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## The Values of Confucian Benevolence and the Universality of the Confucian Way of Extending Love

**Abstract** The spirit of Confucianism, which holds benevolence as its core value, has positive significance in the dialogue between civilizations and in the construction of global ethics. The values represented in Confucian benevolence are similar to the values in Christian Charity. Confucian values such as the doctrine of magnanimity, the idea of putting oneself in the place of another, and the Confucian way of extending love and favors, are crucial resources to hold in close connection with the relationship between human beings and nature, individuals and society, self and others, and one and oneself. The Confucian idea of “differentiated love” is a concrete and practical idea, which can be extended to be “universal love.” Furthermore, the Confucian way of extending love can also be interpreted as eco-ethical: On the one hand, Confucianism affirms the intrinsic value of the universe and calls for a universal moral concern for the ecological world; on the other hand, it recognizes a distinction between human beings and the nature, revealing an eco-ethical awareness of distinction and a consciousness of the differentiation between different ethical spheres. In extracting the instrumental value of ecological resources, Confucians never disregard the intrinsic value of animals and plants. Confucianism puts emphasis on subjectivity, especially the subjectivity of morality. Relationships between man and himself, between self and others, however, are inter-subjective. For Confucians, the universe exists and grows in the process of perfecting oneself, others, and the world. Such an understanding is of modern significance for the exchange and dialogue between civilizations, and the growth of personality and the mental regulation of gentleman today.

**Keywords** Confucianism, benevolence, extending love, love with distinctions, environmental ethics, communicative theory, rites

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## 1 Dialogue between “Confucian Benevolence,” the Confucian Way of Extending Love and “Christian Charity”

How do we wed Confucianism and Christianity today? Above all, we must understand the background, connotation, and significance of Confucian *ren*’*ai* 仁爱 (benevolence)—the core value of Confucianism. The foundation of Confucian benevolence lies in a belief in *tian* 天 (heaven) and a respect of *tianming* 天命 (the supernal mandate), which can be interpreted as transcendent, ultimate, and religiously oriented. The connotation of the term *ren* encompasses five points: Firstly, it regards “loving others” as benevolence; secondly, it sees “restraining oneself through *li* 礼 (rites)” as benevolence; thirdly, “loyalty” and “magnanimity” are close in meaning to benevolence; in addition, Confucian benevolence is valued as a humanistic ideal; last but not least, Confucian benevolence is the supreme principle governing all different spheres of ethics. In other words, Confucian benevolence is the principle governing the subjectivity, self-consciousness and self-discipline of morality; it demonstrates the self-mastery of one’s moral life regardless of any outside impact.<sup>1</sup> The main idea of Confucian benevolence can be understood through the following dialogue between Confucius and his disciples.

Zi Gong said, “If a ruler not only conferred wide benefits upon the common people, but also compassed the salvation of the whole State, what would you say of him? Surely, you would call him Good?”

The Master said, “It would no longer be a matter of ‘Good.’ He would without doubt be a Divine Sage. Even Yao and Shun could hardly criticize him. As for Goodness—you yourself desire rank and standing; then help others to get rank and standing. You want to turn your own merits to account; then help others to turn theirs to account—in fact, the ability to take one’s own feelings as a guide—that is the sort of thing that lies in the direction of Goodness.”<sup>2</sup> (“Yongye” in *The Analects*)

Zhong Gong asked about Goodness. The Master said, “Behave when away from home as though you were in the presence of an important guest. Deal with the common people as though you were officiating at an important sacrifice. Do not do to others what you would not like yourself. Then there

<sup>1</sup> For Confucius’ idea of God’s will and the Philosophy of Humanity as well as the connotation and significance of Mencius’ Virtue Theory, see Guo 2006, pp. 27–32; pp. 72–79.

<sup>2</sup> The translation is adapted from Waley 2007, p. 77.

will be no feelings of opposition to you, whether it is the affairs of a State that you are handling or the affairs of a Family.”<sup>3</sup> (Ibid., “Yan Yuan”)

Zi Gong asked, “Is there any single saying that one can act upon all day and every day?” The Master said, “Perhaps the saying about consideration: ‘Never do to others what you would not like them to do to you.’”<sup>4</sup> (Ibid., “Wei Ling Gong”)

The Master said, “My Way has one (thread) that runs right through it.” The disciple Zeng replied, “Yes.” When the Master had gone out, the disciples asked, “What did he mean?” Zeng said, “Our Master’s Way is simply this: Loyalty, consideration and nothing more.”<sup>5</sup> (Ibid., “Liren”)

Feng Youlan 冯友兰 once said: “To practice benevolence one has to be able from one’s own self to draw a parallel for the treatment of others. That is to say, the best way to be benevolent is to be considerate (or to put oneself in the place of another). On the one hand, ‘do to others what you wish yourself’; namely, ‘if you desire to sustain yourself, sustain others. If you desire to develop yourself, develop others.’ This is the so-called *zhong* 忠 (loyalty). On the other hand, ‘do not do to others what you do not wish yourself.’ This is the so-called *shu* 恕 (altruism; empathy). The practice as a whole is called the principle of *zhong* and *shu*, which is at the same time ‘the way to practice benevolence, human-heartedness... All the teachings of Confucius are linked together by one principle, that is, the principle of *zhong* and *shu*) or *rendao* 仁道 (the principle of benevolence). How easy it is to practice benevolence!” (Feng 2000, pp. 316–317) Zhu Xi defines *ren* (benevolence) as the philosophy of love and the virtue of the mind; he names “doing to others what one wishes himself” *zhong* and calls “not doing to others what one does not wish himself” *shu* (Zhu 1983, p. 48, p. 72). The connotation of benevolence involves both *zhong* and *shu*, which sit side by side and interact with each other. On the one hand, “one should sustain and help develop others if he desires to sustain and develop himself,” or in other words, if you yourself desire rank and standing, then encourage and help others to get rank and standing; if you want to turn your own merits to account, help others with it as well. Another aspect to consider is “do not do to others what you do not wish yourself,” which means that what you do not like done to yourself, do not do to others, namely to respect and tolerate others considerately by putting yourself in the place of another.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.145.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.207.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.45.

Zhang Dainian 张岱年 also remarked that “the original intention of benevolence is consideration for others when one has succeeded in sustaining or developing himself. ‘To sustain’ means to secure oneself a place in society without depending on others, while ‘to develop’ means to be versed in a given field and far transcend the others. One may well be called a good counselor only when he does not forget to help sustain and establish others on his own way to success. In short, in the course of self-perfection, help others attain their aims. To be able from one’s own self to draw a parallel for the treatment of others; that may be called the way to practice benevolence. That is to say, benevolence begins at home, but should not end there. Put yourself in the place of others. Do not work in the interest of yourself alone, and never impose on others what you dislike” (Zhang 1982, pp. 256–257).

The opinions quoted above from academic predecessors have obviously addressed the central issue of Chinese values. For Confucius, benevolence consists in “loving others,” which shows his compassion and concern for the disadvantaged. Confucian benevolence is a moral sense beginning with those who are dear—loved ones. Above all, one must be filial to his parents and adore his brothers. Then he must branch out from this feeling, considering others and empathizing with the heavens, the earth, with people and things, and with his own heart. Only thus can benevolence become a universal sense compassion and righteousness. As to the import of benevolence, Confucius specified three aspects: “loving others,” “having kindly feelings towards everyone” and “cultivating in oneself the capacity to ease the lot of the whole populace.”

Fan Chi asked about the Good (ruler). Then Master said, he loves men. He asked about the wise (ruler). The Master said, he knows men.<sup>6</sup> (“Yan Yuan” in *The Analects*)

The Master said, A young man’s duty is to behave well to his parents at home and to his elders abroad, to be cautious in giving promises and punctual in keeping them, to have kindly feelings towards everyone, but seek the intimacy of the Good. If, when all that is done, he has any energy to spare, then let him study the polite arts.<sup>7</sup> (Ibid., “Xue’er”)

Zi Lu asked about the qualities of a true gentlemen. The Master said, He cultivates in himself the capacity to be diligent in his tasks. Zi Lu said, Can he not go further than that? The Master said, He cultivates in himself the capacity to ease the lot of other people. Zi Lu said, Can he not go further than that? The

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

Master said, He cultivates in himself the capacity to ease the lot of the whole populace. If he can do that, could even Yao or Shun find cause to criticize him?<sup>8</sup> (Ibid., “Xianwen”)

What he cared for most was that the people should have food, and that the rites of mourning and sacrifice should be fulfilled.<sup>9</sup> (Ibid., “Yaoyue”)

Confucius urged the officials and the government to “cultivate in themselves the capacity to ease the people,” to “help the people by bestowing on them liberally,” to “employ the people at proper times” and to “rule the people under the restraint of ritual.” He argued against the abuse of power and the misuse of the people’s financial resources, pressing the rulers to respect and take good care of the common people with dignity and reverence. Confucius lectured on Five Ideal Politics, referring particularly to the idea of “enriching the people in their interests” and also on the avoidance of Four Bad Politics, including putting men to death without having taught them the Right (savagery), expecting the completion of tasks without giving due warning (oppression), to be dilatory about giving orders but to expect absolute punctuality (tormenting), and though meaning to let a man have something, to be grudging about bringing it out from within (behaving like a petty functionary). It is safe to say that Han Yu of the Tang dynasty based his view that “charity is the best of benevolence” on the Confucian idea of “Philanthropy” (universal love). Although Confucian benevolence *per se* is an all-embracing goodwill, the historical facts meet considerable resistance among western scholars and some Chinese scholars for the reason that Confucius also advocates *aiqin* 爱亲 (kinship love), *xiaoti* 孝悌 (filial piety) and *aiyou chadeng* 爱有差等 (love with distinctions). This leads to a misinterpretation of “Confucian benevolence,” with some scholars thinking that the “love” preached by Confucius is limited to “fraternal love,” which is special and thus not universal.

With the dissemination of Western learning in China, the first difficulty that missionaries such as Matteo Ricci confronted was how to communicate between the core values of Confucianism and those of Christianity, especially how to comprehend the Chinese thought of *xiaodao* 孝道 (filial piety or familial reverence). In the Chinese subaltern folk society, the idea of *bao* 报 (repaying, or paying back) is directly related to the rewards of parenthood. Of course, for the Chinese the idea can be very complicated. For example, “*bao*” in Chinese folk culture not only refers to the spirits of ancestors, but also to natural deities, which means requiting the heavens and earth, mountains and rivers, for their

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 265.

breeding and love from childhood. Filial duty is one of the basic concepts of Confucianism. According to “Xue’er” in *The Analects*, the philosopher Youzi, one of Confucius’ disciples, remarked that “it is upon the trunk (i.e., what is fundamental, as opposed to ‘the twigs,’ i.e., small accomplishments) that a gentleman works. When that is firmly set up, the Way grows. And surely proper behavior towards parents and elder brothers is the trunk of benevolence.” Youzi’s statement has aroused a lot of disputes. Zhu Xi gave valuable insights into Youzi’s words, annotating that “being benevolent” means “to practice benevolence”; *xiaoti* (filial piety) is merely one of the main manifestations of human relationships, but also is the beginning of the outpouring of *benxin* 本心 (conscience, or fundamental mind-heart). Benevolence is the end, the origin-source of all objects and events, while filial piety is the means to achieve the end. Zhu Xi also quoted the Cheng brothers as saying: “Virtues (or moral outcomes) have a trunk. When the trunk is firmly set up, the Way grows and expands. Those who in private life behave well towards their parents and elder brothers, in public life often show a disposition to be kind to creatures and to love the masses. Therefore the benevolent holds filial piety as the principal. When it comes to *xing* 性 (human nature), however, benevolence should be the basis of filial piety.” Zhu Xi then developed the Cheng brothers’ idea by saying that “it is safe to say one desiring to practice benevolence should behave well towards their parents and elder brothers first, for filial piety is part of the practice of Confucian benevolence. Nonetheless, although it is acceptable to say that filial piety is the first step of practicing benevolence, it is improper to see filial piety as the trunk (basis) of benevolence. The reason is that Confucian benevolence is a kind of human nature whereas filial piety is a kind of *yong* 用 (function or process). There are four aspects involved in human nature which are *ren* 仁 (benevolence), *yi* 义 (righteousness), *li* 礼 (rites), *zhi* 智 (arts and dispositions of learning, discernment and wisdom) exclusive of filial piety. Yet the principle of love is benevolence; and there is no greater love than the love of dear ones. That is why proper behavior towards parents and elder brothers is the trunk of benevolence” (Zhu 1983, p. 48). Despite the fact that Zhu Xi and the Cheng brothers’ interpretations were similar to those based on the relations between *tiyong* 体用 or *benmo* 本末 (trunk-twig, end-means) developed in the Wei and Jin dynasties, their pronouncements essentially met the original intention of Confucius.

As is known to every scholar intelligent about Chinese philosophy, for Chinese people the relationships between *benmo* and *tiyong* are multi-layered. Confucian benevolence is on a higher and more fundamental level. Compared to benevolence, filial piety is the manifestation, function, phenomenon or development pattern of the former. On a lower level of praxis, filial piety is the beginning of practicing Confucian benevolence. By extension one can also draw

inspiration from Mencius' view that "one must love his dear ones" in order to love others, the masses and even objects (i.e., the landscape, the countryside, the plants, birds and beasts, the rubbles, the vessels, and tools).

Nowadays, it is particularly important to rethink and rediscover filial piety, within the present systems of discourse. Because the society we live in today is a civil society, most of us find it necessary to observe social morality. Some criticize that the filial piety described by Confucians is a stumbling block to the cultivation of social morality. However, this is not necessarily so. These critics usually ground their critiques on some negative empirical facts (i.e., Nepotism, official corruption etc.) and fix the blame on Confucianism. Such criticism talks about filial piety in empirical terms. Filial piety in a Confucian sense, however, refers more to one's mind-nature, moral feeling, and life experience than to something empirical. It is also a feasible and intimate move to foster a sense of love in our children, which is surely the basic idea of love. Filial piety as Confucians describe it is a fundamental understanding of human feelings, of that which makes us human. Because of this, we are capable of feeling for others on basis of such love. Of course, this love only refers to a humanistic love (or all-embracing love) stemming from our internal life experience. As to the Confucian idea of "loving our dear ones," it is by no means something without limit; conversely, the idea should be practiced sparingly and with restraint. In connection with family bonds, Confucians also employ the following virtues to regulate the human feelings mentioned above, namely *ren* (benevolence), *yi* (righteousness), *li* (courtesy), *zhi* (wisdom), *xin* (faith) etc., especially the balancing function of *li* (courtesy). Such is the starting point from which we are to discuss Confucianism and Christianity with ease.<sup>10</sup> Common arguments focus on "love with and without distinction" as regards love in terms of Confucianism, as if love with distinctions cannot be called charity; only love without distinctions, however, can be defined as all-embracing love. This understanding is superficial. For nearly a decade, I have written various books and articles to discuss this issue (Guo 2004, 2009, and 2010).

Since ancient times, such issues as *jian'ai* 兼爱 (all-embracing love), Confucian benevolence and love with distinctions have been well discussed among Chinese philosophers. The Confucian notions of benevolence and filial piety do not necessarily oppose each other. Factually, love in light of Confucianism is also a graded idea, for it places "love of dear ones" on top of any other form of love. Such is the Doctrine of the Same Origin of Mind and Body that has been consistently advocated by Confucians, which, as a matter of

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<sup>10</sup> For the interpretation of *xiaodao* as well as the collision and common ground between the Christian and Confucian views on the issue, see Li 1999, pp. 3–17.

fact, has also been advocated by Christians. Love in terms of Confucianism follows the logic that “if he loves his dear ones, he must love the masses; if he loves the masses, he must be kind to the creatures.” The Mohist Yizhi 夷之 once remarked that “love is non-discriminatory, but the dispensation of love is priority-bound, which should go to the dear ones first.” Mencius criticized Yizhi’s view by pointing out his vulnerability that in principle his Doctrine of Two Origins of Mind and Body talks about all-embracing love, yet in reality, he talks about priority in obtaining this love. In this connection, Neo-Confucians in the Song and Ming dynasties solved this problem well with their idea of *liyi fenshu* 理一分殊 (coherent principle is one or unified while its manifestations are diverse), which inspires our practical reason in perspective of the hierarchy of objective reality. In speaking about this point, the Song Confucian Cheng Yichuan 程伊川 reprimanded Yizhi for his mistake as “Two Origins, No Differentiation.” Liu Shuxian 刘述先 reasserted Yichuan’s thought, pointing out that Zhang Hengqu’s 张横渠 idea of “all the people being brethren; all the creatures being idem genus” represented the spirit of *liyi fenshu*, which by no means parallels all-embracing love (Liu 2011, pp. 60–61).

To better illuminate this point, I will elaborate on Mou Zongsan’s words as follows. Mou pointed out that benevolence is a universal principle, which must be expressible. “Man’s manifestation of benevolence is different from that of God’s. The reason is that God is timeless and spaceless, whereas Man’s manifestation of the principle of benevolence is subject to time. God can love without distinction, but how can Man?” (Mou 2004, p. 109) In other words, God can love all uniformly because he is unconstrained by time and space. Man in the concrete conditions of time and space, however, should behave in certain spatio-temporal patterns, so how can Man speak of love without distinction?

In discussing love with distinctions in terms of Confucianism, He Lin 贺麟 also believed that Confucian benevolence is humanized. It is charity stemming from love of dear ones, which is a universal and natural spiritual fact of human beings. Love with distinctions is a practical reason, which is able to be justified as what we call charity. Specifically, He stressed that the term is an ordinary psychological fact—a natural, normal emotion. He pointed out that Confucius urged us to love others with humaneness. On the other hand, love with distinctions makes sense “not through positive advocacy, but by rejecting unitary love from the reversed and negative side,” such as all-embracing love, *zhuan'ai* 专爱 (undivided love), *liedeng zhi'ai* 躡等之爱 (uncommon love, including rendering good for evil), and so forth. The three forms of love go far beyond human nature and are endangered by excesses and undue aspirations... The Confucian love with distinctions not merely has psychological basis, it also grounds itself on *shudao* 恕道 (the principle of forgiveness, empathy) or *xiejuzhidao* 絮矩之道 (the principle of applying a measuring square). It is not



that Confucius did not harbor a brotherly charity, but that he put more weight on *tui* 推 (inference by analogy), which means using oneself as a standard to discover other people's needs and thus to regulate one's conduct depending on what one finds. He also mentioned that charity "is a high level of spiritual insight only to be reached by a combination of *yi* 义 (righteousness) and *de* 德 (virtues). He who would like to be charitable probably should start from the practice of love with distinctions, then he can build upon this virtue a bosom with which he is of comfort to the aged and cherishes the young, be filled with compassion for someone else's sufferings as if he were starving or drowning himself, and is inclined to disregard personal grievances. This is the so-called charity, or at least to gain upon the ideal of charity. The charity here has more profound meanings than *jian'ai* (all-embracing love) advocated by Mo Zi. ... The charity discussed here is the outcome of well-intentioned popularization of love with distinctions, which is in no contradiction with Mencius' teachings" (He 1990, pp. 364–367). That is to say, love with distinctions is the process of popularizing Confucian benevolence, which aims at universal love. The process of popularizing benevolence is modest and natural, which will not bring about religious fanaticism or bigotry. It is also non-discriminatory. On the contrary, it is a practical virtue and wisdom. Love with distinctions justifies the universality of Confucian benevolence.

It can clearly be seen that filial piety, funeral rites and love with distinctions are complicated and concrete conceptions in Confucianism. Confucius insisted that these concepts were specifically and practically reasoned, but he also attached great importance to their intrinsic, universal humanistic value and moral reasoning. Confucian benevolence is a universal idea, and the praxis and popularization of benevolence is concretely universal. This resembles what Chung-Ying Cheng (Cheng Zhongying) called "Concrete Rationalism."<sup>11</sup> Confucians uphold the Theory of Virtue and will not depart from *xieju zhidao* (the principle of applying a measuring square) for utilitarian purposes.

Confucian Benevolence is as complicated as Christian Charity. Some scholars reduce all discussions about Confucian benevolence to three aspects: metaphysical love (which pertains to the love of the universe), psychological

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<sup>11</sup> As Cheng Zhongying pointed out, one characteristic of Chinese philosophy, the Confucian philosophy in particular, is "material rationalism," such as Mencius' "heart of compassion" which demonstrates that moral sentiments are materialized in specific life experiences. Neither does the material rationality in Confucian philosophy conform to the Kantian practical reason, nor does it accord with the abstract reason in pure rationality. "By material rationalism we mean the perfection in morality through self-education and specifically actualized cognitive process. Knowledge and self-education obtained in actual life are not only rational and reasonable activities, but also demonstrate morality in fulfilling the ideal of making the whole life complete and perfect" (Cheng 2006, p. 17).

love (which pertains to love out of human nature or common awareness) and ethical love (which pertains to a life lived by a strict moral code). They also divide Christian charity (mainly theocentric love in the Old Testament) into three levels: theological or bestowed (blessed) love, religious love or human love responding to God's mercy, and ethical or brotherly love (Yao 2002, pp. 100–105). This chapter does not look to compare the two. Rather, this is a response to a certain misreading of love with distinctions in comparing Confucian benevolence and Christian charity as well as a confusion regarding the Confucian way of extending love. As a matter of fact, kind fathers and filial sons are a generally acknowledged ethical truth shared by East-West traditions. Today people both in Eastern and Western worlds are challenging the ancient teaching of filial piety to parents, but neither can deny the above fact (Wang 2004, pp. 281–301). Of course, in our aging society today, the maintenance of parents needs to be handled in an innovative way.

In light of the theory of human nature, Confucianism and Christianity also share some common grounds. In connection with the love of God in Christianity, Jesus' remark that human beings are born to be equal implies the inherent goodness of man. This conclusion can also derive from the Christian Doctrine of Original Sin. The Confucian teaching about people being inherently good refers to the transcendent aspect of human nature. For Confucians, the inherent goodness of man is an undisputable tenet, which disciplines man out of human nature. It is also due to his unremitting pursuit of the transcendent phase of human nature that Mencius painstakingly lectured on the inherent goodness of man. As for Xunzi's view of man being inherently evil, it is no more than an empirical and objective depiction of some truths of an Orwellian nightmare, which by no means better supports the idea that human beings are inherently good. The Confucian doctrine of good human nature is a topic worth investigating, especially within the dialogue between Christianity and Confucianism.

Confucianism and Christianity have a lot more in common when it comes to the concept of peace. Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan), Founding Father of Republic of China, once held “*zhongxiao* 忠孝 (loyalty and filial piety), *ren'ai*, *xinyi* 信义 (good faith) and *heping* 和平 (peace)” to be the defining characteristics of Chinese culture. Our contemporary society endures incessant conflicts. We can find numerous examples of peaceful thinking in the Old Testament (Zhou 1999, pp. 137–147). Nonetheless, a more detailed and incisive description of the nature of the human mind can be found in Confucianism. And most of these concepts are directed at the cultivation of charity (or benevolence) in us, which is helpful for lessening some of the social chaos confronting China today. In this respect, Christianity and Confucianism also have a lot in common. These similarities are worth excavating and will definitely contribute to the reconstr-

uction of the spiritual home of modern Chinese people.

Is it true that a clan and family system is always decadent and backward, that patriarchy will undoubtedly result in nepotism, that filial piety will surely procure authoritarianism? For Confucians, it is not necessarily so. Hu Qiuyuan 胡秋原 pointed out that in a traditional society, clans and families were natural groups, which counterbalanced kingly and government powers, preventing feudal officials from scrambling fortunes from the disadvantaged. As social agents, and also self-governing and social security organizations, clans and families took up social functions such as old-age insurance, relief for the orphans, education and selecting the capable for public posts. Most of all, the value of the doctrine of *renyi zhongshu* 仁义忠恕 (benevolence, righteousness, loyalty, and empathy) governing the aspects above has become the criterion for judging social justice. “The core value of Confucianism acknowledges that human beings share the root of humaneness and rationality. It also teaches us to nourish and expand the root, which means standing upon our dignity and giving full play to our learning. And the Way of Expansion, however, lays particular emphasis on *tui* 推 (inference by analogy), which, when applied to abstract things, resembles logical reasoning in the Western world; when applied to human affairs, involves a divergent thinking from personal situation to that of the masses, which is nonexistent in the West” (Hu 1969, pp. 21–22). For Hu, Christianity can only be grounded upon the premise that all of us are God’s children; utilitarianism, however, can merely trace back to *kaiming zisi* 开明自私 (open egotism). Confucius said, being able to establish oneself in the society, one should help others to do so; developing oneself, and seeking also to develop others; a gentleman pursues his own moral perfection and helps others fulfill good deeds as well. Being able from one’s own self to draw a parallel for the whole family, the State, and even for the world, so that each has a role of his own to play with everything in its right place—that is the way *tui* demonstrates itself; it is also the realization of each finite life and the infinite cycling of life.

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## 2 The Development of Eco-Ethical Thought in Pre-Qin Confucianism on the Basis of Confucian Teachings of the Heaven-Human Correlation and Benevolence

As the story goes, when discussing certain chapters in *The Analects*, college students at one American university felt that Confucius took an aversion to sheep and horses and so criticized him for being an animal hater.<sup>12</sup> It is obvious that

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<sup>12</sup> Li Chenyang’s 李晨阳 speech at Wuhan University: “Two Paths for Confucian Environmental Ethics,” June 26, 2010.

they misunderstood the following chapters in *The Analects*:

Zi Gong wanted to do away with the presentation of a sacrificial sheep at the announcement of each new moon. The Master said, Ci! You grudge sheep, but I grudge ritual.<sup>13</sup> (“Ba Yi”)

When the stables were burnt down, on returning from Court, the Master said, Was anyone hurt? He did not ask about the horses.<sup>14</sup> (“Xiang Dang”)

The first chapter tells the following story: Since Duke Wen came to power, the State of Lu no longer held rites announcing the new moon, but senior officials of the court still presented a sacrificial sheep on the first of each moon, which Zi Gong deemed as extravagant and would like to do away with it. However, Confucius regarded the sacrifice of the sheep as the hope to restore the rites at the announcement of each new moon. For Confucius, it was thanks to the presentation of the sacrificial sheep that the rites still existed in name; without the sacrifice of the oblation, all hope would be lost. It is not that Confucius detested sheep, but that compared with the sheep he found the restoration of the rites more important. The chapter should be discussed in a proper historical context. And the subsequent chapter cannot justify an antipathy towards horses either. As Zhu Xi annotated, “It is not that Confucius did not love the horses, but that he was more concerned with the safety of people than with that of the horses—so concerned that he had no leisure to bestow any attention on the latter. Valuing the people while leaving the animals aside—perhaps that’s just as it should be” (Zhu 1983, p. 121). First things first, there are always priorities. That is why the first thought came to Confucius was if anyone was hurt. The idea of *guiren jianchu* 贵人贱畜 (valuing the human beings while belittling the animals) derives from Zheng Xuan 郑玄, which of course is grounded on the comparison between human life (including the horse keeper’s life) and horses’ life. It is common knowledge that when in poverty, Confucius had to host sacrifices for a living, or gain his living by fishing and fowling, but he “fished with a line but not with a net; when fowling he did not aim at a roosting bird”<sup>15</sup> (“Shu Er” in *The Analects*). But all of these may be reproached by some scholars today for they believed that Confucians extract biological resources merely for their instrumental values. For this reason, it is necessary for us to more thoroughly discuss the ecological thought in Confucianism.

As with the Confucian spirits of humanity and morality, the ecological thought in Confucianism also stems from the theory of correlations between heaven and

<sup>13</sup> See Waley 2007, p. 33.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

human beings. In other words, a Confucian is not an oligarchical humanist. Confucianism is grounded on the belief in *tian* 天 (heaven), *haotian* 昊天 (the boundless heaven), *di* 帝 (the reigning sovereign in the heavens), *huangshangdi* 皇上帝 (sovereign-God, i.e., heavens), which is in the mainstream and traditional religious cult in China.

For the ancient Chinese, the idea of *tiandi* 天地 (heaven and earth) is usually not a concept about the physical space. When discussing the spatial environment as man's habitat, the pre-Qin Confucians placed heaven and earth on top of the sequential order of existence in the universe on the one hand, and combined heaven, earth, humanity as *sancai* 三才 (three elements, three powers) on the other. Apart from its religious and philosophical connotations, heaven and earth also refers to the ecosystem, which generally comprises organic matters such as plants and animals (including human beings), inorganic matters, ground surface, atmosphere and even the outer space. It is safe to say that this discernment that regards the entire ecological environment in a large context combining man and the universe/creation in one is systematic and holistic. Pre-Qin Confucianism had a basic concept of this system, namely *shengsheng dade* 生生大德 (to give birth to life or life *per se* is the supreme virtue of heaven and earth) in the Appendix of the *Book of Changes*: "The supreme virtue of Heaven and Earth is *sheng*," "yi 易 (the circle of life) is the fountainhead of life and growth in the universe." In other words, *shengsheng* (to give birth to life) is re-creation or creative evolution and also the supreme goodness of heaven and earth). *Shengsheng* is the internal, perpetual dynamic of heaven and earth. Heaven and earth is the great parent of all, who creates everything through *shengsheng*. Moreover, *heyi huasheng* 和以化生 (i.e., there is an intermingling of the genial influences of heaven and earth, and the transformation of all things proceeds abundantly; all things thereupon are produced), namely the intermingling of heaven and earth, is also the propulsion of the process of the ecosystem. The ecosystem is not only an autopoietic system, but also an interdependent life community in which various species coexist harmoniously. This is the profound perception Confucians have towards the great ecolodge *tiandi*.

The pre-Qin Confucians understood the relationship between heaven and man in light of pre-anthropocentrism. Their philosophical thinking of *tianren heyi* 天人合一 (the unity of supernal heaven and humanity) can provide a new perspective for today's eco-ethics. The Confucian way of human retrospection is distinctive of Confucianism, which involves two directions that correspond to each other. On the one hand, man understands *renyi lizhi* 仁义礼智 (benevolence, righteousness, rites, and wisdom) as surpassing everything in the universe. On the other, the transcendence of man also insinuates the difference between human nature and the nature of things. Compared to the nature of things, human nature

is acquired rather than inherited. The unity of supernal heaven and humanity is the achievement of personhood (human nature), which indicates that an individual identifies with the fact that human beings share the same origin with all other creatures and that man are created equal. “*Tianming* 天命 (supernal mandate) determines human nature” and “heaven (God) created people as he created the universe,” on the other hand, implies the codependent equality (equality within the ecosystem), which requires the establishment of ethical relationship between man and the universe. For human beings, ecological species are passive and disadvantageous. Most of the time it is man who harasses the lives of ecological species rather than vice versa, because of which eco-ethics can only be framed upon this unequal basis; it demands thorough introspection and self-discipline in human beings as prerequisites.

The Confucian eco-ethics builds upon our identification with the theory that human nature cognates with the nature of things. Heaven and earth which gave birth to all in the universe are the fountainhead of the values that support our certitude. Under the basic belief of the unity of supernal heaven and humanity, heaven is the womb of all values; but as far as “creatures” are concerned, *tian* and *di* tend to be juxtaposed, mostly *di* governed by *tian*. Therefore, we can also say that *tiandi* is the womb of all values within the ecosystem (Meng 2004).<sup>16</sup>

*The Doctrine of the Mean* and *The Book of Mencius* have very strong insights into the theory that human nature cognates with the nature of things. Only in this way can man show a profound sense of life and weighty cares for everything created by God, knowing the fate of the whole universe rested with their own. On this value consensus, a Confucian eco-ethics is capable of constructing an eco-community which covers both heaven and earth, and the ecosystem will literally be seen as the homeland for our lives in symbiosis with the universe.

It is not that man rises above all other creatures because he is free with his

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<sup>16</sup> In this book Meng Peiyuan 蒙培元 attaches particular significance to the interpretation of *tianren heyi*. He also points out that “*ren* 仁 as moral sentiment can be understood as compassion and love. Since the ultimate source of *ren* is ‘*shengsheng zhide* 生生之德, or the supreme virtue of Heaven and Earth to produce life or *shengsheng zhili* 生生之理, or the principle thereof,’ both of which treat Man and Nature on a equal basis, not only should a man of the virtue of *ren* love people, but he should also love everything besides.” “A man’s spiritual well-being determines his attitude towards all living things in Nature. In Confucianism we advocate the theory of *chengji chengwu* 成己成物, i.e., the established should help develop and establish everyone and everything besides himself.) By saying so this concept must be made clear to us: Only through helping others attain their worthy aims can an individual become fully grown. *Chengji* 成己 to fulfill, to complete oneself) is *xiuji* 修己 to cultivate oneself). A man of the virtue of *ren* 仁 will love everything in Nature on his own initiative rather than cause a wanton destruction to them. *Chengwu* 成物 (to fulfill others) not only relates to living things, but also to stocks and stones, for every single substance on earth is a part of eco-life” (Meng 2004, pp. 32–33).

brain to satisfy his wants and whims; in contrast, man should delve into the origin of human nature so as to learn the supernal mandate from heaven via full development of human nature. Even though human beings are intelligent, they are merely one of the many manifestations of the coherent moral order (or principle) of the cosmos. Man should be very conscious of the fact that sensual excesses may impede the consummation of human nature, and thus should utilize natural resources on just grounds and with restraint. “The gentleman accepts what heaven and earth taught as rites rather than following factitious rites by man” (“Li Qi” in *Book of Rites*). Confucianism is strongly against acts of destruction that rob the ecosystem in order to meet the private ends of man.

As a matter of fact, personality cultivation for Confucians is an interminably upward, accomplishing process. It is due to the fact that man’s sensibility, thinking capacity and action are physical (or phenomenal) and limited in comparison with heaven, pre-Qin Confucians kept accentuating the importance of *jingwei* 敬畏 (awe, reverence) and *zhicheng* 致诚 (in all sincerity). The more the Confucian gentlemen realize the divine nature of the groundwork of human nature, the more they are inclined to hold the cosmological or supernal mandate in awe. *Canzan huayu* 参赞化育 means to join in rather than to replace the *shengsheng dade* (supreme virtue of heaven and earth to produce life) of the Dao of heaven and earth. The Confucian attitude towards ecological protection is following the Supernal Dao, the good timing and the favorable conditions of nature. Now that man is the highest achievement of ecosystem and the utmost implementation of the Goodness of heaven and earth, it is even more inexcusable for human beings to go against the principle of *shengsheng* in the ecosystem where they were born.

Confucius defended objective, intrinsic values within the ecosystem, arguing that the nature of things is to Nature what human nature is to Man. Confucius’ valuation of the ecosystem is based on the knowledge that it is heaven and earth that endowed everything with forms and properties (or dispositions), in the *shengsheng* process of which nothing is precluded from a universal blessing of *xing* 形 (physical forms) and *xing* 性 (human nature). The only difference involved is the creation of the *Yin-Yang*<sup>17</sup> and nothing is produced without the creation. Judging from the universal truth that *xing* (physical forms) and *xing*

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<sup>17</sup> Or *bingqi* 禀气 (vitality, natural property) as defined by Neo-Confucians in the Song dynasty, *Yang* originally meaning sunshine or what pertains to sunshine and light, whereas the word *Yin* meaning the absence of sunshine, i.e., shadow or darkness. In later development, the *Yang* and *Yin* came to be regarded as two cosmic principles or forces, representing masculinity, activity, heat, brightness, dryness, hardness, etc. and femininity, passivity, cold, darkness, wetness, softness, etc. respectively. Through the interaction of these two primary principles, all phenomena of the universe are produced. This concept has remained dominant in Chinese cosmological speculation down to recent times.

(human nature) are created by heaven and earth, the value of nature is more than that of organic life. As with human beings, every living creature has its objective, intrinsic value. It is for this reason that the creation by heaven and earth is value-ontologically significant.

So far as the Confucians are concerned, not only is the ecological system a natural being, but it is also a generating and gathering place for objective values. The relationships among humanity, heaven and earth and the whole creation will inevitably involve a kind of ethics.

Although everything on earth (including man) is birthed by heaven and earth, there is a fundamental difference between man and the other living creatures. Mencius says: “That whereby man differs from birds and beasts is but slight. The mass of the people cast it away, whereas the superior man preserves it”<sup>18</sup> (“Li Lou II” in *Mencius*). Why do we say that the difference between man and birds and beasts is “slight”? It is because both man and birds and beasts are physically and intrinsically valuable due to the bestowal of *xing* (physical forms) and *xing* (human nature) from the creation by heaven and earth. The only difference is that man is conscious of the Goodness in human nature, which is the pre-essential quality of humanness and also the ultimate distinction between man and things. Human beings are the noblest among all species created by heaven and earth. “The human being is the bounty of the virtue of heaven, the outcome of the interaction of *Yin-Yang*, the arrangement of ghosts and gods, and the gracefulness inherited from the constantly circulating five phases *wuxing* 五行” (“Li Yun” in *Book of Rites*). The “nobility” here by no means insinuates that man plays the most essential role in the ecological system; instead, it refers to the noblest disposition heaven and earth endowed in man, thus justifying the claim that man is the ultimate attainment of the ecosystem in creating values. Confucius held that man differs from objects, which illustrates that his ethical attitudes towards human relations and those between man and object are different as well. Mencius said:

In regard to inferior creatures, the gentleman is kind to them, but not loving. In regard to the common people, he is loving to them, but not affectionate. He is affectionate to his parents, and lovingly disposed to the common people. He is lovingly disposed to the common people, and kind to creatures.<sup>19</sup> (“Jin Xin Shang”)

The gentleman, in his relation to things, loves them but has no feeling of benevolence. In his relation to people, he has benevolence, but no deep feeling

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<sup>18</sup> Adapted from Legge 2011, p. 152.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Version 1, p. 268.



of family affection. He has feelings of family affection for his family members, and benevolence for people. He has benevolence for people, and love for things.<sup>20</sup> (Ibid.)

The Confucian *ren'ai* is discriminated. The *ren* (benevolence) here refers particularly to *renlun* 人伦 (ethics, principle of human relations), which can be extended and popularized, such as “treat the aged in your family as they should be treated, and extend this treatment to the aged of other people’s families. Treat the young in your family as they should be treated, and extend this treatment to the young of other people’s families” and the like. The *ai* (love) here refers particularly to *wulun* 物伦 (principle of the relationships among beings), which is also extended from the relationship between man and other beings. *Ren'ai* proceeds from one’s intimates to people generally, and then to every being on earth, which demonstrates an incremental distance. This by no means suggests a decreasing emphasis on previous objects; rather, it typifies diverse ways of distinguishing among different levels of objects of love. Confucius defines *ren'ai* in accordance with different human relationships. For Confucians, love for one’s family differs from that for friends; love for friends differs from that for strangers; love for humankind differs from that for other beings. The principle of human relations) and the principle of the relationships among beings are fundamentally different and should be treated in different ways. “Since the outcomes of the moral order of the cosmos vary from one another, they should not be weighted unbiased. As the ancient teaching goes, coherent principle is one while its manifestations are many” (Zhu 1983, p. 363). The meaning of Mencius’ teaching of “loving things without the feeling of human-heartedness” can be understood through the saying that “man should show a loving concern for inferior creatures, but does not necessarily treat them as human beings.” The hierarchical differentiation between the principle of human relations and the principle of the relationships among beings can be utilized to explain Confucius’ attitudes towards the relationship between man and horse and those between rites and sheep. The principle of human relations is more important in comparison with the principle of the relationships among beings. Such is the humanitarian spirit of Confucianism. Nonetheless, it is inappropriate to draw a conclusion from the above that Confucius is unkind to animals. If so, the Confucian teaching about “loving things” would become empty talk. The so-called *jianchu* 贱畜 (belittling animals) is merely as contrasted with valuing people. In this context it is more appropriate to say that Confucius has warned us: He who acts with ill-will to people will not be good to things; all the things have their order of priority, he

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Version 2, originally trans. by Liu and Xiong.

that does not follow a flexible course of action to meet the immediate needs of the situation cannot be called a Confucian. Mencius said:

The wise embrace all knowledge, but they are most earnest about what is of the greatest importance. The benevolent embrace all in their love, but what they consider of the greatest importance is to cultivate an earnest affection for the virtuous. Even the wisdom of Yao and Shun did not extend to everything, but they attended earnestly to what was important. Their benevolence did not show itself in acts of kindness to every man, but they earnestly cultivated an affection for the virtuous.<sup>21</sup> (“Jin Xin Xia”)

In fact, the Neo-Confucians were lovingly concerned about the entire universe. Their solicitude is greatly oriented by the intrinsic value of each creature, for such value is bestowed by heaven and earth and cognates with the inner value of human beings. As pointed out in “Gaozi Shang” of *Mencius*, Chapter “Niushan Zhuozhuo,” the Niu Mountain was once beautiful under the nourishment of rain and dew. Such beauty was the exclusive intrinsic value of the Niu Mountain. Being situated, however, in the borders of a large state, the trees on the mountain were hewn down with axes and bills and no longer retained their beauty. Then came the cattle and goats and browsed upon them. These creatures wore the mountain bare and stripped the appearance of the mountain, and when people now see it, they think it was never finely wooded. Here Mencius intended to draw an analogy between the tragedy of the Niu Mountain and the development of human nature. But in light of his description of the ravaged Niu Mountain, it is right from the nature of Niu Mountain that Mencius started the analogy. It is owing to its nature that the Niu Mountain was able to be nourished by heaven and earth and become beautiful; it is also due to the damage of its nature that the Niu Mountain finally lost its beauty. It is safe to say that the intrinsic value of the Niu Mountain lies in its nature.

The Confucians, of course, show their concerns about creatures within the ecosystem at different levels. In “Li Lun,” Xunzi divides his argument on care and love into several levels. According to Xunzi, the discussion should be arranged by the superiority of intrinsic values and be developed from inorganic matter to organic matter, from plant to animal, and from animal to human being. Animals are neighbors to humans in this hierarchy of values and possesses the highest intrinsic value next to human beings. In spite of the fact that birds and animals are less intelligent and sensitive than man, they do show some awareness and emotional identification to the same species as well, which surpasses other creatures on earth. Man’s relationship with them is undoubtedly different from that with insects and plants. Such difference also conforms to the Confucian

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<sup>21</sup> Adapted from Legge 2011, pp. 268–269.

principle that love varies from sphere to sphere in nature (or there are gradations of love). Mencius said: “It is the nature of things to be of unequal quality”<sup>22</sup> (“Teng Wen Gong Shang” in *Mencius*). The intrinsic values of things diverge greatly, because of which the ways people love them should also be different. This illustrates an eco-ethical awareness of gradation, or say, a discriminative consciousness of different layers of ethics.

Due to the fact that animals are capable of feeling pain, the pre-Qin Confucians tended to show compassion for them. “Liang Huiwang Shang” of *Mencius* records that on one occasion, when an ox was being led to sacrifice, King Xuan of Qi saw it and could not endure “its frightened appearance, as if it were an innocent person going to the place of death.” Mencius interpreted the story as a natural extension of benevolent mind from man’s unbearing mind towards man to unbearing mind towards animals. For Mencius, unbearing mind towards man is an act of loving the people, while unbearing mind towards animals is an act of loving things. When man encounters the painful experience of animals, his inner moral introspection is bound to be engaged. There are more than instrumental values to be found in animals, which are called their “intrinsic values.”

It would be improper for us to reduce pre-Qin Confucians’ ideas about ecological protection, such as “If close nets are not allowed to enter the pools and ponds, the fishes and turtles will be more than can be consumed. If the axes and bills enter the hills and forests only at the proper time, the wood will be more than can be used”<sup>23</sup> (Ibid., “Liang Huiwang Shang”), to a sheer embrace of instrumental values. “All the creatures cohabit with me” is the general understanding of Confucian eco-ethics. On the one hand, Confucians do utilize ecological resources for the sake of their instrumental values; on the other hand, they by no means underrate the intrinsic values of the resources. *Minben wuyong* 民本物用 (instrumental values), *aiwu* 爱物 (loving things) and *jinwu zhixing* 尽物之性 (intrinsic values) constitute the Confucian way of treating things.

To appreciate the intrinsic value of animals, Confucians advocate care and love for them; for the sake of other concerns, however, Confucians do not oppose utilizing the instrumental values of animals either. But is this contradictory? For animal rights activists, if animals are capable of feeling pain as human beings are, they ought to deserve the basic protection of right to life. Man should avoid killing animals. Besides, man can survive on vegetarian foods, unlike carnivores that have no other option. This thought actually goes from one extreme (unnecessary slaughter of animals) to the other (non-killing; or abstinence from taking life), which in the Confucian view is untenable. Eating and drinking is an

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

important part of Confucian etiquette norms. Confucian etiquette has never questioned the normally edible species in our daily lives. This is because man is also allowed to eat meat (not all animals, of course) in addition to grains and vegetables, which is the natural way man has followed since heaven and earth gave birth to human beings. That man does not overstep the modesty of nature reflects man's reverence toward heaven and earth, which is not to be censured, but should be commended. H. Rolston once reprimanded animal rights advocates for the mistake of putting the cart before the horse. He criticized them by saying that their excessive concerns over wild animals were a sort of "literate and overdone sentimentality" and that man "only bears a weak obligation to wild animals. He should prevent them from unnecessary sufferings so as to improve their lot, rather than searching for their 'welfare'" (Rolston 2000, p. 108). As to edible, domesticated animals, Rolston argued that human consumption by no means sinned against life; in contrast, it demonstrates respect for the order of ecological system. That man kills and eats other animals is a consequence of man's obedience to natural selection and evolution.

"Jiyi" of *Book of Rites* says: "To cut a tree or to kill a beast in inopportune seasons is called unfilial." Cutting down trees and killing beasts are both acts of extracting natural resources. Untimely utilization is improper and should be condemned. We might have criticized this behavior as "improper" at worst. But how can we say it is "unfilial"? The statement in "Jiyi" of *Book of Rites* does not appear alone; rather, it accompanies the narrations on filial piety. Confucius put special emphasis on precise manners in practicing filial piety. As Yue-zheng Chun remarked in the same chapter: "Whenever I take a step, I dare not forget my parents; whenever I say a word, I dare not forget my parents,"<sup>24</sup> which fully indicates this point. Zengzi also quoted Confucius' words to explain that filial piety should be realized through patient, painstaking, and down-to-earth routines of everyday life. With the existence of ancient laws regulating the utilization of forests and lakes, a person that violated the rules would harm the code of courtesy and etiquette and would certainly ruin the reputation of his parents. In the view of the Confucians, this is an extremely unfilial act. That is why Zengzi said in "Zengzi Zhi Yan": "I trust those who do not slaughter domestic animals in the presence of their parents." The Confucians include man's attitudes toward animals in the inquiries about rites. The central part of rites is people. But the relationships between people and things as well as man's attitudes toward things also constitute the scope of rites. In fact, Confucian eco-ethics is closely related to rites; rites, on the other hand, correlate very closely with man's ethics and morals, which results in an inner connection between Confucian eco-ethics and human morality. The Confucian distinction between the principle of human

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<sup>24</sup>Adapted from Legge 1885, "Ji Yi."

relations and the principle of relationships among beings does not suggest that there is no possible connection between the two. This is really something to think about.

Constitutional measures to protect ecology can be found within the Confucian ceremonial system. The *Yue Ling* 月令 (Monthly Commands) reveals that Confucians protected ecological resources through rites in three respects: (1) the prohibition against hewing and hunting to the point of mass annihilation; (2) the protection of the pregnant and the young and any forms of life; (3) emphasis on *shi* 时 (“time” or “season”). The pre-Qin Confucians handled the relationship between man and the ecosystem by way of *liyue* 礼乐 (rites and music). *He* 和 (harmony), one of the spirits of rites and music, is the direct embodiment of the creation-centered spirituality of heaven and earth. Its influence upon the ecological environment is also exhibited in terms of *he* (harmony) in three aspects: in the first place, rites and music are the important guarantees of the fulfillment of the spirit of *tianren heyi* 天人合一 (the unity of supernal heaven and humanity). The Confucian view of rites and music on ecological protection not only follows the natural way of heaven and earth, but also aims to moderate man’s material wants out of human nature. “... Man’s activity shows itself as he is acted on by external things, and develops the desires incident to his nature. ... Now there is no end of the things by which man is affected; and when his likings and dislikings are not subject to regulation (from within), he is changed into the nature of things as they come before him; that is, he stifles the voice of Heavenly principle within, and gives the utmost indulgence to the desires by which men may be possessed”<sup>25</sup> (“Yueji” in *Book of Rites*). If human beings are not capable of moderating their own desires and they exploit ecological resources for their own interests, they are bound to lose themselves and end up on the wrong track. On the other hand, rites and music are religious means by which Confucians experience the same origin between the universe and I. There are strong religious feelings involved in the Confucian reverence toward heaven and earth, which can be explained as awe and worship to the supernal power that could make all things. Pre-Qin Confucians tended to believe that ecological resources were given by heaven and earth, on account of which they grew a reverent feeling towards them. In bad times of the year, Confucians asked that man’s food and drink be moderate, so as to show consideration for the hardships heaven and earth experienced in giving birth to all things. Even the Emperor should not kill a pregnant animal for food, neither a priest who made it among the offerings. It is homage to heaven and earth’s great power of making all things. Last but not least, rites and music as methods to create harmony are Confucian strategies to organize all beings in the universe. As is said in “Li Qi” of *Book of Rite*: “(The

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., “Yue Ji.”

things used in performing) the rites should be suitable to the season, taken from the resources supplied by the ground, in accordance with (the requirements of) the spirits, and agreeable to the minds of men—according to the characteristics of all things.”<sup>26</sup> Man has to gain access to ecological resources for survival. However, it is necessary for man to follow the natural way of ecosystem, trying to be reasonable (following the mandate of gods and the wishes of the people) and temperate (complying with good timing and geographical convenience). Human beings should not exhaust the treasure of heaven and earth to meet their private ends. The fundamental and most effective strategy for ecological conservation is to intervene and disrupt the natural way of the ecological self-sufficient system as infrequently as possible. So long as human beings do not disturb the ecological environment, the supreme virtue of heaven and earth to produce life will naturally generate constantly, creating a world vibrant with life. *Yue Ji* 乐记 (The Book of Music) maintains that ecological problems *per se* are political problems, which requires collaboration and concerted efforts among humankind (i.e., *hejing tong'ai* 合敬同爱). If human beings cannot live in harmony, if they launch wars and start riots, it would be extravagant to hope that they could address the issue of ecology conservation seriously.

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### 3 In Completing Oneself, Help Complete Other People or Things: Inter-Subjectivity, Communicative Theory and Personality Development

This second section attempts to further promote the ideas of the first section, especially the pre-Qin Confucian view of ecological ethics in order to understand the fact that the *ren'ai* 仁爱 (benevolence) and the *tui'ai* 推爱 (extending love) actually endorse and respect the intrinsic values of all living things. But of course these values vary greatly from one another, and the ways that man express concerns over things in Nature are different as well. This is the so-called awareness of gradation. This again goes back to the discussion on *tuiji jiren* 推己及人 (to put oneself in another's place) and *chadeng zhi'ai* 差等之爱 (love with distinctions) in the first section. In fact, the Confucian ideal is to have different people and things play their own roles, follow their true natures and live to the best of their potential. The real world is diverse. In spite of this, Confucius dared to face such diversity squarely. Next let us talk about the characteristics of the Confucian view on benevolence and extending love.

Chan Wing-tsit (Chen Rongjie) said: “More practical and realistic Confucians insisted that benevolence should be graded. For Confucians, it is most unnatural to love other people as love one's dear ones, or to take care of others as of one's

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., “Li Qi.”

parents. It is also out of our comfort zone. It is not that Confucians did not love the mass of people, but that they thought love of people should have priorities... Later on, the Mohist theory in defense of *jian'ai* 兼爱 (all-embracing love) gradually declined. It is not because the Chinese people did not take it seriously, but because the Mohist hypothesis that people in real life could put all people on an equal footing was unconscionable, unrealistic and flawed” (Chen 2009, pp. 22–23). Chen quoted Wang Yangming’s words as saying: “*Ren'ai* has its roots and beginnings, whereas *jian'ai* is rootless.” He also pointed out that love with distinctions did not exactly depend on realistic considerations. *The Doctrine of the Mean*, Mencius and Zhang Hengqu 张横渠, all chose to examine the paramount virtue metaphysically. Chen further indicated that if the Song Confucian conception of *liyi fenshu* 理一分殊 (the teaching that coherent principle or pattern is one or unified while its manifestations are many or diverse) could be applied to the teaching of the paramount virtue, the integration of all-embracing love and love with distinctions could be expected soon. Zhu Xi remarked in *Xi Ming Zhu* 西铭注 (Commentary on Xi Ming) as follows:

Every creature owes heaven and earth for the grace of breeding and parenting. Such is the coherent pattern of moral order in the cosmos. Now that all men and creatures belong in different families and species, it is understandable that individual families love their kindred by favoritism. This ethical relationship also, however, leads to corruption and evil deeds. Suppose the coherent principle of moral order is one while its manifestations are many, we will be most likely to achieve harmony without uniformity without being harmed by the misconduct of all-embracing love or the limitation of the narrow interest of individual in Confucianist family ethics based on *qinqin* 亲亲 (i.e., one should have feelings of family affection for the members of one’s family). Such is the main theme of *Xi Ming*. To unify *qinqin* with *wuwo* 无我 (selflessness) is to integrate the contradictory ideas of private interest and public interest, which is to talk about benevolence and the Supernal Dao objectively in light of the principle of *liyi fenshu*.

Chen Rongjie believed that the speech above laid the metaphysical foundation of the theory of *aiyou chadeng* 爱有差等 (love with distinctions) in Confucianism (Ibid., p. 27). Chen lays special emphasis upon Mencius’ idea of *renyi bingju* 仁义并举 (to practice benevolence and righteousness at the same time) and *renyi neizai* 仁义内在 (to develop benevolence and righteousness within). He points out: “Why would Mencius discuss benevolence and righteousness together? This is because not only did Mencius attach great importance to the essence of benevolence, but also think highly of its

application... Mencius insisted that ‘Heaven gives birth to creatures in such a way that they have one root’<sup>27</sup> (“Teng Wen Gong Zhangju Shang” in *Mencius*, Chap. 5), namely moral life is but one, for the reason of which benevolence and righteousness should not be separated as internal and external. Influenced by *The Doctrine of the Mean*, Mencius also stressed the nature of benevolence, but he endeavored to be faithful to its original meaning. Mencius said, “Benevolence is man’s mind, while righteousness is man’s path.”<sup>28</sup> (Ibid., “Gao Zi Shang,” Chap. 11). He again said, “Benevolence is the tranquil habitation of man, while righteousness is his straight path”<sup>29</sup> (Ibid., “Li Lou Shang,” Chap. 10). Apparently, a straight path requires a procedural order. The “order” here involves the relativity of significance or partiality. Benevolence includes all the ethical relationships between men. Yet it is righteousness that distinguishes among such relationships. In other words, both the universality and uniqueness of Confucian benevolence are highly valued” (Ibid., p. 23). That is to say, for Wang Yangming’s thought of *yiti zhiren* 一体之仁 (forming one body), the significance of righteousness lies in that it complements and enriches the orderliness, partiality, relativity and distinctiveness of morality. Either in terms of individualized, internalized and moralized benevolence and righteousness, or in the form of social normative virtues, the two concepts reinforce each other and reconcile both universality and distinctiveness. Benevolence is the inner spirit of man, while righteousness is the moral standard to be followed. The virtue of righteousness can also be defined as a concrete manifestation of the virtue of benevolence: Show respect to the respectable, love someone who is really worth it. The scope of man’s responsibilities and obligations ranges from parents to spouse, from brethren to relatives, from neighbors to strangers, from official business to personal affairs, and even from family regulation to the administration of the country, each with its own grade, boundary and sense of propriety. Righteousness is judgment on the righteousness of events and the actions ensued, which possesses the connotation of legitimacy, appropriateness, or justice. “Righteousness is the way as it should be,” which also means righteousness is the appropriate way to be followed by all creatures within the universe (Guo 2009, pp. 221–222).

Furthermore, the relationship between *ren* (benevolence) and *li* (rites) is also something to be mentioned.

Roger Ames translated *ren* (benevolence) into “authoritative person,” highlighting its connotation of “growing” man, “growing” personality and the healthy practice of rites by participating in community lives. He points out that “Confucius made the idea of *ren* creatively significant... *Ren* involves a

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<sup>27</sup> Adapted from Legge 2011, p. 103.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 135.



connotation that indicates the qualitative change of a specific person. And it is only within the distinctive, specific context related to the person's life that the connotation can be understood... *Chengren zhidao* 成人之道 (the Way to complete and perfect oneself) is not something given, either. A benevolent person should be a road-builder and a participant in 'authorizing' the culture of his time... In terms of the definition of *ren*, the observation of the rites (or the proprieties) is an internalizing process, which means making the legacy of their fathers their own. This process requires the personification of the roles and relations a specific person has in positioning himself in a community" (Ames 2009, pp. 371–372).

Ames translated *li* into "ritual propriety" instead of "rites," which for him was derogative and implied a complete yielding to conventions. He stressed that "*li* refers to roles and relationships invested with meanings as well as organizations that promote communication and sense of community... What is more significant, this performance comprising *li* begins with such an insight, that is, it is only through rules prescribed by formalized roles and actions that personal refinement is to be realized. Uncreative personalized (something *ren*) rites (*li*) are mandatory and inhumane; whereas formless personal expressions are arbitrary and even presumptuous. It is through proper unification of form (*li*) and personification (*ren*) that families and communities are able to regulate and refine themselves" (Ibid., pp. 380–381).

As with *ren* and *yi*, *li* (rites) possesses moral-religious connotations. As Xunzi discussed in his theory of rites has three fundamentals in "Li Lun" heaven and earth is the original source of life; ancestors are the original source of families and clans; sovereigns and sages are the original source of politics. And rites are to serve heaven and earth and to show respect to the ancestors, the sovereigns and the sages. Rites involve worship and repaying which are religiously connotated, such as "to practice the rites of the Zhou is to avoid forgetting about history and ancestry"<sup>30</sup> ("Li Qi" in *Book of Rites*). In Xunzi's opinion, social integration, maintenance, and regularization depend on social division of labor and social hierarchy. He also mentioned that "moral conduct refers to the practice of rites and righteousness. As for rites and righteousness, it means reverence toward men of noble ranks, filial piety toward the aged, obedience toward the senior, loving affection toward the young, and benevolence toward men of humble birth" (*Xunzi*, Chap. 3). In the ethical order of rites we can also find some humanitarian spirit and moral values. Xunzi rated rites as "the highest of virtues," "the loftiest of righteousness" and "the zenith of humanity," for the ultimate goal of *li* is to make men of noble ranks esteemed, the aged taken good care of, the senior respected, the young lovingly dealt with, and the humble

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<sup>30</sup>Adapted from Legge 1885, "Li Qi."

benefited. We can find virtues such as *jing* 敬 (reverence), *xiao* 孝 (filial piety), *ti* 悌 (fraternal love), *ci* 慈 (mercy), and *hui* 惠 (favor) etc., within the graded ritual system; issues concerning the protection of the disadvantaged are also addressed.

“Quli Shang” in *The Book of Rites* has made a special note of the teachings that “*li* does not go beyond the appropriate grade” and to practice economy and moderation. The context is as follows: “Rites require us not to go beyond the appropriate grade, not to entrench upon or insult others, and not to be frivolous and get improperly intimate with others,” “The gentleman tends to act respectfully, moderately and transigently so as to practice rites.” By nature courteous and obliging, gentleman is always moderate and inoffensive in dealing with people. On the one hand, rites are at heart the practice of reverence and considerateness; on the other, it registers as the observation of certain rites. This however, is not merely a pedantic insistence on rules, but the unification of content and form on basis of *lirang* 礼让 (rites and yielding). “The Master said, if it is really possible to govern countries by rites and yielding, there is no more to be said. But if it is not really possible, of what use is ritual?”<sup>31</sup> (“Liren” in *The Analects*) Confucius followed the ancient history books and reasserted the idea that “‘He who can himself submit to ritual is Good.’ If a ruler could for one day ‘himself submit to ritual,’ everyone under Heaven would respond to his Goodness,” which suggests the significance of self-restraint and civility in practicing moderation. Of course, Confucius’ sentiments also took ground upon human-heartedness. Individually speaking, *fuli* 复礼 (submission to the rites of Chou) is a matter of cultivation. Confucius’ advocacy of *fu’er haoli* 富而好礼 (rich man who loves rites) and *keji fuli* 克己复礼 (submission to rites by self-restraint) actually tells us how to refrain from luxury and pleasure through self-cultivation.

“The ancient kings thereupon laid down rites and music to moderate man’s desires. The funeral rites were devised to make people refrain from carrying their grief to excess. The musical instruments and dance appliances were designed to moderate man’s pursuit of pleasure. Initial ceremony and wedding were created to distinguish between male and female. The rites of drinking wine and archery were used to normalize interpersonal communions. There is rites to moderate human hearts; there is music to harmonize human voices; there is *zheng* 政 (politics) to implement state policies; there is *xing* 刑 (penalty) to prevent evil doings. If the four go unimpeded and do not contradict each other, the requirements to achieve kingly government are fulfilled”<sup>32</sup> (“Yue Ji” in *Book of Rites*). What has been stressed here is moderating human hearts, normalizing

<sup>31</sup> Adapted from Waley 2007, p. 43.

<sup>32</sup> Adapted from Legge 1885, “Yue Ji.”

interpersonal communions and the teamwork of rites, music, penalty, and politics.

The function of rites is most valued when rites are practiced moderately. This is not to pursue moderation for the sake of moderation; instead, some connotation in connection with cultural value is involved. The major function of rites is to moderate people's words and deeds through certain conventions and rules. The conception of moderation here is worth discussing as well. "People in ancient times valued *de* 德 (virtue), while people afterwards stressed reward. Rites values reciprocity, for courtesy on one side cannot last long. With the establishment of rites social stability grows; without rites, the society will suffer unrest and crisis sooner or later. So to speak, 'there is no reason for us not to practice rites!' The essence of rites is seen in humbling one's self and giving honor to others. Even porters and peddlers are sure to display this given honor (in some cases); how much more should the rich and noble do so (in all)! When the rich and noble know to love rites, they do not become proud nor dissolute. When the poor and mean know to love rites, their minds do not become cowardly"<sup>33</sup> (Ibid., "Quli Shang"). The communicative principle here contains the following contents: virtue is most precious; humbling one's self and giving honor to others; and basing civility on reciprocity. Both the rich and the poor, the noble and the mean are supposed to respect and benefit each other. Here we give special importance to the respect for porters, peddlers and the humble (Guo 2008, pp. 184–192).

Confucius said: "The ceremonies of the archery fetes and the drinking at them express the loving feeling towards all in the district and neighborhood; the ceremonies of festal entertainments express the loving feeling towards visitors and guests"<sup>34</sup> ("Zhongni Yanju" in *Book of Rites*). All the rites and ceremonies mentioned above by Confucius reflect the harmonious effect and the principle of harmony of rites.

Rites and music have different emphases. For example, rites help differentiate people of different ranks while music helps harmonize people's communication; rites are mainly directed at the development of morality while music aims at the cultivation of human nature; rites are practiced through external actions while music is practiced from within. In spite of this, rites and music cannot function properly without coordinating with each other, especially in "manipulating man's thought."

Music is an irreplaceable method to harmonize human relations; rites are an incommutable principle to manage the country. Music unites people with one

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., "Qu Li I."

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., "Zhongni Yan Ju."

heart and one mind; rites demand people to distinguish themselves by social rank. So to speak the principle of rites and music can manipulate man's thought. ("Yue Lun" in *Xunzi*)

Similarity and union are the aim of music; difference and distinction, that of ceremony. From union comes mutual affection; from difference, mutual respect. Where music prevails, we find a weak coalescence; where ceremony prevails, a tendency to separation. It is the business of the two to blend people's feelings and give elegance to their outward manifestations. Through the perception of right produced by ceremony, came the degrees of the noble and the mean; through the union of culture arising from music, harmony between high and low. By the exhibition of what was to be liked and what was to be disliked, a distinction was made between the worthy and unworthy. When violence was prevented by punishments, and the worthy were raised to rank, the operation of government was made impartial. Then came benevolence in the love (of the people), and righteousness in the correction (of their errors); and in this way good government held its course.<sup>35</sup> ("Yue Ji" in *Book of Rites*)

Music served to give the interior cultivation; the rules to give the external. The two, operating reciprocally within, had their outward manifestation, and the result was a peaceful serenity, reverence of inward feeling and mild elegance of manners.<sup>36</sup> (Ibid., "Wenwang Shizi")

Enough has been said to show the distinctiveness and gradation of rites. Confucian benevolence and love with distinctions are demonstrated through the formalities of rites. And righteousness are also embodied in rites.

In the process of the growth of the personality of gentleman, it is especially essential to reflect, demonstrate and accumulate the virtue of benevolence. Nonetheless, rites are restricted by time and space while the formalities will constrain the free development of man. Rites *per se* in certain occasions is likely to become a limitation on benevolence.

Tu Weiming has discussed the creative tension between *ren* (benevolence) and *li* (rites) in particular. He emphasized that "Benevolence is not only an interpersonal concept, but also a principle of inwardness. Such inwardness suggests that benevolence is not something acquired from outside, nor is it a product of ecological, social or political powers... Benevolence as an inner morality is not attained via the mechanism of rites from outside, but is a concept

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., "Yue Ji."

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., "Wen Wang Shi Zi."

from a higher level, which gives meaning to rites. In this perspective, we are safe to say that benevolence is largely related to the process of the self-reliance, self-improvement and self-realization of a person... Rites can be regarded as the externalization of benevolence under specific social circumstances” (Tu 2002, pp. 19–20).

Tu compares the tension between benevolence and rites to that between law and the Gospel in Christianity. He again remarked that “a person cannot live without rites. Yet when rites becomes thoroughly determinant in the person’s life, he is no longer a real person. So from a more profound perspective, the creative tension between benevolence and rites indicates an interdependent relationship between the two. In this way, not only have Confucian scholars realized pessimistically that social coercion is no more than a given condition, but they have also found optimistically that it is a new creative tool” (Ibid., p. 23). According to Tu, rites without benevolence will degenerate into an unimprovable social coercion, which might ruin the real feelings of man. Genuine Confucians are not hypocrites. They carry on moral praxis by self-consciousness rather than yielding to given norms.

Confucius emphasized subjectivity, especially the subjectivity of morality (or virtues). Yet the Confucian relations between man and man’s self, man and things are inter-subjective. For Confucians, the universe exists and develops in the extending process of the virtues of self-completion), helping the completion of others and helping the completion of things. *The Doctrine of the Mean* says:

Sincerity is the way of Heaven. The attainment of sincerity is the way of men. He who possesses sincerity is he who, without an effort, hits what is right, and apprehends, without the exercise of thought; he is the sage who naturally and easily embodies the right way. He who attains sincerity is he who chooses what is good, and firmly holds it fast.

Sincerity is the Supernal Dao and the inborn nature of the sage. For the sage, sincerity is realized through *renyi* (benevolence and righteousness), which arises from natural instincts and conforms to the doctrine of the mean without conscious efforts, gains in plenty without speculation, and achieves the Way of the mean with easy assurance. Men of virtue and gentlemen are those who “attains sincerity” by way of cultivation and perseverance. In order to acquire the virtue of sincerity, a gentleman must know the inseparability of knowledge and practice and practice repeatedly by “extensive study of what is good, accurate inquiry about it, careful reflection on it, the clear discrimination of it, and the earnest practice of it.” “When we have intelligence resulting from sincerity, this condition is to be ascribed to nature; when we have sincerity resulting from

intelligence, this condition is to be ascribed to instruction. But given the sincerity, and there shall be the intelligence; given the intelligence, and there shall be the sincerity” (*The Doctrine of the Mean*). Complete sincerity gives way to *mingde* 明德 (illustrious virtue), which is the natural instinct of the sage; illustrious virtue leads to complete sincerity, which is learned achievement of the virtuous. Therefore, the former is *xing* 性 (human nature) while the latter is *jiao* 教 (education). Sincerity giving way to intelligence is the Supernal Dao and a philosophical context; the other way round being the Dao of man and earthly praxis.

It is only he who is possessed of the most complete sincerity that can exist under heaven, who can give its full development to his nature. Able to give its full development to his own nature, he can do the same to the nature of other men. Able to give its full development to the nature of other men, he can give their full development to the natures of animals and things. Able to give their full development to the natures of creatures and things, he can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth. Able to assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth, he may with Heaven and Earth form a ternion. (Ibid.)

A sincere sage can give full play to both his and others’ natural endowments, helping the universe produce life, thus with Heaven and Earth functioning as a trinity! The virtuous (or worthy) man, on the other hand, needs to pursue Goodness diligently and slowly achieve the virtue of complete sincerity in small ways. Through self-cultivation, a worthy man attains utmost sincerity within and is naturally up to the moral standard of rites. He will certainly influence and reform others and extend Goodness to the masses. Practically speaking, a man of virtue (or worthy man) grows from intelligence to sincerity, that is, he has gone through the experience of learning and cultivation, the transformation from part to whole, the transition from the fulfillment of man’s way of dealing things to the materialization of the Supernal Dao, and finally improves his own situation. It does show that with certain efforts in pursuing the virtue of sincerity, the gentleman and man of virtue can also attain to the sage’s greatness of sincerity! *The Doctrine of the Mean* says:

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 superior man regards the attainment of sincerity as the most excellent thing. The possessor of sincerity does not merely accomplish the self-completion of himself. With this quality he completes other men and things also. The completing himself

shows his perfect virtue. The completing other men and things shows his knowledge. But these are virtues belonging to the nature, and this is the way by which a union is effected of the external and internal. Therefore, whenever he-the entirely sincere man-employs them,-that is, these virtues, their action will be right.

Here, the virtue of sincerity is the inwardness of natural morals and the potential of personality cultivation. Dao is the process of self-cultivation and praxis. The virtue of sincerity, on the other hand, is the noumenon of all things and the integrity and process that run through the entire universe. Gentlemen regard sincerity as a rare and precious treasure. Men of complete sincerity not only pursue self-accomplishment, but also propose to help fulfill others' worthy goals. Self-accomplishment is required by the inner benevolence of one's personality; while helping others complete their personalities and follow their true natures is required by the internal *zhi* 知 (all the arts and dispositions of learning, discernment and wisdom) in human nature. The immanent virtues of sage, sincerity, human-heartedness and *zhi* all require outward extension. In this way, self-realization and helping completion of others are united in one. Only when the objectives of other people and things are achieved can one complete oneself completely. Such is the Confucian way of *cheng* 诚 (sincerity) and *shu* 恕 (altruism; empathy). In other words, the idea of sincerity in *The Doctrine of the Mean* includes the way of *ren'ai* (benevolence) and *zhongshu* 忠恕 (conscientiousness to others). In addition, the idea of sincerity in *The Doctrine of the Mean* is the supreme state of the unity of heaven, earth, and humanity as well as the unity of inwardness and outwardness, a state which involves the stretching out from two sides: on one side is the mysterious inner spirit which links with the Supernal Dao, namely godly-like sincerity; on the other is helping completion of things and *jinxing* 尽性 (with all one's soul and natural endowments), extending from heaven to earth, people and things. To sustain one's self and to develop one's self versus to sustain others and to develop others; to give full play to one's own natural endowments or true nature and to give full play to other people's natural endowments or true nature, to give full play to the natural endowments of things; to manifest bright virtue versus the new people; and sageliness within versus kingliness without...are all one body with two sides.

Cheng Zhongying deems that the purpose of Confucian cultivation "is to materialize one's virtues and to realize one's potentials within the actuality of relationships. There are two main ideas involved in such self-cultivation and self-realization: One is that this experience will extend from self-completion to the completion of others; the other is that this experience will integrate man's inner accomplishments with the external effects. In this way man is both inwardly and outwardly cultivated. In other words, he has achieved the state of

‘sageliness within and kingliness without.’ The Confucian teachings have clearly proclaimed the ideal of *chengji chengren* 成己成人 (in completing one’s self, help complete others)” (Cheng 2006, p. 20).

Tu Weiming holds that the Confucian idea of “self” is the center as well as the constant extension and transformation of a multiple relationship network. Tu regards this Confucian view as a self-development within a circle of unceasingly extending relationships, which can be embodied by layers of concentric circles: family, neighborhood, all kinds of communities, society, country, the world, and even the universe and the transcendent. The outmost layers of these concentric circles are open rather than closed. The relations between individual and family, community, country, humanity, Nature and the Supernal Dao are crucial and indispensable in self-development. The Confucian idea of “self” refrains from isolated egocentrism without losing the independence of individuals; it relies upon communities without reducing the number of them; and it gains access to heaven on the basis of communities. The development of a Confucian “self” is double-tracked: One is horizontal extension while the other is vertical deepening. The result of the integration of the two dynamic movements above is the attainment of a complete personality and the unity of heaven, earth and humanity.

Tu Weiming believes that the reconstruction of Confucian humanity can inherit the Enlightenment spirit (liberty, rationality, legislation, human rights, personal indignity and other fundamental values) on the one hand, and transcend the Enlightenment mentality (anthropocentrism, surfeit of instrumental rationality, imposing evolutionary conflicts upon people by force, unchecked self-inflation) on the other, and will provide the following intellectual resources for the New Axial Age: First, the organic unity of body, mind, spiritual senses and the divinities within one’s self; second, the healthy interaction between individual and community and even interaction between communities; third, the sustained harmony between man and nature; last but not least, human will and the Supernal Dao supplement each other (Tu 2002, Guo 2002, Hu 2004).

In brief, the Confucian theory and praxis of *rencheng* 仁诚 (paramount virtue and sincerity) and *renyili* 仁义礼 (benevolence, righteousness and rites) are beneficial to the regulation and harmonization of individual, community, the Nature and the Supernal Dao today. And the idea of Confucian benevolence can communicate with Christian charity. Moreover, the principle of loving with distinctions is a practical wisdom, which can be justified as a universal love. With the guidance of ultimate faiths and supreme beliefs, the methods of *tuiji jiren* 推己及人 (to extend one’s scope of activity to include others or to be considerate), *tui’en* 推恩 (to extend favors), *tui’ai* 推爱 (to extend love) and *chengji chengren chengwu* 成己成人成物 (in completing one’s self, help complete of others) have provided practical approaches for humankind to solve the conflicts between man and nature, man and society, man and man, and man



and himself. The Confucian communicative theory has shed light upon dialogue among civilizations. The Confucian concepts of filial piety, and Confucian benevolence, on the other hand, are not to be neglected in the reconstruction of core values in the modern society. The Confucian teachings on self-cultivation are also of contemporary significance to the personality growth and mental regulation of gentlemen today. The aspects mentioned above, once transformed and reconstructed creatively, will benefit the construction of a harmonious world. *Ren'ai*, *ren'de*, and *zhongshu* are ethos and virtues of universal values upon which we rely ourselves to be recognized by others, by the community, by the nation and by the world.

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