be a tool utilized by rulers to controlling the power of giving names. Defoort named this a "network of names"—and thus the "network of evaluations"—which should be controlled by the ruler to maintain the bureaucracy (Defoort 1997, p. 207). "Posthumous titles" 諡號

may be examined, for instance. There is a chapter named *"the Explanation of Posthumous Titles"* 諡法解 in the *Lost Book of Zhou* 逸周書, which reads that "the posthumous name is the trace of behavior. The title is the expression of achievement . . . Hence, great achievements match great names, and tiny achievements match tiny names" 諡者。行之跡也。號者。功之表也 . . . . . . 是故大行受大名。細行受細名 (*Lost Book of Zhou* 54; Zhu 1912, p. 92).[9] Posthumous titles should be given by authority to kings, queens, dukes, generals, officials, and intellectuals of higher political status after their death, which is in accordance with the lifetimes of conduct, achievements, and virtues of the title-owners. By controlling the authority of distributing posthumous titles, every political participant is to some extent placed in the "network of evaluations".

As a system of evaluation, the significance of fame in relation to the community is also considerable. Sandel, for example, distinguished communities into different categories: instrumental, sentimental, and constitutive (Sandel 1998, p. 150). Of the three, the constitutive is the only category he emphasized. D. Bell further distinguished three kinds of "constitutive community," which include geographical, memorial, and psychological (Bell 1993, p. 185). That is to say, the constitutive meaning of communities is the real concern of communitarians because individuals' identities and values are shaped by this kind of community, which is perfectly in line with the claim of *ming* in Confucianism. In Chinese society, common categories of communities can all be attributed to constructive ones. Families and clans are typical natural communities, bonded by blood ties. States, furthermore, are regarded as communities that share the same structure with the family. Rulers of states, therefore, are always seen as the parents of the people, who, in turn, are the children of their rulers. However, none of this is based simply on given natural attributes, but rather, there are strong constructive factors among these kinds of communities. This is particularly evident in *ming* as reputation. "Filial sons" 孝子 or "loyal officials" 忠臣, for instance, as the highest evaluations of grown men, reflect both the attachment to and even identity with the community to which they belong, but also contain the values that Chinese society desires to promote. Furthermore, rulers can use reputation as a tool to shape values, and even to stabilize or control the state in order to lead people to pursue a greater goal, such as the well-being of the majority. In this sense, virtues in Confucianism, such as "filial piety," "loyalty," and "benevolence," are not abstract and universal values, but rather imply a definite political purpose. This is one of the reasons why Confucianism is called the "religion/education of names" 名教 (*mingjiao*).

## 4. *Ming* as Role: Seeking Order in Relationships

If *ming* as language or reputation represents the viewpoint of Confucian thought on *ming*, the meaning of *mingfen* 名分 should also be investigated carefully, as it is found in the sayings of Confucius. There is no phrase *mingfen* found in pre-Qin Confucian texts. However, the hidden clue can be found in the separate uses of *ming* 名 and *fen* 分. Generally speaking, *fen* means division, and the phrase *mingfen* means the divisions of roles or stations implied by *ming* (names). *Ming* as *fen* primarily means that everyone plays roles in multiple relationships, and secondarily it functions as the foundation of social and political orders. It is also the aspect of *fen* that embeds *ming* deeply into the relationship between individual and community.

Despite a lack of presence of the term *mingfen*, the meaning of *ming* as role can also be found in Confucius' sayings. With consideration to historical contexts, *Analects* 13.3 should be explained according to the history of the State of Wei. Kuaikui 蒯聵, the son of Duke Ling and the successor of the throne, plotted to assassinate Duke Ling's wife, Nanzi 南子, which led to his deportation. After the death of Duke Ling, Nanzi wanted her son, Ying 郢, to succeed to the throne, yet Ying was unwilling to inherit it. At that time, Zhe 輒, the son of Kuaikui, inherited the throne and refused his father's wish to return to his home country by claiming to have the appointment by his grandfather, Duke Ling. In this story, who should be the rightful successor to the throne? Is Zhe's action appropriate as the son of Kuaikui? Both questions have been mentioned in various comments focusing

on *zhengming*, which were divided on the question of who should legally ascend to the throne. However, aside from the above dispute, *zhengming* is simply about correcting the names of son and father, a king and his successor, specifically Kuaikui and Zhe in this historical context. If Kuaikui was the rightful successor of the State of Wei, he should have ascended to the throne. Zhe prevented his father from returning home, which was not as a son should do. As a father, Kuaikui failed to educate his son to be a filial person. All these aspects point to a text highly relevant to *zhengming*. When Duke Jing of Qi asked Confucius about governing, Confucius replied: "Let a ruler be a ruler, a minister be a minister, a father be a father, and a son be a son" 君君，臣臣，父父，子子(*Analects* 12.11; Ni 2017, p. 289). Although some scholars tend to weaken the connection between 13.3 and 12.11 (Defoort 2021b, pp. 121–22; Geaney 2018, pp. 216–17), it is not easy to distinguish them, because the historical meaning of *zhengming* should be explained as "rectifying the name of the rightful heir to the throne" 正世子之名 (Liu 1990, p. 517). In other words, if we take the historical context into consideration, 12.11 could be comprehended as the abstract and broad expression of 13.3, and it is the latter that illuminates the meaning of *ming* as role.

The further development of *fen* in Confucianism can be attributed to Xunzi. As he said: "Why can man form a society? I say it is due to the division of society into classes. How can social divisions be translated into behavior? I say it is because of humans' sense of appropriateness" 人何以能群？曰：分。分何以能行？曰：義 (Xunzi 9.16a; Knoblock 1988, p. 104).[10] The significance of *yi* (appropriateness) will be discussed below. Here we can clarify the relationship between "division" 分 (*fen*) and "group" 群(*qun*). The premise for people to gather and form a society is that each person has their own division, or to be specific, their "role". Conversely, if there is no *fen* in society, disputes and chaos are inevitable, which eventually lead to society falling apart. This is why Xunzi writes that "if a society is formed without social divisions, strife would result; if there is strife, disorder ensues; if there is disorder, fragmentation results; if there is fragmentation, weakness comes; if there is weakness, it is impossible to triumph over objects" 人生不能無群，群而無分則爭，爭則亂，亂則離，離則弱，弱則不能勝物。(Xunzi 9.16a; Knoblock 1988, p. 104). In other words, gathering and forming a society is an essential attribute of human beings, and role divisions are basic to any society. He cited a traditional saying that people who engage in various kinds of work—such as farmers, merchants, hundred craftsmen, etc.—stick in their divisions, and bureaucrats at all levels are committed to their duties, which is the basis of good governing (Xunzi 11.5b; Knoblock 1988, p. 158). In this way, Xunzi emphasizes the significance of "ritual propriety" and "law" because they work simultaneously to make divisions clear.

The above discussion of *fen* as role in Confucianism is helpful in understanding how *ming* functions as a link between individual and community. On one hand, persons who carry names are organized in a plurality of relationships and each plays their role. Specifically, a ruler is defined as a ruler when he manages ministers and people, and a father is respected as a father when he faces his son. From the perspective of communitarianism, it is in these relationships that self-identification can be formed. Here we may offer an analogy, that is, *fen* could be regarded as a Confucian version of "membership." Just as A. MacIntyre has mentioned, "Self has to find its moral identity in and through its membership in communities". (MacIntyre 2007, p. 221) In other words, self-identification is firstly the identification of membership in communities, which is also the effect of *fen* in early Confucianism. On the other hand, every society is bound by a plurality of individuals, and *fen* is also like "membership" in communitarianism that adheres everyone in a community together. M. Sandel believed that a "community describes not just what they have as fellow citizens but also what they are, not a relationship they choose but an attachment they discover, not merely an attribute but a constituent of their identity" (Sandel 1998, p. 150). This shows that the significance of community to individuals is intrinsic and essential. This view can be further proven by the insight of role ethics proposed by R. Ames and H. Rosemont. As they have claimed, there is no room for the abstract individual in Confucianism, only the role-bearing person. "Moreover, we do not 'play' these roles, as we

tend to speak to them, but rather live our roles, and when all of them have been specified, and their interrelationships made manifest" (Rosemont 2015, p. 93). It is these "roles" that "weave a unique pattern of personal identity, such that if some of my roles change, others will of necessity change also, literally making me a different person" (Rosemont and Ames 2016, p. 53). This special meaning of *ming* can also be shown by the idea of "dynamic appellation," which means that the same person can have various appellations due to changes in scene and relationship (Yu 1999, p. 274).

However, compared with "membership," it is worth noting that the Confucian idea of *fen* has a very distinct hierarchical attribute, one of the significant characteristics of Confucianism, which claims that people should be distinguished by high or low, noble or humble. Every name-bearing person, who is also a role-bearing person, is fixed in his/her relationships and given a hierarchical position in them. Rights, obligations, and even social benefits are distributed according to the hierarchical position that he/she occupies. It is not a normative system in line with modern values such as equality or democracy, and is even seen as an accomplice of authoritarianism. Nevertheless, if we take a positive view of this hierarchy based on "role" (*ming*), it could be seen as the basis of social and political order. This is the reason why Xunzi claimed that the establishment of *fen* could stop disputes and chaos.

Moreover, the so-called "order" here is not the abstract and normative rule, but the code of conduct that varies from person to person. Despite the similarities of *ming*, persons who bear the same name often behave differently. Take lord 君 *(jun)* for instance. Every lord should observe the same norms and have approximately the same virtues. There is a chapter in Xunzi named "on the way of a Lord" 君道 *(jundao)*. By self-questioning and answering, Xunzi offers the way of a lord according to its name. "What is a 'lord'? I say that he is one who can assemble," which includes "providing a living for the people and caring for them, arranging and ordering men, providing clear principles for the orderly dispositions and constraining faults and in refining the people" (*Xunzi* 12.6; Knoblock 1988, pp. 181–82). 君者，何也？曰：能群也。能群也者，何也？曰：善生養人者也，善班治人者也，善顯設人者也，善藩飾人者也。Dong Zhongshu even summarized the five virtues of a lord, namely "origin, source, expediency, geniality, and the multitude" 元科、原科、權科、温科、群科 (*CQFL* 35.2; Queen and Major 2016, p. 346). This does not mean that everyone who is called "a lord" possesses these virtues or obeys these rules completely. Instead, a lord is free to choose which virtue or rule to invoke in dealing with political affairs. Rosemont defined role ethics as particularism. By using the analogy of language, he said, "Constraints on roles are very much like constraints on language. There are many ways to be a good friend or teacher, as we have noted, and it is through the unique way each of us lives these roles that we express our creativity" (Rosemont 2015, p. 104). Therefore, one lord will differ from other lords because of the different ways in which he treats people and how he ministers to and handles political affairs depending on various situations, even though they are all defined as "lord". This is the reason why Rosemont believed that role ethics is "highly particularistic, highly contextualized" (Rosemont 2015, p. 174), which can also be used to define the Confucian theory of *ming*. Firstly, it means emphasizing the significance of the particularity of situations and conditions in moral and political practice. Secondly, everyone follows the demand of *ming* and serves as part of an overall harmony, which is the Confucian equivalent of the "common good".

## 5. *Ming* and "Appropriateness": A "Thick" Conception of the Subject

Compared with communitarianism, Confucianism rarely addresses the issue of individual rights. This is likely because Confucianism does not have liberalism as its opposition. However, this does not mean that it has no comment on individual or personal rights. In fact, one of the reasons why Confucianism fits so well with communitarianism is that the two share attitudes toward individuals and rights. For example, communitarians oppose the "unencumbered self" (Sandel 1998, p. 90), while Confucianism asserts the importance of relationships and roles. While communitarians reject the liberals' claim of

the primacy of rights, Confucianism conceals "rights," along with duties and virtues, in a composite conception of the subject. The above claim on "particularism" refers to the creativity of the individual in ethical and political practice, which has already suggested the existence of the concept of a subject of ethical behavior in Confucianism. It might be considered that Confucianism advocates a "thick" conception of the subject. Here I want to use the "thick" conception and the "thin" conception to distinguish between the Confucian/communitarian view of the subject and the liberal one. The main difference between them is that the former accommodates more dimensions and factors in the concept of the subject, such as virtue, right and duty, while the latter takes only one single dimension of right. It could also be proven in the theory of *ming*, especially in the connection between *ming* and *yi* 義 (appropriateness). Here, "appropriateness" was chosen to translate *yi* 義. Because of the relationship with *ming*, *yi* first means that every name has its meaning, then that each name is consistent with the object it refers to. In this sense, "justice" or "righteousness," as the usual translations read, does not fit so well with the meaning of *yi* in this paper.

First of all, names having their reference objects and appropriateness can be regarded as the match between a name and its referent. For objects, it is the match between name and reality 名實 (*mingshi*).[11] In Xunzi's expression, "the way a True King institutes names [is as follows]. Because fixed names keep objects distinguished" 王者之制名，名定而實辨 (Xunzi 22.1c; Knoblock 1988, p. 128). On the question of how to use names to distinguish objects and to avoid confusion, Xunzi also clearly illuminated the way of "giving each different reality a different name" 使異實者莫不異名也，不可亂也 (Xunzi 22.2f; Knoblock 1988, p. 130). Name functions as the distinguisher of objects; at the same time, the essence of what makes the distinction possible is the match between a name and its objects. As the above-mentioned quotation states: "how can social divisions be translated into behavior? I say it is because of humans' sense of appropriateness". Wang Xianqian has noted that: "*fen* (division) and *yi* (appropriateness) are dependent on each other. *Yi* means adjudication and judgment" 言分義相須也。義，謂裁斷也 (Wang 1988, p. 194). Divisions first mean judging and separating things according to their nature. Then, they imply the match between names and the things to which they refer, which is what "appropriateness" means. This conception of *yi* is further developed in one of Dong Zhongshu's expressions. Dong, who inherited Xunzi's theory of *ming*, said, "[Each of] the myriad things comes into existence bearing a name. The sage names them in accordance with their appearance. However, [names] can be modified, in every case in accordance with righteous principles. Thus, one rectifies names so that the names are righteous" 萬物載名而生，聖人因其象而命之。然而可易也，皆有義從也，故正名以名義也 (*CQFL* 82 A.2; Queen and Major 2016, p. 615). Dong apparently attributed the combination of things with their natures to the sage. As he asserted, the relationship between things and names are not fixed at the outset; it is the sage that names things by their images. After that, if the names deviate from the objects to which they refer, the sages can still modify these names. The rationale behind the behavior of naming and renaming is appropriateness, which can also be understood as the match between names and things.

From things to human beings, appropriateness usually implies the duties and virtues belonging to the persons to whom the names refer. In the chapter named "deeply examine names and designations" 深察名號, Dong Zhongshu ties each person within a political structure to a name, and each naming activity implies certain demands on conduct and virtue. "Those who are designated 'Son of Heaven' should look upon Heaven as their father and serve Heaven by following the path of filial piety. Those designated 'Lords of the Land' should carefully oversee what has been granted to them by the Son of Heaven. Those designated as 'great men' should fortify their loyalty and trust, esteem propriety and righteousness, and cause their goodness to surpass the standards of the common man so that it is sufficient to transform them. A 'functionary' [means "one who] performs a function". The 'common people' [means] "eyes closed in sleep" 故號為天子者，宜視天如父，事天以孝道也。號為諸侯者，宜謹視所候奉之天子也。號為大夫者，宜厚其忠信，

敦其禮義，使善大於匹夫之義，足以化也。士者，事也；民者，瞑也 (*CQFL* 35.1; Queen and Major 2016, p. 344). Behaviors and virtues of persons are clearly stipulated by their names, which can be seen as an explicit and specific development of Confucius' saying in *Analects* 12.11.

In the relationship between *ming* and "appropriateness," it is easy to see that the name provides for the virtue and obligation of the person to which it refers, but does this mean that it has no connection to the concept of right? The answer should be negative. At first glance, it is difficult to reconcile Confucianism with the concept of right, because the former advocates a hierarchical and paternalistic system, while the latter implies the idea of equality (Chan 1999, p. 222). However, as T. Bai has stated, Confucianism has some so-called "positive rights," such as "the right people have to enough resources, food and means of livelihood, the right of people to an education regardless of economic status, the rights of people to be cared for when sick or elderly," etc. (Bai 2009, p. 90). These rights held by people are certainly implicit in the appellation of "min" 民 (min) because the "common people" means "eyes closed in sleep," which also means that they lack the capacity to judge and need guidance and nurturing by rulers, which can be seen as the social benefits to which people are entitled. Communitarians would probably agree with this point. M. Walzer has a very clear claim about this. As he has mentioned, "there has never been a political community that did not provide, or try to provide, or claim to provide, for the needs of its members as its members understood those needs. And there has never been a political community that did not engage its collective strength—its capacity to direct, regulate, pressure, and coerce—in this project" (Walzer 1983, p. 68). In other words, it has become an inescapable responsibility of any political community to defend the positive rights of the people.

The protection of the rights to which people are entitled means that the Confucian claim on "name" has something beyond the defense of hierarchy. Although in later developments of Confucianism, such as the "three cardinal guides" 三綱 (*sangang*) or the "religion of names" 名教 (*mingjiao*), there was more emphasis on the subordination of subordinates to superiors, such as son to father, wife to husband, and people to lord, and there are few checks and balances between them. However, such a relationship was at least two-way in early Confucianism. As a member of a community, everyone has different rights and obligations, and in certain circumstances, such rights can be denied. For example, when Duke Xuan of Qi asked Mencius about events such as Tang's banishment of Jie and King Wu's assault of Zhou, Mencius replied: "One who offends against humaneness is called a brigand; one who offends against rightness is called an outlaw. Someone who is a brigand, and an outlaw is called a mere fellow. I have heard of the punishment of the mere fellow Zhou but never of the slaying of a ruler". 賊仁者謂之賊，賊義者謂之殘，殘賊之人謂之一夫。聞誅一夫紂矣，未聞弒君也 (Mencius 1B8; Bloom 2009, pp. 21–22). Zhou, as a tyrannical monarch, was deprived of his rights, which is shown by the changing of his appellation from a ruler to "a mere fellow" 一夫.[12] As mentioned above, Dong Zhongshu, who claimed that the designation of lord has five meanings as virtues, made the further inference that if a lord does not possess these virtues, "he will not be complete in his lordship" 不全於君 (*CQFL* 35.2; Queen and Major 2016, p. 347). In these cases, *ming* functions as a tool relied upon by Confucian scholars who criticized and even denied the authority of rulers. If the name-bearing person violates the provisions of his name, he should be deprived of that name.

In short, the relationship between *ming* and *yi* implies that a name indicates certain requirements of conduct and virtue on the part of the object to which it refers and determines the rights this object should possess. It can be assumed that the appropriate relationship between a name and its referent means that *ming* works as a complex of virtues, obligations, and rights, which is the reason why it can be seen as containing a "thick" conception of the subject. In line with this idea, we could say that Confucianism does not advocate for the notion of an individual with rights, but rather the idea of a role-attached and relationship-based person.

## 6. Conclusions

As Charles Taylor has claimed, "One is a self only among other selves" (Taylor 1989, p. 35). Like communitarianism, Confucianism is explicitly opposed to the absolute individual or "unencumbered self" and instead advocates for the formation of self-identification within various social relationships (or communities). While the commonalities between these two doctrines have been discussed by some scholars, the meaning of *ming* (name) has not yet been fully explored. Therefore, this paper attempts to embed *ming* in the conceptual cluster of Confucian communitarianism and justifies this attempt by exploring how *ming* interacts with the relationship between individual and community, and how it reflects the similarities between Confucianism and communitarianism. To be specific, the main part of this paper is organized around the four aspects of *ming*, namely: language, reputation, role, and "appropriateness". Firstly, the interpretation of *ming* as language represents Confucius' original conception when he advocated for "*zhengming*." Since the speech of a ruler has a significant influence on politics, Confucius required rulers to be very cautious about their words. Furthermore, *ming*, according to its word origin and basic meaning, inherently contains the property of interpersonal interaction, which links the individual with the community. Secondly, *ming* as reputation is also a common meaning in *Analects*. As the evaluation system of individuals, *ming* plays an important role in shaping values and identity and is a crucial tool for rulers to use in the government of their subjects. If we consider "community" to be a group sharing the same values and self-identifications, then the effect of *ming* in the sense of reputation should be emphasized. Thirdly, the conception of *fen* (role) advocated by Xunzi can also be regarded as an aspect of the Confucian notion of *ming*. Like "membership" in communitarianism, it is the *fen* that integrates the plural into the *qun* (community). Meanwhile, it is also the *fen* that brings order to the community (despite the "side-effect" of defending hierarchy). Finally, *ming* as a reference to an object implies the match between *ming* and its referent, which is the meaning of *yi* (appropriateness). It leads to the claim of the "thick" concept of the subject. On one hand, *ming* contains the demand for the virtue and behavior of the person to whom it refers; on the other, *ming* also implies the assertion of rights, which could be deprived if he/she violates the requirements of his/her *ming*. Here it must be noted that, despite the lack of an explicit claim to rights, Confucianism implicitly affirms the concept of "positive rights," which is consistent with the communitarian view. Although these four aspects are sequential and sometimes interrelated, such that *ming* is even presented as *fen* (role) by later interpretations, there is no doubt that *ming* should be conceived of as the bond between individual and community.

Of course, as Bell has pointed out, whether East Asians influenced by Confucianism should look to communitarianism is a debatable question because of the substantial overlap existing between them. On the contrary, drawing from communitarianism as a useful supplement to Confucian values could be a valuable way to combine them (Bell 2020). Focusing on the Confucian theory of *ming*, the question might be which contributions *ming* can provide to this combination, and indeed to the modernization of Confucianism. In this sense, *ming* might well be a notion that preserves the Confucian tradition—including traditions like focusing on the common good and emphasizing the significance of virtues— while also better dovetailing with modern values and providing a "thick" and sound conception of the subject. Therefore, by analyzing the rich meaning of *ming* and how it is involved with the relationship between individual and community, this paper hopes to invite *ming* into the conceptual cluster of Confucian communitarianism. The significance of this work, compared with the enrichment of the discourse on communitarianism, focuses more on the modern transformation of Confucianism.

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## Notes

[1]    For representative researches on the Confucian notion of *ming* and *zhengming*, see Feng (1947); Cheng (1977); Schwartz (1985); Hansen (1992); Makeham (1994); Ding (2008); Gou (2016); F. Cao (2017); Geaney (2018); Defoort (2021a), etc. These studies either reveal the significance of *ming* or *zhengming* in Confucian philosophy or explore the different meanings or aspects of *ming* from different perspectives, such as linguistic, logical, ethical, and political. They have partly touched upon the topic of this paper, however, the Confucian notion of *ming* has not been systematically examined from the perspective of comparative political philosophy. This is precisely the intention of this paper.

[2]    Translations of all citations from the *Analects* are adapted from (Ni 2017).

[3]    Translations of all citations from *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn (chunqiufanlu)* are adapted from (Queen and Major 2016).

[4]    For more discussion of modern criticism on *"mingjiao,"* especially in the field of literature, see (Jin 2019).

[5]    Translations of this citation from *Gongyang Commentary* is adapted from (Miller 2015).

[6]    The original is in French, and the translation is my own.

[7]    Translations of this citation from *Zuozhuan* is adapted from (Durrant et al. 2016).

[8]    Translations of *Guoyu* are my own.

[9]    Translation of *Lost Book of Zhou* is my own.

[10]    Translations of this citation from *Xunzi* is adapted from (Knoblock 1988).

[11]    For more discussions on the relationship between name and reality in Confucianism, see (Makeham 1994, pp. 44–47; Ding 2008, pp. 89–96).

[12]    Translations of this citation from *Mencius* is adapted from (Bloom 2009).

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# The Ritualization of Classic Confucian Spirit of Jing (Reverence and Respect): Evidence from Traditional Chinese Capping Ritual

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**Abstract:** In ancient China, all moral concepts are based on Li 禮 (ritual). Jing 敬 (reverence and respect) is one of the core categories of Confucian ritual spirituality and has rich ideological connotations. This study discusses how Confucianism realizes the ritualization of jing and constructs its symbolic system in the capping ritual to strengthen adult consciousness and social responsibility. First, based on relevant classic texts, we clarify the internal relationship between traditional ritual spirituality and jing. Then, we present an overview of the coming-of-age ceremony and discuss how religious beliefs and rituals incorporate Confucian ethical values and aesthetics. Finally, from the ritual uses of time, space, and behavior, we examine the meaning of jing in the specific practice of the traditional Chinese capping ritual and how it is conveyed to participants and observers through ritual implements and behaviors. The results show the capping ritual as an important life etiquette, and Confucianism injects the spirit of jing into every phase to cultivate an emotional response that will instantiate a moral ideal applicable to individuals and the state. In complex, modern societies, it is important to condense the Confucian spiritual connotation of jing and integrate it into modern coming-of-age rites.

**Keywords:** Confucian etiquette; classic texts; ritual spirituality; jing (reverence and respect); life etiquette; coming-of-age ceremony; the capping ritual; ancient China; meaning in feudal society

## 1. Introduction

Confucianism has played a vital role in establishing the foundation of religious practice in the traditional societies of East Asia (Jung 2019). *Li* 禮 (ritual), one of the core concepts of Confucian thought, was initially applied to specifically religious ceremonies, and later extended to refer to the ceremonial expression of respect or grandness and used in a general sense of social ethical standards of hierarchical feudal society (Editorial Board of Ci Hai 1997). As said in the *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周禮), "The rules have 300 articles and 3000 in detail 經禮三百，曲禮三千". From the perspective of Confucian thought, the ritual system involves efforts to cultivate one's inner etiquette behavior, moral conduct and sentiment. It also consists of regulations stipulating human–nature relationships, interpersonal ethical relationships, and the ruling order (Fan and Li 2020; Hsu 2021). Indeed, over time, Confucianism gives meaning to and regulates everyday life in more inclusive ways. Significantly, the essential occasions in people's lives—commemorating one's birth, puberty, marriage, and death—have been fundamentally based on Confucian rituals (Jung 2019; Peng 2017).

Durkheim once said, "In fact, if the ritual does not have a certain degree of sacredness, it cannot exist (Durkheim 2008)". From the primitive religion to the humanistic religion of civilized societies, the purpose of religious rituals is to solve the fear and anxiety that human beings feel towards death. The concern for life directly leads humans to pay attention to turning points of the lifecycle in individual development. *The Rites of Passage* (van Gennep

et al. 1961) notes that birth rituals, coming-of-age rituals, marriage rituals, funeral rituals, and other ceremonies have structures and symbolic meanings similar to transition rites, simulating death and rebirth to rid people of potential danger during these delicate periods. In a person's lifetime, adolescence is when secondary sexual characteristics emerge, and physiological and psychological status changes significantly and profoundly in both sexes. Almost all cultures attach great importance to this stage in anthropological materials. As a life ritual, the coming-of-age ceremony for men was called the capping ritual (*Guanli* 冠禮) in ancient China; another for girls was known as the hair-spinning ritual (*Jili* 笄禮). Because there are few records of the second, for the convenience of writing, this article mainly takes the capping ritual as an example to investigate. The ancients believed that capping marked the beginning of Confucian ritual propriety and helped the youth become a complete person or an adult. We surveyed Mandarin-language literature and discovered many studies on the traditional capping ritual, for example, focused on the historical origin (Yang 1999), institutional changes (Wang 2016), ritual norms (Hardy 1993), costume characteristics (Hsu 2021), and educational value (Ping 2012). However, the ideological implications hidden in the logical structure of capping's main program have not been sufficiently discussed.

The traditional ritual spirit of *jing* 敬 (reverence and respect) runs through the development of Confucian thought. *Jing* is a spiritual demand on secular life and the emotional basis of moral behavior. Compared with the research on other concepts of moral principles (i.e., affection for the family 親親, respect for honor 尊尊, filial piety for elders 孝, humaneness for the treatment of all 仁) born from the patriarchal clan system, the theoretical research and practical attention to *jing* are relatively weak. Some scholars have begun to explore the relationship between *jing*, ancient religious beliefs, and Confucian rituals in recent decades (Angle 2005; Liu 2019). These studies indicated that the concept of *jing* originated from ancient *wu* 巫 (shaman) activities. Although *jing* appears to denote religious piety, in fact, it emphasizes human subjectivity and moral principle; this religious emotion and attitude was especially extended in Zhou ritual propriety to one's sincere reverence towards elders and superiors, which become a part of human shaping (Li 2004; Mou 2008). Based on the role of emotions in classical Confucian conceptions, Jia interpreted the inner orientation of the word *chengjing* 诚敬 (sincere reverence) in the compound form and emphasized that it was an essential moral emotion and attitude (Jia 2021). Chen (2013) conducted exploratory research around the key words of the capping ceremony and the spirit of respect, but the relevant issues were not discussed in depth. Therefore, although some researchers have realized the importance of *jing* in the execution of Confucian etiquette, there is a less comprehensive examination of this critical concept in the context of specific rituals.

*Li* 禮 (ritual) is an essential method and medium to express and strengthen the inner emotion of *jing*. As an important stage of life etiquette, does the capping ritual carry such an emotional core? What kind of rite arrangements will help the candidate become an adult and qualify for ancestral services? How do people cultivate reverence and respect for their social roles and realize the goal of adult responsibility consciousness and ethical self-discipline? Therefore, based on classical Confucian texts, this study selected the deployment of time, space, and behavior in the traditional capping ritual as an example to discuss how the emotional expression, spiritual essence, and moral connotation of *jing* are ritualized.

## 2. The Fundamental Spirits of Confucian Ritual: Jing (Reverence and Respect)

The Chinese term *li* 禮 is somewhat broader than the English "ritual" since it includes actions and attitudes that we would be more likely to categorize as propriety, decorum, or etiquette. Analyzed from the angle of character shape and origin, *li* is composed of *shi* 示 (the god of sacrifice) and *li* 豊 (the instrument of worship). The first Chinese dictionary, the *Origin of Chinese Characters* 説文解字 (Xu 2018) compiled by Xu Shen, 121 A.D, explained that "*li*, to perform or carry out, serving the spirits to obtain blessings (禮，履也，所以事神致福也) (Ing 2013)." *Li* originated from sorcery rites in prehistoric societies. Its meaning is to hold ceremonies, make sacrifices and seek blessings, expressing a reverence

for nature and the worship of deities. It was later extended to a code of conduct or moral attitudes and actions to express respect. The attribute structure of *li* has the characteristics of religion, morality, social hierarchy, practical principle, institutional factor and politics, and it plays a vital role in distinguishing the status and affinity between individuals and maintaining a hierarchical order of ethical relationships conducive to social stabilization (Sun 2015; Tian 2014). As *The Great Learning* 大學 (Confucius and Mencius 2003) asserts, "A sovereign should try to reach the realm of benevolence, a minister should try to reach that of reverence, a son, that of filial obedience, a father, that of affection, and those who want to make friends with other people, should try to reach the realm of trustworthiness (為人君止於仁，為人臣止於敬，為人子止於孝，為人父止於慈，與國人交止於信)." The confirmation of *li* not only assumes the vital function of maintaining patriarchal social order, but also clarifies individuals' identity in ethical relations. The spirit of *li* is important, but without the form, the meaning of ritual will cease to exist. Therefore, the significance of formulating rituals lies in constructing a symbolic order. Through poetry, music, ritual implements, and costumes, the public learned inherent moral values, which enlightened adherents on both their status and responsibilities, and consequently, the people fulfilled their duties and obligations.

*Jing* 敬 (reverence and respect) is the core category of Confucian philosophy, running throughout the development of Confucianism (Fu 2020; Li 2004). The original meaning of *jing* refers to vigilance against external threats and dissident forces, as well as the feelings of devotion and awe towards heaven in the relationship between humankind and nature. From the Yin-Shang Dynasty to the early Zhou Dynasty, the spirit of *jing* developed from "god-fearing" to "heaven-fearing", which was described as a kind of "consciousness of worries and hardships 憂患意識 (Xu 2001)". However, with the promotion of the "composition of ceremonial melodies" by Duke Zhou, rituals quietly changed from dealing with the relationship between the divine and humans to the relationship of humans with each other, which is more secular. Especially in the late Spring and Autumn Periods, Confucius transformed and updated the original concept of *jing* and incorporated it into the Confucian ideological system, cultivating personal reverence and respect for social roles and bringing about a strong sense of moral obligation. A ritual system centered on "affection for the family" and "respect for the honourable" emerged, which required all actions between different social roles to incorporate displays of respect. In conclusion, the connotation of *jing* gradually expanded to social fields, realizing the transition from religion to politics and then to ethics.

*Li* (ritual) and *jing* (reverence and respect) are closely related, and they have been mentioned in many classic texts, such as *The Chronicle of Zuo* 左傳, *The Book of Rites* 禮记, and *The Analects of Confucius* 論語. With the spirit of *jing* as inner psychological support, rituals have universal significance and value in dealing with human relationships with the divine, ghosts, and other humans. According to Hsun Tzu's discourse on ritual principles, the main official rituals in Confucian states consisted of sacrifices to three kinds of entities: Cosmic forces, royal ancestors, and Confucian sages (Wang 1988). In addition, in early Confucian literature, *jing* typically manifested a frame of mind that includes single-mindedness, concentration, seriousness, caution, and a strong sense of responsibility for people, things, or states of affairs (Liu 2019). *The Record of Rites* (Consolidation Committee of Thirteen Classics Explanatory Notes and Commentaries 2000b) said, "Do not be without carefulness; be instead serious in deportment and thinking, and with words as calm as they are sure. Such an example will make people feel at ease (毋不敬，儼若思，安定辭，安民哉)". Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (a master of the late Eastern Han) explained that "all rituals are based on the spirituality of *jing*". Kong Yingda 孔穎達 from the Tang Dynasty further noted that people must have a respectful heart when they do the five ceremonies—rituals pertinent to circumstances designated as auspicious, inauspicious, fine, guest, and militar. Therefore, in the view of Confucianism, *jing* is an external attitude and an internal emotion (Li 1997; Liu 2019).

### 3. The Reconstruction of the Coming-of-Age Ceremony in Confucian Ritual: The Capping Ritual (Guanli 冠禮)

As a life transition, the coming-of-age ceremony is an essential and indispensable rite of passage. It developed from a fertility cult and totem worship in ancient society and is common in modern life rituals for various nationalities. The coming-of-age ceremony has characteristics of transience (goes through the transformation of space–time conditions), separation (achieves isolation from the past environment, worldly things, and the past self), liminality (emphasizes that the individual is in a vague state during the ritual stage), community (completes the integration of different identities and levels, sacred and secular, social and self), and reintegration (realizes the acceptance of clans, ethnic groups, and social groups) (Ping 2012). In a clan-based society, teenagers need to undergo training or a trial of initiation ceremonies at a specific age to master the necessary knowledge, skills, and strong perseverance expected of adults, to be accepted as whole clan members, and to enjoy adult rights and duties (Yang 1999). These activities often test whether individuals can satisfy the immediate goal of survival. Therefore, such a coming-of-age ceremony contains many cruel aspects, i.e., tattoos, ear piercing, nose piercing, and tooth cutting (Zhang 2015). It is believed that physical injury as a symbol can help young people establish a specific connection with clan totems and ancestral beliefs by restraining the power of sacrifice, which have the meaning of religious belief. In summary, the coming-of-age ceremony in primitive societies can be regarded as a ritual activity that mysteriously transforms an organism into a person with religious characteristics.

With the development of increasingly complex social structures, the rites of the clan system changed. A typical example is that the Chinese capping ritual was changed from a ceremony of initiation that existed in earlier clan systems (Yang 1999). Although this ritual still requires a certain amount of education and training to symbolize the passage of youth into adulthood, it must be stressed that it is by no means a simple continuation. In primitive society, the coming-of-age ceremony is mainly used to identify whether young people are adults by their endurance and tolerance to the sufferings of the body and mind; by contrast, the capping ritual in a class-based society aims to introduce the recipient to patriarchal social life through a series of ritual activities marked by clothes and accessories, which reflects the hierarchical relationship between the social status of youth and adults.

"Capping is the beginning of ritual", stated the chapters "*Guanyi* 冠義" and "*Hunyi* 昏義" in the *Record of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記) (Consolidation Committee of Thirteen Classics Explanatory Notes and Commentaries 2000b). The capping ritual (*Guanli* 冠禮) marked the passage from male adolescence to adulthood. A parallel ritual for girls was known as "pinning" (*Jili* 笄禮), but few details have survived. According to the ritual texts, through capping one becomes a complete person or an adult, and the appropriate age for this transformation was in the twentieth year. The main activities of the capping ritual are "adding the crown," that is, a young man is capped with three symbolic caps, in turn, dressed in corresponding costumes, and given a style-name (Jiao 2011). As the source for most information on how to perform the rites of life passage, the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonies* (*Yili* 儀禮) (Consolidation Committee of Thirteen Classics Explanatory Notes and Commentaries 2000a) presents the complete description of the capping ceremony in the first chapter, which is entitled "The Ritual for Capping an Ordinary [Citizen] 士冠禮". The capping ceremony is of great significance in the ancient Confucian ritual system. The *Record of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記) records, "In treating him as an adult, they will require from him the behavior appropriate to an adult (ch'eng-jen li). In requiring adult behavior from him, they will demand that he perform the duties (li) of a son, a younger brother, a subject, and a subordinate. If they are going to demand these four types of behavior in his interactions with people, how could they not emphasize this [capping] ceremony? After the demonstrations of filial piety, brotherly deference, loyalty, and obedience are accomplished, he can be regarded as a [full-grown] man. And after he is regarded as a man, he can be used to govern others (成人之者，將責成人禮焉也。責成人禮焉者，將責為人子、為人弟、為人臣、為人少者之禮行焉。將責四者之行於人，其禮可不重與？故孝弟忠順之行立，而後可以為人。可以為人，而

後可以治人也)." For these reasons, the sage kings in ancient times emphasized capping. They emphasized that ritual is used to consolidate aristocracy and maintain the patriarchal system to underscore the need for strongman rule (Hsu 2021).

According to the early classic texts, the capping ritual is divided into three stages: Preparation rites, formal rites, and post-transition rites, and it consists of 18 main steps, which are highly complex. The moral concepts in the ancient China context are based on *li*, and the spiritual core of *li* is *jing*. This spiritual dimension has played a vital role in the system maintenance of hierarchy order, the identification of social members, and the ethical cultivation of interpersonal relationships. As the critical period for the development and completion of the Confucian ethical system, the pre-Qin period was also the stage in which the capping ritual was admired and recognized the most deeply. Early Chinese culture was based primarily on kinship ties. As a result, the capping ritual became the core cultural symbol of the spirit of Confucian ritual and gradually broke through the scope of traditional religion. The spirit of Confucianism penetrated every aspect of social life, mandating consciousness, reverence, and respect for Confucian ethics, which has a particular function in ethical education.

## 4. The Spiritual Expression and Symbolic Analysis of "Jing" in the Traditional Chinese Capping Ritual

### 4.1. A Reverence for Heaven: The Role of Timing

As stated in the *Record of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記) (Consolidation Committee of Thirteen Classics Explanatory Notes and Commentaries 2000b), "In ancient times the date on which the ceremony of capping was held and the host who held it should be fixed by use of the divine of the stalks. This shows the holding of it is grave and earnest (古者冠禮，筮日、筮賓，所以敬冠事)." It describes how the capping ritual used divination instead of an arbitrary marker to determine the appropriate day, highlighting the atmosphere of solemnness and sanctity and reflecting the kindness and blessings given by heaven. The use of tortoise shells to the divine is called a practicing of 'bo' (divination by tortoise-shell 龜為蔔), and the use of stalks to the divine is called a practicing of 'shi' (divination by use of stalks 策為筮). Divination was born in culture associated with witchcraft. To prevent practical harm brought on by personal choices, the decision of timing was left to sorcery or divination. It says that divination will make humans believe what they do is not wrong while doubted, and the choice of a fortunate date will have a good ending (Chen 2009). Therefore, in traditional Chinese society, events such as capping rituals, wedding rituals, mourning rituals, and sacrifice rituals needed divination.

Some concerns need to be explained first, including whether there is a regular season or month for the capping ritual. Yang (Yang 2017) and Tang (Tang 2010a) have made some interpretations around this issue. In accordance with records in the ancient books of *Xia Xiao Zheng* 夏小正 (Xia 1981) and *Si Min Yue Ling* 四民月令 (Cui 1981), as well as unearthed documents (Ding and Xia 2010) such as the *Book of Divination* 日書 and the *Chu Silk Manuscript* 楚帛書, most Chinese scholars believe that the capping ritual was primarily held in mid-spring. Through the investigation of ancient records of astronomy and calendars, it is not difficult to find that the traditional Chinese were an agricultural society, and the origin of agricultural activities is closely related to the seasons (Xiao 2016). In the eyes of the pre-Qin Chinese, the change in the four seasons is not only a symbol of the natural order but also a hallmark of the living quality of nature. Based on this, the ancients formed social thought systems that respected heaven as a deity and obeyed prescribed times for various sacrificial activities, hoping to communicate the relationship between humans and nature through a mysterious cosmic force. It is known that spring is a symbol of prosperity, growth, and the starting point of the cycle. As a result, people associated the capping ritual with the symbolic characteristics of the spring season, which is fundamental to finding a personified prototypical representation of the universal phenomena of nature. As anthropologist Harrison claimed, the hymn sung in the Dionysian ceremony eulogizes

spring and is sung as a coming-of-age hymn for youth to celebrate their "second birth" (Harrison 2008).

Second, what designated particular days in divination as auspicious for the capping ritual? As said in the chapter "*Quli* 曲禮" in the *Record of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記), "To do the affairs outside the ancestral temple you should begin on the odd days, and the affairs internal on the even days. The use of tortoise-shell or stalks to divine the date, beyond ten days is called a distant day, and within ten days is called a near day. The date of making a funeral should divine a distant day, and of making fortunate matters should divine a near day (外事以剛日,內事以柔日。凡蔔筮日:旬之外曰遠某日,旬之內曰近某日。喪事先遠日，吉事先近日)." As the capping ritual is the most important of the fine ceremonies, and it is also an internal affair held in the ancestral temple, even-numbered days may be the best choice. Assuming that the ritual was performed in February, divination should be performed in late January; if the result is unfavorable, people proceed to divine for a day farther off, observing the same rules as above (Yang 2017). Although ancient texts contained instructions for choosing the day for the capping ritual, people did not completely follow the relevant provisions in practice and fixed the ceremony by month, which had some rational characteristics. However, there is no denying that the method of seeking divination hides people's reverence for the power of the universe.

Importantly, the capping ritual was generally held at the dawn of day as the best time to communicate with the deities. The *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonies* (*Yili* 儀禮) said, "The usher asks the Master of Ceremonies to name a time, the steward announces it, saying 'To-morrow, at full light, the ceremony will commence' (攝者請期。宰告曰『質明行事』)". It follows that all things were seen as revitalized in the full light of day. As a result, the capping ritual held at this time would have easily made the ritual candidate feel a particular spirit of reverence. In conclusion, the capping ritual of the pre-Qin Dynasty tended to be held at the dawn of one of the even-numbered days in a specific spring month according to ancient texts. There is evidence to prove that such timing is not accidental. The ritual is held following natural timing, showing an apparent spirit of reverence and obedience to heaven.

### 4.2. Honoring Ancestors: The Role of Space

As the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonies* (*Yili* 儀禮) recorded, "Divining (with the stalks) is carried out in the doorway of the ancestral temple 筮於廟門". The temple is a place to worship the ancestors of clans or families and is also sacred land for rites of passage. The R*ecord of Rites* points out the importance of holding the pre-Qin capping ritual in the solemnity of the temple: In ancient times they attached importance to the ceremony of capping, so they held this ceremony in the ancestral temple, which showed their respect for the capping. So, they dared not to treat it presumptuously. This was because their positions in the family hierarchy were humbled, and they gave reverence to their ancients (古者重冠，重冠故行之於廟; 行之於廟者，所以尊重事; 尊重事。而不敢擅重事; 不敢擅重事，所以自卑而尊先祖也). The practice of the capping ritual began with divination at the door of the ancestral hall and was then held inside, which reflected the solid centrality of ancestor worship with a spirit of reverence. On the one hand, it emphasized that through this ritual, ritual candidates have the status and responsibilities of adults and are thereby eligible to carry on the family line and serve the ancestors. More importantly, it is hoped that ritual candidates can obtain the recognition and blessings of ancestors through the ritual. These feelings of reverence, awe, and dependence on the ancestors belong to religious emotions.

According to the architectural composition and hierarchical principles of the ancestral temple, places such as doors, steps, halls, and chambers contained sacred relationships related to identity conversion, and powerful narratives (Tang 2010b). In the space for the capping ritual, the ritual candidate is mainly involved in three places: The steps, the hall, and the east chamber. The east chamber 東房 carries the most sacred sense of ritual, regarded as a holy space of death and rebirth (Figure 1). Why is the east chamber so crucial in the capping ritual? First, the chamber is the main activity space for ancient Chinese

women (mothers). The ancient Chinese architecture and its internal structure contain the profound connotations of the ritual system everywhere, which conveys the concept of social hierarchy, gendered roles, and the desire for heaven's blessings, indicating distinctions in old Chinese manners. Second, the east chamber is divided into two parts, and the area outside on the north side connected to the stairs was called the north hall. It indicated that the spatial orientation in ancient Chinese temples has a connection to the five elements 五 行 (Ye 2005). For example, the north is associated with receding factors such as water, earth, winter, darkness, death, and the female sex. Therefore, compared to the hall in the middle (for the head of a family), the north hall is the feminine place for women (mothers) to stand during the ritual. In addition, there is other evidence that the north hall refers symbolically to women, such as the presence of daylilies (Tang 2010b). The chapter "My lord, Songs of Wei" in the *Book of Poetry* says, "Where's the herb to forget? To plant it north I'd start (焉得 諼草? 言樹之背)". The word "herb" refers to daylilies. Planting them in the north hall can make people remember to forget. If women wore daylilies, it means they could have more children, making the daylily a symbol of motherhood in ancient families (Williams 2006).
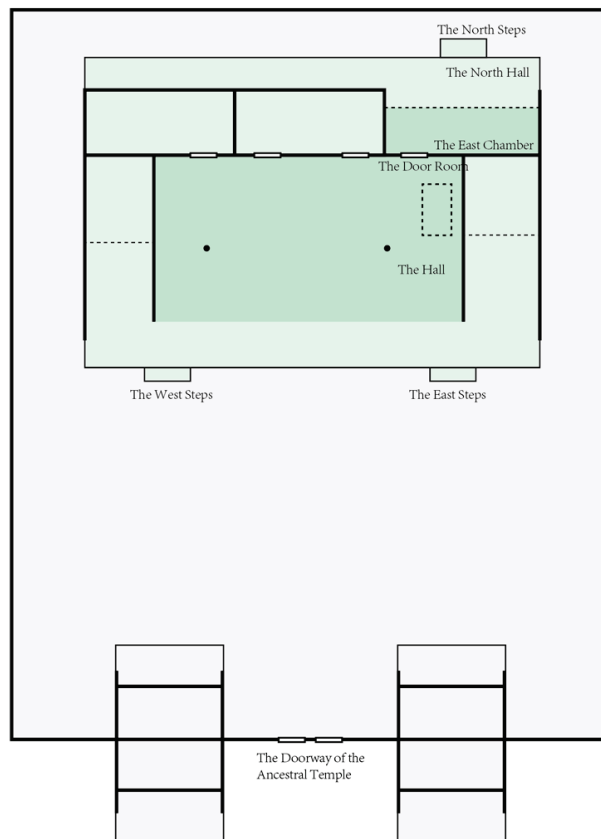


**Figure 1.** The spatial distribution diagram of the ancestral temple. (Reference from the book of The Orientation Map of the Newly Compiled Etiquette and Ceremonial, Mai Jin, published by Zhongzhou Ancient Books Publishing House).

Through many ethnographic writings, it is not difficult to find that the coming-of-age ceremony of various ethnic groups worldwide generally hides a symbolic meaning of resurrection from the dead. For example, the anthropologist Victor Turner (Turner 1970) pointed out that "youth without rites of passage is parasitic in the womb of society, while

life is still in a certain dark state". Meanwhile, it can be found that a sacred place for the coming-of-age ceremony is needed to convey the core meaning of symbolic death and rebirth, such as groves, caves, wigwams, or graveyards. Based on the above analysis, the east chamber, in the spatial intention of the capping ritual, was a symbol of the mother's body and had the same symbolic identity as resurrection from the dead (Tang 2010b). The ritual candidate, dressed in the clothes of his youth and with his hair tied together in the east chamber, waited before the ritual and shuttled through the hall to salute and change clothes during the three cappings (see Figure 2). After that, the ritual candidate was completely separated from the east chamber and did not return there. Compared with the first (natural) birth from the mother's abdomen, the process of entering and leaving the east chamber is similar to the action of swallowing and spitting, symbolizing the candidate's experience of the second rebirth and becoming a complete man who can enter social situations. To summarize, the capping ritual held in the ancestral temple strengthens the clan relationship and implies deep love and gratitude for ancestors and parents. This shows the hierarchical characteristics and ethical norms of ritual space built with *jing* as the support, highlighting a serious frame of mind.



**(1)** The First Capping     **(2)** The Second Capping     **(3)** The Third Capping
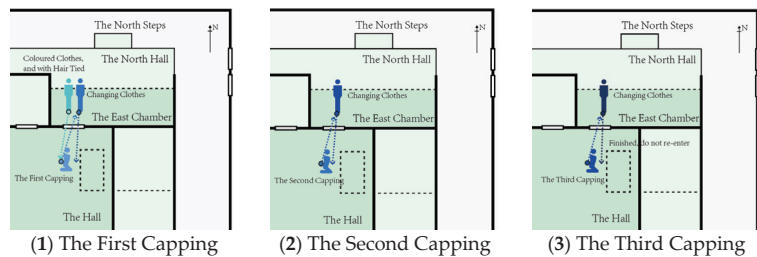
**Figure 2.** The orientation diagram of the ritual "adding three cappings". (Reference from the description of the Record of Rites and the Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial).

### 4.3. Valuing Affairs: The Role of Behavior

The behavior of "adding the crown 加冠" is the central part of the pre-capping ritual. After a series of preparatory rites, the candidate, with the help of the guest, puts three kinds of symbolic caps on his head and changes into corresponding costumes (Hardy 1993) (Figure 3). As recorded in the *Record of Rites*, "Hold the ceremony three times, with each more honourable than the last to show that the one has become a full-grown man (三加彌尊，喻其誌也)". In other words, the three cappings are of a progressive stateliness and are intended to intensify the feelings concerning the significance of the ritual. It was hoped that by paying reverence to ancestors and heaven, people had more emotional access to inspiration and connectedness under the influence of the external environment, thereby eventually shaping the moral character of the candidate imperceptibly and causing him to perceive the rights and obligations of adults.
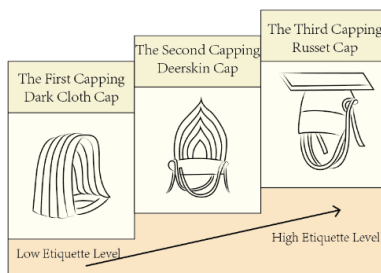


**Figure 3.** The typical crowns of the ritual "adding three cappings" (Reference from the Newly Collated Pictures of "The Three Rituals", Nie Chongyi, a scholar of Song Dynasty).

There are different ideas underlying the use of the three cappings. First, the candidate received a dark cloth cap 緇布冠 from an assistant. In the chapter "Jiao Te Sheng 郊特牲", it is said that, "In the remotest antiquity undyed cloth was worn as a head-dress, only when they took part in the sacrifice ceremony their caps were dyed black (大古冠布，齊則緇之)". At first, the black cloth cap was part of costume-based symbols to remind the candidate not to forget the hardships of the ancestors. The cap also denotes that the youth have since been empowered to participate in family affairs and some aspects of state politics. At the second capping, the guest placed a deerskin cap 皮弁 on the candidate, who again changed his robe and knee covers. The skin cap was made from pieces of white deerskin, which was initially used to protect the head in combat and hunting. The meaning is that the candidate can enjoy hunting and fighting rights and participate in national political and military activities after this ritual. At the third capping, the guest placed the russet cap 爵弁 on the initiate's head, after which the candidate again changed his ceremonial robes. The russet cap is a flat-topped hat, which is mainly used for mourning and rituals of sacrifice and had the shape of a "round front and square back", symbolizing heaven and earth. Mourning rituals and sacrifices are state affairs. Their purpose is to remind people to remember the grace of dominators and parents and show respect towards their ancestors. The russet cap for the third capping is horned, indicating that the candidate is endowed with the right to participate in funeral activities and make sacrifices to the ancestors. According to the concept of rites of passage by Gennep (van Gennep et al. 1961), individuals in the liminal phase are seen as the closest to the deities with superhuman powers. Tang (Tang 2010b) discussed the symbolic meaning of typical crowns by adding three cappings according to the ethnology materials, and believed that the deerskin cap seemed to be endowed with some ability to help individuals communicate with mysterious forces. In the pre-Qin records, deerskin was used as a reward or gift. In the chapter "the marriage of an ordinary officer 士昏禮" of the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* (*Yili* 儀禮), it can be seen that the present sent by the father of the young man to complete the preliminaries is a bundle of black and red silks and a pair of deer skins. However, it may mean more than that. It might be known as deer and deerskin have sacred symbolic significance. For example, Shaman doctors believed that deer could fly and that wearing an antler hat would continue this function (Martynov 1991). In this sense, the original meaning of adding cappings seems to symbolize specific abilities to communicate with mystical forces, showing an intentional state of respect. With further research, there may be more evidence to support this idea.

The spirit of *jing* reflects an attitude and value pursuit of life. The tedious process of "adding the crown" shows the ancient people's concentration, seriousness, and cautious attitude towards life. As the carrier of ritual symbolism, costume embodies the practical significance of the rite of passage and highlights the inner meaning of Confucian ritual spirituality. The threefold capping means that each cap is honored more than the last, thus reminding the candidate to reverently restrain their demeanor and preserve the integrity of their virtue. More importantly, the effect of the entire process is to increase the candidate's resolve and then develop an inner sense of reverence for individuals, families, societies, and countries. The change of clothes and crowns corresponds to the meaning representation of "death and rebirth", which reminds of the clarity of power and obligation for men. In conclusion, the capping ritual created an intentional state of respect for the candidate, making them feel and experience it, thereby cultivating personal reverence and respect for social roles through emotional rendering and self-discipline.

In addition, there are other behaviors worth noting during the capping ritual (Wang 2019). For example, implements for the capping ritual are placed in the western inner hall of the east chamber from north to south according to the order of their use. The place where the guest who officiates the ritual stands, and those of the family members in attendance, all have a hierarchical order. The pursuit of the sense of order and harmony in ancient rites reflects the promotion of the candidate's inner respect through ritual behaviors, which organically combine the direct quality and symbolism of the Confucian spirit (Hsu 2021).

## 5. Concluding Remarks

Confucianism has played a vital role in establishing the foundation of East Asian civilizations. This study firstly used the literature to sort out the internal relationship between *li* (ritual) and the spirit of *jing* (reverence and respect). For the state and society, the traditional ritual is a means of state domination, and it affirms hierarchical distinctions to restrain social conflict. For individuals, it had the capacity to restrain personal emotion and strengthen internal cultivation. As the external expression of natural human emotion, the spirit of *jing* is positively expressed and, at the same time, properly controlled under the guidance and cultivation of Confucian etiquette. People inspired this natural feeling through a symbolic system that guided the Confucian rites of passage in life. These ideas were proven in several ways in subsequent discussions.

Second, we reviewed the historical evidence for the actual performance of the coming-of-age ceremony and discussed the different characteristics and signs of coming-of-age ceremonies in primitive societies and feudal societies. In the Confucian context, capping was the ceremony in which adolescent males were initiated into adulthood. It seems particularly useful for reflection on early moral emotions since it belongs to a category of ritual that has received considerable attention throughout the world. It is concluded that the feeling of *jing* was ritualized in the traditional capping ritual and permeated the whole procedure. The capping ritual's arrangement of time and space have sacred purposes to reflect gratitude for the kindness given by heaven and to obtain the blessings of ancestors by offering sacrifices. More importantly, simulating the cycle of the four seasons captures the inherent meaning of "death and rebirth". On the other hand, through a set of standardized actions, costume supports, and ritual implements, the ceremony created a solemn situation to help the candidate internalize moral emotions in practice. The psychological benefits of capping are always subordinated to its social functions, and foremost among them was the patriarchal education of a young man in an atmosphere of reverence and respect.

With the spread of traditional Confucianism in East Asia, the capping ritual was absorbed and transformed into ceremonies with local cultural and custom characteristics. The Chosun Dynasty in Korea and Edo Japan continued this ritual from China, and it still exists today. For example, Korea defines the third Monday of May as the day of 성년의 날, while Japan defines the second Monday of January as the day of 成人の日. The ceremonial functions of the capping ritual have been observed to reflect cultural values and shape spiritual thought. On this point, the early ritual texts were quite successful. However, if continued use is an index of a ritual's satisfactoriness, capping was inappropriate in later imperial China (Hardy 1993). Although the cap has been an essential item of formal costume throughout Chinese history, gradually, the capping ritual ceremony was no longer strictly practiced. The Ming and Qing dynasties frequently noted that other family rituals enjoyed greater continuity. The capping got lost in the transition.

Spirituality is rooted in the essence of Confucian capping rituals and etiquette. In contemporary social contexts, adolescents have become pioneers in the development of a modern lifestyle. Their phase of life is increasingly expanding, and they are gradually faced with the structural characteristics of status insecurity and status inconsistency (Hurrelmann and Quenzel 2015). The lack of etiquette and the confusion of moral values among young people in Chinese society makes it necessary and urgent to return connotations of traditional etiquette and Confucian spirit. Although the proposal to revive the capping ritual received social attention in the early 2000s, it still faces the development dilemma of maintaining and transforming the connotation of Confucian rituals in contemporary society. It can be said that the moral symbolism and the emotional expression of the capping ritual are influenced by the change of context in cultural essentialism, nationalism, and popular culture. However, these discourses are still worthy of reflection from both normative and descriptive perspectives, rather than arguing that they are outdated and need to be written off to "purify" Confucian ethics. Therefore, this study explores the ritualized presentation of the feeling of *jing* in the capping from a cultural perspective, hoping to contribute to the current trend of approaching Confucian ethics from a more comprehensive perspective. At

the same time, it will help us further understand the interaction between the Confucian ritual spirit and the reform of modern ceremonies.

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*Article*

# *One* or *Two Roots*? Yi Zhi and the Dilemma of Practical Reason

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**Abstract:** Mohism has two versions of ethics, attributed to Mozi and Yi Zhi 夷之, respectively. Mozi introduced an ethics usually described as utilitarian, emphasizing universal love as the basis of impartiality. However, the problem with this emphasis is that it leads to neglecting the development of rational self-interest. Accordingly, Yi Zhi's remarks are a clarification or modification of Mozi's thoughts. First, Yi Zhi alluded to the concept of undifferentiated love to explain universal love as the basis of impartiality. Second, as he understood the concept of undifferentiated love in relation to the idea that "bestowing love begins with one's parents", Yi Zhi incorporated rational self-interest. Moreover, Mencius criticized Yi Zhi and disparaged his remarks as *two roots* (二本 *er ben*), contrasting it to Confucian ethics, which he said was *one root*. This division between *one root* (一本 *yi ben*) and *two roots* has garnered significant attention. On the one hand, Zhu Xi believed that the essence of two roots is undifferentiated love, wherein he concluded that it is applicable to both Mozi and Yi Zhi. On the other hand, most later scholars interpreted two roots from an ethical perspective, arguing that Yi Zhi faced the dilemma of two conflicting moral theories. Considering the basic principles of moral philosophy, the ethics of Mozi and Mencius are one root, and only that of Yi Zhi is two roots. This article shows that Yi Zhi and Henry Sidgwick, the founder of classical utilitarianism, face the same dilemma of practical reason: the conflict between utilitarianism and the self-interest of egoism.

**Keywords:** Yi Zhi; Mozi; Mencius; utilitarianism; impartiality; *one root*; *two roots*; practical reason

## 1. Introduction

The terms *one root* (一本 *yi ben*) and *two roots* (二本 *er ben*) originate in the *Book of Mencius* (孟子 *Mengzi* 3A5).[1] The text reads:

> [Yi Zhi], a Mohist, sought to meet Mencius through the good offices of [Xu Bi]. "I wish to see him too", said Mencius, "but at the moment I am not well. When I get better, I shall go to see him. There is no need for him to come here".

> Another day, he sought to see Mencius again. Mencius said, "Now I can see him. If one does not put others right, one cannot hold the Way up for everyone to see. I shall put him right. I have heard that [Yi Zhi] is a Mohist. In funerals, the Mohists follow the way of frugality. Since [Yi Zhi] wishes to convert the Empire to frugality, it must be because he thinks it the only honorable way. But then [Yi Zhi] gave his parents lavish burials. In so doing, he treated his parents in a manner he did not esteem".

> [Xu Bi] reported this to [Yi Zhi]. "The Confucians", said [Yi Zhi], "praised the ancient rulers for acting 'as if they were tending a newborn babe'. What does this saying mean? In my opinion, it means that there should be no gradations in love, though the practice of it begins with one's parents".

> [Xu Bi] reported this to Mencius. "Does [Yi Zhi] really believe", said Mencius, "that a man loves his brother's son no more than his neighbor's newborn babe? He is singling out a special feature in a certain case: when the newborn babe creeps towards a well it is not its fault. Moreover, when Heaven produces things, it gives them a single basis [*yi ben*], yet [Yi Zhi] tries to give them a dual one [*er ben*]. This accounts for his belief.

"Presumably there must have been cases in ancient times of people not burying their parents. When the parents died, they were thrown in the gullies. Then one day the sons passed the place and there lay the bodies, eaten by foxes and sucked by flies. A sweat broke out on their brows, and they could not bear to look. The sweating was not put on others to see. It was an outward expression of their innermost heart. They went home for baskets and spades. If it was truly right for them to bury the remains of their parents, then it must also be right for all dutiful sons and benevolent men to do likewise".

[Xu Bi] repeated this to [Yi Zhi] who looked lost for quite a while and replied, "I have taken this point".

This well-known passage, which has gained considerable attention, recounts the encounter between the Mohist Yi Zhi 夷之 and Mencius. Most scholars think that Confucian ethics as represented by Mencius is *one root*, and Mohism or Yi Zhi's ethics is *two roots*. In contrast, in this article, we explore and reinterpret *two roots*—or, in general, the discussion that transpired in the encounter between Mencius and Yi Zhi—from the perspective of the dilemma of practical reason. We argue that Yi Zhi's *two roots* problem falls into a famous dilemma of moral philosophy: the dualism of practical reason.

## 2. Two Versions of Mohist Ethics: Mozi and Yi Zhi

In the above passage, Mencius criticizes Yi Zhi for violating the Mohist doctrine. Mozi (墨翟 *Mo Di*), the founder of Mohism, introduced the doctrine of frugality in funerals, which Yi Zhi, as a Mohist, must follow. However, he disobeys it and instead buries his parents lavishly. In response to this criticism, Yi Zhi states "there should be no gradations in love, though the practice of it begins with one's parents" (爱无差等, 施由亲始 *aiwuchadeng, shiyouqinshi*).[2] Moreover, this person, Yi Zhi, is not mentioned outside of the *Book of Mencius*. Hence, Liang Qichao 梁启超 (Cai 2008) asserts that it would be difficult to trace this person's lineage. Before analyzing why Yi Zhi understands the concept of undifferentiated love in relation to the idea that "bestowing love begins with one's parents", it is necessary to examine Mozi's ethics, and various challenges to it.

### 2.1. The Nature of Mozi's Ethics: Utilitarianism

Since the time of Liang Qichao, Hu Shi 胡适, and Feng Youlan 冯友兰, most Mainland Chinese scholars have referred to Mozi's ethics as utilitarian. Since then, overseas scholars (including those in Hong Kong and Taiwan scholars), such as Benjamin I. Schwartz, A.C. Graham, David Nivison, Lao Sze-kwang 劳思光[3] and Wei Zhengtong 韦政通 have also endorsed this position. Indeed, Mozi's ethics is in line with the basic ideas of classical utilitarianism.[4] It is generally accepted that the core of Mozi's teachings is "universal mutual love and exchange of mutual benefit" (兼相愛、交相利 *jianxiangai jiaoxiangli*; *Mozi* 26.4).[5] Additionally, various scholars have argued that Mozi's fundamental principle is "universal love" (兼愛 *jianai*).[6] Inspired by this principle, the Mohists proposed the ten core theses, also called the ten doctrines. These are: elevating the worthy (尚贤 *shangxian*), exalting unity (尚同 *shangtong*), impartial concern (兼爱 *jian ai*), opposing military aggression (非攻 *feigong*), frugality in expenditures (节用 *jieyong*), frugality in funerals (节葬 *jiezang*), Heaven's will (天志 *Tianzhi*), elucidating the spirits (明鬼 *minggui*), opposing music (非乐 *feiyue*) and opposing fatalism (非命 *feiming*).[7] As mentioned, Yi Zhi's lavish burial of his parents contradicts one of the doctrines of Mohism—frugality in funerals. This is the first point in Mencius' criticism to which Yi Zhi responds. To understand the strength of Yi Zhi's response, it is imperative to explain the fundamentals of two Mohist doctrines: utilitarianism and universal love. The central claim of utilitarianism is maximizing consequences, in which, whether an action is right or wrong depends on the maximization of utilities; it is the principle of the "greatest happiness for the greatest number of people" (GHP).[8] In Mohism, this GHP may be stated as: "generating the wellbeing of all people under heaven" and "eradicating the suffering of all people

under heaven" (see *Mozi* 15.1). For Mozi, 天下 *tianxia* or "all people under heaven" is the most encompassing subject. Thus, Mozi thinks it is important to consider the fate of this communal reality.

To attain the state in which "that all people under heaven may experience great benefits", Mozi recommends universal love. In short, universal love is the means to achieve the general good of humankind. In the language of moral philosophy, the essence of universal love is impartiality (不偏不倚 *bupian buyi*). Impartiality is an important component of utilitarianism, and an innovative concept (see Xu 2011, p. 12). As Mozi emphasized impartiality, he simultaneously opposed otherness (別 *bie*). Otherness appears to constitute the Confucian idea of graded love (爱有差等 *aiyouchadeng*), which presupposes that love for parents and other family members must exceed love for others. Since impartiality is regarded as a universal idea, many scholars believe that Mohism provides a vision and principles superior to those of Confucianism (Roetz 1993). Moreover, universal love requires that people be neutral and impartial because it is only in this way whereby GHP can be attained. Conversely, since graded love is unequal, it undermines the GHP. It is also important to note that Mozi's universal love is a modification of the Confucian ideas of graded love and benevolence (仁爱 *renai*; see Zhu 1983, p. 262; Yang 2017). Because universal love is altruistic, Mohism appears more demanding than Confucianism. Mozi's original version of universal love is equal and impartial, which is reflected in Yi Zhi's response. Although Yi Zhi includes "bestowing love begins with one's parents" in his response to Mencius, it is important to point out that Yi Zhi's understanding of undifferentiated love implies Mozi's universal love.

### 2.2. The Fundamental Challenge to Mozi's Ethics: Moral Demand Is Too High

There are two theoretical criticisms of utilitarianism: the requirement of maximizing consequences, and the point of view of impartiality. In sum, these two criticisms suggest that utilitarianism's moral demand is too high. The first criticism involves the question of rationality, which is implied, but not emphasized, in early Chinese philosophy. Therefore, this article focuses on the second criticism. In utilitarianism, impartiality was initially introduced in the concept of the "impartial spectator" proposed by Adam Smith (2002). The crux of this concept is seeking a purely rational vision to calculate utility, and thus arrive at rational choices. Like classical utilitarianism, Mozi faced a similar problem, evident in his encounter with his contemporary, Wu Mazi 巫马子. Wu Mazi doubts his own ability to practice universal love. In the text, he asks: "[universal love] may be good [i.e., benevolent and righteous, 仁 *ren* and 义 *yi*], but how can it be put to use?" (*Mozi* 16.5). Here, Wu Mazi suggests that universal love is too demanding to be implemented. Meanwhile, Wu Mazi's doubt is consistent with Zhuangzi's 庄子 later observations about Mozi. According to Zhuangzi (33.2):[9]

> [Mozi's view] just brings sorrow and worry to the people. I fear this can never be used as the Course of the Sage. The people of the world cannot endure such a thorough rejection of what is in their own hearts. Although Mozi himself may have been up to the task, what use is that for the rest of the world?

In general, Zhuangzi thinks that the ten doctrines of Mozi are too demanding and are difficult to universalize. Accordingly, Zhuangzi also thinks that Mozi's universal love cannot be universalized. Although Mozi can do it, it cannot be forced upon others; otherwise, it would be "a thorough rejection of what is in their own hearts". Mozi's claim can be held as an individual aim, but it cannot be imposed on others as their aim. In this regard, Zhuangzi opposed Mozi's requirement to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you". Since it is considered unacceptable, Mozi's views cannot be implemented. As Zhuangzi (33.2) states, referring to Mozi's views, "I'm afraid that to instruct people thus shows no real love for them. And to put it into practice personally certainly shows no real love for oneself!" This discussion suggests that some people find Mozi's moral demands too high, and therefore unacceptable. However, the above challenges only highlight the problems with Mozi's ethics; they do not recommend alternatives.

The significance of Yang Zhu's 杨朱 notion of "each for himself" (为我 *wei wo*) is better understood in this context. Regarding the question of chronological sequence, in this article, we adopt the view that there was a Yang Zhu stage in Daoism that preceded Zhuangzi (see Fung 1948). Moreover, the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 presents the causal relationship between the thoughts of Mozi, Yang Zhu, and Mencius.[10] The text reads (*Huainanzi* 13.9):

> Universal love, honoring the worthy, esteeming ghosts, opposing fatalism: These were established by Mozi, but Yangzi [or Yang Zhu] opposed them. Keeping your nature intact, protecting your authenticity, not allowing things to entangle your form: These were established by Yangzi, but Mencius opposed them.

This text indicates that Yang Zhu's notion of "each for himself" is a response or an alternative to Mozi's universal love. What is ironic is that universal love loses the self, and without the self, it is impossible to love everyone. Perhaps, it is apt to say that Yang Zhu's objection springs from the perspective of individualism. This objection is the opposite of Zhu Xi's interpretation. In Zhu Xi's view, based on the *Mengzi*, Yang Zhu should precede Mozi. Here, Zhu Xi proposes that the principal aim of Mozi was to judge egoists such as Yang Zhu. As Zhu Xi 朱熹 (Li 1986, p. 1320) describes, "Mozi saw that people in this world are selfish, and they do not care for others, hence he proposes that all people under heaven should love each other". With these two different accounts, we accept the viewpoint of *Huainanzi*. Hence, Mozi preceded Yang Zhu (Sun 2001; Fung 1948). In this case, Yang Zhu can be considered Mozi's first challenger, i.e., egoism challenging altruism. From the perspective of moral philosophy, the essence of Yang Zhu's challenge is to accommodate an independent, autonomous self.

Mencius also challenged Mozi's universal love. In the *Mengzi*, apart from the quotation in this article's introduction, there are two other passages that also refer to Mohism. One of the passages states "if scraping himself [Mozi] bare from head to heels would benefit the whole world, he would do it" (*Mengzi* 7A26). This is to say that the Mohists are a group of people who are zealous for the good of the world. In the same vein, the *Huainanzi* also describes Mohist ethics. It states: "those who served Mozi numbered one hundred and eighty. He could send them all to walk through fire and tread on blades, face death, and not turn their heels [to flee]" (*Huainanzi* 20.22). In other words, Mohists can risk their lives. These passages seem to praise Mohists as moral saints. However, Mencius criticizes Mohists' universal love. He states (*Mengzi* 3B9):

> Since then, a sage King has not arisen; the various lords are dissipated; pundits engage in contrary wrangling; the doctrines of Yang Zhu and Mozi fill the world. If a doctrine does not lean toward Yang Zhu, then it leans toward Mozi. Yang Zhu is 'for oneself.' This is to not have a ruler. Mozi is 'impartial caring [or universal love].' This is to not have a father. To not have a father and to not have a ruler is to be an animal.

This is the criticism of Mohism's principle of universal love, which leads to extreme altruism, thus refusing priority to relatives. Later, Zhu Xi agrees with Mencius, Zhu Xi states (Zhu 1983, p. 272):

> Yang Zhu only knows how to love oneself, but he does not know that the self must practice righteousness, therefore he does not have a ruler; Mozi practices undifferentiated love and he regards his relatives as the same as everyone, therefore he does not have a father. Without a father or without a king, the way of being human becomes extinct, humans are like beasts.

One of the main points of Zhu Xi's criticism is that Mozi's undifferentiated love ignores the special moral relationship between relatives, and thus is a beast. Mencius and Zhu Xi accused Mozi of "fatherlessness", and some have questioned this. The text reads (Li 1986, p. 1320):

> The question: Regarding Mozi's universal love, why does it mean not to have a father? The response: A person has only one (set of) parents, and no one has seven hands or eight feet to love a lot. To support one's father decently is already

difficult. The reason why he supported his parents is he only wears coarse clothes and eats simple food, which he cannot bear. Desiring universal love, he cannot love his parents, and he cannot practice filial piety satisfactorily, therefore he will not have a father. Since Mozi values frugality and hates music, he reverses his chariot and went back when he heard morning songs linger around the lanes. No wonder he seeks no fame and fame is indifferent to him. It is imaginable how he treats his parents.

Considering human limitations, Zhu Xi pointed out that the principle of universal love will inevitably lead to a reduction of natural love for parents, and the love for parents will be even more tenuous. From the perspective of modern moral philosophy, the essence of Mencius and Zhu Xi's criticism lies in the fact that Mohism's universal love derives from an impersonal standpoint that emphasizes impartiality. Hence, Mohism cannot accommodate personal standpoints (see Nagel 1991).

### 2.3. "Bestowing Love begins with One's Parents": Revising Mozi's Universal Love

Based on the *Huainanzi* (13.9) mentioned above, the following sequence can be drawn: Mozi criticized Confucius, Yang Zhu criticized Mozi, and Mencius criticized Mozi. Considering the encounter between Mencius and Yi Zhi as stated in the *Mengzi*, this article provides a hypothesis: Yi Zhi responded to Yang Zhu's criticism by emphasizing self-interest (burying his relatives), while Mencius criticized Mozi and Yi Zhi, pointing out that Yi Zhi faced the dilemma of dualism. Of course, Yi Zhi's response to Yang Zhu requires modification of Mozi's insistence of impartiality to accommodate special relationships (see Dong 2015).[11] Since Confucianism prioritizes relationships such as kinship, Yi Zhi seems to lean towards Confucianism. In Mencius' view, Yi Zhi's lavish burial of his parents violates the doctrine of frugality in funerals, and this action undermines the essence of universal love. In short, Yi Zhi's actions mean that his love for his parents exceeds that of his love for others, thus violating universal love. In response to Mencius' criticism, Yi Zhi defends himself, stating "the Confucians [ . . . ]praised the ancient rulers for acting 'as if they were tending a newborn babe'. What does this saying mean? In my opinion, it means that there should be no gradations in love, though the practice of it begins with one parents" (*Mengzi* 3A5). One interpretation of this statement is the idea that "bestowing love begins with one's parents" suggests that Yi Zhi intends to weaken Mozi's claim of impartiality and emphasize the rational development of self-interest, thus modifying universal and undifferentiated love. Another possible interpretation is that Mencius accused Mozi of "fatherlessness", and Yi Zhi responded by burying his relatives. In this way, Yi Zhi augmented Mozi's utilitarianism as altruism by incorporating self-interest. However, in that case, Yi Zhi must be able to justify himself. As for Mencius' attack, he cites "affection for a child as if one's own" (若保赤子 *ruobao chizi*) as found in the *Book of Poetry* (诗经 *Shijing*) to defend himself. What is meant here is that the supreme ruler treats all of the ruled as if they were his children, and gives them equal love and care. Mencius' example supports the idea that all people have compassion for the children. In this way, Yi Zhi explains the universality of compassion by saying that it is the universal love preached by Mozi. Yi Zhi's approach is indeed clever. In addition, it also shows that he tries to find the foundation of impartiality in the human heart/mind (心 *xin*) and nature (性 *xing*), unlike Mozi who offers little discussion of heart/mind and nature.

Yi Zhi's rhetorical question, "what does this saying mean?" is a mockery of Mencius. Perhaps, it is apt to say that Yi Zhi's response justifies Mozi's universal love. In other words, Yi Zhi justifies universal love in relation to undifferentiated love. We argue that Yi Zhi is the first figure to concretize Mozi's principle of universal love by alluding to undifferentiated love. Such concretization clarifies and popularizes Mohism. More importantly, through this interpretation, the concepts of love emerging in Mohism and Confucianism, respectively, are distinguished. The Confucian virtue of benevolence (仁 *ren*) is an important innovation embodied in humanity (仁爱 *ren ai*). Mozi, who studied Confucianism, followed the idea of *ren* (see *Huainanzi* 21.4). However, in Mozi's view, *ren ai* is narrow; thus, he replaced it with

the principle of universal love. In other words, Mozi regarded Confucian *ren ai* as "classified love" or loving depending on who is being loved (别爱 *bie ai*), which Mozi criticized. Yi Zhi further concretized Mozi's criticism of Confucian *ren ai*. He equated graded love with Confucian *ren ai*, and then proposed undifferentiated love as synonymous with Mozi's universal love. Yi Zhi's observation is keen, and his contrasting of Confucianism and Mohism was recognized by Zhu Xi (Zhu 2001, p. 444).

### 3. The Dispute between *One Root* and *Two Roots*

Mencius was unconvinced by Yi Zhi's defense, for two reasons. Firstly, the ethical principles of Confucianism can be considered *one root*, while the ethical principles of Yi Zhi can be considered *two roots*. Secondly, the Confucian notion of filial piety is understandable from the point of view of moral psychology (Riegel 2015). Pertinent to this article's aim, we focus on the first reason.

#### 3.1. One or Two Roots?

Let us again recall the words of Mencius (3A5):

Does [Yi Zhi] really believe[ . . . ] that a man loves his brother's son no more than his neighbor's newborn babe? He is singling out a special feature in a certain case: when the newborn babe creeps towards a well it is not its fault. Moreover, when Heaven produces things, it gives them a single basis [*yi ben*], yet [Yi Zhi] tries to give them a dual one [*er ben*].

For Mencius, Yi Zhi was too naïve to think that a person could have the same love for his nephew and his neighbor's son. Mencius also refuted Yi Zhi's use of the Confucian ideal of "as if they were tending a newborn babe" (or this can also be understood as the "affection for a child as if (it is) one's own") to justify his love for both. While there is indeed universal compassion for an innocent child who is about to fall into a well, this cannot be used to prove universal love. In other words, the Confucian concept of compassion is thin; the Mohist concept of universal love is more substantial. Therefore, the former cannot be used to prove the latter. In general, the question of *one root* or *two roots*, as summarized by Mencius, underlies the fundamental difference between Confucianism and Mohism. The ensuing discussion focuses on this question.

#### 3.2. Zhu Xi's Understanding of Two Roots: Undifferentiated Love

The original meaning of the terms *one root* and *two roots* is unclear. Hence, some translators have dealt with them more literally (Lau 2003; Yang 1960). Commentators have expressed their views about the context and the whole text of *Mengzi*. The views of Zhao Qi 赵岐 and Zhu Xi are noteworthy. Zhao Qi is the earliest annotator of Mencius. He says, "Heaven gives birth to all things; each comes from one root. Now, Yi Zhi takes the parents of others as equal to his parents, which are then two roots, and therefore he desires to give them similar love". (see Jiao 1987). In Zhao Qi's view, all things are born in Heaven, with only *one* original *root*. As he values his parents in the same way he values others' parents, Yi Zhi juxtaposes *two roots*. The crux of Zhao Qi's explanation is that the love for one's parents and the love for the parents of others come from *two roots*. Since Yi Zhi interprets Mozi's universal love as undifferentiated love, Zhao Qi's description of Yi Zhi's *two roots* is similarly applicable to Mozi. However, Zhao Qi does not explicitly state this. In contrast to Zhao Qi, who only discusses the *two roots* concerning Yi Zhi, Zhu Xi believes that the *two roots* can refer to both Yi Zhi and Mozi. In other words, he explicitly broadens the scope of the *two roots*. As Zhu Xi (Li 1986, p. 1314) states, "*One root*, naturally, has many differences. *Two roots* simultaneously exist, and there is no difference. Mozi is also *two roots*. The question is: is this consistent with Mencius' original intention? Thus, it is imperative to understand the essence of *two roots*.

Zhu Xi also explained the passage from the *Mengzi* that mentions the term *two roots*. Zhu Xi (Zhu 1983, pp. 262–63) states:

Mencius said that the love for his brother's son was different from that of his neighbor's son. Everyone must be born from his parents and there is no difference, it is the principle of nature like the will of Heaven. Therefore, classified or unequal love is established, and extended to others. Now, as Yi Zhi said, he sees his parents as no more than passersby, but the order of bestowing love should start from here. What else could it be if not *two roots*? However, he knows what to choose between priorities. Nothing can extinguish the inherent clarity of the original mind of Yi Zhi. This is the reason why he can be aware of his mistake.

Zhu Xi's explanation highlights three points. The first pertains to the Confucian notion of graded love as emphasized by Mencius. Second, it is inevitable that there is only one source of all things; perhaps, Zhu Xi's interpretation in this regard is more profound than the commentary of Zhao Qi of the Han Dynasty. Third, Yi Zhi's remark "bestowing love begins with one's parents" differs from the original Mohist doctrine and could even be construed as contradictory.[12] In Zhu Xi's view, the fundamental basis of the Confucian notion of graded love is *one root*. Alluding to Yi Zhi's point of view, Zhu Xi (Li 1986, p. 1314) states: "what has difference, *one root* has difference, (it) is not forged". In other words, because of *one root*, there is graded love. However, we cannot say that because of graded love, there is *one root*. As Zhu Xi (Zhu 2001, p. 444) notes: "there are also those who take differentiated love as *one root*, although there is no big mistake, but the meaning is not complete. If it is said that graded love is because of *one root*, then it is possible. If it is said that *one root* is because of love with distinctions, then it is not possible". In other words, *one root* contains graded love, but graded love is not *one root*, yet it is an essential attribute of *one root*.

Common sense suggests that emotions are more intense among family or relatives than among other groups. Accordingly, the Confucian notion of graded love has a strong psychological foundation. Its opposite, undifferentiated love, is unnatural to human psychology. In Zhu Xi's interpretation, the Mohist views expressed by Yi Zhi are problematic. Zhu Xi (Zhu 2001, p. 444) states:

Now, Yi Zhi is talking about undifferentiated love, but it is not known where it originates, and he also sees his parents as different from the others. Distributing love in order is not contrary to righteousness. If we start bestowing love to our relatives, it is hard to know the origin of this love. What is the difference between *one and two roots*? Those who may say that bestowing love begins with the relatives are implicitly in line with *one root* of our Confucian texts. I think a tiny lapse can lead to a huge difference. People who hold this view also do not know what *one root* is.

Although Zhu Xi is sympathetic to Yi Zhi's assertion "bestowing love begins with one's parents", he also strictly defends the basic boundary between Mohism and Confucianism. Accordingly, Zhu Xi refutes the view that Yi Zhi's assertion "distributing love begins with one's parents" is implicit in Confucianism. In following Zhu Xi, it can be said that undifferentiated love is the basic attribute of the *two roots*. In short, the essence of *two roots* is undifferentiated love. From the point of view of moral value, Mozi refused to ascribe parents with higher status than strangers, but emphasized that an objective position of impartiality should be adopted between relatives and strangers. Like Immanuel Kant's (1997) view that "humanity is an end in itself", no one individual has a higher moral value than another, and everyone is equal in terms of moral value. For Confucians, there are thousands of strangers, but Yi Zhi sees his parents as no different from them. In this regard, Zhu Xi (Li 1986, pp. 1313–14) quips sarcastically: "undifferentiated love seems not only two roots, but perhaps, it is ten million roots". Zhao Qi and Zhu Xi do not agree with the undifferentiated love of Mozi and Yi Zhi. Moreover, Confucianism is not opposed to impersonal and objective moral positions; it also espouses the view of "treating all people equally". However, this view only applies to the public domain, or between strangers.

*3.3. Later Scholars' Understandings of Two Roots: The Conflict between Ethical Principles*

Like Zhu Xi, A.C. Graham also believes that *two roots* applies to both Yi Zhi and Mo Zi. However, his understanding of the essence of the *two roots* differs from Zhu Xi's. Rather than dwelling on the problem or difference between undifferentiated love and graded love, A.C. Graham argues that the *two roots* of Yi Zhi is about loving all people without distinction, and favoring one's own family. At the same time, he notes that Mencius regarded *two roots* as contradictory principles (see Graham 1989, p. 43). Arguably, the tradition of Western philosophy with its focus on logical analysis is in the back of Graham's mind. Accordingly, he points out that Yi Zhi cannot pursue two different ethical directions, i.e., *two roots*, simultaneously. Graham also thought that this was not only a problem with Yi Zhi, but the central problem of the Mohist school. As he states: "the Mohist [ . . . ] have the problem of reconciling an equal concern for everyone with greater care for parents and ruler than for others, the issue which led Mencius to accuse the Mohist Yi-tzu of having 'two roots'" (Graham 1989, p. 158). Indeed, Yi Zhi commits to two positions simultaneously: an impersonal and objective position that emphasizes impartiality and a personal view or individual position that rationally develops what is beneficial to the individual. However, the challenge is: how can these two positions be reconciled and balanced?

Like A.C. Graham, David Nivison also analyzed the *two roots* from the point of view of ethics. Nivison (1996) writes:

> While we must be cautious about what Mencius meant by 'one root' and 'two roots' (the commentators and translators have various suggestions) it seems entirely possible that he is talking about the basis of Yi Zhi's moral system, which he is criticizing as being double, insisting that, morally considered, a human as one of Heaven's creatures has just one 'root.' And that root for him has to be, of course, the 'heart' in its different aspects as dispositional 'hearts.' . . . Yi Zhi's trouble, then, would be that he has gotten into a mess by accepting guidance both from his 'heart' and from a set of doctrines that are unconnected with the 'heart.'

In brief, Nivison points out that Yi Zhi is torn by two forces: the natural emotions of the heart/mind or the love of family, and the doctrine of universal love. On the surface, Yi Zhi is in a divided state. Furthermore, Nivison differentiates between sensibility, which comes from the emotions arising in the heart/mind, and reason, which strives to transcend the bounds of sensibility to derive its own arguments.[13] Therefore, Nivison highlights the dilemma between rational arguments and the emotional heart/mind. Moreover, it is important to note that Nivison did not discuss whether Mozi's ethics also have *two roots*. However, his analysis indicates that *two roots* problem does not figure into Mozi's ethics.

After analyzing the representative viewpoint of the *two roots* problem, we deepen the understanding of the problem from the point of view of moral philosophy.

## 4. The Essence of Yi Zhi's *Two Roots*: The Dualism of Practical Reason

The debate between Mengzi and Yi Zhi highlights a crucial issue of moral philosophy, that is, the dualism/duality of practical reason. The discussion of this issue starts with Henry Sidgwick (1838–1900).

*4.1. Sidgwick's Problem*

Sidgwick was a famous utilitarian philosopher in 19th century England. Rawls also regarded him as a significant figure of classical utilitarianism. In his well-known book *The Methods of Ethics*, first published in 1874, Sidgwick attempts to integrate utilitarianism (universal hedonism), egoism (egoistic hedonism), and intuitionism into a systematic discourse. He discovers that he can integrate utilitarianism and intuitionism, but he cannot integrate utilitarianism and egoism. Moreover, it is between utilitarianism and egoism that the concept of "the dualism of practical reason" emerges. This concept is the dilemma of practical reason. In this book, Sidgwick mentions and explains the dualism of practical reason at least three times. In the *Preface to the Second Edition*, he proposes the concept above.

Besides, in a footnote in Book III: Chapter XIV, Sidgwick (1922, p. 405) also mentions it. However, it is in the *Preface to the Sixth Edition* that he presents a more systematic account. Sidgwick (1922, p. xviii) writes:

> I found he expressly admitted that 'interest, my own happiness, is a manifest obligation,' and that 'Reasonable Self-love' [is 'one of the two chief or superior principles in the nature of man']. That is, he recognized a 'Dualism of the Governing Faculty'—or as I prefer to say 'Dualism of the Practical Reason.'

In response to Sidgwick's dilemma and its moral philosophical implications, it has been commented that (Xu 2011, p. 19):

> Although Sidgwick tried to put forward a systematic theoretical defense for utilitarianism in *The Methods of Ethics*, he finally realized that utilitarianism could not avoid what he called 'the dualism of practical reason,' that is, the tension between the rational development of self-interest and the maximization of general welfare from an impartial point of view. His final judgment on utilitarianism constituted a starting point for later debates, forcing later philosophers to explore a series of issues related to the nature of morality, including the question of whether moral viewpoints must be strictly impartial.

At this point, it is necessary to describe practical reason. "Philosophically speaking, practical reason is our general capacity to reflect and decide how to act" (Xu 2011, p. 2). While the fundamental question of normative ethics is "what should I do?", practical reason provides justifications for one's actions. Thus, broadly speaking, morality becomes a part of practical reason. With this understanding of practical reason, it may be concluded that the dualism of practical reason to which Sidgwick refers is a confrontation between the maximizing consequences of utilitarianism through impartial calculation and the development of rational self-interest. It can also be summarized as a confrontation between utilitarianism and egoistic self-love (Chen and Guo 2008).

*4.2. The Possible Response of Yi Zhi in the Context of Modern Moral Philosophy*

The contemporary American philosopher Thomas Nagel extends Sidgwick's view by presenting the opposition, as well as the reconciliation of the personal and impersonal or social positions. In Nagel's (1991, pp. 3–4, 14, 21, 44, 52) view, the dualism between these two positions arises from the division, or the duality, of the self. This is a step further than Sidgwick. Moreover, following these two moral philosophers, it could be argued that while Yi Zhi develops the personal position from the impersonal position, Confucianism develops the impersonal position from the personal position. It is crucial to note that this more comprehensive account of Confucianism is found in Song Confucianism's theory of the unity or oneness of all things (万物一体 *wanwu yiti*; see Chen 2012).

From the perspective of moral philosophy, Yi Zhi's thoughts are in line with consequentialism. When examining actions in terms of their consequences, the action that leads to the greatest consequences must be followed. In contrast, Mencius' thoughts are in accordance with deontology since they emphasize obligations to loved ones. Generally speaking, Confucianism also accepts the principles of "generating the wellbeing of all people under heaven" and "eradicating the suffering of all people under heaven". However, maximization is not its goal (of course, it does not exclude maximization of benefits, whenever possible). For instance, Confucianism is critical of egoism or Yang Zhu's view, while rejecting the tendency of Mohist ethics to require maximizing the consequences of actions on other individuals. The latter point is similar to that of Bernard Williams (2006) who defends the individual position by alluding to the notion of personal integrity. In this regard, utilitarianism's principle of impartiality is in opposition to the rational development of human beings for their benefit. Thus, it undermines human integrity. Additionally, in Confucianism, the importance of individual points of view is relevant, but only when it is moral. Accordingly, Confucianism repudiates the Mohist principle of impartiality. Confucianism—particularly, Mencius—believes that maximization is not the goal of moral-

ity. Moreover, neither impartiality nor universal love is necessary in evaluating whether an action is morally right or wrong.

From the Confucian perspective, Sidgwick's method is problematic because it ignores effort or self-cultivation (功夫 *gongfu*). Moreover, in Western moral philosophy, the person is a rational being and believes there is only one right path among the many. The right path achieves people's unanimous consent. In contrast, Mencius emphasizes the unity of sensibility and reason (Wong 1991).[14] This unity ensures that a person can exert effort or cultivate the self because this is essential when acting in accordance with one's will. Moreover, for Confucianism, the demands of *ren ai* and universal love are the same. Although Mencius suggests that a person can start by loving one's family and then love others, there is no necessary or logical connection between graded love and comprehensive love (博爱 *bo ai*).[15] In fact, the former may also hinder the realization of the latter, and thus produce undesirable consequences such as nepotism or unfair treatment of others. In sum, from a theoretical perspective, Yi Zhi can cite Nagel's relevant thinking in response to Mencius' criticism. This proposal differs from the portrayal in the text where Yi Zhi succumbs to Mencius.[16]

### 4.3. Yi Zhi's Place in the History of Moral Philosophy

Yi Zhi faces the dilemma of practical reason because he tries to integrate the universal love (undifferentiated love) introduced by Mozi and the reasonable self-love of the individual (bestowing love begins with one's parents). Bentham, Mill and Mozi emphasize impartiality. Thus, there is no need to pay attention to an individual's reasonable self-love. In other words, the moral philosophy of Mozi and Mill has only one basic principle; therefore, it is *one root*. Perhaps, in their view, only Yi Zhi, a thinker who does not pursue theoretical thoroughness, could have an ethics that is *two roots*. Broadly, Confucian philosophy, as represented by Mencius, is deontological ethics.[17] Deontology emphasizes the fulfillment of moral obligations, but some obligations are not based on choice, but are determined by birth, such as obligations to family. Since these family obligations emerge because of the special relationship between family members, they must also be generalized or universalized. Accordingly, there is also only one basic principle of Mencius' moral philosophy—*one root*.

A criticism of deontology with respect to utilitarianism is that it is impersonal. Thus, it ignores the possibility of the subject or the person to act according to his relationship with others. However, considering the history of utilitarianism, there is a tendency to accommodate some considerations specific to the subject—the agent-relative. This is evident, for example, in the moral philosophy of David Sosa (1993). In the recent development of utilitarianism, the moral imperative of impartiality has been weakened by the belief that it is also moral to care for loved ones and friends, people with whom the subject has a special relationship. In this development, Sidgwick diverges from utilitarianism. In the same vein, Yi Zhi is no longer in line with classical utilitarianism, instead resembling the later development. Accordingly, Yi Zhi's modification of Mozi's ethics has a special place in the history of moral philosophy. In ancient China where the people accepted inequality, it was inevitable that Mozi's principle of universal love would be ignored. However, under modern conditions, the realization of Mohism's universal love is both possible and realistic. For example, Rawls (1999) argues that his principle of difference is an explanation of the principle of *fraternité*, which is part of the three principles of *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité*. It is also believed by many that universal love is the Chinese version of fraternity or humaneness.

Thus far, there is no satisfactory answer to the question of whether Yi Zhi can get out of the dilemma of practical reason.[18] It may even be impossible to solve this problem in the field of moral philosophy. Perhaps, this problem can be addressed in political philosophy where the state will compensate for the losses of individuals whose actions are directed toward the benefit of the majority.

### 5. Conclusions

This article explores and commends the significance of Yi Zhi in moral philosophy. Yi Zhi is a Mohist and is regarded as the theoretical opponent of Mencius, a great Confucian scholar. In general, scholars do not distinguish the ethics of Mozi and Yi Zhi. This article argues that Mohist ethics have two versions: the original version of Mozi and the modified version of Yi Zhi. Mozi's emphasis on universal love (or impartiality) leads to neglecting the development of rational self-interest. Accordingly, Yi Zhi's remarks are a clarification or modification of Mozi's thoughts. First, Yi Zhi alluded to the concept of undifferentiated love to explain universal love as the basis of impartiality. Second, as he understood the concept of undifferentiated love in relation to the idea that "bestowing love begins with one's parents", Yi Zhi incorporated rational self-interest. Moreover, Mencius criticized Yi Zhi and disparaged his remarks as two roots (二本 er ben), contrasting it to Confucian ethics, which he said was one root (一本 yi ben). In fact, Yi Zhi and Henry Sidgwick, the founder of classical utilitarianism, face the same dilemma of practical reason: the conflict between utilitarianism and the self-interest of egoism. Mozi's ethics is agent-neutral, which means that it prioritizes the interests of the community. In contrast, Mencius' ethics is agent-relative, which means that it puts more importance on the integrity of the individual and opposes the unprincipled sacrifice of the individual for the sake of the community. Yizhi's ethics lies somewhere in between, emphasizing both the interests of the community and rational self-interest. Perhaps, looking at Yi Zhi's ethics helps explain the Confucian idea of the relationship between the individual and the community.

### Notes

[1]     In this article, we use the translations of D. C. Lau (2003) and Bryan W. Van Norden (2008). More particularly, in Mencius 3A5, we use Lau's translation; other passages from the *Mengzi* cited in this article are taken from Van Norden's translation.

[2]     Throughout most of this article, 爱无差等 is translated as "undifferentiated love" and 施由亲始 is translated as "bestowing love begins with one's parents".

[3]     Lao (2005) thinks that the primary principle of Mohism is utilitarianism.

[4]     There are, however, scholars who interpret Mohist ethics from the standpoint of divine-command theory (for instance, see Li 2006). I present three points to challenge or argue against such an interpretation or reading. First, "how can we know that God commands or forbids?" Mozi does not inform us. Second, "the Divine Command theory means that a conduct is right because and only because it is commanded by God". Indeed, in the *Mozi*, there are instances that promote egoism and utilitarianism, which are contrary to the divine-command theory that states the command of God is the only criterion of morality. Third, and most importantly, Mozi proposes that three criteria are the bases for judging right and wrong actions. God is not the origin of the three criteria, but humans are the rightful judge of morality. The *Mozi* (35.3) states: "You must establish standards [ . . . ] What are the three criteria? Master Mo Zi spoke, saying: There is the foundation; there is the source; there is the application. In what is the foundation? The foundation is in the actions of the ancient sage kings above. In what is the source? The source is in the truth of the evidence of the eyes and ears of the common people below. In what is the application? It emanates from government policy and is seen in the benefit to the ordinary people of the state. These are what are termed the 'three criteria'". (Note: For the first two points, please see Frankena 1973.)

[5]     We use Ian Johnston's (2010) translation.

[6]     Zhang Huiyan 张惠言 (1761–1820) of the Qing Dynasty was the first to propose that the essence of Mozi's teachings is universal love. This view was later endorsed by Sun Yirang 孙诒让 and Liang Qichao.Moreover, one may argue that from the translation of "兼爱" as universal love has some Christian connotation. Since this article proceeds from a utilitarian reading of Mohist ethics, it

7   For more information about the ten doctrines, see Loy (n.d.).

8   For instance, Mill (2015) states:"I have dwelt on this point, as being a necessary part of a perfectly just conception of Utility or Happiness, considered as the directive rule of human conduct. But it is by no means an indispensable condition to the acceptance of the utilitarian standard, for that standard is not the agent's own greatest happiness, but the greatest amount of happiness altogether".

9   We use Brook Ziporyn's (2009) translation.

10  We use the translation of John S. Major, Sarah A. Queen, Andrew Seth Meyer, and Harold D. Roth (Major et al. 2010), with additional contributions by Michael Puett and Judson Murray.

11  Dong (2015) also thinks that Yi Zhi modified the Mohist conception of universal love by referring to "love is without differentiation, but it is bestowed beginning with one's parents". However, Dong only mentioned it in passing, and he did not examine this modification from the point of view of moral philosophy.

12  Some modern interpreters have argued that Yi Zhi is inconsistent. As Lau (2003) notes, "by a dual basis, Mencius is presumably referring to the incompatibility between the denial of gradation of love and the insistence on its beginning with one's parents".

13  In fact, Yi Zhi's dilemma can also be explained through Nagel's point of view. In this regard, Yi Zhi is caught in the splitting of the self or the duality of positions, embodying the conflict/separation between personal and impersonal (or social) positions.

14  To avoid the Confucian idea of love from being understood as narrow, Wong (1991) rationalizes and generalizes emotions.

15  Li Jinglin argues that filial piety and love for kinship are the intermediaries between self-love and universal human love (see Li 2009).

16  Some commentators interpreted that Yi Zhi was persuaded and eventually became a Confucian based on two statements: first, at the end of the passage in the *Mengzi* wherein it says that "[Yi Zhi] who looked lost for quite a while and replied, 'I have taken this point'"; and second, from Zhu Xi's explanation that Yi Zhi became cognizant of his wrongdoing which motivated him to leave Mohism and embrace Confucian teachings (see Yang 2019). In this article, we show that Yang's argument is very limited.

17  Some researchers think that Confucian ethics is virtue ethics (see Huang 2020). According to Aristotle (2001), virtue forms based on habits, or is the result of repeated correct behavior. Right behavior refers to the question "how should I act?"—a question that is central to normative ethics (deontology and consequentialism). In this respect, virtue ethics cannot constitute an independent type of ethics. Accordingly, even if Mencius' ethics is regarded as virtue ethics, it also emphasizes that the right behavior is to bestow more love to relatives. For Mencius, this is not only the right behavior but also a virtue. In this way, Mencius' ethics is consistent with deontology in opposing Mozi's utilitarian ethics.

18  Nagel (1991, p. 5) also points out: "the problem of designing institutions that do justice to the equal importance of all persons, without making unacceptable demands on individuals, has not been solved—and that this is so partly because for our world the problem of the right relation between the personal and impersonal standpoints within each individual has not been solved". Although Nagel argues in the area of political philosophy, his argument is also applicable to moral philosophy. As Nagel, Nozick, and others have pointed out, political theory is partly an application of moral theory.

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*Article*

# Preferences and Consensus in the Philosophy of Xunzi

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**Abstract:** To understand Confucian ethics as a "hierarchical mode of association" is to think that it is incapable of dealing with a society of strangers or to understand Confucian ethics as "authoritarian" or "collectivist", and to criticize that it ignores human characteristics and freedoms is to mistake one part of Confucianism for the whole. The Confucian theory of the individual and community actually has a tightly woven structure wherein its recognition of the plurality of diverse individuals and its appeal the unity of a common consensus are combined. From an exploration into the relationship between Xunzi's concepts of "preference" (teyi 特意) and "consensus" (gongshi 共予) and from the way he uses such concepts as "similarity and difference" (tongyi 同異), "one and ten thousand" (yiwan 一萬), and "unity and division" (tongfen 統分), I show how Xunzi included the diversity of individuals within a pluralist society in a unified community with a collective consensus where this community at the same time guarantees the freedoms and preferences of each individual member that belongs to it.

**Keywords:** Confucianism; Xunzi; preferences; consensus; theory of individual and community

## 1. Introduction

Xunzi's 荀子 political philosophy is not just an antique from the past, nor is it only meaningful within a Chinese text. In fact, Chinese philosophy as a whole has proven an important resource for thinking through many of the problems the modern world faces.[1] However, if we are going to make the best use of Xunzi's political philosophy, then it is necessary that we properly understand its basic ideas. There has been much research on Xunzi and the various aspects of his political philosophy,[2] but not enough has been said to clarify one of its central components, that is, the relationship between individuals and their communities. Understanding this relationship is key to understanding Xunzi's political philosophy. Xunzi's view on this relationship is no doubt unique, and it allows the opportunity to think further on this idea basic to political philosophy. Nonetheless, this article can only deal with clarifying Xunzi's understanding of the relationship between individuals and their communities and must leave a more detailed discussion of Xunzi's contribution to solving modern political problems for another time.

There are different methods and perspectives that can be adopted in discussing the problem of individual and community in Confucian philosophy. We can either focus on such concepts as the collective, consensus, community, and unity, or we can focus on other concepts such as the individual, preference, difference, and disunity. An overall tendency of recent research more often than not focuses on one aspect to the detriment of the other and this has led to all kinds of conflicting positions. For example, a classical position says that Confucianism believes in the differential treatment of people through *li* 禮 (rituals) based on differences in kin relationships. This position emphasizes the "distance" between certain kin relations, that between civilized and uncivilized peoples, and even between human beings and animals. Thus, it is a kind of ethical particularism or a kind of ethical "differentialism".[3] This position even thinks that this kind of ethics is only applicable to the narrow scope of one's kin or "inner circle" and that it is incapable of dealing with a society of strangers. Contrary to this, another position has expended great effort in revealing the

notions of collectivity and unity in Confucian thought emphasizing the communal belief that "all within the four seas are one family" and "the whole world is a great unity".[4] It even goes so far as to see this belief as the source of the characteristic of Chinese society that favors collectivity and authority over freedom and the individual.[5]

Both of these positions actually each express a partial truth of Confucianism but do not capture the whole picture. In different contexts it is acceptable to emphasize one aspect rather than the other, but it is not acceptable to use one aspect to completely deconstruct or eliminate the other. In the same way that Confucian thought is not only a "differentialism", neither is it only a "collectivism". It is only when we overly emphasize one aspect to the detriment of the other that we fall into all kinds of prejudices. To a certain degree, the ideas of "self" and "community" in Confucianism exist together within a tightly woven structure; neither can be taken as the basis for any kind of "ism" let alone be seen as oppositional. The Confucian recognition of a plurality of individuals and their preferences is correlative with its appeal for a unified community. Its belief in a plurality of culture and learning is unified with its political ideal of a "great unity" (Wang 2018, 2022). Confucianism has never maintained that consensus and unity are not the basis for differences and preferences, nor has Confucianism ever discussed the rationality of the individual in isolation from the collective. In fact, the opposite of this is the case: Confucianism believes that it is only when the individual and the collective exist together in a mutually regulated unity that justice and order can be realized (Beck 2011).[6]

In order to prove this point, this essay focuses on Xunzi 荀子 as a representative thinker of early Confucianism and explores his concepts of "individual preference" and "collective consensus" in order to see how Xunzi argued for the unity of preferences and consensus in the context of a society radically changing right before his eyes. Obviously, the terms "preference" and "consensus" are words that translate Xunzi's own terms *teyi* 特意 and *gongyu* 共予 into our modern language; they do not necessarily correspond to any concepts with the same names in other philosophical traditions even if they share certain resonances. In addition to these two concepts, he also uses "similarity" (*tong* 同) and "difference" (*yi* 異), "one" (*yi* 一) and "ten thousand" (*wan* 萬), "class" (*lei* 類) and "the unclassed" (*za* 雜), "unity" (*tong* 統) and "division" (*fen* 分) to express similar ideas. Xunzi's use of these terms is very complex and therefore a thorough investigation into their meanings will be beneficial to comprehending the Confucian "theory of the unity of self and community" (*qunjilun* 群己論).[7]

## 2. Diverse Individuals and Their Preference

Humanity is always faced with the problem of an infinitely diverse and plural world. This not only includes infinite physical objects, particulars, and phenomena, but also an infinite number of people and social activities. Like other pre-Qin philosophers,[8] Xunzi confirmed the multiplicity and diversity of human society. For example, he said: "There is the knowledge of sages, the knowledge of rulers, the knowledge of petty people, and the knowledge laborers". ("Xing e 性惡") and "Exemplary persons and petty persons are the same in that they both delight in fame and despise humiliation, delight in benefit and despise harm. It is just the means by which they seek such things is different". ("Rongru 榮辱") It is not only that there is a great difference between exemplary persons and petty persons, but there is also great difference amongst the Confucians themselves, Xunzi says: "There are vulgar people and there are vulgar Confucians; there are elegant people and there are elegant Confucians". ("Ruxiao 儒效") and "One is a scholar of law who enhances ritual without understanding it; one is a common Confucian who can make differentiations but does not enhance ritual". ("Quanxue 勸學") Xunzi also provides this interpretation: "For what reason are Yao and Shun, are exemplary persons superior . . . it is because they can take command of others and none can take command of them. Thus petty people can become rulers but they do not end up so and rulers can become petty people but they do not end up so". ("Xing e") Because peoples' a priori wishes and their external conditions

are different they end up with different levels of morality and behavior. Furthermore, this leads to the classification and ordering of different peoples in terms of value.

There exist differences between people and thus different individuals have different opinions, ideas, perspectives, and voices. It is important to notice that Xunzi did not try to eliminate the objective differences between people, nor did he ever try to eliminate individual preferences or their "unorderliness" (*buqi* 不齊). For Xunzi, in the same way that "the heavenly and the earthly differ in being high and low" and "the ten thousand things are ranked in superiority and inferiority", each individual is its own unique existence, and if we eradicate their differences, then we will have betrayed the a priori basis for communal living. Xunzi criticized Mozi in this regard: "Mozi had certain insights regarding orderliness but not in things being out of order". ("Tianlun 天論"). Xunzi's point is that Mozi saw the "uniformity" (*qitongxing* 齊同性) of the world, but he did not understand that human experiences are expressed in the unceasing discovery of difference and diversity. Therefore, such methods that eliminate or betray individual differences do not match up at all with reality.

Rulers must respect individual differences and unorderliness because societal operations require order and vitality. Hence, Xunzi states:

> What rulers call "worthy people" are not those who can do what all other people can do; what rulers call "intelligent people" are not those who know what all other people know . . . When it comes to taking the lay of the land, determining where is fertile and where is not, and planting the five seeds, the ruler does not surpass the farmer; when it comes to moving around goods, taking note of what is beautiful and ugly, and appraising things of good and bad quality, the ruler does not surpass the merchant . . . Now if their moral worth is determined and their proper place found and each person is given a job that accords with their capacities then those worthy and those not will each have their proper place and those capable and those not will each have their proper job. ("Ruxiao")[9]

Because there is no single person who is omniscient and omnipotent, therefore the ruler must make use of the intelligence and capabilities of other people. Because there is a diversity and plurality in what people are predisposed to know and to do, therefore the ruler must assign different positions and jobs in accordance with people's natural dispositions; because there are differences in local customs and habits between people in near and far lands, therefore, the ruler must arrange different implements and costumes and set up different institutions and allocations.[10] Regarding this, Xunzi also states:

> If the different jobs and positions are all equal then there cannot be hierarchy, if all political authorities are equal then there cannot be centralization of power, if social statuses are all equal then none will be commanded by anyone else. There is the heavenly and the earthly and they differ in being high and low. When the enlightened king first begins the state is managed through an institution of ranked hierarchy . . . When everyone is the same and there are no differences in what they like and dislike, then goods that are of a limited supply cannot satisfy all of their desires and this will lead to certain social strife. If there is strife then there will be chaos and if there is chaos there will be poverty. ("Wangzhi 王制")

The "Wangzhi" chapter imagines a situation that is opposite that of difference, that is where everyone is the same. It thinks that if everyone is the same, that if there is no difference between ruler, minister, official and bureaucrat, then the state will not be efficiently governed, people will not work toward the same goals, and it will be impossible to establish political authority (Dongfang 2021). More importantly, if people lose their various preferences, then their human nature that seeks benefit and profit will compel them to seek the unlimited satisfaction of their desires and when "desires are many" and "goods are few" then the fair distribution of goods will be impossible and social conflict, poverty, and destitution of the whole world will be inevitable. Therefore, the problem with Mozi's "praise of sameness" (*shangtong* 尚同) is not only that it incorrectly imagines that human

diversity can be eliminated thereby falling into an illusion completely devoid of reality, but more seriously, it ignores the rationality and necessity of the "differences" that exist between different individuals thereby eliminating the diversity and preferences that have an important communal value and function. The consequences of this include: (1) it eliminates the political hierarchy between ruler and ministers, thereby diminishing the former's power and (2) it leads to the collapse of the economic foundation of the social allocation of roles based on individual capacities because it undercuts the motivating power of such a system. (Dongfang 2021) In Xunzi's view, in a society where social welfare and reputations are not allocated through "difference" the people will have a weakened motivation to fulfil their wishes and desires. This not only fails to encourage people to work at creating wealth, but it also conversely creates a society that is "completely impoverished:"[11]

> If Mozi was able to govern a large state or even just a small one then the people would all wear coarse clothing, eat poorly, and have prohibitions against music. If things are thus then the state will be impoverished and being impoverished there will be no means to satisfy the desires of the people. If the desires of the people cannot be satisfied then there will be no means to offer rewards and exact punishments. If Mozi was allowed to govern the whole world or even just a small feudal state then the number of subordinates and court officials would diminish and because the ruler would favor those who labor he would be made equal with the common people, forced to undertake the same work. If things are thus, then the government has no authority, and if the government has no authority then rewards and punishments are not effective. If rewards are not effective then the worthy and capable cannot be put to proper use and if punishments are not effective then the unworthy will not be arrested . . . In conclusion, the ten thousand things will go out of balance and the many shifting affairs of the world will not find their proper resolutions; the heavenly will lose its timeliness, the earthly will lose its resourcefulness, and humanity will fall into disharmony. ("Fuguo 富國")

Obviously, Xunzi not only affirms the existence of individuals and their differences; he also defends their rationality. For Xunzi, since "hierarchy" is an a priori fact of objective social existence, not only can people not eliminate their differences, but moreover they should respond to and utilize their natural differences in order to set up a human order and division of labor. More importantly, it is due to the existence of these different preferences and desires that the ruler is able to allocate different social goods based on individual preferences. It is also only the case that when the common people each find satisfaction of their desires and wishes that the ruler and his ministers will have their sympathy and that the people will readily carry out their orders, that regulations will be followed, and that the "great worry of the world" that is the contradiction between goods and desires that leads to conflict and struggle will be resolved.[12] The "Wangzhi" chapter says:

> The former kings created rituals and duties to organize the people so that the poor and the rich, the inferior and the superior each have their place and that there is mutual accord between higher-ups and their subordinates. This is the basis of the care of the whole world. The *Shu* says: "It is only order that is not order". This is what I mean.

> It is only within the "order that is not order" that the orderly development of communal and public affairs can be ensured. Furthermore, it is only when rulers and ministers each fulfil their role, the literati and the miliary each fulfill their capacities, the common people all fulfill their own obligations, and that each and every preference and desire is satisfied and fully developed that the rational safety of each and every person can be realized thereby leading to a healthy and vibrant society.

Against the background of the collapse of the feudal society of the pre-imperial period, the Confucians certainly did tend towards a "great unity". Nonetheless, this unity was not at the expense of the individual or the value of diversity. Such older perspectives as

that which saw Confucianism as being only concerned with the collective while ignoring the individual or which saw Confucianism as a collectivism or an authoritarianism did no more than unduly enlarge one aspect of Confucian thought. As long as we carefully read the text of the *Xunzi* it will not be difficult to discover that Xunzi the philosopher never denied the value of the individual and of diversity, nor did he ever believe in a vacuous collective that lacked personality and character. Conversely, Xunzi maintained that rather than separating people, diversity and division constitute the means for communal living. It is because there are differences that there is social order; it is because there are individual preferences and differences that society is effective and energetic. This is one aspect of Xunzi's "theory of self and community".

## 3. Collective Consensus, Standards, and Authority

However, to affirm the differences and preferences of individuals does not imply the denial of the consensus that exists between people. In the "Fuguo 富國" chapter, Xunzi says: "The ten thousand things are in the same space but have different bodies and that they can be put to use by humans without being designed for such a purpose is due to certain regularities. When people live together, they have different means to seek what they share in wanting and when they desire the same things their knowledge thereof differs: this is life. Whenever everything that is acceptable is the same then the foolish and wise are the same; when what is acceptable differs, then so do the wise and foolish". In other words, the ten thousand things each live in the same world and even though each has their own particular form, they nevertheless are all useful to human beings in their own way. The human world is the same as this. Humans all live in the same world and even though they are different in their value systems and modes of thought, there are still some things that they have in common. Such things as knowledge and capabilities, desires and needs, wishes and values that all people have in common is what we would refer to as social "consensus" in modern terms.

Now why is it that different individuals can come to a consensus? For Xunzi, this is because people have the same nature and similar desires. For example:

> The eyes desire all kinds of colors, the ears desire all kinds of sounds, the mouth desires all kinds of flavors, the nose desires all kinds of scents, and the heart desires all kinds of comforts. These five are inevitable in terms of the human condition. ("Wangba 王霸")

He also says:

> What all people have in common is that when hungry they desire food, when cold they desire warmth, when tired they desire rest; people delight in benefit and despise harm: this is what people all do as living beings without being dependent on anything else to do so. ("Rongru")

Both the wise and foolish, the exemplary and the petty all have the same human capacities and similar desires that find expression in the pursuit of benefit and avoidance of harm; these natural similarities can be summarized as "what all people have in common". In addition, the "Rongru" chapter also says: "Exemplary and petty persons are the same in their natural capacities and intellectual faculties". "Natural capacities" refers to *xing* 性 (i.e., "human nature") and "intellectual faculties" refers to *xin* 心 (i.e., heart, mind); they cannot be confused with each other. It is obvious that all people both have a nature of "delighting in benefit and despising harm" and a mind that is capable of deliberating and differentiating. Furthermore, the reason why humanity can become a "class" (i.e., *lei* 類) is due to their differentiating mind with its ability to "represent" (*zhengzhi* 征知). All of these things reflect humanity's shared "innate rationality" (*tianfu de lixingi* 天賦的理性) (Chen 2009).

Despite this, Xunzi not only saw shared human characteristics in terms of human nature but also saw them in terms of the mind. Even though human nature has the tendency to chase after the satisfaction of desires, Xunzi maintained that through the intellectual

faculties of the mind people could control and regulate their desires, even developing them, in accordance with the guidance of principles and rituals. Moreover, because of this, people could create a moral life out of their "adverse natural dispositions" (*xing e* 性惡). In this sense, even though Xunzi strictly differentiated exemplary and petty persons, these real differences are not enough to eliminate the natural commonalities shared across humanity let alone negate the moral "equality" of all people.[13] Xunzi even criticized that "There is no a petty person who does not strain their neck and stand on their toes to get a glimpse of a worthy saying that 'the natural capacities and intellectual faculties of the worthy are something only they have,' but they do not know that there is no difference between them and worthy people in these regards". Petty persons often mistakenly think that the difference between themselves and exemplary persons is in terms of the objective natures, but they are not aware that "nature does not treat Zengzi and Min Zisai preferentially on behalf of their filiality at the expense of all others" and that "nature does not treat the people of Qi and Lu preferentially at the expense of the people of Qin". In terms of nature, the people are all the same when it comes to their natural dispositions and intellectual faculties. It is this equality and similarity of moral character that constitutes the fundamental universality of humanity.

Moreover, it is only due to the existence of this commonalty that a universal social consensus is therefore possible. Regarding this, the "Zhengming 正名" chapter says:

> All things of the same class have the same faculties of perception and intelligence. Therefore, as long as people are similar to each other they can understand each other through analogies and emulations. This is also why people require names and regulations to bind them together so as to ensure the convenience of communication.

It is because people are of the same kind and that they share intellectual faculties in terms of their mind and "representative knowledge" that people are able to achieve consistency in naming conventions and language usage thereby ensuring societal and communal interactions. Xunzi also used the term "common principle" (*tongli* 同理) to express such universal consensus and conventions:

> To use a common principle to take command of the whole miscellany of things is to use a consistent standard to govern the ten thousand things ... Rulers and ministers, fathers and sons, younger and older brothers, husbands and wives, from beginning to end and again from end to beginning, the ten thousand things all share a common principle that exists for all ages and can be called the "great root". ("Wangzhi")

Sages take measure of things based on their own experiences; they take measure of other people based on the commonalities of all of humanity; they take measure of other people's emotions based on the commonalities of all people's emotions; they take measure of the circumstances of things based on the commonalities of all things; they take measure of actual deeds based on a common discourse; they take measure of all things based on a comprehensive principle. This is the same in both the past and the present. As long as a thing belongs to a class, then no matter by what time two things are separated, they are nonetheless subject to the same rules. Therefore, as long as people understand this then when they face the many things of the world they will not misunderstand or become confused; when they encounter things that hinder their path, they will not become troubled. This is because they are able to take measure of all things with a common principle. ("Feixiang")

The "common principle" that Xunzi mentions here refers to the shared "rationality" and "reasons" (in terms of legitimate and correct judgements) of all human beings. It also refers to the universally adhered to "principles", "regulations", and universal consensus and standards. Xunzi believed that there existed such a universal and unified "principle" that can be generally known and accepted by different groups of humans that transcends the limitations of time and space to become a belief or conviction common to all members

of society. It is because of the existence of this "common principle" that even though different members of society each have their own social and kin relationships they can nevertheless be consistent with each other when it comes to moral and ethical regulations. The different theories that people appeal to in their actual ethical practice does not influence the establishment of a shared moral consensus.[14] Even though different methods and institutions of government exist in different times, the principles, rationality, and justice shared between all humans is nonetheless the same.[15] That is to say, consensus and unity take shape within a cornucopia of diverging values and moral situations.

It is because of the existence of this "common principle" and consensus that a unified order and authority can be established for the whole of society. For Xunzi, sages (or sage kings) are those who grasped this "common principle" first and therefore can serve as models of morality and justice as well as the highest "authority" of government in their role as ruler. Furthermore, each individual member of society must emulate and acknowledge the authority of the sage otherwise society will lack a unified foundation and standard. Regarding this, the "Zhengming" chapter says:

> It is only when the names for things are settled that they can be differentiated, that the intentions of the people can be communicated, and that the ruler can effectively govern the people and maintain unity . . . Thus, it is only when the common people all consistently follow the laws and when they conscientiously implement orders that the affairs of the state can be brought to completion and the whole world can achieve wondrous order.

It is because people are able to arrive at universal consensus and a common understanding that different members of society are able to connect and work with each other. This also makes it possible for the existence of collective life and social order. Xunzi repeatedly emphasized that the "the unclassed are ordered through classes and that the ten thousand are ordered through the one" ("Wangzhi") and that one should "measure people with people, kinds with kinds" ("Feixiang 非相"). He also said that one should "Broadly know the things of the world with what is obvious and use the events of the past to deal with those of the present . . . always use a general principle to deal with whatever may happen". ("Ruxiao") and "Respond to things with consistency, when principles are consistent then there is no disorder". ("Tianlun 天論") What Xunzi means by all of this is that it is only through grasping "principles" and "classifications" that individuals have a standard with which to judge the right and wrong in the words and deeds of others. It is only through such comprehension that people will know what is right and wrong, what is appropriate and what "should" be done. In addition, such comprehension allows people to avoid confusion in the face of all kinds of different opinions and states of affairs and also to not get lost in a confusing and changing environment. Xunzi even directly criticized a so-called "saying of the world" (*shisu zhi shuo* 世俗之説):

> A saying of the world says that Yao abdicated the throne to Shun. This is not so. The Son of the Heavenly is the most respected of positions, there is none who can challenge him in the whole world. Who is there that he could abdicate to? Complete in moral virtuosity, brilliant in wisdom, facing south listening to the whole world there were none who are not moved, submitting to his transforming influence. There were no hidden away scholars and no unnoticed good deeds. Those who are the same as Yao and Shun are right and those who are different are not. How could there be such a thing as abdication? ("Zhenglun 正論")

For Xunzi, an ideal society cannot lack a Son of the Heavenly and their authority. Lacking this, the common people will not know what to submit to, what to follow, and what to believe in. If people cannot generally acknowledge and accept this kind of authority then not only will people lose their general standard of right and wrong but society will also fall into stagnation.

It should be said that in the face of the collapse of a unified ideology and the rise of a diverse and turbulent society, even though Xunzi affirmed the existence of different

individuals and their preferences, he nevertheless tried to find the unifying consensus that tied all of their differences together. This is one reason why people have previously thought that Confucianism emphasizes difference and denies "commonality" and "universality" even going so far as to say that Confucian ethics is ill-suited to deal with a society of strangers. Yet, this is only to see one aspect of Confucian thought at the expense of its other dimensions. In fact, for Xunzi, not only can individuals not remove themselves from society with its consensus, authority, and communal living, but moreover, it is only individuals who do live in such societies that words and deeds can find proper regulation and guidance. It is only within such a collective community that the disorder brought about by diversity can be overcome. This is the second aspect of Xunzi's "theory of self and community".

### 4. The Interdependence and Unity of Preference and Consensus

Since preferences and consensus are both necessary, the question then becomes how do we deal with their relationship? In the "Dalüe 大略" chapter, Xunzi says something quite interesting:

> Each person in the world has their own preferences and yet there is consensus among them. In terms of taste people agree with the gourmet Yi Ya; in terms of sound people agree with the musician Shi Kuang; in terms of order people agree with the Three Kings. The Three Kings established regulatory standards and created music and ritual to pass onto later generations: what difference is there between altering the harmony of Yi Ya's food and the melody of Shi Kuang's music and having the inheritance of the Three Kings but not using it instead doing everything on one's own? Without the laws of the Three Kings the world will fall into chaos and the state will perish.

The "preferences" here refers to each individual's particular knowledge and opinion and the "consensus" here refers to everything that all people agree on and accept. For Xunzi, everybody has their own values and lifestyles that diverge from each other but this does not impede the formation of a general opinion. Conversely, the universal unity and consensus of society does not influence an individual person's own preferences and opinions. If society ignores individual preferences, then it will lack a diversity and abundance of values; at the same time, if society lacks consensus, then political order will lack a unified standard and foundation. In terms of this, Xunzi said that even though people all have different tastes when it comes to food and music they nevertheless still all agree with the "authority" of the gourmet Yi Ya, the musician Shi Kuang, and the political institution of the Three Kings. Even though political systems and order change with the times, people in both ancient and contemporary times nonetheless acknowledge that the system of "ritual and music" is continuous in past and present. People cannot abandon the quest for consensus because without consensus there is no common standard or measure. At the same time, people cannot ignore their individual experience and preferences because without these there will be no motivating force for the development of society. If the ruler separates "consensus" from "preferences" then the state and society will not endure and its development will stagnate.[16]

However, Xunzi affirmed that people are similar in the values they hold, this is the consensus that they all agree on, and at the same time he also acknowledged that people each select different values, and this expresses the fact that individuals and their preferences are diverse. For Xunzi, the "preferences" of the individual and the "consensus" of the collective exist together. They do not form an oppositional pair; nor are they isolated from each other. In fact, the reverse is the case: both rely on each other to form an integrated unity.

"Preferences" and "consensus" in terms of the political realm are not separable from each other. Each member of society holds their own political opinion and viewpoint, but at the same time, society as a whole also constitutes a public opinion and collective will. Individual opinions and public will are interdependent. If the diverse opinions of society do not exist, then there cannot exist collective wisdom and political energy. Conversely,

if there is no public opinion or communal voice, then society as a whole will fall into dissidence and opposition:

> All such heterodox theories as those that take leave of right principles and make up their own do so due to the three abovementioned confusions . . . therefore the enlightened ruler uses his authority to suppress such heterodoxies, uses the proper way to lead those who believe in them to the right path, uses the law to send them clear warnings, uses correct theories to guide them, and uses punishments to prohibit their behaviors . . . The enlightened ruler listens to and accommodates all theories and opinions with intelligence and measure but he is not arrogant or full of himself. He has a character that is tolerant and accommodating but is not haughty or brash . . . To use a unified way that is proper to differentiate what is improper is like using a plumbline to guide the straight and curved. Due to this heterodox opinions cannot bring about chaos and the hundred schools cannot make any falsehoods. ("Zhengdao")

The function of political order is to both provide a space for the full expression of public and social opinions and a unified consensus as well as a standard for right and wrong for all of the diverse and competing opinions of each member of society. The role of the ruler is to listen broadly to what everyone has to say and to allow for and take into consideration criticisms of his performance. At the same time, the ruler also has to figure out what is "good" and eliminate what is "bad" and use the "proper way" to deal with deviants. True consensus is produced from the diverse debates of the public, therefore the public realm must allow for public criticism rather than suppressing public opinion. If there is place for the different opinions of all members of society, if there are no competing yet complementary opinions on what is right and wrong, then policies good for social order will be hard to achieve.

Of course, this is one place where Xunzi might encounter suspicion. That is, how is a consensus reached out of so many competing, often fundamentally opposed, opinions? Xunzi's answer comes in the form of an appeal to music. He believed that people would be able to achieve "consensus" through the magical effect of music and ceremony. He discusses this in the chapter "Yuelun 樂論" (On Music):

> As for music, it is that which harmonizes without changing; as for ritual, it is that which patterns without altering. Music brings together and ritual differentiates. The rule of music and ritual is to take charge of the minds of the people . . . Thus, when there is music in the ancestral hall, the ruler and ministers, superiors and inferiors all listen to it and none lack proper respect; when there is music in the inner halls then fathers and sons, brothers older and younger all listen to it and none lack familial affection; when there is music in the village, the old and young all listen to it and none lack amicability. Thus as for music, investigate what is uniform to make certain harmony, compare things to properly accessorize, and piece together music to make complete compositions of music. It is enough to take in one way and it is enough to govern the ten thousand changes . . . When the music is centered and even then the people will be harmonious and will not roam; when the music is serious and solemn then the people will be unified and not disordered . . . when it is like this, then none of the common people will not settle in their place and enjoy their village and will be enough for those above them.

For Xunzi, if we say that the purpose of ritual is to ensure the differences and uniqueness of individuals, then the function of music is to coalesce all of that diversity and individuality into a coherent harmony. In comparison with the ritual that emphasizes differentiating people into individuals according to their "differences", music emphasizes the quest for social harmony and cohesion. Through music, no matter if it is in the halls of government or village squares, people will experience a sense of communal being that ties

them together. Through this is established the political order the includes and combines ritual and music.

The relationship between "preferences" and "consensus" does not only obtain in terms of values or politics. Instead, it is also reflected in the realms of learning and knowledge. For Xunzi, it is because each person has their own opinions and preferences that society is able to produce different viewpoints and competing ideas. At the same time, people are also interconnected in terms of the moral principle of right and wrong therefore they are also able to constitute an ideal "way of true kings". To a certain degree, the relationship between Xunzi's "preferences" and "consensus" is also the "great unity" of his ideal learning that merges with his spirit of accommodating diversity. This relationship is expressed in terms of "one" (*yi* 一) and "two" (*liang* 兩) in the "Jiebi 解蔽" chapter:

All problems come from people's obsession with one thing preventing them from seeing the whole picture. It is only when the prejudices of the people are corrected that they can return to the proper way and wherever there is duality there will be confusion. There is only one way in the world and the sages are never of two minds. Today there are so many kinds of government and so many kinds of theories so that there is either rightness or wrongness, order or chaos ... It is the natural capacity of the mind to know and in knowing there are differences; in there being differences the mind knows multiple things at once; knowing multiple things at once is to be "dual" (*liang*). Yet, there is so-called "concentration" (*yi*) and this means that this thing known does not interfere with that thing known.

Being "dual" means to know more than one thing at a time; and so-called "concentration" means being focused on one theory or principle. Xunzi not only criticized the "duality" that divides "concentration" but he also refuted the idea that "duality" is the foundation for "concentration". Xunzi emphasized that both "sameness and difference are equally valid" and that "the many ideas of the masses can be learned from simultaneously". This means that "unity" should be sought amongst "diversity" and that "difference" should be sought within "unity" and vice versa. It should be said that Xunzi both opposed people being overly invested in diverse debates and arguments that lead to disorder and confusion and at the same time did not think that there should be some kind of uniformity in what people think and believe thereby blindly eliminating the diversity of knowledge. For Xunzi, the correct method is to form one's own opinion after broadly surveying as many opinions and ideas as possible, that is to say, one's own opinion should be founded on the foundation formed through the assimilation of a diverse source of ideas and values:

There is none among the ten thousand things that does not have a shape to be seen; there is no thing that is seen and not discussed; there is no thing that is discussed that loses its proper place. Sit within your room and see the four seas, situate yourself in the present and discuss the distant. Take a broad perspective on the ten thousand things and know their exigencies; tally up historical instances of order and disorder to find a measure therein; weave together the heavenly and the earthly to appropriate the resources of the ten thousand things. ("Jiebi")

It is only within the diverse world of the ten thousand things that the mind can transcend them; it is only in interacting with others and society as a whole that individuals can form a true communal unity. It is only when the mind embodies the way and truly comprehends societal consensus that people engage in the diversity of the world with greater openness and tolerance. It is also only when people liberate their minds from its fetters that they bring the various and diverse ten thousand things that are each involved in their own interrelated maturations into clear coherence and order. Thus, Xunzi constantly calls for rulers to "Lay out all of the ten thousand theories at once and balance them as if on the scales so that each different thing does not occlude anything else thereby bringing about disorder". ("Jiebi") This means that the ruler needs to lay out all the different opinions, ideas, and theories and through balancing them against each other establish a standard measure. Moreover, rulers need to judge and appraise each of the differing theories in

accordance with this common standard so as to seek out a true course amongst a dizzy array of options. To a certain degree, this is similar to what John Rawls calls "overlapping consensus" (Rawls and Wan 2000).[17]

Xunzi maintained that individual "preferences" should be unified with collective "consensus" in the face of the division and collapse of values, knowledge, and politics and the rationality of diversity of social competition during his contemporary times. He both opposed overly emphasizing "unity" at the expense of individuality and diversity and falling into "relativity" through an excessive search for "diversity". For Xunzi, as long as people excessively emphasize one end of the spectrum they will lose the other end, that is, they will inevitably fall into negative one-sidedness and prejudice. In addition, it is only when "preferences" and "consensus" both exist simultaneously and are even interdependent that people will be able to resolve social divisions and the tension that exists between individual and community. This is the third feature of Xunzi's "theory of individual and community".

## 5. The Rational Allocation between Individual and Collective

There is still an unresolved problem regarding the emphasis on the unity of "preferences" and "consensus". In actual situations the preferences of individuals and the consensus of the collective are not always consistent with each other. For example, in certain circumstances, people might be conflicted on whether or not to satisfy their individual needs or work toward the greater good of the community. How is this problem solved, then?

Xunzi was aware of this conflict, he said:

> People desire the same things and when desires are many but the things to satisfy them are few there will certainly be struggle. ("Fuguo 富國")

Even though Xunzi affirms the unity of the individual and community in most cases, he nevertheless acknowledged that as long as there is some kind of separation between the two then there will always be some kind of conflict. When a contradiction arises between "infinite desires" and "finite goods" or when people only chase after goods for their own personal satisfaction while ignoring the good of society, society will be brought to internal conflict that is wasteful of resources thereby leading to poverty and a "sickness of the public" (*gonghuan* 公患). Xunzi saw the possibility of the imbalance of benefit between individual and community as a basic problem that no normal society can avoid. The problem is how such conflicts are dealt with.

The method for resolving conflicts cannot simply be the elimination of individual desires but respecting individual desires does not conversely imply that the collective good should be ignored. In the face of such a quandary, Xunzi offers the following proposition in the "Bugou 不苟" chapter:

> Study the principles of the unity of ritual and morality and differentiate what is right and wrong . . . A ruler as small as five *cun* can measure any distance in the whole world.

The so-called "unity of ritual and morality" here refers to the unity of all values as well as the most fundamental value system, its principles, and standards. The so-called "differentiate what is right and wrong" refers to the different opinions of the people on what is right and wrong. For Xunzi, these two are used in two different areas, each having their advantages and disadvantages, and can be used to rationally allocate goods to society. More specifically, the "unity of ritual and morality" is a universal and restrictive principle and each individual must accord with and respect it. Even though there might be conflict between different individual's opinions and ideas; however, at the same time, behind all their differing views there must be a unified standard. Moreover, no matter what kind of changes take place or what kind situation occurs, an individual's words and deeds cannot take leave of this standard: "It is the wisdom of sages to maintain a consistent standard even though they hear many theories and opinions and debate all day" ("Xing e") and

"Their words and their actions are consistent with ritual regulations and they respond appropriately as the things around them change yet their principle with which they do so remains the same". ("Rongru") Regarding the "unity of ritual and morality", Xunzi maintained that it was something fundamental and primary, or put in another way, he thought that it represented the "base level" of ethics, that is, it was the basic thing that all people need to satisfy before they can achieve greater ethical heights. Even though Xunzi affirmed that each person should seek the realization of their own goals, he did not therefore think that this was done without the limiting factor of collective principles and goals. When individual pursuits conflict with collective ones, people should first work toward achieving the latter. It is only when "public morality" and the ethical base line of the public realm are guaranteed that individuals should pursue their own goals. In addition, it is only when there is "unity of rituals and morality", that is when collective principles and ideals are fully realized and promoted, that individuals are able to fully grasp and develop their own plans and ideals.[18]

It is clear that the reason why Xunzi proposes the notions of unity and division is because he wants to resolve the contradictions that exist between the need to allocate goods for individuals and goods for the community. Xunzi said:

> The former kings despised disorder, this is why they created rituals to divide people up properly so that the rich and poor, superior and inferior each had their proper place so that the higher-ups and their subordinates all cooperated; this is the root of caring for the world. ("Wangzhi")

> The former kings despised disorder, this is why they created rituals as means to divide people up properly to nourish their desires and provide for their needs. They did this so that desires did not lack for the goods to satisfy them and that the goods desired did not run out of supply. When both of these situations are maintained for a long time then therefrom rituals rise. ("Lilun 禮論")

What Xunzi means by "created rituals to divide people up properly" is that the former kings created a system that properly allocated whatever was necessary for both personal and social benefit. The "rituals" here has a double role. On the one hand, it guarantees that each individual person can acquire what they need for the satisfaction of their basic desires; on the other hand, it allocates different statuses and jobs based on the differences that obtain between people in any given circumstance. Xunzi's ideal was to use ritual to rationally allocate goods in order to satisfy both individual and collective needs while at the same time preserving the heterogeneity of society.

It is important to note that just as conflict can exist between the individual and the collective in terms of values, conflict can also occur between individuals and the collective in terms of benefit. Xunzi thought that individuals should sacrifice a bit of their personal benefit on behalf of collective benefit when the two come into conflict. This is expressed in the "Rongru" chapter:

> In terms of human circumstances . . . they do not dare have meat and wine . . . they do not dare wear silk garments . . . they do not dare travel by horse and cart. Why is this? It is not because they do not desire these things, but rather because if they for a second do not think of the future then how could it be possible that when they run out of goods they will be able to maintain any kind of stability for long? . . . Thus they think long and hard about the future and take into consideration the many generations to come.

Just as the "unity of ritual and morality" has a foundational and restrictive function for the individual, collective benefit in a certain sense takes priority over that of individuals. Even though Xunzi did emphasize that the needs of individuals should be met, he nevertheless thought that the needs of others should not be sacrificed for such ends, let alone should the safety and stability of society as a whole be risked. Even the ruler of the whole world who can enjoy infinite pleasures should not give free reign to his own desires and pursuit for personal benefit because if there is no "greater good" (*dali* 大利) then how

could that of the individual be maintained for any period of time at all? Hence, in the "Zhengming" chapter Xunzi says:

> As long as the mind accords with the proper way, then even though desires are many no harm will be done to order ... even though desires cannot be entirely eliminated, there will always be people who will want to regulate those desires that cannot find their satisfaction. Act in accordance with the proper way so that when it is possible the near total satisfaction of people's desires can be designed and when circumstances do not allow for this then regulate the desires of the people. There are none who do not follow what they can do and distance themselves from what they cannot do.

"According with the proper way" and "regulating desires" refer to the method of guiding and regulating the people's desires so that balance can be maintained between the individual and the collective whenever there is conflict. Specifically, this is to "supplement what is lacking" and "reduce what is in surplus", that is, those who are lacking in terms of their basic needs need to be mobilized and stimulated to motivate them and those who have an overabundance of desires need to be regulated so that they "know enough" and cease to behave excessively. ("Zhenglun 正論"). The regulations provided by rituals might be short-term or long-term depending on the particular situation in question, but their goal is nevertheless to maintain balance between individuals and the collective so as to accumulate wealth and ensure the greater good.

Xunzi believed that it is only when individual "preferences" and collective "consensus" are rationally allocated and balance each other that both can be maintained for a long period of time. Furthermore, it is only when such a balance is maintained that the greatest benefit for society as a whole can be realized:

> Thus order the activities of the four seasons, cultivate the ten thousand things, and bring benefit to all within the world: there is no other means to do so than by dividing people appropriately. ("Wangzhi 王制")

> The way of satisfying all of the needs in the world is in understanding the proper division of people. ("Fuguo 富國")

Xunzi provided a supplement to his theory on the unity of the individual and collective in the face of the conflict that can occur between "preferences" and "consensus". In order to realize their harmonious unity, Xunzi tried to find a rational method for properly dividing people. This includes making clear the distinction between individual preference and collective consensus as well as properly allocating goods to meet both individual and collective needs. Social justice is founded on the basis of the different needs of the members of society, a proper understanding of right and wrong, as well as the proper positioning of individuals within the collective. It is only when the distinction between preferences and consensus is made clear that their conflict can be truly resolved; it is only when goods are properly allocated to both individuals and the collective that balance and harmony can be achieved between them in addition to realizing a harmonious and unified social order. This is the fourth aspect of Xunzi's "theory on "self and community".

## 6. Good Persons and Good Societies

In the above four sections we have seen how Xunzi dealt with the relationship between diverse individual preferences and a unified social consensus. In the face of the collapse of society and the emergence of a diverse field of ideas and opinions, Xunzi was concerned with how to merge diverse individuals into a unified collective while preserving the characters and freedom of those individuals. Therefore, he both recognized that individual preferences and opinions led to societal division and that this reality had a certain rationality to it. However, he also maintained that there existed something—consensus—that transcended all individuals, groups, and schools of thought. For Xunzi, people should adhere to this universal principle and consensus and not become confused and obsessed by any one opinion or idea. The mind should accommodate many different opinions

and theories, but it should not let this lead them to any kind of relativism or nihilism. People must transcend their individual limitations on the foundation of the recognition of their own values and differences. They need to open their minds to be more tolerant and accommodating as well as try to experience the universal and transcendent truth. It is only in this way that a fractured and divided society can be fixed; it is only in this way that the tension between individuals and society can be resolved.

Xunzi said that this kind of relationship between preferences and consensus is, in a certain sense, a correlate with the relationship between "good persons" and "good societies" often seen in ethical discussions. Xunzi believed that good societies can only take shape when each and every individual can fully express themselves and develop their diverse goals:

> When the ruler and lords do not waste resources, when the court officials do not engage in uncouth behavior, when the bureaucrats do not slack off on the job, when the common people do not follow all kinds of strange and weird customs, and when there are no thieves and bandits at all, this can be said to be when justice has spread across the land. ("Jundao 君道")

It is only when the individual (no matter if it is the ruler or the common person) fully realizes their desires and wishes and strives with all their might in the pursuit of spiritual ideals and goals that society as a whole can achieve a kind of universal "justice". Even though there might be inconsistency between individuals and the collective, it is nonetheless due to the existence of each person's own goals that collective goals and ideals can exist. In other words, it is because each person strives toward realizing their own goals that the collective can come together with shared purpose and energy. Without the efforts of the individuals that make up the collective there will be no force binding society together as a whole, nor will there be any such thing as collective wisdom.

Yet, it is because there is a good society that there are good people:

> Collect all of the wishes of the world and possess them all at once, lead the world and govern it as if it were your children and grandchildren. As long as someone is not crazy and confused then how could anyone not find joy in the sight of this? ("Wangba 王霸")

Even though the self-realization of each individual is unique and diverse, as social products and members of a collective, they cannot take leave of their social relationality nor can they avoid evaluating themselves in terms of the value framework provided by society. Individual development and collective realization are mutually complementary: individual development cannot take leave of the division of labor and cooperation of others and, at the same time, individual goals can only be realized through their being placed within collective goals. If there is no common goal providing encouragement and motivation, if there is no unified guide or leader, then individual development and accomplishment is not possible. Regarding this, Xunzi said:

> When the way of the community is right then the ten thousand things each find their proper place, the six domestic animals each grow as they should, and all living things live in accordance with their natural conditions. When each thing grows as it should then the six domestic animals will flourish; when things grow and die as they should, then the grasses and trees will flourish; when government orders are issued in the right way, then the common people can be unified and worthies will come to court in service. ("Wangzhi")

It is because there is a common belief in and adherence to "consensus" that the actions of each member of society can be guided and assisted and that their lives can have direction. Xunzi did not believe in a communal order that is separate from what is shared or common to humanity, nor did he believe that an individual who lived isolated from the community would have freedom or fortune. He thought that the members of society could only find their proper place within the life of the community and that it is only within the rational

order of the community that individual freedoms can develop and diversity and justice can flourish. This is similar to what Plato (Guo and Zhang 1986) and Aristotle (Wu 1965) mean by justice.

Furthermore, the ideal form of society is also one where each person can practice a universal morality amongst a diversity of unique individuals. In other words, the common moral ideal and collective regulation is only obtained through the interaction of diverse individuals:

> When in the presence of the ruler practice what is appropriate of a subordinate; when in the village practice what is appropriate to the young and old; when among friends practice what is appropriate in interpersonal conduct; when faced with the young and uneducated practice what is appropriate to guiding and accommodating them. There should be none who are not loved and none who are not respected, nor should anyone be fought with so that all are accepted like how the heavenly and the earthly encompass the ten thousand things. ("Fei Shierzi 非十二子")

Xunzi did not believe in an individual freedom and fortune that were separate from the foundation of the community; neither did he believe it was possible for collective fortune and unity without the freedom of the individual and pluralistic creativity. Therefore, he both criticized Mozi for "praising sameness" because it eliminated individual diversity and a radical individualism that overly emphasized the self at the expense of the collective. For Xunzi, even though "I" am "I" and "you" are "you", we are not mutually exclusive of each other, instead we both live on this same piece of land; even though the "individual" is the "individual" and the "collective" is the "collective", it is only through the mutually beneficial interaction of individual and community that people can pursue a common future:

> It is only what is not orderly that can become orderly, it is only what is not straight that can become straight, and it is only the different that can be unified. ("Chendao 臣道")

These considerations that take account of several aspects of the relationship between individual and community provide us with certain inspiration regarding our modern circumstance. In our modern world with its unceasing tendency toward homogenization and globalization, human civilization has been no exception. Modern civilization has seen a high degree of the division of labor and separation and the problems of plurality and acceptance, the individual and the collective have become more and more important. Xunzi's discussion on the concepts of "preferences" and "consensus" provide us with insight on the questions of how to ensure the rational safety and development of each and every individual, of how to use the rational division of labor and allocation of goods to positively organize each member of society, and of how to establish global justice between the diversity of individuals and unity of the collective.

Obviously, there is a great difference between ancient societies and modern society, and this is reflected in the concepts of individual and community. We can at least affirm that Xunzi's reflections on "preferences" and "consensus" and the Confucian "theory of the unity of self and community" that they reflect undoubtedly makes a contribution to this important discussion. In the ideal society where "only not order is order", Xunzi steadfastly believed in a world full of human diversity, in a unified and regulated political order, in a plural and open public opinion, in a common and universal consensus of values, in a flourishing of justice and diversity in terms of good individuals and societies. Furthermore, he also believed that all of these things could be unified. In other words, it is only when the same and the different, the individual and the community, preferences and consensus, plurality and consensus mutually interact with each other in harmony that people can finally establish a flourishing human society that is accommodating and orderly while at the same time providing for each of the ten thousand things so that they all find their proper place.

## Notes

1. For more in depth discussions on Xunzi philosophy and modern political theory, refer to; Li and Ni (2014); Bai (2020a, 2020b); Bell and Li (2013); Bell (2006); Cline (2014, pp. 165–75); Zhang (2009, pp. 483–92); and Washio (2009).

2. Erik Lang Harris' treatment of Xunzi's political philosphy in Hutton (2016) also address the relationship between individuals and their communities, however, he focuses on the question of "political legitimacy" through Xunzi's concept of "allotment" (fen 分) rather than the particularities of this relationship itself. See also Henry Rosemont's chapter "State and Society in the Xunzi: A Philosophical Commentary" in Kline and Ivanhoe (2000, pp. 1–38). For other treatments of Xunzi's philosophy, see Kline and Tiwald (2014); Cua (2005); Goldin (1999); Sato (2003, 2015, 2021).

3. For more on this view see Fei (1985), and Brindley (2010), Bai (2020a, 2020b) and Zhang (2007).

4. For more on this view see Loewe (1994); Yao (1997); Pankenier (2013); Yang (2011); Zhao (2006, pp. 29–41); Zhao (2007) and Watanabe (2021).

5. This citicism is perhaps not limited to Chinese society but can be extended to include traditional Japanese, Korean, and Vietanamese societies, too.

6. The term "individual" might prove problematic for some who would prefer to talk of Confucian "persons" instead as it avoids the unnecessary baggage of individualism. However, this does not mean we cannot recognize that a Confucian person is the amorphous and pourous complex that is both individual and their community or society. A forest may be an infinitely organic complex, but without indivivdual trees (not to mention all the other organims) to constitute it there would be no forest at all. Neither individual nor society should be reduced one to the other, but rather, room should be maintaiend for the perspectives of both while not setting up a hard and fast division between them. For treatments of "individualism"and "person" drawing on Confucian insights see Rosemont (2015) and Ames (2022).

7. "Unity" within the Confucian context has more to do with balance and harmony than with the subsumption of particulars in a transcendent or ideal principle. For the idea of harmony in Chinese philosophy see Li (2014) and for the problems of Western philosophy's notion of unity, see Zhang (2017, pp. 151–78).

8. For example, the *Mengzi* 孟子 also says "That things are arrayed with certain disorder is the circumstances of things" (3A4), the *Gongsunlong* 公孫龍 says: "differentiate what is the same and what is different" and "separate the hard and the white", and the "Zeyang 則陽" chapter of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 says "When looking at things in terms of the differences then there are the liver and the gallbladder, the states of Chu and Yue". These are all affirmations of the objective existence of differences.

9. All translations of first-hand materials were done in concert with the author and with reference to both modern Chinese and English translations of the respective texts.

10. It needs to be clarified that even though Xunzi is speaking about diversity from the position of the ruler here, he nevertheless does not see diversity as a kind of "social utility". For Xunzi, maintaining the difference and individuality of a single person is rooted in their rights or even their essence. Even those of no remarkable intelligence and ability are still worthy of social respect. Xunzi, through the division of labor, hoped to allow those of society who did not match their peers in intelligence or ability to have the opporunity to participate in society. This does not mean that he wanted to "utilize" them for the benefit of the ruler. In fact, the opposite is the case: the work of the ruler is in maintaining the diversity of the common people.

11. This is resonate with Lucas (1977) argument "against equality" that thinks "equality" has become a superstition of the modern world and something that people worship as a kind of skeleton key to understanding government and the only means to achieve social justice.

12. We can imagine with Xunzi that everybody can become a sage like Yao or Shun but still recognize that this is an optimistic ideal and is actually very difficult to realize and therefore such a pursuit will lead to the world being thrown into chaos.

13. None of the great Confucians denied that humanity possesses a "natural" commonality or that people are not equal in moral terms.

14. It should be said that even though Xunzi strongly believed in adhering to the Confucian ethics of kin relationships and ritual, he nonetheless emphasized that ethical and moral values are universal and common. Therefore, in this sense, no matter if its Confucianism in general or Xunzi in particular, neither can be summarized in terms of "particularism" or "differentialism". In fact, the opposite is the case where Xunzi's concept of "sameness" refers to true universality because it not only transcends the limits of time and space but also all classes and ranks of family and society. He believed that humanity constituted a "unified class" where human beings all had the same natural dispositions and intellectual faculties and held the same values and principles.

15. It is worth noting that Xunzi frequently uses the phrases "what the hundred kings all have in common" (*baiwang zhi suotong* 百王之所同) and "what the past and the present are the same in" (*gujin zhi suoyi* 古今之所一) so much so that they might even be considered technical terms.

16    *Mengzi* 6A7 makes a very similar argument that people are all alike in their moral preferences through analogy with their similarities in sensory preferences by appealing to the same hsitorical figures as Xunzi. What these figures represent are social and cultural goods that have sedimented over time as common values that the majority of people consent to.

17    Of course, there is the possibility of suspicion here. That is, is it possible for what Xunzi or Rawls discovered or invented to be realized in today's society? Rawls himself acknowledge that much of what he said was merely theoretical. However, I do not think that the over idealization of a theory means that that theory necessarily loses its intepretive power in regard to reality. A theory is just a theory, and whether or not it can change reality might not be a question for the philosopher but instead is a question of the actual practice of politicians and social activitists. It is possible there exists in today's society a better political theory and reality than in Xunzi's time, but we still should and must read Xunzi because he provides us with an alternative path for exploring the modern topics of "diveristy" and "consensus". Or, perhaps put in another way, he allows us the opportunity to rethink the concept of "overlapping consensus" and provides further examples and evidences for this idea.

18    Xunzi's idea of a "unified standard" needs to be clarified. Xunzi is speaking from the perspective of the ruler and he thought that the ruler should provide a universal model for the common people and that this could serve as guide and reference for them in their words and actions. But this does not imply that the ruler was to force or demand that the people follow his example. The first task of the ruler is nothing other than preserving the preferences of the common people, guaranteeing that they are able to fully develop themselves, and safeguarding the meaningful realization of their lives. This is obviously different from modern democracries which want to uses the people's name to justify a principle of restriction.

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*Article*

# For the Common Good: The Symbiosis between Individual and Community in the Philosophy of Xunzi

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**Abstract:** The concept of community within Confucianism is deeply rooted in its unique understanding of individuals. This is exemplified by Xunzi, who claims that individuals, driven by their growing desires for satisfaction, would fight over limited resources and hence lead themselves to social disorder and distress. Thus, he evaluates human nature to be evil, thereby highlighting the necessity of forming a community. Keeping in view Xunzi's aims of establishing a harmonious co-existence amongst individuals who "desire or hate the same things" (*yuwu tongwu* 欲恶同物), this paper explores his considerations and justifications when accessing the individual and the community. Firstly, the origins of community arise from the survival crises of individuals in the state of nature. As individuals face the dilemma of disorder, they opt to form a community. This would, to a certain extent, endow individuals with rationality and the capacity to suppress their desires, therefore differentiating them from animals. Secondly, the principle of *fen* 分 (social division) is important in maintaining social order and uniting individuals under the governance of the *jun* 君 (lord). Differentiated justice embodied in the concept of *fen* also presents a contrast from the universal implications of *qun* 群 (community). Following social distinctions and affiliations, people are then absorbed into the ritual structure and social relationships as embedded individuals. Thirdly, realizing the common good would depend on the moral transformation of individuals and their identification with values that define an ideal community on a spiritual level, ultimately reflecting the essence of ancient Chinese universalism.

**Keywords:** Xunzi; embedded individuals; *qun* 群 (community); *fen* 分 (social division)

## 1. Introduction

As is evident from the lack of conscious development of the concept of the individual during the western Zhou dynasty, the origins of ancient Chinese culture paid little attention to the individual as a smaller unit within the collective community. This mindset shifted with the decline of *li* 礼 (ritual) and *yue* 乐 (ceremonial music) during the Spring–Autumn and Warring States periods, prompting pre-Qin scholars to examine individuals in the context of the social order in which everyone survived and thrived.

Amongst scholars of his time, Xunzi stood out for his proposal on the construction of a new social order grounded in the state of nature. Combined with his understanding of the shortcomings of human nature, he argues for the necessity of community formation by providing a profound dissection of common human emotions. His famous proposition that "man's nature is evil" ("*Xing'e* 性恶") embodies a thorough understanding of human desires in uncivilized cases. An important point to note would be that Xunzi did not strictly distinguish between the concepts of *xing* 性 (nature), *qing* 情 (emotion), and *yu* 欲 (desire), in which sense this paper agrees that Xunzi's views on human nature are not entirely pessimistic (see Xu 1969, p. 234).[1] However, it is evident that Xunzi specifically calls for mankind to overcome the selfish and evil nature of their character, for fear of detrimental effects to the overall development of society. Moral education is hence essential in

instilling common acceptance of a standard for "good", or what may be called "the common good", in order meet the needs of the community. Contrarily, Xunzi also warns that if individuals fail to restrain the desires rooted in their nature, allowing their desires to expand endlessly will lead to the proliferation of "evil". Consequently, he concludes that man cannot live without a community.[2] Indeed, an individual's force is extremely tiny in Nature, requiring communal stability and order for better existence. This is the starting point of Xunzi's political philosophy.

Since one's development would always be entangled with that of the community, one must deal with relationships between oneself and others. This is not only a sociological issue concerning public and private spheres, but also an anthropological problem concerning the integration of individuals into diverse and heterogeneous societies. Unlike Mencius' belief in sprouts of *shan* 善 (goodness) present in human nature, Xunzi, as a realist philosopher, took into consideration the practical circumstances of the limited nature of material resources, which would affect individual existence and hence shape external norms when cultivating *shan*.[3] Paradoxically, uneducated man's desires are unlimited and can never be satisfied. This inevitably leads to some degree of tension between an individual and his Other, as it seems impossible to inculcate in him the virtue of self-sacrifice and accomplishment for others. This is similar to Thomas Hobbes' illustration that "every man is enemy to every man" in the state of nature, and that the basic principle of "self-preservation" in human nature gives rise to the desire for "power" to secure survival. (See Sabine 1986, pp. 522–25) Xunzi's view differs slightly, in that he acknowledged the role of Confucianism in educating mankind to overcome the "evil" in human nature, to adopt a better way of life, and to take up one's moral obligations through the cognition of the *dao* and the observance of rituals throughout an individual's entire life. This would prompt individuals to cooperate with others to achieve the common good. Focusing on the differences and commonalities between the virtue politics of Mencius and Xunzi, Sungmoon Kim points out that: "Although starting from a radically different view of human nature, Xunzi joins Mencius on Confucianism's common positive moral-political perfectionist ambition. It was their shared conviction that positive Confucianism can be attained not by suppressing the desire for material interests but by transforming it into the public interest that is profitable for both the ruler and the ruled" (Kim 2020, p. 57). Therefore, it can be seen that individuals, according to Xunzi, are not only participants with multiple roles across political, social, and ethical life but also moral subjects seeking the common good.

Xunzi's core concept depicting the relationship between the community and the individual is *qun*, but there are many different interpretations of this term used in *Xunzi*. Eric Hutton translates the word *qun* as "community", while Eirik Lang Harris notes that these terms are used both as nouns and verbs, and he renders "*qun*" as "community" or "to form community" depending on how it is used in the sentence (Harris 2016, p. 96). In contrast to the above translations, Fu Yan 严复 (1854–1921), a well-known modern Chinese interpreter, considered Xunzi's usage of *qun* to be equivalent to "society" in Herbert Spencer's *The Study of Sociology* (*Qunxue Siyan* 群学肆言). In the Chinese context, *qun* holds the meaning of society or social groups. In addition, Fu Yan translated John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* as *Qunji Quanjie Lun* 群己权界论 (which can be understood as "the Boundary of Community-Power and Self-Rights") in view of the idea that the theme concerns civil and "social liberty" (*qunli zhi ziyou* 群理之自繇) (Yan 1981, p. 3) and that the boundary dividing the powers of community and the individual must hence be drawn to ensure its people can achieve true social freedom.

Generally, *qun* has been understood as "social group" in sociology, and "community" in politics. The question then points to what exactly does *qun* encompass as a philosophical terminology? This paper suggests that Xunzi's concept of *qun* is proposed under the broad worldview of "all under heaven" (*tianxia* 天下), which encapsulates "all creatures" (*wanwu* 万物). Therefore, he brings across the point that all life can find its place within the community and be guided toward the best available paths of development. The focal point of Xunzi's thought is hence that man's virtue can be cultivated through the cogni-

tion of *dao* and the observance of rituals, honing their abilities in taking on different social roles to support the orderly development of society. This process is, however, seen to be possible exclusively when the establishment of rituals and legislation are conducted by a sage. The individual which Xunzi is concerned about is never an isolated being, but one that has always existed within social networks. This includes their relationship with sage kings (*shengwang* 圣王), whom would delegate suitable roles to his people to collectively complete work and practice rituals in order to achieve the common good.

Reviewing previous studies, it is found that many scholars have focused on the concept of *qun* in *Xunzi* but have paid insufficient attention to the individual. This paper attempts to offer an affirmative defense that the idea of the individual has already been present and would lay important foundations in explaining the formation of the community as explained in *Xunzi*. Firstly, this paper discusses the role of the individual in the origins and formation of the community and justifies why the concept of person is understood as an embedded individual. Secondly, concerning the problem of how to *qun* (form a community), this paper explains Xunzi's understanding of the political principle of *fen*. Thirdly, this paper explores the moral transformation of the individual and the establishment of an ideal community. Finally, this paper also suggests the implications of Xunzi's views on the individual and the community for contemporary society.

## 2. The Origin of Community: Individual Co-Existence Scenarios

It is a highly debated topic as to when the concept of "individual" emerged in Chinese culture, and whether it corresponds with individualism in Western philosophy. In discussions of comparative ethics, some scholars, including Kwong-loi Shun, have pointed out that certain Western notions have been claimed to be inapplicable to the Confucian concept of personhood (Shun 2004, p. 183). Nonetheless, the spirit of humanism was abundant in Confucianism in the pre-Qin period, the pursuits of people from the Spring–Autumn and Warring States periods gradually veered from the worship of heaven and superstition of gods that had been prevalent in primitive society, to the seeking of a realistic significance of human existence. However, perceptions of human existence at that time varied from Western notions of atomic individualism as individuals were still largely integrated into a complex system of rituals and relationships in the traditional Confucian society. Therefore, this paper examines Xunzi's concept of the person as an "embedded individual" (see Dongfang 2010, p. 127), closely linked to others on various levels.[4] To illustrate this argument, this paper explores Xunzi's statements from different dimensions.

### 2.1. Concerns about Individuals

When discussing the concept of the individual, a logical starting point would be Xunzi's statements about human characteristics. As a realist thinker, Xunzi depicts humans as being in the original state of individuals. This corresponds with the theoretical "state of nature", a hypothetical initial phase of human society, which is able to provide the necessary justifications for the existence of community while at the same time also providing a rational basis for specific claims for political action. Specifically, in Xunzi's view, human beings driven by primitive desires are always unsatisfied. Consider the following quotations:

> The natural disposition of people is that for food they want meats, for clothes they want embroidered garments, for travel they want chariots and horses, and moreover they want the riches of surplus wealth and accumulated goods. Even if provided these things, to the end of their years they would never be satisfied; this is also the natural disposition of people. ("Rongru 荣辱") (Hutton 2014, p. 29)

> Liking what is beneficial and desiring gain are people's inborn dispositions and nature. Suppose there were brothers who had some property to divide, and that they followed the fondness for benefit and desire for gain in their inborn dispositions and nature. If they were to do so, then the brothers would conflict and contend with each other for it. However, let them be transformed by the proper

form and order contained in ritual and *yi*. If so, then they would even give it over
to their countrymen. ("Xing'e") (Hutton 2014, p. 251)

Taking into account his experience, Xunzi points out that human beings are inherently
selfish and unsatisfied, and are driven by primitive desires, leading to paradoxes since each
individual would seek to maximize their personal satisfactions albeit in a society with lim-
ited resources. It is therefore within the selfish nature of man to desire benefits, even going
to the extreme extents of trying every possible way to obtain them, regardless of whether
this means having to compete with brothers or other blood relatives over materialistic pos-
sessions. This tension between individuals in turn makes it difficult to foster mutual trust,
as it is seemingly impossible to cultivate the virtue of sacrificing oneself to help others.
Exploring deeper, the fundamental problem here lies in the way that, as it is difficult for
mankind to overcome the unlimited desires inherent to human nature, an adverse practi-
cal impact would be the inability of people to achieve rational distributions of resources
when faced with competition and struggle. For Xunzi, this problem can only be resolved
if people are made to form a community in which a stable order has been set; for individu-
als, integration would mean that one's evil nature has to be suppressed or transformed by
observing ritual, and subsequently cultivating moral sentiments.

To solve the dilemma of human society, Xunzi provides a thorough account of the
process by which ritual was established by the former kings (*xianwang* 先王):

From what did ritual arise? I say: Humans are born having desires. When they
have desires but do not get the objects of their desire, 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 yi in order to
divide things among people, to nurture their desires, and to satisfy their seeking.
They caused desires never to exhaust material goods, and material goods never
to be depleted by desires, so that the two support each other and prosper. This
is how ritual arose. ("Lilun 礼论") (Hutton 2014, p. 201)

Explaining the cause of ritual, Xunzi believes that it is crucial in regulating human
emotions and desires and enabling individuals to be liberated from their state of nature
where their desires are limitless. In view of this, Philip J. Ivanhoe argues that Xunzi seeks
to achieve a "happy symmetry" between desires and goods (Ivanhoe 2014, pp. 43–60).
Chenyang Li 李晨阳 also elaborates on the correlation between desires and goods, point-
ing out that Xunzi explicitly drew connections between rituals and desires, proposing that,
on the precondition that rituals inculcate the effective restraint of one's desires, growth
of desire itself can facilitate the production of goods, in such a way that existing supplies
should be able to satisfy suppressed desires and demands. (Li 2021, vol. 10, pp. 101–7) In
this way, human beings solve the problem of mutual strife in primitive societies through
the formulation and use of rituals. Loubna El Amine emphasizes the importance of rituals
from a different perspective, claiming that: "Rituals, by clarifying positions and social dis-
tinctions, contribute to the avoidance of conflict in society" (Amine 2015, p. 99). As evident
from the above-mentioned, perceptions of the state of human nature serves as the logical
starting point in explaining the construction of *qun* in *Xunzi*. Concurrently, practicing rit-
uals would be the only approach that allows the group to avoid descending into chaos.

It is noteworthy that Xunzi's envisioned process of establishing a community does
not involve the signing of contracts or the formation of a general will, but rather the for-
mulation of rituals as an essential part of the process. He argues that "people of evil na-
ture" can be transformed morally under the influence of rituals, thus leading the society
towards better progress. However, Xunzi has also omitted some key questions from his
argument. For instance, why would people be willing to change their nature to accept the
rule of the sages? Does a community ensure that the needs of all its people are met? No
direct answers have been given. In Western classical political philosophy, scholars such

as Thomas Hobbes, Hugo Grotius, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau illustrated the social contract as a foundation for attaining the common good. For example, Rousseau assumes, "Men have reached a point at which the obstacles that endanger their preservation in the state of nature overcome, by their resistance, the forces which each individual can exert with a view to maintaining himself in that state. Then this primitive condition can no longer subsist, and the human race would perish unless it changed its mode of existence." This situation then renders a social contract by which the community is restructured and supported (Rousseau 2010, p. 14). The social contract was hence thought to reflect the general will of individuals, as seem from how he wrote that, "The general will alone can direct the forces of the state according to the object of its institution, which is the common good" (Rousseau 2010, p. 25). There are differences and commonalities between these discourses and Xunzi's thoughts, the commonality being that both camps acknowledge that the public good would be a long-term benefit of the individual. On the other hand, their differences lie in the varying methods and imaginations of what the common good would be. While Xunzi believes that "human nature is evil," he also admits that human nature can be transformed, during which the rites created by sages served as stimuli for transformation. In this regard, Xunzi emphasizes that "the fate of a person rests in Heaven, and the fate of a state rests in ritual" ("Qiangguo 强国") (Hutton 2014, p. 163). To clarify Xunzi's theories, the fate of the nation would be determined by rituals performed by the sages. Observation of such rituals allows for good governance to be achieved. However, the destiny of individuals would still be mainly determined by Heaven and cannot be changed. This highlights the social significance of rituals, which enables people to form a community not bound by blood, but by common values, norms, conventions, etc.

### 2.2. Distinctions between Qun and Animal Groups

Observing the formation of the community, it was the sage who first put in place various regulations, which through rituals, sought to shape the social essence of every individual, eventually transforming them completely from "natural persons" to "embedded individuals". At the same time, as defined by various social rules and moral codes, a sharp distinction is made between human beings and animals who lived naturally in groups. Xunzi describes the difference between man and animals in the following way: that the essence of human beings lies in our abilities to distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong, therefore being able to set up reasonable social norms and order under the provisions of ritual to form communities. He writes:

> Water and fire have *qi* 气 (vital breath) but are without life. Grass and trees have life but are without awareness. Birds and beasts have awareness but are without *yi* 义 (a sense of morality and justice). Humans have *qi* and life and awareness, and moreover they have *yi*. And so they are the most precious things under Heaven. They are not as strong as oxen or as fast as horses, but oxen and horses are used by them. How is this so? I say it is because humans are able to form communities while the animals are not. ("Wangzhi 王制") (*Xunzi* 9.16a, Knoblock 1990, vol. II, pp. 103–4; Hutton 2014, p. 76)

According to Xunzi, humans occupy a distinguished position in the world, and their wisdom is superior to that of animals, allowing them to make other species work for them. This is due to the fact that only humans have the capacity to "*qun*" (form a community). However, Xunzi also acknowledges that "Wherever grasses and trees grow together, birds and beasts will flock. This is because each thing follows its own class" ("*Qunxue* 劝学") (Hutton 2014, p. 3). Although also referred to as "*qun*" in Xunzi's description, grasses, trees, and animals form their own "group" only because they each belong to their own species, and similar species naturally tend to grow together. However, Derk Bodde suggests that many animals, such as bees, in fact choose to live in a *qun*, and that even within these animal groups, specific divisions of labor and hierarchies exist (Bodde 1991, p. 311).[5] This has spurred further discussions about the differences between human and animal behavioral patterns, as well as methods of social interactions. Xunzi's assertion that only

"humans are able to *qun*" has led some scholars to question the meaning of *qun* and the way in which *qun* is discussed. Eirik Lang Harris focuses on this issue and proposes that it could be the case that Xunzi used the term "community" in two slightly different ways, one of which would be purely descriptive, while the other could have normative overtones (Harris 2016, pp. 101–2). If discussions of animal organizations are regarded as descriptive, Xunzi's proposition that "humans are able to form communities" is normative, which highlights humankind's capability to engage in reason. As Robert Brandom points out, "Reason is as nothing to the beasts of the field. We are the ones on whom reasons are binding, who are subject to the peculiar force of the better reason. This force is a species of normative force, a rational 'ought'" (Brandom 1994, p. 5). Equipped with reason, men can actively make choices that best serves their long-term development. Antonio S. Cua also suggests that there appears to be two different conceptions of men in Xunzi's thought. On one hand, man is to be understood in terms of his basic motivational structure. In this sense, men are alike in being actuated with the same range of feelings and desires. In another understanding, man is to be characterized in terms of his capacity to make moral distinctions. This differentiates men from animals (Cua 2005, p. 12). We can take a moral description of men instead of a normative one.

In order to evaluate the significance of Xunzi's terms of *qun*, it is necessary to understand the development and evolution of the traditional Chinese character *qun* 羣, on top of considering the differences between human and animal behavior. In his study of *Jiaguwen* 甲骨文 (scriptures carved on tortoise shells or animal bones during Shang and Western Zhou periods) and the Jin inscriptions for the character *qun*, Shi Feng 冯时 analyzes the interpretations of *qun* in pre-Xunzi periods from the perspectives of the original meaning of the character *qun*, the changes and developments of its meaning, the distinction between humans and animals advocated by the ancient Chinese, and the reference to related terms. In particular, he mentions that the ancient Chinese dictionary *Shuowen Jiezi* 说文解字 (Origin of Chinese Characters) explains explicitly that the character for *qun* was created in relation to the observations of sheep while its pronunciation was similar to the word for *jun*. It can hence be seen that the character *qun* is derived from the habit of sheep to gather in flocks (Feng 2019, vol. 2, pp. 39–41). Clearly, the ancient Chinese thinkers were already aware of the fact that animals also live in herds or groups, which is also termed as *qun* in the *Xunzi*. While the character of sheep is still utilized as a symbol to denote *qun*, it is evident that the idea of human community inherits its ancient meaning of "a flock of sheep". However, it is also clear that there is also the idea of a more prominent lord present in the human *qun*. Given this context and consideration, the use of sheep or lambs as a symbol is in fact a way of expressing that people are as humble as lambs.

According to the study of etymology, a social order set up within the human community is headed by a lord, under whom all others are subordinates, this is an integral characteristic of the formation of *qun*. A debatable question is where the boundaries and distinctions between human communities and animal groups lie. From a biological perspective, it is clear that *qun* is not exclusive to humans as a survival option, because animal groups can also have leaders. For example, in the case of honeybees, there is also a "lord" who calls the shots. However, Xunzi's understanding of *qun* emphasizes the unique human capacity for rationality, which creates a normative force that does not exist in animal groups. The question then arises as to how Xunzi's so-called *qun* should be understood and how it differs from the animal group or herd. I offer two possible defenses as follows.

Firstly, one key difference between the social existence of humans and animals is the capacity for moral and value-driven identification that Xunzi highlights as the foundation of human cohesion. Human beings possess a rational and orderly capacity to overcome primitive desires, and this is the key to being "the most noble of all". Through the universal recognition of the common good, individuals no longer perceive their place in the natural world as an isolated entity but would place themselves under a social ideology or value system, thereby finding their own position and responsibility which enables them to further realize the particular meaning of their existence within the community. However,

this understanding does not cater for when *qun* is understood as groups with a division of labor but without shared ethical values. Humans were seen to be the only species who will seek to survive as a community under the dominance of ritual, ethics and morality. Confucianism recognizes this as the greatest difference between humans and animals. Many contrast Mencius' theory of the goodness of human nature, which distinguishes between "humans" (who are supposed to be moral) and "non-humans" (who are incapable of compassion), by the four sprouts (四端 *siduan*), with Xunzi's belief that every human must acquire these goods to be human. From Xunzi's perspective, although man is not born with a tendency to be good, man can become good as long as he is able to accept transformations imposed by ritual, morality and law, and this constitutes the greatest difference between man and animals. As Feng's study points out, the *qun* evolved from a group of animals from the same species to a group of people, expanding from a group of blood relatives to a social relationship that broke through the barriers of blood relations, eventually taking on the meaning of society (Feng 2019, vol. 2, p. 44). The *qun* referred to by Xunzi is in fact equivalent to the whole of a ritually governed society. Xunzi's concept of categories (*lei* 类) describes the sage as an individual with the ability to comprehend and unify categories. A wise ruler is able to "thoroughly grasp the unifying categories of things" (*zhitongtonglei* 知通统类) ("Ruxiao 儒效") (Hutton 2014, p. 67). The ancient Chinese annotator Yang Jing 杨倞 elucidates that "all the rules and regulations are made into a system of laws" (Wang 1988, p. 248). As can be seen, grasping the unifying categories of things has the effect of defining norms and establishing legal patterns in different ways. Thus, in addition to the natural attributes of man, the social attributes of man are also regarded as a specific category by Xunzi.

Second, it is obvious that trees and animals also have groups which they belong to, but these groups, which are categorized primarily by species, lack considerations and acceptance of diversity. Although creatures might belong to different categories, an important aspect of Xunzi's notion of *qun* lies in the basis of respect for the differences between all creatures. Therefore, he emphasizes the idea of a "clear division to form the community" (*mingfenshiqun* 明分使群) ("Fuguo 富国"). Consider the following statements:

> The myriad things share the same cosmos and have different bodies. They have no intrinsic fittingness but are useful for humans. This is simply the arrangement of the world. Various grades of people live together. They share the same pursuits but have different ways. They share the same desires but have different understandings. This is simply the way they are born . . . People all desire the same things and all hate the same things. But while their desires are many, the things to satisfy them are few, and since they are few, people are sure to struggle over them. Thus, the products of the hundred crafts are means to nurture a person, but even the most capable can not engage in every craft, nor can people each fill every professional post. ("Fuguo") (Hutton 2014, p. 83)

Continuing his analysis on the inequality of demand and supply, as well as desire and satisfaction, Xunzi noted that individuals all love or hate the same things, and hence create a mismatch between their constant desire for more benefits and the limited social supply. The struggle to attain more resources hence ensues, thus resulting in a situation where each person's life needs to be supported by a variety of productions. However, it is impossible for one to be competent in all professions or to manage all work at the same time. Therefore, one cannot live apart from the community, should they want to survive. Additionally, if the individual lives in a community where different positions and statuses are not reasonably divided, strife will arise. As such, nothing is better than to have clear distinctions between ranks and classes in order to save one's life from trouble and eliminate calamity.

From the point of view of nature, although all animals and plants live in the same world, they take on different forms. The same applies to human beings. Although they share some common desires and pursuits, their method of attaining benefits might also differ, therefore differences also exist within commonalities. In order to avoid chaos amongst

the masses, Xunzi argues that it would be best to clarify the distinctions of rank and hierarchy. That being said, the sage must also adhere to the principles relating to co-existence of differences as well as universality, taking into account people's common feelings and desires, and subsequently granting them different degrees of satisfaction according to their abilities, social status, divisions, and relationships, rather than practicing absolute egalitarianism. From the above discussion, it is easy to ascertain that Xunzi does have his solutions for constructing pluralistic groups when dealing with universality and differences of the population, which is precisely how the community accommodates plurality.

### 3. The Community's Settlement for the Individual

In explaining the origins of political philosophy, Leo Strauss writes that, "all political action has then in itself a directedness towards knowledge of the good: of the good life, or the good society. For the good society is the complete political good. If this directedness becomes explicit, if men make it their explicit goal to acquire knowledge of the good life and of the good society, political philosophy emerges" (Strauss 1957, vol. 19, p. 343). All political action naturally includes the establishment of the community, the point of which is to enable people to lead good lives and to realize the common good. How then, can the settlement of the very life of each individual within the community be achieved? On the basis of social division, Xunzi proposes a social image of people "living in a community harmoniously and being one" (*qunju heyi* 群居和一). In Xunzi's words:

> Accordingly, for their sake the former kings established ritual and *yi* in order to divide the people up and cause there to be the rankings of noble and base, the distinction between old and young, and the divisions between wise and stupid and capable and incapable. All these cause each person to carry out his proper task and each to attain his proper place. After that, they cause the amount and abundance of their salaries to reach the proper balance. This is the way to achieve community life and harmonious unity. ("Rongru") (Hutton 2014, p. 30)

It is vital to emphasize that achieving communal life and harmonious unity requires certain conditions. The social arrangements and distributions made by the former kings were reasonable, and best suited to the development of each individual. In this process, an order would be formed in the society in which a hierarchy would be constructed of nobility and inferiority, as well as a differentiation between the young and the old, which must be adhered to in order for people to enjoy a good life. This paper tries to explore the issue from two perspectives: the *dao* of how to *qun* and *fen* as a requirement of ritual and legislation.

#### 3.1. Jun (君 Lord) as the Creator and Authority

The political philosophy of Xunzi is based on an ethical–humane orientation. The social values and morality are given externally by the community's kings. Xunzi adds:

> Now how about the way of the former kings and the ordering influence of *ren* and *yi*, and how these make for communal life, mutual support, mutual adornment, and mutual security? ("Rongru") (Hutton 2014, p. 28)

As previously mentioned, former kings (*xianwang* 先王) appear when mankind is faced with chaos, performing epoch-making tasks since only sage kings (*shengwang* 圣王) can establish rituals and make laws for the community. The legislation set for the community was seen to cover all aspects of public life.

Various names for the community's leaders present fine distinctions in the *Xunzi*. Firstly, there is the distinction between the former kings and later kings (*houwang* 后王). The former kings are creators who, in response to the chaotic original state of humanity, first uphold the *dao* and practice the rituals that enable everyone to be nourished and to live in peace. The rulers should follow the path of the ancient kings and emulate the later kings. Youlan Feng suggests that by the time of Xunzi, King Wen (*Wenwang* 文王) and Duke Zhou (*Zhougong* 周公) were considered the later king, and the *dao* of Zhou could only be called the *dao* of the later kings. (Feng 2000, p. 245) This classification was made

based on historical sequence. Secondly, Xunzi has different definitions of sages (*sheng* 圣) and kings (*wang* 王). He believes that "utter sufficiency" (*zhizu* 至足) ("Jiebi 解蔽") means becoming sage kings, as they perfected both morality and governance. A sage is someone who is knowledgeable about all aspects of moral relationships, and hence does not require an appropriate political position. For example, Confucius was a sage but not a king. In contrast, the contributions of a king primarily lie in the establishment of institutions and by their becoming a political leader. Third, Xunzi distinguishes between the Son of Heaven (*tianzi* 天子) and the ruler of a state, with the former being the ruler of *tianxia* and the latter being the ruler of a particular city-state. During Xunzi's time, the actual existing states, including territories governed by *Zhou tianzi* 周天子 (the emperor of Zhou), were limited to individual city-states. (Sato 2021, p. 253). The word "lord" only referred to the sovereign of a vassal state in the Spring–Autumn and Warring States periods.

As stated above, there is a slight difference between the concept of "sage king" and that of "lord". According to Xunzi, the sage kings are ideal lords as they have mastered and can maintain a balance between ruling by ethics and the system of governance. The process of *qun* (which means forming a community), on the other hand, depends on the governance of the lord. This idea is closely related to Xunzi's idea of "the *dao* of the lord" (*jundao* 君道). Eric Hutton notes the commonality in the pronunciation of the Chinese words *jun* (君 lord) and *qun* (群 community), which, according to Feng Shi, is not without significance. One of the important definitions Xunzi gives to the lord is "good at forming a community" (*shanqun* 善群):

> The true lord is one who is good at forming a community. When the way of forming a community is properly practiced, then the myriad things will each obtain what is appropriate for them, the six domestic animals will each obtain their proper growth, and all the various things will obtain their proper life spans. ("Wangzhi") (Hutton 2014, p. 76)

Xunzi elevates the practice of *qun* as *jundao*, by which the life of all the creatures could be accommodated, illustrating an associative view of the universe. It is noteworthy that when Xunzi refers to the *dao*, it cannot be regarded as a strictly metaphysical concept, but rather as a form of political wisdom put into practice by the lord. He expounds that the *dao* carried out by the lord ought to contain four dimensions:

> What is the way? I say: It is the way of a true lord. Who is a true lord? I say: It is one who is good at keeping people alive and nurturing them, good at organizing and ordering people, good at elevating and employing people, and good at beautifying and ornamenting people. When one is good at keeping people alive and nurturing them, they will love him. When one is good at organizing and ordering people, they will feel comfortable with them. When one is good at elevating and employing people, they will delight in him. When one is good at beautifying and ornamenting people, they will give him glory. When the four key factors are possessed completely, then everyone under heaven will slide with them. This is called being able to create community. ("Jundao 君道") (Hutton 2014, p. 123)

Xunzi holds that the lord should uphold and insist on four main aspects of the *dao*: Firstly, people's reasonable desires should be satisfied. Secondly, the lord is responsible for regulating the lives of his people and governing them, including the establishment of basic orders. Thirdly, suitable positions and statuses should be created and allocated. Lastly, rituals and righteousness should be advocated and utilized to educate the people in becoming better moral agents both externally and internally. Furthermore, by upholding these principles, the lord will be beloved by all the people under heaven. The lord, therefore, not only holds the political power to rule the entire land, but also becomes the pivot of ideological principles of the world, acting as the transmitter of political teachings in poetry, books, ritual and music, as well as the embodiment of the *dao*. This is important, as the ideal of "living in harmony" was seen to only be achieved when ritual, justice, and culture constituted part of the governance. As Xunzi says:

But to have a gentleman acting as ruler and disorder in the state–from ancient time to the present I have never heard of a such thing. This is what the old text means when it says, "Order is born from the gentleman, disorder from the pretty man." ("Wangzhi") (Hutton 2014, p. 38)

Significantly, Xunzi had extremely high expectations for the lord, even exceeding his expectations for the establishment of the community, as he saw a strong connection between the lord and the governing of the state. To some extent, the meritocratic selection and appointment of lords would eventually lead to political centralization and authoritarianism. Further, Xunzi differentiates individuals in a hierarchical order that places the lord and the people on unequal footings. As the lord represents the will to power, he is highly involved and prominent in the whole political system.

Generally, in Chinese philosophy, the concept of the individual is not prominent, the relationship between the sage and the people is discussed more from the standpoint of the community. Nevertheless, in discussing the formation of ritual, legislation, customs, and social order when establishing the community, Xunzi gives due consideration to how individuals should embrace moral transformation to overcome excessive desires. He proposes that sage kings should play a key role in combining the community's power with the individual's rights. Only through the guidance and edification of sage kings can a balance be achieved between the community's general will and the individual's personal development. From the above discussions, we can conclude that the relationship between the individual and the community is relatively clear in *Xunzi*. Because of limited resources and the flaws of human nature, individuals cannot survive on their own. The advantage of humans is that they have the rationality and ability to form communities based on the recognition and delineation of different social roles and relationships.

### 3.2. Fen: The Principle for the Organization and Distribution of the Community

The organization of individuals within a highly centralized community requires a foundation in social norms, values and beliefs. Xunzi's conceptual framework of *fen*, *yi* 义 (righteousness) and *bian* 辨 (differentiation) provides this foundation for the community. When we delve further into this issue, it will be useful to focus on the terms of *fen* as used in the *Xunzi*. In his view, the formation of the community, including the acceptance of common values by human beings, cannot be separated from *fen*. Xunzi makes the following statement:

Why are humans able to form communities? I say it is because of *fen*. How can *fen* be put into practice? I say it is because of yi. And so if they use yi in order to make social divisions, then they will be harmonized. If they are harmonized, then they will be unified. If they are unified, then they will have more force. If they have more force, then they will be strong. If they are strong, then they will be able to overcome the animals. And so, they can get to live in homes and palaces. ("Wangzhi") (Hutton 2014, p. 76)

According to Xunzi, the term *fen*, which can be understood as a norm and value, is a human characteristic and an essential element in the formation of the community. Xunzi takes rituals as the basic structure of his political philosophy, within which there is a hierarchy dividing noblemen and the grassroots, a distinction between the old and the young, and separate rules for the rich and the poor. On this basis, Xunzi concludes that ritual has two functions: to nurture (to ensure people's desires can be met without having too much stress on resources) and to distinguish (as in establishing a social order). Judging from the latter, it can be seen that ritual encompasses impartiality and objectivity in that everyone would have rituals designated for them, albeit being differentiated by class. Xunzi says:

For human ways, none is without distinctions. Of distinctions, none are greater than social divisions, and of social divisions, none are greater than rituals, and of rituals, none are greater than those of sage kings. ("Feixiang 非相") (Hutton 2014, p. 35)

The system of ritual contains connotations of impartiality and objectivity. It defines different classes of people and allows people to do what they are fit to do, in which their class determines the rules that people are expected to follow in the given ideology. People who are evil in nature are averse to labor and lack awareness of their social rights and duties. The only way to draw a clear line between the public and private spheres is to make rituals to "clarify the division (*mingfen* 明分)" so that people can clearly know their rights and obligations. Only in this way can people avoid social disputes caused by the lack of boundaries to one's desires, while also clearly understanding their duties and being thus able to effectively fulfill their social obligations. The limitation of human desires is hence important in Xunzi's treatise of rituals, because "If there is no *duliang* 度量 (measure) or *fenjie* 分界 (limit) to their seeking, then they cannot help but struggle with each other" ("*Lilun*") (Hutton 2014, p. 201). Therefore, Xunzi saw the need for individuals to sacrifice personal satisfaction in order to seek long-term developments of the community. In this way, the individual's own situation will be also improved under the umbrella of the community. This is what makes sustainable and rational public life possible. Undeniably, Xunzi recognizes the differences in abilities, talents, identity and moral standards of individuals. However, he also asserts that the principle of *fen* in rituals would allow for different people to retain such differences while striving for relative fairness and fulfilling personal satisfaction. The *duliang* and *fenjie* in the *Xunzi* can also be understood as the contents of the rights and duties that people pursue today, which would have their scopes and limits. Xunzi writes:

> That what is most great and lofty in the world, is the boundary for right and wrong, and is the source from which arise the allotments of tasks and the naming of phenomena—the regulations of true kings are just that. ("Zhenglun 正论") (Hutton 2014, p. 198)

With regards to *fen*, regulations for true kings can be summarized into two main points. The first would be to educate people to differentiate right from wrong, while the second would include the prescription of different divisions of labor and systems of nomenclature. It is worth noting that there are two pronunciations for the word "*fen*" in Mandarin, corresponding to the two interpretations of the term. This term can be a noun, referring to a fixed position in the political order; while it also appears as a verb, which means to make a distinction. Therefore, different translations of "*fen*" include division, allotment, distinction, distribution, etc. For Xunzi, division can hence be discussed between good or evil, heaven or human, schools of thought, honor or disgrace, and governance or chaos. Further, Xunzi closely links the terms of *fen* with the coordination of the community. He says:

> In order for people to live, they cannot be without community. If they form communities but lack social divisions then they will struggle with each other. If they struggle with each other than there will be chaos, and if there is chaos they will be impoverished. Thus, to lack social divisions is the greatest harm to people, and to have social divisions is the root benefit for the whole world. And the lord of men is the pivot and crucial point in controlling social divisions. ("Fuguo") (Hutton 2014, p. 105)

Here Xunzi is playing upon the fact that the word *jun* 君 (lord) and *qun* 群 (form communities) are very similar in both pronunciation and written form during ancient times (a similarity that one can still perceive in their present pronunciations and written forms). Xunzi demonstrates that social division is essential to the creation of a stable community, as it can lead to prosperity and prevent strife. From a utilitarian perspective, the whole community benefits from division. With regards to ethical concerns included in division, Xunzi's proposal is as follows:

> As saying goes: When the farmers are allotted their fields and then plow them, when the merchants are allotted their tasks and then set to work, when the hundred craftsmen are allotted their tasks and then set to work, when the grand min-

isters are allotted their assignments and then hear their cases, when the rulers who preside over states bestowed upon them as feudal lords are allotted their land and then guard it, when the three dukes collect together various proposed methods for governing and debate over them-then the Son of Heaven need merely keep himself in a reverent state and that is all. If both inside and outside the palace things are like this, then everything under heaven will be peaceful and even, and everyone will be well-ordered and live in accordance with the proper distinctions. This is something in which the hundred kings were the same, and such is the great division of society brought about by ritual and proper models. ("Wangba 王霸") (Hutton 2014, p. 106)

In a further elaboration on the concept of *fen*, Xunzi suggests that it encompasses both "the divisions of social status" in human society, namely the distinguishment between rulers and subjects, as well as "the divisions of labor" (or what may be called the "allotment") between key trades and industries, including agriculture, industrial production, commerce and scholarship, which are all essential to the development of the traditional Chinese society. He claims that only when "the division" is successfully instituted, can the common good be achieved. This leads to the assertion that a clear division of rights and duties is necessary for the common good to be achieved. By clarifying the rights and duties of each individual, the young and the strong will not compete with each other, and all kinds of trades and industries will be at peace, allowing for harmony within the family.

In this sense, *fen* can be understood as a principle of difference. In terms of difference, people are delegated to different occupations because these divisions would be based on differences in individuals' abilities, strengths and other personal circumstances. Different roles, identities, ages and genders in society generate varying statuses and occupations in the community, allowing people to function in accordance with their own situation or as appropriate. In terms of universality, people share common emotions, desires, and pursuits, and are subservient to the rule of the saints and are thus able to accept the same values and undergo a moral transformation, so that different people can live harmoniously in a community.

To explain why people are willing to accept this differential social arrangement, Xunzi offers a twofold explanation. On the one hand, no matter how competent an individual is, they would have personal limitations and must hence cooperate with others to share workloads in order to seek a better existence, which is the significance of the formation of the community. The meaning of *fen* first lies in "nurturing the people" (*yangmin* 养民), through the contribution and collaboration of different social classes and fields, such as agriculture, industrial production, commerce, and scholarship, in order to satisfy the basic desires of all people in the world at the same time. As Loubna El. Amine points out, "By dividing society into classes based on distinctions of eminence, age, and merit, rituals cause the people 'to perform the duties of their station in life and each to receive his due'. This prevents a situation where everyone feels entitled to the same things, or where uncertainty about the future drives people to focus on satisfying immediate needs" (Amine 2015, p. 99). Dividing the individuals within a community into classes allows them to give up some of their immediate interests for long-term enjoyment, ensuring that individuals of every age, rich or poor, are nourished within a stable social structure.

On the other hand, Xunzi analyzes the commonalities and differences among people. Xunzi argues that people fundamentally share common characteristics due to their nature, emotions and desires. However, if the sage treats them equally, they will fight for the same things and intensify social conflicts. In this regard, Xunzi does not agree with Confucius' statement that "inequality rather than want is the cause of trouble" (*buhuan gua er huan bujun* 不患寡而患不均) (Analects 16.1) but asserts that the bright kings treat people differently yet achieve the ideal of universal harmony.

*3.3. A Specific Case: Three-Year Mourning*

Further, the meanings of *fen* can be discussed pertaining to specific rites. An excellent example of the idea of division is Xunzi's study of funeral rites. According to Xunzi, the ancient Chinese custom and norm of "three-year mourning" (*sannian zhi sang* 三年之丧) is the best expression of humanitarianism. He sees this regulation as a rite of passage that most fully expressed humanity:

> What is the reason for the three-year mourning period? I say: It takes measure of people's dispositions and establishes a proper form for them. It accordingly ornaments the various groups of people, distinguishing different regulations for close and distant relatives and for the noble and the lowly, such that one can neither add to nor subtract from it. Thus I say: it is a method that is to be neither adapted nor changed. ("Lilun") (Hutton 2014, p. 213)

The term "three-year mourning" refers to the 25 months of mourning that children must complete after the death of their parents. The word "accordingly 因 (*yin*)" expresses the need for rituals to be catered to specific emotions, for they can only be used to ornament the various groups of people and distinguish regulations for close and distant relatives if they can appeal to common feelings of the people. In mourning, the relationship between the *Wufu* 五服 (five degrees of mourning clothing) system is very clearly denoted, as dress codes and diets are very strictly organized in rituals, according to human relationships. Confucian scholar Yingda Kong 孔颖达 writes in a commentary that *qun* refers to all the relatives in the *Wufu* system, who would each don different mourning garments (Zheng and Kong 2009, p. 3609). According to Xunzi, the humanist spirit of Confucianism is fully expressed in these regulations. The individual, as an observer of the rites, does not have liberty to express one's own feelings and emotions, especially in the case of mourning. He must abide by norms and customs of the community in a proper manner in accordance with these rules of social relations. These regulations are not rigid but were seen to be the most appropriate expressions for each person according to their status, duties, age, relationships, etc. Moreover, it is because of these differences that society can develop in a better direction, therefore, Xunzi emphasizes the importance of differential provision:

> Where ranks are equal, there will not be enough goods to go around; where power is equally distributed, there will be a lack of unity; where there is equality among the masses, it will be impossible to employ them. ("Wangzhi") (Hutton 2014, p. 38)

Xunzi's emphasis on fair social division is also for the sake of unity. It is because of the differences in statuses and ranks that the lord is able to manage each individual within the community, and thus create a stable social order. Since people are aware of the unequal distributions, they would also be more inclined to identify their roles and obligations in order to obtain the social resources to which they are entitled.

It is necessary to emphasize here that the concept of *qun* is inseparable from the concept of *fen*. Xunzi believes that human beings are similar in nature, but that treating them equally could result in competition for the same things, leading to intensified social conflicts. In performing rituals, the sage kings follow the principle of "making each person carry out one's own duties and get what oneself deserves", meaning that the individual's ability and suitability for a certain task would firstly be considered, thus deciding on social arrangements and distributions that are well thought out, reasonable and best suited to each person's own development. Therefore, fairness and legality are also embedded in the concept of *fen*, which is fundamental to the establishment of a community. Hence, the term "*fen*" concurrently has a descriptive and also a normative meaning.

## 4. For the Common Good

It should be noted that Xunzi also points out that the basis of *fen* is *yi*. This concerns more the understanding Xunzi has of the moral transformation of the individual. The individual in the *Xunzi* is not only a citizen in social and political life, but also a spiritual,

ethical, and moral subject. Xunzi's appeal for moral transformation of each man rests on his understanding that man, as an integral part of the community, will work towards the realization of the common good. Xunzi's definition of good and evil hence includes public, objective, and normative implications. He writes:

> In every case, both in ancient times and in the present, what everyone under Heaven calls good is being correct, ordered, peaceful, and controlled. What they call bad is being deviant, dangerous, unruly, and chaotic. This is the division between good and bad. ("Xing'e") (Hutton 2014, p. 155)

According to Xunzi, there has been a common understanding of *shan* from ancient times until his contemporary period: that which is beneficial for constructing an ordered and peaceful community is considered as *shan*. Nevertheless, from the individual's stand-point, is this necessarily *shan*? Why then is the individual motivated to practice *shan*? By discussing this issue from both external and internal perspectives, we can gain a better un-derstanding of Xunzi. From a public perspective, Xunzi explains that, in accordance with societal expectations and needs, individuals are subjects to the seemingly authoritarian government as they must only submit to the will of wise rulers, recognize what is bene-ficial for the community, and work diligently to achieve the common good. Personally, however, acquiring morality is an inclination of the individual mind. There are different accounts of Xunzi's theory that "human nature is inherently evil", but one explanation also accentuates the goodness of the mind. Xunzi emphasizes that the mind cannot help but acknowledge the *dao*, and that each individual's mind has the capacity and inclination to learn and practice the *dao*. This is also termed as the *wei* 伪 (moral transformation) of individuals. There are different interpretations of the term *wei*. John Knoblock renders *wei* as "conscious exertion" and reveals that Xunzi also calls *wei* "acquired nature": What must be learned before a man can do it and what he must apply himself to before he can master it yet is found in man is properly called "acquired nature" (23. IC) (See Knoblock 1994, vol. III, p. 143). Jonathan W. Schofer points out: "Conscious activity as a part of learning includes studying texts, practicing ritual, being conscious of good and bad qual-ities in oneself and others, following the instructions of a teacher, associating with good and learned people, and concentrating on attaining the qualities exhibited by a Confucian sage" (Schofer 2000, p. 70). Confucianism believes that every individual has the potential to become a sage, a potential to which Xunzi attributes to one's acquired moral efforts and learning. Eric Hutton also writes: "I say that human nature is the original beginning and the raw material, and deliberate effort is what makes it patterned, ordered and exalted" ("Lilun") (Hutton 2014, p. 210). In this sense, human nature is only the raw material, while the moral excellence that a subject can attain through edification from his teachers, influence from external environments, and his own efforts, would be the synthetic product. Nevertheless, consider that the distinction between human beings and animals lies in the fact that human beings can possess righteousness and the ability to judge right from wrong with reason. Therefore, Xunzi's idea of *wei* is not just for the individual, as it also takes into account the survival crises brought about by people's indulgence in their excessive desires. The individual must learn and accept the requirements of rituals sincerely, this will not only improve their moral standards but will also further change the state of public life of the community, directing society towards positive progress. As Kurtis Hagen explains, "Xunzi sees our original nature as problematic, and the rites are part of a solution that evolves through the cumulative efforts of exemplary individuals' intellectual and moral efforts" (Hagen 2007, p. 108). Kwong-loi Shun highlights that, "one's own self-cultivation will have a transformative and nourishing effect on other things, and such effect is itself a measure of one's progress in self-cultivation "(Shun 2004, p. 193). The community cannot be established without the moral efforts and the value recognition of individuals.

Finally, the concept of "community" in realpolitik also implies the establishment of certain kinds of social setups. During the Spring–Autumn and Warring States periods, the concept of "*qun*"(community) corresponded to the idea of "all under heaven" (*tianxia* 天下) and "the state". In *Xunzi*, there is always an intrinsic connection and consistency between

"the state" and "all under heaven", where there are even some ideological overlaps. In line with this, Xunzi devised different definitions of state 邦国 (bangguo).[6] First of all, a state is a living space for people and a defined territorial area. More importantly, the state is an independent political entity that bears significant responsibilities and tasks, hence being a key component in ensuring universal order. Xunzi cites the reign of the Qin state to illustrate what is commendable in terms of political governance as a real community. In contrast to the notion of *qun*, the term *tianxia* refers to a broader geographical area, symbolizing a spiritual community to which its people have developed sense of belonging and loyalty. According to Masayuki Sato, discussions about existing states such as Qin and Zhao would eventually be expanded into talking about the ideal state of the future, where the people, territory, and governmental system exceeds far beyond the scale of the vassal states that existed at that time. The structure of such a state then, is also no longer like that of existing vassal states; the state has the size and structure comparable to the world. In this exposition, Xunzi's ideal ruler is called the sage king (shengwang 圣王), the later kings (houwang 后王), the teacher of people (renshi 人师), etc. These names are all aliases for the emperor of the world (*tianxiazhijun* 天下之君) (Sato 2021, p. 254).

Xunzi's ideal was to foster kinship amongst people from the "four seas", which was seen to be possible under the rule of the sages who can differentiate and unite all under heaven. This unity of mankind is the ultimate goal of Xunzi's theory of *qun*, as can be seen from his citing of the state of Qin to demonstrate what was commendable aspects of political governance as a real community. He writes that "The gentleman examines the Way of the later kings and then discusses events prior to the hundred kings as easily as clasping his hands and debate in court. He extends the controlling influence of ritual and *yi*, marks out the divisions between right and wrong, gathers into hand the crucial affairs of the world, and orders the masses within the four seas, all as though employing a single person" ("Bugou 不苟") (Hutton 2014, p. 21). The establishment of universal values through the sage kings ultimately allows individuals to coalesce into a harmonious community, reflecting ancient Chinese universalism.

As the world today encompasses much diversity, Xunzi's thoughts provide valuable insights for contemporary society, particularly in addressing the conflicts caused by national, ethnic, cultural, and ideological differences. Since we have to co-habit on the same Earth, it is crucial that we collaborate, communicate, be open-minded, and respect differences to create a more cohesive community for all of mankind. While Confucius believes that "all within the four seas are brothers" (*sihai zhinei jie xiongdi* 四海之内皆兄弟也) (Analects 12.5; See Ni 2017, p. 284), Xunzi also hopes that "the four seas are like one family, and all the genera are obedient to each other" (*sihai zhinei ruo yijia* 四海之内若一家) ("Yibin 议兵"), which is a comparable vision to our current goal of building a global community with a shared future for all humanity. In addition, Xunzi also reminds us to beware of the "evil" caused by unlimited desires, an apt advice as we reflect on the problems of "modernity" such as environmental pollution, energy shortages, frequent wars, financial inequalities, and the degradation of moral values. Therefore, this paper argues that Xunzi's thinking is not only a good example of modernity, but also a good example of a way of thinking. Xunzi's ideas remain relevant and significant in present society.

## 5. Conclusions

It is evident that early Chinese philosophy did not place much emphasis on the concept of the individual, yet the pre-Qin scholars had a strong interest in people's lives and humanism, therefore beginning explorations on how individuals could achieve better existence by forming a community. This paper focuses on Xunzi's views of individuals and the community. As a renowned representative of Confucianism, Xunzi describes human society as having emerged from a chaotic state while scattered individuals gradually grouped into communities. In this process, Xunzi first assumed that it would be difficult for humans to overcome their excessive desires inherent in nature, this also implies that humans are reticent to achieve a rational distribution of resources in a situation full of competition

and struggle. Under this context, Xunzi further emphasized the necessities of forming a community and constructing a stable social order to guide people towards a harmonious public life. Secondly, Xunzi highlights the role of the lord or sage in the community. He gives due consideration to how individuals should embrace moral transformation to overcome excessive desires and proposes that sage kings would be the key figure in balancing the powers of the community with the rights of the individual. Thirdly, Xunzi puts forth that the only way to draw a clear line between the public and private spheres is to preserve the principle of *fen* and clarify the distinction between different people, so that everyone can recognize their rights and obligations. Fairness and legality are embodied in the concept of *fen*, which is essential for the formation of the community. Each individual's status and contributions might differ, but they can each get appropriate placements and allotment to maintain social order. Finally, Xunzi's concept of *qun* is proposed under the broad vision of the idea of *tianxia* and "the state". Forming a community in realpolitik requires the establishment of certain social setups, such as the states in the Spring–Autumn and Warring States periods but at the same time, a true community cannot be built without the individual's moral efforts and the cultivation of a sense of value, especially when aiming to foster a spiritual sense of belonging amongst its people. From all of the above, it can be seen that Xunzi's thoughts are not only of continued relevance, but they have also been adequately framed with relevant justifications and analyses concerning the common good in the modern world.

## Notes

1   Xu, Fuguan 徐复观 (1903–1982), a famous modern Chinese philosopher, argues that "although Xunzi conceptually defines nature, emotion, and desire, in fact, nature, emotion, and desire are three names for one thing" (Xu 1969, p. 234).

2   Xunzi says: "In order for people to live, they can not be without community. If they form communities but lack social divisions then they will struggle with each other. If they struggle with each other then there will be chaos, and if there is chaos they will be impoverished" (Hutton 2014, p. 105). Tung Xiufu argues that the community and its constitutive norms provide a superior structure for our desires and our life so that we can enjoy a good life (Tung 2012, p. 463).

3   According to Mengzi, human virtuous dispositions are like the sprouts of plants whose growth must be nurtured, according to xunzi, transforming a natural human being into a virtuous person is like steaming and bending a straight piece of wood until it becomes a circular wagon-wheel (Van Norden 2007, p. 46).

4   Dongfang, Shuo points out: "Xunzi's concept of the person or self is indeed expressed as an embedded self" (Dongfang 2010, p. 127).

5   Bodde writes: "Ignorance of animal social behavior is evident in Xunzi's insistence that the basic distinction between human beings and animals is the former's ability to create social organizations (*qun*, lit. 'to collect together'). Here again, if Xunzi had been more cognizant of the organizing activities of many of the larger animals as well as of bees and ants, he could have focused his attention on the distinctions that really matter, such as a human being's ability as a two-legged animal to make tools or the human capacity for speech" (Bodde 1991, p. 311).

6   Xunzi's remarks on "the state" include the following points: 1. The state is the most efficacious instrument in the world, and to be ruler of men is the most efficacious power in the world ("Wangba") (Hutton 2014, p. 99). 2. The state is the greatest implement in the world, and the heaviest responsibility ("Wangba") (Hutton 2014, p. 101). 3. The rivers and waterways are where fish and dragons dwell. The mountains and forests are where well birds and beasts dwell. The state and family are where well-bred men and common people dwell ("Zhishi 致士") (Hutton 2014, p. 142). 4. If we draw a comparison for the state, things come at it as if

pouring forth continuously from a spring, and if even a single thing does not receive a proper response, then this is the starting point of chaos ("Jundao") (Hutton 2014, p. 130).

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*Article*

# Discussing the Relationship between Father and Son, Ruler and Subjects in the *Xiaojing*: Based on the Dunhuang Manuscripts

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**Abstract:** It has long been accepted that the ancient Chinese ruler–subjects relationship was a metaphorical extension of the father–son relationship, where loyalty and family reverence were considered synonymous. The Confucian classic the *Xiaojing* is taken as a significant piece of evidence supporting this view. However, based on the annotated version of the *Xiaojing* discovered in Dunhuang, it is evident that during the Han Dynasty and the Six Dynasties period, Confucian scholars made clear distinctions between father–son relationships and ruler–subjects relationships. They also made a clear differentiation between the moral connotations of loyalty and family reverence. The father–son relationship is a bond of blood, while the ruler–subjects relationship is a bond of duty and appropriateness, meaning that the ethical requirements for the father–son relationship and ruler–subjects relationship are fundamentally different. Therefore, expressions such as "service to ruler with family reverence is loyalty" does not mean to unify loyalty and family reverence, but means that the governor should select people who have already cultivated the virtue of family reverence to become officials because they have learnt how to show respect in their family life.

**Keywords:** the *Xiaojing*; family reverence; loyalty

## 1. Introduction

The Confucian classic the *Xiaojing* 孝经 (usually translated as the Book of Filial Piety or the Classic of Family Reverence) is an important Confucian text written in the Han dynasty[1]. Believed to be the record of Confucius teaching the principle of *Xiao* 孝 (usually translated as filial piety or family reverence) to his disciple Master Zeng 曾子, it has deeply influenced and shaped the understanding of the father–son and ruler–subjects relationships, which formed the foundation of politics and social relations in ancient China.

Max Weber put forward a highly influential viewpoint regarding the father–son relationship and the ruler–subject relationship in Confucian society. He believed that there was a strong similarity between the two.[2] Many scholars strongly criticize the negative role played by filial piety in ancient Chinese society. For example, Walter S. Slote claims that "Confucianism was based on authoritarianism, and filial piety was the principle instrument through which it was established and maintained." (Slote and Devos 1998, p. 46). In recent years, scholars such as Roger T. Ames have defended the Confucian concept of the family as reflected in the *Xiaojing*. However, there has not been sufficient and thorough exploration regarding the similarities and differences between the ruler–subjects and father–son relationships in the *Xiaojing*. The early annotated versions of the *Xiaojing* unearthed in Dunhuang 敦煌 provide important references for clarifying this question.

The understanding of the father–son and ruler–subjects relationships in the *Xiaojing* can be roughly divided into two periods in the history of explaining the *Xiaojing*. The first period is from the Han dynasty to the Tang dynasty, when the *Xiaojing* was considered to be a classic related to the political system. In this period, the father–son and ruler–subjects relationships were clearly distinguished, and therefore the *xiao* 孝 and *zhong* 忠 (usually translated as loyalty when used in the context of the relationship between ruler and subjects) were separate concepts with their own independent connotations. The second period began after Emperor Tang Minghuang's 唐明皇 (The Emperor Ming of Tang Dynasty,

685–762 AD) commentary of the *Xiaojing* was promulgated. In his commentary, the *Xiaojing* was transformed from a political and moral classic that regulated politics to a moral treasure trove for the emperor to cultivate people. In this period, the boundaries between father–son and ruler–subjects relationships became blurred, and as a result, loyalty and family reverence merged into one.

In the *Xiaojing*, the following three passages are the main targets of criticism for their description of the father–son and ruler–subjects relationships[3]:

《孝经·圣治章》：父子之道，天性也，君臣之义也。

The proper way (*dao*) between father and son is natural propensity that by extension becomes the appropriate relationship (*yi*) between ruler and subject. (Sagely Governing)

《孝经·士章》：资于事父以事母而爱同，资于事父以事君而敬同。

The lower officials drawing upon their devotion to their fathers to serve their mothers, the love they feel towards them is the same; drawing upon their devotion to their fathers to serve their ruler, the respecting (*jing*) they feel for them is the same. (The Lower Officials)

《孝经·广扬名章》：君子之事亲孝，故忠可移于君。

The Master said, "It is only because exemplary persons serve their parents with family reverence that this same feeling can be extended to their ruler as loyalty. (Elaborating upon "Raising One's Name High for Posterity")

During the May Fourth Movement in the twentieth century in China, the scholar Wu Yu 吴虞 (1872–1949 AD), in his essay "*The Family System as the Basis for Authoritarianism*" cited these three passages along with Emperor Tang Minghuang's annotations and analyzed their meaning:

Upon careful examination of Confucius' teachings, he considered *xiao* as the foundation of all virtues, so he established his own theory with *xiao* as the starting point. The character "教" (teaching) also derives its meaning from the character "孝". When ordinary people are not in official position, they practice filial piety at home by serving their parents. When they go out to serve as an official, they practice *xiao* by serving the ruler. *Xiao* is both filial and political, making no distinction between family and state; "To find loyal subjects, one must look at the door of filial sons" indicates that there is no difference between a ruler and a father. The scope of *xiao* encompasses everything. The family system and authoritarian politics are closely intertwined, inseparable. (Wu 2013, pp. 8–9).

Wu Yu's analysis suggests that in Confucian teachings, the concept of *xiao* serves as the foundation for both familial and political relationships. The interconnection between family and state, as well as the ruler–subjects and father–son relationships, contributes to the development of an authoritarian political system, where the family system and political structure are deeply intertwined and cannot be separated[4].

The belief that the ancient Chinese ruler–subjects relationship was an imitation of the father–son relationship, and that loyalty to rulers and family reverence to fathers are similar concepts, is widely accepted.[5] However, whether Confucian thought truly establishes the ruler–subjects relationship on the foundation of the father–son relationship, and loyalty on the foundation of family reverence, is indeed a question worth re-examining.

## 2. Clarifying the Relations between Father and Son, Ruler and Subject

In the *Xiaojing*, the most representative statement on human relationships can be found in the in the Chapter "Sagely Governing". The following is the classic text with Emperor Tang Minghuang's commentary:

父子之道，天性也，君臣之义也。〔注〕父子之道，天性之常，加以尊严，又有君臣之义。

The proper way (*dao*) between father and son is a natural propensity that by extension becomes the appropriate relationship (*yi*) between ruler and subject.

*Commentary*: The way of the father and son is the constant of nature, and when it is honored and dignified, it also becomes the way between the ruler and subject. (Tang and Xing 2007, p. 38)

父母生之，续莫大焉。〔注〕父母生子，传体相续。人伦之道，莫大于斯。

There is no bond more important than the father and mother giving life to their progeny and there is no generosity more profound than the care and concern this progeny receives from their parents.

*Commentary*: It is the parents who give body and life to progeny. Therefore, there is no other relationship more essential and important than the relationship between parents and progeny.

君亲临之，厚莫重焉。〔注〕谓父为君，以临于己。恩义之厚，莫重于斯。

There is nothing more grateful than the ruler personally giving governing and caring to his subjects.

*Commentary*: One should treat his father as a ruler. There is no other relationship which embodies the deepest graciousness and righteousness as such.

This paragraph has long been regarded as an expression that equates the father–son relationship with the ruler–subjects relationship, thereby transforming the father–son ethic into a ruler–subjects ethic. Indeed, this is also the case when considering Emperor Tang Minghuang's commentary. However, if we carefully examine the text, it can be observed that "the proper way (*dao*) between father and son" and "the appropriate relationship (*yi*) between ruler and subject", "father and mother giving life to their progeny", and "ruler personally giving governing and caring to his subjects" form a contrastive structure, which indicates that the father and ruler are different entities. But Tang Minghuang's commentary combined the father–son and ruler–subjects relationships together in the previous sentence, therefore leaving the "ruler" with no explanation in the following sentence. As a result, he had to interpret "ruler" as "parents like a ruler". In short, in the original text, the father–son and ruler–subjects relationships were discussed separately. Yet Tang Minghuang's commentary combined them together, seemingly providing a coherent interpretation of the text, but in fact, it leads to misunderstandings.

Before the commentary of Tang Minghuang was published, there were two other popular versions of the *Xiaojing* in the Tang dynasty. One was the Old Text version and the other was the New Text version. The New Text version adopted commentary by Zheng Xuan 郑玄 (a prominent Confucian scholar and commentator during the Eastern Han Dynasty, 127–200 AD) and the Old Text version adopted commentary by Kong Anguo 孔安国 (a renowned Confucian scholar and commentator during the Western Han Dynasty, 156–74 BC). Emperor Tang Minghuang commented on the *Xiaojing* twice: in the tenth year of the Kaiyuan 开元 era (722 AD) and in the second year of the Tianbao 天宝 era (743 AD). He used the New Text version for the scripture and mixed annotations from various scholars for his own commentary, then promulgated it throughout the country. Since then, the interpretations of Kong and Zheng were combined into one unified version by Emperor Tang Minghuang. As a result, his Imperial Commentary has been accepted and circulated for a thousand years without any alternative interpretations.

However, in the past century, numerous manuscripts have been unearthed from the Dunhuang 敦煌 caves, enabling us to see the Tang dynasty's version of the *Xiaojing* with Zheng Xuan's commentary. It can be seen that Emperor Tang Minghuang made changes to the New Text of the *Xiaojing* and that his commentary had a particular political agenda. In the newly discovered Dunhuang manuscripts of the *Xiaojing*, the sentence reads as "父子之道天性君臣之义父母生之续莫大焉君亲临之厚莫重焉". There are no two "也" characters in this version. The text and commentary by Zheng Xuan is as follows:

父子之道天性，〔注〕性，常也。父子相生，天之常道。

The proper way (*dao*) between father and son is a natural propensity.

*Commentary*: *xing* refers to constancy. The father giving birth to son is a constant way in nature.

君臣之义。〔注〕君臣非有骨肉之亲，但义合耳。三谏不从，待放而去。

The relationship between ruler and subject is bond by duty.

*Commentary*: There is no blood relationship between ruler and subjects; they are bond by duty. If after advising the ruler three times and still not being heeded, the subject can wait to be dismissed and then leave.

父母生之，续莫大焉。〔注〕父母生之，骨肉相连属，复何加焉。

There is no bond more important than the father and mother giving life to their progeny and there is no generosity more profound than the care and concern this progeny receives from their parents.

*Commentary*: Parents give life to their progeny, and there is a bond of flesh and blood between them. What more could be added to this connection?

君亲临之，厚莫重焉。〔注〕君亲择贤，显之以爵，宠之以禄，厚之至也。

There is nothing more grateful than the ruler personally giving governing and caring to his subjects. *Commentary*: The ruler personally selects the virtuous, honors them with titles, bestows them with rewards, and shows the utmost favor. (Chen 1987, pp. 138–41).

With Zheng Xuan's annotations coming to light, this may overturn a thousand years of the interpretation of Emperor Tang Minghuang. The main difference between Zheng Xuan and Emperor Tang Minghuang lies in their understanding of the father–son and ruler–subjects relationship. Emperor Tang Minghuang combined the two concepts into one, while Zheng Xuan treated them separately. Regarding the phrase "the proper way (*dao*) between father and son is a natural propensity", Zheng Xuan's commentary means that the father–son relationship is inherently established by nature, and that there is no escape from it in the world. In terms of "the relationship between ruler and subjects," Zheng Xuan did not believe that the ruler–subjects relationship is the same as the father–son relationship. On the contrary, he emphasized the differences between the two relationships. Therefore, his explanation particularly stressed that "the ruler and subjects are not related by blood, but are bound by duty." The "ruler-subjects relationship bound by duty" is the core principle of the Confucian view on the relationship between ruler and subject. In his annotations, Zheng Xuan is concerned that readers may not understand the meaning of "bound by duty," so he adds an explanation: "If after advising the ruler three times and still not being heeded, the subject can wait to be dismissed and then leave".

When annotating classics, Zheng Xuan usually focused on explaining the meanings of individual characters and cross-referenced different classics for mutual verification, rarely adding additional text to explain the classics. However, in this case, the added text serves two purposes. First, it particularly highlights the differences between the father–son and ruler–subjects relationships. The relationship between a subject and a ruler is bound by duty, so the subject can leave if their advice is not heeded after three attempts. However, the father–son relationship is based on nature, and although there is a method of remonstrance, a son has no way to terminate the relationship with his father because they are bound by blood.

Second, it clarifies the meaning of "ruler-subjects relationship bound by duty". In Chapter Yan Yuan 颜渊 of the *Analects*, the disciple Zi Gong 子贡 asked about friendship, and Confucius replied: "Offer loyal advice and guide them in a good way. If they do not accept it, stop and do not humiliate yourself." Zheng Xuan's annotation states: "Friendship is a lighter bond based on duty. For all relationships based on duty, there is a way to sever the bond. Offer loyal advice, and if it is not accepted, stop." (Wang 1991, p. 136). 朋友，义合之轻者也。凡义合者有绝道，忠言以告之，不可则止也。 The character "凡" (which is generally translated as all) is rarely used in Zheng Xuan's annotations.

When it is used, it implies a generalization that covers all situations. The relationship between friends is a lighter bond based on duty, so when offering advice to a friend, one should stop if it is not accepted. The ruler–subjects relationship, on the other hand, is a heavier bond based on duty, so a subject should advise the ruler and wait to be dismissed after three attempts if the advice is not heeded. This distinction lies in the degree of importance, not the nature of the relationships. In Zheng Xuan's view, the ruler–subjects relationship is similar in nature to a friendship rather than a father–son relationship.

With Zheng Xuan's separate interpretation of the father–son and ruler–subjects relationships, the interpretation of the following text becomes much clearer and more reasonable. The phrase "父母生之，续莫大焉" connects with "父子之道天性", emphasizing that the bond between parents and children, being of blood and nature, is unparalleled. Therefore, Zheng Xuan interpreted "大" as something that cannot be surpassed. The phrase "君亲临之，厚莫重焉" connects with "君臣之义". Zheng Xuan interpreted "君" as "ruler" and "亲" as "personally". He argued that a person of virtue originally had no official title or reward, just being a commoner. However, due to their virtue, the ruler personally selects and promotes them to positions of power and prestige, such as officials or high-ranking subjects. This recognition of one's talent and virtue is considered as the ultimate expression of generosity and favor given by the ruler.

Zheng Xuan's interpretation does not merely present his own point of view, as it can be proved by other historical records during the Han dynasty. The "Biography of Mei Cheng" 枚乘传 in the "*Book of Han*" 汉书 records that during Emperor Wu's 汉武帝 reign, Mei Cheng was a courtier of the state of Wu吴. When the King of Wu planned a rebellion, Mei Cheng remonstrated him and began by saying: "The relationship between father and son is based on nature. A loyal subject does not avoid heavy punishment in order to remonstrate, so there will be no unfinished strategies, and their merits will last for generations." (Ban 2010, p. 2359). Mei Cheng's words were derived from the *Xiaojing*. After Zheng Xuan, there are historical texts also adopting his interpretation. During the Jin dynasty, Shi Pangzha 史庞札, an official of Henan province, wrote in a memorial, "I heard that the relationship between father and son is based on nature, and the affection between them is natural. Yet the bond between ruler and subject comes from a sense of duty." (Fang 1998, p. 1400). This is apparently a direct application of Zheng Xuan's interpretation of the *Xiaojing*.

Referring to other Confucian classics, it can be found that Zheng Xuan's interpretation is more in line with the original meaning of the *Xiaojing*. The chapter "Sang Fu Zhuan" 丧服传 in the "*Yili*" 仪礼 (Book of Rites) can provide us with more evidence. The "Sang Fu Zhuan" chapter specifically discusses the proper attire and ceremonies for mourning and funerals. Through these regulations of the mourning ceremony system, it demonstrates the human relationships defined by Confucianism. According to it, one should mourn the death of *jun* 君 (usually translated as a ruler or monarch) for three years. This is because "*jun* is the most respected". Zheng Xuan explained the term "jun" as "the emperor, the dukes, and the high-ranking officials who own land are all called 'jun'." (Zheng and Kong 2007a, p. 346).

The Chapter "Sang Fu Zhuan" describes the situation in a feudal system. The Son of Heaven 天子 (usually translated as the emperor) is the ruler of the world, whose subjects are the dukes, the emperor's subjects, nobles, lower officials, and commoners. A lord, within his state, is also a ruler, and his subjects are the subjects, nobles, lower officials, and commoners within his country. A subject or noble is a ruler within his family, and his subjects are the lower officials and commoners within his fiefdom. Lower officials do not have land, so they cannot be called rulers. In other words, the term "ruler and subject" does not necessarily refer to the emperor and his subjects, but refers to the ruler–subjects relationship in various community organizations (such as home, country, or world) of different levels. Therefore, "the bond of ruler and subject is based on appropriateness" can only be realized in such a feudal system, because only when there are many rulers can the subjects "leave after three unsuccessful admonitions" and serve the other rulers. Yet by the time

of Emperor Tang Minghuang, the political system had changed from the feudal system to the imperial system. There was only one "ruler" under heaven; that is, the emperor. And the relationship between the ruler and the subjects became the relationship between an emperor and the subjects of the world. The subjects had no opportunities to choose their rulers. Therefore, in political life, the relationship between ruler and subject, like that of father and son, also became an inescapable relationship.

Then, why was the Emperor Tang Minghuang's interpretation, equating the relationships of father–son and ruler–subjects, widely accepted? This can be attributed to the ambiguity in expression of the early Confucian classics. In Confucian classics, father–son and ruler–subjects, as well as family and state, are often mentioned simultaneously, such as in the Chapter "Yan Yuan" 颜渊 in *Analects*, "In the state, no complaints; in the family, no complaints." Cases where serving the father and the ruler are mentioned together, such as in the Chapter "Xue er" 学而 in *Analects*, "Serving parents, able to exhaust their strength; serving the ruler, able to devote their life," in the Chapter "Zi Han" 子罕, "Going out to serve officials, coming in to serve father and brothers", and so on.

However, with a careful examination of the meanings of these expressions, we can realize that they do not suggest that the ruler–subjects relationship is the same as the father–son relationship, nor do they suggest that ruling the state is the same as managing the family. The family and the state can coexist because they are the basic units in the political system. The two parts of the family and the state make up the entire world of ancient people's lives. People have ethical lives in their families and political lives in their states. If a society only talks about family ethics, such as father–son and husband–wife relationships, public life will be unable to established.

Yet in some cases, in order to emphasize that a son should respect his parents, the father can be compared to a ruler, as is stated in the "Jia Ren" 家人 Chapter of the "*Zhou Yi*" 周易 (Book of Changes), which says "In a family, there is a solemn ruler, that is, the parents." This metaphor of the ruler for the parents suggests that the parents' words, actions, and manners should be solemn and appropriate. This is consistent with the teaching in the Chapter "Sagely Governing" 圣治章 of the *Xiaojing*, which states "In family reverence, there is nothing more important than venerating one's father", "Affectionate feeling for parents begins at their knees, and as children take proper care of their fathers and mothers this veneration increases with the passing of each day". All of these emphasize the dignity of the parents. In human relationships, there is nothing more dignified than the relationship between the ruler and the subject, hence the use of this relationship to metaphorically represent the parents.

However, this is not the same as the Emperor Tang Minghuang's interpretation of the *Xiaojing*, which directly states that "The way of the father and son is the constant of nature, and when it is honored and dignified, it also becomes the way between the ruler and subject." Referencing the historical records of the Han dynasty, the "Biography of Zhang Zhan" 张湛传 in the "Book of Later Han" 后汉书 states that Zhang Zhan was "Dignified, serious and courteous, behaves with decorum. Usually residing in a quiet room, always maintains himself neatly groomed. Even in front of his wife and children, he remains as solemn as a ruler." (Fan 2003, p. 928). The use of the word "as" 若 indicates that it is a metaphor used to describe Zhang Zhan's solemn and dignified demeanor.

Meanwhile, to emphasize that a ruler should be close and kind to his subjects, the ruler can be likened to a father, as repeatedly mentioned in the *Shi Jing* 诗经 (The Book of Songs), calling the ruler "the parents of the people". In the Chapter "Nanshan Youtai" 南山有台, it states: "The joyful and delighted nobleman is the parents of the people". The "Jong Zhuo" 泂酌 says: "What a joyous and contented nobleman, he is the parents of the people." The so-called "parents of the people" does not mean that the relationship between the ruler and the subjects is like that of father and son, nor does it emphasize that the ruler–subjects relationship is superior to the father–son relationship, but it emphasizes that the method of governing should be protecting and loving the people.

In the Confucian classic the *Liji* 礼记 (The Book of Rites), there are two passages which explain the meaning of "the parents of the people" in the *Shi Jing*. In the Chapter "Kongzi Xianju" 孔子闲居, one of Confucius's disciples, Zi Xia 子夏, asked: "May I ask about the meaning of the phrase in the 'Book of Songs': 'The joyful and delighted nobleman is the parents of the people.' How can one be called the parents of the people?" Confucius explained: "The parent of the people must know the origin of rites and music, so that they can reach the 'ultimate five virtues', and practice the 'three abstentions', to influence the world. If any disaster occurred anywhere, he would surely know in advance. This is what is meant by the parents of the people." The Chapter "Biaoji" 表记 quotes Confucius's words: "The benevolence advocated by the *junzi* 君子 (usually translated as noble man) is probably quite difficult to achieve! The 'Book of Songs' says: 'What a joyous and contented nobleman, he is the parents of the people.' 'Joyous' means to educate the people with an unyielding spirit; 'contented' means to stabilize the people with joyful emotions. The people are joyful without neglecting their duties, they are courteous and close to each other, they are dignified and at peace, they are filial and kind and respectful. Make the people respect oneself as they respect their father, and be close to oneself as they are close to their mother. In this way, one can then become the parents of the people. If one does not have very noble virtues, who else could achieve this?".

In short, the "parents of the people" emphasizes the responsibility of the ruler, addressing that the role of a ruler is like the parents of a family. He should engage in politics with a benevolent heart and treat others as his family members. But the premise of this analogy is that the father–son and ruler–subjects relationships are different and cannot be confused.

In all the human relationships defined by Confucianism, *qinqin* 亲亲 (usually translated as "cherishing kinship", a principle that emphasizes the importance of maintaining close relationships and fulfilling responsibilities towards one's family members) and *zunzun* 尊尊 (usually translated as respecting hierarchy, a principle that emphasizes the importance of respecting those of higher rank or status) are two fundamental ethical principles. In the chapter "Da Zhuan" 大传 of the *Liji*, six principles are introduced that regulate mourning attire. The first principle is "*qinqin*" and the second is "*zunzun*". Zheng Xuan explains: "*qinqin* refers to the principle in the relationship between family members, with the parent-children relationship being the head. *Zunzun* refers to the principle in the relationship between ruler and subject, with the ruler being the head of the relationship." (Zheng and Kong 2007b, p. 619). Since "*qinqin*" emphasizes the essence of the father–son relationship, and "*zunzun*" presents the essence of the relationship between ruler and subject, the ruler–subjects relationship and the father–son relationship are clearly distinct. This was not only historical fact in the pre-Qin time, but also the idea held by Confucianism. Only by understanding this foundation can we understand the distinction between *zhong* (loyalty) and *Xiao* (family reverence).

## 3. Clarifying the Different Connotations of *Zhong* (Loyalty) and *Xiao* (Family Reverence)

The reason why *Zhong* (loyalty) and *Xiao* (family reverence) are often confused as one stems from the phrase in the *Xiaojing* that says "To serve the ruler with family reverence is loyalty". If we isolate this sentence from its context, it indeed seems to epitomize the idea of "unifying loyalty and family reverence". However, does it really advocate the unification of loyalty and family reverence? And under what circumstances does "to serve the ruler with family reverence is loyalty" apply? We must return to the text for further understanding. This phrase comes from the Chapter "The Lower Officials" 士章 in the *Xiaojing*. Fortunately, today we can see the original text with Zheng Xuan's annotations in the Dunhuang manuscripts:

资于事父以事母而爱同，〔注〕资者，人之行也。事父与母，爱同敬不同也。

The lower officials drawing upon their devotion to their fathers to serve their mothers, the love they feel toward them is the same;

*Commentary*: Drawing upon means to draw upon the way of treating the fathers to serve their mothers. When serving fathers and mothers, the love they feel toward the fathers and mothers is the same, yet the respect is not the same.

资于事父以事君而敬同。〔注〕事父与君，敬同爱不同也。

Drawing upon their devotion to their fathers to serve their ruler, the respect they feel for them is the same. *Commentary*: When serving the fathers and the ruler, the respect they feel for them is the same, yet the love is not the same.

故母取其爱，〔注〕不取其敬。

While to their mothers love is rendered.

*Commentary*: Respect is not rendered

而君取其敬，〔注〕不取其爱。

And to their ruler respect is shown.

*Commentary*: Love is not shown.

兼之者父也。〔注〕兼，并也。爱与母同，敬与君同，并此二者，事父之道。

It is only to service to their fathers that both love and respect combine.

*Commentary*: Both means combining. The love for the fathers is the same as the love for the mothers, the respect for the fathers is the same as the respect for the ruler, combining love and respect is the way of serving the father.

故以孝事君则忠，〔注〕移事父孝以事于君，则为忠矣。

Hence, service to the ruler with family reverence is loyalty.

*Commentary*: to transfer the family reverence for the fathers to serve the ruler, it is loyalty.

以敬事长则顺。〔注〕移事兄敬以事于长，则为顺矣。

Service to elders with family reverence is compliance.

*Commentary*: To transfer the family reverence for the brothers to serve the elders, it is compliance. (Chen 1987, pp. 53–57)

Zheng Xuan simply explained "service to the ruler with family reverence is loyalty" as "to transfer the family reverence for the fathers to serve the ruler, it is loyalty". However, father and ruler are different entities; how can the family reverence for the father be transferred to serve the ruler? And why will the family reverence for the father turn to loyalty when it is applied to the ruler? Zheng Xuan did not give an explicit explanation, but a fragment of annotations in the Six Dynasties explaining Zheng Xuan's commentary, which also was unearthed in Dunhuang, has provided us with a crucial clue to understand Zheng Xuan's meaning:

辨爱敬同异者，士始升朝，离亲辞爱，圣人所难，以义断恩，物情不易，故曰士始升朝也。

"The reason to distinguish the similarities and differences between love and respect is that when *shi* (usually translated as lower officials) lower officials first enter the court to engage in politics, they must bid farewell to and leave their loved ones behind. Even for a sage, this can be a difficult thing to do because to establish the bond of loyalty between ruler and subject and sever the bond of affection between father and son is not an easy task from a human perspective." (Xu 2008, p. 1990)

It talks about the class of "*shi*", who, when entering into politics, leave their parents and serve the ruler, changing from serving their parents to serving the ruler. Therefore, to understand the phrase "service to the ruler with family reverence is loyalty", we need to understand in what political system the people from the "*shi*" class need to leave their families and enter into politics.

Whether the titles of "*Qing*" 卿 (generally referring to the high-ranking officials in the Zhou dynasty), "*Dafu*" 大夫 (usually referring to people with cultural cultivation and official positions), and "*Shi*" 士 are hereditary is one of the key debates of the Old/New Text school Controversy in the Han dynasty. According to the text of *Xiaojing*, its attitude to the issue can be inferred. The chapter "Governing through Family Reverence" 孝治章 says:

> 昔者明王之以孝治天下也，不敢遗小国之臣，而况于公侯伯子男乎？故得万国之欢心，以事其先王。治国者，不敢侮于鳏寡，而况于士民乎？故得百姓之欢心，以事其先君。治家者，不敢失于臣妾，而况于妻子乎？故得人之欢心，以事其亲。

> "Of old when the enlightened (*ming*) kings used family reverence to bring proper order to the empire, they would not presume to neglect the ministers of the smallest state, how much less so the dukes, earls and other members of the high nobility. Thus all of the different vassal states participated whole heartedly in their service to these former kings. Those who bring proper order to the vassal states would not presume to ignore the most dispossessed, how much less so the lower officials and common people. Thus the various families all participated whole heartedly in their service to these former rulers. Those who would bring proper order to various families would not presume to overlook their servants and concubines, how much less so their wives and children. Thus all of the people participated whole heartedly in their service to their parents."

In the text, the *ming* kings refers to the emperors, who need to serve their "former emperors". The ones who bring proper order to the vassal states refers to the dukes, who need to serve their "former kings". By referring to "former emperors" and "former kings", it can be seen that the titles of both emperors and dukes are hereditary. Only when the father dies can the son inherit the title of nobility and become an "empire" or a "duke". Therefore, the family reverence for them is not to serve their own living parents, but to have all the people participate wholeheartedly in their service to sacrifice their former emperors and kings.

However, in terms of the high-ranking officials (including *Qing* and *Dafu*), the text says they need to serve their "parents", not the "former empires" or "former kings". It can be inferred that their titles were not inherited from their fathers, but obtained through election. In other Confucian classics, there are many statements that corroborate that the title of high-ranking officials could not be hereditary. For example, the Neize 内则 chapter of the *Liji* says: "At the age of twenty, capping ceremony should be conducted to show one is independent and responsible. At thirty, one should have a stable family life. At forty, one should begin his career . . . At fifty, one should be appointed as an official and engage in government affairs. At seventy, one should retire." And according to the Wangzhi 王制 chapter, all the princes of the kings, the sons of the high-ranking officials, and all the talented individuals selected by the state can learn in the royal academy. They were taught the classic of Rites and the classic of Music in spring and autumn, and the Book of Songs and the Book of Documents in summer and winter by official *situ* 司徒. After their study performance was assessed by official *Sima* 司马, they could be granted corresponding noble titles. Since the titles of the high-ranking officials were not hereditary, it was even less likely that the lower officials, such as "*Shi*", would inherit their titles and positions. Therefore, it can be inferred that the *Xiaojing* presumes that all the high-ranking and lower officials were not hereditary, but were selected from the talented commoners. Therefore, the meaning of "when lower officials first enter the court to engage in politics, they must bid farewell to and leave their loved ones behind" is quite clear. Because the lower officials did not inherit their titles and salaries, but were elected from among the virtuous and capable commoners, they had to leave their parents after being granted their titles and serve in the court. In doing so, they needed to sever the father–son bond in favor of their duty to the ruler, shifting from "serving the father" to "serving the ruler".

Before being selected as a lower official, a person at home would honor his father and respect his brothers, but would have no experience in serving the ruler or superiors.

Honoring one's father and respecting one's elder brother at home are based on natural affection and respect, cultivated from a young age. But once one leaves his family to start serving the ruler, the relationship between the ruler and subjects is no longer natural. For this reason, the Sages tried to create regulations and principles that aligned with human nature for governance. Therefore, they taught people to serve their ruler based on the manner of serving their father, and serve their superiors based on the manner of serving their brother, so that people's actions, whether in family life or in public affairs, would be in line with human nature.

Since the relationship between ruler and subjects is not naturally established, then how can a person who has never served a ruler know the correct way to serve him? According to the *Xiaoijing*, "service to the ruler with family reverence is loyalty" does not regard the *jun* (including the emperor, dukes, and high officials above the lower official class) as a father, nor does it require people to treat the ruler with the family reverence towards one's father, making loyalty and family reverence indistinguishable. As pointed above, serving a father requires both love and respect, while serving a ruler requires only respect, so there is definitely difference between loyalty and family reverence. Therefore, "service to the ruler with family reverence is loyalty" cannot be explained as "serving the ruler with the family reverence for father is loyalty", because when a lower official begins to engage in politics, he needs to leave his own family and engages in public affairs. Therefore, the sentence should be understood as "a person who can serve his father with family reverence will naturally be loyal when it comes to serving the ruler". Because the lower official cultivates his family reverence at home, which encompasses both love and respect towards his father, when he serves the emperor, dukes, or high-ranking officials, he can apply the respect he shows to his father at home to his ruler and this naturally results in loyalty. The phrase "service to the ruler with family reverence is loyalty" originally means "to apply the respect to serve the ruler", yet it has been wrongly generalized as "to apply family reverence to serve the ruler", which leads to a deep misunderstanding. The original meaning of the text is not that family reverence can be transformed into loyalty, but rather that a lower official who serves his parents with family reverence can display loyalty when serving his ruler.

It must be pointed out that the contemporary interpretation of "service to the ruler with family reverence is loyalty" overlooks the fact that this phrase comes from the Chapter "the Lower Officials" and specifically refers to the lower official class, not a principle that everyone should follow. In fact, the classic *Xiaojing* does not discuss the principle of family reverence in a general sense, but focuses on discussing how the cultivation of family reverence should be conducted in a political system. People are divided into five classes in the *Xiaojing*: the emperor, the dukes, the high-ranking officials, the lower officials, and the common people, and each class has a typical way of expressing family reverence. The regulation of practicing family reverence for each class should be understood in its institutional background. For example, if the emperor only "is circumspect in their conduct and frugal in their use in order to take care of their parents" (this is the requirement of common people), he definitely can not be considered to practice family reverence. Additionally, "service to the ruler with family reverence is loyalty" only applies to the lower officials. The lower officials who have just begun their political careers need first to consider how to learn to "serve the ruler". As for high-ranking officials, who have been in service for a long time, they should think more about how to follow the laws of the former kings to govern the state. As for the dukes, they are all relatives of the emperor or descendants of meritorious officials, and there is absolutely no reason for them to "serve the ruler with family reverence".

What should be further explored is why Confucius established family reverence as the foundational principle of Confucian society as a whole. In the chapter "Setting the theme and Illuminating Its Meaning" 开宗明义章 of the *Xiaojing*, it states "The former kings have their consummate excellence and vital way", and Zheng Xuan's annotation says: "Yu 禹 was the first of the three kings." (Pi 2015, p. 21). This means that the governing mode

discussed in the *Xiaojing* started from the era of "Family First" 家天下 (the notion is derived from the chapter Liyun of the Chinese Classic *Liji*. It refers to the time of the three dynasties of the Xia 夏, Shang 商, and Zhou 周, when the great way had disappeared and the land under heaven belonged to the royal family rather than the common people), because Yu was the founding emperor of the Xia dynasty. In the "Family First" era, the social structure was based on family and the father–son relationship was the most fundamental human relationship within the family. Therefore, the political philosophy of Confucius begins with shaping the family. According to Confucius, the fundamental human relationship within the family is the father–son relationship, the morality within the family is the family reverence, and the emotions within the family are love and respect. The reason why family reverence can be viewed as the root of all virtues is not because of family reverence itself, but because of the feelings of love and respect that naturally arise when family reverence is implemented in family life.

The *Xiaojing* speaks of love and respect many times. For example, the chapter "The Emperor as the son of 'Tian'" 天子章 says: "The man who loves his own parents would not presume to hate the parents of others, he who respects his own parents would not presume to be rude to parents of others". The chapter "Sagely Governing" 圣治章 says "Affectionate feeling for parents begins at their knee, and the children take proper care of their fathers and mothers this veneration increases with the passing of each day. The sages build upon this veneration in their teachings of respect, and build upon this affection in their teachings about love". When the family becomes the basic structure of society, people are born in families, naturally establishing the relationship between father and son. Therefore, Confucius enacted principles based on human nature and applied education according to the inherent nature of humans. The father–son relationship is naturally established as the fundamental human relationship, and family life is regarded as the first school for cultivating virtues. In family, young children naturally possess not only affection but also a sense of inherent respect towards their parents. As stated in the Jinxin 尽心 chapter in *Mencius*, it is said, "What people can do without learning is their inherent ability. What they can know without deliberate thought is their inherent knowledge. Even young children all know how to love their parents. As they grow older, they all know how to show respect to their elder brothers." Indeed, this inherent ability to act without learning and know without deliberate thought forms the foundation and essence of virtues. On the one hand, the development of virtues is rooted in love, starting with the love for one's own parents and extending that love to encompass the parents of others. This is known as benevolence, as stated in the Jinxin chapter of *Mencius*: "To love one's parents is benevolence." On the other hand, respect gives rise to ritual. As the chapter "Elaborating upon the Vital Way" 广要道章 in the *Xiaojing* says: "ritual propriety is simply a matter of respect". The reason why family reverence holds a fundamental position within the father–son relationship lies in the fact that the it must be supported by the feeling of natural love and respect.

## 4. Understanding the Virtue of "*junzi*" from the Perspective of the Talent Selection System

The chapter "Elaborating upon 'Raising One's Name High for Posterity'" 广扬名章 in the *Xiaojing* also discusses loyalty and family reverence. The following are the text and commentary of Emperor Tang Minghuang:

It is only because *junzi* serve their parents with family reverence that this same feeling can be extended to their ruler as loyalty.

*Commentary*: To apply the family reverence to serve the ruler is loyalty.

君子之事亲孝，故忠可移于君。〔注〕以孝事君则忠。

It is only because they serve their elder brothers with deference that this same feeling can be extended to all elders as compliance.

*Commentary*: To apply the respect to serve the elders is compliance.

事兄悌，故顺可移于长。〔注〕以敬事长则顺。

And it is only because they maintain a proper home life that this same sense of organization can be extended as proper order to the offices of government.

*Commentary*: Where the junzi resides, he influences and educates people around him. Therefore he can be transferred to serve in government. (Tang and Xing 2007, p. 47).

居家理，故治可移于官。〔注〕君子所居则化，故可移于官也。

The commentary of Xing Bing says: "The previous Confucian scholars believed that there is a character '故' missing after '居家理', so emperor Tang added it in his commentary." (Tang and Xing 2007, p. 47). This is the only time that Xing Bing explicitly states that Emperor Tang Minghuang made changes to the *Xiaojing* text. He further explains, "Since a *junzi* can serve his parents with family reverence, therefore, he can draw upon the family reverence to become loyal, and transfer his devotion to father to serve his ruler." (Tang and Xing 2007, p. 38). According to Xing Bing's explanation, loyalty and family reverence are combined as one, and there is no difference between serving the ruler and serving the father. However, the manuscript excavated in Dunhuang enables us to see Zheng Xuan's commentary, which is quite different from Xing Bing's explanation:

It is only because *junzi* serve their parents with family reverence and become loyal, they can be transferred to serve their ruler.

*Commentary*: In order to seek loyal ministers, one must look among families with filial children. Therefore they can be transferred to serve the ruler.

君子之事亲孝故忠，可移于君。〔注〕欲求忠臣，必出孝子之门，故言可移于君。

It is only because they serve their elder brothers with deference that this same feeling can be extended to all elders as compliance.

*Commentary*: To serve the elders with family reverence is compliance, therefore they can be transferred to serve elders.

事兄悌故顺，可移于长。〔注〕以敬事长则顺，故可移于长。

And it is only because they maintain a proper home life that this same sense of organization can be extended as proper order to the offices of government.

*Commentary*: Where the *junzi* resides, he influences and educates people around him. Therefore he can be transferred to serve in government. (Chen 1987, pp. 187–88)

居家理治，可移于官。〔注〕君子所居则化，所在则理，故可移于官。

The extra character "故" in the Dunhuang manuscript makes the punctuation of the whole sentence different and brings great changes to the meaning of the text. First, the main actor, *junzi*, in this chapter is a person who needs to serve his father at home and serve his elders and ruler, which indicates that he belongs to the lower official class. Therefore, it is proper for Zheng Xuan to quote the text "to serve the elders with family reverence is compliance" in the "The Lower Officials" chapter to explain the text here. Next, "It is only because *junzi* serve their parents with family reverence that this same feeling can be extended to their ruler as loyalty" means that *junzi* can serve his father with reverence, which means that he has already has the ability to love and respect his father. Because the feeling of respect is the foundation of loyalty, the potential of loyalty has thus already been prepared inside him. Even if he has not yet served the ruler, it can still be inferred that he will be loyal to his ruler in the future. Therefore, "It is only because *junzi* serve their parents with family reverence and become loyal" does not mean they will apply family reverence to serve the ruler, but means that *junzi* have already prepared all kinds of virtues in their family life and whenever they enter politics, they will show loyalty to their ruler.

As stated in the Wei Zheng 为政 chapter in the *Analects*, someone asks Confucius, "Master, why do you not engage in government?" Confucius replied, "The Book of History says, 'Being filial and respectful to one's parents, being friendly to one's brothers, and extending this to governance.' This is also governance, so why should I engage in government?" This shows that the order within the family contains the basic nature of politics

and governance. So if a *junzi* can manage his family properly, he can also govern the nation well. A paragraph in the chapter Zengzi Lixiao 曾子立孝 of the *Dadai Liji* 大戴礼记 can help to elucidate the meaning of this text in *Xiaojing*. It says, "A person without a ruler can be inferred as a loyal minister because he is a filial son. A person without elders can be inferred as compliant because he is a obedient brother".

It must be emphasized that the *Xiaojing* in its original form is not moral instruction for individuals, but a classic of governing wisdom. This can be inferred from the beginning words "the former kings were able to use the model of their consummate excellence and their vital way to bring the empire into accord" of the first chapter "Setting the Theme and Illuminating the Meaning" 开宗明义章.

Taking this point into consideration, the potential listeners of the chapter "Elaborating upon 'Raising One's Name High for Posterity'" 广扬名章 are not the lower officials but the rulers. Its aim is not to teach the lower officials how to be filial and respectful at home and then how to serve the ruler and elder when leaving home. Instead, it instructs the rulers, attempting to convey to them the political idea that a person who can excel in all aspects at home will inevitably possess the fundamental qualities necessary for engaging in political life. Therefore, such individuals should be encouraged and selected to participate in politics. In other words, this political idea should be implemented in the design of talent selection systems. Examining the historical records from the Han to Wei dynasties, it can be observed that the frequent references to phrases such as "because the lower officials serve their parents with family reverence and become loyal, they can be transferred to serve their ruler" are often associated with the selection of talent. In the "biography of Wei Biao" 韦彪传 of the *Book of Later Han* 后汉书, the official Wei Biao wrote a memorial stating: "Confucius said, 'Devotion to parents can be transferred to loyalty to the ruler.' Therefore, when seeking loyal ministers, one should look to the doors of filial children." (Fan 2003, p. 918). Similarly, in the "Biography of Xiahou Xuan" 夏侯玄传 of the *Records of the Three Kingdoms*三国志, when asked about the attitude to current political situation by the Grand Tutor Sima Yi 司马懿, Xiahou Xuan responded by saying "Filial conduct is evident within the family, so shouldn't loyalty and integrity be present in official duties?" (Chen 2007, p. 295). Both instances highlight the connection between the political idea conveyed by *Xiaojing* and the selection of talent.

## 5. Conclusions

How should we understand and discuss Confucian moralities such as family reverence, loyalty, benevolence, and righteousness in the modern day? In the past century, Confucian moralities have mainly been discussed and studied within the framework of intellectual history or the history of philosophy. This approach is characterized by abstracting moralities from their traditional semantic context, analyzing their philosophical connotations without considering their original significance in the ancient political and educational system of China. Undeniably, this approach is of great significance for contemporary people to understand traditional moralities which are quite unfamiliar to them. However, in many cases, if we try to understand moral issues without considering their specific ideological and historical background, we may not truly understand the essence of moralities, and may even distort their meanings out of modern biases. For example, as mentioned above, if we understand the meaning of "to serve the ruler with family reverence is loyalty, and to serve the elders with respect is obedience" in the "Lower Official" chapter of the *Xiaojing* literally, it seems to suggest that serving the ruler with the same family reverence as serving one's father is loyalty. In this case, family reverence and loyalty would be indistinguishable, and serving one's father and serving one's ruler would become indistinguishable as well, leading to a conflation of family affairs and state affairs, and making it impossible to differentiate between public and private relationships.

However, putting this statement back into the context of the *Xiaojing*, it can been noticed that "to serve the ruler with family reverence is loyalty" is meant to apply to the lower official class, not to all the "subjects". Since lower officials have just begun their careers in

government and know how to serve their fathers but not their rulers, it is necessary to emphasize the common moral emotions between serving the ruler and serving the father by extrapolating from what they already know to what they have yet to learn. In fact, the common emotional foundation between serving the ruler and serving the father is respect, not family reverence.

Therefore, in contemporary moral studies, it is necessary to place Confucian moralities within the context of traditional context of political and educational system in China for a better understanding[6]. In other words, in addition to understand and analyze moral terms abstractly, it is also necessary to place these terms within the broad classical world and to re-evaluate and interpret them accordingly.

## Notes

[1] The authorship and exact composing time of the *Xiaojing* remains uncertain. According to Hu Pingsheng, the most likely candidate is a student of Master Zeng 曾子 named Le Zheng Zi Chun 乐正子春 (Hu 1996, p. 8). Since the *Xiaojing* is first cited in the text *Lushichunqiu* 吕氏春秋 which was composed no later than 239 BC, Roger T. Ames believes that "The *Xiaojing* was composed sometime during the height of the convulsions of the Warring States period that anticipate the birth of imperial China. (Rosemont and Ames 2009, p. 18). However, it is widely accepted by Confusion scholars in Han dynasty that Confucius is the true author of this text.

[2] In the book *The Religion of China*, Weber said "Feudalism rested on honor as the cardinal virtue, patrimonialism on piety. The reliability of the vassal's allegiance was based upon the former; the subordination of the lord's sevant and official was based upon the latter. The difference is not a contrast but a shift of accent." See Max Weber (Weber 1968, p. 157).

[3] The English translation of the *Xiaojing* in this article mainly refers to the translation of Henry Rosemont, Jr. and Roger T. Ames as a reference. See Rosemont and Ames (2009).

[4] As Roger T. Ames has pointed out, "At the turn of the twentieth century the traditional Chinese family and the conservative values that it represents was one of the main targets of passionate reformers who sought to drag a humiliated and convulsing China in the modern world. The hierarchical Confucian family and its structural inequalities came to be seen as emblematic of everything that was holding China back from scientific development and democratization." (Rosemont and Ames 2009, p. 3).

[5] For example, Max Weber claimed "Piety (*hsiao*) toward the feudal lord was enumerated along with piety toward parents, superiors in the hierarchy office, and office holder generally, for the identical principle of hisao applied to all of them. And the basic character of allegiance was patriarchical, not feudal." (Weber 1968, p. 157).

[6] In recent years, another affirmation of the significance of *xiao* has emerged within the framework of Confucian role ethics. However, this theory still needs to further explain how the ruler–subjects relationship can be based on the father–son relationship while also having distinctions from it. See (Rosemont and Ames 2016).

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# A Neo-Confucian Definition of the Relationship between Individuals and Community in the Song–Ming Period (960–1644): Start with the Discovery of Multifaceted Individuals

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**Abstract:** Alasdair MacIntyre doubts that Confucianism can discuss the relationship between individuals and community because he maintains that it is impossible to discuss the topic in depth without a Western conception of individual rights. In this article, I show that Neo-Confucianism pays extensive attention to the relationship between individuals and community by working through several Chinese thinkers' theories from the 11th to the 17th centuries. Neo-Confucianism seems to be focused on the exploration of the common principles of a community, but its real intention is ensuring the fundamentality of individual selves and making up for limitations caused by an excess of individual limitations. Thus, a new relationship is formed between individuals and community; that is, all individuals are equal and the common principles of community are independent of any individual. In order to make each individual harmonize with common principles, some mainstream Neo-Confucian thinkers attached great importance to the effort (*gongfu* 工夫) of "eliminating personal desires" (*qu renyu* 去人欲) since they thought that personal desires represented a selfish appeal that contradicts common principles. Influenced by this line of thinking, Neo-Confucianism fell into the predicament where individuals were suppressed, but this shortcoming was corrected in its later stage by defending the right to satisfy individual desires for survival. This study shows that Neo-Confucian discourse has given much thought to the problem of the relationship between individuals and community.

**Keywords:** Neo-Confucianism; individual; community; self; others; principle; desire

## 1. Introduction

How does Confucianism approach the relationship between individuals and community? Many discussions on this topic have been held from the perspective of comparative philosophy in academic circles since the beginning of the new century. The book *Confucian Ethics: A Comparative Study of Self, Autonomy, and Community*, edited by Kwong-loi Shun and David B. Wong, is worthy of special mention. The book brings together discussions among scholars from English-speaking countries who specialize in comparative philosophy between China and the West. Alasdair MacIntyre's comments are attached at the end of this book. MacIntyre not only fully affirms these philosophers' research from the perspective of comparative philosophy but also wonders about the Confucian discussion about the relationship between individuals and community, on the grounds that it is impossible to discuss the topic in depth "without making any use of any Western conception of individual rights." (MacIntyre 2004, p. 211) Coincidentally, MacIntyre's concern is indirectly responded to in Henry Rosemont Jr.'s interpretation of "what it is to be a human." According to that interpretation, "for the Confucians there are only interrelated persons, no individual selves." (Rosemont 2015, p. 93).

Thus, the problem is somewhat tangled. Does Confucianism value individuals or not? If the subject matter is confined to the pre-Qin Confucian texts, it will undoubtedly be difficult to answer this question, but if we expand our scope to include Neo-Confucianism, which began in the Song Dynasty and dominated Chinese thought for several centuries

afterwards, then we might gain a full and accurate understanding of it. Therefore, this article selects several representative thinkers from the Neo-Confucian tradition spanning from the 11th to the 17th centuries, and, by sorting out their positions regarding the relationship between individual and community, it shows the deep diversity of thought on and deep concern for the relationship between individuals and community in Neo-Confucianism, thereby addressing MacIntyre's concerns.

## 2. Shao Yong: The Discovery of Individual Selves and the Overcoming of Their Limitations

The emphasis of Neo-Confucianism on the relationship between individuals and community can be traced back to Shao Yong's 邵雍 (1012–1077) discovery of equal individuals and his overcoming of limitations caused by indulging individual selves. Before that, traditional Confucianism proposed to bridge the gap between selves and others with the rule of subjective consciousness, which is summarized by Confucius as "wishing himself to be established, sees that others are established, and wishing himself to be successful, sees that other are successful."[1] (Analects of Confucius 6: 30) Although this expresses the sincere feelings of an individual, it still cannot bridge the inner tension between selves and others, because both self and other are different individuals. If one is asked to widen his own circle of care to others' self-fulfillment, one will undoubtedly fall into the dilemma of subjectivism, thereby causing the original relationship of equality between selves and others to collapse. After all, in the era when Confucianism prevails, there may still be others who care about neither self-establishment nor self-success. What reason, then, can be available for Confucianism to change the consistent style of that group?

In order to explain the equal relationship among different individuals, Shao Yong creatively proposed the concept of "observing things" (*guanwu* 觀物). (Shao 2010, p. 49) In "observing things," Shao Yong first points out that equality is essential for each individual by investigating the most general feature of individuals as "things," their actual being. As for the actual beings of "things," Shao Yong believes that according to common sense, they can be divided into living beings and non-living beings. Although the actual being of each "thing" is complex and diverse, each specific being is a part of the collection of all things. Accordingly, as the most intelligent being among all "things," humans are also a part of the "many" beings constituting all "things." With the establishment of the equal relationship between humans and "things," Shao Yong also established the equality of self and other in the same way. In Shao Yong's words: "Each self is a somebody else when taking others as reference, and each other also has a self when taking himself as reference, on the ground that both self and other belong to the being of things."[2] (Shao 2010, p. 49) Therefore, as different individualized beings, humans are born equal, and this equality is determined by the reality of their being as "things."

Although humans are equal due to the reality of their being as "things," this does not mean they are isolated from each other in daily life. On the contrary, they always live in many given groups at once. Shao Yong believes that these groups are either consortiums of division of work made up of "scholars, peasants, craftsmen and businessmen" (*shi nong gong shang* 士農工商) or consortiums of political classes including "emperors, kings, monarchs and counts" (*huang wang di bo* 皇王帝伯). (Shao 2010, p. 333) Both have a normative effect on individuals in reality that is similar to that possessed by modern communities. In terms of a causal analysis, the reason why individuals are regulated by the principles of communities is not only to ensure good cooperation between self and others but also to avoid the defects of the blind subjectivity caused by indulging individual selves. Shao Yong himself is blunt about the limitations of individual selves: "Indulging individual selves makes personal feelings spread unchecked, which leads to the blindness of minds, and in turn leads to confusion about the distinction between right and wrong."[3] (Shao 2010, p. 152) In this sense, it is necessary for all individual selves to protect their equality and independence, as well as to avoid defects of the blinded subjectivity caused by individualism. Only in this way can an orderly relation of cooperation be established between self and others. This

also means that the tension between the self as an independent individual and the common principles of the community is also ruled out. Fundamentally speaking, common principles are not a superfluous existence but indispensable to a community as the ground rules or standards that require either the self to behave well to others or others to behave well to the self. While regulating the behaviors of all individuals in the community, these principles also guarantee their equal rights.

The appeal of the philosophy of "observing things" is not only that it reveals the equality and independence of individual selves, but it also supplies a series of constructive plans for an orderly cooperation between self and other. In Shao Yong's illustration, these plans are not theoretical assumptions but instead have long been implemented by the sages of the past. How are sages able to do that? Shao Yong thinks that it is only "by using the matrix" of "observing things on the basis of things" (*yi wu guan wu* 以物觀物). (Katz 2013, p. 155) Under the condition of "observing things on the basis of things," sages obviously go beyond the habitual matrix of "observing things from the perspective of the observer self" (*yi wo guan wu* 以我觀物) (Shao 2010, p. 49) that is common to ordinary individuals. Hence, sages can fully understand the being of others as equal and independent individuals, and then, on the premise of equality and independence, unify others and selves. In this sense, what sages think about and are concerned with can cover the thoughts and concerns of all individuals. In Shao Yong's words, it is only sages that can "use the eyes of all individuals as their own eyes," "use the ears of all individuals as their own ears," "use the mouths of all individuals as their own mouths," and "use the minds of all individuals as their own minds."[4] (ibid). Thanks to this breadth of vision, the sages' pursuits undoubtedly represent the common pursuits of all individuals, and their considerations for self and others correspondingly become a common principle of the community.

For Shao Yong, the belief that only sages can use the matrix of "observing things on the basis of things" is supported by the reality that "all things are different in size, and all individuals are different in virtue or ignorance."[5] (Shao 2010, p. 48) In that sense, the difference in individual ability has an ontological basis, and no one can deny it at any time. Although sages are much higher than ordinary individuals in ability, it does not mean that there exists an unequal relationship between them. On the contrary, Shao Yong insists sages have exactly equal status with others because, in the philosophy of "observing things," "individuals are a part of the collection of all things, and sages are a part of the collection of all individuals."[6] (Shao 2010, p. 7) In other words, whether sages or other individuals, as a part of the collection of things, they are exactly equal to each other. Even if sages can establish common principles for all individuals by virtue of their omnipotent ability, when faced with these principles, they must adhere to them unconditionally just like other individuals, and never place themselves above common principles.

## 3. The Cheng Brothers: The Independence of Common Principles from All Individuals

With Shao Yong's establishment of common principles, what Neo-Confucianism needed to do next was to reveal how they play a normative role in the daily lives of all individuals. In fact, not long before the rise of Neo-Confucianism, when Buddhism and Daoism criticized Confucian ethical principles as being centered on ruler/minister and father/son relations, this problem had already become a topic of hot debate. For example, the viewpoint of "going beyond Confucian ethical dogmas and conforming to nature"[7] (Ji 2014, p. 402) in Wei-Jin Neo-Daoism and the idea of "Buddhists disrespecting the king"[8] (Shi 1992, p. 220) in the Buddhist tradition posed a serious challenge to the universality of Confucian ethical principles. To some extent, elucidations on the universality of common principles in Neo-Confucianism were a unified response to the criticisms against Confucian ethical principles by Buddhism and Daoism. Among them, the "theory of heavenly principles" (*tianli lun* 天理論) which was put forward by the Cheng brothers, Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–1085) and Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107), shows very profound insight.

It should be pointed out that in explaining the normative role of common principles in individual daily life, the "theory of heavenly principle" does not offer a perspective from social ethics but instead an ontological one: "All things under heaven can be seen in the light of principle. As long as there is a thing, there must be a law, and everything has its principle."[9] (Cheng and Cheng 2004, p. 193) This is Cheng Yi's explanation for the combination of things and principle. In his view, principle is "ontologically prior to things," and "it explains not only how a thing exists but also why a thing is such a particular thing instead of something else." (Huang 2014, p. 201) Based on the above elaboration, Cheng Yi clarifies the necessity of principle as a natural law and establishes the inevitability of principle as a moral law as well. However, how can Cheng Yi do so? It is because, for him, the statement that "all things under heaven can be seen in the light of principle" already contains concern about human beings and, compared with things, human beings have a duality; that is, human beings are not just a thing that accords with natural principles but they are also beings that accord with moral principles, too. Thus, an inevitable unity is formed between human beings and common principles that is rooted in moral law, and as long as there are human beings, there must be common principles, too. In the Cheng brothers' understanding, this kind of unity is unconditional, and "Even in times of difficulty and restlessness, it must be this way."[10] (Cheng and Cheng 2004, p. 38)[11]. From what the Cheng brothers say, it can also be concluded that common principles, including Confucian ethical principles, are inevitable for any individual, and no one can escape the restriction of these principles. What is more, this is presented in terms of the unity of individuals and Confucian ethical principles, not as an assumption but as something founded on an ontological fact; that is, on the fact that "there is not a single one of the ten thousand things and the many affairs that does not each have its own proper place."[12] (Cheng and Cheng 2004, p. 968).

To some extent, the unity of individuals and Confucian ethical principles is different from that of things and natural principles. The former involves an "ought to be" while the latter is keen on questioning a "to be." Therefore, to say that the relation between individuals and Confucian ethical principles is inevitable is just a necessity within the pursuit of a universal moral ideal, but the relationship between things and principle provides a certain ontological guarantee. The Cheng brothers were aware of this difference and, when further discriminating the relationship between the two kinds of principles, Cheng Yi specifically mentioned the method of "analogy." (*leitui* 類推) (Cheng and Cheng 2004, p. 157) In such an "analogy," the clarification of the ontological relationship of things and natural principles is the premise and, through this, the unity of individuals and Confucian ethical principles is revealed to also have similar features. In short, this method for discovering meaning can be summarized in two points: first, in the ontological dimension, it is an absolute truth that there is no thing under heaven that is not unified with natural principles; second, in the ethical dimension, Confucian ethical principles should be a necessity for all individuals and constitute the definition of what human beings are. Relying on the latter dimension, the Cheng brothers strongly refuted the criticisms of Confucian ethical principles by Buddhism and Daoism, which argued that Confucian ethical principles are superfluous. On that basis, the Cheng brothers asserted that any individual, whether they be Daoist or a Buddhist, must accord with this ethical principle, and this is also a truth of daily life.

In addition to providing theoretical support for explaining the inevitability of Confucian ethical principles through the method of "analogy," the Cheng brothers also discuss the objectivity and completeness of Confucian ethical principles. This so-called objectivity is first shown in terms of natural principles, which are not changed by individual will or desire. The Cheng brothers' borrow from Xunzi 荀子 (c. 313–c. 238 BCE) to say that this principle does "not appear due to Yao, nor does it disappear due to Jie."[13] (Cheng and Cheng 2004, p. 31) Compared with objectivity, completeness emphasizes that natural principles have definite connotations that do not change with the development of concrete beings. In the Cheng brothers' words, "how can we say that it appears or disappears, that

it increases or decreases? It is not originally incomplete."[14] (ibid) It can be said that it is precisely because of their objectivity and completeness that natural principles are called "heavenly principles" by the Cheng brothers. Corresponding to the establishment of the objectivity and completeness of natural principles, Confucian ethical principles centered on "benevolence" (*ren* 仁) and "righteousness" (*yi* 義) are also interpreted to have similar characteristics. This means that the Confucian ethical principles are both objective and complete. "When does it say that Yao increases the ruler's principle because of his own acting on principle of the ruler and that Shun increases son's principle because of his own acting on the principle of filiality? These principles remain as they ever were."[15] (Cheng and Cheng 2004, p. 34) It can be seen that, in the face of objective and complete Confucian ethical principles, no matter how well sages, including Yao and Shun, perform ethically,[16] they can at most only add to the number of good moral examples rather than adding a new element to the definite connotations of ethical principles. In this way, the Cheng brothers emphasized the independence of Confucian ethical principles from all individuals.

Of course, ethical principles are different from moral laws because the former are always associated with particular historical situations. To such an extent, it seems somewhat unintelligible to assert the objectivity and completeness of any ethical principle. However, in terms of responding to the criticisms of Buddhism and Daoism, and further highlighting the universal features of Confucian ethical principles, the above assertion can provide related support for the Cheng brothers in argument. It is out of these considerations that Confucian ethical principles have also been regarded as another form of "heavenly principle" by the Cheng brothers. There is no doubt that the Cheng brothers highlight the independence of Confucian ethical principles, which not only increases the common features of Confucian philosophy but also warns against the emergence of an authoritarian personality represented by sages. This idea of stressing the independence of ethical principles provides a theoretical reference for Neo-Confucianism to deal with the relationship between individuals and community.

## 4. Zhu Xi and Wang Yang Ming: Eliminating Desires to Preserve Harmony between Individuals and Community

The establishment of common principles, including Confucian ethical principles, is only a theoretical consideration that does not ensure an adequate normative effect on individuals in daily life. Neo-Confucianism also acknowledges the tension between theory and practice. In the traditional understanding of Neo-Confucianism, this tension is not caused by the flaws of ethical principles but is mainly caused by unchecked individual limitations. The Cheng brothers pay special attention to the emergence of the tension between individuals and community from the perspective of individual limitations. However, in their eyes, these limitations are obviously not those subjective ones mentioned by Shao Yong but instead are "desires" (*yu* 欲). Precisely speaking, they are "personal desires" (*renyu* 人欲) which are regarded as self-centered demands. The Cheng brothers believe that an excess of personal desires is incompatible with the common principles that are used to keep communities healthy on the grounds that "pursuing personal desires leads to little dedication, and the orderly operation of common principles is built on individual dedication. Treating others with common principles is the means by which one is morally commiserate."[17] (Cheng and Cheng 2004, p. 372) As a result, an alternative relationship between common principles and personal desires is formed. Cheng Yi succinctly summed up this relationship as "either heavenly principles or personal desires . . . once there are no personal desires there will be only heavenly principles."[18] (Cheng and Cheng 2004, p. 144)[19].

Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) inherited the Cheng brothers' definition of the relationship between individuals and community in terms of the relationship between common principles and personal desires. Like the Cheng brothers, Zhu Xi also notices that there is an alternating relationship between common principles and personal desires, and what is more, he points out that the proliferation of personal desires lessens the harmony between

individuals and community. In his view, between individuals and community, "how can a good order and harmonious relation be possible if individuals act only out of their desires?"[20] (Li 1986, p. 606) Zhu Xi is very vigilant about the harm of excessive individual desires and even points out that "its destructive effects are strong enough to lead to a fall of the whole state."[21] (Li 1986, p. 2395) Zhu Xi stresses that, for each individual living in the community, eliminating personal desires should become part of their daily business; especially, "at the moment when heavenly principles and personal desires are in conflict, one must overcome their selfish desires in whatever situation they counter and not leave them alone casually. For this reason, one must first of all understand what common principles he should be in accordance with, and then resolutely implement those principles to eliminate personal desires."[22] (Li 1986, p. 2800).

How were principles to be employed in the elimination of personal desires? Zhu Xi taught that one needs to do so through "effort" (*gongfu* 工夫): "for the effort of those engaged in learning, there are only two things to do, which is holding on to reverence and exhaustively seeking principles."[23] (Li 1986, p. 150) Here, "exhaustively seeking principles" (*qiongli* 窮理) belongs to the first stage of effort, which includes reading the classics (*dujing* 讀經) and apprehending principles in things (*gewu* 格物). By means of "exhaustively seeking principles," individuals can deeply realize that common principles are inescapable to themselves like the inevitability of heavenly principles to things. This understanding clarifies the goal of their actions. "Holding on to reverence" (*jujing* 居敬) belongs to the second stage of effort, which is dedicated to strengthening individual autonomy. By means of "holding on to reverence", individuals internalize the inevitable common principles in their hearts, and then make these principles the master of their actions. It should be added that the first and second stages of effort only indicate the logical sequence and do not tell us that one stage is more important than the other. As far as the feasibility of this method of effort is concerned, these two stages are very important and are both indispensable: "if one does not exhaustively seek principles, then no understanding why principles are inevitable will be had . . . if one does not hold on to reverence, then no collecting principles in the heart will be had."[24] (Li 1986, p. 151) It can be seen from the above that "holding on to reverence" and "exhaustively seeking principles" cannot be separated because "exhaustively seeking principles" is not just to understand the knowledge of principles but to internalize them in the heart, which requires the intervention of reverence. In addition, "holding on to reverence" is not a pure action with no concerns; instead, it nurtures principles. On the premise that "holding on to reverence" and "exhaustively seeking principles" cannot be separated, Zhu Xi points out that "if acting with reverence, heavenly principles will prevail; otherwise, if acting without reverence, personal desires will flood forth."[25] (Li 1986, p. 287) From the above, we see that Zhu Xi has redefined effort in terms of the relationship between common principles and personal desires.

Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529) also had a profound influence on the theory of the effort of eliminating desires. Compared with Zhu Xi, Wang Yangming seems to have "little patience with lengthy, systematic approaches" such as reading the classics and apprehending principles in things, but focuses on practicing the theory of extending conscientious knowing (*zhi liangzhi shuo* 致良知説). (Angle 2009, p. 150) "On the whole, learning and effort is about paying attention to the intentions in one's head, if one focuses one's intention on extending moral learning then in whatever one hears and sees there will be nothing not the effort of extending conscientious knowing."[26] (Wang 2015, p. 88) According to the theory of extending conscientious knowing, it is the "moral knowing" of the mind-heart that determines what individuals think and do in their daily lives, including the practice of common principles and overcoming of selfish desires. In this sense, the exertion of effort in extending conscientious knowing, which is centered on expanding the dominating function of the mind-heart, is not to let individuals return to the state of no demands and ignorance but to ensure that the mind-heart can absolutely dominate over action by eliminating personal desires.

> All are only from the mind-heart, and the mind-heart decides whether principles are possible. If the mind-heart is not covered by selfish desires, it will be filled with heavenly principles, and there is no need to add more from the outside. When all actions are from the mind-heart filled with heavenly principles, serving fathers must be in accordance with filial piety, and serving kings must be in accordance with loyalty, and making friends and governing people must be in accordance with faith and benevolence. It is enough for the mind-heart to put forth efforts on eliminating personal desires and keeping heavenly principles.[27] (Wang 2015, p. 3)

Obviously, Wang Yangming does not treasure the knowledgeable understanding of common principles as much as other Neo-Confucians. He instead pays more attention to doing or not doing in terms of individual actions, which are conditioned by the degree of eliminating personal desires. As long as personal desires are completely eliminated, then the individual mind-heart will naturally point to the common principles and the tension between individuals and others will thus be resolved. With the occurrence of this, there achieves a full integration between individuals and the community, in which instance, each individual appears very harmonious and calm in carrying out his daily business that he should conduct in the community. In Wang Yangming's words: "Even if one has been engaged in tedious business for the community all his life, he still does not feel tired at all, and for this reason, despite at the bottom of the community, he feels quite calm and does not think it is humble."[28] (Wang 2015, p. 67).

From the discussion of Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming on the effort of eliminating desires, it can be seen that the leading members of Neo-Confucianism attached great importance to the harmony between individuals and community. However, because they focus too much on the overcoming of individual limitations in the promotion of harmony, there is an imbalance in their dealing with the relationship between common principles and individual needs that is embodied in the emphasis on common principles and the neglect of individual needs. This suppression of personal desires obviously deviates from Shao Yong's original intention of covering the thoughts and concerns of all individuals and is not very close to the reality of daily life.

Finally, there is another detail that needs to be revealed; that is, although the leading members of Neo-Confucianism advocate the suppression of individual personal desires, they do not deny the importance of conscientious knowing in the individual mind-heart. Rather, some of them particularly emphasize the significance of maintaining the independence of the individual mind-heart in judging what is right or wrong. Among them, Wang Yangming is the most conspicuous in this regard: "Whether the teachings are important or not depends on the examination of the individual mind-heart. Even if it is a quote from Confucius, we still dare not believe it to be right when it cannot stand the examination of our mind-heart."[29] (Wang 2015, pp. 93–94) These are very unique expressions. From the perspective of the history of Confucianism, such expressions are of very considerable significance, showing the open minds of mainstream Neo-Confucianists, centered on Wang Yangming, and their beliefs against authority worship and encouraging respect for individual autonomy.

## 5. Li Zhi and Wang Fuzhi: Defending the Right to Satisfy Individual Desires

The excessive suppression of individual desires by the leading members of Neo-Confucianism led to a reactionary movement to redefine the relationship between individuals and community, within which Li Zhi 李贽 (1527–1602) seems to be the most radical. As a disciple of the Taizhou School 泰州學派 that followed the teachings of Wang Yangming, Li Zhi realized the distortion and falseness of the Neo-Confucian idea of eliminating personal desires in the relationship between individuals and others. This idea leads to there being a large number of individuals who "only know to cater to others but not to cherish themselves, and who only pursue a good reputation but not actual effects. If one entreats someone who is already like these then both will go hand in hand into a trap."[30] (Li 2009, p. 6) Besides this, Li Zhi also believes that this action that completely ignores individuals is

evidently contrary to the actual situation of human beings on the grounds that, in daily life, "seeking advantages and avoiding disadvantages is the common aspiration of all individuals."[31] (Li 2009, p. 41) It is the instinct of "seeking advantages and avoiding disadvantages" that makes individuals act toward achieving definite goals.

In view of the fact that "seeking advantages and avoiding disadvantages" is a common characteristic of human beings, Li Zhi emphasizes the positive drive of selfish desires in the pursuit of goodness in the individual mind-heart. Taking the daily life of individuals as an example, Li Zhi points out that "The existence of mind-heart must be conditioned by the existence of individual selves. If there are no individual selves, there will be no mind-heart. For example, those who are engaged in farming often think that they as individual selves will have the harvest in autumn so they always work very hard in plowing the fields."[32] (Li 1959, p. 544) It can be seen that Li Zhi especially highlights the decisive role of individual desires in understanding how the dominant function of the mind-heart is possible, and he even regards the satisfaction of desires as a common rule of individuals. Starting from this understanding, Li Zhi makes abstract ethical principles utilitarian and insists that "the issue of dressing and eating is the only concern of ethical principles; apart from dressing and eating, there are no other ethical concerns."[33] (Li 2009, p. 4) Due to the excessive emphasis on the satisfaction of individual desires, the independence of common principles is weakened, and this inevitably pushes Li Zhi's definition of the relationship between individuals and community in the opposite direction to mainstream Neo-Confucian thought.

In terms of criticism of the problems of mainstream Neo-Confucianism, Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–1692) is not as extreme as Li Zhi. He instead takes a positive approach to remedying the ills of Neo-Confucianism. Focusing on explaining the line from the *Book of Songs* (*shijing* 詩經) that says "only a full seed has vitality" (*shihan si huo* 實函斯活) (Zhou 2010, p. 486), Wang Fuzhi points out that the truth of this line can be used to clarify how individuals adhere to the common principles of the community. That is to say, between individuals and common principles, it is only when individuals have full vitality in the body that it can be possible for them to adhere to common principles. Otherwise, for any individual who lacks vitality, adhering to common principles is undoubtedly just an empty phrase. In this sense, Wang Fuzhi puts the satisfaction of individual desires for survival in a fundamental position when discussing the relationship between individuals and common principles because this is the only way to ensure that individuals are full of vitality. "Individual selves with destitute bodies are just like blighted grains with empty cores, and that makes their vitality very weak. The lack of vitality also leaves individual selves accomplishing nothing in the practice of benevolence."[34] (Wang 2011, vol. 3, p. 501).

As can be seen from the above, "Wang Fuzhi has a fundamental confirmation of what is essential to human survival" that mainly includes "physical needs and material desires." (Liu 2018, p. 270) In this regard, Wang Fuzhi not only states that all individuals cannot be without desires, but also insists that "The desires that are common (*gong* 公) to all under heaven is principle; and when each individual appropriately satisfies their own desires there is fairness (*gong* 公)."[35] (Wang 2011, vol. 12, p. 191) This does not mean that all individual desires should be averaged or unified in terms of satisfaction. Based on such an understanding of the relationship between principles and desires, Wang Fuzhi points out that no matter how cumbersome and complex principles are, they should not conflict with individual desires for survival. In other words, satisfying desires for survival is the most essential need of all individuals, and this is directly related to their existence as living organisms. Therefore, "do not establish a principle that is ultimately separated from individual desires."[36] (Wang 2011, vol. 6, p. 913) At the same time, Wang Fuzhi does not think that it is necessary to discuss the common principles of a community for an individual with no signs of life.

For Wang Fuzhi, advocating the satisfaction of individual desires for survival is not due to a need to pursue creature comforts but instead is to emphasize that we should not "treat personal desires as dangerous things such as snakes and scorpions,"[37] (Wang

2011, vol. 6, p. 675) especially when it comes to the definition of the relationship between individuals and the common principles of their community. Otherwise, if individual desires for survival are regarded as a negative thing and "completely cut off relations with others",[38] (ibid) then it will undoubtedly force individuals into a desperate situation for survival. To such an extent, the satisfaction of individual desires for survival has become a basic right, which seems both essential and reasonable. As a basic right, it means that all individuals are neither blind nor unrestrained in the satisfaction of their desires for survival but only obtain their due shares according to corresponding principles. Wang Fuzhi believes that the self-discipline shown by individuals in the pursuit of the satisfaction of their desires reflects their uniqueness as human beings: "The difference between human beings and animals is that daily physical needs of the former are always orderly met in accordance with clear principles."[39] (Wang 2011, vol. 3, p. 492) That is to say, as flesh-and-blood beings, all individuals have physical desires by birth, and as human beings, they are fully capable of controlling the degree to which they satisfy their desires to an appropriate level, thereby allowing individuals to defend their rights without hindering their adherence to the common principles of their community. Obviously, Wang Fuzhi bravely stands at the forefront of his era when it comes to discussing how a harmonious relationship between individuals and community can be established.

## 6. Conclusions

Through the analysis of the philosophy of the above seven Neo-Confucians, we have seen that there existed multidimensional discussions on the relationship between individuals and community in the Neo-Confucian tradition. These include the dimension of principles and desires, the dimension of selves and others, the dimension of the one and the many, the dimension of the common and the personal, etc. Regardless, these discussions point to the maintenance of a harmonious relationship between individuals and community. In this Neo-Confucian discourse, the reality of individuals and the independence of the common principles of community were highlighted more than ever before, and that is why Neo-Confucianism deserves to be affirmed and taken seriously regarding the topic of individual rights and the community. Of course, it is undeniable that, in promoting the harmony between individuals and community, Neo-Confucianism once made the mistake of suppressing individual needs. This imbalance of emphasizing common principles and despising individual needs led to certain criticisms by future generations of thinkers. However, it is also necessary to see that it was the deformed definition of the relationship between individuals and community by mainstream Neo-Confucian thinkers that prompted the reactionary movement of actively defending the right to satisfy individual desires for survival in the later stage of Neo-Confucianism. This reflected the fact that Neo-Confucianism had a sufficiently strong power of self-correction and, what is more, it reveals that Neo-Confucianism took seriously the human right for survival. In view of the above, we can conclude that MacIntyre's claim that Confucianism does not have a conception of individual rights is not strong enough. Especially in the work of some Neo-Confucianists, such as Shao Yong and Wang Fuzhi, plenty of counterexamples can be found it to demolish it.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

## Notes

1    己欲立而立人，己欲達而達人。
2    我亦人也，人亦我也，我與人皆物也。

3  任我則情，情則蔽，蔽則昏矣。
4  用天下之目為己之目；用天下之耳為己之耳；用天下之口為己之口；用天下之心為己之心。
5  物有大小，民有賢愚。
6  人亦物也，聖亦人也。
7  越名教而任自然。
8  沙門不敬王者。
9  天下物皆可以理照，有物必有則，一物須有一理。
10  顛沛造次必於是。
11  This statement is originally from the *Analects* of Confucius, and Confucius used it to reveal the relationship of exemplary persons to the principle of benevolence: "Exemplary persons will not deviate from benevolence even in the short time it takes to finish a meal, and in times of rush and restlessness must also maintain accordance with benevolence". (Analects of Confucius 4: 5).
12  萬物庶事莫不各有其所。
13  不為堯存，不為桀亡。
14  更怎生說得存亡加減？是它元無少欠。
15  幾時道堯盡君道，添得些君道多；舜盡子道，添得些孝道多？元來依舊。
16  Yao and Shun have always been regarded as ancient sages by the Confucian tradition.
17  人循私欲則不忠，公理則忠矣。以公理施於人，所以恕也。
18  不是天理，便是私欲 ... ... 無人欲即皆天理。
19  "Heavenly principles" here refer to the common principles that are independent of all individuals. In the context of Neo-Confucianism, all "heavenly principles" that appear together with personal desires refer to common/ethical principles and are always used to indicate the universality and independence of the latter.
20  只是人欲私心做得出來，安得有序，安得有和。
21  其流弊便有喪邦之理。
22  天理人欲交戰之機。須是遇事之時，便與克下，不得苟且放過。此須明理以先之，勇猛以行之。
23  學者工夫，唯在居敬、窮理二事。
24  若不窮理，又見不得道理 ... ... 不持敬，看道理便都散，不聚在這裡。
25  敬便是天理，肆便是人欲。
26  大抵學問工夫，只要主意頭腦是當，若主意頭腦專以致良知為事，則凡多聞多見，莫非致良知之功。
27  都只在此心，心即理也。此心無私欲之蔽，即是天理，不須外面添一分。以此純乎天理之心，發之事父便是孝，發之事君便是忠，發之交友治民便是信與仁。只在此心去人欲、存天理上用功便是。
28  終身處於煩劇而不以為勞，安於卑瑣而不以為賤。
29  夫學貴得之心。求之於心而非也，雖其言之出於孔子，不敢以為是也。
30  但知為人，不知為己；惟務好名，不肯務實。夫某既如此矣，又複與此人處，是相隨而入於陷穽也。
31  趨利避害，人人同心。
32  人必有私而後其心乃見。若無私則無心矣。如服田者。私有秋之獲而後治田必力。
33  穿衣吃飯，即是人倫物理；除卻穿衣吃飯，無倫物矣。
34  我體不立，則穀之仁猶空之仁，我之仁猶空之仁，蕩然不成乎我，而亦無以成乎仁矣。
35  天下之公欲，即理也；人人之獨得，即公也。
36  終不離欲而別有理也。
37  把這人欲做蛇蠍來治。
38  與他一刀兩段。
39  人之異於禽獸者，粲然有紀於形色之日生而不紊。

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*Article*

# The Way to Achieve "This Culture of Ours": An Investigation Based on the Viewpoints of Pre-Qin Confucianism and Song Confucianism

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**Abstract:** The concept of wen 文 has multiple meanings, but it plays an exceptionally important role in the development of Confucianism and Chinese philosophical terms. Pre-Qin Confucianism 先秦儒学 and Song Confucianism (Song dynasty Neo-Confucians 宋代儒学/宋代新儒家) are two important representatives in the history of Confucianism. Confucius has insisted that although the heaven is not going to destroy wen, wen must exist in everyone's xing 性, and only when placed within a community can it develop. In Pre-Qin Confucianism, wen completed the transformation from the long established social political structure of the Zhou dynasty and its corresponding moral principles to the consciousness of consummate conduct and ritual propriety based on human instinct and humanistic rationality. Song dynasty Neo-Confucians inherited this Confucian mission and developed the spirit of wen in their period. They emphasized the necessity of learning classics and then writing articles to get closer to the heart-mind of sages and then to build a cultural community together. Both Pre-Qin Confucianism and Song Confucianism have been applying their viewpoints to achieve a community, which is "this culture of ours" 斯文.

**Keywords:** Confucius; *Analects*; the *Book of Changes*; Song Confucianism; cultural community

## 1. Introduction

The concept of wen 文 has played an exceptionally important role in the development of Confucianism. In the Chinese language, "wen" has multiple meanings, including written word, pattern, literature, sign, decoration, refinement, culture, humanity, civilization, etc. When used in Confucian texts, wen is often concerned with politics, society, customs, religion, ethics, as well as the relationship between individual and community. Two instances of wen in the *Analects* serve as foundational uses of the word in the Confucian tradition: Confucius said, "Does not our cultural heritage (wen) reside here in us? [...] Heaven is not going to destroy this culture of ours (wen). 文不在兹乎？……天之未丧斯文也。" (*Analects* 论语 9.5) Wen encapsulates both external manifestations of order and internal principles that concern the heart-mind. "Heaven is not going to destroy this 'wen'" (i.e., the cultural–political order exemplified by rites and music) and "Does 'wen' not reside in us?" (i.e., the pursuit of inner moral refinement) illustrate the combination of the internal and external dimensions of wen. This paper follows Peter Bol and Roger T. Ames in translating the primary sense of siwen 斯文 with "this culture of ours"[1] (Ames 2021, p. 315). The reason why this paper chose and agreed with this translation is because the "ours" actually has a worldwide meaning in today's era. This "ours" refers to a community with a shared future for mankind all over the world. This is also the worldwide significance of Confucianism.

The theories of the Song Confucianists (songru 宋儒) formed another crucial development in the history of the concept of wen. On the one hand, they believed that inner moral cultivation, namely neishengxue 内圣学 (the study of cultivating the inner sage), is the means to achieving the ideal cultural and social order, which they identified with

"siwen 斯文". On the other hand, the Song dynasty Neo-Confucian conception of siwen 斯文 finds expression through the paradigmatic theme of "the juncture of heaven and the human world" (tianrenzhiji 天人之际), which, in its essence, is concerned with the relationship between individual and community. These transforming developments of the concept of wen added new dimensions to its meaning, giving it a renewed importance in the history of Confucianism.

This paper thus approaches the interpretation of the Confucian concept of siwen 斯文 with textual evidence from two historical periods: the Pre-Qin period, chiefly the *Analects* and the *Commentary on Zhouyi* (the *Book of Changes* 周易), and the Song dynasty Neo-Confucian writings. Wang Guowei 王国维 in his article "*Philosophy Discrimination*" (zhexuebianhuo 哲学辨惑) has especially emphasized that philosophy is an inherent Chinese learning. In this article, Wang Guowei only discussed the Six Classics 六经 of the Pre-Qin and the theory of Song Confucianism. He said that the theory of the Six Classics in Pre-Qin and Confucianism in Song Dynasty already achieved in-depth philosophical issues (Wang 1993, p. 5). Coincidentally, I agree with this view. The interpretation of "this culture of ours" 斯文 in this paper is also the first choice of these two representatives of Confucianism in the two typical historical periods with the most philosophical depth to discuss wen 文 as a topic with philosophical significance between individuals and communities.

## 2. The Origin of the Concept of Wen: Zhou Wen and the Society of the Zhou Dynasty

The earliest extant instance of the character wen 文 is found on a clay pot with red writing, excavated at the Taosi site in Xiangfen, Shanxi, and dated to around 2000 BCE. Feng Shi's 冯时 research argues that the character "wen" on this clay pot is intimately connected to the ancient sovereign Xia Yu 夏禹, and that wen was the name of the state of Xia. The Shiji 史记 evidences this theory, for it tells us "Xia Yu had the name of Wenming. 夏禹，名曰文命。" King Yao 帝尧 was thought to be the first champion of wen, while the King Wen of Zhou 周文王 was said to be the inheritor of wen. The first rulers of Xia were equally related to wen, for Yao was thought to embody "the thought of wen" (wensi 文思), Shun "the clarity of wen" (wenming 文明), and Yu "the ordinance of wen" (weming 文命). Wu Xiaofeng 吴小锋 thus theorizes that the legitimacy of the three ancient dynasties' right to rule lies, in fact, in the rule of wen (Wentong 文统) (Wu 2012, vol. 10, p. 64). Confucius exclaims, "Zhou had the advantage of viewing the two past dynasties. How complete and elegant are its regulations (wen)! I follow Zhou." (*Analects* 论语 3.14) What does it mean for Confucius' to "follow Zhou"?

The precise meaning of wen in the *Analects* is not fixed. The meaning of wen gains a sense of completion when, after several stages of transformative reinterpretations in the Shang and Zhou dynasties, its meaning finds culmination in Confucius' coining of the term siwen. Yin inherited large portions of its governmental structure (wen) from the Xia, whose wen was in turn succeeded by the Zhou. Therefore, for Confucius, wen symbolizes the political organizational structure and governing principles that gradually became established tradition as the rule of ancient Chinese dynasties expanded and became secured.

Specifically, the term wen had evolved from its sacred usage in the Shang dynasty with "minghao 名号" and "miaohao 庙号" to be used in the titles of the sage-kings in the Zhou dynasty signifying an abstract virtue, as exemplified by King Wen of Zhou. This transformation is evidenced by the fact that the script of wen transformed from the Shang dynasty character " 大 " to the Zhou dynasty character " 文 ", which includes the radical "心" (heart-mind), signifying the embodiment of the moral requirements for a sage-king to be deemed wen. Thought to have been inherited from the ancient sage-kings, the political virtue of wen (wende 文德) reached new heights with the Zhou dynasty establishment of the rite-and-music governance.

Nonetheless, the emphasis of wen changed significantly in the Zhou dynasty political environment. Summarizing the way of the three ancient dynasties, the Shiji 诗经 writes,

The Grand Historian remarks: The government of the Xia dynasty was marked by good faith, which in time deteriorated until mean men had turned it into rusticity. Therefore the men of Shang who succeeded to the Xia reformed this defect through the virtue of piety. But piety degenerated until mean men had made it a superstitious concern for the spirits. Therefore the men of Zhou who followed corrected this fault through refinement and order (wen). But refinement again deteriorated until it became in the hands of the mean a mere hollow show. Therefore, what was needed to reform this hollow show was a return to good faith, for the way of the Three Dynasties of old is like a cycle which, when it ends, must begin over again. It is obvious that in the period between the Zhou and the Qin dynasty, the earlier refinement and order (wen) had deteriorated.[2]

This shows that the primary sense of wen in the Zhou dynasty is very different from the "ordinance of wen" that characterized the Yin and Shang dynasties and had taken on meanings much more complicated than wen that was used in the naming of the ancient kings. On the one hand, the wen that the rites of Zhou upheld (shangwen 尚文) emphasized "the difference between the lofty and the lowly" (zunbeizhicha 尊卑之差) and the sense of order that permeated all state-ordained rites and regulations. These aspects constituted the outward, behavioral side of wen which was ultimately encapsulated by "the regulations of state rites 礼文". On the other hand, wen also meant the secular rationality of the Zhou dynastic political order, namely the characteristic "political virtue of wen 文德", which advocated secular political discourse and moved away from divine narratives. It is important to note that in Chinese political–philosophical terms, especially in the Pre-Qin era, the scope of the government is not limited to the laws and regulations that ensure the smooth functioning of all social sectors, for it also includes rites performed by the state and acts of governance aimed at cultivating the moral development of the general public and at bringing elevating transformations to their customs, as it is captured by the term wenzhijiaohua 文治教化 (governance of wen and transforming through education). The relationship between wen and the notion of a "cultural community" is reflected here. It is through this sense that wen also takes on the meaning of civilization and cultural tradition (modern Chinese sense of the term wenming 文明), where the establishment of much of the Chinese cultural, moral, and political order is thought to have originated with the rule of the ancient sage-kings, and gradually became an important part of the Chinese ethnic psyche and social value orientation.

What is the intellectual motive behind the consistent upholding of the rites-and-music order since the founding of the Zhou dynasty? Guo Moruo 郭沫若 points out that "de 德" is the driving force behind "rites" (Li 礼).[3] (Guo 1982, pp. 335–36). While the rites are comprised of all the cultural and political things, de is the all-pervasive spirit and character. On the one hand, wen encapsulates the rite-and-music system (Zheng 2009, p. 91). On the other hand, de forms the spiritual core of wen. Together, the rites and de form the contents of wen when Confucius says, "how complete and elegant are (Zhou's 周) regulations 郁郁乎文哉!" (*Analects* 3.14) and "how glorious are the elegant regulations (wen 文) which (Yao 尧) instituted 焕乎其有文章!" (*Analects* 8.19). The ideal of wen which Confucius longed for had concrete foundations in the long established social political structure of the Zhou dynasty and its corresponding moral principles and secular rationality.

A speech given by the Duke Xiang of Shan 单襄公 gives us a "list of virtues" (demu 德目) that was popular in his time, which included the virtue of "reverence" (jing 敬), "good faith" (zhong 忠), "trustworthiness" (xin 信), "consummate conduct" (ren 仁), "optimal appropriateness" (yi 义), "wisdom" (zhi 智), and "courage" (yong 勇). He said,

"You must treat Jin Zhou well, for he shall rule over Jin. His deeds show the virtue of wen (wende 文德), and he who has the virtue of wen shall receive the blessing of heaven and earth. He who has the blessing of heaven and earth shall at least rule over a city, and at most rule over all. Reverence is the respectful aspect of wen; good faith is the sincere aspect of wen; trustworthiness is the practical aspect of wen; consummate conduct is the altruistic aspect of wen; optimal appro-

priateness is the decisive aspect of wen; wisdom is the chariot of wen; courage is the commander of wen; education is the provision of wen; being filial is the root of wen; kindheartedness is the kind affection of wen; deference is the capability considerations of wen […] longitudinal and latitudinal lines of the world never go amiss, for they are the outward sings of wen. The King Wen of Zhou possessed the virtue of wen, and so his rule was ordained by heaven. (*Guoyu Zhouyu II* 国语·周语下)

Evidently, every virtue is defined as a particular manifestation of wen. Various interpreters have commented on the overarching sense of wen as it encompasses all virtues. Wei Zhao 韦昭 notes that wen is the overarching name of all de. Gong 公 is one of its manifestations. The meaning of all eleven de are like so. Wei Zhao 韦昭 also comments that "wen is at the essence [of the eleven de], wende 文德 is found in their essence and nature. 质文，其质性有文德也。" (the *Collection of Annotations to Guoyu, Guoyu-Jijie* 国语集解） by Xu Yuangao徐元诰 (Xu 2002, p. 89). This encompassing use of wen "has extraordinary methodological implications" (Bai 2007, vol. 177, p. 14). Confucius' conception of wen was deeply embedded in the de of the Zhou dynasty political order and the system of rites-and-music, two cornerstones of Zhou's rule 周礼. Confucius said,

"If the people be led by laws, and uniformity sought to be given them by punishments, they will try to avoid the punishment, but have no sense of shame. If they be led by virtue, and uniformity sought to be given them by the rules of propriety, they will have the sense of shame, and moreover will become good." (*Analects*, 2.3)

The system of de and rites was long established as the framework and background of much of the early Chinese intellectual landscape, from which the hundred-schools-of-thought had sprung. However, nearing the end of the Spring-and-Autumn period, Confucius took a turn in that intellectual–cultural tradition, and introduced profound moral notions symbolized by the Confucian "consummate conduct" (ren 仁) to the understanding of what it means to enact ritual performance (li 礼) and what it is to possess ritual propriety (li 礼).

## 3. The Wen of Heaven and the Wen of the Human World

Wen in the history of Pre-Qin takes on the meaning of social–political and cultural order, which needs to be analyzed and comprehended from the perspective of the rites-and-music system established at the beginning of the Zhou dynasty and from the perspective of the rites-and-music civilization, for the de 德 and rites 礼 system is the origin and background of the concept of wen. However, Confucius lived at a time when the rites-and-music system was nearing its end and the de and rites system was on its final course of decline. What creative transformation does Confucius bring to wen in his pursuit of "how complete and elegant are [Zhou's] regulations (wen 文)!" (*Analects* 3.14)?

Wen in its symbolic sense, as it is used in words including character (wenzi 文字), writing (wenshu 文书), transforming wen through education (wenjiao 文教), ritual code (liwen 礼文), civilization (wenming 文明), and culture (wenhua 文化), embodies the meanings of order, rules, and norms. For example, "patterns of heaven" (tianwen 天文) implies order and rules in the movements of the sun, moon, stars, and the seasons, while "patterns of the human world" (renwen 人文) is considered to be the ideal norms and rules that give order to human relationships and conduct. Confucius was the first to develop this strand of thought. The *Analects* record an episode where Confucius was surrounded by Kuang militia:

The Master was put in fear in Kuang. He said, "After the death of King Wen, was not the cause of truth lodged here in me? If Heaven had wished to let this cause of truth perish, then I, a future mortal, should not have got such a relation to that cause. While Heaven does not let the cause of truth perish, what can the people of Kuang do to me?"

The Master said, "Heaven produced the virtue that is in me. Huan Tui—what can he do to me?"

Cui Shu 崔述, in his Zhusi Kaoxinlu 洙泗考信录, comments that the two passages "seem to be reports of the same event, while the two reporters recorded what they learned individually. 似一时之言，而记者各记所闻". Confucius asked rhetorically, "does not culture heritage reside here in us?" with a great sense of mission and went on to invoke the relationship between "heaven" and "this culture of ours" to give expression to the humanistic side of Confucian philosophy. Confucius said, "heaven has produced the virtue that is in me 天生德于予", showing his confidence in having received the mandate of heaven. When Confucius lamented "heaven is not going to destroy this culture of ours 天之未丧斯文" he emphasized the inherent relationship between heaven and siwens and that it would not be threatened by imminent danger posed by the people of Kuang. In this light, the siwen that Confucius much approves of should be interpreted within the larger frame of the relationship between heaven and earth. That is to say, there exists a hidden and inherent connection between the human order and the laws of heaven.

In the *Analects*, Confucius' understanding of wen is not limited to its external representation in Liyue (rituals such as rites and music 礼乐). Instead, Confucius posits "ren" as the refinement of an inherent moral consciousness in human nature. Therefore, wen encapsulates both external manifestations of order and internal principles that concern the heart-mind. The dual aspects of wen implies that the pursuit of inner moral refinement necessarily finds concrete expression in the virtuous actions that are given in the order of external ritual behaviors, which is intrinsically a communal affair. Confucius seldom discussed abstract topics such as "human nature and the way of Heaven 性与天道." Apart from the above two examples, the *Analects* also rarely mentioned wen in the sense of culture (wenhua 文化) or civilization (wenming 文明). The above analysis of passages from the Zihan and Shu'er chapters of the *Analects* has already hinted to a considerable extent that Confucius' discussion of wen continued to deepen and develop, i.e., to further explain wen and "this culture of ours" from the perspective of the juncture of heaven and the human world.

Further, the recently excavated *Mawangdui Silk Manuscripts* 马王堆帛书 reveal a very close connection between Confucius and the *Commentary on the Book of Changes*. The *Commentary on the Book of Changes* 周易 is the intellectual legacy of Confucius, his seventy disciples, and their later followers. Its content is precisely the expansion and deepening of Confucian philosophy on its theory and vision on the juncture of heaven and the human world. The *Book of Changes*, especially its Commentary 传, has long been an important resource for the Confucian school to reflect on and discuss historical and cultural awareness, civilization, and culture. Within this book, the part that discusses wen is relatively abstract. It emphasizes the meaning of wen as principle and order, while also opening up new perspectives on heaven and human (tianren 天人) as well as patterns of heaven (天文 tianwen) and patterns of the human world (renwen 人文). This can help us further grasp and understand the philosophical value of wen in Pre-Qin Confucianism.

There are a total of six appearances of the term "wenming 文明" (the clarity of wen) in the *Commentary on the Book of Changes*. In this work, wen primarily refers to order and regularity, while ming 明 means manifestation, clarity, and universalization. Therefore, "clarity of wen" implies the process by which order, organization, standards, and rules gradually become universally accepted values. The Bi 贲 chapter of the *Tuanzhuan* discusses patterns of heaven (tianwen 天文) and patterns of the human world (renwen 人文) in connection, "The strong and the malleable interweave and intersect, such is the patterns of heaven. Bring clarity to wen to bring about lasting order in the human world, such is the patterns of the human world. Discern the changes in time by observing the patterns of heaven. Observing the patterns of the human world, to exert beneficial influence that help accomplish all affairs under heaven. 刚柔交错，天文也；文明以止，人文也。观乎天文，以察时变。观乎人文，以化成天下。" The notion of "to exert beneficial influence that help accomplish all affairs under heaven 化成天下" underscores the formation of human societal order through the observation and understanding of the interweaving and

intersecting wen of heaven. The notion of a structured and coherent order is rooted in the principled and dynamic interplay of rigidity and flexibility that is manifested in the turnings of celestial bodies. The *Commentary* clearly supports the view that the principles that guide a well-ordered human society must be grounded by the abstract principles that govern the movements and transformations of the natural world. Therefore, both patterns of heaven and patterns of the human world take on meanings including order, rules, and law-like principle. While the "regulations" (wen 文) in the previously discussed "How complete and elegant are its regulations (wen)" refers to the patterns of the human world, i.e., the ethical and moral order stipulated by the rites-and-music system, the *Commentary on the Book of Changes* clearly seeks to ground this ideal human order upon the way of heaven. Conversely, this is also why Confucius attaches great importance to wen, or more precisely, "the wen of Zhou" (zhouwen 周文).

Philosophies of the hundred-schools-of-thought converge on the "investigation on the juncture of heaven and the human world". In the chapter Tianyun (The Way of Heaven 天运) of *Zhuangzi* 庄子:

> Anciently, Shun asked Yao, saying, 'In what way does your Majesty by the Grace of Heaven exercise your mind?' The reply was, 'I simply show no arrogance towards the helpless; I do not neglect the poor people; I grieve for those who die; I love their infant children; and I compassionate their widows.' Shun rejoined, 'Admirable, as far as it goes; but it is not what is Great.' 'How then,' asked Yao, 'do you think I should do?' Shun replied, 'When (a sovereign) possesses the virtue of Heaven, then when he shows himself in action, it is in stillness. The sun and moon (simply) shine, and the four seasons pursue their courses. So it is with the regular phenomena of day and night, and with the movement of the clouds by which the rain is distributed.' Yao said, 'Then I have only been persistently troubling myself! What you wish is to be in harmony with Heaven, while I wish to be in harmony with men.' Now (the Way of) Heaven and Earth was much thought of of old, and Huang-Di, Yao, and Shun united in admiring it. Hence the kings of the world of old did nothing, but tried to imitate that Way.

Also, in the Chapter Dasheng (The Full Understanding of Life 达生) of *Zhuangzi*:

> Bian-zi said, 'Have you not heard how the perfect man deals with himself? He forgets that he has a liver and gall. He takes no thought of his ears and eyes. He seems lost and aimless beyond the dust and dirt of the world, and enjoys himself at ease in occupations untroubled by the affairs of business. He may be described as acting and yet not relying on what he does, as being superior and yet not using his superiority to exercise any control. But now you would make a display of your wisdom to astonish the ignorant; you would cultivate your person to make the inferiority of others more apparent; you seek to shine as if you were carrying the sun and moon in your hands. That you are complete in your bodily frame, and possess all its nine openings; that you have not met with any calamity in the middle of your course, such as deafness, blindness, or lameness, and can still take your place as a man among other men—in all this you are fortunate. What leisure have you to murmur against Heaven?

These two passages from the *Zhuangzi* contain a message that is similar to the *Commentary on the Book of Changes*, as they both emphasize that the natural order represents the assumption and foundation upon which human social political system is to be discussed. Wen in this passage also takes on the meaning of natural order (or patterns of heaven in the *Commentary*).

The concept of the clarity of wen proposed in the *Commentary* contains profound meanings in terms of order and sacredness. Moreover, the "gua 卦", "yao 爻", "xiang 象", "shu 数", "yan 言", and "ci 辞" mentioned in the *Book of Changes* are all different forms of wen. For example:

The sage surveyed all the complex phenomena under the sky. He then considered in his mind how they could be figured, and finding semblances (xiang 象) that could represent their character and form, used such signs (xiang 象) to represent them. […] The sage appended his explanation to each line of a diagram, to determine the good or evil indicated by it. Hence these are called yao 爻. The most thorough mastery of all the complex phenomena under heaven is represented by the diagrams. The greatest stimulus to all motion under heaven is given through the explanations. 圣人有以见天下之赜，而拟诸其形容，象其物宜，是故谓之象……系辞焉，以断其吉凶，是故谓之爻。极天下之赜者，存乎卦；鼓天下之动者，存乎辞。（Xici I 系辞上）

The Yi makes clear the past and teaches us to discern matters in future; it makes manifest what is minute and brings to light what is obscure. In the beginning, things were distinguished from one another in accordance with their names. Discerning various things, giving accuracy to words and expressions, attaching correct and definite explanations to [each gua and yao], the Yi is complete. The names it gives to things are refined, the categories it devises are comprehensive. Their scope reaches far, and the explanations attached to them are complex but elegant (wen). 夫《易》，彰往而察来，而微显阐幽，开而当名。辨物，正言，断辞，则备矣。其称名也小，其取类也大。其旨远，其辞文。（*Xici II* 系辞下）

Dao is marked by changes and movements, and hence we have the lines. These lines are grouped in distinction of one another, representing the myriad things. The myriad things are intermingled with one another, forming a complex state of affairs (wen). Things and affairs (wen) are never the same with one another, necessitating good fortune and bad. 道有变动，故曰爻。爻有等，故曰物。物相杂，故曰文。文不当，故吉凶生焉。（*Xici II* 系辞下）

The concepts of "xiang 象", "yao 爻", "gua 卦", and "ci 辞" in the *Book of Changes* 周易 are concrete manifestations or forms of wen, and even the *Book of Changes* itself can be seen as a kind of wen. With the help of these concepts, the *Book of Changes* opens up space for philosophical reflection. The *Book of Changes* claims to be "broad and all-encompassing 广大悉备," because its sixty-four gua establish an all-encompassing set of basic patterns for understanding the universe and society, patterns of heaven and patterns of the human world. The *Commentary on the Book of Changes* also makes it possible to understand the guayao 卦爻 and passages in the *Book of Changes*. From another perspective, the *Book of Changes* and its *Commentary* have also become a model for wen—a literary classic that can comprehensively bring together the cultural order and the natural order, or "investigate the juncture of heaven and the human world." As such, it can be said that "The Yi is a book whose subject matter is to look into the beginnings of things and affairs, in order to discern their ends. 《易》之为书也，原始要终，以为质也"。

## 4. Concrete Ways of Realizing "This Culture of Ours": The Theory of Song Dynasty Confucians

The above analysis has shown that during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, there was a lively environment of discourse among thinkers of the hundred-schools-of-thought. By philosophizing the concept of wen in connection with the "wen of heaven" and "wen of the human world", Pre-Qin Confucians attached great philosophical importance to the term wen. With the flourishing of the study of the classics (jingxue 经学) in the Han dynasty, the notion of wen veered towards referring to the classics. Subsequently, the prosperity of Tang dynasty literature shifted the focus of wen towards literary aspects such as rhetoric and poetry, and its value was admired mostly by literary figures. Following the Classical Prose Movement, Song dynasty literature shifted from an emphasis on form to free expression, while the Song dynasty intelligentsia were renowned internationally for their Confucian studies, and Neo-Confucianism gradually moved towards the center stage of Confucianism. Liu Shuxian 刘述先, a contemporary New-Confucian, divides the history of Confucian philosophy into three periods: Pre-Qin, Song-Ming, and the contemporary

era. As such, the prominent status of Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism in the history of Confucianism is self-evident.

The conceptual relationship between wen and cultural community needs to be recognized in the *Analects* of Confucius, which is based on the different semantics of wen in different contexts. It is partly evidenced by the foremost position of wen in Confucius' four teachings "wen 文, xing 行, zhong 忠, xin 信" (*Analects* 论语 7.25) and serves to prove that wen is central to the forming of a civilized society through cultural and moral education. People can only grow into cultural beings through education. Only in this way can we achieve the spiritual civilization of the entire society. It is not difficult to see that Confucius emphasized culture and education by teaching "wen 文, xing 行, zhong 忠, xin 信", which is also an ideal expression of wanting to build a social and cultural community.

The relationship between wen and the cultural community is also evident in the Song dynasty. "Wen-governance 文治" is the hallmark of Song political culture. The Song dynasty Neo-Confucian scholars were a cultural community which aimed to guide policy making with Confucian principles and exert greater influence on the formation of a civilized society bound by a common moral pursuit. Further analysis of Song dynasty Neo-Confucian theories on the Confucian spirit of "this culture of ours" reveals that the Song Confucian's pursuit of inner sageliness and outward kingliness (neishengwaiwang 内圣外王) formulated rich methodological approaches to the cultivation of individual spiritual temperament and personal self-cultivation, emphasizing the importance of continuous effort on the part of the individual. Therefore, on the one hand, Song Confucianism theories on wen not only emphasized the relationship between wen and dao to highlight the social and ethical–practical significance of wen. On the other hand, they also focused on how to achieve wen, namely through the study of ancient classics, for individuals need to apply themselves in "learning" (xue 学), intimating themselves towards the dao of the sages through concrete practice, in order to achieve inner sageliness and outward kingliness on the subjective level, so that the communal and social wen order, as well as the Confucian "this culture of ours" community can be achieved.

It is said in the *Analects* that those who desire to learn can be called wen:

> Zi Gong asked, saying, "On what ground did Kong Wen get that title of Wen?" The Master said, "He was of an active nature and yet fond of learning, and he was not ashamed to ask and learn of his inferiors! On these grounds he has been styled Wen". (*Analects*, 5.15)

Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao are two towering figures in the development of Confucian thought in the Northern Song. Among the two, Cheng Yi's advocation of learning (xue 学) corresponds to Confucius and Mencius in the past and served as an important foundation for Zhuxi's subsequent development. For Cheng Yi, the key to wen lies in learning. Bol believes that the Northern Song intelligentsia used the concept of wen to define learning. But words of Cheng Yi further demonstrate an interplay between wen and learning. Volume 5 of the *Ercheng Yishu* 二程遗书 says:

> The accomplishments of a successful essay have certain observable forms, but this is merely an accomplishment on the practical aspect of things. However, the work that makes possible such an accomplishment is one's sageliness. (Cheng and Cheng 2004, p. 79)

During the period of the Hundred Schools of Thought, Confucius' concept of siwen 斯文 was often associated with the rites of Zhou and ceremonial practices. Fingarette believes that ceremonial practices are at the core of Confucius' "sacred" teachings (shengxue 圣学). As ceremonial practices are manifestations of human nature formed through the accumulation of experience, the practice of ritual ceremonies can help perfect human nature within the context of society as a whole. Through proficient practice of ceremonial behavior as they are required by the various roles that make up human society, individuals can ultimately achieve a state of acting in harmony with the dao of the mean and radiate a magical charm, which is what being both ordinary and sage-like means "the secular as sa-

cred"(jifanersheng 即凡而圣)[4] (Fingarette 1972). The state of attainment of the sage is the sacred radiance that human nature emits through the practice of ceremonial customs in the mundane world.

In the social, intellectual, and political environment of the Song dynasty, Cheng Yi believed that politics and academics could be treated as two separate issues. Even in the event of political disorder, learning the teachings of the sages is still one's duty because learning these teachings is the process of an individual's understanding of morality. For the Neo-Confucian thinkers, moral discourse constitutes an intellectual space that is independent from the politics of the day. With this notion, they sought to set aim at rejuvenating "correct leaning on their own" outside state politics, albeit being continuously suppressed by the state.[5] (Bol 2008, p. 129)

Song dynasty Neo-Confucians cherished the concept of "bringing beneficial transformation in the general public through moral teaching" (jiaohua 教化), but its legitimacy requires the support of classical texts. Zhu Xi emphasized the importance of the Four Books, especially the notion of "rejuvenating the general public" (xinmin 新民) in the Daxue chapter of the *Liji*, emphasizing the way to help each individual rejuvenate their inherent moral nature. The importance attached to the Confucian classical texts by Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi was indeed a way of corresponding to Confucius' dao of the sage, which is to become sage-like through learning. In fact, this is also a way to reconstruct and pass on the Confucian "this culture of ours" through the thought and methods of Neo-Confucianism. "In the study of classics, one must not limit oneself to the interpretation of the text, one must learn to discern the character and manner of the sages." (Cheng and Cheng 2004, p. 284). Learning the words (text) of the sages to approach the heart-mind of the sage. Song dynasty Confucians' pursuit of "this culture of ours" thus has a trail to follow.

Zhang Zai 张载 also emphasized the connection between learning and the Confucian concept of siwen, his emphasis being that "dao can be passed on" (Dao-kechuan 道可传):

> Confucius said, "Heaven is not going to destroy this culture of ours (wen), what can the people of Kuang do to us?" Now as we wish for our achievements to reach all under heaven, we must cultivate as many scholars as we can. Then dao can be passed on. (Zhang 1978, p. 271)

Zhang Zai's comment on Confucius aims to highlight the timeless principle behind his sayings:

> Those who say that dao has perished with the death of Confucius knows not the fact that dao is found in writings more ancient than Confucius himself. The principles of dao are imperishable, regardless of what words and sayings are left behind. 语道断自仲尼，不知仲尼以前更有古可稽，虽文字不能传，然义理不灭。 (Zhang 1978, p. 278)

In the Fanyu Xu chapter of the *Zhengmeng*, Zhang Zai's disciple Fan Yu范育 praises the limitlessness of heaven and earth and offers words of great admiration for how the "sayings" (yu 语) and "words" (yan 言) in Zhang Zai's Zheng Meng are in accordance with the universal order that permeates all under heaven:

> Alas, dao is a singular unchanging entity that is everlasting and everywhere. Speaking of matters up high it details principles lofty and illuminous; speaking of matters down low it discerns practical matters in all shapes and sizes; speaking of grand matters it reaches that which has no gap; speaking of minute matters it grasps that which has no sign. Should there be any matter that such words finds obstruction and fails to reach, then they would be false in the judgment of the principle. And so, the words of the Zhengmeng are such that it suppresses that which is too tall; lifts up that which is too low; gives substance to that which is empty; makes passage wherever there is obstacle; forms unity with those that are scattered; and makes disperses those which have been bound together. Its principle matter is to establish a standard that is appropriate and righteous to the utmost […] there is nothing which it does not encompass, nothing which it

does not detail to its furthest end, nothing so great that it does not cover, nothing so small that it overlooks. As such, words of the Zhengmeng reach the utmost of what words can do, and dao has come to be among us. The sage has resurfaced, and the uninterrupted continuity of siwen is preserved. (Zhang 1978, p. 6)

To the Song dynasty Neo-Confucians, sages do not merely belong to history. When dao arrives at an opportune moment, sages can resurface. In Fan Yu's eyes, it is implied that dao finds a renewed embodiment in his mentor Zhang Zai. The Song dynasty Neo-Confu-cians generally took it upon themselves to receive dao from ancient classics and ensure the continued passing on of dao. The Song Confucian scholars were deeply devoted to "this culture of ours", which must ultimately be manifested in tangible ways. Zhang Zai's interpretation of the term clarity of wen in the *Book of Changes* unifies the inner and outer aspects of wen. Chapter Dayi of the *Zhengmeng* 正蒙篇 states:

Optimally appropriate words and deeds are moral conducts that are universal to all under heaven. Taking this into account, the effect of the beneficial provision of the great person thus becomes wide-ranging; and the clearness of wen becomes conspicuous for all under heaven. (Zhang 1978, p. 51)

"De", which is the inner moral virtue of a person, is indispensable to "the clarity of wen of all under heaven". Since before the unification of the Qin dynasty, the meaning of "wende" has been in constant transformation and was consistently upheld by subsequent Confucian thinkers via the spirit of "this culture of ours". Jingde-dadao 经德达道 brings together the natural order of heaven and earth and the moral order of the human world, both subsumed under the frame of "all under heaven" (tianxia 天下). This notion has rich and significant political and philosophical implications.

Regarding the "wende 文德" of the "kun 坤" hexagram, Zhang Zai said in the *Hengqu Yishuo* that the de of platitude and compliance is not isolated, for "it possesses wisdom bright and grand, containing the clearness of wen, and is capable of taking up the affairs of a king. 其知光大，含蕴文明，可从王事者也" (Zhang 1978, p. 81) The kun hexagram represents an inward virtue. Wende emanates outwards from within. It is an internal state that embodies civilized literacy. When the inner value reaches a certain level, it will naturally "come to know illumination and greatness", to the point where it can handle affairs of state. This fully demonstrates the spirit of "inner sageliness and outer kingliness" (neisheng-waiwang 内圣外王) of Song dynasty Confucianism.

During the Southern Song period, the articles of Ouyang Xiu and Su Shi were exemplary articles favored by most scholars, but Zhu Xi did not blindly follow this popular predilection. Zhu Xi believed that his contemporaneous literati merely took joy in studying the rise and fall of things past and did not devote enough effort to self-cultivation when writing. They only "recited poems, drank, and made jokes to pass their days 以吟诗饮酒戏谑度日。" (Li 1986, p. 3113). In his criticism of Su Shi, Zhu Xi said in his letter Response to Lü Bogong, "Su's teachings range widely from human nature and the ordinance of heaven to the principles of politics, … they ruin people's natural potential and corrupt customs." (Zhu and Zhu 2010, *Book 21*, p. 1428). The Confucian scholars of the Song Dynasty practiced "inner sageliness and outer kingliness" on a personal level. Those who fail to do so, compounded with openly discussing a variety of philosophical topics, were met with severe criticism, for they were seen as a corrupt influence on society. How is one expected to influence those around her if she does not make sufficient effort to cultivate herself? Aristotle famously said in Politics that human beings are by nature political animals, who naturally want to live together (Aristotle 2003, p. 4). Therefore, the connection between the individual and her social and political community is ubiquitous. We cannot underestimate the impact of personal demeanor on the wider society. Compared with artificial, unsubstantiated impression of inner refinement, moral behavior that arises from natural inner cultivation and refinement has a starkly different impact on other individuals, one's surrounding community, and wider society. For Song Confucianism, each individual is inherently a member that constitutes siwen. Therefore, the accomplishment of siwen requires

inner, spontaneous cultural cultivation and a spirit of wende on the part of each person. The profound meaning of "personal wen makes transformative achievements" (renwen-huacheng 人文化成) is that good spiritual temperament on the part of the individual can naturally influence the cultural demeanor of society.

Zhu Xi explained whether wen has harmful effects on dao through counterexamples. Zhu Xi talked about his own reading experience and recalled that he also used to like the literary style of the works of Qu Yuan 屈原, Song Yu 宋玉, Tang Le 唐勒, and Jing Cuo 景差. What they wrote was similar to the writings of Su Shi, namely, wen that were off the path of dao. Although they might please the reader, upon reflection they only evoke feelings of "sadness" (beichou 悲愁) and "wild self-indulgence" (放旷 fangkuang), and such works would indeed harm the heart-mind if read consistently. He wrote：

> Is wen and dao the same, or two different things? If there are objects that exist independently of dao, then writers could write in any manner that pleases them without doing harm to dao. […] There was a time when I much admired the works of Qu Yuan, Song Yu, Tang Le, and Jing Cuo. As a reflected upon them, I came to see that although their writings are greatly embellished, they evoke only the feelings of sadness and wild self-indulgence. Reading such works everyday would transform oneself with them and do great damage to one's heart-mind. […] Not to mention that while Su Shi writes much about subjects ranging from human nature to the principles of politics, their contents go no further than the writings of Qu, Song, Tang and Jing. Learners of dao may well be pleased by their writings, but the benefit of reading such works last no more than a day, and its damage could be lasting. When its damage reaches the marrow of one's bones, the effect can hardly be reversed on one's own. Cases of them ruining people's natural potential and corrupting customs are far more than a few. (Zhu and Zhu 2010, *Book 21*, p. 1428)

In this passage, Zhu Xi's emphasis of wen is on the substance that wen is used to convey. "Use wen to convey dao" (wenyizaidao 文以载道) Su Shi's wen is ornate and superficial. Its content "does great harm to the heart-mind 大为害心". Zhu Xi's direct criticism of the wen of the two Su brothers is also directed against Buddhist and Daoist tendencies, which is characteristic of the disagreement between different schools of thought and of the Song Confucianism scholar-officials. This is also a manifestation of the Song Confucian scholar-officials' wish to achieve the ideal of "this culture of ours" society from personal to communal, from individual to collective.

## 5. "文以载道: Using Wen to Convey Dao" and "文便是道 Wen Is Identical to Dao": Confucian Classics as Siwen

One basic consensus of Confucianism is that the teachings of the sage kings are recorded in the Six Classics (liujing 六经), which were edited and transmitted by Confucius himself, making it the prime example of "using wen to convey dao".

These classics are preserved, practiced, and passed on by Confucian scholars. The title of Six Classics, given to the collection of six ancient texts, had not yet come to circulation during Confucius' time. For the term "Six Classics" first appeared in the Tianyun chapter of the *Zhuangzi* 庄子. The "Six Arts" (liuyi 六艺) mentioned in the *Rites of Zhou* 周礼 refer to the arts of ritual ceremony, music, archery, charioteering, writing, and mathematics. The Yiwenzhi of the *Hanshu* records that "The writings of the Six Arts are such that the Book of Music brings harmony to one's mind, and is the outward expression of consummate conduct (ren 仁); the Book of Songs teaches proper uses of words, and represents the uses of optimal appropriateness (yi 义); the Book of Rites gives clarity to proper conduct, and since proper conduct is thus clearly observed, it needs no further explanation; the Book of Documents helps one become informed in a broad range of subjects, and is the means to great understanding; the Spring and Autumn Annuls helps one make well-reasoned judgment, and is the mark of trustworthiness." (Ban 1962, p. 1723). This shows that the terms "Six Arts" and "Six Classics" are interchangeable.

Through the continuous efforts of Confucius and the Confucian school, the "Six Arts" became classics, establishing the tradition of classics studies (later termed "continued transmission of dao") (daotong 道统), exerting an unparalleled and profound influence on the history of Chinese thought and culture.

The term "using wen to convey dao" is often used by later scholars to summarize the literary theory of the Tang and Song dynasties' "Classical Prose Movement" (Zhu 2019, p. 28). However, the phrase was first coined by the founder of Song Confucianism, Zhou Dunyi 周敦颐. Zhou Dunyi used the term "conveying dao" (zaidao 载道) to discuss wen, as stated in his Tongshu 通书:

> Using wen to convey dao is like using a cart to carry goods. Makers of carts work decorations onto the wheels and shafts, and so writers also bring refinement to their writings, both in hopes that others would find pleasure in the use of their works. But if I should make embellishments to objects that are not to be used, then my work becomes hollow, bringing no real benefit. The same is true for a cart that carries no good, or a piece of writing that does not convey dao. What use do they have, regardless of how embellished they are? (Zhou 2009, p. 35)

> The use of words and phrases is a skill, whereas dao and de are the substance [of a writing]. Being truthful in its substance, and having be written by an author of great skill, a piece writing is of such beauty that readers would find pleasure in reading it. Finding pleasure in reading such a piece of writing, one would pass it on to others. When persons of noble mind learn from such a writing and put his understanding into practice, education is complete. Therefore, it is said that "sayings with poor literary form do not travel far". (Zhou 2009, p. 36)

The Southern Song scholar Zhu Xi had always respected Zhou Dunyi's scholarship and moral character. He also attached great importance to Zhou's view on wen. In agreement with Zhou, Zhu Xi argued firmly against the notion that all writings are the same, for writings which do not carry dao is the same as a cart with nothing in it (Li 1986, p. 2410). No matter how embellished, neither provides any real benefit. In other words, for Zhou Dunyi and Zhu Xi, "using wen to convey dao 文以载道" is likened to "using a cart to carry goods 车以载物". Although "sayings with poor literary form do not travel far, 言之无文，行之不远", the role that "sophisticated literary form" (wenci 文辞) needs to play is to "pursue dao and de 务道德". To "pursue dao and de", one must learn Confucius' moral teachings. Zhou Dunyi also said, "Only Confucius has reached such height and breadth in his daode. His teachings alone have brought infinite transformations. Indeed, he is at one with heaven, earth, and the four seasons!" (Zhou 2009, p. 40). The most difficult thing for humans to obtain is "dao and de", for "Between heaven and earth, dao is the most revered, and de is the noblest of all. Zhou believes that moral principles are what make a person exceedingly distinguished, and that the proper use of wen to provide moral education and his theory of "using wen to convey dao" are two sides of the same coin.

Based on Zhou Dunyi's theory of "using wen to convey dao" and other reflection on wen by Northern Song Confucian scholars, Zhu Xi emphasized the state of "wen is identical to dao" (wenbianshidao 文便是道):

> Writings produced by sage-like rulers of the three ancient dynasties were all delivered from this heart-mind, and thus their writings were dao. (Li 1986, p. 3319)

The wen in the phrase "wen is identical to dao" does not refer to all forms of writing, but rather to the exemplary carriers of Confucian "this culture of ours", namely the writings of the sages during the three ancient dynasties. The purpose of Zhu Xi's avocation of the classics and his formulation of the system of the Four Books was to ensure the preservation of the writings of the sages.

In this sense, wen and dao have already become highly integrated. Zhu Xi elevated the concept of wen to an unprecedented level and believed that wen meets his standards only when it is integrated with dao. Regarding the relationship between wen and dao, Zhu

Xi's most famous metaphor is found in his work Lunwen 论文 in the *Zhuzi-Yulei*. He writes the following:

> Dao is the root of writings (wen), while writings (wen) are the branches and leaves of dao. Should a piece of writing spring from dao as its roots, then it is dao also. (Li 1986, p. 3319)

Roots cannot be seen, but leaves can. This can also be compared to Zhu Xi's description of the concept of "already expressed and not yet expressed" (yifaweifa 已发未发) in his theory on the art of cultivation. Wen and dao are as inseparable as the roots and leaves of a tree. However, fallen leaves eventually return to the roots, thus wen and dao form a reciprocal and symbiotic relationship.

What does Zhu Xi mean by "all of them are dao 皆道也"? Whether it is wen, which is the outward expression of dao, or dao, which is the root and essence of wen, they are both dao. Therefore, the emphasis of this passage by Zhu Xi is on the relationship between wen and dao, which is one of emergence, mutual exchange, and symbiosis. Of course, the prerequisite for this type of wen is that it must come from dao, and the writings produced during the three ancient dynasties that Zhu Xi admired were written in this way. Writings with dao and de, insofar as they are in accordance with dao, regardless of their stylistic merits, all meet the standard of wen in the sense of "wen is identical to dao".

There was a time when the classics first came to be. The creation of the Six Classics was the result of the sages' "producing wen" (weiwen 为文). The Book Annotations on Chapter and Sentence of the Four Books 四书章句集注 and Jinsilu 近思录 were the result of Zhuxi's producing wen. This is a kind of way to practicing siwen in Song Confucainism.

Classics are born at the inception of a certain mindset. The authors of the "Six Classics" left behind the texts as a result of the sages' "writing." The authors of classical texts, that is, the ancient sages, wrote the Six Classics because it flowed naturally from their heart-minds. However, there is still one issue, dao is not produced by writings. It exists naturally and spontaneously, whereas the Six Classics are "texts" (wenben 文本), which are human-made objects. If wen is identical to dao, is there an irreparable gap that cannot be explained? Ming Dynasty scholar Chen Baisha 陈白沙 explicitly proposed the theory of Six Classics Dross 六经糟粕论. The turning point of Confucianism in the Ming Dynasty is a complex issue in the history of Confucianism. But why does it need to emphasize so much that Song Confucianism's positive promotion of "Using wen to convey dao" and "wen is identical to dao"? This is why Song Confucianism can continue the call for siwen of Pre-Qin Confucianism. The emphasis on siwen and the invention of ideas by Song Confucians is a positive promotion of the inheritance. This positive effect benefits every individual Confucian.

## 6. Conclusions: "This Culture of Ours" Community

When Confucius traveled to the state of Zheng 孔子适郑, he lost himself with his disciples and compared himself to a homeless dog (Sangjiagou 丧家狗). The profound meaning of this allusion has been talked about to this day. Confucius mocked himself but did not give up hope. The reason for this is because he himself is precisely wen 文, but the career of wen is not something that a person can accomplish. Only in the community can people learn and feel the most primitive spirit of wen.[6] (Ishii 2014, p. 84).

In essence, wen represents the emergence of order out of an incomprehensible state of chaos. The "wen of heaven" denotes the principled revolution of celestial bodies, whereas the "wen of the human world" stands for the various kinds of order that separate humans from other animals. In a narrow sense, humans created systems such as writing and language (wen); in a broader sense, the Confucian conception of human "civilization" (wenming 文明) is also identified with a universal order that is manifested by all principled movements in the universe.

This paper has looked at the meaning of wen in the Pre-Qin period and in the writings of Song Confucians. While Confucius reinterpreted wen based on his understanding of the wen of the Zhou dynasty and the Six Classics, the Song Confucians developed the

concept of wen further based on their interpretations of Confucius' writings. The notion of heaven (tian 天) has played an important role in both of these transformative periods. Just as Confucius believed that the wen of the Zhou dynasty was under the protection of heaven when he said, "Heaven is not going to destroy this culture of ours (siwen) 天之未丧斯文也." (*Analects* 9.5). Before this sentence, Confucius made a hypothesis, "if Heaven had wished to let this cause of truth perish, then I, a future mortal, should not have got such a relation to that cause 天之将丧斯文也，后死者不得与于斯文也". Obviously, what Confucius was actually saying was so how can we talk about this Siwen斯文 again after the death of King Wen? Is not the culture of ours revived and passed on here today? This is exactly the meaning of "the text is not in this 文不在兹乎". The Song Confucians believed that the inner sage-like moral cultivation (neisheng 内圣) is at one with the "principles of heaven" (tianli 天理) that governs the movements and transformations of external objects. Some aspects of their theories are no doubt the product of contemporary social and intellectual discourse particular to their time, but "the relationship between heaven and the human world" (tianrenguanxi 天人关系) features prominently throughout the history of the concept of wen.

Song Confucian scholar-officials generally wanted to translate the teachings of wen into concrete and practical policies that could help bring beneficial transformations to the general public. Unlike dao, which is invisible and has no form, siwen as the ideal state of good governance is pursued in the form of a tangible order and harmony that is found in all aspects of society. Therefore, for scholar-officials such as Zhu Xi, the purpose of siwen is to bring about beneficial changes in the general public with the use of a well-considered concept. Partly reacting to the political discourse of his time, Zhu Xi also stressed the belief that sovereigns do not become sages merely by ascending to power but must also strife to become sage-like through his own inner moral cultivation, before he can assume the authority of a sage. Until then, Zhu Xi argued that a ruler must adhere to the principles and institutions set down by ancient sages, in order to preserve a siwen (political principles and order) that is at one with dao.

From an individual's perspective, siwen is a never-ending practice. It asks us to learn to take up our role as humans living among a myriad of things under heaven, as humans do not rule over the entire universe. "Consummate conduct is an empathetic kindness towards all others. 仁者爱人" and "a consummate person is one who does not distinguish herself against others. 仁者浑然与物同体" are shared beliefs among Confucians of all periods in terms of how best to understand and interact with other people. Confucians generally believe that the potential tendency to act consummately is part of each individual's inherent nature, and the ideal state of affairs is achieved when everyone realizes and exhibits such a potential. If individuals are able to spontaneously exercise empathetic kindness in their everyday dealings with other people, a siwen 斯文 community would be formed.

Siwen is a conception of culture and civilization that is unique to China. Zhu Xi cleverly compares dao 道 to the roots of a tree and wen to its leaves. It is apt to also think of the growth rings of the tree trunk as the repeated efforts by generations of Confucians to strife towards the ideal of siwen through the rise and fall of different customs, institutions, and regulations (wen), making the tree ever stronger as they give renewed strength to a living tradition.

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## Notes

[1]  Roger T. Ames has pointed out that wen means the written word, patterns, culture, refinement, and King Wen. See also 文化 wenhua. Culture, enculturation. He said, "on the bronzes, wen occurs in the context of sacrifices as a term of respect for the ancestors as 'the noble and virtuous.' As a proper name, it refers to King Wen of the Zhou dynasty whose name is then used unbiquitously in the canonical literature to allude to the responsibility for intergenerational transmission of 'this culture of ours'(siwen 斯文)." (Ames 2021, p. 315).

2    Translation taken from Burton, W. (1993) with minor revisions of my own (Watson 1993, p. 118).

3    The rulers of the Zhou dynasty were responsible for the coining of the term "de", for the concept of de was a novel intellectual element that is not found in documents written before the founding of Zhou. See Guo, Moruo, Guo Moruo Quanji, Lishibian (Guo 1982, pp. 335–36).

4    Fingarette pointed out, Confucius "is a holy vessel" (Fingarette 1972, p. 79). He said, "Confucius wanted to teach us, as a corollary that sacred ceremony in its narrower, root meaning is not a totally mysterious appeasement of spirits external to human and earthly life. Spirit is no longer an external being influenced by ceremony; it is that that is expressed and comes most alive in the ceremony. Instead of being diversion of attention from the human realm to another transcendent realm, the overtly holy ceremony is to be seen as a the central symbol, both expressive of and participating in the holy as a dimension of all truly human existence." (Fingarette 1972, pp. 16–17) The study of cultivating the inner sage of Song Confucianism strengthened this consciousness.

5    I agreed with Wood, Alan T's point that for Song Confucians, "the idea that they had recovered correct learning on their own, independently of the state of politics, and that it had survived and spread despite the court's repeated attempts to suppress it, was clear evidence that the kind of learning essential to morality could not be equated with the political system." (Bol 2008, p. 129).

6    Ishii Tsuyoshi believes that the community of wen is not a group that emphasizes standardization. Just gentlemen seek harmony but not uniformity 和而不同, and the community of wen is a community that can accommodate individual differences. (Ishii 2014, pp. 74–84).

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*Article*

# "Eliminating Social Distinctions" or "Preserving Social Relations": Two Explanations of *Datong* in Modern China

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**Abstract:** A Confucian scholar, Kang Youwei, living in the late Qing period imagined a future utopian society called *datong* which eliminated all social distinctions. To illustrate it, he borrowed and developed the theory of the Three Ages, which first appeared in the Confucian classic *Gongyang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, as well as in the theory of human nature in the Han dynasty. However, one of his students, Chen Huanzhang, made a new explanation of the "Liyun" chapter that greatly differed from his teacher. According to him, *datong* was a society committed to "preserving social relations". The different understandings of *datong* reveals two different patterns of social relations in Confucianism. Besides the traditional *wulun* pattern, Kang Youwei offered another possible pattern. Although it proved to be a failure in practice, as a theory that discovered many hidden traditions in Confucianism, Kang Youwei's *datong* theory is worthy of attention.

**Keywords:** Liyun; *datong*; Kang Youwei; Chen Huanzhang

## 1. Introduction

The ancient Chinese society that was formed and dominated by Confucianism is generally considered to be a community based on kinship and family relations. A typical metaphor for Chinese social relations comes from the well-known sociologist Fei Xiaotong 费孝通 (1910–2005). According to him, the organizational principle of Chinese traditional society is similar to the concentric circles formed when a stone is thrown into a lake. The self is at the center, the circle immediately surrounding the self is the nuclear family (the most intimate relatives), and the outer circles resemble distant relatives and strangers. Each circle spreading out from the center becomes more distant and consequently more insignificant (Fei 2013, pp. 28–30). This means that in Chinese society the way to get along with others for an individual is not fixed, but depends on their relative position in the pattern of kinship. This is quite different from the Western scheme where all members in an organization are equivalent. The term *renlun* 人伦 (human relation) is used by the Confucians to define or prescribe the relations between different kinds of people. To be specific, it includes five relations (五伦 *wulun*): those between father and son, husband and wife, elder and younger brother, ruler and ministers, and friends. In a word, the traditional Chinese society was a society formed by acquaintances. The *wulun* was the principle to deal with the relations between acquaintances.

Does this mean that according to Confucianism the *wulun* schema is the only possible pattern of social relations? No. The Confucian scholar Kang Youwei 康有为 (1858–1927) in the late Qing period put forward a new pattern which is entirely different from the *wulun* pattern[1]. By explaining the "Liyun" 礼运 (Ritual Operations) chapter of the Confucian classic the *Liji* 礼记 (Book of Rites), he imagined a future utopian society called *datong* 大同 (literally, "great unity") which eliminated all social distinctions. According to him, the *datong* society was formed by millions of completely self-sufficient, independent, and equal individuals. His work seems to show another possible way to organize the society according to Confucianism.

Kang Youwei's identity as a Confucian is a matter of doubt. A respected Confucian named Ye Dehui 叶德辉 (1864–1927) once harshly criticized him as a man "with a Confucian

appearance outside and a foreign mind inside." (Su 2002, p. 165). Apparently, Kang Youwei was viewed as a heterodox. Nonetheless, as Xiao Gongquan 萧公权 (1897–1981) has pointed out, if we do not interpret "Confucianism" in a fundamentalist way, but understand it instead as an intellectual tradition gradually formed and developed over the course of a long history, then Kang Youwei might be recognized as a revisionist of Confucianism, especially in light of his lifelong dedication to espousing and advocating for Confucianism (Xiao 2005, pp. 30–31).

With the improvement of the research on Kang Youwei, many scholars tend to agree that Kang has inherited many of the Confucian traditions. However, most of them still consider his *datong* theory inconsistent with the Confucianism because *datong* was a society where all families and social relations had vanished, which apparently contradicted to the traditional Confucian society[2]. In recent years, there are other scholars arguing that the relation between Kang Youwei's *datong* theory and the Confucian tradition should be re-explored[3].

Therefore, if we agree that Kang Youwei's *datong* theory has explored a new social pattern in Confucianism and that it needs to be explained to what extent Kang Youwei's imagined *datong* conforms to the Confucian tradition. Moreover, in order to evaluate Kang's *datong* pattern, criticism and reflection on his *datong* theory should also be taken into consideration.

## 2. Eliminating Boundaries and Distinction: Kang Youwei's Explanation of *Datong*

The term *datong* first appeared in a "Liyun" chapter of the Confucian classic the *Liji*. At the beginning, it says:

Once upon a time, Confucius took part in a sacrifice held at the end of the year. When the ceremony was finished, he went out and climbed up the gate tower to take in the views, thereupon he let out a deep sigh. He probably sighed for the state Lu. One of his disciples called Zi You was by his side and asked, "What made you sigh, my master?" Confucius replied, "Even though I was not born during the time of the three dynasties of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou when the great way was practiced, I am still intent on seeing it realized again." Having said this, Confucius continued: "When the great way is in practice then the world as a common property (rather than that as the property of the emperor), worthy and capable people are selected for government office, and people are reliable and seek harmony amongst each other. Therefore, in such a world, people do not only show affection for their parents or for their children but they make it so that the elderly have what they need to live out their lives, that the strong are put to proper use, that the young are provided for in their growth, and that the sick, orphaned, widowed, deformed, and destitute are all taken care of. It is a time when all the men have work to do and all the women have a place to return to; a time when the people do not like to throw goods away or wish to hoard them up. It is a time when people despise not putting in their effort even it is to benefit someone else. Because of this, it is a time when schemes and intrigues are not put to use or when robbers and traitors do not exist. It is a time when it is so safe that people leave their doors open when going out. This is called *datong*." He also said: "Now the great way has disappeared and the land under heaven belongs to the royal family. Every man only loves his own parents and only cares for his own children. Goods and one's own effort are kept as one's private possessions. The sovereign passes the throne to his own son. High walls and deep moats are built to make the city safe and impregnable. Abundant thieves and robbers exist. Therefore, the rituals and righteousness are made to rule the people; the relations between ruler and ministers, father and sons, elder and younger brother, husband and wife are regulated; regulations are established and the fields are divided; the brave and the worthy are respected; people take the establishment

of merits as their own advantage, schemes, and wars arise. . . . . . . This is called *xiaokang* 小康 (the minor prosperity)". (Zheng and Kong 2008, pp. 874–76)

This passage from the "Liyun" chapter is uniquely Confucian. It gives an account of the origin and the development of *li* 礼 (variously translated into English as etiquette, ritual, rites, or ceremony). According to Confucius, *li* originated from the Three Dynasties (*sandai* 三代, that is, the Xia, Shang, and Zhou). In the Confucian tradition, the Three Dynasties were regarded as a Golden Age and resembled the highest political ideal of Confucianism. The Confucian masters Mengzi and Xunzi often started their arguments by quoting stories or sayings from the Three Dynasties. However, it is very unusual to find in the "Liyun" chapter Confucius indicating that there was a virtuous and harmonious time called *datong* that existed before the Three Dynasties. Although he did not explicitly claim that *datong* was superior to the Three Dynasties, his preference can still be inferred from the words he used, for example, the juxtaposition of *datong* and *xiaokang*.

After the failure of the political reform in 1898, Kang Youwei went into exile, travelling abroad to foreign countries. While living on Penang Island in Malaysia during the years of 1901 and 1902, he wrote a series of commentaries on several of the Confucian classics. He claimed that he had discovered an unrevealed theory of Confucius in the "Liyun." In the preface to his book *Liyunzhu* 礼运注 (Commentary on Liyun), Kang Youwei wrote:

> The way of Confucius is so magnificent. Though we cannot fully understand it, I still try my best to get a glimpse of it . . . . The moment when I started to read "Liyun", I was amazed by the great way of Confucius . . . .This is a precious book where the greatest and deepest thoughts of Confucius are preserved. It is also the best prescription to save millions of people! (Kang 2007, vol. 5, p. 553)

It is known to all that Confucius himself strictly followed regulations of rituals throughout his life. However, in the "Liyun" chapter, he exceptionally talked about a society which was not governed by rituals. For the two thousand years between Confucius and Kang Youwei, all the studies of Confucianism had focused on those visible words and sayings of Confucius. However, Kang Youwei indicated that Confucius probably kept his deepest and ingenious thoughts under cover. His few words talking about *datong* are a hint, just like the tip of an iceberg.

In his *Commentary on Liyun*, Kang Youwei offered an innovative explanation of *datong*. He explained the saying that "The world is that of the community (rather than that of the emperor), worthy and capable people are selected for government office" as "Official positions were appointed to the wise and talented who were elected by the public." He also explained the saying that "They make it so that the elderly have what they need to live out their lives, that the strong are put to proper use, that the young are provided for in their growth, and that the sick, orphaned, widowed, deformed, and destitute are all taken care of" as "They use the public property which was made up by each man's own property to provide for the aged, to care for the children, to help the poor, and to cure the sick." Again, the saying that "It is when all the men have work to do and all the women have a place to return to" was explained as "Men and women had their own authority and right which should not be exceeded by any one of them. Though not as strong as men, women were self-reliant and independent and should not be suppressed by men. Marriage for them was a contract that should be observed by both parties." (Kang 2007, vol. 5, p. 555). Generally speaking, all the governing in the time of *datong* presents a principle of equality and fairness.

Kang Youwei was not satisfied with only explaining the text of the "Liyun" and added his own interpretation: "People have this common saying, 'The empire, the state, the family.' This is a limited cognition of ancient people. Because these boundaries and distinctions of the empire, the state, the family lead to self-interest and selfishness." (Kang 2007, vol. 5, p. 555). Though the description of *datong* in the "Liyun" chapter expresses the spirit of equality, it still uses terms such as state, family, and individual; therefore, it does not present the final image of *datong* in Kang Youwei's opinion. In another book titled *Zhongyongzhu* 中庸注 (Commentary on the Zhongyong), Kang Youwei said "Confucius

had already known that there would be another sage arising three thousand years after his death. And the new sage would continue to develop his *datong* theory." (Kang 2007, vol. 5, p. 388). Therefore, for Kang Youwei, the "Liyun" chapter provided a clue to the followers to seek the realization of a real *datong*. Kang Youwei maintained that Confucius' understanding of *datong* had never been completely expressed until he had thoroughly revealed it in his *Datongshu*.

In the *Datongshu*, Kang Youwei listed all the kinds of torture and grief humans suffer in the world and attributed them to the inequality of human society. For example, as he asserted, slavery is due to class inequality, the oppression of women is due to gender inequality, and material scarcity is due to wealth inequality. After "observing all the phenomena of the world", he came to the following conclusion: "There is no way other than the way of *datong* to save humanity from suffering!" (Kang 2007, vol. 7, pp. 6–7). What exactly did the "way of *datong*" refer to? In what sense can it be called the best prescription to save humanity? According to the edition compiled by Kang Youwei's disciple Qian Dingan 钱定安, there are ten chapters in the *Datongshu*: Chapter One "Descending to the world to observe the sufferings of ordinary people", Chapter Two "Eliminating the boundaries of states and uniting the whole earth", Chapter Three "Eliminating the boundaries of nations", Chapter Four "Eliminating ethnic groups to unite all of humanity", Chapter Five "Eliminating biological difference to achieve independence", Chapter Six "Eliminating the boundary of family to become *tianmin* 天民 (people of *tian*), Chapter Seven "Eliminating category of industry to share the means of production", Chapter Eight "Eliminating struggle and disorder to realize peace and harmony", Chapter Nine "Eliminating species to love every creatures in the cosmos", and Chapter Ten "Eliminating of suffering to reach bliss." From these titles, it can be seen that Kang Youwei started his book from describing the harsh and cruel condition of human beings. After eliminating the boundaries of states, classes, nations, genders, families, and species, humanity could finally build a new social form of collective production, common distribution of resources, common living arrangements, and common welfare. In other words, the way of *datong* referred to the process called *qujie* 去界 (eliminating social boundaries and distinctions). Kang Youwei pointed out: "All that is under heaven is equal. So boundaries between states should not be built for they will lead to fighting and war. The boundaries of families should not be built for the love of humanity will be unable to spread far and wide. The boundaries of individuals should not be built for they will lead to selfishness." (Kang 2007, vol. 5, p. 555). In Kang Youwei's opinion, all the grief and sufferings originated from inequality. Inequality laid in differences. Differences led to distinction. Distinction resulted in selfishness, thus leading to differences in social relations. In turn, the inequality of society became more differences and distinction must be eliminated. It is only by and more serious. Therefore, in order to save people from sufferings and to realize the equality of the whole society, all the boundaries of groups, tribes, and communities must be eliminated, and all the selfishness and self-interest caused by doing this that the result where "everyone is unified in their equality" can be achieved[4]. (Kang 2007, vol. 5, p. 555).

## 3. The Foundation of *Datong*: "Humans Are Born by *Tian*" and the Theory of "The Three Ages"

Why did Kang Youwei consider the essence of *datong* to be where "everyone is unified in their equality"? This has to do with his theory of human nature: "humans are born by *tian*" 天. This term *tian* is semantically abundant and has been commonly translated as "nature" or "heaven" and variously refers to the sky, the natural world and its processes, and a semi-anthropomorphic deity. In his *Commentary on the Zhongyong*, when explaining the sentence "What is given to the people by *tian* is called nature" (*tianming zhiwei xing* 天命之谓性), Kang Youwei said:

> Humans cannot be made by humans; humans are born by *tian*. Human nature is the stuff of human life. Humans derive their nature by spiritizing *qi* which

is received from *tian*, not by obtaining physical body from their parents. (Kang 2007, vol. 5, p. 369)

In *Datongshu*, he further explained that:

Humans are born by *tian*. It is by the bodies of one's parents that humans come to the world. However, this does not mean parents can dominate their children. Because every individual ultimately belongs to *tian* and not to their parents. (Kang 2007, vol. 7, p. 36)

According to these statements, "humans are born by their parents" only describes the formation of the human body in the world of experience. However, a person cannot be called a "human" simply by virtue of their bodies. To illustrate this, Kang Youwei gave an example: "When I lived in village as a child, I used to see a mad man. His mother and wife fed him but he didn't eat. He just put his fingers into his mouth and bit them. A man such as this only has a human body but no spirit. This is why he could hardly be called a human." (Kang 2007, vol. 5, p. 561). In other words, it is human nature rather than the visible figure or body that makes us human. The phrase "humans are born by their parents" can explain where the human body comes from, but it cannot metaphysically explain where human nature comes from. Therefore, "humans are born by *tian*" can be understood as "human nature is derived from *tian*".

However, in which way do humans get their nature from *tian*? Kang Youwei explained the process of the derivation of human nature from *tian* thus:

The infinite and flowing *yuanqi* 元气 ("primal *qi*", also variously translated into primal ether or primal force or vital force) created the heavenly and the earthly (*tiandi* 天地). *Tian* and humanity were all made of the same *yuanqi*. Though one is great and one is tiny, they both share the same *yuanqi* that proceeded from *taiyuan*太元 (the great origin of the universe). The relation of humanity and *tian* is like when a drop of water is thrown into the ocean: not the slightest difference between them can be found. (Kang 2007, vol. 7, p. 4)

According to this argument, the natures of human beings and every other one of the ten thousand things are made of *qi*. It is the origin of the universe as well as the vital force that invigorates all things. "All the things in the cosmos originated from *yuanqi*. Humanity is only one of the creatures made of it" (Kang 2007, vol. 7, p. 49). Human nature is the luminous numinosity obtained through the process of gaining *qi*. As such, since humans are things, they have a fundamental *qi* constitution. In terms of the real world, a person is thrown into a world of inequality the moment they are born. People might be pretty or ugly in appearance, healthy or disabled in body; they might be born into a rich family or a poor one, a noble or base one. The preposition that "humans are born by *tian*" not only gave a new definition of humanity, but also provided a premise for equality in the *datong* society. From an a priori perspective, because every person was created by *qi* without any differences between them, human nature is realized via the principle of *datong* where "everyone is unified in their equality".

However, according to our common experience, humans are given birth to by their parents. It is because of this fact that *qinqin* 亲亲 (being affectionate to one's parents) is regarded as the most essential ethical principle of Confucianism. Does "humans are born by *tian*" contradict this aspect of traditional Confucianism? In fact, the proposition that "humans are born by *tian*" was not first proposed by Kang Youwei. Instead, it can be traced back to Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (BC179–BC104), a Confucian master from the Han dynasty. In his book *Chunqiu Fanlu* 春秋繁露 (Luxuriant Gems of Spring and Autumn Annals), Dong Zhongshu said: "Those giving birth to humans cannot create humans, humans are created by *tian*. *Tian* is like humans' great grandfather" (Su 2002, p. 318). By saying that "Humans are created by *tian*", Dong Zhongshu actually meant that humans derived their nature from *tian*. In the chapter "Shencha Minghao 深察名号", he explained the meaning of *xing* 性 (usually translated as nature or human nature): "Nowadays people are confused by the meaning of *xing*. There are various explanations of it. Why do we not investigate

the word *xing* itself? *Xing's* original meaning is *sheng* 生 (meaning to live, life or to give birth to, to generate). A thing's nature is that natural resource which it draws on for living. *Xing* is the essence of things" (Su 2002, p. 291). Dong Zhongshu asserted that *xing* and *sheng* had a close semantic relationship. *Xing* referred to the character of humans or other things which was naturally endowed at birth. It was not endowed by those who gave birth, but endowed by *tian*. Nonetheless, Dong Zhongshu also admitted the fact that humans were biological products of their parents. In the chapter "Shunming 顺命", he said: "The father is like *tian* to his son; and *tian* is *tian* to the father. Nothing can be born without *tian*. *Tian* is the ancestor of all living things (Su 2002, p. 410). In the book *Chunqiu dongshixue* 春秋董氏学 (On Dong's Study of the Spring and Autumn Annals), Kang Youwei further elaborated Dong Zhongshu's theory: "Human inner dispositions and outer conditions alongside their capacities to know and perceive originate in *tian* and the shape of the human body originates in their ancestors". (Kang 2007, vol. 2, p. 375). According to Kang Youwei, the birth of humans could be understood in two dimensions: one was being born as the children of parents, the other was being born as the children of *tian*. Therefore, "Humans are born by *tian*" does not contradict the fact that humans are biological products of their parents.

Despite claiming that his theory was developed from Dong Zhongshu, Kang Youwei had to explain why Confucius highly praised the value of *qinqin* in most of the other classics. His answer was that "Confucius had preset the Law of the Three Ages and hoped to realize *datong* in the future". (Kang 2007, vol. 5, p. 379). "The Law of the Three Ages" was Kang Youwei's development of the theory of the Three Ages which first appeared in the Confucian classic *Chunqiu gonngyangzhuan* 春秋公羊传 (Gongyang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals). It referred to the Age of Disorder, the Age of Approaching Peace, and the Age of Great Peace (also referred to as the Age of *Datong*). Kang Youwei applied this theory in explaining the evolution of human civilization. According to him, each Age resembled a stage of civilizational development. The Age of Disorder was the primary stage of human civilization where people lived in savagery and needed to be cultivated and regulated by hierarchical rules and regulations. The Age of Approaching Peace was an advanced stage of human civilization where laws and regulations tended to be more equal to the people. The Age of the Great Peace was the final stage of human civilization where all hierarchical systems would disappear, and distinction and boundaries between people would be eliminated. Each Age had its corresponding systems, laws, and values. These systems, laws, and values might contradict each other due the different civilizational stage they belonged to. Kang Youwei asserted that the order of the Three Ages could not be reversed. Although *datong* was the best prescription to save the world, "even Confucius himself could not apply the way of Great Harmony to his time, since he lived in the Age of Disorder. He had to obey the order of the Three Ages". Therefore, Confucius' advocation for the hierarchical order was his solution to the Age of Disorder. The hierarchical regulation and rituals of the classical Confucians was a necessary step on the way to *datong*.

By the phrase "eliminating boundaries and distinctions", Kang Youwei did not mean to take them down by force, but instead to dissolve them by *ren* 仁 (often translated as benevolence, humanity, or consummate conduct). *Ren* is the core term of traditional Confucian ethics, yet Kang Youwei understood it in a novel way:

> The heart which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others (*buren ren zhi xin*不忍人之心) is called *ren*, or electricity, or ether. All the men have it, therefore we can say the human nature is good. (Kang 2007, vol. 5, p. 414)

> The thing that makes humans superior to any other creature is their nature because they have a natural disposition to virtue. It is like metal being attracted by a magnet. It is because humans have this ether inside them that they can be attracted by virtue. (Kang 2007, vol. 5, p. 426)

Traditional Confucianism took *ren* as an abstract virtue. However, Kang Youwei understood *ren* as having some kind of physical attribute of *qi* which was naturally a part of human nature. It was by this physical attribute that humans could be affectionate to each other and be inclined toward kindness. Kang Youwei explained the meaning of *ren* thus: "*Ren* is expansive love" (*boai* 博爱) (Kang 2007, vol. 6, p. 424). He further explained: "I am endowed with *qi* derived from *tian*. All the living things are all endowed with *qi* derive from *tian*. Therefore, they are all my brothers and sisters. How can I not love them?" (Kang 2007, vol. 5, p. 415). Because humans shared the same *qi* with the ten thousand things, they are all equally relevant to us and we are responsible for taking care of them. The complete realization of *ren* is to love all the other living creatures with impartiality.

Therefore, according to Kang Youwei, the development of the Three Ages is accompanied by the expanding and spreading of *ren*. He explained the relation between the two processes by quoting Mengzi's theory of *qinqin* (to treat one's parents affectionately), *renmin* 仁民 (to treat the people humanely), and *aiwu* 爱物 (to love all the living creatures):

> The following was the law of the Three Ages set up by Confucius: During the Age of Disorder, *ren* could not be spread broadly so people were only required to be affectionate to their parents. During the Age of Approaching Peace, *ren* could be spread within the same species so people could be kind to each other. During the Age of the Great Peace, all living creatures are equal so people could love all creatures. If there are differences in how one employs *ren*, then there will be progress and retrogression, largeness and pettiness in the world. (Kang 2007, vol. 5, p. 415)

From *qinqin* to *renmin* to *aiwu*, all the distinctions and differences between people, classes, nations, and species gradually disappear with the development of the scope and range of *ren*. In short, in order to make his *datong* theory more convincing, Kang Youwei built up a system including the theory of human nature and the theory of Three Ages that he claimed were all based on core concepts in the Confucian tradition.

However, many of his arguments remain questionable. First of all, his interpretation of Mengzi's theory is suspicious. According to Mengzi, the extension of *ren* followed the sequence from being affectionate to parents to being humane to the people and finally to loving all creatures. However, the affection for parents, people and all living creatures is different at each stage. Mengzi's exact words were "In regard to inferior creatures, the superior man is kind to them, but not loving. In regard to people generally, he is loving to them, but not affectionate. He is affectionate to his parents, and lovingly disposed to people generally. He is lovingly disposed to people generally, and kind to creatures." (Jiao 1987, pp. 948–49). It is clear that for Mengzi, the further *ren* extends—from family to the people to all living things—the more diluted the "love" for the object. Therefore, Mengzi used the different phrases of "to be affectionate", "to be kind", and "to love" to describe the different relationships between one person and a relational object. It is a natural response that humans have different feelings and affections when facing different objects. It was based on this natural fact that the Confucian differential arrangement of relationships was established. If there is no difference between the affection for parents, the people, and all living things as Kang Youwei claimed, then the affection for parents cannot be the foundation for the affection in the other relationships because the affection for the people will dissolve the affection for parents and the affection for living creatures will further dissolve the affection for the people.

Secondly, according to Kang Youwei, the *datong* society was formed by millions of completely self-sufficient independent and equal individuals (what he called *duren* 独人 or "solitary men"). If this were the case, there would be no need for people to socialize with others. As such, it is hard to imagine these "solitary men" could keep close attachment to each other as Kang Youwei asserted.

Moreover, even though Kang Youwei maintained that "there was a fixed track" for the progression of the Three Ages "that could not be surpassed", and even though he did not want his *datong* theory published before his death, because the ultimate goal of humanity

was on the horizon, he wondered what possible forces could thwart the people's advance toward the *datong* society.

## 4. Preserving Social Relations: Chen Huanzhang's Reflection on Kang Youwei's Theory

Being the most important thought of Kang Youwei, all of his students were deeply familiar with his *datong* theory. However, in 1922, one of his favorite students, Chen Huanzhang 陈焕章 (1880–1933), published "Cunlun pian" 存伦篇 (Article of Preserving Social Relations) proposing his own understanding of *datong* that greatly differed from his teacher's.

Chen Huanzhang was born in the town of Gaoyao, Guangdong province. He began studying with Kang Youwei at the Wanmu Academy at fifteen years old and obtained the title of *jinshi* 进士 (a successful candidate in the highest imperial examinations) in the year of 1904. One year later, he was selected by the Qing government to study in America. He obtained his PhD from the University of Columbia with a dissertation titled *The Economic Principles of Confucius and his School* 孔门理财学. At Kang Youwei's behest, Chen Huanzhang established the Shanghai Confucius Association after returning to China in 1912. He also started several journals to advocate the doctrine of Confucius and expand the Confucius Association worldwide[5]. According to Chen Huanzhang's own account, he became suspicious of Kang Youwei's *datong* theory early on: "I used to suspect the theory of *datong* twenty years ago. In my dissertation *The Economic Principles of Confucius and His School* and in the article 'On Confucianism' written in Shanghai several years ago, I made a little argument on the theory. I had also discussed the theory with many of my Chinese and foreign friends over the years but did not draw my own conclusion until the year 1915. When writing the book *Administering State Affairs Under the Instructions of Confucius* 孔教经世法, I pondered the Liyun' chapter over and over, and by studying the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, I came to realize the five social relations must exist in the time of *datong* described in the 'Liyun.' Thus my confusion lasting for more than ten years had come to a resolution." (Chen 2015, p. 79).

Of the five social relations, Chen Huanzhang cared most about the first three ones, that is, the relations between ruler and ministers, father and son, and husband and wife. He was concerned with these three because the former was a public relation while the latter two were domestic relations. Therefore, in order to demonstrate that the five social relations must all be preserved in the *datong*, his argument focused on the reason why these three are necessary features of the *datong* society.

First of all, in defense of the relation between ruler and ministers, Chen Huanzhang said:

Recently, there was a misunderstanding of *datong* in the "Liyun" that argued there were no rulers and ministers in the *datong* society. But this is wrong. In the *datong* society, the world was a community of people. This means that the sovereign did not pass the throne to his own son but selected "worthy and capable people" for government office. But this does not mean there were no ruler or ministers. If that were the case, then why did they need to "select worthy and capable people" to govern? It was because of the distinction between the ruler and ministers and the fact that not everyone was equal that the noble could rule the base and the capable could rule the incapable. Otherwise, what was the point of selecting the worthy and capable if they were not appointed? Since there were positions for the worthy and capable, it was obvious that they played a role as the rulers and superiors. This can be clearly seen in the text. Besides, the text says "people are reliable and seek harmony amongst each other." If there were no ruler and ministers the people would be like a pile of sand. Who would encourage them to be honest and seek harmony? Who would be responsible for their moral cultivation? If there were no one taking the responsibility, even though honesty and harmony were encouraged before, laws and rules would be fickle, and wars and fights would run rampant. Therefore, even *xiaokang* 小康 society could hardly be realized, not

to mention the *datong* society. In conclusion, the *datong* society must have a ruler and ministers. (Chen 2015, p. 95)

Compared with Kang Youwei, Chen Huanzhang returned to the text of the "Liyun" itself and based his explanation of *datong* thereon. He clearly recognized the authority of the classical text. It can be inferred from the text that *datong* was definitely not a society without ruler and ministers.

In addition, Chen Huanzhang gave a new connotation of the word *jun*君 (ruler, lord):

*Jun*, in terms of its pronunciation which sounds like *qun* 群 (group or crowd), means to group. If every individual in the world is independent and isolated and has no need to socialize with others, then there can be no ruler. However, if two people come together to form a group, there must be subordinates and rulers. For example, in the relation between husband and wife, the husband is the ruler. In the relation between father and son, the father is the ruler. In the relation between elder and younger brothers, the elder brother is the ruler. In the relation between two companions, the capable one will definitely be the ruler. This is the natural way of human society. (Chen 2015, p. 93)

Chen Huanzhang emphasized that *jun* did not necessarily refer to the sovereign but that the relation between ruler and subordinates exists in many occasions. Humans cannot live in the world in isolation. They need to communicate and socialize with one another, therefore, they must follow certain orders and rules. These kinds of relations can both find expression in the strict hierarchical relationship between emperor and ministers as well as the less hierarchical relationships that obtain between superiors and inferiors. Even under the public democratic system there must be someone playing the role of the president. The president in this sense can also be viewed as a form of *jun*. "A ruler is necessary if the state and world are to be governed. It does not matter whether that ruler is an emperor or a president" (Chen 2015, p. 96).

Apparently, Chen Huanzhang tried to respond to Kang Youwei's criticism on the relation of ruler and ministers. According to *Datongshu*, the relation between ruler and ministers was merely a kind of class oppression. The royal families made themselves superior to the common people, thus causing the "suffering of class oppression". Chen Huanzhang realized that Kang Youwei had overstated the conflict between ruler and ministers without considering the necessity and rationality of hierarchical order in human society. Kang Youwei's understanding of the relation between ruler and ministers was based on his theory of human nature. Because "humans were born by *tian*", any distinction and difference between humans was not inherent, but rather was something acquired. Yet in the perspective of Chen Huanzhang, the existence of *jun* accorded with human nature. He said: "To group is the nature of humans. Thus, the existence of *jun* accords with human nature" (Chen 2015, p. 96). The social differences and distinctions found in human society are natural and justified; they are the foundation of political order in human society. Even Confucius admitted the people's talents were different, some were born "who already knew" and some were born who had to "learn to know".

Next, in the defense of the relation between father and son, Chen Huanzhang realized Kang Youwei's understanding of *qinqin*, *renmin*, and *aiwu* was very questionable. To illustrate the function of *qinqin* and *renmin*, Kang Youwei once used a metaphor of "abandoning the boat to step ashore." He only took the *qinqin* and *renmin* as tools and methods to achieve *datong*. When *datong* was realized, *qinqin* and *renmin* were to be abandoned. However, In Chen Huanzhang's opinion, the development of human affection is like planting or building. Without *qinqin*, the affection for others was like water without a source, or a tree without a root, something quite unimaginable:

"People did not only love their own parents but also loved the parents of others. They cared not only their own children but also for the children of others". By the use of "parents" and "children", it is apparent that *datong* started with being affectionate to family members. How could this contradict "the world is that

of the community"? Otherwise, although one claims to love the others' parents and to care for the others' children, this love is like water without a source, a tree without a root. These are things that are entirely impossible. (Chen 2016, p. 20)

From the different words used in "Liyun" such as "their own parents", "parents of others", "their own children" and "children of others", it can be concluded that the love for one's own parents and children was different from the love for others' parents and children. Therefore, "People did not only love their own parents but also loved the parents of others . . . .They did not only care for their own children but also cared for the children of others" means that it is only after people render good care for their own parents and children that they then can give consideration to the parents and children of other people. In fact, the sentence "people did not love their own parents" has proven to be particularly problematic for many Confucian commentators throughout history. According to the Tang dynasty Confucian scholar Kong Yingda 孔穎達, this sentence meant that "The sovereign was unselfish, he spoke with honesty and behaved with kindness so the people imitated him. Therefore, they did not love their own parents, and did not care for their own children". Furthermore, he said that "they make it so that the elderly have what they need to live out their lives" means since the whole world was united, people were not only affectionate to their own family members but supported all the elderly in the world regardless of kin relations (Zheng and Kong 2008, p. 878).

By saying "The whole world became one unity and people were not only affectionate to their own family members", Kong Yingda seemed to imply a love without differences. But the establishment of an ethical order according to social relations was the basic principle of Confucianism. Therefore, Zhang Zai 張載 (1020–1077), a Confucian master from the Song dynasty, argued by saying that "people loved their own parents" did not contradict the proposition that "people did not only love their own parents" because it only represented the period of "lacking and narrow compassion." When it came to the period of "unobstructed love", people would not only love their own parents but also the parents of others (Wei 1985, p. 253). Of course, the unspoken consensus was that the affection for people's own parents and for the parents of others was different in degree and in form.

Chen Huanzhang knew that Kang Youwei's understanding of the love that paid no heed to different social relations in the *datong* society was based on his theory of human nature. He simply did not agree with it. He emphasized the decisive role of parents in the birth of humans: "The birth of humans must have its origin. It is the parents who give birth, and those who are born are called children. This fact cannot be denied under any circumstances. If there is a man, he could not come down from heaven nor could he grow up from the earth, instead, he must be given birth to by his parents. So when treating his parents he must follow the rules of social relations" (Chen 2015, p. 85). Kang Youwei's theory of human nature did not follow the observation of the world of experience, but was instead based on a theoretical deduction whereas Chen Huanzhang returned to the common-sense experience and drew the conclusion that "the love between father and son is rooted in nature, their binds are tight and cannot be broken" (Chen 2015, p. 88).

Furthermore, Chen Huanzhang tried to prove that there must be marital relations between husband and wife in the *datong* society:

Confucius discussed the *datong* system saying that "all the women have a place to return to." He obviously referred to the families of their husbands and their parents. Since women need to get married to obtain their social role, therefore, families mainly refer to the family of their husband's [sic]. Zheng Xuan explained "all the women have a place to return to" as "they all married into good families." If free love took the place of marriage, what would happen if a man without good virtue abandoned his spouse? She would have no husband's family to return to. Her brothers would not know what she suffered and would laugh at her so that she could not return to her parents either. Confucius said "all the women have a place to return to" instead of saying that "all women have their families",

because only by marrying into her husband's family could a woman settle down and achieve real independence and liberty. (Chen 2016, p. 21)

When explaining the "Liyun" text, Kang Youwei deliberately changed the word "to return" (*gui* 归) to "to tower over" (*kui* 归). Because in his point of view, the word "to return" itself showed the dependence of women on their husbands: "What does 'women cannot set up their own families' mean? A woman joining with a man is called marriage or 'returning.' This is where the principle of 'husband is the guide of wife' originated. That 'women should listen to husbands in marriage' was considered the highest virtue. However, women had lost their independence and rights. This seriously violated the principle of equality!" (Kang 2007, vol. 7, p. 57). By changing the word "to return" to "to tower over", he claimed the independence of women: "'To tower over' means towering majestically like a mountain. Even though women are weak, they can achieve majestic independence and avoid oppression. The husband and wife should make a contract and adhere to it. This is the principle of husband and wife". (Kang 2007, vol. 5, p. 555). But Chen Huanzhang accepted the traditional explanation which translated "to return" as "to marry" (*jia*嫁). As for women, they do not have a family of their own. Before marrying, "family" refers to the family of their parents and after marrying "family" refers to the family formed with their husband. As such, the phrase "all the women have a place to return to" means the existence of marriage in the *datong* society.

In addition, Chen Huanzhang pointed out another flaw in Kang Youwei's theory of human nature:

Since *tian* did not make men and women physically the same, therefore marriage cannot be abandoned to be replaced by free love. (Chen 2016, p. 21)

In fact, despite claiming that all humans were born by the same *qi* substance, Kang Youwei also admitted that people were born with certain differences in the real world. He borrowed the Han Confucian theories on *yin* and *yang* that were used to explain the origin of human nature and emotion. He said the *qi* of *yang* made the spirit of humans and the *qi* of *yin* formed the figure of humans. The birth of humans in the world of experience was the combination of *yin* and *yang*. Though the *qi* of *yang* was clear and full of benevolence, "When a person comes into the world they are inevitably influenced by the *qi* of *yin* which constitutes their bodies" (Kang 2007, vol. 5, pp. 426–27). Chen Huanzhang noticed that no matter how equal the talents, abilities, and social status of men and women could be, they still had biological differences. This difference would ultimately lead to certain relations between men and women. His opinion can be supported by the traditional understanding of the relation between husband and wife in Confucianism. In the "Hunyi 昏义" (The Meaning of Marriage) chapter in the *Liji*, we read, "When the distinction between the male and the female is formed then the moral integrity between the husband and wife is established". (Zheng and Kong 2008, p. 2277). According to Confucianism, the relation of husband and wife was naturally established on the physical distinction between men and women.

Another criticism on marriage made by Kang Youwei was that women were confined to a life of dependence in marriage. If a woman is kept in a terrible marriage and has no way to escape, she would have no choice but to endure it the rest of her life. Hence, Kang Youwei invented a new way for men and women to get along with each other in the *datong* society: they could make a contract to maintain their relationship. The couple could also determine the length of the contract themselves. In addition, while the contract is in effect, if either side changed their mind, he or she could freely withdraw from it. And when the contract expires, they could choose to renew it or not. But Chen Huanzhang tried to demonstrate that marriage was not the suppression of women. He took pregnancy as an example saying that "Only women can get pregnant, men cannot. [If free love is permitted, then] during the period of pregnancy, women cannot have relations with other men, however men can still have relations with many other women. This is not fair to pregnant women". (Chen 2015, p. 83). Again, Chen Huanzhang focused on the biological differences of men and women to illustrate the fairness of marriage. The fact that only females can get pregnant

determines that the male and female cannot have the same freedom in the relationship. In light of this, he asserted the positive side of traditional marriage in preserving women's independence and liberty:

> According to our Chinese customs, women are in charge of the affairs of the household and men are in charge of the affairs of the public. There is a clear division in the work that men and women do. There was no so-called "inequality" between husband and wife. Besides, after women have children, they not only enjoy the rights of women but also the rights of mothers. In the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, even the emperor of the Zhou dynasty had to bear the criticism of not serving his mother. (Chen 2015, p. 84)

The traditional Chinese family pattern encouraged women to show their talents and abilities in domestic affairs and had priority over men who were responsible for public affairs. In other words, they enjoyed considerable freedom and priority within the family and could get more protection and security by marriage.

Furthermore, Kang Youwei assumed that all humans wish to seek happiness and avoid suffering. Everything he designed for the *datong* society embodied this principle. But what is suffering? What is happiness? Happiness is generally understood as the satisfaction of the desires for good food, beautiful sights and sounds, safe and comfortable living conditions, and good health. But Chen Huanzhang saw the complexity of human nature and that desires for happiness varies. Not all the happiness referred to sensual pleasure. In Kang Youwei's designs for the *datong* society, the most appealing regulation was that he removed the restriction of marriage on men and women. They could freely combine and separate with each other by following their hearts. In Kang Youwei's mind, this was the only way that human nature could find realization. However, Chen Huanzhang pointed out another side of human nature, that is "If people only listen to their natural desires to combine as couple or separate like strangers then affection for each other becomes irregular and fragile, just like water flowing off the back of duck or wind blowing through duckweed. How can that be happiness? This seriously violates human nature." (Chen 2015, p. 82). Besides desire and passion, humans are also eager for stable emotional bonds and relationships. Marriage and family are the systems that protect these kinds of emotions and affections. Indulgence in lust and passion does not necessarily bring human happiness; it can contrarily also ruin the wonderful experience of having stable and lasting affection for others.

Thus, it is clear that underlying the two notions of "eliminating social distinction" and "preserving social relations" were Kang Youwei's and Chen Huanzhang's two different understandings of human nature. Kang Youwei deliberately avoided describing the human from an empirical perspective and instead set up his theoretical system on the preposition that "humans are born by *tian*." However, Chen Huanzhang returned to the traditional understanding of human nature; therefore the social relations were the accomplishment and safeguard of human nature.

## 5. "The Whole State Went Mad" and the Significance of Two Understandings of *Datong*

Why did Chen Huanzhang return to Kang Youwei's *datong* theory nearly twenty years after he first proposed it? Is there any other reason besides that he felt Kang's theory was questionable? The answer is yes. With the Republic of China replacing the old empire after the 1911 revolution, Kang Youwei felt that he was living in a time that corresponded with the final *datong* stage in his theory of the Three Ages. However, Chen Huanzhang was much less concerned with an ideal that could be and focused more on the actual social conditions of his time:

> Nowadays the whole state has gone mad and morality has decayed. Social relations are undefined and, to make things worse, there are those who suggest that the relation between ruler and ministers can be abandoned because China has become a republic, that the relation between husband and wife can be abandoned

because promiscuity was prevailing, and that the relation between father and son could be abandoned because of the "family revolution." Since the "three cardinal guides" had been abandoned, all human affairs have been put out of order and evil speech and violence abound. This is an unprecedented disaster never before seen in five thousand years. (Chen 2015, p. 82)

Even though the establishment of the new republic saw an end to political revolution, that did not mean that there was an end to ideological revolutions. Various doctrines and ideologies from both the Eastern and Western worlds flooded into modern China, strongly impacting the traditional lifestyle and thoughts. Among them, one of the mainstream ideologies was individualism and liberalism. The New Culture movement started in 1915 strongly criticized the feudal family system as binding the individual. For example, Chen Duxiu 陈独秀 (1879–1942) wrote an article claiming that "loyalty, filial piety, chastity, and righteousness" were the "morality of slaves." (Chen 1915, vol. 1, no. 1). Chen Huanzhang was very sensitive to the problem of the dissolution of social relations for two reasons. On the one hand, as he mentioned many times in his "Article of Preserving Social Relations", without the relation between father and son, parents would be unwilling to give birth to children. Without the relation between husband and wife, there would be abuse of contraception and abortion. He called them "the way to exterminate humans." Family must be protected out of the consideration for the survival of humanity. On the other hand, "Today people desire to spread far and wide and all kinds of strange and bad things emerge. These are people who ride the waves wherever they go. Others pretend to uphold the Confucian classics and adorn their new thinking with its accoutrements, daily paying lip service to the *datong* society, but in doing so they completely misunderstand it" (Chen 2015, p. 79). The *datong* theory of Kang Youwei was used by those shallow people as a weapon to attack family and social relations. For Chen Huanzhang, who was dedicated to advocating Confucianism, if the doctrine of Confucianism could not be adhered to, then it would finally be replaced by another doctrine and ideology.

### 6. Conclusions

Kang Youwei's *datong* theory was apparently not the simple and superficial utopian imagination that it was generally considered to be. In fact, it involved the discovery of many hidden traditions in Confucianism. Regardless of whether it was the "Liyun" chapter or the theory of human nature offered by Dong Zhongshu, they all contained content that greatly challenged the mainstream of Confucianism, which is worth attention. In recent years, there are scholars suspecting that traditional *wulun* pattern in Confucianism could hardly respond to the problem of interactions with strangers (See Zhao 2007, pp. 15–21). Kang Youwei offered a possible way to approach the problem. However, it has to be pointed out that Kang's *datong* theory should be considered as an attempt rather than a solution to the problem. Being one of the few who could really see the flaws in Kang Youwei's theory, Chen Huanzhang's vigilance and attempt to prevent the dissolution of traditional Chinese social relations in the early republican period of modern China provide us with a good mirror by which to reflect on and to further the study of Kang Youwei's theory of *datong*.

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## Notes

1 Federico Brusadelli called it a "universal pattern" (Brusadelli 2020, p. 56).

2 Scholars including Fan Wenlan, Li Zehou and Tang Zhijun all agreed that Kang's *datong* theory was a theory independent from Confucianism invented by himself, aiming at opposing feudal autocracy and leading the way for the modern bourgeoisie. Fuller discussions see Fan (1955); Li (1979) and Tang (1984). Zhu Weizheng asserted that Kang Youwei's *datong* theory was just one of the western utopian theories flooded into modern China with little value. Its academic value is "to expose and criticize the problem of Chinese society". See (Zhu 1997, p. 247). Goran Malmqvist also agreed that the *Datongshu* which shared some creeds with the Communist Manifesto might have been influenced by utopian novels such as Looking Backward written by Edward Bellamy. But he claimed that Kang established the utopia imagination on his belief of Confucianism. See Malmqvist (1991).

3 For example, Wang Hui claimed that Kang Youwei's *datong* imagination was the vision combining the universalism of Confucianism and the western science, political and religious knowledge. "(Wang 2008, p. 826). Besides, Takeuchi Hiroyuki noticed that Kang Youwei's *datong* theory had inherited the legacy of many other thinkers such as Wang Tao, Chen Qiu in earlier time. See Hiroyuki (2008). A recent study on Kang Youwei's *datong* theory was made by Federico Brusadelli. He said, "beyond any doubt that the Datong Shu cannot be considered as a unique specimen in Kang's production, nor as a fancy appendix to it. It was not a final detour from a more rational political path, nor the culmination of a "second phase" of his thought. Instead, it must be considered as fully embedded in Kang's earliest reflections on the meaning of tradition and on the trajectory of human history and mundane institutions." (Brusadelli 2020, pp. 40–41).

4 As many scholars have pointed out, Kang's *datong* theory inherit many of the Huayan and Mahayama tradition (Brusadelli 2020, pp. 44–50). However, this does not mean his *datong* theory does not obey Confucianism. Specific argument can be seen below.

5 Chen Huanzhang's efforts of establishing Confucian Society and his view of Confucian religion has been receiving much attention in recent years. See Gan Chunsong: Kang Youwei, Chen Huanzhang and the Confucian Society, in *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 16–38.

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# Confucian Cosmopolitanism: The Modern Predicament and the Way Forward

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**Abstract:** In the Chinese-speaking academic community, the topic of Confucian cosmopolitanism is intricately linked to the concepts of "Tianxia" and "Datong", carrying significant political implications. This context arises from the tension between the Confucian vision of a borderless world order and the reality of the bounded nation-state system since the late 19th century. This modern situation constitutes the dual predicaments for Confucian cosmopolitanism: the contradiction between the logic of Datong and the logic of national empowerment, as well as the conflict between the specific Confucian identity and the universal concern for the world. Represented by notable figures like Liang Qichao, modern scholars have devoted themselves to resolving these predicaments. On one hand, Liang, in contrast to his teacher Kang Youwei, emphasized the coexistence of the global ideal and the nation-state system. He proposed the concept of a 'cosmopolitan nation,' which not only considers nationalism as a stepping stone toward cosmopolitanism but also views the nation as an organizational form with the world as its ultimate purpose. This response addresses the first predicament. On the other hand, Liang redirected the focus of cosmopolitanism to the individual, establishing a connection with the core Confucian value of Ren. He interpreted the ideal of Datong as the awakening and refinement of each individual's kinship consciousness, thereby mitigating the constraints imposed by Confucian identity and the national narrative on the discourse of cosmopolitanism. This tackles the second predicament. Reflecting on these modern predicaments not only sheds light on the political reasons underlying Confucian cosmopolitanism but also reveals its broader dimension as a universal ethical concern.

**Keywords:** Tianxia; Datong; nationalism; modernity; Liang Qichao; kinship consciousness

## 1. Introduction

In the Western philosophical tradition, "cosmopolitanism" is a multifaceted and richly nuanced topic with roots in various historical sources. From Diogenes' concept of "kosmopolitēs" to the Stoic idea of a "world city-state" and Kant's vision of a "league of nations", each of these intellectual origins sheds light on different issues. In contemporary philosophical discussions, the exploration of cosmopolitanism has also diversified, giving rise to varied perspectives. For many philosophers, cosmopolitanism is regarded as an ethical matter, sparking debates about whether individuals should extend their care and assistance to all human beings without distinction or if they have specific duties primarily to their fellow compatriots. On the other hand, a significant number of thinkers view cosmopolitanism as a pressing political philosophical issue, grappling with questions about the most just and equitable form of global political organization (see Scheffler 1999; Kleingeld and Brown 2019).

Meanwhile, the issue of "Confucian cosmopolitanism" seems to be confined within the domain of ethics and moral philosophy. After the publication of Martha Nussbaum's essay "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" (Nussbaum 1994), Confucian scholars, whether explicitly or implicitly, have engaged with Nussbaum's ideas and focused on defining the characteristics of a Confucian cosmopolitan and how they can be cultivated. They argue that Confucianism, with its morally centered philosophy of Ren 仁 (humanity) and its

metaphysical emphasis on the Dao 道 (the way) and Tian 天 (heaven), provides a solid philosophical foundation for cosmopolitanism. These scholars perceive the ideal Confucian cosmopolitan as someone who embodies moral excellence and virtue, exemplified by the junzi 君子 (noble person) or sage (Neville 2012). Furthermore, they contend that Confucianism offers a distinctive form of "rooted cosmopolitanism" that addresses Nussbaum's concerns about global homogeneity (Peng 2023). They primarily view cosmopolitanism as an ethical or moral issue rather than a purely political one (see Ivanhoe 2014).

However, the situation is precisely the opposite in the Chinese-speaking academic community, particularly after Chinese leaders proposed the concept of a "community of shared future for mankind". The focus shifts towards studying a Chinese version of a world system that transcends the nation-state framework. Cosmopolitanism, as the translation of "shijie zhuyi" 世界主义, becomes closely associated with international political issues. Chinese philosophers, especially those studying Confucianism, feel the responsibility to seek the roots of a Chinese conception of the world in ancient philosophical resources. Therefore, concepts such as Datong 大同 (great harmony) from pre-Qin texts and the cosmological worldview of the unity of all things developed during the Song and Ming dynasties, along with the idealized view of Tianxia 天下 (all under heaven) and the tributary system in reality, are repeatedly mentioned and compared to the current global situation[1]. To some extent, Confucian cosmopolitanism now becomes the modern expression of the concept of "Tianxia".

The significant differences between the Chinese and English academic communities regarding Confucian cosmopolitanism prompt us to examine the context from a century ago. Cosmopolitanism was introduced to China during the late 19th century, and in the 1920s, Chinese intellectuals witnessed discussions on cosmopolitanism that went beyond the nation-state framework. In a radically different context from the pre-modern era, intellectuals influenced by tradition expanded and reconstructed the Confucian understanding of world order. This historical backdrop helps explain the semantic differences in the concept of cosmopolitanism. Nationalism as a rival engendered the modern predicament of Confucian cosmopolitanism, highlighting its political implications. However, modern Confucian intellectuals, like Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873–1929), offered ways to transcend this predicament by reinterpreting the notions of Tianxia and Datong. Moreover, this approach reveals the commonalities between the two discourses of Confucian cosmopolitanism in China and the West.

## 2. Cosmopolitanism in Confucian Context: Tianxia, Datong, and the Boundary between Yi and Xia (夷夏之辨)

The term "Tianxia" has been widely recognized by Chinese scholars as the word used in ancient China to refer to the world. Its literal meaning suggests a close association with the concept of heaven in ancient Chinese thought. Although the notions of tian, tianming 天命 (heavenly mandate), and tiandao 天道 (the way of heaven) have exhibited quite multifaceted and evolving meanings within various philosophical schools, such as Confucianism, Daoism, and Mohism, the prevalent use of the term "Tianxia" unequivocally indicates that the ancient Chinese perceived the world through a lens of unity and comprehensiveness. As summarized by contemporary Chinese scholar Zhao Tingyang 赵汀阳, who holds significant influence in the discourse on the "Tianxia System", Tianxia is a philosophical construct encompassing geographical, psychological, and sociopolitical dimensions. Functioning as the bedrock of ancient Chinese comprehension of both the subjective and objective realms, "Tianxia" embodies a holistic worldview that integrates both humanistic and physical aspects, signifying a transition from chaos to "kosmos". It represents an "institutionalized world" that encapsulates the full concept of the world (Zhao 2011, p. 28).

Aligned with the systemic nature of "Tianxia" is the notion of "Datong". The treatises on Xiaokang 小康 (a state of moderate prosperity) and Datong found in the chapter "Li Yun 礼运" (Ritual Operation) of the Confucian classic the *Liji* 礼记 (*Book of Rites*) have formed

the cornerstone of the discussion on Confucian political philosophy in modern times. It says the following:

> When Great Dao was pursed, a public and common spirit ruled all under the Heaven. They chose men of talents, virtue, and ability; their words were sincere, and what they cultivated was harmony. Thus men did not love their parents only, nor treat as children only their own sons. A competent provision was secured for the aged till their death, employment for the able-bodied, and the means of growing up to the young. They showed kindness and compassion to widows, orphans, childless men, and those who were disabled by disease, so that they were all sufficiently maintained. Males had their proper work, and females had their homes. (They accumulated) articles (of value), disliking that they should be thrown away upon the ground, but not wishing to keep them for their own gratification. (They laboured) with their strength, disliking that it should not be exerted, but not exerting it (only) with a view to their own advantage. In this way (selfish) schemings were repressed and found no development. Robbers, filchers, and rebellious traitors did not show themselves, and hence the outer doors remained open, and were not shut. This was (the period of) what we call "Datong". (Zheng and Kong 1999, pp. 658–59)[2]

According to the views put forward by Kang Youwei 康有为 (1858–1927) and other modern intellectuals, the Confucian classics contain a series of political norms that are considered relevant to the era of Xiaokang. However, the authentic manifestations of Confucius' Datong doctrine are rarely encountered in the classical texts or historical records. The preceding passage depicts the multifaceted ethical relationships inherent in an ideal Datong society, accentuating its guiding principle, namely, "gong 公" (publicity). It advocates not only caring for one's own children but also ensuring that everyone receives care, not just accumulating wealth but utilizing resources to their fullest. These statements underscore the dissolution of boundaries between finite communities and the dichotomy of self and the others. While the transcendence of national borders is not explicitly addressed in this passage, subsequent descriptions of Xiaokang mention that "their object is to make the walls of their cities and suburbs strong and their ditches and moats secure" (Zheng and Kong 1999, p. 660), suggesting that Datong indeed implies the transcendence of political boundaries, encapsulating a world order at the scale of "Tianxia".

"Tianxia" is a comprehensive concept that encompasses everything, leaving no external world beyond its scope. This characteristic likely explains why Chinese thought does not generate concepts similar to "heresy", which is related to the trend of nationalism prevalent in the West. "Since there is no external world, Tianxia consists solely of an internal realm without incompatible externals, but rather internal structural relationships of proximity and distance. While China, like any other region, naturally develops localism centered around itself, it lacks clearly defined and universally applicable 'the Others,' as well as the consciousness of irreconcilable differences and the nationalism that demarcates boundaries from 'the Others.'" (Zhao 2011, p. 35). However, this viewpoint is a subject of ongoing debate. Prasenjit Duara has brought attention to the fact that the concept of Tianxia as a form of "culturalism" (as termed by Levenson) is not the only representation of community within the Confucian tradition. He highlights: "at least two representations of political community in imperial Chinese society are discernible: the exclusive Han-based one founded on an ascriptive principle and the another based on the cultural values and doctrines of a Chinese elite" (Duara 1996, pp. 59–60).

Confucianism indeed distinguishes between the internal and external aspects of the world. Throughout history, whenever nomadic tribes invaded the central empire, the concept of "Yixia 夷夏" from pre-Qin classics like *Chunqiu Gongyang Zhuan* 春秋公羊传 (*The Gongyang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*) would be invoked to reinforce the boundaries between the Han ethnic group and minority ethnic groups. *Gongyang Zhuan* states, "In *Chunqiu*, the state of Lu 鲁 is regarded as the 'internal,' while the states of other Xia ethnicities are considered the 'external.' Furthermore, within the Xia ethnicities, they

are seen as the 'internal,' whereas the barbarian tribes are seen as the 'external.' Since the king aims to unify Tianxia, why does the rhetoric of this classic text still differentiate between the 'internal' and 'external'? This is because unification should commence from the closest proximity" (Gongyang et al. 1999, pp. 400–1). The distinction between the "internal" and "external" in this context refers to the record of a gathering, where *Chunqiu* extensively documented the names of participants from feudal states in the central empire, but the remote state of Wu 吴 was only mentioned as "Wu", with the names of the attendees from that region omitted.

While this emphasis on the distinction between "Yi" and "Xia" may appear as racism, interpretations by successive Confucian scholars have shown that this distinction is compatible with the concept of Tianxia. *Gongyang Zhuan* already provides the progressive scheme of "commencing from the closest proximity". Furthermore, sanshi shuo 三世说 (the theory of three eras), attributed to Confucius, underwent progressive refinement by Confucian scholars to incorporate the issue of differentiating between the internal and external realms, shifting the concern of extending or eliminating the boundaries of "Yi" and "Xia" from a spatial problem to a temporal one. In times of extreme disorder, it was necessary to differentiate one's own state even from other states of the same ethnicity. As times improved, the focus shifted to distinguishing the Xia ethnic group from others. Ultimately, in the perfected world, all races should be treated equally without distinguishing proximity or distance. Tianxia, as a fully institutionalized world where the order of Datong can be applied, represents this third world. However, it is usually an ideal rather than a reality. Thus, Duara argues: "The universalistic claims of Chinese imperial culture constantly bumped up against, and adapted to, alternative views of the world order which it tended to cover with the rhetoric of universalism: this was its defensive strategy" (Duara 1996, p. 57). According to him, China's political identity exhibits variable and plural boundaries. However, the attribute of "Tianxia" being all-encompassing is demonstrated in the fact that these boundaries can be embraced by "Tianxia". The "external" is, in fact, a conditional "internal". While the boundaries between internal and external may persist for a long time, they are still temporary and incomplete, whereas the universality and permanence of the concept of "Tianxia" are unshakeable. Throughout history, when barbarian tribes in remote regions attained political and military supremacy over the central empire, it heightened the prominence of ethnic boundaries. Nevertheless, this did not shake the cultural preeminence of Confucian cosmopolitanism. Even as the Ming Dynasty approached its downfall and scholars raised the issue of "the collapse of Tianxia", their concerns remained focused on the military setbacks of the empire of Han ethnicity which posed a threat to the survival of Confucian civilization, rather than the complete annihilation or replacement of Confucian universalism by a heterogeneous other. It is precisely this point that faced unprecedented challenges in modern times. This particular impact is a significant reason why Confucian cosmopolitanism is regarded as a political rather than an ethical issue.

### 3. The Modern Predicament of Confucian Cosmopolitanism

Confucianism, as a form of universalism, has faced significant challenges from the impact of Western modernity, necessitating a response. This response has taken various forms: retreating into localized knowledge and being assimilated as the backward "Other" within the framework of Western progress, expanding its denotation to demonstrate Chinese tradition as the source of Western civilization while maintaining its universality, or seeking a comprehensive pluralism to navigate conflicts between competing worldviews. However, this perspective of impact and response has been criticized in both Chinese and Western academia for its inherent Western-centric bias. Zhao Tingyang emphasizes the need for modern China to "rethink China" as a subject of civilization rather than as the other and merely "critiquing China" (Zhao 2011, pp. 1–11). Nonetheless, this process of rethinking must be situated within the historical context.

In modern times, particularly since the late 19th century, the predicament of Chinese culture lies in its transformation from the center of the all-encompassing Tianxia system to the periphery of the world. Confucian cosmopolitanism, as a manifestation of this Tianxia system, has become a marginal and insignificant viewpoint. The rise of prevailing universalistic civilizations based on the nation-state system, Enlightenment values, modern political philosophy, and evolutionism has undermined the premise of "all-encompassing", leaving Confucian cosmopolitanism grappling with a dual predicament.

The first aspect of this predicament is the contradiction between the reality demands of establishing a modern nation-state and the Confucian cosmopolitan ideal that transcends national boundaries. Wang Hui 汪晖 characterizes this conflict as a conflict between the logic of Datong and the logic of national empowerment. The national crisis faced by modern China required prioritizing the nation's salvation, where the political survival of the state became the foundation for confrontations or dialogues between civilizations. Resisting colonial invasion under the banner of nationalism became the common choice of reformers and revolutionaries. However, this path largely affirmed Western modern values, such as constructing a sovereign nation through resistance and following the route of European colonialism and industrialization (Wang 2015, p. 717).

From the late 19th to the early 20th century, nationalism and militarism gained prominence in the intellectual circles of China. Yang Du 杨度 (1875–1931), in his work *Jintie Zhuyi Shuo* 金铁主义说 (*Doctrine of Gold and Iron*), explicitly incorporated this stance in its title. The opening statement of his work reads, "The countries China encounters today are civilized nations, and the world China resides in today is a barbaric world" (Yang 1986, p. 219). Within this context, civilization represents freedom and equality domestically, while externally it requires strength to dominate the weak, reminiscent of barbarism. In order for China to coexist with civilized nations in a barbaric world, Yang advocates for the adoption of economic militarism, which would ensure China's survival and superiority in competition. Yang's discourse establishes a dichotomy between civilization and barbarism, indicating his understanding and plan for the construction of a new China within the framework of modern evolutionism. He did not seek to reclaim or argue for the restoration of Confucian universalism or the concept of Tianxia. Nor did he advocate for the uniqueness of language, customs, or history as the shaping forces of the new nation-state. Instead, he aimed to reshape China through the principles of a free citizenry, responsible government, the prosperity of the people symbolized by "gold", and national strength symbolized by "iron". This approach embodies a practical form of "worldly nationalism".

During this period, Liang Qichao, much like Yang Du, passionately advocated for nationalist ideologies, viewing imperialism, nationalism, and national imperialism as successive stages of social evolution. Liang argued that Westerners utilized social Darwinism to justify the concept of "survival of the fittest" among nations, which he regarded as the driving force behind the rise of modern imperialism (Liang 2018a, p. 695). He believed that China should follow this evolutionary path, engaging in competition with other nations under the banner of nationalism. Although he never advocated for China to colonize other countries, and his discussions on national imperialism focused on devising strategies for national salvation, he did explicitly state that "(China) must first experience the era of nationalism before entering the era of national imperialism" (Liang 2018b, p. 11). It is evident that the rationale behind national empowerment acknowledges the significance of modernity and signifies the failure of Confucian cosmopolitanism. Thus, seemingly, Yang and Liang fell into the trap of colonialism.

However, when one chooses to criticize nationalism and embrace cosmopolitanism, they encounter yet another trap. Following World War I, during the surge of cosmopolitanism promoted by the New Culture Movement, Sun Zhongshan 孙中山 (1866–1925) cautiously maintained that cosmopolitanism could not replace nationalism. He believed that the cosmopolitanism advocated by the new generation of intellectuals, influenced by Britain and Russia and popular in China, was a disguised form of imperialism and aggression. The criticism of nationalism's narrowness and the aspiration for global unity concealed

the conspiracies of imperialist nations seeking to preserve their monopolistic status and impede the resurgence of weaker nations. Sun Zhongshan often used a metaphor to depict China as a poor laborer, nationalism as the carrying pole, his means of livelihood. In contrast, cosmopolitanism was likened to a hidden lottery ticket within the pole. When the laborer discovers he has won the lottery, he rejoices, thinking he no longer needs to sell his labor and discards the pole into the sea. Sun Zhongshan did not dismiss the value of cosmopolitanism, but he believed that, given China's vulnerable situation at the time, cosmopolitanism was merely a lure to deceive the Chinese people into surrendering their resistance. Without grasping the carrying pole of nationalism, China would be unable to preserve its nationhood, let alone achieve the ideal of Datong (Sun 2011, pp. 35–37). Consequently, within the context where Confucian universalism had proven ineffective, Confucian cosmopolitanism found itself in a dilemma: contracting into nationalism would affirm the logic of imperialism and abandon the vitality of the culture, while embracing modern cosmopolitanism seemed to fall into the cunning plot of colonialism, forsaking the vitality of the nation.

The other aspect of this dual predicament lies in the fact that the concepts of Tianxia and Datong have become defensive tools for conservative nationalism. While they may represent an imagined vision of a superior global order, they are primarily perceived as "Eastern" and "ours" before being considered "better". Compared to the previous predicament, the second one may appear less urgent. However, after World War I, when the Western world was no longer unquestionably synonymous with a perfect future, and when Enlightenment rationality and modern values underwent thorough examination and criticism, the voice of cultural nationalism indeed deserved attention and concern. Dongfang wenhua pai 东方文化派" (Eastern Culture Faction) of the May Fourth era embodies these sentiments, emphasizing the differences between Eastern and Western cultures through a comparative lens and firmly believing that the nation can only be saved through the revival of its own culture. According to their perspective, the issues arising from the negative aspects of Western culture can only be resolved by embracing Chinese or Eastern culture. In terms of global order, they argued that Europe's descent into conflict stemmed from Europeans' exclusive focus on the nation-state concept while disregarding the concept of Tianxia.

Liang Qichao was regarded as a prominent figure of this group. In his work *Xinmin Shuo* 新民说 (*New Citizen Discourse*) in 1902, he pointed out that the Chinese people lacked a national consciousness and were "aware of Tianxia but ignorant of nation" (Liang 2018a, p. 546). At that time, he perceived this as a deficiency within Confucian culture. However, after traveling around Europe in the late 1910s, he reassessed his admiration for nationalism and social Darwinism, shifting his focus to China's and particularly Confucian civilization's responsibilities towards world civilization. In his book *Ouyou xinying lu* 欧游心影录 (*Impressions of a Trip to Europe*) he stated, "China was highly developed in terms of the ideal of a united humanity. We have never regarded the nation as the highest human group" and "Formerly, the European conception of Tianxia was not as clear as the Chinese" (Liang 2018c, pp. 155–56). This statement implies that cultural foundations contribute to Europe's division and turmoil. Furthermore, he pointed out that Westerners were fascinated by Confucian teachings such as "all within the four seas are brothers", Mohist principles of "Jianai 兼爱" (universal love) and "Qinbing 寝兵" (cessation of warfare), which led them to seek the incorporation of elements from Eastern civilization. He encouraged young people to respect, reconstruct, and propagate traditional culture because "across the vast ocean, there are several billion people, distressed by the bankruptcy of material civilization, crying out desperately for help, waiting for your deliverance" (Liang 2018c, p. 85).

It was not only the Chinese Cultural Faction that held such a view. In the 1920s, the belief that Chinese culture would save the world was quite widespread. Sun Zhongshan also asserted that the spirit of Chinese pacifism embodied true cosmopolitanism. He recounted an incident during the height of World War I when a British consul tried to persuade him to join the Allies in the war. Sun Zhongshan responded by stating that Chinese civiliza-

tion had progressed over 2000 years beyond Europe, having long abandoned imperialism and advocated for peace. He believed that European warfare was driven by power rather than justice and hoped that China would always uphold the ethics of peace, thus choosing not to participate in the war. Eventually, the British consul agreed with his viewpoint (Sun 2011, pp. 45–46).

The problem with regarding Confucian cosmopolitanism as a superior salvation strategy compared to the West lies not in the pride that Chinese people take in their own culture. The issue arises when the concepts of Tianxia and Datong, characterized by inclusiveness and universality, become part of a binary narrative between Eastern and Western cultures. When these concepts are used to amplify cultural divisions and assert cultural superiority, they undermine their original intentions. Confucian cosmopolitanism should transcend national boundaries and dissolve the distinction between self and the other. However, the excessive emphasis on the historicity and ownership of the doctrine of cosmopolitanism has diluted its universality. It is worth noting that the inclination to assert the superiority of Confucian culture through the cosmopolitan idea of Tianxia and to differentiate groups based on this assertion is not uncommon in Chinese history. However, in the 1920s, China could no longer revert to its pre-modern, self-centered worldview, despite the apparent decline of the Western-centric perspective that had been introduced. Instead, China faced the task of reinventing Confucian cosmopolitanism, striving to enhance the inclusiveness of this worldview that recognizes no external part and is founded on the principle of publicity.

Unsurprisingly, under the dual predicaments, modern nationalism and the nation-state system pose significant challenges and act as direct interlocutors to Confucian cosmopolitanism. Therefore, from its inception, this topic has been a question of political philosophy and practice. Given the pressing and complex external environment, Confucian cosmopolitanism cannot be solely addressed as an issue of the education of individuals, but rather as a problem of institutional construction.[3] However, in navigating these predicaments, modern scholars, particularly Liang Qichao, have not only explored potential modern forms of Tianxia and Datong at the institutional level but have also delved into the inner aspects of human nature and reinterpreted the value of Ren, the fundamental virtue of Confucianism.

## 4. The Reconciliation of the Nation and the World

Confucianism provides its own solution to the first predicament. The theory of three eras proposed by the Gongyang school, mentioned earlier as a way to accommodate the distinction between Yi and Xia, can be slightly modified to assimilate nationalism, perceiving the nation-state as a preliminary phase for the realization of the Datong ideal.

One of the most prominent scholars who applied this theory in modern times is undoubtedly Kang Youwei. In his work *Datong Shu* 大同书 (*Book of Datong*), he vividly depicted the relentless wars and subsequent hardships that arose "once national boundaries were established and national consciousness was born" (Kang 2010, p. 203). His portrayal spanned from the tribal era to the conquest by the Qing Dynasty, even including the historical tribulations of Europe and other Asian countries. He lamented, "How sorrowful! How miserable! All these sufferings are caused by the establishment of national borders!" (Kang 2010, p. 218). While he acknowledged that the annexation of small countries by larger ones is a natural law, he believed that stopping wars and ensuring people's well-being is a matter of "Gongli 公理" (principle) and that Datong is an achievable reality rather than a mere fantasy. In the chapter discussing the "harm caused by the existence of nations", he redefined the theory of three eras, proposing that the realization of the Datong ideal requires three stages, which he still named as "juluanshi 据乱世" (the era of chaos), "shengpingshi 升平世" (the era of stability), and "taipingshi 太平世" (the era of great peace). However, he gave these stages a new definition, starting with an equal alliance among nations, transitioning to a federated world government, and culminating in a "dadi gongyi zhengfu 大地公议政府" (global public government) devoid of individual nations or governors. He

meticulously constructed a "table of the three eras for Datong and the unity of nations", serving as a comprehensive blueprint to achieving Confucian cosmopolitanism. It encompasses various aspects such as representative institutions, judiciary systems, and disarmament processes, as well as transnational transportation and communication. This blueprint goes beyond the traditional conception of the Datong order found in ancient texts. It incorporates modernity by assimilating some of its elements into earlier stages and integrating others into the highest ideal of Datong. Kang Youwei declared the following:

> Within the coming century, all weak nations will undoubtedly face extinction, all autocratic monarchies will be systematically dismantled, and both republican and constitutional governance will be universally adopted. The equality of people's parties will shine brilliantly, and the citizens of civilized nations will universally achieve wisdom, while inferior ethnic groups will gradually fade away. Henceforth, the irresistible momentum of human spirit and societal development will drive us towards global Datong and universal peace, an unstoppable force as potent as water rushing into a chasm. (Kang 2010, p. 226)

Kang Youwei embraced the theory of evolution and engaged with the dichotomous discourse of civilization versus barbarism, even using it to differentiate between races. He viewed the annexation of smaller nations by larger ones as a stepping stone towards the realization of Datong. Kang predicted that within the span of a century, weaker nations would gradually cease to exist, consolidating into a few super-nations on a continental scale. This development would, in turn, establish the groundwork for an international government.

Kang's ideas seemingly exhibit the characteristics of imperialist thinking, sharing a striking resemblance to the logic of national empowerment advocated by Yang Du and Liang Qichao. Furthermore, his portrayal of the third stage—"abolishing nations and territories, establishing autonomous provinces and counties, all united under a public government, akin to the systems of the United States or Switzerland" (Kang 2010, p. 226)—seems to imply that the ultimate goal of Confucian cosmopolitanism resembles an expanded version of the United States or Switzerland. If Kang Youwei's discourse were to end here, he would find himself caught in the first predicament. However, his approach was far more nuanced. Kang aimed to expand and reshape Confucian universalism by incorporating Western theories and experiences into the path towards the Datong ideal. Regarding the Western paradigm of modernization, especially in terms of international relations, Kang placed it within the first stage, the era of chaos. He drew parallels between this era and the dynamics of alliances among powerful states in the Spring and Autumn period, such as Jin 晋 and Chu 楚, as well as the Vienna System in Europe. Simultaneously, Kang Youwei demonstrated an open-minded attitude towards Western modern values, integrating them into his own philosophical framework. He emphasized democracy as a crucial prerequisite for dismantling national boundaries, stating, "When power resides in a monarch, individual self-interest makes unity challenging. Yet, if power rests with the people, unity becomes significantly more attainable. Given that people inherently seek their own advantage, the beneficial concept of Datong, proposed by benevolent individuals, naturally resonates with them" (Kang 2010, p. 221). In addition, he believed that a democratic framework would facilitate a milder merger of countries. According to Kang's vision, a global-scale democratic entity would emerge. However, after the process of unifying nations, ethnicities, and religions, the concept of "nation" or "state" would essentially be discarded. The public government, devoid of any central authority, would consist only of legislators and administrators. Borders, armies, and weapons would be dissolved, while language, transportation, currency, and measurements would be unified. Land, oceans, and taxes would be collectively owned. Religions or deities would not be worshiped nor would there be reverence for the heavens. Instead, respect would be given to the wisdom of the sages and the inherent divinity of each individual. As Wang Hui aptly notes, "It is the persistent interplay, tension, and divergence between the transcendent logic of Datong and the wealth-seeking logic of national empowerment that forms the intrinsic essence of

Kang Youwei's thought" (Wang 2015, p. 747). Kang expanded the scope of the theory of three eras by incorporating individualism, liberalism, and rationalism into the Datong framework, bridging the gap between nationalism and cosmopolitanism. He not only justified China's current need for strength and prosperity within the context of Datong but also enriched and reconstructed the ideal of Datong into a comprehensive knowledge structure that transcends historical boundaries and envisions a global scale.

Kang Youwei's efforts to reshape Confucian cosmopolitanism began quite early, possibly starting works such as *Shili Gongfa Quanshu* 实理公法全书 (the *Complete Book of Public Principles*) and *Datong Shu* as far back as the 1880s. His student, Liang Qichao, had early access to these books. According to Liang, Kang had already worked on these texts when Liang began studying under him in 1891 at the age of 19. Liang learned about the concept of Datong through Kang's discussions with Chen Qianqiu 陈千秋 (1869–1895), an elder student of Kang. In his later works, such as *Qingdai Xushu Gailun* 清代学术概论 (*An Introduction to Scholarship in the Qing Dynasty*) written in 1920, Liang revisited *Datong Shu*. Unlike his initial impression "appreciating its beauty without fully grasping its essence" (Liang 2018b, p. 109), he now had a profound understanding of the modern implications of Kang's adaptation of the theory of three eras. When summarizing the contents of Datong Shu, Liang identified "a world devoid of countries, under a singular global government divided into several regions" (Liang 2018c, p. 275) as the primary point. He regarded this book, written three decades prior, as resembling present-day cosmopolitanism and socialism but more ingenious.

However, Kang and Liang had differing attitudes towards this ideal of Datong, and this discrepancy provides crucial insights into understanding Liang's cosmopolitan propositions. The divergence mainly lies in Liang's belief that, conceptually, the "world" should coexist with the "nation" rather than sequentially replacing it as an evolutionary process. This disparity becomes evident when considering their contrasting opinions regarding the publication of *Datong Shu*. Kang Youwei believed in a progressive sequence of the three eras and argued for keeping the ideal of Datong concealed during the era of chaos, as openly discussing it would create more chaos (Kang 2010, p. 276). He persistently emphasized that the present issues should be addressed with the principles of Xiaokang. In contrast, Liang was eager to widely disseminate the theory of Datong from the moment he encountered it. He repeatedly suggested Kang to publish *Datong Shu*, but his proposals were consistently declined until parts of the book were eventually published in the journal *Buren* 不忍 in 1913. Liang Qichao asserted the following: "The paradox of constructing a new ideal, recognizing it as the epitome of goodness and beauty, yet not desiring its realization and exerting all efforts to resist and hinder it, is the most peculiar phenomenon conceivable" (Liang 2018d, p. 561). After World War I, although Liang conceded that it might be too early to embrace a unified world, he did not support the prevailing global pattern of nations engaging in warfare with each other. He believed that the ideal of Datong, the epitome of goodness and beauty, should not be subtly hidden behind text, like the rhetoric of *Chunqiu*. Instead, Liang raised the banner of cosmopolitanism and engaged in discussions about the current global order with this ultimate aspiration in sight.

In Liang Qichao's work, *Xinqin Zhengzhi Sixiang Shi* 先秦政治思想史 (*A History of Pre-Qin Political Thought*), he conducted a critical evaluation of the cosmopolitan ideas advocated by various Pre-Qin philosophical schools. His central thesis can be stated as follows:

> All Chinese ancient philosophers, regardless of their respective schools of thought, universally considered Tianxia as the subject of their political discourse. Tianxia represents the concept of humanity as a whole. While their understanding of the term "whole" may not have aligned precisely with the modern understanding, these ancient scholars aimed to encompass the broadest human context within their reach, rather than focusing on a limited group. This approach exemplifies the genuine spirit of cosmopolitanism. (Liang 2018d, p. 561)

Although the concept of "Tianxia" discussed by philosophers during China's Axial Age did not objectively encompass all of humanity due to the limitations of their cognitive

scope, it did not hinder their subjective perception of the world as a unified and inclusive entity, and their interpretations of justice and order as universally applicable principles. "The ultimate aspiration of our ancestors was to expand their cultural insights for acceptance and sharing among all of humanity, and establish a platform of equality" (Liang 2018d, p. 561). Furthermore, Liang Qichao argued that during the Pre-Qin era, which was characterized by the coexistence of multiple nations, cosmopolitanism was not a prevailing reality. On the contrary, it was an objective pursued by various schools of thought, who advocated academic theories and propelled cosmopolitanism as a prominent intellectual current of the time. As inter-nation conflicts intensified, especially during the time of Mencius, criticism of nationalism grew among proponents of cosmopolitanism. In this context, Liang's interpretation of *Gongyang Zhuan* on the opening sentence of *Chunqiu*, "Yuannian chun wang zhengyue 元年春王正月" (the beginning year, the spring, the king, the beginning month), offers a distinctive and intriguing perspective:

> In Confucius' *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the opening sentence reads "Yuannian chun wang zhengyue". The *Gongyang Commentary* states, "What does it mean by 'wang zhengyue'? It refers to "dayitong" 大一统 (the grand unification)". The use of the Lu 鲁 state's calendar reflects the prevailing concept of state, which was inherent in the societal norms of that period. However, the significant placement of the character "wang 王" before "zhengyue 正月" carries a profound implication of transcending the boundaries of states. (Liang 2018d, p. 561)

Liang Qichao interpreted "wang" and "zhengyue", respectively, as symbols representing cosmopolitanism and nationalism. The term "zhengyue", tied to the calendar system of the Lu state, reflects the practical expression of national consciousness, while "wang" alludes to the Zhou 周 Emperor, signifying the ruler of the entire world. The prioritization of "wang" over "zhengyue" highlights Confucianism's emphasis on a cosmopolitan order that transcends national boundaries. This interpretation aligns with Liang Qichao's concept of a "cosmopolitan state" as described in *Impressions of a Trip to Europe*.

It is important to note that Liang Qichao's interpretation diverges from the traditional understanding of the Gongyang school and differs from that of his teacher, Kang Youwei. Neither He Xiu 何休 (129–182) nor Kang Youwei considered "zhengyue" to represent the Lu state's calendar. He Xiu interpreted "zhengyue" as a calendar reform ordained by the king and mandated by heaven. Kang Youwei proposed that the original text of *Chunqiu* before Confucius made revisions, namely "buxiu Chunqiu 不修春秋", recorded "Yinian chun yiyue 一年春一月" (the first month of spring in the first year). Confucius added the character "王" and modified "一" to "正", highlighting the authority and mandate of a king in establishing the calendar (Kang 2016, pp. 45–52). Thus, these interpretations did not explicitly acknowledge the concept of a nation or state. Even the metaphorical depiction of "wang lu 王鲁" (regarding Lu as the king) is more of a rhetorical construct, representing an ideal universal order reformer rather than recognizing Lu as a legitimate "state".

Furthermore, both He Xiu and Kang Youwei mentioned the idea of "using the governance of the king to rectify the accession of feudal lords". The position of feudal lords, whether or not they can be considered "states", is derived from the governance of the king who received the mandate from heaven. The term "wang" in this context is explained in *the Gongyang Zhuan* as "wenwang 文王". He Xiu interpreted this as a reference to King Wen of Zhou 周文王, the earliest heaven-mandated sovereign of the Zhou Dynasty. Kang Youwei, however, took a more radical approach, seeing "wenwang" as "wenming zhi wang 文明之王" (the king of civilization), which he identified with Confucius himself. This interpretation enhanced Confucius's status as a preeminent legislator. In both cases, the interpretation of "wang Tianxia 王天下" (be the king of the world) or "dayitong" consistently emphasizes the absolute, unique, and supreme nature of the cosmic order. This order not only holds greater legitimacy compared to nationalism but also carries ontological validity rooted in heaven and transmitted by sages and kings. It is within this prescribed order that states and feudal lords exist.

Liang Qichao's interpretation, however, aims to strike a balance between global and national perspectives by expanding the national framework to incorporate a broader global outlook. This idea gained significance in the aftermath of World War I, where the nation-state remained dominant in international politics, but the League of Nations emerged as a point of contention. Liang advocated for the League, not solely to protect China's interests, but as a starting point for reconciling global and national aspirations. He emphasized its role in curbing excessive national ambition and promoting moderation. His depiction of a "cosmopolitan state" encapsulates this idea: "Our patriotism must recognize not only the nation but also the individual, and similarly, acknowledge the world in addition to the nation. Our goal is to seek protection under this nation, to maximize individual potential within the country, and to make significant contributions to the global civilization" (Liang 2018c, p. 71). This passage highlights two key themes. Firstly, it underscores the limitations of the nation and recognizes the existence of individuals and a broader global community. The nation, in Liang Qichao's perspective, serves as a means to an end, with the ultimate value lying in the world rather than merely within national interests. Secondly, it emphasizes the significance of individuals. In his broader works, Liang Qichao distinctly emphasized the value and ethics of individuals, providing a pathway to confront the second predicament: the limitation imposed by cultural nationalism that appears to be inherent in Confucianism. Moreover, his perspective serves as a bridge that connects the institutional world with the ethical world. Remarkably, Liang's modern interpretation of "Datong" aligns closely with contemporary English scholarly discussions on Confucian cosmopolitanism.

## 5. The Decentralization of Datong

As discussed earlier, Liang Qichao once proclaimed China's cosmopolitanism as unique and superior. Such a belief can easily lead to cultural arrogance and confine cosmopolitanism within a narrative centered around the nation, ultimately falling back into the trap of nationalism. To overcome this limitation, Liang Qichao sought to fully develop the ideals of Datong and Tianxia through the concept of "tonglei yishi 同类意识" (kinship consciousness). He shifted the focus from the nation to individuals and personal character, decentralizing and internalizing the vision of Datong. The mission of achieving Datong is no longer limited to a specific country or civilization, but rather becomes an inherent aspect of personal growth and perfection.

In his work *A History of Pre-Qin Political Thought*, Liang Qichao elaborated on the concept of Datong:

"Datong" represents the ultimate realization of a complete and harmonious human personality within the universe. However, the universe is never completely perfect; if it were, it would no longer be a universe. Confucians deeply hold this principle, as reflected in the sixty-four hexagrams of *Yi* 易 (the *Book of Changes*), starting with "Qian 乾" and ending with "Weiji 未济". In this imperfect universe, our task is to continuously progress based on our capabilities, inching closer to the realization of the ideal personality and the harmonious universe we aspire to. How can we achieve this? By expanding our kinship consciousness to its utmost extent. However, many people remain numb and unaware of this consciousness. Thus, before discussing further expansion, the first step is to awaken this consciousness. The first step towards awakening begins with the simplest and closest ''xiang ren ou 相人偶" (reciprocal relationships). For instance, recognizing that a father's role is fulfilled by his son, and a son's role by his father; or a husband's role by his wife, and a wife's role by her husband. By understanding these reciprocal human relationships, we can then contemplate expanding this consciousness to a broader scale (Liang 2018d, p. 483).

While the concept of a "cosmopolitan state" considers cosmopolitanism as a complement to nationalism, advocating that the notions of the world and the state, the logic of Datong and national empowerment, should coexist, Liang Qichao consistently perceived the Confucian ideal of global order, Datong, as the ultimate aim of history. This lofty and

unattainable goal illuminates the path towards it, which is underscored by the awakening and refinement of "kinship consciousness". This concept originates from Liang Qichao's interpretation of Confucian personalism. During this period, Liang Qichao enthusiastically emphasized the significance of personalism, asserting that "In Confucianism, without the philosophy of life, there is no true learning, and without personalism, there is no philosophy of life" (Liang 2018d, p. 479). The concept of kinship consciousness is closely intertwined with the core Confucian value of Ren. In essence, they are virtually synonymous. Kinship consciousness is centered on one's recognition of the categorical concept of 'humanity' and the shared similarities between self and the other. Zheng Xuan 郑玄 (127–200), a renowned classical scholar from the Han Dynasty, interpreted "Ren" as "xiang ren ou", which implies reciprocal relations with others. Building on this interpretation, Liang Qichao proposed that kinship consciousness is the conscious recognition of one's shared existence and mutual interdependence with others, which is essential for the formation of personhood. In this context, both kinship consciousness and Ren lead to a unity of self and the other. Liang Qichao further claimed that Ren is synonymous with the awakening of kinship consciousness, presenting a fresh reinterpretation of Ren through the lens of kinship consciousness, emphasizing the concept of mankind.

He contended that the formation of the concept of mankind manifests as kinship consciousness on the cognitive dimension and as empathy on the emotional dimension—a representation of love and care for one's own kind. The negative expression of this emotion is captured in the principle of "Shu 恕", which urges individuals not to do unto others what they do not wish for themselves (己所不欲勿施于人). Conversely, its positive manifestation is described as "aspire to establish people when you wish to establish yourself, aspire to succeed people when you wish to succeed yourself" (己欲立而立人, 己欲达而达人), which characterizes Ren. Intriguingly, Liang Qichao emphasized that the word "ren 人" one aspires to assist is not another individual but humanity as a whole:

> The position I desire to attain presently must be reached in cooperation with my fellow humans. The position I aspire to reach in the future must be advanced together with my fellow humans. Why is that? Human life thrives on reciprocal relationships (that is, "xiang ren ou"). Without everyone collectively establishing this position, I cannot possibly achieve it independently; without everyone jointly reaching this status, I cannot attain it solely. "Establish people" and "succeed people" do not merely imply aiding other individuals but refer to facilitating the success of mankind. As the 'other' and I collectively constitute humanity, facilitating their success equates to advancing humanity, and in doing so, I advance myself as well. (Liang 2018d, p. 478)

Liang Qichao notably emphasized the positive and creative aspects of empathy. However, the principle expressed by "aspire to establish people when you wish to establish yourself" faces an inherent issue: it can potentially lead to the hegemony of universalism, where one imposes their will on others, denying the subjectivity of others. This criticism is applicable to both modern imperialism, which often disguises its aggression under the pretext of a civilizing mission, and the notion that Chinese culture would be the savior of the world. However, Liang's reinterpretation specifically addresses this issue. Instead of interpreting the phrase as enabling others to succeed before oneself or extending one's desired benefits to others, he emphasized the unity of self and the other. This unity implies that personal achievements must be based on recognizing and including all of humanity, and that the shared accomplishment of humanity as a whole is essential.

Undoubtedly, Neo-Confucianism's ontology, which posits that "Ren signifies embracing the cosmos and all living beings as one entity" (仁者, 以天地万物为一体), has long acknowledged the holistic and inclusive nature of Ren. Liang Qichao's explanation incorporates the metaphor of "shou zu bu ren 手足不仁" (insensitivity of limbs) from Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism, where a lack of empathy for others is likened to the numbness of not perceiving one's own limbs. However, Liang's innovation lies in connecting Confucian

moral philosophy with political philosophy, intertwining "Ren" with "Tianxia" and binding kinship consciousness with cosmopolitanism.

Liang Qichao argued that Confucian political theory is deeply rooted in the philosophy of life. After reinterpreting the moral value of Ren, he shifted his focus to its political implications, stating that "Zheng zhe, zheng ye 政者, 正也" (to govern is to rectify). According to Liang, Confucian political aspirations revolve around Tianxia, but governance itself is not the primary concern. Instead, the emphasis lies on achieving harmony. Confucian ideals do not aim to establish a uniform world governed by a specific political system but rather to create a world characterized by "ping" (平, harmony) and "zheng" (正, rectitude). These concepts are deeply rooted in the "jieju zhi dao 絜矩之道" (the way of measuring and aligning), which refers to the kinship consciousness that involves perceiving others through empathy, understanding emotions through sympathy, and recognizing similarities through categorization. The origin of this kinship consciousness can be found in the love we have for those closest to us, which gradually extends from the family to the nation and eventually to other nations. Therefore, achieving harmony and rectitude in Tianxia means expanding this kinship consciousness to its fullest extent. The essence of Tianxia and Datong lies in the comprehensive development of this kinship consciousness and the ultimate refinement of every individual's personality. Liang avoided attributing this process to any specific political entity and did not portray the nation as the central actor. Since the ultimate goal is for every individual in the world to adopt a global perspective, take responsibility for the world, and become an integral part of humanity as a whole, the subjectivity of each individual should indeed be emphasized.

It is undeniable that Liang Qichao believed in the role of Confucianism as an educator in awakening and expanding kinship consciousness. He argued that the reason ancient China was a unified country rather than fragmented into numerous states like Europe was largely due to the promotion of kinship consciousness by Confucianism. Liang asserted, "While external factors certainly played a significant role in our unity, the foremost reason lies in the transformative power of the sage's teachings, which unifies the minds of the majority. I staunchly affirm that kinship consciousness should be broadened, not limited. If our ancestors had consistently fostered a love only for one's own state, such as the people of Qin 秦 loving Qin and the people of Yue 越 loving Yue, the divergent national characteristics between Qin and Yue would be as substantial as the differences between Germany and France today" (Liang 2018d, p. 563). Moreover, he indeed regarded the recognition of kinship consciousness as a crucial distinction between "us" and "them". He stated, "We emphasize the cultivation of our kinship consciousness, leading to convergence despite differences, whereas they prioritize exploiting their differences, resulting in further divergence" (Liang 2018d, p. 563). In this context, "we" represents the Confucians, while "they" refers to Western philosophers. Based on his concept of kinship consciousness, Liang Qichao argued that Confucian political thought differs significantly from prevalent Western ideologies. He strongly criticized nationalism, as it tends to idealize narrow forms of patriotism and view other nations as adversaries. This sentiment aligns with Mencius' idea of "beginning with what they do not care for, and proceeding to what they care for" (以其所不爱及其所爱), which ultimately entangles both their own nation and others in the perils of warfare. Furthermore, Liang extended this critique to socialism, acknowledging that although socialists show empathy towards the working class, they advocate for a contradictory approach of imposing on others what they themselves do not desire. By perpetuating class divisions and considering capitalists as outsiders, they inadvertently hinder the expansion of kinship consciousness.

However, taking a different perspective, Liang Qichao, with the concept of kinship consciousness that illustrates the disparities between Chinese and Western ideologies, does not necessarily propose replacing the West with distinct Chinese systems, values, or cultural traits. Instead, his viewpoint seeks to dissolve the distinction between "we" and "they", China and the West. Formally, Liang employed the language of Confucianism in his discourses and might reinforce the barriers between the self and the other. Neverthe-

less, the essence of his discourse negates these barriers and emphasizes the shared humanity and similarities between individuals. In other words, the Confucian cosmopolitanism he advocated does not necessarily negate its inherent premise of inclusiveness and all-encompassing simply because it is associated with Confucianism. On the contrary, it is possible to transcend the limitation of being solely "Confucian" by focusing on the awakening and refinement of human kinship consciousness. Around 1920, Liang Qichao frequently used the term "the whole of humanity" (人类全体) to contemplate future issues on a global scale. According to his perspective, various groups of people, including nations, serve as means to organize and facilitate the development of mankind, representing stages in the expansion of kinship consciousness. However, they are temporary and limited, while only the "self" has a direct connection to the whole of humanity. The whole of humanity is the maximum extension of the self, with the self serving as the foundation of the whole of humanity. Therefore, the expansion of the "self" towards "the whole of humanity" in each individual has come to embody the modern significance of the ideal of Datong. This profound meaning allows Confucian cosmopolitanism to transcend ideological constraints and decentralize and eventually surpass the confines of the "Confucian" discourse.

## 6. Conclusions

From an intellectual historical perspective, it becomes evident that within the Chinese-speaking sphere, the discourse on cosmopolitanism in modern times has been deeply entwined with the nation-state system and the rise of nationalism. The worldview of Tianxia characterized by its all-encompassing nature and the ideal of Datong based on the principle of publicity have become obsolete, which forms the backdrop for the modern predicament of Confucian cosmopolitanism. In a world marked by boundaries and fragmentation, the modern challenge of Confucian cosmopolitanism lies in reconciling the conflicting logics of Datong and national empowerment, as well as balancing Confucian identity with global concerns.

Through the study of Liang Qichao and his contemporaneous scholars, we find a potential pathway to address these dual predicaments. On one hand, Liang made significant efforts to understand and embrace the modern context, putting forth the concept of a "cosmopolitan nation" that acknowledges the coexistence of the world and the nation. He sought a balance between the ultimate ideal of Datong and the practical reality of nationalism. While recognizing the limitations of the nation-state system, he advocated for a nation that embodies the principles of cosmopolitanism, regarding it as an organizing and mobilizing method to realize this goal. On the other hand, Liang critically reevaluated the values of Confucianism in light of modernity. He offered a fresh interpretation of the ideals of Datong and Ren, bridging Confucian ethics and political theory through the notion of kinship consciousness. His aim was to restore the essence of Confucian cosmopolitanism as the awakening and refinement of human kinship consciousness. This interpretation not only challenged modern ideologies such as nationalism and socialism but also transcended the confines of the Confucian discourse. Ultimately, the focus on individual values directs attention towards addressing human concerns from a global perspective.

As of today, the Chinese-speaking academic community has once again sparked a fervor in exploring the concept of Tianxia, giving rise to theories like "New Tianxiaism" (see Liu 2015; Xu 2015). The practical concern behind this trend is to reconstruct China's understanding of the world order. This reflects that the Chinese cosmopolitanism is still influenced by modern predicaments from the past century, but it has undergone some changes. China consciously seeks a development path consistent with the logic of Datong, offering an alternative proposal different from Western modernity, which appears to alleviate the first modern predicament. However, amidst the current prevalence of nationalism, populism, and anti-globalization sentiments, the second predicament, namely cultural nationalism, is accentuated.

Liang Qichao posited China's responsibility towards world civilization as a process of "integration": "What we should do is to enrich our civilization with Western civiliza-

tion and, at the same time, contribute our civilization to supplement Western civilization, so that the two can integrate into a new civilization" (Liang 2018c, p. 83). While this was an attempt to transcend the confines of cultural identities, in today's world characterized by a more diverse global landscape, the scope of integration should be expanded. The discussion on cosmopolitanism must move beyond the Western–Chinese dichotomy and embrace a global perspective. For instance, Hindu philosophy also offers the concept of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (the cosmos is one family), which promotes a humanistic view that seeks to dissolve boundaries between self and others (see Ranganathan 2015; Hatcher 1994). In conclusion, as the Daoism motto goes, "seeing Tianxia through the view of Tianxia" (以天下观天下), the global landscape requires acknowledging and appreciating diverse cultural heritages, fostering extensive intercultural dialogues to seek commonalities and embrace diversities. Such an approach may serve as a potential pathway to overcome the modern predicaments of cosmopolitanism.

## Notes

1    Regarding the discussion on cosmopolitanism within the Chinese context, see Ma and Sun (2014), Liu (2016), and Wang (2020).
2    The translation of the chapter Liyun of this paragraph and the subsequent text is based on the work of James Legge (Legge 1885, pp. 364–72). To ensure terminological consistency in this article, minor modifications have been made to certain statements, such as replacing "the Grand Union" with "Datong".
3    Undoubtedly, the term "shijie zhuyi 世界主义", as the translation for "cosmopolitanism", in the Chinese world has other specific reasons for its strong political implication. For example, internationalism, which has a stronger political connotation and emphasizes a world order transcending national boundaries, is not equated with "shijie zhuyi" but translated as "guoji zhuyi 国际主义", yet this term has its own particular referent, that is, the international alliance formed by the proletarian states advocated by Marxism (see Chen 2021). My article focuses on the awareness of modernity and the modern transformation process of Confucian world ideals, so the issue of translation and dissemination will not be discussed here.

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