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Book Review

Scholar's Corner: Confucianism in and for the Modern World

Korean Philosophy Today: *Retrospect and Prospect*

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What is the status of Korean philosophy today from a global perspective? What was it like before and how is it evolving? Anglophone philosophers in general have of late begun to pay more attention to the general history and issues of philosophy in East Asia, and, Michael C. Kalton (1988; 2015), Martina Deuchler (1992), P. J. Ivanhoe (2015; 2016; 2020), Robert Buswell (1983; 1989; 2007; 2016), Charles Muller (2012; 2015), Hwa Yol Jung (2014; 2021), Jin Y. Park (2005; 2010; 2014; 2018; 2022), and other influential commentators both of Western as well as Korean extraction have made substantial contributions that develop major themes in Korean philosophy specifically. Indeed, Korean philosophy in general, having been an intellectual pariah for a long time, has made steady progress over the years and is now gradually evolving into a respectable form of thought. This is a welcome development. The recent surge of intense global interests in East Asian traditions in general and especially in the K-culture (K-pop, K-drama, K-movies, K-foods, *inter alia*) has given an additional impetus to the growing attention to Korean philosophy as well. At this point,

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** The great challenge facing those interested in Korean philosophy in academia is the Romanization of the Korean and Sino-Korean characters. Scholars traditionally prefer McCune-Reischauer Method (MR here after) but the Revised Romanization (RR hereafter) suggested by the Ministry of Education of the government of the Republic of Korea is gaining popularity. Since the available literature lacks consistency, I simply proceed with RR as a default method, even though I will stick to the traditional spelling in some cases, e.g., when famous names have been used consistently and predominantly in a different method. Whenever the context makes the reader bewildered, I will indicate the method adopted in individual works after each.

many institutions of higher education in the world, the course list in philosophy includes one or more surveys of Asian philosophy. The historical-geographical importance of this philosophy is universally recognized in the Pacific Rim Era, and more and more scholarly works on various figures or movements within it appear each year.

There is still no denying that Korean philosophy per se still maintains a relatively low profile, despite the scholarly efforts inter alia. There have been relatively few attempts made to introduce the philosophical tradition in Korea systematically and comprehensively. There is hardly any academic monograph or textbook that is singly dedicated to Korean philosophy in the English language.[1] Also, there is no anthology of original writings dedicated only to Korean philosophy today in English. The survey courses in Asian philosophy do not always include materials from Korean philosophy. There is a palpably felt need to help redress this unfortunate situation by way of e.g., more monographs that explore the leading themes and major development of Korean philosophy in its entirety. Those who attempt to learn or teach Korean philosophy thus face a huge disadvantage.

As is widely known, before the modern era there was no term for "philosophy" in Korea, even though the term "history" was established as part of government effort. There was naturally no phrase for philosophical ethics or for that matter metaphysics and of course "the history of Korean philosophy." The historiographic category of Korean philosophy was a modern invention coined in the context of the writing of the history of Korean Confucianism (Takahashi 1912). In fact, it was Joseon (Chosŏn), the dynasty before the colonial period, that the project referred to when it conceptualized "Korean Philosophy" as an academic sub-field for the first time. It was not philosophy in general but Confucianism that was examined here.

The term "philosophy" has its origin in the West, originally in ancient Greece. As explained, the term for it in East Asia is a result of an Asian response to the massive influx of western civilization in East Asia in the nineteenth century. The term for philosophy "*cheolhak*

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[1] A possible exception is Cawley (2019), even though this work treats not only philosophy but also religion in Korea.

(*ch'ŏrak*)" in Korean was thus a response to this imposition—East Asians did not have any choice but to make responses to the tsunami of European cultural invasions whether they liked it or not.

But could there have been philosophy in this Western sense at least in its rudimentary element in the Asian tradition? Some doubt it and claim there was no philosophy in Asia. Many still believe so. But the situation is gradually changing. There is a new perception that philosophy in Asia does not have to be a twin sister of its western counterpart, and this is also true of Korean philosophy. In what sense, then, can we say there is philosophy in Asia? Compare Confucius' *Analects* and Plato's *Republic*. Both are classics in their respective traditions. *The Analects* offers a lot of insights about the human community by way of analogy and examples. More so than arguments, it provides practice-oriented ways of self-cultivation and the governance of society under what might be called *eu-praxia*.[2] *The Analects* is a congeries of practical directives for how to live a good life at the level of individual and society. This form of thinking is fundamentally grounded in an insight into human relationships. The *Republic* on the other hand offers insights or visions of the universe and humanity in it by way of more detailed theoretical arguments by a recourse to ideals that don't concretely exist in this world. This form of thinking is more focused on independent truth and its revelation. This comparison indicates that, even though there was no term for "philosophy" in Asia, Asian thinkers including Korean thinkers pursued what we call "philosophy" as part of an intellectual or spiritual discipline in a manner congenial to their culture and historical environment.

And it is not the case that the Asian mode of thinking was not completely incommensurable with that of the Western thinking. If Asians can learn from the Western tradition, certainly, non-Asians can learn from the Asian traditions too. Perhaps we can even find some examples or analogues of Western-style philosophy in Asian traditions.

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[2] For this concept of *eu-praxia* describing the systematic study of good action or practice in society as a way of life, see Kim (2020b).

For example, we may point out Buddhist logic or epistemology.[3] But there is a controversy about it. For example, it may be pointed out that Indian Buddhism has also an Indo-European connection. After all, it is influenced by Hinduism and its language, Sanskrit, is an Indo-European language. How about the Chinese tradition? Can Confucianism or Daoism show anything similar or analogous to classical Greek philosophy? Indeed, there are studies suggesting that logic and language (and other analytically manageable tools) were once highly regarded by some ancient Chinese philosophers as an important source of insights about human society and natural world.[4] But this case is an exception, not a norm. And once again, Asian philosophy, in order to be philosophy at all, does not have to be an exact replica of its Western counterpart in its method or style or tool.

Now, one does not have to talk about a zoo in order to do zoology. Likewise, one does not have to talk about Korea in order to do Korean philosophy. Even though there was no term for philosophy, there were definitely analogous intellectual, even spiritual, activities. *Dohak* (*Tohak* 道學, the learning of Dao), or *Seonghak* (Sŏnghak 聖學, the sage learning) are among them. Korean Buddhism always emphasized sitting meditations (as well as the study of the sutras). The past masters in Korean philosophy did not conceive their activities as part of "Korean philosophy" in this sense. The Buddhist masters Wonhyo (Wŏnhyo, 617–686) or Jinul (Chinul, 1158–1210) did not speak of their national identity when they produced their work. The eminent Neo-Confucian Toegye (T'oegye, 1502–1571) and Yulgok (1536–1584) did not think about their own Korean character when they produced their thoughts. They all rather thought of themselves as part of the universal order of Buddhism or Confucianism. Today philosophers engaged in Korean philosophy think of themselves (or wish to do so) as part of the universal order of global philosophy. Their philosophy may contain reference to Korea or particular names but they hope that their philosophy can be universally acceptable. Philosophy in Korea today is cosmological in this sense.

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[3] See, for example, Dignāga (c. 480–540 CE) in his magnum opus, the *Pramāna-samuccaya*.
[4] See, e.g., Willman (2023).

It is part of the aim of the present paper to give a general survey on the current status of Korean philosophy as a way of paving the way for its in-depth introduction, detailed intellectual treatment/analysis, and discussions concerning its leading spirits, the main themes as well as the main debates in the entirety of Korean philosophy systematically and historically. But, when you contemplate writing a history of Korean philosophy, you immediately meet a couple of challenges. Is there any unitary, main theme or a spirit that never fails to run through the whole of Korean philosophy? What are the major operating philosophical categories that are uniquely found in Korean philosophy but nowhere else? What are the leading philosophical debates in its history not found elsewhere? In other words, is there such a thing as "Korean" philosophy at all?

In order to describe Korean philosophy at work today, one may ask what characterizes Korean philosophy within the general field of philosophy. To answer that question, we first distinguish the following two approaches carefully: the essentialist and the formalist approaches (Cf. Jospe 1997, 113–14; 2008, 19–33). According to the essentialist approach, there exists an essential core of Korean philosophy, which Korean philosophy would explain and rationalize. The strictest version holds that there is a single essential core that any philosophical ideas must conform to in order to count as Korean philosophy. Professor Han Ja Kyoung, for example, seems to hold a view belonging to this category (Han 2008). Han thinks that the distinctiveness of Korean philosophy is its orientation in the concept of mind (*sim* [*shim*] 心, *maeum* [*маŭм*]). On this view, Korean philosophy does not exclusively come from Korean sources, but it is specific in that it strives to orient philosophy within the framework of the mind and its activities. According to this essentialist model, Korean philosophy should not focus on particular doctrinal or religious or spiritual backgrounds alone. In order to count as a producer of Korean philosophy, one only needs to agree with this general philosophical orientation. If there is no candidate that satisfies this criterion, we should not count anything as Korean philosophy. Nobody counts as a Korean philosopher unless one reflects on mind in some form or other directly or indirectly. In this case, we would have to weed out a lot of good philosophies (especially contemporary ones) not

dealing with issues in the human mind as non-Korean.

Secondly, the formalist approach holds that Korean philosophy can be identified by means of biographical and linguistic criteria. In this respect, someone who is not of Korean extraction cannot produce Korean philosophy. The formalist approach is a powerful alternative to the essentialist model because it rejects essentialism not only for being too narrow but also because of its unacceptable flaw: it is prescriptive rather than descriptive. It is really hard to find a philosophical component that is universally present in all or even most of Korean philosophies throughout history. Someone who believes that Korean philosophy must have an essence inevitably classifies texts into Korean and non-Korean elements. Without any generally acceptable, factual basis for an essentialist claim, such an operation is neither feasible nor useful. Moreover, this prescriptive approach ends up favoring prejudiced judgments about Korean philosophy as a whole.

Actually, formalism can be divided into two types. Extreme formalism calls Korean philosophy any philosophy produced by an ethnically Korean person, whatever the definition given for "Korean."[5] According to moderate formalism, the Korean identity of the author is a necessary condition but not a sufficient one. A Korean who plays football doesn't make it a Korean football. Extreme formalism is also untenable in the following situation: in the case that a philosopher realized at the end of his career that he was Korean, extreme formalism would retroactively turn his work into a contribution to Korean philosophy. These two absurd examples prove that the criterion used by extreme formalism to define Korean philosophy is indefensible. Moderate formalists include reading and referring to Korean sources or addressing Korean issues as the other necessary factors to define a philosophy as Korean. While essentialism focuses on the Korean content, moderate formalism rather takes into account the Korean national/ethnic identity. This moderate formalist definition is still too narrow and thus unacceptable because it leaves no possibility of non-

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[5] One may be Korean even if one actively pursues academic life in foreign countries in this sense. Woncheuk (Wŏnchŭk), an eminent Consciousness-only Buddhist during the Tang dynasty is a case in point. Refer to Jospe (1997, 113).

Koreans specializing in, and doing, Korean philosophy.

For the third option in defining Korean philosophy, we may turn our attention to a very liberal one, the hybrid approach, according to which a philosophy counts as Korean philosophy if it either satisfies the essentialist model or the formalist model. This could serve as a "disjunctive" model of Korean philosophy. This definition has an advantage because it guarantees that Korean philosophy can be meaningfully classified with a relatively loose criterion, but it is outweighed by its disadvantage, for too many philosophies might count under this criterion. Even if a foreign philosopher happens to publish a work on a Korean concept of *jeong* (*chŏng*, emotional attachment), *han* (lingering sorrow), or *nunchi* (*nunch'i*, the subtle art of gauging others' mood), etc., that would not automatically turn them into a Korean philosopher.

The fourth approach is scepticism. This view holds that there is simply no such thing as Korean philosophy. As Hilary Putnam once said, there is no (analytic) philosophy. There is only good philosophy (1997, 203). So scepticism about Korean philosophy says that there is no Korean philosophy as such. There is simply a good philosophy and that is all. This is because of the universal, rational nature of philosophy, philosophy that anybody anywhere can understand, even intelligent extraterrestrials. But here the particularities and the context of any philosophy are ignored. Its historical background is swiftly brushed aside. This is why it is extreme and not acceptable.

Finally, there is what we might call a contextualist approach. Consider the following contextual definition: A Korean philosophy is an attempt to provide a well-reasoned and informed account of the fundamental questions concerning the spiritual and cultural beliefs and practices found in the Korean philosophical literature, both traditional and contemporary, without being confined to authors of Korean extraction. In this case we can uphold the universalistic character of philosophy and its communicability, but it also holds its cultural, social, historical background as important. In the former respect, there is no Korean philosophy, for any philosophy that only Koreans can accept is not truly a philosophy. Philosophy must be universally communicable. But we can also describe a philosophy actively pursued, investigated and promoted by Korean philosophers as Korean philosophy. In other

words, "Korean philosophy" is given a contextual definition. Jaegwon Kim (1934–2020), an analytic philosopher, once said that there is only one physics and only one chemistry, etc.; So why not one philosophy?[6] This is right when considered in its universalistic character, but wrong in another sense because it ignores the particularities in Korean philosophy that can be widely shared. Also, this excludes Jaegwon Kim from the scope of a history of Korean philosophy but includes Woncheuk (Wŏnchŭk, 613–696), a Consciousness-only Buddhist, because, even though both were born and raised in Korea and then spent the rest of their lives in foreign countries, the former never employed the language of Korean academia for major publications and was never active in the pursuit of any Korean themes, while the latter did, despite having spent all his career in Tang China, at the height of Pax Sinica.[7]

Two comments are in order for this definition. The first one is about the connection between philosophy and the origin of its method: I will concentrate on the manner by which Korean philosophers have used non-Korean philosophies in order to solve philosophical problems they faced from the start. In other words, we do not pay attention so much to the content or the actual answers to the philosophical questions but rather the way they dealt with the issues by resorting to the Indian, Chinese, and more recently German, French, and American, or other philosophical methods. The question is then to what extent any philosophical method of foreign extraction was useful to the Koreans for the purpose of doing philosophy, even though the Koreans themselves also may well have contributed to the elaboration of such philosophy—and sometimes even did so without any reference to Korean historical texts or any sources identifiable as palpably Korean. We may count phenomenology or analytic philosophy done in Korea as part of Korean philosophy in this respect.[8]

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[6] See Jaegwon Kim (2000).

[7] For this argument, see Kim (2019b).

[8] For the former, see the works by Kah Kyung Cho, who spent most of his career at SUNY Buffalo or Hwa Yol Jung at Moravian College in the US. Both of them died in the US. For the latter, see the recent debate on *uri* 우리 ("we") among analytic philosophers in Korea. For the most general bibliography, see my forthcoming "Oxford Bibliography in Korean Philosophy."

The contextual definition of Korean philosophy I have just given isn't meant to state what Korean philosophy essentially at its core is or should be but rather offers a new way of measuring its evolution, depending on its context of discussion. Most historians of Korean philosophy divide it into the pre-Buddhist, the Buddhist, and the (Neo-)Confucian periods as well as the contemporary period. The periodization I propose is guided by the contextualist model. Korean philosophy of the contemporary period is not exclusively Confucian nor Buddhist. There is a palpable influence from the West including the contribution of analytic philosophy as well as phenomenology and existentialism. Marxism has been influential, too. But despite having nothing to do with any uniquely Korean themes, they are all influential in Korean philosophical activities. Philosophies, when genuine, are never mere copycats in their internalization of such philosophies and their associated methods, and I think this is true of Korean philosophy as is practiced today. It is this approach then that we adopt in our description and characterization of Korean philosophy today as well as its prospect in the future.

The eminent contemporary popular philosopher Ham Sok Hon (Ham Seokheon, Ham Sŏkhŏng) once wondered: Can anything good come out of Korea? He characterized Korean history as that of suffering but at the end attempted to elevate the spirit of Korean people by way of a progressive, teleological, indeed eschatological scheme of things with the conception of *ssi-al* ("ordinary people") as the main drive of history (Ham 1985).[9] Our specific question, however, is: was there a good philosophy which came out of Korea?

In the spirit of the contextualist conception of Korean philosophy given above, we can, perhaps, take a further step and suggest that Korean philosophy is a conscious effort to answer fundamental questions about human life both as individuals and members of society and also about their physical, mental, cultural universe as viewed by someone with a keen interest in the processes and things taking place in the Korean Peninsula. It also involves theoretical foundations of

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[9] For an account of his view, see Kim (2016b).

the Korean worldview and the cultivation of characters. As part of the effort to answer this question, we may first ask: what are the most important *de facto* philosophical components in the Korean way of philosophizing? Certainly in view of its humble beginning in Siberia/ Manchuria, the seeds of Korean philosophical thinking were sown in a form of shamanism, no matter how rudimentary it may have been.[10] But it really hardly evolved into abstract thinking required for genuine philosophical thinking. There was no canonical text in it, even though the latter is not essential to philosophy. After all, Socrates himself did not think highly of a written tradition. In Korea there is no question that the first genuine form of philosophical thinking was offered by Buddhism. When Buddhism first arrived in Korea, it came with multiple (sometimes confusing) systems of thoughts with diverse, sometimes conflicting views. For example, the view about universal causation (twelve dependent origination), the view about the no-self, and the view about the impermanence of all things. Most of all, some held that things do not really exist but are empty of self-nature. Others held that things exist as the development of our consciousness. It took Wonhyo's (Wŏnhyo) genius to sort things out and come up with a consistent and coherent view of the world and humanity.[11] Later, Jinul developed the method of sudden enlightenment and gradual study for the purpose of attaining Buddhahood (or rather rediscovering and rehabilitating the inherent Buddha-nature in us.[12] The latter is typical of Seon (Sŏn) (=Zen) school, which is the dominant trend of Buddhism in Korea today.

In the fourteenth century, Buddhism gave way to Neo-Confucianism, not because of philosophical weakness but political reasons. Buddhism was driven out by force, not by philosophical persuasion,[13]

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[10] Note that, in ascribing a form of life or spirits to all entities, Spinoza's pantheism or Leibniz's monadology is similar to Korean shamanism. Of course, the former two systems are vastly more complex in their philosophy than the latter but they are all animistic nonetheless (or even panpsychistic in some extended sense).

[11] See, e.g., Buswell (1989; 2007) for an exposition of the view.

[12] For an elementary account of Jinul's Seon Buddhist philosophy, see Buswell (1983; 2016); Keel (1984).

[13] For an attempt at such a persuasion, see Jeong Dojeon's (Chŏng Tojŏn, 1342–1398) *An Array of Critiques of Buddhism* in Muller (2015). For Gihwa's (Kihwa, 1376–1433) defense of Buddhism against the Neo-Confucian criticisms, see Muller (2015) as well.

when the new dynasty Joseon (1392–1897) toppled Goryeo (Koryŏ, 918–1392). Buddhism as an institution never recovered to its former glory even when the Neo-Confucian state of Joseon fell apart and could not fill the spiritual lacuna, to the chagrin of many modern reform-minded Buddhists at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the people most needed it. Later, this allowed Christianity to sneak in at the end of the nineteenth century with its systematic approach to the needs of the people.[14] Koreans had already accepted Confucianism together with Buddhism early in their history but they began actively integrating Neo-Confucianism into their thinking at the end of the fourteenth century from the Mongol dynasty of Yuan. If you think that Neo-Confucianism took root right away then, you are in the wrong. It took a couple of hundred years to infiltrate the very depth of the Korean mind. If you also think that the same form of Confucianism was maintained throughout the five hundred-year Joseon dynasty, you are also in the wrong. Neo-Confucianism went through many different forms. But it is hardly disputable that the development of Neo-Confucianism culminates in the fifteenth century in the form of the Four-Seven Debate[15] with ramifications on moral psychology, cultivation of the relational self, and metaphysical outlook in the unison of heaven and human. Most importantly, it was Toegye's genius that brought about the most pertinent solutions to the philosophical

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[14] The process of appropriating Christianity was gradual like any other intellectual/spiritual movements of foreign origin in Korea. For a domesticated form of Christian thinking in Korea, see, e.g., Yu Yeongmo's (Yu Yŏngmo) (pen name: Daseok [Tasŏk]) diary (*Daseok ilji* [*Tasŏk ilchi*]). See Kim (2019c) for a basic account of this "Korean" interpretation of the Christian worldview.

[15] The debate was *prima facie* over the origin of Four Sprouts (the heart/mind of sympathy, the heart/mind of shame, the heart/mind of deference, and the heart/mind of right/wrong; see Mengzi 2A.6) and Seven Emotions (such as joy, anger, love, fear, sorrow, hatred, desire). At its foundation, the debate is essentially about the true source and nature of morality. In this respect, it not only touches on the issue of the feasibility of a metaphysics of Principle (*i*) and Vital Force (*gi* [*ki*] 氣) in terms of their causal efficacy and normativity but also the questions about moral and psychological philosophy of mind, human nature, and feelings, and, most importantly, the questions about how best to achieve ideal moral characters and life under the epithet "sage" despite our emotions in our examined life with bodies. For this see, e.g., Kalton et al. (1992), Chung (1995), and Ro (1989).

problems that the Four-Seven Debate is about, the problem of evil by way of the power of our rational mental enterprise in the form of principle (*i* 理).

Korea was then challenged in an unprecedented way by the introduction of Western Learning (西學) beginning in the seventeenth century. Following the Renaissance, Reformation and the Age of Discovery (and Destruction), Westerners began sending their army and traders to Asia as elsewhere. Religion, too. The very conception of "religion" had to be invented. Indeed, there was no term for "religion" in Asia before the American commodore Perry forced an unequal treaty on the Japanese when he and his "black ship" invaded the land. When Jesuits sent their best representatives to China, like Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), Neo-Confucianism in Korea was shaken. The eighteenth century began witnessing the new school of thought under Practical Learning, and its star philosopher Dasan (Tasan, 1762–1836) showed a keen interest in the new ways of thoughts and, instead of rejecting them, went out of his way to incorporate them (Jeong 2001; 2010; 2012; 2016). The result is his unique form of philosophical system. For example, his answer to the traditional problem of evil proceeded by means of the concept of free will[16] suggests that the problem is in fact multifaceted and complex. This was the first time East Asians came up with the notion of freedom explicitly in the philosophical context. Rejecting the role of *i* ("principle") in cosmology and ethics, Dasan reintroduced the concept of God (called "*sangje* 上帝" or "supreme deity") that is personal and rewarding, recovering it from the classical Confucian texts. It was sort of a panopticon now serving as an external source of moral motivation for human agents. I hope by now it is clear that the manners in which the three quintessentially Korean thinkers philosophized amply show that there is much to be learned from the Korean way of doing philosophy in the past. And this is our answer to Ham's question.

But can Korean philosophy be globalized? This is a new form of Nathaniel's question: Can anything philosophically good come from

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[16] His actual term was the power of autonomy (自主之權), not "free will." For an exposition of Dasan's thought see, e.g., Baker (2002; 2010).

Korea today? Of course it all depends on the possibility of universal philosophy acceptable to any interested readers and practitioners. No philosophy was ever accepted by every human being everywhere out there. But there are philosophies interculturally acceptable. Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger all thought that Asians lack universal reason but this point of view itself reflects a particularized point of view. The so-called universal reason is one defined from a Euro-centric perspective. What we need is not universal acceptance but the possibility of empathy in its broadest sense. This starts from understanding certain outlooks and nature in a direct way. Furthermore, this empathy does not have to be fixed once and for all. Things change naturally, and empathy, its content and form, can change as well.

Today Korean philosophy covers large areas, indeed all walks of philosophical life, and confronts issues that are germane to all aspects of human life and universe. Some are prominent, for example, environmental issues, the problem of the human self and consciousness, and the possibility of achievement of peace on the Korean Peninsula and globally as the country is divided into two: one south, one north. But there is no denying that explorations of important relevant concepts often find themselves derived from Confucian motives, e.g., emotions, carings, and lovings that make life in Korea what it is. So we may cautiously say that the main influence upon Korean philosophy is that of Neo-Confucianism. Various explorations of the nature of the human mind and of the self as well as emotions are guided by the basic assumptions in Confucianism. No matter how you try to characterize Korean philosophy, it is mostly heavily influenced by Confucianism, especially Neo-Confucianism. Buddhism predates Neo-Confucianism by almost 900 years in Korea, but the Joseon Neo-Confucianism has so heavily influenced Korea that it is still palpably perceived today. In this cultural and intellectual environment, no thinking could freely escape the long arms of Neo-Confucianism in Korea. Even the Christian-inspired thinking which has last arrived in Korea cannot escape from the influence of Confucianism. We may then say that the influence of Confucianism upon philosophical thinking in Korea has been greater than that of anything else, except perhaps for that of Buddhism.

It appears that these days people are excited about the possibility that recent developments in Korean philosophy might shed some light on some main problems in philosophy. To my knowledge, not much light has been shed; at least it has not been known worldwide. Nevertheless one can still hope. We also find some philosophers still under the influence of the prejudice that philosophy is properly concerned exclusively with clarity and perspicuity and that conceptual analysis is all that matters, and that for this analysis no knowledge of the particular traditions, e.g., Korean tradition, is necessary. As much as we need the developing scientific data and discoveries as well as truths, we also stand in firm need of the particularities of history and culture in properly doing Korean philosophy—indeed, any philosophy.

The German philosopher Jaspers once spoke of an exemplary age when ingenious philosophies emerged all over the world. We do not seem to live in such axial ages now. The philosophical scene today seems rather bleak. This is like the period between the Greek classical philosophy and the medieval Scholastic philosophy. Or between the pre-Han Classical period on the one hand and the rise of Chinse Buddhism during the Sui-Tang period. The great figures of the past—such as Confucius, Buddha, Mencius, Nagarjuna, Shankara, Zhu Xi, Wang Yangming, Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Sartre, etc.,—do not seem to exert the same vital energy as before; their work has been more or less thought lightly and now is sometimes even brushed aside. But if you carefully think about the philosophical significance, their thought cannot be ignored nor replaced. A great deal of highly competent, and sometimes even interesting, work is being done both in Korea and elsewhere. But there are no dominant ideas or visions being introduced and developed at least at this point in history. We are still waiting for a Zarathustra—a new creative impulse that can revitalize philosophy.

It is also important to note concerning Korean philosophy that Koreans have always been enthusiastic about religion. Even the North Korean Marxist and thus atheist, anti-religious regime takes advantage of this Korean religious fervor.[17] The North Korean state is now more

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[17] For this point, see Hannah H. Kim's "Juche in the Broader Context of Korean Philosophy" (forthcoming, *The Philosophical Forum*), which approaches North Korean *juche*

like a religious cult centering on its leaders than a political state. Nevertheless, because of this strong sentiment, we cautiously hope that the next large creative impulse in Korean philosophy might come from the direction of religion. Baek Seonguk (Paek Sŏng-uk, 1897–1981), Iryeop (Iryŏp, 1896–1971), Daseok (Tasŏk, 1890–1981), Ham Sok Hon (1900–1989), and many important Korean contemporary philosophers are just a few examples of philosophers with deep religious orientations. Not a few philosophers in Korea are now taking religion seriously in their personal lives. Of course, the vast majority of them may not be institutionally involved—they are not "religious but spiritual" to quote an often-overused phrase—but they acknowledge religious feeling or commitment. We may associate it with the concept of empathy as I pointed out above. Some of these thinkers, in time, are likely to systematize their religious sentiments and commitment and to bring a preoccupation with religious issues into academic philosophy. This is the case with metaphysics, but ethics is no exception. What fell within the province of religious thought could very well have important repercussions in ethics as well. We live in the Fourth Industrial Age and AI and all, but the meaning and value of ethical life will never tarnish. Human nature being what it is, Confucius' *Analects*, *Bhagavat Gita*, and Plato's *Republic* will never lose their importance in human civilization. For life is about the nature of virtue, the meaning of life, the ultimate purposes and ideals of life and universe, and so on.

Research in traditional Korean philosophy generally consists of reading and interpreting literature related to Korean philosophy. The investigation of Korean philosophy typically begins with learning how to read Korean alphabets, but it also includes literacy in classical Chinese—only then are you able to empathize with the thoughts of the traditional Korean philosophers. Students of philosophy in Korea have been focused mostly on how to best interpret the existing literature. So textual analysis has been an integral part of Korean philosophy. They have been attempting to extract and promote ideas in the works of Korean philosophy and it was important to decipher

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philosophy academically, contextualizing it in light of broader views on the traits in Korean philosophy.

these interpretations and to come up with new understanding. Neither of these are facile, but such tasks become even more significant and engrossing if you develop your own ideas including your own way of reading the traditional works. Also traditional works are mostly treated in isolation from the general context of contemporary East Asian philosophy. However, Wonhyo did not think of himself as doing a uniquely Korean ("Silla [Shilla]") philosophy, or for that matter, Toegye, Yulgok, and Dasan did not view themselves as promoting a quintessentially Korean ("Joseon") form of thought. Their view was that truth is truth, and it can be captured when it is revealed, and communicated through systematic and conscientious effort. What provided this outlook was the general East Asian tradition. In this respect, Chinese philosophy traditionally has been a main inspiration. More recently Western philosophy has been a main influence. But we may want to be exposed to Japanese thinking, Vietnamese thinking and beyond, such as Africana philosophy, Native American philosophy, and Latin American philosophy as they are being explored and expanded more. We truly live in the earth village and live our life globally. Inter-cultural investigation is not an option but a necessity.

Korea today is where major different schools of thought of the world come to and interact. In this sense, it is a philosophical melting pot. As for Western philosophy, the influence of Kant, Hegel, and Marx among others has been prominent. More recently, Anglo-American analytic philosophy and French philosophy seem to exert influence on the students of philosophy. Political institutions have also been developed under the influence of their views both in South and North Korea. This suggests that Korea offers a fertile ground in which people can philosophize in many ways concerning human beings and the world around them. But it is not an abstract "cosmopolitanism" that can be only thought about, which is needed here, but one that can relate to the heart of the people and have an influence on the way people act, feel and think in a community in which they find themselves free and equal. Thus, Korean philosophy when properly developed can contribute to the age of globalization. It is said that all history is contemporary history. Any study of the past is necessarily informed by the consciousness and situation of the writer's own time;

the more conscious historians are of their contemporary motives, the more searching and accurate their investigations of the past (D'Amico 1999, 272). I think the same is true of philosophy. All philosophy is contemporary philosophy. Our study of Wonhyo, Jinul, Toegye, Yulgok, and Dasan, etc. is a form of contemporary philosophy, too. It is their philosophy seen through our eyes today. It follows that the Korean study of Kant, French philosophy, and Confucius, Mencius, and Zhu Xi are also Korean philosophy. Korean philosophy then is any philosophy seen, analyzed and interpreted by the Koreans, or by the scholars in Korean philosophy, indeed, by anybody remotely interested in Korean affairs.

I took up my professional teaching job in Korea several years ago after decades of teaching in the US, and I can assure the reader that philosophy in Korea is improving as fast as anywhere else in the world. I constantly hear good discussions of all kinds of philosophy both in classrooms and conferences, and read good papers in the local language. The only defect, or rather a desideratum, is the formidable barrier posed by English. Hardly any philosophy is discussed in Korea in the international language (i.e., English). Hardly any good work in Korean philosophy has been translated into English. Accordingly, not much is known about the status of Korean philosophy outside Korea. For this purpose, my colleagues and I helped establish the North American Korean Philosophical Association (NAKPA). We speak philosophy in the universal language (English) here, so everybody can come understand and exchange ideas freely and equally. Why North America? Because that is where many philosophers come willingly. NAKPA is affiliated with the American Philosophical Association as a sub-group. Korean philosophy is not American philosophy, and Korean philosophers are not American philosophers. But this maneuver has several merits. We hold our NAKPA panels during the American divisional meetings. People hardly ever come to Korea to discuss Korean philosophy on their own but they come to the US to its annual meetings from all over the world. We want to take advantage of Pax Americana Philosophia so to speak, even though we might have witnessed the beginning of its decline with the attack on the US Capitol in 2022. NAKPA was founded in 2014 in Baltimore, Maryland,

at the American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division Meetings. Professors based in the US have kindly agreed to the idea and since then we have been holding its annual meetings all over the world except of course during the pandemic. We pursue exchanges of new ideas and theories and engage in friendly discussion in all areas of philosophy. But if you examine the past programs of the meetings both at the annual meetings as well as the APA divisional meetings, Neo-Confucianism has been the dominant topic. It was followed only by Buddhism. We held our very first annual meetings in Omaha, Nebraska, at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 2015 under the auspices of the Academy of Korean Studies. Hwa Yol Jung and Owen Flanagan were its keynote speakers. The second meeting took place in Toronto, Canada, where Graham Priest gave a keynote. The third meeting took place in Seoul, at Sungkyunkwan University. The fourth meeting was at University of San Francisco with its keynote speaker as P. J. Ivanhoe. The fifth meeting took place in Palo Alto at Stanford University with the keynote speaker from Korea, Jung In Kang. The sixth meeting took place in Cork, Ireland. The seventh meeting was originally planned for Sogang University, but it was postponed due to the pandemic. Then its seventh meeting took place in Omaha again both at University of Nebraska and Creighton University, Omaha. Its keynote speakers were Kim Heisook (on a Korean feminism theme) and Robert Buswell (on Jinul). The eighth meeting will take place in Daegu, at Kyungpook National University in November 2023, with Edward Chung as its keynote.

As the meetings took place, we began to see anthologies emerge on Korean philosophy. P. J. Ivanhoe and Hwa Yeong Wang recently edited and published *Korean Women Philosophers and the Ideals of a Female Sage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023). Their anthology on Korean Confucianism is forthcoming. Jin Y. Park and Sumi Lee are in preparation for an anthology on Korean Buddhism. What we need is a single-volume anthology on Korean philosophy. Also junior members of NAKPA began taking tenure track positions around the world including University of Colorado-Denver, University of Arizona, Leiden University, Duke Kunshan University, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaigne as well as universities in Korea *inter alia.*

In the context of generating discussions on Korean philosophy across different countries, Romanization will play an important role. There is no expectation that all students of Korean philosophy will master the difficult language of Korean. We often see Korean authors Romanize their terms arbitrarily, which is likely to cause confusion among readers who cannot expect to know Korean nor even its alphabet. As for Romanization, more and more authors are beginning to rely on the Revised Romanization (RR) as opposed to McCune Reischauer (MR), which has been popular among professional scholars but not exclusively.[18]

Finally, there is a strong need to unify various efforts to publish different presentations and articles on Korean philosophical themes in an international language. Korean philosophers see their efforts rewarded when their articles are published in Korean philosophical journals and anthologies, but an English-language journal devoted only to Korean philosophy is well worth the effort. There is a growing body of scholars who are able to submit articles in English and engage in peer reviews.[19]

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[18] For Korean Romanization, see the Wikipedia entry "Romanization of Korean." For an automatic conversion, one should visit: http://roman.cs.pusan.ac.kr/input_eng.aspx
[19] I thank Jin Y. Park and Hannah Haejin Kim for comments on this paper.

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Towards
a More Comprehensive
Moral Psychology:
Integrating East Asian
Perspectives

On This Topic

Towards a More Comprehensive Moral Psychology: *Integrating East Asian Perspectives*

Guest edited by Doil Kim*

Contemporary moral psychology seeks to unravel the intricate psychological processes underlying moral judgments, emotions, and virtues. Drawing on recent research in the fields of empirical and evolutionary psychology, as well as cognitive neuroscience, scholars aim to shed light on the complexities of human morality. The study of East Asian philosophy by philosophers trained in the Anglo-American tradition has applied these results to a number of traditional East Asian thinkers.

Of particular interest is the treasure trove of profound wisdom in traditional Confucian thought concerning moral psychology and human nature in general. English-speaking scholars have been diligently scrutinizing a plethora of claims from Confucian philosophy that intersect with contemporary moral psychology, hoping for mutual enlightenment between the two disciplines. The focus has fallen on intriguing topics such as early Confucian responses to the critique of global virtues from a situationist perspective, the cognitive aspects of emotions as understood through Confucian principles, and the foundational role of innate inclinations in morality, which draws upon the concept of moral modularity.

However, there remains a lingering concern for the future of East Asian philosophy—a yearning for a more profound integration of

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the experiences of contemporary East Asians into moral psychology research. One pressing issue that requires further attention is an asymmetry in theory building and testing that results in having the experiences of modern East Asians not adequately reflected in the study of East Asian philosophy itself. This challenge does not simply call for contemporary moral psychology to rely more heavily on the experiences of modern East Asians than it currently does. It also necessitates a deeper appreciation of the experiences of modern East Asians even wh en studying their own philosophical tradition. After all, this tradition continues to shape the everyday lives of modern East Asians and those who have been influenced by their culture.

Regrettably, the study of East Asian philosophy has not fully embraced the indigenization of these experiences. As a consequence, the standards of experience in the field are largely biased in favor of data and analysis based on WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) samples rather than accounting for the unique experiences of modern East Asians. This results in the asymmetry noted above. Western theories often provide the primary concepts, approaches, and goals, which are then applied to East Asian traditional materials, overlooking the rich tapestry of modern East Asian experiences.

To address these concerns, we organized the academic conference "Contemporary Moral Psychology and Cross-cultural Moral Psychology," held at Georgetown University on September 22–23, 2022. The conference was co-organized by Philip J. Ivanhoe at Georgetown University and myself, and it was co-sponsored by the Center for the Contemporary Study of East Asian Classics and Critical Confucianism (CCECC) at Sungkyunkwan University, Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, and the National Research Foundation of Korea. The event featured a total of nine presentations, each delving into various issues that arise at the intersection of East Asian thought with contemporary moral psychology and social or cultural psychology. One of the important foci was exploring how the study of East Asian philosophy can extend beyond merely gleaning insights from traditional Confucian texts to understanding the experiences of contemporary individuals.

From these presentations, we have compiled five papers to form this special issue. Each showcases the diversity in research directions within the realm of moral psychology concerning East Asian philosophy, thereby illuminating the interconnectedness of these disciplines. These contributions collectively shed light on the relevance of East Asian philosophical perspectives for contemporary moral psychology, further enriching our understanding of the complexities of human morality across cultures.

Let me introduce each of the papers briefly, highlighting the different issues they explore:

Jin Li's paper emphasizes the importance of paying attention to emotions that have been developed and shared within the Confucian cultural context when studying the moral psychology of East Asians. These emotions are not purely natural but are shaped and influenced by cultural values and norms. She identifies four aspects of these emotions, which she names as philosophized, moralized, ritualized, and aestheticized. Among such emotions, her focus particularly centers on the emotions of filial piety and humility, topics extensively discussed in two other papers within this special issue.

Monima Chadha and Shaun Nichols's paper takes a typical comparative philosophical approach to the prominent moral emotion of gratitude. Their study revolves around the compatibility issue between the concept of gratitude prevalent in Western analytic philosophy and the concept of no-self prominent in Buddhist philosophy. They raise the question of whether it is possible to express gratitude to someone for the benefits he has given without presupposing a specific self, as viewed from a Buddhist perspective. They delve into the formation of gratitude within the Buddhist cultural sphere in a manner consistent with the concept of no-self. This exploration is closely related to the overarching theme of our special issue, aiming to explain the differences in moral emotions arising from cultural variations.

Hagop Sarkissian's attention is drawn to the distinctive moral emotion and virtue of filial piety among East Asians. He raises challenging questions about the legitimacy of filial piety from a modern moral standpoint, particularly in the context of Confucian culture. Specifically, he questions whether sons and daughters are morally obligated to show

absolute filial piety even towards parents who deserve moral criticism. In an attempt to answer this question, he delves into a textual analysis of the relevant literature, focusing on the notion of remonstration and its limits. He thus seeks to clarify the conceptual roots of filial piety, which remains highly relevant in the experiences of modern East Asians.

Keunchang Oh focuses on "*hwabyeong* 火病," a particularly indigenous moral emotion in Korea. Previously classified as a Korean culture-bound syndrome in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (by health care professionals in the United States), *hwabyeong* represents a highly culturally specific form of anger. Through a philosophical inquiry into *hwabyeong*, Oh endeavors to uncover the intricate interplay between emotions and cultural influences. While the paper maintains some skepticism about the cultural specificity of *hwabyeong*, it underscores the importance of exploring the cultural or indigenous nature of certain moral emotions.

Finally, in my own paper, I shift my focus to the virtue of humility within the East Asian Confucian traditions. Acknowledging the profound significance of humility in shaping the mindset of contemporary individuals influenced by Confucian teachings, I draw attention to the limitations of defining the true essence of humility as found in these traditions. According to my argument, this limitation stems, in part, from various biases prevalent among researchers in both the East and the West, as well as among those influenced by the Confucian tradition themselves, when it comes to understanding humility or modesty. These biases, I note, are encapsulated in the concept of "modesty-bias," which is frequently associated with collectivist cultural traits in modern social and cultural psychology, particularly in East Asian contexts. I aim to distinguish between attitudes or behaviors associated with modesty-bias and traditional Confucian humility, emphasizing that failing to make this distinction hinders our understanding of Confucian humility as a virtue and its contemporary relevance.

The aforementioned papers offer diverse approaches to exploring moral emotions and virtues within East Asian traditions. As mentioned earlier, it is crucial for our future endeavors to reexamine and interpret certain aspects of East Asian philosophy in light of modern scientific achievements, such as recent empirical and evolutionary psychology

research and cognitive neuroscience. However, this special issue highlights the simultaneous necessity of gaining a clearer understanding of the social and cultural specificities that shape these moral phenomena. In this process, some of the papers underscore the importance of integrating the "contemporary" perspective in a compelling manner. This involves grounding our inquiries in the lived experiences of contemporary East Asians and seeking a more nuanced comprehension of their worldview.

Building upon this foundation, we can enrich our understanding of universal human moral experiences. In other words, such endeavors pave the way for a more inclusive and insightful exploration of moral psychology, effectively bridging the gap between East and West and providing us with a more intricate understanding of the variegated tapestry of human morality across diverse cultural contexts.

Confucian Affect (*Qing* 情) as the Foundation for Mutual Care and Moral Elevation

Jin Li*

Abstract

Western psychology primarily studies human emotions via physiological reactions to external stimuli. Research suggests that cultural variations lead East Asians and Western-heritage individuals to experience distinct emotional patterns beyond bodily responses. A more thorough understanding of affect, involving culturally influenced emotions, remains unexplored in cross-cultural contexts. Influenced by Confucianism, East Asian cultures show unique emotional patterns. Unlike the Western focus on rationality, Confucian philosophy values human affect (*qing* 情), going beyond conventional emotions. This paper delves into the transformative nature of Confucian affect, specifically its four facets: (1) philosophized (*zhelihua* 哲理化), (2) moralized (*dehua* 德化), (3) ritualized (*lihua* 禮化), and (4) aestheticized (*meixuehua* 美學化). These dimensions redirect human emotions towards mutual care and moral elevation. Despite limited empirical research, contemporary East Asian experiences shed light on Confucian affect's ongoing significance in daily life. This paper illuminates existing research to elucidate Confucian affect and proposes future directions for exploration. By recognizing the interplay of cultural influences and emotions, a richer comprehension of affective experiences across cultures emerges, offering insights into the intricate tapestry of human emotions shaped by diverse philosophical and cultural foundations.

Keywords: Confucian affect, philosophizing, moralizing, ritualizing, aestheticizing, self-cultivation

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I. Introduction

Among the three major philosophical schools of thought of Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism in East Asian cultures, Confucianism has engaged more in contemplating, expressing, and practicing a particular kind of human affect, or *qing* 情. However, such human affect is not the "raw" emotion (e.g., I smile because I feel happy), as psychology traditionally defines and studies. Confucian affect is instead transformed feelings toward the goal of realizing moral self-cultivation and mutual care. In this paper, I first review how human emotions have been studied traditionally in psychology and other related fields, presenting evidence that despite common human emotional capacity, people across cultures experience, express, and respond to emotions differently. These variations are associated with different cultural values and norms. Next, I introduce the "affect evaluation theory" as advanced by Jeanne Tsai with empirical evidence that humans do not typically feel emotions "naturally." Instead, individuals are socialized since childhood in *how to feel* in accordance with their cultural values and norms. Different cultures have different affective ideals to fit their life purposes and processes. I employ Tsai's theory to ground and analyze Confucian *qing* as exhibiting at least four transformations such that human affect is (1) philosophized (*zhelihua* 哲理化), (2) moralized (*dehua* 德化), (3) ritualized (*lihua* 禮化), and (4) aestheticized (*meixuehua* 美學化). As a result, people experience, express, and respond to affect accordingly to foster mutual care and moral growth. Further, I review available empirical research that lends support for these types of transformed affect despite a lack of directly relevant research on these transformations. Finally, I venture to point out some research directions for the future.

II. The Western Conventional View of Human Emotion

When it comes to emotions, it takes little effort for us to think about our emotional life with clearly observable physiological reactions such as laughter for happiness and tears for sadness. Indeed, in psychology,

biology, and other related fields, that is how human emotions have been studied. In these fields, emotion is understood as our bodily responses to external stimuli with three general characteristics: episode, discreteness, and valence. "Episode" refers to the *temporal* process of emotion that is usually segmented as (1) antecedence perceived/coded, (2) the ensuing feeling state, (3) action in response to the actual emotion felt, and (4) coping (Frijda 1986; Tangney and Fischer 1995). An emotion typically begins with some antecedent event, cause, or instigation that the person experiences and then codes as self-relevant (e.g., hearing a sudden loud boom). Upon such a quickly processed encounter, an appropriate bodily response, namely, feeling state of fear, follows. Feeling thus, our natural action tendency is self-protection (e.g., fleeing). The last part of the episode is called "coping" because we routinely engage in some thinking, interpretation, and justification of the emotion and associated action we have experienced. Depending on the nature of the evaluation, we either strengthen our accumulative emotional repertoire if we deem our response as successful and beneficial, or correct our inappropriate or mistaken action if we think we made a blunder (e.g., apologize to a coworker for using hurtful words; See Lewis 1993).

Pertaining to discreteness, emotions are typically felt one at a time (Buck 1999; Fischer et al. 1990; Izard et al. 2010; Larsen et al. 2001). This means that when we feel happy, for example, we are physiologically unlikely to feel simultaneously sadness, fear, or some other distinct emotion although people in some cultures (e.g., East Asian) report mixed emotions to the same event more than in other cultures (e.g., U.S. and U.K.; See Grossmann et al. 2016). Most of our emotions are automated physiologically, responsive to the specific event coding of a given antecedent (Frijda 1986). If we experience a positive event, our automated response is usually happiness or some similar emotion (such as joy or pleasure). Likewise, if we experience a negative event (e.g., failing a job interview), we are likely to feel disappointed. Finally, the idea of valence refers to positivity and negativity of emotions. There is no such a thing as neutral emotion. A given emotion is either positive or negative although the level of arousal of any emotion could be any degree between low and high (Tsai et al. 2007). If a felt state is neutral,

then it would mean that our body is not aroused to respond to an antecedence.

Other than the concept of emotion, psychology also uses the concept of affect to address human emotionality. *Affect* as an umbrella term includes not only emotion but also feelings that are not necessarily accompanied by clear physiological responses. For example, we say "I feel weird." This state of feeling is neither visibly cognitive nor emotive with clear detectable bodily arousals. Yet, it is nonetheless human feeling. Whereas emotion may have a narrower range, feelings can vary widely and are more complex (Tangney and Fischer 1995).

In traditional Western thought, affect as a whole was viewed for a long time as irrationality that underlay personal, social, and religious troubles and therefore ought to be controlled by reason for higher human purposes. However, recent empirical research and theory underscore the fact that affect is fundamentally adaptive, promoting successful human functioning more than interfering with it (Damasio 2005; Sznycer and Cohen 2021; Tangney and Fischer 1995). Affect plays an essential role in human motivation to action and is centrally involved in our cognitive, social, moral, spiritual, and aesthetic life.

III. How to Feel, but Not How We Feel "Naturally"

However, within the realms of cultural psychology and anthropology, there is a significant amount of evidence indicating that the perspective that focuses solely on biology as the basis for understanding human emotions has its limitations. Human emotional life varies widely across cultures. It is one thing that humans are endowed with the emotional capacity (Izard et al. 2010; Schore 2016); it is another how frequently, intensively, and differently people experience a given emotion (e.g., anger) across cultures (De Leersnyder et al. 2021; Kitayama et al. 2006; Mesquita 2003). Such emotional variation reflects the fact that affect inextricably serves wide-ranging human purposes and functions under the influence of different cultural values and norms (De Leersnyder et al. 2021; Kitayama et al. 2006; Mesquita 2003; Tamir et al. 2016; Tsai at al. 2006).

Among various theories, Jeanne Tsai's "affect valuation theory" articulates well how culture shapes human emotionality. Her research demonstrates that the so-called natural emotions that we are led to believe are, after all, not that natural. Instead, our culture often socializes us *how to feel* in accordance with our cultural values and norms, but not *how* we feel our "raw" emotions as our bodily arousal leads us to feel (also see Lutz 1988). Culture promotes its ideal affects (how to feel) but discourages those in discord with its ideal (how not to feel) in daily life. Research by Tsai and others indicates that different cultures have their ideal affects and expressions (De Leersnyder et al. 2015; Kitayama et al. 2006; Tamir et al. 2016; Tsai 2017; Tsai et al. 2019). For example, European Americans have higher emotional arousal by the same stimulus (seeking higher excitement and happiness along with stronger expressivity and positivity) due to their culture's high value placed on individuals' emotional expression while discouraging devalued emotions (e.g., shame). In comparison, East Asians experience lower arousal, orienting toward less excitement and positivity, but more placidity and tranquility toward a balance between the two extreme valences (Kirchner et al. 2018; Tsai et al. 2006, Tsai 2017). Furthermore, among East Asians, sad sentiments and sorrow may be savored more openly (Eid and Diener 2001; Fung 1998; Li et al. 2013; Scollon et al. 2005), presumably toward relationality and mutual care.[1]

IV. Confucian Affect (*Qing* 情)

In this paper, I hope to analyze Confucian affect[2] (*qing* 情) as a kind of cultivated human feeling in light of the theory and research as advanced by Tsai (affect valuation theory) and others (De Leersnyder

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[1] Enculturation of how to feel across cultures begins early on and continues throughout life, perhaps enabling children to become affectively functional members of their culture (Fung 1998; Li and Fung 2020; Tsai et al. 2007; Wang and Fivush 2005).

[2] *Qing* 情 is not easily translated into any Western language. Some scholars translate it into *sentiment*. I prefer *affect* mainly because *qing* is often connected to bodily arousal. Nevertheless, it is not only bodily arousal but transformed feelings that people experience.

et al. 2021; Mesquita 2003; Tamir et al. 2016; Tsai 2006). In my reading and lived experience, *qing* is the general term connoting "ideal affect," not only in Chinese culture but also across the so-called Confucian-heritage cultures that include China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and the diasporic East Asian groups across the world. As such, *qing* is desired, thus primarily positive.[3] It is inevitably normative, expressing not merely feelings but also moral, virtuous, and ethical intent.

A. Why Confucian?

It is well-known that in East Asia, three major schools of thought have been predominant throughout history, despite the presence of Christianity over the past 150 years: Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. Of the three, the first two were Chinese native philosophy; whereas Buddhism originates from India. Regarding affect, Daoism does not really address it because Daoist tenet is yin-yang balance, and the ideal human emotional state is calm with no particular positive or negative emotion. Likewise, Buddhism teaches that everything in the world is illusion. Therefore, to achieve enlightenment is to detach oneself from any attachment and any emotion. Thus, affect is regarded as interference with one's enlightenment. Central to Buddhist teaching is the idea of compassion. Although it is easily linked to our moral emotions of empathy and sympathy, Buddhist compassion is still theorized and practiced as spirituality rather than a direct expression of one's bodily arousal.

Confucian philosophy is the only one that embraces human affect. The general term is *qing* 情. The character is made of two parts: the meaning of heart (*xin* 心 [忄]) and the sound of blue/green (*qing* 青), thus *qing* 情. Due to the fact that there is no English equivalence of the full meaning of *qing* 情, I use *qing* in this paper.

According to both ancient and contemporary thinking, Confucian philosophy does not rest on pure reason as Western philosophy, but

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[3] Certainly, other-directed negative emotions and feelings exist (e.g., anger and contempt), but they are not part of *qing* that I address in this paper.

human feelings (*shengming qinggan* 生命情感). Chinese contemporary philosopher Wang Defeng 王德峰 maintains that Confucianism philosophizes the meaning of human feelings so as to help us embody, express, expand, and elevate our human feelings (Wang 2022a). In Confucian persuasion, human feelings are rooted in our relationality that is not conveyed and felt merely for the moment (episodic), but toward lasting mutual care, honoring each other, and realizing human dignity. Through *qing*, one self-cultivates toward Confucian virtues such as humaneness (*ren* 仁), rightness (*yi* 義), ritual propriety (*li* 禮), and trustworthiness (*xin* 信).

V. Further Exploring Confucian *Qing*: Four Transformations

Following Tsai's affect evaluation theory and psychological research on how to feel, the most noticeable characteristic of Confucian affect is that it does not focus on the "raw" emotions, namely, pure bodily arousal, but highly enculturated feelings. From what I could discern, Confucian-felt *qing* exhibits at least four interrelated transformations from the "raw" emotions/feelings: (1) philosophized (*zhelihua* 哲理化), (2) moralized (*dehua* 德化), (3) ritualized (*lihua* 禮化), and (4) aestheticized (*meixuehua* 美學化). I discuss each in that order.

A. *Qing* as Philosophized (*Zhelihua* 哲理化)

The term *philosophized* (*zhelihua* 哲理化) may seem unusual. Other terms such as *theorized, highly cognized*, and *culturally valued* could also serve the purpose. I considered these but still prefer *philosophized*. Then, it is necessary to explain briefly what philosophizing might entail in the way I use the term here. In my view, philosophizing refers to systematic contemplation of life.

 This intellectual engagement frequently results in a body of scholarly work, primarily centered around theorizing and ongoing debates concerning the nature of the phenomena. These activities include describing, delineating, and similar endeavors, aiming to understand how these phenomena operate and how humans perceive

and experience them. Confucian *qing* is one phenomenon that has been subject to philosophizing since the rise of Confucianism. Philosophizing *qing* is not the same as other human endeavors (e.g., making art or empirical research). Surely, the other three transformations to be discussed in this paper are related to the philosophizing of *qing*, but each addresses a different facet of it.

B. The Traditional Chinese View on *Qing*

It is not the purpose of this paper to trace all the philosophical origins of Confucian *qing*; it suffices to look at a few major ideas and their relations. Although *qing* was discussed in most Confucian texts such as the *Analects, Mencius,* and *Xunzi*, a number of books during the Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE) reveal more concentrated philosophizing of *qing*. The oldest Chinese dictionary *Shuowen Jiezi* 說文解字 (121 CE) explains *qing* as human inner feelings (人之陰氣有欲者) as we experience them in daily life, which is our raw emotion. "Seven emotions" (*qiqing* 七情) are listed: happiness, anger, sadness/sorrow, pleasure, fear, love, and disgust (喜怒哀樂懼愛惡) (See Xu [121] n.d.). Earlier, the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (ca 239 BCE) discusses "six desires" (*liuyu* 六欲): eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind (眼耳鼻舌身意) as human bodily senses through which emotions are generated (See Lü [239 BCE] 2007). *The Record of Ritual* (*Liji* 禮記), one of the five classics, states that humans have innate ability to feel the seven emotions without any need to learn them. Subsequently, the Confucian philosopher Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BCE) elucidated that as human desire *qing* can be limitless without discipline. Finally, Chinese traditional medicine, as has been practiced throughout East Asian history to date, has an extensive theory on how emotions are related to bodily functions as signs of health/illness and related treatment (Zheng 2019).

Qing as a subject of philosophy and practice was studied more by Neo-Confucians during the Song-Ming eras (960–1279 and 1368–1644, respectively; See Chen 2011). As a result of their attention to the role of affect, raw human emotions need to be regulated, experienced, expressed, and elevated in order to promote Confucian moral self-cultivation. Among the Four Books, there is *Centrality and Commonality*

(Zhongyong 中庸), which was carefully selected and annotated by the renowned Neo-Confucian scholar Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) to be essential reading and a central subject for the Chinese Civil Service Examination (ca. 1300 to 1905). In this book, a noteworthy passage indicates:

> When joy and anger, sorrow and happiness are not yet manifest, call it "the center." When they are already manifest, and yet all are hitting the proper measure, call it "harmony."[4] (As translated in Angle and Tiwald 2017, 91)

It is clear that the goal is to strive for a balanced affective life by self-discipline to avoid excessiveness and being engulfed by our sheer bodily desires.

C. Prevalence of *Qing* and Its Wisdom for Life

Consequently, philosophized *qing* has entered most, if not all, domains of life. This development influences people's worldviews, values, and purposes of life. These orientations further shape how people view their personhood, develop their relationships, and engage in social interactions. The prevalence of *qing* is quite evident in the Chinese language (also in Vietnamese,[5] and likely in other East Asian languages as well). Two facets are noteworthy: (1) there is a large lexicon of *qing*, differentiating nuances, and (2) within this lexicon, there are also large numbers of accumulated folk sayings, proverbs, idioms, and aphorisms that reveal *qing*-related wisdom for people to draw on as their life guidance.

An important theory as advanced by anthropologist Robert Levy serves to illuminate this large lexicon. Levy (1984) uses *hypercognize* versus *hypocognize* to differentiate domains of human life that a given culture conceptualizes in accord with that culture's value system and norm. Domains that are hypercognized in a culture (e.g., anger in Tahiti) have many more terms and ways to differentiate fine nuances of the

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4 喜怒哀樂之未發, 謂之中; 發而皆中節; 謂之和.
5 See Fung and Thu (2019).

domain. By contrast, domains that are hypocognized in the same culture (e.g., sadness in Tahiti) have fewer terms and ways to conceptualize differences of that domain. *Qing* seems to be a hypercognized domain in Chinese culture (and possibly across Confucian-heritage cultures).

Qing has a very large lexicon because *qing* is present in most of life, including both social and cognitive realms. Roger Ames (2011) explains: "*Qing*. . . is both the facticity of and the feeling that pervades any particular situation" (74). During my exploration of the Chinese Online Dictionary (n.d.), I came across a wealth of entries incorporating the term *qing*. I selected five common *qing*-terms with both literary and non-literal translations: (1) *shiqing* 事情 (circumstancing/mattering feeling vs. a matter/event/issue), (2) *qingkuang* 情况 (feeling situation vs. situation), (3) *qingxing* 情形 (feeling circumstance vs. circumstance), (4) *qingjing* 情境 (feeling scenario vs. scenario), and (5) *qingli* 情理 (feeling pattern vs. pattern/reasoning). All these literal translations in English sound bizarre, but they are very natural in Chinese!

To verify such prevalence of *qing* in Chinese culture empirically, a recent study asked 60 young adults in China what *qing* means in each of the above five terms. Although most people (87%) indicated that the first term does not carry the central meaning of *qing* as affect, but rather serves a linguistic function, the next three terms involve *qing* and *qing*-related situations, states, and descriptions more (42%, 45%, and 45%), with the last term expressing the most *qing* (76%) (Yang 2023).

Pertaining to the large idiomatic expressions of *qing*-related folk wisdom, I present three examples. First is the term *minqing* 民情, literally "people's feelings." This term is primarily used in matters of governance. When government officials go to local areas to investigate people's livelihood/complaints, they use the expression "investigating people's feelings" (了解民情). Why are feelings instead of factual data collection emphasized here? From what I can discern, it is because in any social situation human feelings are always at the center. Human-relevant situations and involved feelings are stressed over dry, abstract, logical reasoning. It is indeed sensible to perceive human interactions in this manner, given that all human interactions are primarily rooted in human emotions. Placing them in the center of any human matter is the key to handling human interactive tensions effectively. Thus,

one Chinese approach to conflict resolution is "moving the parties by feelings before reasoning" (動之以情, 曉之以理).

The second example is the common proverb "presenting swan feathers a thousand miles away, *qing* is weighty despite the trifling gift" (千裏送鵝毛, 禮輕情意重). This saying came from a true story: a tributary state sent a convoy to present a swan (a rare but "auspicious" animal then) to the Emperor Taizong during Tang dynasty. Unfortunately, the swan escaped leaving a few feathers. The convoy still traveled over a thousand miles and presented the feathers as a gift. Upon learning the truth, the Emperor was moved, accepting the gift. The proverb clearly conveys that the actual value of the gift matters much less than *qing* that the gift conveys. The third example is the (also common) saying "To meet an old friend in distant land is like sweet rain after a long drought" (久旱逢甘雨, 他鄉遇故知). The enlightening meaning here is that as humans need rain to grow food, our affective comfort from old friends in a strange land is also essential for our well-being.

To sum, *qing* as philosophized reflects concerted contemplation beyond "raw" emotions that people feel and express in daily life. Philosophized *qing* then becomes a way to construe the world, to guide us in how to lead a meaningful life, how to interact with others, to regard, and to relate to each other. Due to their millennia-long influence, *qing* is well-integrated with life. As such, East Asians experience *qing* prevalently and deeply in the Confucian way.

D. *Qing* as Moralized (*Dehua* 德化)

Qing is not morally neutral but highly relationally conducive, morally elevating, and expansive feelings expressed and felt, that is, moralized. I would venture to say that there is no Confucian virtue without *qing*. For example, in the *Analects* (17.21), we read a famous conversation between Confucius and his student Zaiwo on what it means to practice filial piety toward one's deceased parents:

> Zaiwo inquired, "the three-year mourning period on the death of one's parents is already too long. [Zaiwo next gives several reasons that such long mourning might impede people's daily life including making

music]. Surely a year is good enough." The Master replied, "Would you then be comfortable eating fine rice and wearing colorful brocade?" Zaiwo said he would indeed. The Master said "If you are comfortable, then do it. When exemplary persons (*junzi* 君子) are mourning, they can find no relish in fine-tasting food, no pleasure in the sound of music, and no comfort in their usual lodgings, that they do not abbreviate the mourning period to one year. Now if you are comfortable with these things, then by all means, enjoy them." When Zaiwo had left, the Master remarked, "Zaiwo is really perverse (*buren* 不仁). . . ." (As translated in Ames and Rosemont 1998)

Ren 仁 (*humaneness*) is the highest human virtue as advocated by Confucius. Unfeeling or hurried grief toward deceased parents is regarded as un-*ren* (*buren* 不仁), or a lack of humaneness, by Confucius. Thus, feeling comfortable eating fine-tasting food, wearing beautiful clothes, enjoying music, namely seeking personal pleasure here is not just a bodily caloric drive or momentary enjoyment, but inseparable from one's virtuous self-cultivation.

Another example of *qing* as moralized is the very first opening three sentences of the *Analects* (1.1):

The Master said: "Having studied [Confucian way (*dao* 道)], to then repeatedly practice what you have learned—is this not a source of pleasure? To have like-minded friends from afar [to learn with oneself]—is this not a source of enjoyment? To go unacknowledged by others without harboring frustration—is this not the mark of an exemplary person (*junzi* 君子)? (As translated in Ames and Rosemont 1998)

Here Confucius' pleasure (*yue* 說), enjoyment (*le* 樂), and without frustration (*yun* 慍) in seemingly mundane activities are expressed in conjunction with one's virtuous and moral self-cultivation.

Finally, the well-known four moral germinations of humans by Mencius are all *qing* sentiments: (1) *empathy* as the germ of humane conduct, (2) *shame and distain* of rightness, (3) *courtesy and deference* of ritual propriety, and (4) *approval and disapproval* of wisdom (Mencius 1970, 2A.6). Neo-Confucians during the Song-Ming era (960–1279 and

1368–1644 CE, respectively) further argued that Confucian virtuous self-cultivation requires *qing*, which facilitates one's internalization of Confucian virtues as to enable one to spontaneously practice them. Practicing one's virtues is never a sheer reasoning-based act but one that engenders genuine enjoyment via *qing*. Thus, true Confucian self-cultivation is a cycle and intertwinement of understanding and enjoyment toward higher virtues (Chen 2010).

Below is a sample of other important virtues with clear *qing*. The first group has been pursued since antiquity: mindheart (*xin* 心), sincerity/wholeheartedness (*cheng* 誠), tender love (*ci* 慈), fondness of (*hao* 好), deference (*gong* 恭), kindness/generosity (*hui* 惠), broad-mindedness/benevolence (*kuanhou* 寬厚), earnestness/focus (*du* 篤), deferential yielding (*rang* 讓), and humility (*qianxun* 謙遜). The second group is more recent: kindness (*youshan* 友善), respect (*zunzhong* 尊重), politeness (*keqi* 客氣), gratitude (*baoda* 報答), holding someone's kindness in heart (*jiqing* 記情), and perseverance (*jianren* 堅韌).

E. *Enqing* (恩情)

To provide some concrete examples of Confucian affect considered thus far (philosophized and moralized), I discuss next *enqing* 恩情, that is, possibly the highest Confucian *qing*. What is *en* in *enqing*? It is deep kindness/care (*houhui* 厚惠) (See Xu [121] n.d.). Thus, *enqing* is what one person extends to another (one-directional) deep-hearted care. As I discern, at least five features merit initial analysis.

First, *enqing* is not mutual affect, hence not between equals such as friendship that rests on mutual care, liking, and trust. Instead, *enqing* occurs in an unequal or hierarchical relationship between Person A (P_1) and Person B (P_2).[6] The relational nature is that P_1 possesses higher position, status, and power (e.g., positional, intellectual/skill, financial,

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[6] For 2000 years (Baidu n.d.), Chinese people have been using the term *enai* 恩愛 to refer to the affect between husband and wife, but not the term *aiqing* 愛情 that denotes romantic love. As such, *enai*, according to contemporary philosopher Wang Defeng, is not romantic love, that is, more pure emotion, but transformed to the Confucian affect between the couple, emphasizing the mutual ethical commitment and care. See Wang (2022b). My paper does not address *enai*.

and social resources). With such capacity, although without any duty, P_1 volunteers to help, rescue, relieve, care for, support, protect P_2 at a lower position, status, at risk, facing challenges.

Second, P_1's help does not stem from a calculation of personal gain, expectation of return, or utilitarian/manipulative purposes, but what Mencius refers to as empathy/compassion and sheer kindness. Neither does P_2 expect, request, and feel entitled to P_1's help. Third, *enqing* is not expressed for trivial, but significant matters in P_2's life. Sometimes, P_1 may not regard small help as *en*-significant, but P_2 regards P_1's *enqing* as significant and very meaningful.

Fourth, the principle of "a spring of gratitude to a drop of kindness" solidifies the relationship between the two. *Enqing* is sheer kindness, irrespective of how P_2 responds. Nonetheless, the more P_1 intends and acts this *en*-way, the more P_2 feels compelled to enact the principle. For any *enqing*, even just "a drop, one shall reciprocate it with a spring," a common Chinese aphorism (滴水之恩, 當湧泉相報). Still in reality, because of the unequal status/resources between the two, P_2 can never reciprocate to P_1 enough. Finally, P_1 does not regard the deed as anything special, but often downplays the significance, and continues P_1's *en*-acts toward P_2. Yet, because of this fourth principle, P_2 will remember P_1's kind deed and reciprocate whenever P_2 can, thus the expression of "gratitude forever" (*yongshi buwang* 永世不忘).

Having presented these five features of *enqing*, it would be helpful to look at a few typical forms of *enqing*. The first one is the *en* of *parental* unconditional tender love/care (*fumu yangyu zhi en* 父母養育之恩) with parental utter devotion and sacrifice. Such parental *en* calls for the deepest gratitude from children. This is probably why filial piety, or reverence, for parents, is such a profound virtue that is undoubtedly also expressed as a Confucian affect.

The second form is the *en* of teacher/mentor (*enshi* 恩師). A teacher, who recognizes P_2's goodness/potential, teaches P_2 with unusual dedication (beyond the call of duty), care, and support, without holding back any knowledge/skill. P_2 will work/live to honor the *en*-teacher/mentor. The third form is lifesaving *en* (*jiuming zhi en* 救命之恩). Suppose, P_2's life was saved by a stranger (doctors or rescue workers belong to this type of *en*, but they are not regarded as strangers). P_2 must remember

such *en* and express gratitude to P₁ for life. The fourth form is the *en* of encounter and recognition (*zhiyu zhi en* 知遇之恩), where P₂'s talent/ability/potential is recognized by a superior, thanks to an unexpected encounter (good luck). P₁ helps P₂ realize P₂'s potential and guides P₂ to great achievement.

The final form to be featured here is unspecified *en* (*youen yuwo* 有恩於我) where P₂ receives something special that P₂ is unable to reciprocate to P₁. P₂ bears P₁'s kindness in mind and takes an opportunity to express gratitude to such *en* (could be years later) whenever an occasion arises. Here is one vivid example—Siddharth Chatterjee, current Indian Senior UN official in China overseeing 27 agencies. Chatterjee hoped to give something back to China since childhood because of a pair of boots. When he was nine, his father took him to a local bazaar. In a shoe store owned by a Chinese man, Chatterjee saw a pair of beautiful boots and asked his father to buy them. But his father said no, because they could not afford it. As Chatterjee and his father were leaving, the owner handed Chatterjee a gift bag. The father and son went home and opened the bag (a local custom) to discover the boots that Chatterjee wanted. His parents returned to the store wanting to pay for the boots, but the owner refused, because his own nine-year-old son died of illness a year before. Chatterjee reminded him of his own son. Chatterjee felt not just compassion from the owner, but also fatherly love to Chatterjee as if he were the man's son. Many years later, Chatterjee was able to "reciprocate" the owner's *enqing* by sharing the story with Chinese people (CCTV 2021).

Given the weighty nature of *enqing*, failure to express due gratitude for it, or worse, inflicting harm to the *en*-giver (e.g., abusing one's parents) is a serious moral wrongdoing, called in Chinese "forgetting *en* and failing rightness" (*wangen fuyi* 忘恩負義). Of course, failure happens in any culture. The most serious is unfilial (*buxiao* 不孝), which is understood as the child not caring or trashing parental tender love and sacrifice. When unfilial behavior occurs, it really hurts, which is likely to result in the condemnation by the larger kin and community.[7] Such

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[7] Currently, China and other East Asian societies (e.g., Korea, Singapore, and Hong Kong) have to different degrees codified filial piety into law. For example, Chinese law

outrage coheres with Mencius' long-standing exposition that lacking such basic humaneness signals serious character flaw and problems (Mencius 1970, 2A.6). Such failure is likely to lead to a breakdown of important relationships at home and beyond. Those who are once associated with such a person may distance themselves, avoiding interacting with the person.

Beyond *enqing*, there are many other common and important kinds of *qing*, for example, that of family (*qinqing* 親情), siblings (*shouzu zhiqing* 手足之情), friends (*youqing* 友情), study peers (*tongchuang zhiqing* 同窗 之情), those who share a hometown (*xiangqing* 鄉情), those who have interacted substantially (*xiangqing* 交情), and humans in general (*renqing* 人情). All of these kinds of *qing* serve the same purpose of moral/virtuous self-cultivation.

F. *Qing* as Ritualized (*Lihua* 禮化)

The third posited transformation of Confucian *qing* is through ritual, thus the term *ritualized* (*lihua* 禮化). A fundamental way East Asians express their *qing* is through *ritual propriety* (*li* 禮). Despite changes throughout history, *li* has been persistently practiced since antiquity. However, *li* is not easy to describe even by East Asians to themselves, let alone to non-East Asians (J. Li 2021). Amazing is the fact that East Asians do this without the need to verbalize *li*'s meaning and even how to do it (right). They just do it naturally all the time. For example, at the dinner table, a mother always hands the first bowl of her best food to her young son to give to Grandma. Yet, the same food is right in front of her. She could easily serve it herself. But nobody questions this seemingly irrational, inefficient, or pointless nature of this act.

What's going on here? The mother asked her son one day why she takes the "trouble" to have him bring the food to Grandma like that. Without any hesitation, her son said "so we *show* her that we love and respect her!" The boy grasps the essence of it. However, this prompts us to delve deeper into why this ritual act achieves the goal

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stipulates that adult children are obligated to care for and provide psychological support to their parents.

of expressing love/respect for Grandma? Furthermore, we're intrigued to explore what this ritual accomplishes that other methods, such as straightforward verbal expressions like "I love you, Grandma!" supposedly can not achieve.

Here may lie probably one of Confucius' greatest achievements. To exposit the idea, two senses of Confucian ritual distinguished by Eric Hutton, translator of *Xunzi* (Xunzi 2016), are helpful. First, there is a set of standards for behavior that has been traditionally passed down over several millennia that people observe, despite changes throughout history (e.g., wedding ritual).[8] Confucian ritual in this sense is translated into *rites*. The second sense is the personal tendency to practice ritual as a *personal* virtue, and this sense of Confucian ritual is translated into ritual propriety. For my purposes, I address *ritual propriety* while holding rites as the cultural backdrop. My focus here is on the *personal*. As such, I would argue that ritual propriety is surely a psychological domain because individuals think about, feel, and practice it.

According to an influential treatise on Confucian's profound teaching of ritual propriety by contemporary philosopher, Li Zehou (2015), ritual propriety was originally shamanistic performance to the cosmos (*tian* 天) and other supernatural powers for tribal survival with tribal heads as shamans themselves. Gradually, the fear and awe toward the cosmos underwent a humanizing transformation. Now, the cosmos was more interwoven with humans so that "it sees with the eyes of my people, and it hears with the ears of my people" as declared by King Wu[9] ("Taishi zhong" n.d.). Instead of relying on the cosmos as an independent superpower, human welfare became the judgment of cosmic operations. While shamanic ritual continued, something significant took place: Duke of Zhou 周公 (ca twelfth to eleventh century BCE) established their governing system known as "ritual and music" (*lile zhidu* 禮樂制度). In this system, ritual was both the principal way of

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[8] Such ritual is not the same as the general notion of convention (e.g., quietly listening to a priest's sermon in itself is not ritual); ritual is a much complex event.

[9] Who mobilized his people and succeeded in overthrowing Shang dynasty's cruel and tyrannical king (Di Xing known as Zhou Wang, 1105–1145 BCE).

governance for all the kingdom's affairs as well as a conventional code to regulate commoners' conduct to each other. Music as detailed in the *Record of Ritual* (Liji n.d.) and *Xunzi* (Xunzi 2016) served in conjunction with ritual propriety to shape and educate people toward an orderly, peaceful, and harmonized society. Unfortunately, after several centuries, Zhou's central power declined, resulting in many vassal states fighting against each other for several more centuries. During this time, as lamented by Confucius, the well-functioning system became "ritual disintegration and music decay" (*libeng yuehuai* 禮崩樂壞). Eventually, Zhou ended by the Qin emperor 秦始皇 (259–210 BCE) conquering all vassal states, uniting China. How to return to the human way (*rendao* 人道) in such chaos was a great question for political leaders and intellectuals (Qian 2013).

According to Li, Confucius' epoch-making contribution regarding ritual propriety is that, in the midst of such disorder, he turned previously human-to-deity awe to human-to-human dignification, that is, initiating the process of dignifying humans. Confucius insisted that all humans have the worth of dignity and the capacity to achieve it. But this is not the kind of dignity we are familiar with today, but something more inspiring. What would happen, to take Confucius' conviction a bit further, if we humans turn to each other and treat each other the way we deify the cosmos and spirits? What, with this shift, would happen to each *one of us* and to *everyone* we interact with? Confucius concluded that we would become persons with cosmic quality, that is, achieving the highest human excellence, which he termed *ren* 仁, consummate humaneness. Thus, Confucius repurposed shamanic ritual by bringing it to the between-human world, which became the core of Confucian relationality. Li expounds that this underlies the true meaning of Confucian "oneness of the cosmos and humanity" (*tianren heyi* 天人合一) and moral/virtuous self-cultivation. This new and brilliant philosophizing of mutual human treatment and regard is tantamount to making the mundane sacred in daily life. Who under the sun would not like to live a life with dignity?! Herbert Fingarrette (1972) was probably the first Western scholar who saw this unprecedented philosophical achievement by Confucius. Because Confucius' teaching is anchored in the ordinary life, he has been so effective and has deservedly been

honored as an "exemplary teacher for all ages" (*wanshi shibiao* 萬世師表). The deification of human worth surely inspires individual persons to strive toward and to support each other in realizing this worth.

Let us return to the concrete example of the mother handing the best bowl of food to her son who takes it to Grandma at dinner time. How is *qing* of love/honoring expressed with ritual propriety? As far as I can tell, there are at least six features meriting discussion (J. Li 2021). First is the idea of Grandma being dignified *subjunctively* (Seligman et al. 2008). Accordingly, a fundamental purpose of ritual propriety is to enable humans to deal with the nature of human life fundamentally as unpredictable, chaotic, and fractured by creating a realm that is not real but easily imaginable and enterable in which to experience the positive, dependable, and consistent. In the example, Grandma is served with the best food first. But in reality, she is no different from anyone else. However, she is elevated to a higher realm, thus being "deified." Although subjunctive, it feels real.

The second feature of ritual propriety is mutuality as requisite. Ritual propriety exists not for the individual alone, but for strengthening and enriching particular relationships with others. In fact, ritual propriety would not be needed if relationality and mutuality were absent. In the example, Grandma cares for her grandson with tender love and often self-sacrifices (e.g., cooking for and cleaning the child). Their deep relationship makes it only natural for the grandson to reciprocate love to Grandma with the best food. Moreover, relationality does not merely include Grandma and the child, but also the mother, who was raised by Grandma in the first place. In performing ritual propriety, the mother models and guides the child while Grandma accepts the ritual propriety-food.

The third ritual propriety feature is the format that structures the performative act. This means that although ritual propriety involves verbal expression, it is less central than the actual doing, namely, practice. The format is key to conveying and recognizing the meaning of a particular ritual propriety performance in the culture. Such structured performance ensures the delivery of the message. Going back to the example, the mother fills the bowl with the best food in front of everyone. She then hands the bowl to the child, who brings it to

Grandma. By doing so, the actual food is no longer important, thus losing its materiality. Instead, the food here becomes symbolic of love and respect for Grandma. The depth of the meaning is achieved through demonstration.

The fourth feature is channeled expression of *qing*, not as raw emotional expression. *Qing* here involves mostly "self-conscious" emotions. Such emotions are socially generated and often other-oriented where the self is centrally implicated, such as honor, pride, gratitude, respect, and humility on the positive side versus negative shame, guilt, embarrassment, or contempt. Given that the goal is to cultivate and strengthen relationships, positive self-conscious emotions are involved most. In the dinner example, the channeled expression of *qing* may be diagrammed as GM↔M↔GS↔GM. Grandma (GM) nurtured the mother (M). When young, GM gave M much more. As M grew up and learned how to express *qing* with ritual propriety, she reciprocated care and love back to GM (e.g., filial piety) similarly. M then had grandson (GS) and did the same to raise and nurture him. As GS was raised and taught ritual propriety, he, too, began to reciprocate care and love back to M. Finally, as in the dinner example reveals, GS was guided to express *qing* through ritual propriety to GM as she also co-parented GS. And the process would continue for the rest of their lives. This ritual propriety-based expression of *qing* indeed shows love and respect effectively to GM as the boy readily acknowledged.

The fifth feature may be characterized as "aesthetic exaltation" in expressing *qing* via ritual propriety. Returning to the dinner example, it is clear that the food to Grandma is presented in a style, typically with the child holding the bowl with both hands and presenting it to Grandma, bowing. Bowing is a common bodily gesture for East Asian people to express respect for others, especially authority (e.g., parents, grandparents, teachers, and organizational leaders) or guests (e.g., at an important event/ceremony). Ritual propriety here enables all to experience "beatitudes," elevating the ordinary to the sacred. The love and respect that the family extends to Grandma feels indeed as dignifying.

The final feature of ritualized *qing* is to support people's moral/ virtuous self-cultivation toward the highest Confucian virtue of humane-

ness (*ren* 仁). According to Wei-ming Tu (1979), consummate humaneness is the most humane, sincere, and genuine human quality for which everyone could strive. Consummate humaneness is not a single behavior or feeling but a constellation of all humaneness, sincerity, and warm-heartedness that are manifest in the person's character (Ames 2011). Consummate humaneness includes, but is not limited to, parental love and dedication to their children, children's filial feelings, understanding, and acts toward parents and grandparents, sibling love and care, compassion toward others, and so forth. Ritualized *qing* can generate the ripple effect on self-cultivation toward consummate humaneness. In the family, Grandma gave her unconditional love and dedication to the mother. The mother then gave the same love and care to her own son. Since childhood, he has been taught and guided to practice filial piety to his parents and grandparents. By this practice, the son develops filial feelings toward the family adults. As the child grows older, he gains deeper understanding of filial piety, eventually internalizing related feelings, behavior, and understanding. Every step of the way, the child moves closer to consummate humaneness. The child's siblings develop similarly. In the Confucian persuasion, once acquiring such basic goodness at home, the child is likely to extend his developing consummate humaneness outside home, to his peers, teachers, and other community members.

G. *Qing* as Aestheticized (*Meixuehua* 美學化)

The final transformation of *qing* I explore is the aesthetic transformation (*meixuehua* 美學化). I use "aesthetic" here to mean that *qing* is expressed, felt, and received in a way that is not our raw emotional response but graced with the idea of beautification. For example, if one feels sadness, one sheds tears. This is a direct physiological expression of the feeling state of sadness. However, if instead of crying, one plays a song to convey one's sad feeling, it is embellished in the form of music. By doing so, one's sad feeling is no longer merely physiological. Not only does one feel one's own embellished sadness, but those to whom one plays the music may likewise receive the transformed feeling. The psychological impact of such a transformation on the self and others is different,

which I would say is a process of affective elevation that Confucians promote. Note that this example does not necessarily involve ritual propriety. Just using music to express one's sadness substantiates the aesthetic transformation I have in mind.

Despite limited discussion on this topic, aestheticized *qing* across East Asia is prevalent and highly visible. I already hinted some aesthetic aspects in the section on ritualized *qing*. There are many aesthetic forms (such as poetry, music, gesture, speech, and clothing). I highlight two ways in which *qing* is aestheticized: Gift-giving and poetry.

H. Everyday Gift-Giving Filled with Aestheticized *Qing*

Gift-giving in East Asia is an everyday routine, but it is also a delicate act. To begin with, the term *gift* in Chinese is *liwu* 禮物, literally ritual object that has been used over several millennia. The significance of gift-giving is intimately connected to ritual propriety. In comparison, *gift* in Western languages is just something a person gives to another without any hint to the idea of ritual (J. Li 2021). In the gift-giving process, the gift-giver has an occasion or desires some relationship with another. The aestheticized *qing* is expressed from the beginning in one's selecting or making a gift for the other with care and respect.[10] The heart and mind that go into the gift and its presentation convey *qing* with aesthetics via ritual propriety. As a result, the relationship between the gift-giver and gift-receiver is deepened, and both parties' virtues elevated.[11]

I. Writing and Reciting Poetry to Express *Qing*

Poetry has been playing a profound role in Chinese people's lives. All poetry is about human feelings, such as love, care, hope, longing, admiration, aspiration, eulogy, lament, sorrow, loss. . . . One of the oldest books in Chinese civilization is the *Book of Songs* (*Shijing* 詩經), a collection of folk songs and ballads, poems for ritual ceremonies of

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[10] This is similar to Western cultures' Christmas gift-giving (i.e., selecting, wrapping, and presenting the gift).
[11] See J. Li (2021) for a fuller analysis on gift-giving via ritual propriety.

aristocracy, and poems for religious events at state temples (Shijing n.d.). The *Book of Songs* is one of the Five Classics that every student had to study for the Civil Service Examination from about the seventh century to 1905 (about 1300 years) when the dynastic system ended. Writing poetry was a required skill if one hoped to succeed in the Examination. Thus, civil (but also many military) officials were actually called scholar-officials. They wrote poems at most governmental levels. Rulers were also tutored, since childhood, in poetry writing and recitation (as well as achieving an appreciable level of calligraphic art). In the 661 years between Tang and Song dynasties (618–1279 CE) alone, there were over 200,000 poems (not to mention those lost) written by about 13,000 poets. For educational purposes, scholars compiled selections of poems from Tang and Song eras, the most well-known are *Three Hundred Tang Poems* (*Tang shi sanbaishou* 唐詩三百首) by Sun Zhu 孫洙 (eighteenth century) and *Three Hundred Song Poems* (*Song ci sanbaishou* 宋詞三百首) by Zhu Xiaocang 朱孝臧 (nineteenth century) (see Zhu 2009). Most current elementary students learn by heart many poems, and it is quite common for Chinese people to recite poems regardless of their level of education.

As an example, I give one poem *Longing at Quiet Night* (*Jingyesi* 靜夜思) by Li Bai (701–762 CE) that is memorized and recited across China by children and adults:

> Before my bed a pool of light,
> Is it hoarfrost upon the ground?
> Eyes raised, I see the moon so bright,
> Head bent, in homesickness I'm drowned.[12]

Many poems like this express the deep *qing* toward people's families and homes.

The bright round moon for Chinese and other East Asians stands not only for home but also for family reunion and togetherness. When people part from their families and friends, they feel sorrow just like anyone else. But the way Chinese people express such sorrow

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[12] 床前明月光; 疑是地上霜; 舉頭望明月; 低頭思故鄉. See Sun (2021, 50-51).

is often through poetry. On the mid-autumn day where the moon is the roundest a la lunar calendar, people write and recite poems, from national to local and family festivity. I remember that despite poverty, my parents would bake mooncakes and nuts and serve them with tea on a stable set in the courtyard. When all gathered, my parents would start reciting poems from Tang and Song eras written for the occasion, inviting children to join. My siblings and I learned many poems during the annual Mid-Autumn Festival and at the same time learned how to express our family *qing* through poetry.

I recall watching an interview a few years back featuring the renowned contemporary writer Yu Qiuyu 余秋雨, where he discussed the essence of the festival with a TV anchor. Yu said that during the night, when a farmer, a housewife, a construction worker gazes at the moon and feel *qing* toward their families/home, they all become poets themselves. Yu further noted that this holiday is the only poetry-centered holiday that he knows in the world. I concur.

VI. Empirical Research on *Qing* 情

As stated at the beginning of this paper, there is little empirical research that directly addresses Confucian *qing* in light of the four transformations as outlined above. Nonetheless, one could cull from various studies some relevant research findings. In general, East Asians tend to value and experience lower arousals of both positive and negative emotions than their European American and European counterparts (Tsai 2017; Tsai et al. 2007; Tsai et al. 2019). Research further shows that these two cultural groups tend to experience different types of emotion, particularly socially engaging (e.g., friendliness, closeness, and shame) versus disengaging emotions (e.g., pride and anger) at different frequencies and to different extent (Kitayama et al. 2006; De Leersnyder et al. 2021). Moreover, Western and East Asian people process emotional components (Frijda 1986; Mesquita, 2003) of a given emotion differently (e.g., shame-induced fury or humility), such as how one encodes the antecedence, acts, and copes with it and the relational other (Boiger et al. 2022; De Leersnyder et al. 2021; Kirchner et al. 2018).

Taken together, this line of research supports the idea that emotional lives of East Asians and Western people reflect their cultural models of the interdependent and independent self, respectively.

A separate strand of empirical research comes from discourse analysis, that is, pragmatics (how to use language to achieve one's goals) on Chinese communication that sheds some light on Confucian ritualized *qing* and ritual propriety practice. The research demonstrates conclusively Chinese people routinely engage in "humbling oneself and giving honor to others" as espoused in the *Record of Ritual* (Liji n.d.). Discourse analysis uses the term *self-denigration maxim* to refer to such social-affective interactions. In his seminal paper, Yueguo Gu (1990) states:

> When self pays a visit to other, his visiting is described by self as *baifang* 拜访, or *baijian* 拜见, or *baiwang* 拜望, or *baiye* 拜谒. The morpheme *bai* 拜… literally means "to prostrate oneself at the foot of other." The four verbs can be glossed… as "to prostrate oneself to visit." If self's visiting is a return visit, he *huibai* 回拜 (to return a prostration). Similarly, self's reading other's writing is *baidu* 拜读 (i.e. to prostrate self to read other's writing), and for self to say goodbye to other is *baibie* 拜别 (i.e. to prostrate self to take leave of other).… When self requests the pleasure of other's company, on the other hand, the former begs the latter to *shangguang* 赏光 (to bestow light), and the latter's presence is *guanglin* 光临 (light arrives). If self requests other to read his writing, he begs the latter to *cijiao* 赐教 (condescend to teach), or *fuzheng* 斧正 (to use an axe to correct the blunders). (247)

Although some of these linguistic forms have been used less in modern times, many persist to date. Putting ourselves in the shoes of the speaker, it is not hard to feel the humbling affect in oneself. As the recipient, hearing such ritualized affect intended to honor oneself, one would likely feel respected and grateful to the self-denigrating person, but at the same time marveling at the person's virtue (that the person would take the care to honor oneself).

Within the family and extended kin, ritualized *qing* is expressed all the time. In this ethos, one never addresses older generations by their names (such behavior is very rude, therefore countering the purposes of

ritualized *qing*). Each family and kin relationship has a specific address term by generation, gender, and age. That the family and kin relational system rests on the principle of "honoring the older generations and the aged" (*zunlao* 尊老) is well-known across East Asia (Fung and Thu 2019; Gu 1990; Li and Fischer 2007). But here I would just like to highlight ritualized *qing* among nonkin as documented by discourse analysis.

The following exchange frequently occurs when two strangers A and B just meet:

> A. 請問您貴姓? (May I know your <u>honorable</u> surname?)
> B. 免貴姓余. (Sparing "<u>honorable</u>," my surname is Yu)

Clearly, by initiating the question, A elevates B (the underlined part). But this type of exchange is not done flatly, but instead with interpersonal warmth conveying respect and sincerity (smile and other bodily gestures, i.e., ritualized *qing*). While asking the question, A is likely to bow toward B or to extend his/her hand to shake that of the other. Upon hearing the question, B feels honored and reciprocates with "sparing 'honorable'" (the underlined part), which is B's own ritualized *qing* to acknowledge that of A, but at the same time, lower/equalize the self to A.

Furthermore, there is prevalent use of kin terms to address nonkin (Wu 1999). For example, Chinese often use two prefixes *lao* 老 (old)[13] and *da* 大 (eldest, elder, grand, or simply a deferential marker for seniors) plus a role term or sometimes surname (depending on a variety of other factors) to address strangers: *lao nainai* 老奶奶 (old grandma), *lao yeye* 老爺爺 (old grandpa), *dage* 大哥(elder brother), and *dajie* 大姐 (elder sister) among nonkin. Oftentimes, people use both lao and da, such as *laodaye* 老大爺 (old grand grandpa). In contemporary life, there are also generalized terms of deference (*zunjing* 尊敬) that are widely used such as *shifu* 師傅 (master, e.g., a cook in a restaurant or a shoe repair person) and *laoshi* 老師 (teacher). Notice lao, a highly generalized address term to address anyone that is vaguely related to teaching or a profession (You 2014). Some finer distinctions notwithstanding, it appears that when in

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[13] Calling someone old may be highly insulting in the West. But *lao* in an address term does not have a trace of insult, but quite the opposite, respect.

doubt, one ought to address nonkin with a term that honors the other, rather than equalizing, or for heaven's sake, denigrating the other when one encounters a stranger.

The final line of empirical research on Confucian family *qing* to be featured here is children's response to parental *enqing* 恩情, which is filial piety or filial reverence (*xiao* 孝). As noted previously, filial piety is a fundamental value across East Asia that contains not just thinking and act, but also affect. As a tripartite psychological domain, filial piety has been studied extensively, most by East Asian social psychologists. This research was pioneered by a group of psychologists in Taiwan, led by Kuo-shu Yang (Yang 1988; Yang et al. 1989). They collected substantial data from school students and general public and found four key components of filial piety: (1) Respect and care for one's parents (*zunqin kenqin* 尊親懇親) in daily life. (2) Yield self to observe parents' will (*yiji shunqin* 抑己順親) that emphasizes honoring parents' will/hopes even when they do not concur with one's own. (3) Support parents in old age and offer sacrifices to them after their passing (*fengyang jinian* 奉養祭念) to ensure parents' comfort. "Sacrificing to deceased parents" is a spiritual memorializing tradition for millennia as noted earlier. (4) Protect and honor parents' reputation (*huqin rongqin* 護親榮親) to ensure their communal moral standing.

These results document overwhelming positive affect of filial piety. The ancient but continuously used term to capture the nature of filial piety affect is attentive respect and tender-heartedness toward parents (*jingai shuangqin* 敬愛雙親). As is clear, if tender-heartedness is the key in filial piety affect, fighting/arguing to win a point, intransigent endorsing of truth, criticizing, bickering with parents all serve to harm tender-heartedness. Thus, much of the so-called "yield self to observe parents' will" is to deliver tender-heartedness to parents rather than blind succumbing oneself to parents' demands.

Further research by Kuang-hui Yeh (2003) illuminates more the state of filial piety among contemporary people in Taiwan. He proposed a dual model: reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety. Reciprocal filial piety is the type based on the philosophy espoused by classical Confucians. This form of filial piety emphasizes mutual intimacy, empathy, tender-heartedness, and care extended according

to the closeness of family. Parental tender and unconditional love fosters children's deep attentive respect, love, and reciprocated care for parents. However, authoritarian filial piety is more formalized, emphasizing duty and obedience that may not necessarily rest on affect. People can debate about the accuracy and appropriateness of the Western term *authoritarian* that is used to capture Yeh's second filial piety form. Perhaps the term "duty-based" makes more sense. In general, filial piety is expected of any child at any age regardless of whether the child feels like it. Put differently, filial piety is a moral duty in Confucian-heritage cultures as delineated by Confucian philosophy as well as by contemporary scholars (Hwang 1999). Yeh's subsequent research in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China indeed received support for his dual model (Yeh and Bedford 2003; 2004; Yeh et al. 2013). Whereas the reciprocal form is more endorsed among contemporary Chinese, "authoritarian" filial piety is not absent but coexists with the reciprocal kind. Their persistent cooccurrence suggests that these two sides are intertwined in East Asians' filial piety-related psychological functioning.

Moreover, Kyu-taik Sung (2001) criticized contemporary simplistic portrayal of Confucian filial piety that tends to reduce it to obedience to older generations and care for one's parents. He conducted a comprehensive review of research across East Asia and proposed a multidimensional model of filial piety in 14 forms of respect, the filial *qing* children show to their elders in daily living:

(1) Care respect: expressed by care and services for an elder's mind and body, (e.g., providing personal care, nourishment. . .), making them feel happy and comfortable.
(2) Victual respect: directed towards respecting prerogatives held by elders with regard to the liking and consumption of foods and drinks.
(3) Gift respect: such as money. . . and other materials of symbolic value.
(4) Presentational respect: appearance which conveys a sense of respect (e.g., dressing not extravagantly but plainly/neatly and maintaining a polite and deferent posture).
(5) Linguistic respect: using honorific language when the young interact with elders.

(6) Spatial respect: giving elders a seat or place of honor (e.g., at dinner table).

(7) Celebrative respect: celebrating birthdays or events in honor of elders.

(8) Public respect: voluntary and public services for elders at large (e.g., enacting laws protecting elders' rights, status, and security, etc.).

(9) Acquiescent respect: exhibiting obedient behaviors which reflect deference and reverence toward elders (e.g., listening to their advice and directives, not talking back).

(10) Consultative respect: consulting elders on personal and family matters.

(11) Salutatory respect: greeting elders to show respect (e.g., bowing and bending the body forward).

(12) Precedential respect: allowing elders to have precedence over beneficial things (e.g., services to elders first, etc.).

(13) Funeral respect: mourning for and burying deceased parents with respect by holding a funeral ceremony, wearing special attire, and wailing and weeping, etc.

(14) Ancestor respect: family members typically arrange carefully prepared foods and drinks on a table for sacrifice, make bows to the tablet or the picture of their ancestor, and maintain ancestors' graves. (20–21)

As Yang's research in Taiwan, these *qing*-laden forms of filial piety correspond quite well to the fundamental meaning and forms since ancient times. Sung noted some changes in modern times such as less obedience but more courtesy and kindness, more mutual communication, and so forth. However, despite these changes, "elder respect remains a central value and feelings of respect and obligation do remain to bind generations together" (22) in East Asia.

These empirical research findings reveal the meaning and processes of Confucian *qing* in some ways, but as a whole, there is scarce research on *qing* in light of the four transformations I have outlined. Much research can be conducted along these new theoretical lines. For example, how is *qing* conceptualized and experienced among East Asians? Researchers could ask people to describe typical scenarios to obtain prototypes of each type of *qing*. Furthermore, many empirical

methods can be used to study how *qing* is related to children's moral and virtue development, what role *qing* plays in important relationships, how *qing* is ritualized in the process of people's actual experience, and how *qing* is aestheticized in particular relationships and processes. Such research would lead to new insights into how Confucian *qing* functions in contemporary East Asian lives.

VII. Concluding Note

As a species sharing a common evolutionary history, the biology of human emotion is similar. However, how to feel and how we lead our affective lives vary from culture to culture. Confucian *qing* is not a matter of our sheer bodily responses but highly cultivated, expressed, felt, and acted upon experiences. This cultural cultivation entails at least four transformations of raw emotions: Philosophized, moralized, ritualized, and aestheticized. These transformations are not isolated but interrelated with each other and reflect the Confucian cultural ethos as developed over the course of history. Together, they form a fundamental way to view the world and act in it toward the envisioned goal of mutual care and moral elevation in human relationality. To East Asians, this affective life with *qing* is worth pursuing, achieving, and furthering.

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Gratitude Without a Self

Monima Chadha and Shaun Nichols*

Abstract

Gratitude plays a critical role in our social lives. It helps to build and strengthen relationships, and it enhances wellbeing. Gratitude is typically thought of as involving oneself having a positive feeling towards another self. But this kind of self-to-self gratitude seems to be at odds with the central Buddhist view that there is no self. Feeling gratitude to someone for some past generosity seems misplaced since there is no continuing self who both performed the generous action and is now the recipient of gratitude. In this paper, we explore how the Buddhist might respond to this problem. In response, Buddhists characterize a kind of gratitude (*anumodanā*) that is not fully propositional, but nor is it a notion that critically implicates the problematic concept of self. *Anumodanā* (literally rejoicing in good deeds of another) is best thought of as an expression of sympathetic joy (mudita) which is classified among the "sublime abidings" or "perfections" in Buddhism. In this paper we explain the notion of *anumodanā* and its functioning in the context of *dāna* (gift-giving or almsgiving in the Buddhist monastic context) to explain how it recovers some of the benefits of our ordinary reactive attitude of gratitude without implicating the self.

Keywords: Reactive attitudes, gratitude, no self, *anumodanā*, *dāna*, revisionism

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I. Introduction

Social emotions like gratitude and guilt play a vital role in our everyday lives. These emotions are woven into the fabric of our social lives to such an extent that it is hard to see how we could do without them. However, powerful philosophical arguments seem to call into question the theoretical presuppositions behind some of these emotions. In the contemporary literature in Western philosophy, this issue has been most extensively explored in the context of free will skepticism. If people don't have free will, then it seems mistaken to think that anyone deserves gratitude, or that anyone should feel guilty for their actions. After all, if people don't have free will, then they don't deserve credit for their behaviors whether they are good or bad.

Buddhism poses a related problem for these kinds of emotions. A central thesis of Buddhist philosophy is that there is no self. As a result, on this view, it makes little sense to feel guilty for a past action, since such a feeling seems to presuppose that the person feeling guilty is the same as the person who committed the infraction. However, if there is no self, how is this possible? Similarly, feeling gratitude to someone for some past generosity seems misplaced since there is no continuing self who both performed the generous action and is now the recipient of gratitude. In this paper, we will explore how the Buddhist might respond to these kinds of problems, focusing on the issue of gratitude without a self.[1]

It's instructive to consider how free will skeptics have dealt with social emotions like guilt and gratitude. The contemporary discussion is typically framed against Strawson's famous paper, "Freedom and Resentment." In that paper, Strawson maintained (among other things) that our lives would be greatly diminished if we uprooted reactive attitudes like resentment, anger, and gratitude. Thus, he maintains, if the denial of free will is supposed to carry with it the rejection of these attitudes, denying free will carries an enormous cost. Hard incompatibilists, who maintain that we lack free will, have tried to assuage these worries (e.g. Pereboom 2001, 2007; Sommers

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[1] For our treatment of guilt without a self, see Chadha and Nichols (2019).

2007; Waller 1990). Derk Pereboom has developed the most systematic response on behalf of the hard incompatibilist. Part of his response is that many of the reactive attitudes, e.g., love, are largely unscathed by the denial of free will (Pereboom 2007, 121–2; see also 2007, 11–13). He acknowledges though that some reactive attitudes really are seriously threatened by hard incompatibilism. Pereboom writes, "Moral resent ment, indignation, and guilt would likely be irrational for a hard incompatibilist, since these attitudes would have presuppositions believed to be false" (Pereboom 2007, 122; also Sommers 2007, 15). For those problematic attitudes, Pereboom has two possible replies. He claims that either the targeted attitudes aren't necessary for good interpersonal lives or there are analogues that can serve in their stead (Pereboom 2007, 122).

Like hard incompatibilism, Buddhism maintains that some of our commonsense metaphysical beliefs are mistaken. For our purposes, the important metaphysical belief challenged by Buddhism is the belief in a self. According to Buddhism, the idea that there is a self is a false presupposition. Just as with the belief in free will, the belief in a self seems to underlie many of our practices. Hence, the Buddhist must also face the implications of the no self view for our lives. Should we extirpate the belief in the self? Here, Buddhism provides substantive guidance. The primary practical goal of Buddhism is to reduce suffering. Indeed, the goal of reducing suffering is the heart of Buddhist soteriology. And Buddhists maintain that the most basic source of suffering is the false metaphysical presupposition that there is a continuing self. As a result, Buddhism is broadly committed to uprooting the belief in self. But how would this impact our lives?

When considering the implications of Buddhism for the reactive attitudes, one must consider a range of questions that will include (1) whether the reactive attitude depends on an invocation of the self, and (2) whether the reactive attitude contributes to suffering. The results of this inquiry will indicate the kind of changes that would be recommended by Buddhist Revisionism. In addition to questions about what Buddhism itself entails about Revisionism, however, we need to consider broader questions about the implication of the Buddhist revolution. We can think of this as a Strawsonian question. In the

context of the potential threat of determinism, Strawson maintained that whether it's rational to retain the reactive attitudes if determinism is true, "we could choose rationally only in the light of an assessment of the gains and losses to human life, its enrichment or impoverishment" (1962, 83). We think a similar issue arises in the context of Buddhism. If we are to determine whether it is rational to retain the reactive attitudes if Buddhist metaphysics and soteriology is correct, we must consider the gains and losses to human life of Buddhist Revisionism.

II. The Psychological Account of Gratitude

A central aim of our paper is to argue that many of the benefits of gratitude can be preserved consistently with adopting the no self view. But this aim presupposes that there are important benefits to gratitude. In this section, we describe some of the key benefits of gratitude, drawing on contemporary work in philosophy and psychology.

Gratitude is a response of thankfulness that arises when one has received a benefit. It is typically associated with positive terms: as a prosocial emotion, a form of "social glue," as a moral virtue and so on. Contemporary philosophers and psychologists agree that gratitude is a good thing that should be promoted. Psychologists have focused on examining the role of gratitude in promoting wellbeing and fostering good relationships and prosocial behaviour. Contemporary philosophers agree that gratitude can be thought of as a relationship enhancer. Swinburne, for example thinks that a genuine act of benevolence is thought to signal a desire or intention to start or to deepen a friendship (and gratitude as a response to the benevolence is the reciprocation of this intention, which enhances the relationship) (1989, 65). Blustein writes that while gratitude does not presuppose a pre-existing personal relationship, "it *establishes* one by some form of reciprocation" (1982, 190). Contemporary philosophers, however, are also interested in figuring out the conceptual nature of gratitude: is it an emotion or a disposition (a trait)? Is it an interpersonal emotion directed at agents who have bestowed a benefit to one in the past or can we think of it more generally in impersonal terms? This last question is of special interest

here to us, especially in the light of the Buddhist no self view.

A. Propositional and Prepositional Gratitude

Philosophers concerned with analysing gratitude begin with cases in which we naturally express gratitude. Although it is natural to use gratitude terms in cases where we are grateful to a person or an agent, we sometimes use gratitude terms more impersonally. One can be grateful for the beautiful weather for one's wedding day or natural beauty more generally. This latter sense of gratitude is called propositional gratitude, which is best understood as a proper response to a good state of affairs: *X* is grateful that *p*. But many, perhaps most, common uses of gratitude are of the interpersonal kind like being "grateful to someone for trying to help me;", or "grateful to someone who stood up for me." This triadic sense is called prepositional gratitude: *X* is grateful to *Y* for *ø-ing*. Contemporary philosophical literature focuses on prepositional gratitude as gratitude proper, the cases of propositional gratitude are taken to be expressions of appreciation rather than gratitude (Manela 2021 *SEP*).   in the restrictions on the English word "gratitude," particularly. But we do think the distinction between propositional and prepositional gratitude is important, and that it is certainly an important distinction when it comes to Buddhist accounts of gratitude.

B. Gratitude: Input, Output, and Function

Psychological accounts of emotions are typically given in terms of inputs, outputs, phenomenology, and the function of the emotion (see, e.g., Keltner and Lerner 2010). Thus, fear is thought to be an emotion that is activated by an input that constitutes a perception of imminent threat, and it generates as output an action tendency to escape the situation. The phenomenology has a negative valence. And the function of fear is widely regarded as that of protecting the organism from immediate, concrete dangers. The input-output profile of fear makes sense given the function. A system that has the function of protecting the organism from danger needs to be activated by threats and motivate

protective responses.

In the case of gratitude, the characteristic input is a perception that someone has intentionally benefited the agent.[2] The benefit is typically something that the agent is happy to have. The characteristic output of gratitude is an action tendency to behave generously towards the benefactor.[3] This generosity is often a kind of reciprocal response. The phenomenology of gratitude has a positive valence, and experimental participants have characterized the feeling variously as joy, release, and comfort (Elfers and Hlava 2016).

The foregoing account of the input/output profile of gratitude is naturally thought of as an account of prepositional rather than propositional gratitude. Perhaps the best known account of the function of such gratitude derives from classic work by Robert Trivers on reciprocal altruism. Trivers maintains that much altruistic behavior in the animal kingdom seems puzzling from an evolutionary point of view until we recognize that often when one individual behaves altruistically towards another, the recipient will return the favor. Trivers suggests that this can, among other things, provide an account of the human emotion of gratitude. He writes, "I suggest that the emotion of gratitude has been selected to regulate human response to altruistic acts" (Trivers 1971, 49). If someone benefits you, and you return the favor, this increases the chances that these positive exchanges will continue. Hence the reciprocity of reciprocal altruism. Sara Algoe has developed an influential account of the function of gratitude, grounded in the same kinds of considerations as Trivers. She dubs it the "find, remind, and bind" account. On this account, gratitude involves identifying a high-quality relationship partner, and the generous response serves to improve the relationship: that is, gratitude finds new or reminds of a known good relationship partner and helps to bind recipient and benefactor closer together (Algoe 2012, 457). Thus, the function of gratitude on this account is to maintain or strengthen a relationship with a thoughtful/considerate partner. These dyads might be siblings, parent-child, friends, romantic partners, and even co-authors.

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[2] See McCullough et al. (2001).
[3] See Bartlett and DeSteno (2006).

This *binding* function makes sense of the input/output profile of gratitude. Individuals who intentionally benefit you are the kinds of individuals with whom it is advantageous to sustain a relationship and behaving beneficially towards them will encourage and sustain the relationship. The binding function also makes sense of the phenomenology of gratitude. Building and sustaining a beneficial relationship is an apt occasion for positive feelings of joy and comfort.

We will assume in what follows that something along the lines of the Trivers/Algoe view of the function of gratitude is correct. In particular, we will assume that a primary function of gratitude is to sustain or strengthen a relationship that is valuable to the recipient. Insofar as gratitude motivates the beneficiary to be generous towards the benefactor, gratitude in the benefactor plausibly generates a cycle of beneficial reciprocal responses.

C. Additional Beneficial Effects of Gratitude

Even if the primary function of gratitude is in terms of relationships between individuals, that doesn't preclude the possibility that gratitude also has effects that go beyond the confines of relationship benefits. Indeed, psychologists have identified several ways in which gratitude has effects that go beyond benefits between benefactor and beneficiary.

1. Upstream Reciprocity

Gratitude, as we've seen, motivates the beneficiary to behave generously towards the benefactor. But gratitude also seems to motivate the beneficiary to behave generously towards people other than the benefactor. Behavioral experiments demonstrate that gratitude fosters prosocial behaviour (Carlson et al. 1988; Emmons and McCullough 2004; Bartlett and DeSteno 2006). For instance, when participants receive a benefit in an economic game but they are unable to reciprocate the benefit to their benefactor, they will often act so as to benefit another player (Dufwenberg et al. 2001).

There are competing explanations for why beneficiaries might extend benefits to people other than their benefactor. One explanation

is that it is a kind of mistake[4] Another possibility, though, is that such behavior reflects a kind of "upstream reciprocity" (or "pay it forward" reciprocity) that might have evolutionary advantages in facilitating cooperation (Nowak and Roch 2006). If the latter theory is right, this might constitute a reason to think that, in addition to the binding function, gratitude also has the function of generating prosocial behavior. Either way, though, it's plausible that feelings of gratitude are elevating, and a consequence of this is prosocial action.

2. Moral Reinforcer

Displays of gratitude towards a benefactor plausibly increase the likelihood of further generosity by the benefactor. This might be a kind of subsidiary function of reciprocal altruism. Part of what makes gratitude advantageous is that it makes the benefactor more likely to produce more benefits for the original beneficiary. However, the reinforcement of generosity plausibly has more general effects on benefactors. McCullough and colleagues elaborate on this point:

> When a beneficiary expresses gratitude, either by saying "thank you" or providing some other acknowledgment of appreciation, the benefactor is reinforced for his or her benevolence. Thus, the benefactor becomes more likely to enact such benevolent behaviors in the future. (2001, 253)

The basic idea here is a simple application of something like reinforcement learning. Getting positive responses to one's generosity makes being generous more appealing.

D. Psychological Benefits

Several studies have indicated that gratitude is associated with a variety of psychological and health benefits[5] For instance, one study pinpointed

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[4] See Bartlett and DeSteno (2006).

[5] See Cheng and Lam (2015), Emmons and Stern (2013), Froh, Sefick, and Emmons (2008), and Otto et al. (2016).

gratitude as a protective factor against Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms (Israel-Cohen et al. 2015). To give the flavor of some of this research, consider a study by Emmons and McCullough (2003). They had participants create lists before bed. In one condition (the control condition), the list was just events from the week, but in another condition, participants were told to list things they were grateful for. The instructions for the *gratitude* condition read as follows:

> There are many things in our lives, both large and small, that we might be grateful about. Think back over the past week and write down on the lines below up to five things in your life that you are grateful or thankful for. (379)

Emmons and McCullough report the following examples drawn from the lists made by participants: "waking up this morning," "the generosity of friends," "for wonderful parents," "to the Rolling Stones." They found that participants in the gratitude condition had higher self-reported wellbeing (381). In another study, they found that participants in the gratitude condition reported more and better sleep than participants in the control condition.[6]

E. Costs of Ingratitude

Thus, gratitude seems to have a wide range of positive impacts, both for moral behavior and general psychological wellbeing. However, it's also important to consider the costs of being ungrateful. In early modern philosophy, ingratitude was often used as a paradigm example of morally bad behavior. Hume, for instance, writes, "Of all crimes that human creatures are capable of committing, the most horrid and unnatural is ingratitude, especially when it is committed against parents" ([1739] 1969, 16). To be sure, we find it disheartening when our acts of generosity is greeted with ill will. Even the absence of gratitude can be upsetting. Imagine a colleague has inadvertently created a problem that will lead her to be sanctioned and you solve the problem

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[6] Emmons and McCullough (2003, 386). See also Wood et al. (2009).

while she watches. She will likely say that she is grateful to you for solving the problem. However, if her response is merely a casual acknowledgment of the situation, such as stating, "I'm glad the problem is resolved," you would likely find this somewhat annoying.

The psychological research confirms the intuition that ingratitude is aversive. To take one example from the experimental literature, Suls and colleagues (1981) had grade school and college students read four vignettes with two characters. The first character either helped or didn't help the second, and subsequently the second either helped or didn't help the first. Thus, the vignettes had this structure:

    i.   A helps B then B helps A;
    ii.   A helps B then B doesn't help A;
    iii. A doesn't help B then B doesn't help A;
    iv. A doesn't help then B helps.

B is judged more negatively in the ingrate condition (ii) than in all the others. Indeed, for the older children and college students, B was judged *much* more negatively in the ingrate condition (1981, 28). Such ingratitude plausibly has negative consequences—making it less likely that a benefactor will engage in the kind of behavior that was followed by ingratitude (e.g., McCullough et al. 2001, 253). This might then work against the kind of cooperation and moral reinforcement that seems to be facilitated by gratitude.

Thus, gratitude has a wide range of benefits, some directly tied to the function of sustaining and strengthening relationships between benefactor and beneficiary, some more indirect benefits for upstream reciprocity and moral reinforcement, and some very general benefits to wellbeing. Ingratitude, by contrast, is aversive, and threatens to undermine the benefits that gratitude facilitates. Given the benefits of gratitude it should be amply clear that it is a valuable interpersonal emotion. Buddhists agree with contemporary philosophers and psychologists that gratitude should be preserved and cherished.

III. Gratitude and No Self

In section II-A we distinguished between propositional and preposi-
tional gratitude. Propositional gratitude is gratitude for a state of affairs,
like being grateful for a beautiful sunset. Propositional gratitude is
associated with positive effects. Indeed, when asked to list things for
which they were grateful, participants will often list states of affairs.
One of the examples above illustrates this where a participant expressed
gratitude for "waking up this morning." This kind of gratitude does not
essentially involve any representation of the self. It doesn't have the
interpersonal characteristic of prepositional gratitude. As a result, the
Buddhist can happily acknowledge and accept a role for propositional
gratitude. Indeed, there are a lot of gratitude practices that would be
considered propositional. Buddhist monks in the Thai Forest tradition
who live in Australia report that their regular practices include being
grateful that they live in a country with free healthcare. This is a good
thing since propositional gratitude has significant positive value. With
prepositional gratitude, it's a different story. Given that propositional
gratitude is consistent with the no self view, we will focus our discussion
on the more difficult kind of gratitude—prepositional.

A. Prepositional Gratitude as Inconsistent with No Self View

While the propositional sense of gratitude seems prima facie consistent
with the no self view, that is not the case for the prepositional sense.
To see why, consider Strawson's characterisation of gratitude as one
of the positive interpersonal reactive attitudes, as opposed to negative
emotions such as resentment and anger. He says,

> If someone's actions help me to some benefit I desire, then I am
> benefited in any case; but if he intended them so to benefit me
> because of his general goodwill towards me, I shall reasonably feel a
> gratitude which I should not feel at all if the benefit was an incidental
> consequence, unintended or even regretted by him, of some plan of
> action with a different aim. ([1962] 2008, 22)

Buddhists would be uneasy with gratitude as Strawson characterizes it because the characterization is loaded with reference to oneself and another. Such reference to the self seems to be at odds with the no self view. It reveals that gratitude presupposes a self. Buddhists seem pressed to resist this prepositional characterisation because it brings to the fore that this valuable emotion involves an implicit commitment to the self. Indeed, this might also be called *self-to-self* gratitude. Prepositional gratitude presupposes a self, in a way that propositional doesn't. However, propositional gratitude does not seem to carry the function of gratitude as a relationship enhancer.

Note that the situation here for the Buddhist is rather different than for the hard incompatibilist. The hard incompatibilist who rejects free will but retains the commitment to self, can still keep a robust commitment to gratitude in the prepositional sense. This is reflected in Pereboom's discussion. He writes, "gratitude includes an element of thankfulness toward those who have benefited us. Sometimes, being thankful involves the belief that the object of one's attitude is praiseworthy for some action. But one can also be thankful to a pet or a small child for some favor, even if one does not believe that he is morally responsible" (Pereboom 2001, 201). The Buddhist cannot make this move so easily. How then might the Buddhist resolve the apparent tension between the commitment to no self and preserving and indeed encouraging gratitude practices? To address this, we focus on the Abhidharma Buddhist tradition and its unique typology of mental states and their account of emotions before we turn to gratitude.

B. Abhidharma Model of Mind

In order to understand Buddhist treatments of emotions, we need to have in place a richer sense of Buddhist philosophy of mind and, in particular, the basis for their distinctions between different mental factors. The Buddhist analysis of experience maintains that what we experience as a temporally extended, uninterrupted flow of phenomena is, in fact, a rapidly occurring sequence of causally connected events, each with its particular discrete object. To explicate this, Buddhist philosophers decompose the world and us in it into a causal sequence

of evanescent mental and physical states (*nāma-rūpa*). Though there are various construals of this central Buddhist *nāma-rūpa* in the literature, the best way to understand this notion is that of a minded-body (Ganeri 2017, 77–79). In Abhidharma Buddhism, the minded-body is further analyzed into "*dharmas*," which are discrete momentary factors. Importantly, the *dharmas* include both physical and mental factors. On the Abhidharma picture, mind is not a substance or central processor that produces experiences and thoughts; rather it is an aggregate of many simultaneous series of mental *dharmas*. These mental *dharmas* are best thought of as "phenomenologically basic" features that constitute conscious experience (Dreyfus 2011). This does not, however, mean that the phenomenological features are readily available in ordinary introspection. The claim is that mental *dharmas* are in principle available in first-person experience, though discerning the *dharmas* requires meditation practice. Indeed, some *dharmas* are better thought of as subliminal mental factors that can be brought to the surface only through sustained meditation practice. The Abhidharma schools disagree about the number, classification, and role of these features in experience. So the Abhidharma philosophers take great pains to provide ever new lists and classifications of mental *dharmas* and detailed arguments to justify the proposed revision. However, Abhidharma schools agree on the starting point for grouping the mental factors: They are primarily classified as good (*kusala*), bad (*akusala*), and neutral (*abyākata*). Good (*kusala*) is defined as that which is "salutary, blameless, skillful" (*Atthasālinī*, 62–63) and thus reduces suffering. Bad (*akusala*) is just the opposite; it is unhelpful, blameworthy, unskillful and augments suffering. Certain mental factors inherently possess a wholesome or positive nature, such as compassion, wisdom, and the like. Conversely, some factors are inherently unwholesome or negative, like anger, greed, and craving. There also exist neutral factors, such as equanimity and resolve. The moral valence of a given conscious state or thought, whether it is good or bad, is determined by the moral valence of mental factors constituting conscious thought and experience. For example, a thought associated with compassion would be good because compassion is a good factor; a thought associated with equanimity would be indifferent because equanimity is disinterested; a thought

associated with greed and ignorance would be bad because greed and ignorance are bad factors.

The overarching aim of the Abhidharma philosophy is to cultivate the wholesome mental factors and eradicate the unwholesome ones. This, in turn, will ensure a prevalence of good thoughts, intentions, and actions, thereby reducing suffering. How does one go about identifying the good and the bad factors? The Abhidharma answer is to turn to the tradition as a repository of moral knowledge delineating the good and bad factors. However, experienced teachers also suggest a turn to moral phenomenology. The idea is to pay attention to how thoughts or actions appear or feel to a person. In developing their moral phenomenology, Buddhists begin by noticing that the pursuit of sense pleasures is typically mixed with hardship and disturbances in the mind because such pursuits involve greed and craving for more of the same. In contrast, by purifying the mind through restraining oneself from indulging in sense pleasures, one "experiences internally an unmixed ease (*sukha*)" (*Majjhima Nikaya* I, as translated in Nanamoli and Bodhi 1995, 181). For example, by their very presence in the mind, loving-kindness and compassion have a calming influence and result in easing the mind. Good and bad thoughts and actions can both appear joyful and pleasurable, but only bad thoughts cause distress and disturb the mind. In the Abhidharma psychology, good or wholesome (*kusala*) thoughts are never painful or distressing, though they can be neutral. They are felt as neutral when they are experienced through equanimity and disinterest. The thought is that we focus on experientially available distinctions to figure out which mental factors are wholesome or good. Wholesome factors can be differentiated from unwholesome ones in that the former involve a healthy and uplifting state of mind in contrast to the latter that distress and disturb the mind.

Given the salient differences between the Abhidharma model of the mind and other models of mind in Western philosophy and psychology, it is natural to expect that the mental categories will be very different. The Abhidharma philosophers are not concerned with distinguishing emotions from other mental factors. They *are*, like contemporary emotion theorists, interested in the action-guiding role of particular emotions; but it bears emphasis that these actions are set in the context

Figure 1: Mental factors organized by moral valence

Mental Factors with Good Moral Valence	Mental Factors with Bad Moral Valence
Right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*)	Wrong view (*micchādiṭṭhi*)
Right thought (*sammāsaṅkappa*)	Wrong thought (*micchāsaṅkappa*)
Right effort (sammāvāyāma)	Wrong effort (*micchāvāyama*)
Right concentration(*sammāsamādhi*)	Wrong concentration (*micchāsamādhi*)
Right mindfulness (*sammāsati*)	
Non-greed (*alobha*)	Greed (*lobha*)
Non-hatred (*adosa*)	Hatred (*dosa*)
Non-delusion (*amoha*)	Delusion (*moha*)
Non-covetousness (*anabhijjhā*)	Covetousness (*abhijjhā*)
Non-malice (*abyāpāda*)	Malice (*byāpāda*)
Shame (*hiri*)	Shamelessness (*ahirika*)
Fear of wrongdoing (*ottappa*)	Fearlessness (*anottappa*)
Impartiality (*tatramajjhattatā*)	Pride (*māna*)
Compassion (*karuṇā*)	Self-contempt (*omāna*)
Sympathetic joy (mudita)	Envy (*issā*)
	Avarice (*macchariya*)
	Remorse (*kukkucca*)

of the guiding principle of reducing suffering in the world. Thus, the primary division among mental factors will be in terms of whether they reduce suffering (good) or increase suffering (bad) or have no effect on suffering (neutral). Ignoring the neutral factors for now, a partial list of good and bad factors is reflected in figure 1 to give the reader a sense of the Abhidharma typology.

C. Buddhist Account of *Kṛtajña* Gratitude

Given the basic division in Buddhist typology between good and bad factors, where can we place gratitude or *kṛtajña*? *Kṛtajña* does not

feature as one of the basic positive mental factors worth cultivating. But *kṛtajña*, literally translated *kṛta* (what is done) and *jña* (who knows); in other words, "being mindful of what has been done." Therefore, it is best thought of as a complex attitude derived from the basic wholesome factor of "right mindfulness." *Kṛtajña* can be conceived of as a complex attitude that remembers the good things that have been done and keeps them in mind. It is used for acknowledging past benefits and being mindful of favours. The example usually given to illustrate *kṛtajña* in the Nikāyas is that of an old jackal who howls at the break of dawn to acknowledge the gift of a new day. The jackal story might suggest that the Buddhists are thinking about gratitude in a propositional sense. No one is being thanked here, the jackal is grateful *that* it is a new day. The use of examples involving the jackal from the Nikāyas suggests that gratitude does not seem to invoke the problematic reference to the self. This, however, is not the whole story.

In the famous Jātaka tales, gratitude is often used in a way that does implicate the self. For a bit of context, the Jātaka tales mainly concern the previous births of the Buddha in both human and animal form. In these stories, the Buddha may appear as a king or as a lowly animal—however, regardless of the form in which the Buddha manifests, he consistently embodies Buddhist virtues, such as generosity and compassion. Consider the Sīlavanāga Jātaka (No. 72; as found in Appelton 2010), a magnificent white elephant "adorned with the ten perfections" is contrasted with a wicked person. According to the tale, a certain person is lost in wilderness. He is starving but is unable to find his way home. The person meets an elephant who saves his life by bringing him back to the human habitat. Far from being grateful, however, the greedy man goes straight to the ivory-workers' quarters and asks them how much they will pay for the tusks of a living elephant. He then returns to the elephant three times in a row—first sawing off the elephant's tusks, then removing the stumps of the tusks, then gouging into the flesh itself to retrieve every last ounce of ivory, with each gift being freely offered up by the compassionate elephant. As we might expect, the kind and compassionate elephant serves as an effective foil for the wickedness of the man. The moral of the story is to encourage people to develop the ten perfections and give up their wicked ways. If non-rational animals

can be compassionate, why can't rational human beings be so too?

Setting aside the moral of the story, the important thing to notice is that the right response to receiving the said benefit is that the person should be extremely grateful to the benefactor (the elephant) for saving his life. The ingrate is blameworthy. In the early *Nikāyas*, the Buddha is reported to have said, "Endowed with four things a foolish, unskilled and wicked person is one who has destroyed his own foundation, is censurable and blameable by the wise, and accumulates a lot of demerits. With what four? With bodily misconduct, with verbal misconduct, with mental misconduct, and with *ingratitude* and not helping in return" (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 4.223, emphasis added) The Sīlavanāga Jātaka construes gratitude (*kṛtajña*) in interpersonal sense, after all it is the   (with the ten perfections) is a human appearing in the elephant form. It is clear that this Jātaka tale invokes gratitude in the prepositional sense: the beneficiary is expected to be grateful to the benefactor (in the form of an elephant) for helping him to return home. But this sense of gratitude seems to be at odds with the no self view. Both the beneficiary and the benefactor are conceived of as continuing agents, the beneficiary is expected to be grateful to the benefactor for a favour bestowed in the past. So, it seems that, like the English term gratitude, *kṛtajña* seems to allow for both propositional and prepositional readings. The prepositional reading of gratitude and its invocation of the self-spells trouble for the coherence of Buddhist view.

D. The Two Truths?

Perhaps the most obvious strategy for dealing with this apparent inconsistency is to appeal to the doctrine of two truths. Across a wide range of contexts, the doctrine of two truths is called upon to explain away the inconsistency between the no self view and frequent use of conventional terms like persons, Brahmin, Bhikkhu and even the first-person pronoun "I" by the Buddha himself in the scriptures. According to the Two Truths doctrine, while reference to a self cannot be ultimately true – since ultimately there is no self—a statement that talks about persons can be conventionally true provided acceptance of

the statements reliably leads to successful worldly activities (Siderits 2008, 35).

According to most Buddhist philosophers, the implicit or explicit reference to the self in the Vinaya rules is best understood as referring to conventional persons. *Dharmas* alone are ultimately real but many things in our folk ontology, for example chariot and pots, are conventionally real. The idea here is that terms like "pot" stands for a concept that that has proven useful (for storage) for creatures like us given our interests and cognitive limitations. We are unable to keep track of many evanescent momentary *dhammas*. Pots and chariots are in this sense useful fictions that deserve a place in a sort of second-tier ontology (Siderits 2019, 315). Using exactly the same strategy, Siderits argues that given that there is no self and the *dharmas* that ultimately constitute a person are replaced many times in one life, what should we say of persons over a lifetime? As in the case of pots and chariots, we employ distinction between the two truths. The term "person" does not refer to anything at the level of ultimately real *dharmas*. But persons can refer to conventionally real, conceptual fictions that supervene on causal series of appropriately organized sets of *dharmas*. Persons are useful fictions because they can perform some of the work of selves: they can be conceived of as agents of action and bearers of responsibility which means our interpersonal practices of responibilty attribution will be left unscathed by the Buddhist rejection of the self.

Our concern with this strategy is that substituting person for self surreptitiously imports the idea of self into the argument. By introducing persons as convenient fictions we risk reintroducing self-interests and attachment to continuing persons. These attachments and interests are exactly the sorts of things that encourage the defilements of greed, hatred and the "I" delusion. And postulating more or less persisting persons will lead to the unwholesome emotional habits and biases that lead us to prioritise our personal futures (Williams 1998, 110-2; Chadha 2021). The only difference is that in the second-tier ontology the "I" refers to conventional persons rather than ultimately real selves.

Given this, in Section IV, we explore how the living Buddhist tradition finds an innvovative (if partial) solution to the proposed tension between gratitude and no self without reverting to the idea of persons.

They introduce an analogue attitude for gratitude, *anumodanā* (literally rejoicing in good deeds by another) as a substitute for the problematic form of *kṛtajña*. *Anumodanā*, we contend, presents an innovative middle way solution by introducing an analogue attitude which preserves some of the valuable functions and benefits of gratitude without the presupposition of the self.

IV. Buddhist Revisionism

Thus, the Buddhist commitment to no self appears to conflict with the prepositional reading of gratitude or *kṛtajña*. In this sense gratitude is similar to self-conscious emotions like pride in that it also involves an insidious commitment to selves. In the case of gratitude, the problem seems even worse since both the beneficiary and the benefactor are individual selves. Consequently, we would expect gratitude in the pre-positional or self-to-self sense to be in the category unwholesome or negative emotions that should be eliminated.

As we will see, Buddhists have a kind of systematic response to these concerns. Part of the response is theoretical. Buddhists characterize a kind of gratitude that is not fully propositional, but nor is it a notion that critically implicates the concept of self. In addition to the theoretical innovation, Buddhists have actually implemented practices that (partially) serve the functions of gratitude, and guard against the costs of ingratitude. This points to a significant difference between the Buddhist tradition and contemporary work on revisionism about free will. Buddhists have a history of communities that have attempted to implement revisions. Furthermore, these communities have survived, perhaps partly due to these revisions. The Buddhist community has norms and practices that seem to supply an alternative way of achieving the function of prepositional gratitude.

A. Costs of Rejecting Self-to-Self Gratitude

By rejecting the notion of self-to-self gratitude, Buddhists appear to forego the function and benefits associated with gratitude. One of

the most significant benefits is the sustaining and strengthening of relationships that are mutually beneficial. The function of gratitude is tied to dyadic partial relationships, focusing on dyads like romantic partners and parent-child, etc; the Buddhist will be concerned because of their focus on "me," "mine," "my child." The additional benefits, namely upstream reciprocity and moral reinforcement, are also something that the Buddhist values. Insofar as the Buddhist values generosity and compassion, downgrading gratitude as a negative emotion because it implicates the self is likely to be very costly. Add to that the cost of ingratitude, which is accompanied by aversive feelings, anger and resentment, all of which are negative states that the Buddhist wants to eliminate. The price of embracing the no self perspective and consequently rejecting gratitude seems too high.

B. The Buddhist Account of *Anumodanā* Gratitude

Kṛtajña or gratitude requires the supposition that the beneficiary is grateful to the benefactor for the benevolent act, and therefore the no self theory seems to undermine gratitude. However, to recover some of the benefits gratitude commonly has in interpersonal relationships, Buddhist traditions found a way around in the context of religious gift-giving (*dāna*). *Dāna* is best understood as ritually ordered sense of almsgiving to monks and the monastic community (*saṅgha*) more generally. *Dāna* is very important in the Buddhist context because the monasteries depend on gifts the laity for material support and per-petuating the monasteries is essential to perpetuating the Buddhist *Dharma*. Sustaining and maintaining this symbiotic relation and the cycle of beneficial reciprocal responses is crucial for the perpetuation of *Dharma* and survival of Buddhism (Berryman, Chadha, and Nichols 2023). The laity, in turn, rely on the monastics to teach the *dharma*. They also seek guidance from the monastics on moral and spiritual matters and expect the monastics to be available for performing important rituals in case of death, sickness, and other significant life events. Historically, the monasteries have benefitted from the belief among the laity that giving gifts (*dāna*) to the monks is likely to significantly enhance the positive *karmic* consequences achieved by the gift-giver.

The Buddhist tradition has devised an ingenious way of recovering the benefits of gratitude without the insidious reference to individual selves. *Kṛtajña* in the prepositional self-to-self sense sits uneasy with the no self view. For this reason, the Buddhists do not regard *kṛtajña* as a disposition associated with *dāna*—a verbal expression of thank you to the donor is not the appropriate response (Heim 2004, 68). In the Buddhist religious context, the right response of the recipient and the benefactor is *anumodanā*, literally rejoicing in good deeds of another. The recipient and the benefactor both express joy, and even a third parties observing the good act of giving rejoice with them. *Anumodanā* is best thought of as an expression of sympathetic joy (*mudita*) which is classified among the "sublime abidings" (or *brahmavihāras*, according to the Theravāda scholar and monk Buddhaghosa in his *Visuddhimagga*) and "Perfections" (or *Pāramitās* according to the Mahayana scholar and monk Nāgārjuna in his *Dharmasaṃgraha*). In what follows, we explain the notion of *anumodanā* and show how it functions in the Buddhist context to recover the benefits of gratitude.

C. The *Dāna* Ceremony

One might think that the reference to *another* in *anumodanā* is still loaded with reference to another self, the benefactor. To understand how the Buddhists avoid the insidious reference to the self, it is important to pay attention to the ritual of gift-giving. Buddhist monasteries organise occasional *dāna* ceremonies as an event in which the Buddhist community as a whole participates by celebrating the good act of giving. For example, Thai Buddhists believe that everyone that participates in the *dāna* ceremonies, not just the donor, accrues positive *karmic* merit.[7] The *dāna* ceremony provides a model for a new way of

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[7] The theory of *karma* in the background motivates members of both the laity and the monastic community to maximize their efforts. But we can put aside the *karma* theory as part of the general socio-cultural and religious milieu in ancient India. Our concern is whether, even without an appeal to *karma*, the Buddhist notion of *anumodanā* potentially recovers the function and benefits of gratitude. And we have argued that it does recover some of the important functions and benefits of gratitude.

thinking about gratitude.[8] This is because rather than thinking of the gift as merely a benefit to an individual monk, the *dāna* is regarded as a benefit to the monastic community as a group. In return, the monastic community benefits the laity as a group. To take an example, living Buddhist societies in present day Thailand organise the annual Kathina ceremonies in which large groups of Buddhists band together for the ceremonial presentation of the robes to the monastery.[9] The community folk band together with the donors and proceed to the monastery as a group to participate in the *dāna* ceremony. The entire Buddhist community contributes to the ceremonial event. The women prepare food, the men help carry the gifts, the men dance around the raised platform which is reserved for the monks. School children help carry the gifts to the monastery. These are expressions of *anumodanā* by the laity. The Buddhist text *Suttasaṅgahaṭṭakatha* describes *anumodanā* in the following way:

> When people take joy (*anumodanti*) in [another's] *dāna*, saying "this is good, this is great," with clear minds and without envy or selfishness, or when there are those who [assist with another's *dāna*] by rendering physical services, it is not the case that the gift is lessened or diminished by others taking pleasure or assisting in it. On the contrary, it is even more complete. Just as when one lamp is lit from another lamp, the light of the first lamp is not diminished, but instead the light of that lamp together with the single one increases, so too the gift is not diminished by this. Even those who just experience joy and render services are said to be sharers of the merit, that is, they receive a share of the merit. (As quoted in Heim 2004, 68)

The *dāna* ceremony supposedly benefits everyone (in the context of the Buddhist *karma* theory everyone gets a share of *karmic* merit). Indeed, even the beneficiary partakes in the ceremony by expressing *anumodanā*. But to be clear the beneficiary's expression of *anumodanā* is not meant to be thank you to the donor, rather it is a response of joyful approval and acceptance. *It is important to emphasize that anumodanā*

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[8] For a detailed description of the community events, see Kariyawasam (1996).
[9] See Cunningham (2017).

is an attitude towards the good act of giving. This revision would also be welcomed by the hard incompatibilist. Pereboom writes,

> Gratitude involves an aspect of joy upon being benefited by another. But no feature of the hard incompatibilist position conflicts with one's being joyful and expressing joy when people are especially considerate, generous, or courageous in one's behalf. Such expressions of joy can produce the sense of mutual well-being and respect frequently brought about by gratitude. Moreover, when one expresses joy for what another person has done, one can do so with the intention of developing a human relationship. (2001, 202)

A Buddhist revisionist will be happy to endorse Pereboom's point that the expressions of joy produce the sense of respect and mutual wellbeing, but the Buddhist will be concerned by the reference to persons and the intention of developing a human relationship between the benefactor and the beneficiary. Again, the sense of respect and the intention of developing a relationship is directed towards a particular beneficiary and thus brings back the insidious reference to the self.

D. Representatives Rather than Selves as Target of *Anumodanā*

To avoid the problematic reference to the self, the Buddhist suggests a further revision. Here the Buddhists draw on a general doctrine of a "worthy recipient" in the *dāna* practices in the broad religious context in South Asia. Hindus and Jains thought of *dāna* in a similar manner. In the Buddhist context, the gift (*dāna*) has to be commensurate with the "worthiness" of the beneficiary. The moral worth of the recipient is a primary consideration in how much benefit is produced from the *dāna*. One way in which Buddhist monastics are deemed to be worthy of the highest respect is that they receive *dāna* on behalf of the "universal *saṅgha* headed by the Buddha." The Kathin ceremony in Thailand captures this sentiment by placing an image of the Lord Buddha on a gold-colored raised platform facing the laity. The senior monks are seated nearest to the Buddha image. The younger monks or novices sit further from the image. The robes, food, and other gifts is offered to individual monks seated on the platform. They receive the gifts as

representatives of the *saṅgha* headed by the Buddha. The Buddha and thus the *saṅgha* is worthy of the highest respect. Another way in which Buddhist practices allow for individual monastics to demonstrate their worthiness is that beneficiaries can make a conscious effort to transform on account of receiving the gift, even if they are not yet worthy recipients. Rather than a verbal expression of *kṛtajña* or gratitude, individual beneficiaries *qua* representatives of the *saṅgha* acknowledge the favour by practicing harder to increase their moral worth, because of the background belief that the gains made by individual monks in their practice increases benefits for everyone. A second reason the moral worth of the recipient is important is that it produces the ideal response in the donor. The recipient is someone who is held in esteem and demands the highest respect (*Śraddhā*) from the benefactor. The moral value is determined by the objective qualities (for example, whether the monk is a novice or ordained, his dedication to practice, his spiritual achievements, and so forth) rather than subjective facts about the individual monk. This is to ensure that the benefit is bestowed impartially. What matters is not the individual beneficiary but what they represent. The result is a win for everyone: the benefits accrued by the lay community (including the donor) is massively increased and the spiritual status of the *saṅgha* is improved because the monk (qua representative of the universal *saṅgha*) achieves enlightenment. This provides a model for individual monastics qua representatives of the *saṅgha* to acknowledge the benefit. This possibility is flagged by stories in which monks practice harder, make more effort, after receiving the benefits. A story from the texts tells of a monk who receives *dāna* from a layman who, due to his unfortunate circumstances, must go to great personal sacrifice to give *dāna*. The monk acknowledges this by deciding to make the gift more beneficial by making himself more worthy. Since the reward for the donor is commensurate with the virtue of the recipient, the monk "deems it his duty, he who is the beneficiary, to increase the fruit by making himself greater" (Filliozat 1991, 241). The monk becomes more diligent in his practice and becomes enlightened. This story might seem to be suggesting that the beneficiary and the benefactor are trying to maximize benefit to each other. However, interpreting it in this manner is a mistake. The right attitude towards the

act of *dāna* is *anumodanā* not *kṛtajña*. The efforts of the benefactor are justified because the beneficiary represents the *saṅgha* and the efforts of the beneficiary are justified because the benefactor is a representative of the laity. The efforts are meant to maximize benefits for everyone, conceived impersonally rather than the benefactor and the beneficiary conceived of as individual persons. It is worth emphasising again that *anumodanā* is an *attitude towards the good act of giving*, not towards a person.

The point here is that although the Buddhist account of *dāna* involves the benefactor and the beneficiary, as part of the *dāna* ceremony they are just representatives of groups, the laity, and the *saṅgha*. The notion of *anumodanā* thought of as participating in the joy of giving by the laity as well as the *saṅgha* allows for a novel expression of gratitude without smuggling in the self. Gratitude in the sense of *anumodanā* is an attitude towards an action of *dāna*. Though there are several participants in *dāna* ceremonies, they do not involve individual selves in a way that will conflict with the Buddhist no self doctrine. Giving and receiving benefits is impersonally conceived as altruistic actions aimed at alleviating suffering. This is accomplished through the laity offering *dāna* or benefits (food, robes, building material, labour, and so on) to the monastic community. In return, the monastic community acknowledges these offerings by intensifying their efforts and working harder to provide services such as teaching, conducting rituals during significant events, offering solace in times of illness and death, providing spiritual guidance, and so on.

E. Revising Expectations

We have shown how Buddhists have developed theoretical resources and community practices that help to serve some of the key functions of gratitude. It's worth noting that these changes also plausibly change expectations in keyways that guard against feelings of ingratitude.

Ingratitude is aversive—we feel bad when another does not repay our generosity with gratitude. This alone makes ingratitude something Buddhists would want to minimize. It is clear that Buddhists despise ingratitude. The Sīlavanāga Jātaka tale (Section III-B) execrates the

ingrate as wicked. In addition, ingratitude likely undercuts upstream reciprocity and moral reinforcement. This provides additional reason to guard against ingratitude. How does the Buddhist system manage this? Well, whether one feels ingratitude depends on one's expectations. Non-Buddhist benefactors tend to expect displays of gratitude towards them from the beneficiary. But in important Buddhist contexts, this is not the expectation. As a result of being educated in the practices of ceremonial giving, donors know what to expect. Donors and the broader community of participants in the *dāna* ceremonies are aware that the offering is made to the universal *saˑngha* headed by the Buddha, rather than an individual monk. It is done with the highest respect without any expectation of gratitude towards the donor (either from the *saˑngha* or any other individual monk). The participation and the expression of joy (*anumodanā*) by the broader community, not just the individual donor, also makes clear that in giving a gift to the monastery, one does not expect to be singled out. Indeed, singling out an individual bene-factor-beneficiary dyad for gratitude would be bizarre, under the circumstances. Given these expectations, the kind of aversive feelings associated with ingratitude would be blocked. In effect, the *dāna* cere-monies provide a basis for changing the expectations about expressions of gratitude. Schools in Thailand often organize group visits by children to participate and contribute to *dāna* ceremonies so that children can imbibe the expectations and values early on in life.

A primary function of gratitude is to maintain or strengthen a rela-tionship with a thoughtful/considerate partner. *Anumodanā* fails to pre-serve this function insofar as gratitude is concerned with dyads at the individual level: self (beneficiary)-to-self (benefactor). But *anumodanā* preserves the function of maintaining and strengthening relationships at the group level: laity-to-monastic community. We've suggested that the additional benefits of gratitude—upstream reciprocity and moral reinforcement—are thus recovered. The monastic community ack-nowledges the benefit by expressing *anumodanā* and working harder to return the favour to the laity in the services they can offer, such as teaching, performing ceremonies, offering comfort, and so on. The laity offers *dāna* mostly to fulfil the material needs of the monastic community which allows for the preservation and perseverance of the

saṅgha. This ensures upstream reciprocity since the services do not target an individual beneficiary but the Buddhist community as a group. The laity who joins in *dāna* ceremonies feel joyful on the occasion and are motivated to be more benevolent in the future. The benefits are endowed to the monastic community as representatives of the *saṅgha* and thus *anumodanā* also functions as a moral reinforcer.

F. Limits of *Anumodanā* Gratitude

Thus far, we have been celebrating the theoretical and practical innovations of Buddhism that allow for key functions of gratitude to be achieved without appealing to selves. However, there are important limits to how far these solutions extend. In particular, even if *anumodanā* and associated *dāna* ceremonies succeed in securing the function of gratitude in the relationship between the laity and the monastics, what about the relationships among the laity themselves? The mechanisms in place from the monasteries don't obviously extend to the interpersonal case for the laity. A Buddhist parent might well feel quite wounded by the ingratitude of their son or daughter, and this is not likely to be assuaged by the kinds of practices associated with *anumodanā*. A recommendation to uproot interpersonal gratitude (*kṛtajña*) might be very costly. The Buddhists did not recommend getting rid of gratitude in partial relationships. Indeed, many sutras in the *Nikāyas* directly teach filial piety and regard it as an important virtue for the laity. For example, *Aṅguttaranikāya* (2.31–32) which is known in Pāli as the *Kataññu Sutta* (*Kṛtajña sūtra* in Sanskrit) notes that ingrate have no integrity. The sutra gratitude is explicated by the paradigm reciprocal relationship between parents and children.

> Monks, one can never repay two persons, I declare. What two? Mother and father. Even if one should carry about his mother on one shoulder and his father on the other, and so doing should live a hundred years, . . . in supreme authority, in the absolute rule over this mighty earth abounding in the seven treasures,—not even this could he repay his parents. What is the cause for that? Monks, parents do much for their children: they bring them up, they nourish them, they introduce them to this world.

The *Sūtra* does not mean to suggest that one should not try to repay one's parents because it is difficult to repay. Rather the Sutta goes on to explain how one can repay one's parents.

But anyone who rouses his unbelieving mother and father, settles and establishes them in [Buddhist] conviction; rouses his unvirtuous mother and father, settles and establishes them in the Dhamma; . . . To this extent one pays and repays one's mother and father. (Thanissaro 2002).

This *Sūtra* shows that the Buddha recognised that the highest goal of enlightenment (*nirvāna*) and understanding and internalization of the radical no self view is going to be beyond what can be expected of every lay Buddhist and even novice monks and nuns.[10] So, the Buddha laid a two-tier system with very different expectations from these groups, compared to the fully-ordained monastics. This is evident in the Buddhist sources which lists only five vows for the lay Buddhists, 10 for the novices, and over 200 for the monastics. It is worth noting that in the Pāli Vinaya, monastics are allowed to give the robe cloth or any other gift they have received to their parents. The special exception in the Vinaya rules makes it obvious that the Buddhists regard the parent-child relationship as a valuable one indeed.

In addition, the Buddha laid out numerous guidelines that pertain to the virtuous life for lay Buddhists. Being virtuous does not pre-clude the laity from enjoying the benefits to be had by indulging in partial relationships. Love and friendship are to be enjoyed by the laity while remaining on guard not to give in to infatuation, lust, and greed. The *Sigalovada Sutta* (*DighaNikāya* 31, Walshe 1995), which has been considered as the Vinaya [Buddhist code of discipline] of the householder, explains the ways to honour the six quarters that symbolize the different social relations of the householder: "The parents should be looked upon as the East, teachers as the South, wife and children as the West, friends and associates as the North, servants

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[10] The doctrines of *karma* and rebirth ensure that the ideal is not in principle beyond the reach of the laity. The laity can aspire to achieve enlightenment but can only hope to make limited progress on the Buddhist Path in the present life. The ultimate goal of enlightenment within a lifetime is only possible for advanced practitioners.

and employees as the Nadir, ascetics and Brahmans as the Zenith"
(Thera 2010). These paradigm relations set out reciprocal duties and
commitments so that the lay Buddhists are virtuous and social harmony
is preserved in different interactions found in community life. Thus, for
example, children owe respect and service to their parents and must
therefore support them, fulfil their duties, keep the family tradition,
make themselves worthy of their inheritance and honor the passing of
the departed relatives by giving alms. Parents, on the other hand, must
keep their children away from evil, show them the virtuous path, teach
them labor skills, arrange for a proper marriage and grant them access
to the family inheritance (Subasinha 1997, 28–31).

By having a two-tier system of vows and practices the living Bud-
dhist traditions have been able to achieve what the free will skeptics
aspire to. The Buddhist recognize the limits of *anumodanā*, so they
supplement it by rejecting ingratitude as a vice especially in the context
of partial relationships, paradigmatically that between parents and
children. This is made clear in the Sīlavanāga Jātaka tale, the ingrate
person is considered to be worst than a lowly animal. The Jātaka tales
play an important role in communicating and educating that laity about
the Buddhist virtues through the Bodhisattva stories.

V. Conclusion

Buddhism counsels a metaphysical revolution. Suffering is based on
the false presupposition of a self, and the Buddhist says that we must
uproot that false presupposition which will have the effect of reducing
suffering. In this paper we have examined some potential costs of
uprooting the belief in self. Reactive attitudes like gratitude seem to play
a key role in a good life. A key function of gratitude is to strengthen and
sustain personal relationships. Gratitude has several other beneficial
consequences—it increases generosity, it reinforces moral behavior,
and it enhances wellbeing. Yet gratitude seems to depend critically on
the view that there are selves. In particular, gratitude seems to involve
one self (the beneficiary) showing generosity towards another self (the
benefactor).

We argue that Buddhists have a sophisticated response to this concern. First, some forms of gratitude do not involve the presupposition of self. One can be grateful for a beautiful sunset or the majesty of the mountains. But it's also true that in everyday life, we feel grateful to particular people who benefit us. This kind of gratitude is harder to square with the no self view. Does that mean that we need to give up on this kind of gratitude altogether? Buddhists have both theoretical and practical innovations to address this. First, they introduce another notion of gratitude, *anumodanā*, which involves feeling joy (rather than directed gratitude) in response to the good deeds by another. Second, they implement a practice of celebrating generosity that does not involve appealing to the self. This is most clearly seen in the context of donations to the monastery. Buddhist communities organize elaborate *dāna* (gift-giving) ceremonies as public events encouraging everyone to participate in the joy of donating to the monastics to emphasize that gratitude (*anumodanā*) strengthens the symbiotic relationship between the monastic community and the laity, rather than a self-to-self relationship. Importantly, this kind of ceremony changes expectations about the kind of response to expect from being generous. As a result, a donor will not find the lack of directed gratitude aversive—it will not appear to them as an instance of ingratitude.

Thus, Buddhists have an impressive coordinated response—involving theoretical and practical revisions—to ensuring that important functions of gratitude are preserved. This set of revisions is largely targeted at monastics interaction with each other and with the laity. But what about the laity themselves? If the Buddhist rejects self-to-self gratitude, does this mean that children should not be grateful to their parents? Intuitively that seems quite difficult to bear, and Buddhism does not advocate a revolution that extends this far. Rather, Buddhist positively promote gratitude between children and their parents. This might mean that the laity do not live fully in accordance with the right metaphysics, but there is a strong practical strand in Buddhist philosophy. Insofar as the elimination of child-parent gratitude would increase suffering, this provides a reason against pushing the Buddhist no self revolution into family life.

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How Remonstration Fails: *Filial Piety and Reprehensible Parents*

Hagop Sarkissian*

Abstract

Critics of Confucianism have long raised concerns about its focus on filial piety (*xiao* 孝). This concept entails traditional expectations, such as children dutifully serving parents, demonstrating outward respect, and subordinating personal desires to parental wishes. Critics find this problematic not only as an approach toward parents but also as a broader orientation toward authority figures.

In response to such criticism, a common argument asserts that it misunderstands filial piety's true nature. This perspective claims that filial piety requires not only service, respect, and compliance with parents but also the courage to admonish them when they veer from the path of what's right. However, this response is unconvincing. Passages used to support this view suggest admonishment should be light and avoided if it causes bad feelings, which may not be effective with stubborn parents. Other passages within the same texts indicate that admonishment is discouraged, emphasizing parental satisfaction over whether children should remonstrate.

The most robust endorsements for admonishment originate from the relatively less influential Xunzi. In conclusion, concerns raised by critics about unquestioning obedience to authority warrant serious consideration. These concerns invite a thorough examination of the intricate dynamics of filial piety and its implications, advocating a thoughtful approach.

Keywords: Filial piety, remonstration, Confucianism, Confucian ethics, critics of Confucianism, *Mengzi* (Mencius), *Xunzi*

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I. Introduction

Critics of Confucianism have long been concerned with its emphasis on filial piety (*xiao* 孝). Among the many traditional strictures of this concept are demands for children to be vigilant in serving their parents, to do so with the proper outward respect and demeanor, and to yield to parental wishes when personal desires come into conflict with them. Critics have found this last stricture problematic as an orientation not only toward one's parents but also to authority figures more generally. Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879–1942) and Wu Yu 吳虞 (1872–1949), for example, argued that filial piety inculcated an obedient and servile attitude that pervaded all of one's orientations to authority figures, preventing moral progress and the development of a public spirit. These figures were, of course, iconoclasts, yet even a prominent classical scholar such as Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896–1950) found the demands of filial piety problematic in similar ways.[1]

One common response to such criticism is to claim that it misunderstands or misrepresents the true nature of filial piety, which demands not only that one serve, respect, and yield to one's parents, but also take notice when they may be veering off the path of what is right and proper. If this happens, filial piety requires *remonstration*, as noted in a number of passages in classical (and canonical) Confucian texts. Filial children (sons, in most cases) should remonstrate with their parents (fathers, in most cases) if they risk doing something either practically foolish or morally suspect. Therefore, one can accept both that a subservient attitude toward authority figures is problematic while also denying that it has anything to do with filial piety. Put another way, filial piety, *properly* understood, is *anathema* to the worry of blind obedience.

In this article, I argue that such an argumentative strategy is unpersuasive. First, according to most of the passages that are regularly invoked to buttress this argument, remonstrance must be conveyed

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[1] As Michael Nylan and Thomas Wilson write, Fu "was persuaded as a student at Peking University to condemn the 'Confucian' family as 'the source of all evil,' insofar as it induced a 'slavish' mentality of 'blind obedience' that constituted the major impediment to rapid modernization of industry and sociopolitical structures" (2010, 202).

with a light touch and only when it will not engender bad feelings or estrangement. For parents who are amenable to changing their ways, this light form of remonstration (the strongest form possible) may be sufficient. However, but for those who are stubborn, quick to temper, or otherwise insensitive to remonstrance it will obviously fall short— precisely where it may be required most. Second, for nearly every passage claiming that children must remonstrate with wayward parents one can find another that either a) presents, as paragons of moral excellence, children who engage in self-censure and recrimination *instead* of remonstration, or b) insists that parents are always right, so remonstrating would be a mistake. So, the tradition is, at best, ambivalent on this topic. Finally, I argue that the strongest passages endorsing remonstration appear in the *Xunzi*, which is a comparatively minor text in terms of his influence on the development of later Confucian thought. I conclude that critics worried about obedience to authority cannot be easily dismissed and should be taken seriously.

II. Filial Piety in the Best of Lights

The family has been central to Chinese culture and religion since classical times. Ancestor veneration, mourning rites, and the perpetuation of the family line were foundational aspects of Chinese civilization, and filial piety is crucial to understanding traditional Chinese ethics.

The Confucian tradition, in particular, contains astute observations on the role of the family in a person's development and socialization. A person's foundational moral experiences occur when they are a child under the guidance of their parents and other immediate family members, who teach them how they ought to feel in, and how they ought to react to, a complex world of roles, rituals, and demands. The family is responsible for forming an individual's basic dispositions and patterns of reflection and response, which will then influence their experiences, interpretations, and reactions to the world around them (Ivanhoe 2007; Sarkissian 2010a, 2010b). Without the concern, devotion, and sacrifice of caring parents, children would have little chance of developing properly as persons.

Families also have a hierarchical structure, with parents, grand-parents, aunts, uncles, and older siblings on top, and children, grand-children, nieces and nephews, and younger siblings on the bottom. This natural hierarchy is sharpened and enhanced by a culture that carefully delineates the roles, responsibilities, and spheres of influence that attend to any particular individual (or dyadic pair of individuals) within it. These roles require the cultivation of qualities such as dutifulness, conscientiousness, and benevolence. Family life—in this hierarchical and structured sense—prepares individuals to understand their place in broader social networks outside the family. Hence, family education is also, in effect, socialization.

Apart from their role-specific obligations, parents have a further responsibility to become models of goodness and correct behavior for their children more generally. Good parents should be (and often are) good people. They may exemplify excellences in other roles besides that of parents, such as being good neighbors, good teachers, good friends, perhaps even good public servants. Children may thus also be motivated to cultivate themselves out of respect or admiration for the good examples provided by their parents and other elder relations.

When parental contributions to their children's development are real, sustained, and effective, it results in a bond between parent and child, where a child seeks to reciprocate for the benefits they received through. In the words of Heiner Roetz, "filial piety as respectful care can be interpreted as resulting from a natural feeling of responsibility and as an expression of gratitude which makes good the pains the parents took for their child" (1993, 54). Philip J. Ivanhoe calls this filial piety's "true basis."

> The true basis for filial piety is the sense of gratitude, reverence, and love that children naturally feel when they are nurtured, supported, and cared for by people who do so out of loving concern for the child's well being. . . . I suspect that the sense of gratitude that many people feel toward their parents . . . is really a reflection of their parents' commitment to and subsequent success at loving and caring for the child that they create. In other words, what we recognize and appreciate is the parents' intention to provide a good life and not just life to their child. (Ivanhoe 2007, 299)

In this paradigm, we might say that children will naturally (perhaps even effortlessly) be filial, developing a feeling of love, reverence, and gratitude for their parents. Something like this natural affection is captured in the ode "Thick Tarragon" (Liao e 蓼莪, n. 202) from the *Ode Classic* (*Shijing* 詩經).[2]

Moreover, numerous early texts, such as the *Filial Classic* and the *Analects*, link this state of filial affection and family harmony to greater peace in the world at large. Along these lines, consider the statement by Kongzi (Confucius) in *Sayings from Kongzi's Home* (*Kongzi jiayu* 孔子家語) which considers filial piety as one kind of hierarchical dyadic set, where if those above discharge their duties in exemplary fashion, those below will be rectified in turn.

> The more those in higher positions revere their parents, the more those in lower positions will practice filial piety; the more those in higher positions respect their older brothers, the more those in lower positions will practice brotherly love; the more charitable those in higher positions are, the more generous those in lower positions will become; the more those in higher positions maintain a close relationship with worthy people, the more those in lower positions will choose good people as friends; the more those in higher positions love morality, the less likely those in lower positions will hide their moral deficiency; the more those in higher positions dislike greed, the more those in lower positions will feel it shameful to compete for benefit; the more deferential those in higher positions are, the more shame those in low positions will feel for being impolite. These seven teachings are the foundations of governing people. . . . Those in higher positions are exemplars of those in lower positions. When the exemplars are rectified, who else will not be rectified?" (Y. Huang 2012, 157)

In this context, terms such as PARENT and ELDER BROTHER can be seen as thick concepts, both describing the world and providing prescriptions for action (Ng 2024). If these concepts are applied correctly and children are nurtured accordingly, we have reason to believe that children will develop into good people whose parents are worthy of

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[2] As cited by Ivanhoe (2007). See Waley and Allen (1996, 184–85) for a full translation.

care. The sense of order captured in these passages is not imposed from above; rather it arises from the effortless assent of all who participate in it.

III. Filial Piety in the Sober Light of Day

However, while love, respect, care, and devoted service might develop naturally in children toward their parents, this cannot be taken for granted. There are two obvious ways that things can (and do) depart from this paradigm. First, children can fail to love, care for, and support their parents *despite* having benefited from them. They may fail to appreciate the effort expended by their parents in their care—the sacrifices made to provide them a good life. As Han Feizi writes in his essay "Wu Du" (Five Vermin), "Among human affections none takes priority over the love of parents for their children. But though all parents may show love for their children, the children are not always well behaved. And though the parents may love them even more, will this prevent the children from becoming unruly?" (Watson 1964, 102). Filial duties can serve to remind such children of the importance of giving parents their due and reciprocating in kind for the care they received. This might rekindle the affection they likely feel for them thereby.

But it is also true that parents can prove to be difficult to love, even unworthy of love. And this seeds the real problem of filial piety. Not all parents are morally good, practically wise, or personally pleasant to be around. Parents can be demanding, oppressive, and heavy-handed in their dealings with children, over whom they exert considerable power. Can children be expected to have love and reverence in their when raised by parents who are impoverished, indifferent, or even abusive? Should they abnegate their beliefs, desires, and goals and hold their parents paramount in their lives under such conditions?

From our own critical perspective, and that of the past critics noted above, the answer to all these questions seems to be a firm "*no*." Filial piety as a core value is most compelling when we have in mind good (or at least average) parents—those who try and (at least somewhat)

succeed in being good caregivers and role models. As Ivanhoe writes, "Parents who are consistently and uniformly bad do not perform the kinds of acts and manifest the love that are the true basis of filial piety, and so their children are under no obligation to cultivate reciprocal feelings and undertake the care of such parents" (2007, 310).[3] Similarly, Sungwoo Um argues that it "seems unreasonable to claim that a child should have love, gratitude, and respect, no matter how terrible her parents are" (2020, 105).

This much seems right. And yet, these sentiments would be in tension with much of the classical Confucian tradition. When Ivanhoe writes of the "true basis" of filial piety, he is not making an interpretive claim about the tradition. Rather, he is making a very sensible evaluative claim from his own perspective, arguing that the only justified or compelling ground for filial duties is the prior love and care given by one's parents. Similarly, when Um argues that "a child's being filial should be understood as an appropriate response to her parent's being virtuous as a parent," this is again a sensible evaluative claim. However, this does not align with how the concept was traditionally understood. The idea, for example, that parents need to be virtuous in order to demand filial piety from children is simply false. Filial piety places children under obligation to undertake the care of *all* parents—to love, respect, and serve them—no matter how reprehensible they are. Or so I will argue. And this seeds the problem of filial piety noted at the outset of this paper.

IV. A Short Statement of the Argument

Indeed, three assumptions, together with the interpretive claim just mentioned, are important for the rest of this paper, so they are best stated here as premises.

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[3] Ivanhoe goes on to claim that children may still elect to cultivate some filial piety for bad parents, perhaps out of respect for the institution of parenting and a desire to set a positive example for others. But if such love is unwarranted and the parents are truly bad, it's not clear why one would want to set such an example. He also thinks that poor (not bad) parents might change for the better if treated with filial piety.

1. Some people are reprehensible (e.g. practically foolish or personally vicious) and difficult to love.
2. Some such people are parents of children.
3. Some such people will demand fealty and servitude from their children.
4. Plausibly, the Confucian tradition maintains that children should, at the end of the day, love, respect, and yield to such parental demands, even though they are reprehensible.

The first three premises may be considered simple assumptions or observations. The fourth is, I will argue, a sensible interpretive claim derived from canonical Confucian texts. If so, then we may derive the following conclusion:

C. Plausibly, Confucianism demands unjust and objectionable forms of obedience from children of reprehensible parents.

This argument does not require that the entirety of the Confucian tradition speak in a uniform voice concerning the topic of yielding to reprehensible parents. Expecting such consistency from a variegated and protracted tradition would be unreasonable. Instead, it only requires the presence of a sufficient number of passages in prominent texts that support this viewpoint, making it a plausible one. This much, I will argue, is plainly true.

V. Remonstration and Its Limits

First, we should note that demands for filial service do not mention the parental qualities that may merit it. In other words, filial service is not contingent on parents exemplifying goodness in their roles as parents. It is sufficient that a child exists and that a parent exists for the service to be owed. The basic imperative of filial piety is to serve one's parents, period. *Approaching Elegance* (*Erya* 爾雅) (ca. third century BCE), an early book of glosses of Zhou dynasty terms, says "to do good (things) to/ for one's parents is called filial piety" (善父母為孝), and the etymological dictionary *Analyzing Graphs and Explaining Characters* (*Shuowen jiezi* 説文解字) (ca. first-second centuries CE) says, similarly, filial piety is "to

serve one's parents well" (善事父母). Neither of these canonical defini-
tions mention parental merit. Consider, too, *Mengzi* 孟子 4A.19:

> Mengzi said, "Of all forms of service, which is the greatest? It is serving
> one's parents. Of all kinds of vigilance, which is the greatest? It is
> vigilance over one's own person. I have heard of those who, not losing
> control of themselves, have been able to serve their parents, but I have
> never heard of those who, having lost control of themselves, have been
> able to serve their parents. There are many services one must perform,
> but the serving of one's parents is the root of all of them. (Bloom 2009,
> 82-83)[4]

The absence of any mention of parental merit or worth is, I argue, a
feature and not a bug. In other words, it is simply not true that parents
need to be good to demand that children be filial. The natural reading
of such passages is that all parents merit such service *regardless* of their
qualities. It is of course possible that the authors of these passages
had in mind not all actual parents but only *typical* or *normal* parents,
whom they assumed were good enough to warrant such service. Re-
gardless, the imperatives appear in rather naked form. Passages that
specifically invoke *good* parents—that is, those that live up to the roles—
as grounding filial duties are comparatively rare (e.g., *Lunyu* 論語 17.21,
Mengzi 7A.15).

　　Is remonstration an aspect of filial service? The answer varies
depending on which source one is reading. Some passages make it
clear, for example, that while remonstration is appropriate in some
hierarchical relationships, it is *not* in the father/son or parent/child
one. The "Tan gong shang" 檀弓上 chapter of the *Ritual Record* (*Liji* 禮記)
distinguishes service to rulers on the one hand, which requires that one
hold one's line, push back, and not cover up for their wrongdoings, to
service to one's father on the other, which *forbids* these. Instead, a son
must serve his father, conceal his faults, and not provide pushback.[5] The

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[4] All translations follow Bloom (2009), often without modification or with only slight
modification. For example, "Mencius" has been changed to "Mengzi" in all cases.
[5] 事親有隱而無犯，左右就養無方，服勤至死，致喪三年。事君有犯而無隱，左右就養有方，服勤至死，方喪
三年。

"Internal Regulations" ("Nei ze" 內則) chapter of the same text says, by way of contrast, that remonstration is possible, but clarifies that it must be done very gently; if one's parents become angry one must redouble one's commitments to them—even in the face of bloody beatings.

> If the parents have a fault, one should with bated breath, bland aspect, and gentle voice admonish them. If the admonition does not take effect, one should be the more respectful and filial. When the parents are pleased, one should repeat the admonition. If the parents are displeased, rather than allow them to make themselves guilty of an offense against neighbors and fellow citizens, one should admonish them in a well thought-out manner. If the parents get angry then and are displeased, and beat one till the blood flows, one should not dare to complain and be resentful, but be still respectful and filial. (Roetz 1993, 60)

In the *Elder Dai's Ritual Record* (*Da dai liji* 大戴禮記) (early Han dynasty), we find Kongzi's student Zengzi saying the following, essentially echoing the point from the previous passage:

> If what parents do conforms to the Way, one ought to follow; if what they do does not conform to the Way, one ought to remonstrate. If one's remonstration is not taken, one ought just to do what parents do as if it is one's own idea. It is not filial to obey parents without remonstration, nor is it filial to remonstrate without obeying parents [if they don't listen]. A filial son's remonstration aims at goodness and therefore should be done without quarrels with parents, as quarrels are the source of disorder. (Y. Huang 2012, 159)

The *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語) contains a parallel passage, 4.18, with most understanding it as also maintaining that filial piety demands compliance when remonstration fails.[6]

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6 The *Analects* (Lunyu 論語) contains a parallel passage, 4.18, with most scholars understanding it as also maintaining that filial piety demands compliance when remonstration fails, including Ames and Rosemont (2010), Brooks and Brooks (1998), Goldin (2011), C. Huang (1997), Radice (2017), and Slingerland (2003). Some interpret this passage differently, as the ambiguous referent of a key grammatical term allows for the different

Of course, sympathizers will point to other passages that do not specify that compliance is required when remonstration fails. For example, consider these lines from the "Remonstrating and Expostulating" ("Jian zheng" 諫諍) chapter of the *Filial Classic* (*Xiaojing* 孝經), where Zengzi asks Kongzi whether a son may be deemed filial for following what his father decrees. Kongzi rejects this idea:

> The Master said, "What kind of talk is this? What kind of talk is this? In the past, the Son of Heaven had seven ministers to expostulate with him so that he would not lose the world even if he [were about to act] without the Way. The feudal lords had five ministers to expostulate with them so that they would not lose their states even if they [were about to act] without the Way. The grand masters had three ministers to expostulate with them so that they would not lose their families even if they [intended to act] without the Way. If a *shi* has friends to expostulate with him, he will not depart from his illustrious virtue; if a father has a son to expostulate with him, he will not fall into unrighteousness. Thus whenever there is unrighteousness, a son cannot but expostulate with his father and a minister cannot but expostulate with his lord. Thus whenever there is unrighteousness, one expostulates about it. To follow one's father's decrees—how can that be filial piety?" (Goldin 2005, 110–11)

Commenting on this passage, Goldin argues that, "Surely there is no better evidence that the practice of filial piety was not intended 'to turn China into a big factory for the manufacturing of obedient subjects,' 把中國弄成一個「製造順民的大工廠」 as the critic Wu Yu 吳虞 (1871–1949) alleged" (Goldin 2011, 36). Of course, no single passage could possibly warrant the inference Goldin makes here. That is, no single passage in isolation from the rest of the corpus could establish what filial piety was intended to bring about (or not bring about, as it were). No single use of

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reading. On this alternative reading, one may remain committed to one's remonstrance and seek other avenues for it, though without resentment (Y. Huang 2012; Ni 2017). This might not amount to much in practice but does acknowledge the importance of personal integrity. As Roetz (1993) remarks, "although one might be skeptical about the possible success, it remains important that the moral imperative [according to this interpretation] is not revoked in favor of the final priority of [filial] role" (70).

the concept can determine what it constrains and affords. (One might just as well point to a passage like those just noted that unambiguously demand that sons refrain from remonstration to show that such obedience *was*, in fact, the intended effect. That would be similarly unpersuasive.)

Returning to the "Jian zheng" passage at hand, we see that remonstration is required, but nothing is said about what to do when it fails. In practice, if a child remonstrates with a reprehensible parent (or a parent acting reprehensibly) and they refuse to accept, what then? It seems reasonable to assume that such a child has discharged their filial duties, as no more is said on the subject (for example, that they must ensure that their parents accept the remonstration).

VI. Pleasing, Not Remonstrating; Self-Censure, Not Blaming

Indeed, it is important to note that other passages state explicitly that remonstration must end if parents are recalcitrant. The norm is to avoid parental anger and family disharmony at nearly any cost. Consider this peculiar passage in the *Mengzi* (4B.30):

> Master Gongdu said, "Throughout the state, everyone calls Kuang Zhang unfilial, yet you, Master, consort with him and treat him with courtesy. I dare to ask why this is."
>
> Mengzi said, "In the world today, there are five things that are considered unfilial. To be indolent in the use of one's four limbs and not concern oneself with the nurture of one's father and mother—this is the first form of unfiliality. To occupy oneself with chess and to be fond of drinking wine and not concern oneself with the nurture of one's father and mother—this is the second form of unfiliality. To be fond of goods and property and partial to one's wife and children and not concern oneself with the nurture of one's father and mother—this is the third form of unfiliality. To indulge the desires of the ears and eyes so as to disgrace one's father and mother—this is the fourth form of filiality. To be fond of bravery and to be quarrelsome and contentious, so as to endanger one's father and mother—this is the fifth form of unfiliality. Has Master Zhang done any one of these?

"In Master Zhang's case, the son demanded goodness of the father and they came to be at odds with one another.[7] To demand goodness of one another is the Way of friends. But for father and son to demand goodness of one another entails a great assault on affection. Kuang Zhang of course wanted to have good relations with his wife and children. But because he had offended his father and was not allowed to come near him, he sent away his wife and children and, for the rest of his life, has not had their nurture. He made up his mind that if it was not thus, this would be one of the greatest of crimes. This is Kuang Zhang." (Bloom 2009, 94, modified)

This is a challenging passage. We are not told exactly why everyone called Kuang Zhang unfilial, and the explanation by Mengzi is open to interpretation. One thing is certain: the act of abandoning his wife and child could not be unfilial (even if we consider it morally repugnant) because he does not owe them filial duties. If he is deemed unfilial it must be because of how he treated his parents in general, or how he treated his father in particular.

Given that the "solution" to the strained affect between Kuang Zhang and his father is for the fo rmer to abandon his wife and child, it may seem *they* were the problem. Indeed, this would be an illustration of the third form of unfiliality mentioned in the immediately preceding lines—namely, to be "partial to one's wife and children and not concern oneself with the nurture of one's father and mother." But Mengzi claims, explicitly, that Kuang Zhang did not fail to nurture his parents.

Another possibility is that Kuang Zhang's father did not approve of his choice of wife and yet he married her anyway. So while he remained attentive to his parents' needs he was still unfilial for going against his parents' wishes. When it was time to finally make amends, Kuang Zhang did something he thought would please them—namely, abandoning his wife and child. If this is correct, and if he abandoned them so as to serve his parents, this would explain why Mengzi consorts with him and treats him with courtesy. The problem with this interpretation is that it

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[7] I follow Legge (1971) and Eno (1996) in my reading of this line, as it better accords with the rest of the passage.

is mere speculation.[8]

Indeed, there is a more straightforward interpretation: the last part of the passage begins by claiming that Kuang Zhang and his father had a falling out because the son demanded goodness of the father, and so we must focus our attention here. In *Mengzi* 4A.18 we are told that goodness is something fathers and sons must never demand from one another because (and this is important) the demand for goodness might not succeed, leading father and son to be estranged, and nothing could be more unfortunate (or inauspicious) than that.[9] Of course, it is made clear here that when such a clash occurs the child is the one to bear the brunt of the resulting estrangement. A father can throw a child out of the house, ostracize him, refuse contact with him, etc. (as Kuang Zhang's father did in this case), and the child will be the one censured as guilty of the crime of unfiliality. It bears mentioning that if this analysis is correct, then Mengzi is carving out a sixth way to be unfilial in this passage—suggesting to Gongduzi that, in effect, demanding goodness from one's father may be deemed unfilial. Having been guilty of this great crime, Kuang Zhang abandons his wife and child, because doing nothing to make up for his unfilial act would have been worse still.[10] Kuang Zhang serves as an object lesson for what can happen if one demands goodness from one's father.

Indeed, the more basic duty is to please one's parents instead, not

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[8] Attempts to fill in the details using another person named Zhang in the *Warring States Annals* (*Zhanguoce* 戰國策) are equally speculative and don't help with the interpretation of this passage in particular. See Lau (2003, Appendix I).

[9] Peimin Ni (2008) interprets the injunction for fathers and sons to avoid demanding goodness of one another as simple and commonsense practical advice that should not be elevated to loftier status, without referencing the related case of Kuang Zhang at all.

[10] This seems the most likely explanation of why Kuang Zhang was deemed unfilial. However, his wife and child are left out of this this explanation entirely, leading the reader to wonder why they were abandoned, and how they fit into the story. It seems not simply unjust but more fundamentally arbitrary that Kuang Zhang sought to make amends for his crime of demanding goodness of his father by abandoning his wife and child. One interpretation is that he felt so ashamed of his unfilial behavior that he sent them away so that they would never have to associate with him again. Birdwhistle (2007) suggests that the wife and child were sent away by Huang Zhang as a form of self-punishment (99). Eno (2002) makes similar claims (192). At best, we might say that Mengzi feels pity for Kuang Zhang, and that is why he consorts with him. This is indeed Zhu Xi's verdict.

remonstrate with them. Delighting, ennobling, honoring, and enriching one's parents is a fundamental filial duty. In 2B.7, for example, when someone asks why the casket he prepared for his mother was made of such expensive wood, Mengzi explains that he was following the ancients, for whom lavish burials were the norm:

> This was not simply for the sake of a beautiful appearance but because it allowed, at the last, for the full expression of people's hearts. If people were not permitted to do this, they could not feel satisfaction, and if they did not have the means to do it, they also could not feel satisfaction. The ancients, if they were able to do this, and had the means to do it, all employed this practice. Why should I alone not have done so? Moreover, is it not a comfort to the mind to keep the earth from touching the bodies of those we love who have been transformed in death? I have heard that the noble person would not for anything in the world stint when it came to his parents." (Bloom 2009, 43)

Indeed, in the face of cogent challenges by the Mohists concerning the wastefulness and onerousness of burial rites and practices, which were put forth *from the perspective of the surviving family*, Mengzi doubles down and says *only* such kinds of expenditures, whether toward living or dead family members, can count as truly loving them. Consider 5A.3, where Mengzi explains why it is that Shun ennobled, enriched, and honored his brother Xiang—the most inhumane person in the world— despite meting out severe justice to criminals who did not reach his brother's level of depravity:

> "A humane man does not store up anger against his brother, nor harbor grievances against him. He simply loves him; that is all. Loving him, he desires him to be honored; loving him, he desires him to be wealthy. His enfeoffment at Youbi was to make Xiang wealthy and honored. If, while Shun himself was sovereign his brother had been a common man, could he be said to have loved him?" (Bloom 2009, 101)

Desiring that one's kin are wealthy and honored regardless of whether they are deserving, and regardless of whether they are inhumane, are here described as necessary conditions for being deemed to love

one's family. Lest readers doubt that Shun may have been blind to his brother's depravity, in 5A.2 Shun is described as vividly aware that he and his parents and brother tried to kill him not once but twice—by trying to trap him on the roof of a building and setting fire to it, and by asking that Shun dig a well so that they could bury him alive in it. (In both cases, Shun escaped death.) Indeed, after the well incident, Shun returned to his home to find Xiang there, fully intent on assuming Shun's possessions and claiming his wives as his own! And yet, upon seeing his brother in his home for the very first time, Shun was overcome with delight, since his younger brother was finally paying a visit. Indeed, he immediately asks Xiang to help him in governing the people. Mengzi explains this by saying that "a gentleman can be deceived by what aligns with his side of things"—in this case, Shun being deceived by his brother's appearance of fraternal care, which is what Shun always desired.

This preoccupation for approval and love from reprehensible kin is a consistent theme in the text. In 5A.1 we are told that Shun would weep and cry out to Heaven owing to his inability to get his parents (described consistently as reprehensible human beings) to love him. He toils in the fields and works to fulfill his duties, yet his parents do not love him. Even when Yao, his predecessor on the throne, presented the empire to Shun (instead of his biological children), Shun still felt as though homeless because of the absence of parental affection. Mengzi explains:

> "To have the approval of the men of service of the realm is something everyone desires, yet this was not enough to dispel his sorrow. To have the love of women is something every man desires, and Shun had as wives the two daughters of the sovereign, yet this was not enough to dispel his sorrow. Wealth is something everyone desires, and he had the wealth that comes with possessing the realm, yet this was not enough to dispel his sorrow. Honor is something that everyone desires, and he had the honor of becoming the Son of Heaven, but this was not enough to dispel his sorrow. The reason why the approval of men, the love of women, wealth, and honor were not enough to dispel his sorrow was that it was a sorrow that could be dispelled only by being in harmony with his parents. . . . The person of great filial devotion longs throughout his life for his father and mother. In the great Shun there

was manifested one who, at the age of fifty, still longed for them."
(Bloom 2009, 98)

There is no ambiguity in the message here: Regardless of one's achieve
ments, no matter whether one is esteemed or entrusted with the
greatest responsibility in the world, none of that is as important as
receiving parental affection—even if the parents are reprehensible
(indeed, even if they have attempted prolicide, not once but twice). In
4A.28 this message is reinforced:

> Mengzi said, "Greatly contented, the whole world turned to him, yet
> he regarded the whole world turning to him, greatly contented, as like
> so much grass. Only Shun was like this. He thought that if he could
> not win the hearts of his parents, he could not be a human being, and
> that if he could not reach an accord with his parents, he could not be
> a son. Through Shun's fulfilling the Way of serving his parents, Gusou
> [his father, aka the Blind Man][11] came to be pleased, and when Gusou
> came to be pleased, the world was transformed. When Gusou came to
> be pleased, all the fathers and sons in the world became secure. This is
> called 'great filiality.'" (Bloom 2009, 85)

Van Norden's selection of commentary on this passage is striking:

> Zhu Xi comments that, because of Shun, "All the sons in the world
> will know that there are no parents in the world whom one cannot
> serve. They will say to themselves, 'The manner in which I serve them
> is simply not as good as Shun's.' Consequently, all will be encouraged
> to be filial until their parents are also pleased. Then the fathers of the
> world will also never fail to be kind." (Van Norden 2008, 102)

This claim that Shun's self-abnegation was successful because it re-
sulted in his depraved father being pleased with him is repeated in
5A.4. It is why Shun is, for Mengzi, a paragon of virtue. As Youngsun
Back writes, "people hold his filiality in high esteem because his un-
remitting love successfully brought his broken family back into the ideal

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[11] Both characters in his name—瞽瞍—have the meaning of "blind."

Confucian family: his family members came to care for him as well" (Back 2019, 541).

Regardless of how one thinks of these episodes, the existence of the sage king Shun—or, more precisely, Mengzi's representation of him[12] —effectively condemns future generations of children to bearing all manner of abuse from reprehensible parents, out of a blind hope that their parents too will be moved to delight as the Blind Man (Shun's father) was. As Zhu Xi implies, the problem lies with the *children*, who are guilty of not being as good as Shun was—for not being as dutiful, loving, and obedient in the face of reprehensible behavior. Ivanhoe expresses the worry here clearly.

> The Confucian tradition again seems to require too much, insisting that such children simply grin and bear it, no matter how bad their parents happen to be. One of the clearest examples of this problem is found in the Mengzi. In 5A.2 Mengzi discusses how Emperor Shun endured repeated attempts on his life by his father, stepmother, and half-brother and yet continued to love, support, and take joy in them. In 4A.28 we are told that in the end, Shun's perseverance so moved his father that he abandoned his wicked ways and became a model parent. [13] That makes for a fine story. However, does it describe a reasonable ideal or at least suggest one? (Ivanhoe 2007, 310)

One cannot help but conclude that the import of all of this is to render parents practically *beyond reproach* by their children, which feeds directly into the critics' worry mentioned at the outset.[14] As Roetz poignantly notes, Shun's filial piety

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[12] See Nivison (2002) and Eno (2002) on how Mengzi elaborates and embellishes on the Shun legacy in order to push forward his own philosophy.

[13] I see no reason to think that Gusou became virtuous. We are only told that he was pleased, and agree with Radice that in thinking it better to characterize him as becoming more amicable (2017, 199). See also 5A.4.

[14] Indeed, Zhu Xi was sure to include passages to this effect in his Elementary Learning (Xiaoxue 小學), a primer for the youth, such as one by Luo Congyan 羅從彥 (1072–1135, a student of Cheng Yi) who claimed that "there are no parents in the world who are not right" (Roetz 2008, 43).

may be moving, but an ethic which suppresses anger in the face of injustice and instead relies on self-accusation or passive readiness to suffer hardly imparts the competence for postconventional action. Those Confucians, it seems, who praised these attitudes as exemplary, evaded a moral decision in favor of a moral exaction" (Roetz 1993, 60)[15]

"In view of these restrictions," he continues, "'moral vigilance' [i.e. remonstration] does not seem to have been worth much in practice" (Roetz 1993, 60).[16]

VII. Xunzi and the Way to Be a Son

Before concluding, we ought to note that we can indeed find an unambiguous statement in the classical corpus claiming that filiality demands doing what is *right*, defined *independently* of parental desires or commands. It is found in the *Xunzi*, a text that exerted comparatively minor influence on the later tradition. The "Way to be a Son" ("Zidao" 子道) chapter opens with the following lines:

> To be filial upon entering and to be a good younger brother upon going out is lesser conduct. To be compliant to one's superiors and devoted to one's inferiors is middle conduct. To follow the Way and not one's lord, to follow *yi* and not one's father is the greatest conduct. If one's intentions are at ease in ritual, and one's words are put forth in accordance with the proper classes of things, then the Way of the *ru* is complete. Even Shun could not improve on this by so much as a hair's breadth. (Hutton 2014, 325)

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[15] In the terminology of Roetz's book, "post conventional" means going beyond accepted norms, mores, and conventions and developing a capacity to see how any of these might come into conflict with what is truly right.

[16] This dimension of filial piety is alive and well in Confucian heritage societies, and is known as "authoritarian filial piety" (AFP) in the empirical literature. AFP is characterized by two underlying factors: a willingness to set aside one's personal wishes and desires in order to comply with the will of one's parents, and a sense of obligation to exalt one's parents, maintain their status and prestige, and continue the family legacy. For a recent study showing how this mindset predicts passivity in the face of corruption, see Sarkissian and Buchtel (2023).

According to these lines, a filial son's obligations ultimately lie not with his father but with what is right (*yi* 義). The passage goes on to address some of the normal stumbling blocks that a son might face in making good on this commitment.

> There are three cases in which the filial son does not follow orders. When following orders will endanger one's parents/loved ones, but not following orders will make them safe, then the filial son will not follow orders, and this is having scruples. When following orders will disgrace one's parents, but not following orders will bring them honor, then the filial son will not follow orders   being *yi* [right]. When following orders requires a beastly act, but not following orders requires cultivation and decorum, then the filial son will not follow orders, and this is being respectful. And so, not following orders when it is permissible to do so is to behave as though one is not a son. Following orders when it is not permissible to do so is to lack any scruples. If one understands the proper purposes of following and not following orders, and if one can be reverent, respectful, loyal, trustworthy, scrupulous, and honest so as to carry these out vigilantly, then this can be called the greatest filial piety. A proverb states, "Follow the Way, not your lord. Follow *yi*, not your father." This expresses my meaning. (Hutton 2014, 325)

Note the difference here when compared to everything that preceded. We are not told that a filial son simply remonstrates in the hope that the father will change his ways. Nor are we told that remonstration must end when a father does not yield. Instead, Xunzi makes it clear that a filial son will simply *disobey bad orders*, regardless of who issues them. As Radice writes, "the highest form of conduct is achieved when one ceases to follow the arbitrary will of one's superiors in favor of a more independent standard" (Radice 2017, 199). This kind of moral clarity is desperately needed in order to afford space for a son, otherwise burdened by obligations of servility, to refuse to indulge parents who cannot see the error of their ways. Alas, Xunzi is a comparatively minor and heterodox voice from the perspective of influential systematizers such as Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200 CE).[17]

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[17] Though see Justin Tiwald's helpful survey on how Xunzi was received among the Neo-Confucians (Tiwald 2016).

VIII. Conclusion

In later times, filial duties become ever more stringent, demanding absolute compliance and being codified in law (with brutal punishments for violators) starting in the *Tang Dynastic Code* (650 CE)[18] And non-canonical (yet influential) texts such as *Twenty-Four Filial Ones* (*Ershisi Xiao* 二十四孝, Yuan dynasty) contain disturbing examples of extreme filiality that would put even Shun to shame, all presented as paragons worthy of admiration.

However, as I have contended, canonical texts from the classical era already contain passages that license a straightforward and unqualified obedient attitude toward one's parents. At best, remonstration must be conveyed gently, and the point at which a filial child should stop coincides with when parents might get upset and the relationship strained. For reprehensible parents this point will come quickly. (In fact, if a child can foresee this resistance, why engage in remonstration at all? Why take the risk?) At worst, demanding goodness from one's own father is itself tantamount to an unfilial act. It thus seems unrealistic and irresponsible to expect that children will have the strength and moral wherewithal to stand up to reprehensible parents, as that would be counter-normative in a culture that venerates these texts.

Of course, there were historical reasons (having to do with the succession of power and international intrigue among rival families) that may have lead to such stringent emphasis on filial abnegation in the classical period. Ivanhoe, crediting Jack Kline, points out that "the children of rulers and ministers were well situated to betray their kingdoms to neighboring states. Strongly advocating perpetual patience and an attitude of deference would have worked to prevent the children of politically powerful people from causing considerable mischief" (Ivanhoe 2007, 310n31). But he is quick to add that "these kinds of arguments no longer offer contemporary people good reasons for such an attitude or practice."

The current author is in agreement.

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[18] See Knapp (2006).

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Culture in Anger Disorder as Culture-Bound Syndrome

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Abstract

For many, anger has been seen as irrationality, even as illness. But it seems that anger-related disorder and its culture-relatedness have not receive much attention in psychiatry. Like backward-looking ressentiment, *hwabyeong* 火病 can be literally translated into anger disorder. In this paper, I examine the notion of anger and culture with the help of considering the case of *hwabyeong* as a Korean culture-bound syndrome (hereafter, CBS). Drawing on historical changes in the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) and cases of *hwabyeong* as CBS, I will argue that the social and cultural aspects of mental disorder are indispensable parts. Additionally, it will be suggested that the rigid distinction between CBS and mental disorders is questionable. First, I begin by examining Jarome Wakefield's harmful dysfunction analysis and Ian Hacking's social constructionism on mental disorder. Next, given that the illness is common among poor old women who suffered from patriarchal social structures, I question whether *hwabyeong* is really a culturally specific illness. Moreover, *hwabyeong* cannot be properly understood without considering unequal power relations and extremely limited ranges of one's agency. Thus, calling it culture-bound may be due to WEIRD-ish (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic), culturally stereotypical prejudice as well as misogynic thinking concerning *hwabyeong*. In present times, it's worth noting that, despite common biases, *hwabyeong* or *han* (恨) is no longer solely a Korean phenomenon, thanks to recent societal advancements. In conclusion, I show that curing *hwabyeong* or anger management is not just medical but sociopolitical matters.

Keywords: Culture, anger disorder, culture-bound syndrome, *hwabyeong*, *han*, anger

I. Introduction

For many, anger has been seen as irrationality, even as illness.[1] But anger is biologically and universally valuable as well because it enhances fitness by detecting aggression or threats and facilitating cooperation. Can excessive or malfunctioning anger be seen a matter of mental illness? It seems that anger-related disorder and its culture-relatedness have not receive much attention in psychiatry. Like backward-looking ressentiment, *hwabyeong* 火病 (often Romanized as "hwa-byung" in the literature) can be literally translated into "anger disorder." In this paper, I examine the notion of anger and culture with the help of considering the case of *hwabyeong* as a Korean culture-bound syndrome (hereafter, CBS). Indeed, it is a common view that many psychiatric disorders cannot be properly understood without certain sociocultural contexts. Drawing on historical changes in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) and cases of *hwabyeong* as CBS, I will argue that the social and cultural aspects of mental disorder are indispensable parts. Additionally, it will be suggested that the rigid distinction between CBS and mental disorders is questionable. In this paper, my focus is mostly concerned with cultural causation and social conditions of *hwabyeong* in Korea. This question will also have several implications on the question of whether *hwabyeong* is culturally bound.

First, before discussing *hwabyeong*, I begin by examining Jarome Wakefield's harmful dysfunction (hereafter, HD) analysis and Ian Hacking's social constructionism on mental disorder. This is because Wakefield and Hacking's views on mental disorder provide us some conceptual resources to understand the conception of *hwabyeong* as CBS. Next, given that the illness is common among poor old women who suffered from patriarchal social structures, I question whether *hwabyeong* is really a culturally specific illness. Moreover, *hwabyeong* cannot be properly understood without considering unequal power relations and extremely limited ranges of one's agency. Thus, calling it

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[1] The meaning of anger is very diverse: "rage, outrage, hatred, fury, indignation, irritation, frustration, resentment, pissiness, impatience, envy, jealousy, revenge, and vengeance" (Flanagan 2018, x). Note that I do not aim to engage with the current research on anger in this paper due to the limited space. This would be for another research project.

culture-bound may be due to WEIRD-ish (Western, Educated, Indus-trialized, Rich, and Democratic), culturally stereotypical prejudice as well as misogynic thinking concerning *hwabyeong*. It is worth noting that, despite common biases, *hwabyeong* or *han* (恨) is no longer solely a Korean phenomenon, thanks to recent societal advancements. In conclusion, I show that curing *hwabyeong* or anger management is not just a medical but a sociopolitical matter.

II. Defining Mental Disorder with the Help of Culture

In this section, for a viable definition of mental disorder, I will examine Wakefield's harmful dysfunction analysis. For many, psychiatry is regarded as a naturalistic investigation of mental disorders. Wakefield believes that the HD model has better explanatory power over other rival accounts insofar as it connects a value term (harmful) to a scientific factual term (dysfunction). He writes: "According to the HD analysis, a disorder is a *harmful dysfunction*, where "harmful" is a value term, referring to conditions judged negative by sociocultural standards, and "dysfunction" is a scientific factual term, referring to failure of biologically designed functioning" (Wakefield 2007, 149).[2] He admits a role of sociocultural standards by using the concept of "harmful" but rejects a pure social constructionism by referring to the idea of "dysfunction." In sum, something counts as a mental disorder if and only if it is both harmful and dysfunctional. Through the HD, Wakefield tries to develop a two-tier model by attempting to bridge the gap between constructionism and naturalism.

While mental disorders are usually considered harmful, it is im-portant to note that there are many harmful or negative cases that are not disorders. Disorders can be a failure of certain natural function be

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[2] Addressing the question of the boundary between social value and biological facts, his main motivation is to critique the view that mental disorders are nothing other than the products of normalizing socio-cultural forces. Against it, Wakefield claims, "a central goal of an analysis of 'mental disorder' is to clarify and reveal the degree of legitimacy in psychiatry's claims to be a truly medical discipline rather than, as anti-psychiatrists and others have claimed, a social control institution masquerading as a medical discipline" (2007, 150).

it psychological or physiological. What Wakefield wants to appeal to is the factual component, that is, definitive etiological understanding of mental disorder. In distinguishing disorder from non-disorder, this factual component comes down to a dysfunction, in other words, a failure of natural functioning. For him, dysfunction is the failure of an internal mechanism to perform certain naturally selected functions. When it comes to the distinction between normal sadness of mourning and disordered sadness, for example, Wakefield thinks that a "purely value-based account of 'disorder' does not explain such distinction among negative conditions" (Wakefield 2010, 287). In sum, he claims that natural functions can be objectively accountable since our psychological and physiological functions are naturally selected for certain evolutionary purposes.

In addition, Wakefield embraces a value-laden part along with a factual part about dysfunction. If there is a condition that involves no harm at all, one might count it as mere human cognitive diversity rather than disorder. His analysis is a two-tier and hybrid theory as far as the value judgment of harm constitutes some further criterion to the factual account of dysfunction. The idea is that a society is, at least partially, responsible to delimit the boundary between abnormality and normality, sanity and madness. For example, the occurrence of anorexia is closely related to certain cultural norms valuing thinness as a feminine ideal. But the western ideal of female beauty may not be applicable to African or Asian countries regarding various avoidant/restrictive food intake disorders. Likewise, it is unclear if current American psychiatric methods are equally viable in a Korean context or the United States in 100 years ago.

Concerning the question of whether culture plays a decisive role in the value judgment, Wakefield is very explicit that cultural differences can affect our judgment of something as actually "harmful." Due to the elusive concept of the disorder itself, the identification of mental disorder requires the standard for judging what mental condition should count as mental disorder in the first place. A dysfunctional condition is a mental disorder when it is considered harmful or negative according to some social values. To show this point, he gives an example of dyslexia, that is, the inability to learn to read, which was not harmful in

illiterate societies. If we stick to a purely scientific account of disorder, we cannot understand this value component of the mental disorder. Similarly, consider the case of homosexuality, which has not been considered as a mental illness since the early 1970s. Is homosexuality "sexual dysfunction" due to its failure to perform the natural function of reproduction? At least, it might be argued that it still belongs to dysfunction but fails to count as harmful in the contemporary value system.

However, we might ask how the HD model helps to make genuinely cross-cultural diagnoses. As he shows in his analysis of the cross-cultural use of diagnostic criteria, we can find different gender expectations, youth expressions, and social norms such as individuality in south Korea, Germany, and Taiwan. These cultural aspects should affect the DSM criteria differently. In the next section, I will provide Ian Hacking's social constructionism.

III. Hacking on Social Construction

If we take the value component of mental disorders seriously, social constructionism emerges as an intriguing option. It seems plausible to consider mental illness, if not somatic illness, to be socially constructed. In other words, a society is, at least partially, responsible to delimit the boundary between abnormality and normality, sanity and madness. For example, the occurrence of anorexia is closely related to certain cultural norms valuing thinness as a feminine ideal. But the western ideal of female beauty may not be applicable to African or Asian countries regarding various avoidant/restrictive food intake disorders. Likewise, it is unclear if current American psychiatric methods are equally feasible in a Korean context or the United States in 100 years ago. If so, it might be argued that current categories of mental disorder do not pick out real kinds of disease. In other words, diagnosis does not "cut nature at its joints" as far as there are no practice-independent or classification-independent joints in the first place.

To be sure, a certain mental disorder is not simply brought into being by our conception about it. Even though depression may be

influenced by some sociocultural factors, it might be argued that it is also correlated with serotonin's abnormal secretion. Here note that I am only concerned with a modest version of social constructionism, which allows room for underlying biological mechanisms. The upshot is that a given society's specific attention, patterning, and grouping may affect the occurrence of disorder itself. In this regard, one of Hacking's points is that the socially constructed category of mental illness suggests its changeability, historicity, and instability (1999, 6). According to him, for example, a mental disorder like schizophrenia does not necessarily have to be as it is currently understood, and its characteristics are not inherently predetermined by nature. While schizophrenia may be taken for granted and appears to be inevitable, we may be better off if we remove the category of schizophrenia. If this is the case, we should be cautious not to prematurely reify the current categories of mental disorders.

Unlike natural sciences on natural kinds, Hacking claims that the problem of classification in social sciences on human kinds has a distinctive problem. Whereas the essence of gold can be described as 79 protons, mental disorders cannot be described in such a way due to what Hacking calls the looping effect: "The classification 'quark' is indifferent in the sense that calling a quark a quark makes no difference to a quark" (1999, 105). According to Hacking, human kinds are necessarily interactive kinds whereas natural kinds are indifferent to the classification.

> We are especially concerned with classifications that, when known by people or those around them, and put to work in institutions, change the ways in which individuals experience themselves—and may even lead people to evolve their feelings and behavior in part because they are so classified. Such kinds (of people and their behavior) are interactive kinds. (1999, 104)

This is the "looping effect" in which the classification interacts with the classified object (in this case, patient's belief and desire): "to create new ways of classifying people is also to change how we can think of ourselves, to change our sense of self-worth, even how we remember

our own past" (1995, 369). The looping effect shows that the conception of such and such mental illness can cause some change in the mental illness itself. As Hacking notes, "what was known about people of a kind may become false because people of that kind have changed in virtue of what they believe about themselves" (1999, 34). Thanks to a causal role of categorization, there is some significant relation between our subjective experience and the conception of mental disorders. According to his "dynamic nominalism," the act of naming and the actual kind coexist simultaneously. That is to say, "numerous kinds of human beings and human acts come into being hand in hand with our invention of the ways to name them (2002, 113). Before the conception of multiple personality disorder (MPD) is available, for example, we can say that a humankind with MPD does not exist.

It might be argued that autistic children, who have severe com munication problems, are a counterexample to Hacking's claim that mental illnesses are interactive kinds. But it is important to note that this interaction does not have to involve explicit conscious awareness. Even if we see no clear looping effect in the case of individual child autism, his point does still make sense. Hacking writes: "By interaction I do not mean only the self-conscious reaction of a single individual to how she is classified. I mean the consequences of being so classified for the whole class of individuals and other people with whom they are intimately connected" (1999, 115). This assertion suggests that the awareness and intentional internalization of shared norms are not a necessary condition for the looping effect. For it is very unlikely that mentally disordered people intentionally want to imitate people with mental illnesses. The looping effect does not require certain people to consciously know which category they belong to as far as they interact with the categorization in a certain way. This is also consistent with our intuition that mental disorder should be something involuntary and not consciously controlled. Even if some patients are deviants who are violating norms, we should distinguish a failure to conform to a norm (non-disorder) and an inability to understand it (disorder). For instance, people who are deviants in that they violate social norms are not the same as deviants in that they are not statistically normal in their psychological makeup.

The case of childhood autism is particularly interesting because Hacking wants to maintain the indifferent kind as well as interactive kind in considering mental disorder. He says: "let us posit that there is a pathology P, no matter how it will be identified. By hypothesis the pathology P will be an indifferent kind. The neuro-geno-biochemical state P is not aware of what we find out. . . . In more traditional jargon, P would be a natural kind" (1999, 117). Hacking goes on to say that "childhood autism is (is identical to) a certain biological pathology P, and so is a 'natural' kind or an indifferent kind. At the same time, we want to say that childhood autism is an interactive kind, interacting with autistic children, evolving, and changing as the children change" (1999, 119). His ultimate position seems to embrace both natural kinds and humankinds. Here natural kinds can refer to common underlying mechanisms across historical and cultural boundaries such as genes. This point is noticeable since disorders can persist across the genera tions despite sociocultural influences. This suggests there should be some biological abnormalities whereas some of them may be partly cultural products. To reconcile a possible tension between interactive kind and indifferent kind, he appeals to "semantic resolution," drawing on the causal-historical theory of reference. Regarding autism, Hacking presents the following arguments:

a) There is probably a definite unknown neuropathology P that is the cause of the prototypical and most other examples of what we now call childhood autism;

b) The idea of childhood autism is a social construct that interacts not only with therapists and psychiatrists in their treatments, but also interacts with autistic children themselves, who find the current mode of being autistic a way for themselves to be. (1999, 121)

On this account, "autism" refers to the combination of an indifferent kind—the underlying biological pathology—with an interactive kind. This semantic resolution is intended to incorporate two different meanings of causation involved in the investigation of mental disorders: on the one hand, this causal-historical theory of meaning fixes its referent by the causal chain of successive users in a linguistic

community. On the other, Hacking's semantic resolution aims to accommodate a causal power of feedback by reference to the looping effect. If the causal-historical theory of reference is right in this context, the essence of autism would be neuropathological (1999, 121), while its connected meaning may vary in accordance with sociocultural factors. The neuropathological essence amounts to an Archimedean point.

Insofar as Hacking sharply divides indifferent kinds and interactive kinds and does not integrate them into a unified research program, it remains unclear how they can be connected. In Hacking's picture, even if terms like "autism" are supposed to refer to combinations of natural and social explanations, they seem to remain separated. For him, "some of these interactive kinds pick out genuine causal properties, biological kinds, which, like all indifferent kinds, are unaffected, as kinds, by what we know about them" (1999, 123). It is not clear how "some of these interactive kinds" can be indifferent kinds, and how these two different kinds should be demarcated. Given the fuzzy line between the natural and the social, the boundary between interactive kinds and indifferent kinds may be much more variable and malleable than Hacking supposes. Furthermore, if only biological kinds are "genuine causal properties," it is hard to know to what extent social kinds have their own causal power. If so, there seems to be a similar problem of the rigid distinction between descriptive (indifferent kinds/dysfunctional part) and normative (interactive kinds/harmful part) properties in Hacking's view. To be sure, it might be argued that Hacking's model is much more relaxed than Wakefield's proposal in acknowledging interactive kinds as the value component. But as far as Hacking wants to maintain this distinction between indifferent (value-free) kinds and interactive (value-laden), his model would amount to another version of two-tier model like Wakefield's. The issue of causation is different from that of construction, classification, or labeling.

If so, the crucial question regarding social constructionism debates is not to simply choose the causal or the descriptive account of the semantic meaning of mental illnesses. If the genuine issue is the causal interaction between neurological mechanisms and culture via the mental representations, it might not be so important to choose the proper semantic theory to investigate the issue of mental disorders.

The genuine issue is to see how culture as a causal factor shapes mental illness. The version of social constructionism as to mental illness we need, in my view, is stronger than merely a semantic one, which is concerned with idea construction. That is, a satisfactory model for mental disorder should consider the relevant causal factors, integrating biological and social factors, not just limited to the issue of reference. My basic point that culture must be considered a serious causal factor of mental disorders, rather than their mere manifestation. To make this point more vividly, I will turn to the notion of anger and disorder in anger disorder in Korea.

IV. *Hwabyeong* and Cultural Variation

In this section, I will extend my previous discussion by considering culture as a causal factor for giving rise to mental illness. Unlike depression, schizophrenia, or anxiety, which are considered to universally occur in almost every culture, CBS seem to suggest a more profound influence of culture on mental health. They also raise the difficult question of the status of mental disorder and its normativity. A vast range of anthropological literature on cultural variation raises the difficult question of how to conceive the cultural factors in considering mental disorders. An immediate question =is to decide whether the CBS should be considered a distinct category within the diagnostic classification of mental disorders. For many western observers, the CBS such as *amok*, *latah*, and *koro* may seem idiosyncratic, exotic, incomprehensible, and irrational outliers.[3] By contrast, even though Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) was seldom found outside the USA, it was not considered culture-bound. The fact that discussion of the CBS was included as a glossary in appendix I of the DSM-IV

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[3] "Well-studied examples of non-Western culture bound syndromes include amok (an episode of rage that often ends in killing, thought to be typical for the Indonesian Archipelago...), koro (a genital-shrinkage anxiety, most common in China and Southwest Asia...), and latah (a condition associated with a disordered startle response that can lead to abnormal and extreme behavior, found in southeast Asia)." See Kelly and De Block (2022).

suggests the stark dichotomy between universal categories of mental disorders and unique CBS. According to DSM-IV published in 1994, CBS are defined as "recurrent, locality-specific patterns of aberrant behavior and troubling experience that may or may not be linked to a particular DSM-IV diagnostic category" (898, as recited in Murphy 2015). While this definition assumes only the DSM categories are cross-cultural and not culture-bound, it is not clear whether any specific CBS is intrinsically and unquestionably attached to a specific ethnic or cultural group. Instead, we should be non-parochial and dynamic in considering the classification of the CBS in the broader frameworks of mental disorders. It would be deeply misleading if non-Western and non-American Psychiatric Association (APA)-sanctioned mental disorders are simply designated as the CBS. As Charles Hughes writes, "The CBSs are important not as a museum of exotic, static, bounded entities, but as illustrations of a generic way of thinking about relationships between psychopathology and cultural context" (1998, 420).

To see this point concretely, I will briefly examine the case of *hwabyeong*, a well-known culture-bound syndrome in Korea. *hwabyeong* was included in CBS when DSM-IV was published. It was thanks to several Korean psychiatrists who tried to relate the indigenous idea of *hwabyeong* to the DSM's alleged scientific classification of depressive disorder, thereby establishing it as a legitimate medical condition. As far as "hwa" 火 means anger as well as fire and "byeong" 病 disorder, *hwabyeong*'s literal meaning would be "anger disorder."[4] Hwa's twofold meaning (fire/anger) is noteworthy since *hwabyeong*'s common somatic symptoms are heat or hot sensations in the body (often as chest pressure and heart pounding).[5] Relatedly, anger-related emotional reactions may include *eogul* 抑鬱 ("feeling unfairness") or *bun* 憤 (similar to *eogul* in the feeling of unfairness but also "eruption of

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[4] *Hwabyeong* is related to "pain in the upper abdomen, fear of death, tiredness resulting from the imbalance between reality and anger" (Cuellar and Paniagua 2013, 27).

[5] Laura Silva also talks about a hot phenomenology in anger. In discussing self-anger, "subjects reported feelings of 'boiling inward' in anger and self-anger, but not in other emotions" (Silva 2022, 2). I discuss other philosophers' views on anger such as Myisha Cherry (2021) in another unpublished manuscript.

anger"). The terms "*Eogul*" and "*bun*" can be translated in various ways, including suffering unfairness, being victimized, being mistreated, being resentful, being indignant, and being sorry.[6] It is notable that it is sufficient for those who suffer *hwabyeong* to perceive something being unfair rather than the fact that they are actually a victim of such unfairness. But it should be noted that the gap between the perception of unfairness and the actual happening of unfairness is supposed to be rather exceptional than ordinary.[7] Interestingly, *hwabyeong* is likely to develop in situations such as unfair and unjust social environments or stressful relationship such as chronic familial conflicts. Patients with *hwabyeong* report that they had to "suppress or inhibit their anger, so as not to jeopardize peace in the family or harmonious social relationships or that expression of anger has been blocked" (Min 2009, 13). As a result, suppressed anger gradually accumulates and becomes extremely dense (*ul* 鬱), accompanying with various symptoms such as somatization, depression, and anxiety. Insofar as an eruption of anger is blocked, *hwabyeong* is like inactive volcano. While somatic symptoms like respiratory stuffiness seem to be related to the suppression of hwa ("anger/fire"), the coping mechanisms involve crying, sighing, random thoughts, and talkativeness (hasoyeon) (2009, 14).

In his systematic investigations, Sung Kil Min, one of the most well-known experts of *hwabyeong*, argues for the need for the indigenous research on *hwabyeong* because genuinely Korean aspects cannot be captured by cultural obstacles inherent in the WEIRD-centered psychiatric studies. He says, "it is problematic that our country's psychiatrists rely solely on theories of Western Medicine in treating our country's patients. Socio-cultural factors that cause our patients' mental illnesses are different from those of (Western) societies. (Our patients') manifestation of symptoms, ways of expressing them, and methods of treatments cannot be separated from the traditional attributes of our family, society, and culture" (Min 1986, 653).

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[6] Earlier than Min's works, Yi Si-hyeong, a popular psychiatrist and author, may be the first one who highlights disadvantaged social and cultural conditions behind *hwabyeong* in Korea (Yi 1977).

[7] I thank an anonymous reviewer for their question on this issue.

Min enumerates several culturally specific features of *hwabyeong* such as shamanism, traditional medicine, a culture of *jeong* 情 ("love," "caring," and "attachment"), collectivism, han ("one," "big," and "whole") philosophy, and fire-likeness. Among others, it would be helpful to consider culture of *han* as a unique traditional collective sentiment of Koreans. While *han*'s colloquial meanings are "'grudge,' 'rancor,' 'spite,' 'regret,' 'lamentation,' 'grief,' or 'hate,'" Min defines *han* as "a chronic mixed mood of missing, sadness, suppressed anger, feeling of unfairness ('*uk-wool* [*eogul*]' and '*boon* [*bun*]'), or 'everlasting woe'" (Min 2009, 14). Especially, *han* is an emotional reaction to a tragic national history (Korean War, Japanese colonialism, poverty, etc.) as well as a personal hardship (failed romantic relationships, handicap, chronic disease, etc.). According to Min, *han* as collective emotion is individuated and embodied in *hwabyeong* as personal illness. While "anger in haan [*han*] seems to be more suppressed, passively expressed, sublimated. . . anger in *hwa-byung* [*hwabyeong*] is partially suppressed. Haan [*han*] is a collective, stable and paradoxically somewhat positive emotional state, hwa-byung [*hwabyeong*] is a form of personal illness" (Min 2009, 15). It is notable that anger is suppressed, not just hidden. Again, what matters is external conditions wherein releasing anger is almost impossible or at least too costly and risky.

When it comes to the etiology of *hwabyeong*, Min argues that "suppression and control have been strong social codes of behavior in the traditionally familial, collective, and Confucian culture of Korea" (2009, 13).[8] In this regard, it is not accidental that *hwabyeong* is most common among older women with little formal education in the lower social class, who happen to be among the most marginalized. Because it is related to oppressive cultural norms emphasizing patriarchal authority and harmony among family at the expense of women, this syndrome is brought about by a long-term, partial, and incomplete suppression of expressing an innermost anger.

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[8] He argues that "the traditional philosophy like Confucianism has taught a way of life in which people suppress emotional reaction not to jeopardize harmonious interpersonal relationships. In this culture, Koreans have learned to express their suppressed emotion in somatized form while saving their face" (Min 2013, 56–57). Of course, this presumption of Confucian authoritarianism should be confirmed by further empirical studies.

It has been argued that *hwabyeong*'s etiology is deeply related to oppressive gender system. Consider a typical case of a 49-year-old housewife whose self-diagnosis is *hwabyeong*:

> The reason for her anger was her family situation… To keep peace in the family, the patient had to suppress her anger and hide her hatred toward her husband and mother-in-law; she obeyed her husband and his mother. . . . However, she said she did not feel depressed and had never thought about suicide. . . . She attempted to avoid being isolated from her fellow workers since she believed they might think of her as a "good" person. She revealed her painful past memory of how she had been discriminated by her mother for being a daughter. Finally, her mother's favoritism to sons and her gender discrimination did not allow the patient to complete her middle school education. (Min 2013, 55)

In short, *hwabyeong* is closely related to oppressive social environments. I will return to this point later in the next section.

V. Cross-Cultural Anger in Anger Disorder

In the previous section, I have provided a definition of *hwabyeong* as CBS. But it would be argued that anger may not be so culturally specific and distinctive, at least in the case of *hwabyeong*. Indeed, *hwabyeong* as CBS was deleted in DSM-V in 2013. More precisely, when the terminology of 25 types of CBS was explicitly replaced by nine types of "cultural concepts of disease"[9] and *hwabyeong* was not included in the latest version of DSM.

In this section, I would like to conclude by examining the concept of culture in anger disorder as a culture bound syndrome. What is a role of culture in *hwabyeong* as culture bound syndrome? As Flanagan says, note that anger is a culturally malleable and socially constructed concept, in other words, "a cultured passion, a participant in modern normative orders, governed by complex psychosocial norms that provide

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[10] For a detailed account of cultural concepts of disease, see Kaiser et al. (2019).

scripts and permissions for what appropriately triggers anger, what warrants it, and what behaviors are acceptable when angry" (2018, xii). Should we talk about cultural relativism at some levels in considering anger? For instance, "Whereas German mothers tend to meet anger of children with their own anger, Japanese mothers meet children's anger with disappointment and sadness" (Flanagan 2018, xiv)

However, it is not at all clear if *hwabyeong* is really a culturally specific, exotic, and unique mental illness. As far as the basic assumption behind CBS seems WEIRD-centric, calling *hwabyeong* culture-bound may imply that it is deeply irrational and scientifically primitive from the Euro-American perspective. But *hwabyeong* should not be seen as exotica in the museum of mental disorder. Conversely and ironically, the fact that some Koreans attempt to promote that *hwabyeong* is a uniquely Korean thing may be an internalized or reverse way of colonial thinking: "the project of defining a uniquely Korean malady reflects a desire among medical professionals to make the indigenous meaningful, thereby guaranteeing a tool for gaining circulation and foreign recognition. . . . The Korean distinction as analytical unit was favorably employed at first, only tentatively used, and then erased from the discourse" (Suh 2013, 100–101).[10] As the therapy and research on *hwabyeong* develops, *hwabyeong*'s cultural uniqueness actually gets diluted. Paradoxically, efforts to globalize *hwabyeong* end up erasing its indigenous aspects. We find a similar movement in Min's works: "Beginning with a passion to articulate the culture-bound attributes of hwa-byung [*hwabyeong*] in the early 1980s, Min ended up with a culture-neutral conceptualization of hwa-byung [*hwabyeong*] in the twenty-first century" (Suh 2013, 89).

After examining Min and others' works, Soyoung Suh concludes, "what medical research about hwa-byung [*hwabyeong*] tells us is that there are no essentially Korean features of the mental disorder. Rather, medical professionals' reports on Koreanness illustrate the process through which a biography of the local has emerged and been

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[10] "Uniquely Korean narratives are inclined toward audiences in the outer world. In retrospect, Min confessed that [*hwabyeong*] was welcomed more by international audiences than by domestic listeners" (Suh 2013, 88).

modified, disclosing its (dis)juncture with global trends" (Suh 2013, 95–96). While largely agreeing with her view, I am not denying the existence of *hwabyeong* once and for all. Even if *hwabyeong* is only found in Korea, this fact would not mean that it is a faked illusion. Insofar as it has relevant physiological mechanisms, *hwabyeong* can be considered a genuine mental disorder.[11] That is, it may involve some innate and universal machinery that produces anxiety and anger, which is embedded in a range of different cultures' norms. In other words, *hwabyeong* as anger disorder can be universal given the universality of cultural factors for it.

In a similar vein, it may be plausible to think that *hwabyeong* is a variant of an existing universally occurring disorder, rather than a culturally distinct disorder, as far as *hwabyeong* can occur wherever similar cultural pressures of suppressing anger. In this way, ironically, a phrase made famous in the 1990s in South Korea, "what is most Korean is most global" is actualized.[12] I think *hwabyeong* may be universal if it refers to certain culturally specific idioms of distress. Indeed, there are similar descriptions and reports of *hwabyeong* as anger disorder such as irritability, aggressive disorder, dysfunctional anger, and anger attack elsewhere in the world (Min 2009, 19).[13] If so, it is very dubitable that *hwabyeong* is really a culturally bounded syndrome to the extent that it results from "the imbalance between reality and anger," which is in some sense pervasive in human life. As Lorde says in a different context, it is notable that "*every* woman has a well-stocked arsenal of anger potentially useful against those oppressions . . . which brought that anger into being" (1984, 127, my emphasis). If she is right about the quantifier ("every"), there may be not so culturally specific things about women's anger.

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[11] Using fMRI, "the effect of anger suppression resulted in an aberrant function of the brain regions related to the visual pathways. Moreover, this functional impairment in the anterior cingulate cortex may contribute to the pathophysiology of hwa-byung [*hwa-byeong*]" (Min 2013, 54).

[12] In this vein, Suh says, "different avenues of Korean discourse on *han* share a twofold desire to situate *han* in a specific time and place while simultaneously universalizing it. Han needs to be articulated through Korean's own history" (Suh 2013, 88).

[13] Among CBS, *ataques de nervious, susto, dhat* syndrome seem to have similar symptoms of anger disorder.

Min and others point out that the collective emotion of *han* is deeply related to the causal mechanism of *hwabyeong*. It is assumed that *han* as the collective emotion is alive and well today. However, it is not clear if *han* has been actually and successfully transmitted from generation to generation in Korea. When talking about *hwabyeong* as CBS, *han* seems to suggest a sort of Korean exceptionalism of inherent and permanent sadness. Minsoo Kang, a professor of history, shows that the notion of *han* is deeply questionable given its troubling origin and meanings: "the idea itself has roots in the Japanese imperial ideology that was used to justify the subjugation and exploitation of Koreans during the colonial era. . . . The idea has its roots in Western theories of racial essentialism that the Japanese adopted, adjusted, and then utilized for their own purpose" (Kang 2022). On this view, the idea of *han* along with Koreans' inherent backwardness and essential sadness were simply constructed in the modern era for the sake of colonialism and racism. In turn, after the national liberation, this essentialist notion of *han* was ironically utilized by Korean (ethno-) nationalists who see *han* as admirable inner strength, considering it to be the absolutely unique thing to Koreans (Kang 2022). In Korean cultural psychiatry, there were some explicit campaigns that try to promote *hwabyeong* as a uniquely Korean disease since 1980s. These efforts significantly contributed to *hwabyeong*'s registration in DSM-IV.

In this regard, there seems to be a colonial origin in conceiving *han* as *hwabyeong*'s pivotal emotional part. Further, the colonial aspects of the idea of *han* are not just imperialist but also sexist. This is because the colonial subjects are

> consistently feminized as weak, irrational, primitive, childlike and unintelligent, needing the strong and rational rule of their masculine imperial masters. Once the Japanese who espoused the idea left the peninsula and Koreans adopted the notion that their people were defined by *han*, the concept was literally feminized through the idea that women were the exemplary carriers. This was expressed in the aesthetization of women's sorrow. (Kang 2022)

Here we find a sort of double gendering in the case of *han*. That is, if Koreans are inherently feminine, then Korean women are feminine par

excellence. While women are lauded due to their passivity and docility, they are naturally to be punished and disparaged when they try to assert themselves.[14]

According to Kang, however, this kind of praising women's sub-ordination is inappropriate in today's South Korea given that women have better opportunities and access to education and work. Surely, one might argue that gender discrimination is not the only factor in *hwabyeong* because uneducated and poor men can have *hwabyeong* too. However, the social progress such as economic growth and democratization is not just limited to the domain of gender:

> The idea of *han* has undergone a significant decline in cultural importance in South Korea itself since the late 1990s, now to the point of irrelevance. With the achievement of prosperity and democracy, the notion of an essential character defined by a profound sorrow from trauma and unrealized potential no longer seems appropriate. (Kang 2022)

Therefore, it would be a mistake to use the retrospective idea of *han* to define the culture of contemporary Koreans. Just as we cannot rea-sonably stick to the broad stroke notion of "Western individualism" to understand the people in the US, *han* as a sort of Koreanness may be too generic to explain the uniquely Korean culture, if any. As Kang convincingly argues, "intense emotionality is hardly unique to Korean narratives, and the notion of a specific kind of sorrow/regret/frustration/rage that only Koreans can feel is absurd" (Kang 2022).

Along with *han*, it is argued that collectivism in Korean culture is another important factor in the etiology of *hwabyeong*.[15] According to Min, the importance of "we" relationships is expressed in the Korean culture of harmonious, family-oriented, interdependent collectivism. In this "we" culture, one tries to control oneself to not be aggressive to

[14] In this respect, it is notable that Kang says that "as a feminist scholar once told me, 'For feminism in Korea to thrive, *han* must die.'" (Kang 2022). It seems to me that *han* is largely dying out.
[15] Interestingly enough, there is an expression of "our" wife instead of "my" wife in Korean language.

others. Suppression and endurance are virtues. Hwabyung [*hwabyeong*] seems to be the result of an effort by a victim not to jeopardize a "we" relationship with others. Therefore, it is natural that hwabyung [*hwabyeong*] frequently develops under the pressure of a socially relatedness like marriage (between wife and husband or mother-in-law) rather than blood-related family (Min 2009, 17). Similarly, he writes about a Confucian root of the patriarchal authoritarianism:

> Traditional philosophies including Confucianism and the traditional patriarchal authoritative culture have supported the development of unique familial collectivism in Korea. In this culture, fathers, teachers, and kings are identified to be in the same authority [*gunsabu ilche* 君師父一體]. People have been taught to suppress anger and not to jeopardize social or familial harmony with those authority figures, engendering a suppression of anger. These traditional cultures have also been supportive in the development of gender discrimination and social class-related oppression, which has contributed to the social un-fairness for women and lower-class people in their sociopolitical life. (Min 2013, 57)

Even though it is said that the idea of *gunsabu ilche* was predominantly applied to educated men, it can be arguably seen as a patriarchal em-bodiment of the traditional familial collectivism. Furthermore, it might be argued that there are other patriarchal elements in Confucianism. For instance, to name a few, the idea of patrilineage, female infanticide, wifely fidelity, and concubinage seem to constitute Confucian misogyny. If it is the case that Confucianism is deeply implicated with patriarchial social norms, Korean culture may be causally relevant to the etiology of *hwabyeong*. Although it is debatable if this diagnosis of Korean culture and Confucianism as its essence is entirely plausible, it seems that those traditional philosophies are losing their overall influences.[16] Instead,

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[16] Another way to deal with this issue would be conceiving critical Confucianism. An anonymous reviewer urges me to discuss how the aspects of Confucian thought and culture contribute to *hwabyeong*. Note that this paper does not exactly concern the relation between Confucianism and *hwabyeong*. Here Confucianism is only discussed as part of broader Korean collectivist culture. In other words, abolishing Confucian culture would not be sufficient to expel harmfully collectivist culture. Although the relationship

I would like to suggest that in today's multicultural settings it gets harder to do cultural psychology of *hwabyeong*'s unique Koreanness. Rather, even if it is the case that social codes such as suppression and control in "the traditionally familial, collective, and Confucian culture of Korea" (Min 2009, 13) were a main causal factor of generating the social conditions for *hwabyeong*, they have been significantly weakened. Arguably, traditional forms of *han* are considerably overcome by educational fever, rapid economic growths, and achieving democratic and egalitarian culture and ensuring human rights to certain degree.[17] Along with globalization and multicultural interaction through the media and migration, deep structural transformations in family, civil society, and the state have produced more individualist culture. Further, various gender asymmetry and inequality have been challenged as well. For instance, despite backlashes, recent feminist movements like #MeToo have been very influential in younger generation in South Korea. For many younger generations, suppressing anger is not the only viable option like older generations. In this respect, talking about *hwabyeong* seems anachronic to some degree.

Surely, on the flip side, fierce competition and fast economic development can be another problematic source for anger, alienation, and extreme stress. In this respect, one may question whether there is an established sense of social progress. For it is hard to deny that today's people are angry in most of times. While it is certainly a bad thing that we live in an age of anger, my point is that suppressing anger may be worse. In fact, it could be that releasing anger may be nothing more than the sufferer of anger venting out their anger. We may evaluate whether releasing anger is more fitting or not if the unfair event is redressed. My point is that proper ways of releasing anger can be healthy and politically useful. Given these considerations, the fact of

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between Confucianism and *hwabyeong* is not my main focus, it should be added that if Confucianism is not compatible with the contemporary forms of life in the wake of neo social movements, its viability would be seriously weakened. This needs another occasion for discussion. Finally, I should note that there are trends in Confucian feminism. For a survey, see Rosenlee (2006).

[17] On top of that, people become less reliant on traditional and religious treatments of *hwabyeong* like Christian faith healing or shaman rituals (*gut* 굿).

social progress in culture shows that what makes CBS CBS is historical. CBS should not be seen as static and unchanging entities. Therefore, it is worth recalling that one of Ian Hacking's points in the earlier section is that the socially constructed category of mental illness suggests its changeability, historicity, and instability (Hacking 1999, 6). If this is the case, we should be cautious not to prematurely reify the current categories of mental disorders.

Therefore, "we should avoid the assumption that the Western variants of disorders are somehow 'purer' and 'less culture-bound' than those that occur in other cultures" (Cooper 2010, 329). While maintaining that mental disorder is naturalistic, the closer attention to culture may elucidate the need to address social and cultural injustice or discriminatory treatment. That is, diverse ways to change oppressive culture through social movement can be correlated to the change of the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorder. In the case of *hwabyeong*, understanding and changing gender oppression and patriarchic culture is crucial to diagnose and remedy it.

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Unveiling the True Nature of Confucian Humility in the Modern Context
- A Methodological Proposal for Interdisciplinary Research Combining Cultural Psychology and East Asian Philosophy-

Doil Kim*

Abstract

Confucian humility (*qian xun* 謙遜) is a deeply rooted virtue in East Asian traditions and widely practiced among modern East Asians. Despite its significance, our modern understanding of it remains imperfect, partly due to a prevailing misunderstanding of its true nature under the label of "modesty-bias." This bias is often cited as a representative trait of East Asian collectivism in social or cultural psychology, leading to a narrow focus on attitudes and behaviors associated with it, with little attention to whether it accurately reflects the historical roots of Confucian humility. This paper aims to highlight the notable differences between attitudes or behaviors related to modesty-bias and traditional Confucian humility, arguing that failing to make this distinction poses a significant obstacle to understanding Confucian humility as a virtue and its contemporary expression. Methodological suggestions are provided on how to conduct interdisciplinary research on Confucian humility, emphasizing the need to recognize and address the prejudice associated with modesty-bias. Such an interdisciplinary approach can also help discern modern attitudes or behaviors rooted in Confucian humility and shed new light on the continuing relevance of this traditional virtue in contemporary East Asian society.

Keywords: Confucian humility, modesty-bias, collectivism, individualism

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I. Introduction

Humility (or modesty) is a highly esteemed virtue in contemporary East Asian cultures, especially among Koreans who consider it a crucial aspect of excellent character.[1] However, some view it as a symbol of oppression, particularly towards women and individuals of lower status. This conflicting understanding underscores the complexities involved in comprehending humility as a vital virtue. Essential to grasping this virtuosity is a proper understanding of its historical roots. Nevertheless, it is no easy task to comprehend elements of the tradition that are still alive in the experience of contemporary East Asians.

One of the main difficulties is the possibility that modern people's understanding of attitudes or behaviors related to humility (or modesty) is distorted by prejudices. This paper highlights "modesty-bias," which has been the subject of recent research in social and cultural psychology, as a potential source of such prejudices. Modesty-bias is posited as a characteristic of collectivist cultures in East Asia that contrasts with the "self-serving bias" of individualist Western cultures. This paper calls into question whether modesty-bias accurately accounts for its historical roots and depicts the entirety of the contemporary East Asian experience. More specifically, this paper argues, first, that the attitudes or behaviors associated with modesty-bias, although widely used to comprehend modern East Asians, are actually unrelated to Confucian humility embedded in the East Asian tradition. Second, this paper contends that there is a significant likelihood that modesty-bias fails to fully reflect modern East Asian behavior due to its unsound conceptual basis, as it relies on an excessively stark dichotomy between the East and the West.

As such, the primary objective of this paper is to disentangle modesty-bias *not only* from Confucian humility, the bedrock of East Asian humility (or modesty), *but also* from the entirety of contemporary East Asian humility-related attitudes and behaviors. Why is this

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[1] Note that in this paper, I will not dwell too much on the difference between humility and modesty.

endeavor significant? It is because many individuals nowadays tend to conflate attitudes and behaviors related to modesty-bias with the latter two. In this regard, the aforesaid disentanglement functions as a methodology to investigate tradition and the present in a clearer light. Scholars delving into traditional concepts are prone to distorting them through the prism of their own experiences and intuition, which are heavily influenced by contemporary concepts and frameworks of their time. Therefore, it is vital to ensure that modern researchers' experiences and intuition do not impede the study of the past.[2] Furthermore, the aforementioned disentanglement permits a more lucid understanding of modern individuals' experiences and behaviors, as well as the inherited elements of contemporary experiences from tradition. To sum up, by distinguishing between what pertains to the past and present, we can avoid distorting the notion of tradition and gain a better grasp of its impact on modern experiences.

First, Section II provides an overview of Confucian humility's historical roots. Sections III and IV critically review recent discussions of modesty-bias, arguing that it may not accurately reflect the entirety of modern East Asian attitudes or behaviors. Section V addresses whether modesty-bias and Confucian humility are aligned and concludes they are unrelated. Section VI emphasizes the importance of an interdisciplinary study of East Asian philosophy and psychology to gain a deeper understanding of contemporary Korean experiences of humility and its historical roots. In this final section, two psychological studies conducted by the author are introduced to demonstrate that interpreting Korean humility solely through the lens of modesty-bias may result in confirmation bias and perpetuate incorrect preconceptions about modern Koreans.

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[2] The problem of distortion arises because the philosopher's experience may not be transcendental, nor may it transcend cultures. See Nichols (2004). This paper argues that the analytic philosophical work of characterizing various folk concepts in our daily lives based on the philosopher's intuition is being challenged by psychological discoveries including cross-cultural empirical data.

II. The Reconstructed Concept of Confucian Humility

In this section, a concise overview of the author's previous research on *qian xun* 謙遜, Confucian humility, is provided. Previously, the examination of (1) the original form of Confucian humility in early Chinese thought, and (2) the conceptual development of Confucian humility in medieval times was conducted (Kim 2020; Kim forthcoming). Through these studies, the development of relevant original ideas scattered throughout early Chinese texts and how they were developed by Neo-Confucians in a way that relates them more coherently to the core values of the Confucian system of thought were traced. These core values include harmony (*he* 和), broad-mindedness, righteousness (*yi* 義), the attitude of letting go in the pursuit of one's goal, and no-self (*wu wo* 無我).

The original version of Confucian humility in ancient China is known as *qian* 謙, and its important characteristics are well captured by the medieval Confucian Zhu Xi's expression: "lowering oneself and respecting others."[3] This phrase originates in the early Chinese text *Liji* 禮記 (Book of Rites) and is still adopted in many modern Korean and Chinese dictionaries. This definition of *qian* reflects its key features: it is a relational virtue required in social interactions, guiding individuals to respect others in a unique way that involves lowering oneself relative to the other person. This unique way of respecting others involves a certain manner of attentional shift, namely shifting one's focus from oneself to the other.

In the author's previous work, the attentional shift is elaborated by defining a *qian* person as someone who does not cast themselves in a better light than the other person and, instead, treats the other as better by highlighting some aspect of the other. Thus understood, Confucian humility has two aspects: inwardly, it guides one not to highlight one's own achievements, merits or self-worth, and to be wary of being viewed as the better person relative to the other in interaction; Outwardly, it guides one to focus on the other person's achievements or strengths, thereby treating and casting the other as better.

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3 "謙者, 自卑而尊人." See Zhu Xi's *Zhouyi benyi* 周易本義 (vol. 8, 7).

For example, *qian* was adopted in an interaction between a minister with excellent political ability and a relatively incompetent feudal lord with higher social status in the pre-modern hierarchical system. For a feudal lord to run his country well, it was essential to select and employ someone with the most outstanding capacity. To avoid losing such talents to other countries and being defeated by powerful neighboring countries during the Warring States Period, it was always necessary to maintain good human relationships. Thus, a feudal lord should not be arrogant and should interact with competent subjects by focusing on their capacities rather than their lower social status. On the other hand, a talented person should not be arrogant, even if better in terms of political competence, and should always behave in a way that shows respect to the feudal lord in higher social status.

This display of mutual respect remains useful even in modern society, in which social hierarchy no longer works as it previously did. This manner of respecting each other in interactions can still be practiced in consideration of what can be called the "comparative effect," which can emerge in terms of different strengths and varied characteristics through which one can gain higher self-worth, even in the modern context.

The inward and outward aspects are further developed by Neo-Confucians in medieval times. They introduced new ideas such as "*you er buju*" 有而不居 ("having something without dwelling in it") and "*roushun*" 柔順 ("being gently adaptive") to solidify the concept of humility within the Confucian system of thought.[4] A detailed explanation of this development is omitted in this section, but it needs to be emphasized tshat the characteristics of the original form in early China are reinforced through the two ideas just mentioned. This conceptual enhancement of the medieval form can be summarized as follows: Confucian humility goes beyond one of the features of its original form, one's not highlighting one's own merits, achievements,

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[4] For instance, Zhu Xi defines *qian* in terms of the meaning of *you er buju*. "謙者, 有而不居之義." See his *Zhouyi benyi* 周易本義 (vol.1, 15). On the other, *qian* is sometimes understood in connection with *roushun*. See the following commentaries on *Zhouyi* by another Neo-Confucian thinker, Cheng Yichuan 程伊川: "以柔順處謙, 又居一卦之下, 爲自處卑下之至, 謙而又謙也. 故曰謙謙." See his *Yichuan yizhuan* 伊川易傳 (vol. 2, 3).

or relatively high social status, in that it further involves not giving any thought to those aspects of one's own. Moreover, it also goes beyond another feature of its earlier form, one's respecting the other person in interactions by paying attention to what makes the other the better person, as it further aims to embrace other people and achieve *he* 和 ("harmony") in relationships with them while pursuing core Confucian values such as *yi* 義 ("righteousness") or *li* 禮 ("the Confucian formal rules of conduct") in a timely manner (*shi* 時).

By examining the aforementioned cluster of ideas, we can gain a deeper understanding of the function of Confucian humility and its normative traits. In particular, for now, we need to pay special attention to the connection between Confucian humility and *yi*, which has been evident since long before Zhu Xi's time. For instance, in the Tai Bo 泰伯 chapter of *Lunyu* 論語 (The Analects), Yan Hui, Confucius's best disciple, is described using various expressions, including one very similar to *you er buju*, called *you ruo wu* 有若無 ("having, as though he had not").[5] Based on these attitudes and behaviors, he was already considered a humble person (*qian*) in the Confucian sense.[6] According to Zhu Xi, Yan Hui was able to cultivate this kind of attitude and behavior because his mind was focused solely on the boundless core values of Confucianism, such as *yi*.[7]

One significant implication of the connection between Confucian humility and *yi* is that it sheds light on the normative character pursued through Confucian humility. It can be interpreted as a unique way of achieving *yi*. In Confucian texts, *yi* 義 ("righteousness") carries the connotation of appropriateness (*yi* 宜), which means that each being acquires its proper position through appropriate distribution based on social distinctions (*ge de qi yi* 各得其宜). Therefore, Confucian humility is believed to help achieve an ideal state in which every individual occupies their appropriate social position and receives their due.

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[5] "以能問於不能, 以多問於寡, 有若無, 實若虛, 犯而不校." See Zhu Xi's *Lunyu jizhu* 論語集注 (vol. 4, 12).

[6] "此章稱顏淵之德行也. . . . 言其好學持謙, 見侵犯而不報也." See Xing Bing's *Lunyu zhushu* 論語注疏 (vol. 8, 5).

[7] "顏子之心, 惟知義理之無窮, 不見物我之有間." See Zhu Xi's *Lunyu jizhu* 論語集注 (vol. 4, 12).

From what we have discussed so far, two key characteristics of traditional humility stand out. Firstly, it involves an attitude of respect for others by focusing on their strengths through a shift in attention. Second, this respect ultimately seeks an ideal state where all people, including oneself, are treated properly.

III. Two Individualistic Forms of Modesty-Bias: A Link to Cultural Dissonance?

The contrast between collectivism and individualism has been a fundamental conceptual framework in comparative studies of Eastern and Western cultures since the 1980s (Markus and Kitayama 1991; Cho 1996). "Modesty-bias" has been proposed as a representative feature of collectivism. This bias is associated with different levels, such as self-view, motivation, and attribution. In individualist cultures, the dominant self-construal pattern is independent, while the interdependent self is typical of collectivist cultures. This difference in self-view leads to variations in motives, with individualists valuing high self-esteem and collectivists prioritizing group harmony over self-desires. Accordingly, individualists tend to attribute their success to their own abilities, while collectivists are inclined to credit external factors such as luck or other people's help. Cultural psychology has accumulated considerable empirical findings in this field over the last decade, which shed light on contemporary East Asians to a considerable extent, albeit with questions about their legitimacy.

It is worth noting that many scholars in the field have pointed out that the definition of "collective" can vary.[8] It is divided into two types: the first focuses on the group as a whole, with modesty-bias explained as a mode of sacrificing individual needs for the greater good of the group. The second form of collectivism emphasizes interpersonal rela-

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[8] Many scholars in cultural psychology have pointed out that the conceptual framework of collectivism and individualism alone cannot fully capture different variations of collectivism. For this reason, such distinctions between vertical and horizontal collectivism or hierarchical and relational collectivism have been adopted in the literature. For a related discussion, see Brewer and Chen (2007, 135).

tionships, where modesty-bias is based on the desire to elevate others while prioritizing the relationship over individuals.

Irrespective of how we define the "collective," we can comprehend modesty-bias in four different ways based on its relationship with positive self-regard. The first type is *a semi-individualistic perspective* on modesty-bias: In this approach, a modest person, similar to an individualist, is fundamentally motivated to attain high self-esteem and has a self-enhancing bias. He has inherent inclinations to pursue his own desires and successes, and to evaluate himself highly. However, these tendencies are restrained by modesty-bias under social pressure, which demands relinquishing self-needs for the sake of group needs (Kurman 2003, 501). Moreover, to preserve "social face," a person may become modest.[9] For him, how others evaluate him is important, and he has a concern for receiving positive evaluations. This type of person has a possible conflict between the collectivist self that seeks to maintain social face and the repressed individualistic self.[10]

The second type is *an individualistic perspective* of modesty-bias: This type of person practices modest behavior to ultimately manage his high individualist self-esteem. For instance, he sacrifices his needs in favor of the group not because of other-regarding considerations, but because doing so earns his positive self-regard, such as a positive feeling about himself in being the kind of person he wants to be (Kim 2001). This type of person may be too self-centered, if not selfish. Thus, this modesty-bias is ultimately self-serving. For this type of person, maintaining social face may be a way to increase self-esteem by gaining social recognition. In this sense, modesty is a kind of social impression management strategy.

The topic of modesty-bias has been widely explored in the field, with many scholars relying on the aforementioned two individualistic perspectives to explain it. As I see it, however, these perspectives are

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[9] For a summary of the related discussions, see Heine et al. (1999, 787).

[10] There are quite many studies that assume that such an internal conflict is a characteristic of East Asians in relation to a need for face. Yang Kuo-shu one of the forerunners of Chinese modern cultural and indigenous psychology, presented this kind of understanding earlier on. Yang describes the conflict as that between "public self" and "private self." See Yang (2004, ch. 3).

utilized primarily to grapple with the challenge of reconciling the self-deprecating nature of modesty-bias with the individualistic framework, which posits that the preservation of one's self-esteem is a fundamental human derive.

The aforementioned stances ostensibly align with individualistic construals of collectivist tendencies. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen how effective such an explication truly is in characterizing contemporary East Asians. In the interim, extant empirical evidence could shed light on its explanatory efficacy. Be that as it may, we must bear in mind that the depictions of East Asians above may imply a troublingly constrained or flawed psychological disposition. Specifically, under the individualistic rubric, they are either beset by cultural dissonance in terms of internal and external cultural values, or engage in modesty just as a disingenuous ploy to project a favorable image of themselves. Given these unflattering representations of East Asians, we must pause and contemplate whether they indeed comprise the most perspicacious explanatory possibilities at our disposal. What we can say with conviction, however, is that if we only comprehend modern views and comportments concerning modesty (or humility) in the aforementioned ways, it ceases to be a virtue. At the very least, we must further scrutinize whether modesty (or humility) can differently be formulated as a virtue in the contemporary milieu, particularly in its nexus with tradition.

IV. Two Collectivistic Forms of Modesty-Bias:
A Potential Source of Confirmation Bias?

Given the last remarks in the foregoing section, it is needed to examine other perspectives that construe modesty-bias consistently through a collectivist lens. The third type is *a semi-collectivist perspective* on modesty-bias: Individuals of this kind possess an underlying drive to uphold their positive self-regard, albeit one that diverges from individualistic self-esteem. Their positive self-perceptions stem from prioritizing the collective's needs over their own, advancing the goals of others, or evincing other-centered emotions like empathy (Markus and

Kitayama 1991, 242). We may refer to this type of positive self-regard as "relationship-esteem" or collectivist self-regard.[11]

The fourth and final type is a *robust collectivist perspective* of modesty-bias. For these individuals, modesty is not conceptualized in relation to self-esteem or any type of affirmative self-perception. For this sort of person, the pursuit of self-esteem is not their primary motivation. They align themselves with group interests by subordinating their own needs, or they act out of emotions that elevate others over themselves. They do so not because it is an effective way to preserve positive self-regard, but because they wholeheartedly embrace collectivist values and embody a collectivist perspective that aligns with those values.[12]

The modesty-bias construed in these two perspectives does not cast East Asians as individuals with an inner discordant self-image, at the very least, in contrast to the two individualistic construals of collectivism discussed in the previous section. Nonetheless, it behooves us to scrutinize if there are any other issues inherent in grasping the attributes of East Asians through these collectivist perspectives.

In cultural psychology, scholars have made noteworthy attempts to understand East Asians from a robust collectivist perspective. One prominent proposal suggests that East Asians affirm themselves through *self-criticism*, rather than self-enhancement, which is common among individualistic cultures. Unlike the latter, self-criticism among East Asians is not aimed at boosting self-esteem, but rather at self-improvement. Empirical data confirms that the Japanese tend to view themselves as incomplete, and thus believe that they must work hard to better themselves. In contrast, North Americans tend to rely on their past successes to enhance their self-confidence and self-esteem, which is typical of individualistic cultures.[13]

Another defining characteristic of collectivist cultures is *self-deprecation*, which is often considered representative behavior or attitude of

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[11] See Heine et al. (1999, 786).

[12] Some cultural psychologists already pointed out that the motive for maintaining high individualist self-esteem cannot be universal, for it can be based on a North American individualized view of self and therefore culturally specific. See Heine et al. (1999, 785).

[13] As to a broad range of related works, see Heine et al. (1999, 770).

modern East Asians. It is also the polar opposite of self-enhancement, as it involves thinking of oneself as below average or worse than others perceive. It is widely regarded as a key component of modesty-bias (Markus and Kitayama 1991, 242). This tendency towards self-deprecation is also manifested in interpersonal interactions, where individuals may downplay their achievements or act foolishly to avoid making others feel envious or uncomfortable.[14] These attitudes and behaviors are often viewed as false modesty or impression management tactics in social settings, rather than virtues of modesty. Nevertheless, many scholars identify self-deprecation, namely the tendency to think less of oneself, as a crucial aspect of modesty-bias.

It is worth delving into the possibility that the prevailing under-standing of East Asians as possessing self-critical and self-deprecating tendencies could be contributing to "confirmation bias." As is widely known, this bias refers to the tendency to search for and interpret information in a manner that reinforces one's preconceived beliefs or hypotheses, resulting in a distorted perception of reality that reinforces the original prejudice. For example, individuals who hold negative stereotypes about specific groups may selectively recall information that corroborates those stereotypes while dismissing contradictory evidence. While it may be difficult to completely deny that many Japanese indi-viduals tend to be more self-critical than North Americans, given the substantial body of research supporting this contrast, it is possible that the accumulation of such empirical data merely perpetuates a flawed premise. Furthermore, there seems to be a dearth of reflection on the fundamental assumptions that underlie the validity of modesty-bias as a lens for understanding East Asians.

From this perspective, it is possible to argue that modesty-bias, which encompasses both self-criticism and self-deprecation, is rooted in an excessive binary between the East and the West. The portrayal of modesty-bias as a hallmark of East Asian culture could be due to the stark opposition with the individualistic trait of self-enhancement.

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[14] See Chen, Bond, and Chan (2009, 604). In the following papers, self-depreciation is described as modest: Exline and Lobel (1999); Gibson and Sachau (2000); Roberts and Levine (2021).

In other words, from the outset, the reason why self-criticism or self-deprecation is associated with East Asians is that the East represents everything non-Western that possesses a strong inclination towards self-enhancement. If that is the case, modesty-bias may be a consequence of a misguiding dichotomy between the East and the West.

As a matter of fact, the dichotomy between East and West has been a longstanding subject of critique in the field of psychology. Cultural psychology scholars initially explored the contrast between collectivism and individualism at the level of different countries, with a particular focus on Japan and the United States. However, recent scholarship has raised concerns regarding the validity of such a binary contrast on a national level. Studies have demonstrated that cultural values differ even within the same country, and that the degree of collectivism and individualism varies across East Asian nations (Jeong and Han 2015; Chang 2010).

More recently, scholars have taken a step further, proposing that cultural aspects can coexist within an individual, not only at the societal or national level. These latest studies suggest that a person's cultural tendencies may be adaptable and context-dependent, meaning they can exhibit either collectivist or individualist characteristics depending on the situation (Oyserman and Lee 2008; Oyserman 2016; Singelis 1994; Choi and Lee 2019). Given these findings, the dichotomy between East and West, as well as broader issues of cultural differences, should be approached with caution. As scholars continue to investigate the complexities of social and cultural psychology, a more nuanced understanding of the cultural dimensions of the human experience is gradually emerging.

Despite the recent skepticism surrounding the dichotomy, I contend that the issue of confirmation bias persists. This is because the understanding of modesty-bias itself has not evolved in recent studies. Even if we acknowledge that the distinction between collectivism and individualism can be blended within an individual, the fundamental understanding that modesty-bias is a bias in collectivism, encompassing the tendencies of self-criticism and self-deprecation, remains unchanged. In other words, modesty-bias is still predominantly perceived as the opposite of the West, perpetuating a dichotomy

that reinforces the concept at an individual level. This concept, as a byproduct of excessive dichotomy, remains stagnant.

The real problem arises when we apply this concept to traditional humility. Through the lens of this modern construct, there is a significant risk of distorting traditional humility through the East-West dichotomy. This issue will be addressed in the following section, as it represents the most pressing concern that this paper aims to highlight.

V. Uncovering the Inconsistency between Confucian Humility and Modesty-Bias

The question we must now grapple with is whether modesty-bias and Confucian humility are aligned. Yet, this inquiry is partly contingent on our interpretation of the latter. As presented in Section II, my understanding of Confucian humility may appear to lean towards the robust collectivist perspective on modesty-bias elucidated in Section IV, which disregards any notion of positive self-regard, especially, self-esteem. This is because the key tenet of Confucian humility is to focus on others while neglecting oneself, which is not congruent with a desire to maintain positive self-esteem. Of course, we can acknowledge that practicing Confucian humility may have a secondary effect of boosting self-esteem. However, this increase is not the primary motivation or justification for the practice. In fact, ancient and medieval Confucian thinkers did not consider self-esteem as a primary goal of Confucian humility, as there is no textual evidence to suggest so. Thus, it is challenging to establish a direct link between the practice of Confucian humility and enhancing self-esteem, as assumed by the two individualist perspectives on modesty-bias outlined in Section III.

That being said, it is worth considering if it is not completely implausible to examine Confucian humility through the semi-collectivist perspective on modesty-bias that accounts not for self-esteem but for a different kind of positive feeling or esteem, such as relationship-esteem, as explained in Section IV. At this point, it is important to distinguish relationship-esteem from self-esteem in a more detailed manner. Self-esteem is elevated by an individual's overall evaluation

of their worth based on their abilities, accomplishments, or personal qualities. Conversely, relationship-esteem is cultivated through an individual's appraisal of their value within the context of their relationships. It is augmented by their capacity to form and maintain healthy relationships, their perception of themselves as desirable partners, and their communication skills. Thus, while self-esteem is focused on an individual's evaluation of themselves as an independent entity, relationship-esteem takes into consideration their assessment of themselves in relation to others.

Thus understood, relationship-esteem aligns more closely with the basic orientation of Confucian humility, as it focuses on relationships rather than the individual. Even so, it is important to note that relationship-esteem is still about oneself. Therefore, it is doubtful whether such a positive evaluation of oneself is the basis or fundamental motive of Confucian humility. In fact, there is no textual evidence to support the claim that Confucian humility involves any form of positive self-evaluation, regardless of whether it is focused on the individual or the individual in the context of relationships.

Nevertheless, my ultimate intention is not to posit that the robust collectivist perspective on modesty-bias corresponds with Confucian humility. Rather, I would like to argue for the converse—that the aforesaid two robust collectivist tendencies, self-criticism and self-deprecation, have nothing to do with Confucian humility.

First, while the self-critical orientation may account for certain aspects of modern East Asian conduct, it is erroneous to conflate it with Confucian humility. Although the Confucian tradition stresses self-cultivation, this does not necessarily translate into a critical view of oneself. Instead, Confucian humility involves de-emphasizing oneself to demonstrate respect for others and evincing little direct concern for one's achievements, virtues, or abilities. This shift of attention away from oneself to others does not entail a self-critical focus, which is still directed inward.

Second, self-deprecation linked to modesty-bias is likely to be an irrational underestimation of oneself, as it involves considering one-self inferior to the average regardless of objective evaluation or facts, or evaluating oneself lower than how others see. This form of self-

deprecation does not align with Confucian humility, which instead endeavors to ensure that all individuals are assessed appropriately. As previously explained, Confucian humility is a path to pursuing *yi*, or Confucian righteousness, which rests on the belief that one's position and evaluation can be suitably determined in an environment where everyone is accurately evaluated. Therefore, pursuing righteousness is ultimately incongruous with any type of irrational self-underestimation.

In conclusion, whether modesty-bias is interpreted from an individualist or a collectivist perspective, it remains inconsistent with Confucian humility. As previously noted, this suggests that if modern readers construe traditional humility (or modesty) through entirely different lenses, such as those associated with modesty-bias, without sufficiently considering their compatibility, this construal can lead to the misrepresentation of traditional thought.

With that being said, the current matter goes beyond simply distinguishing modesty-bias from Confucian humility. Moreover, it would not suffice to argue that modesty-bias belongs to the present while Confucian humility belongs to the past, and thus they are merely distinct. As discussed in Section IV, even the notion of modesty-bias being a comprehensive explanation for modern East Asian behavior is highly questionable.

VI. Uncovering the Hodgepodge of Traditional and Modern Elements

It is now evident that modesty-bias falls short of capturing the full essence of traditional Confucian humility and may not accurately represent modern East Asian attitudes and behaviors towards humility. So, how can we gain a more profound understanding of these traditional and contemporary attitudes and behaviors? To answer this question, we must delve into the lay theory, or folk psychology, that modern East Asians use to comprehend themselves and others in everyday life. Although lay theory is different from scientific theory, it still serves as a cornerstone of social cognition. We must recognize that modesty-bias may only capture a fraction of modern East Asians' lay theory about

humility, suggesting that some critical aspects of their experience might have been overlooked in psychological research. It is therefore possible to form a biased view of East Asians if we rely solely on the lens of modesty-bias.

Modern East Asians' lay theory on humility comprises various elements from different sources. For example, in the case of modern Koreans' humble (or modest) behavior and psychological state, a mixture of elements from Confucian humility and modesty-bias concepts may be present. To avoid perpetuating prejudiced research, we must acknowledge this hodgepodge of traditional and modern elements in East Asians' experiences. Thus, the study of behaviors and psychological states rooted in tradition, such as humility, must consider the mixed experience of modern people. This is where an interdisciplinary study of East Asian philosophy and psychology crucially functions. This paper has demonstrated its importance so far.

To explore the fusion of traditional and modern elements in the contemporary Korean experience, I recently collaborated with psychologists to conduct two studies aimed at understanding how Koreans perceive humility (Han, Choi, and Kim 2022). In Study 1, we collected open-ended responses from adults residing in South Korea (aged 19 to 59 years old) regarding their thoughts and experiences of humility. A professional research company recruited 167 participants (79 males, 88 females) who completed the survey after giving their informed consent. The participants were then asked to answer questions about their own perception of humility, as well as questions about demographic variables. We analyzed the responses and found that the participants' perceptions of humility were largely divided into seven categories, with aspects related to others or relationships being dominant. Specifically, responses focusing on others, relationships such as suppression of self-expression, respect for others, self-lowering, and courtesy accounted for 84.7% of the total responses, while self-focused responses such as objective self-evaluation, self-confidence, and self-development accounted for 7.9% of the total.

In Study 2, we itemized the contents of the seven humility categories identified in Study 1 to secure additional evidence for the categories. We conducted Study 2 with the same research company as

in Study 1, and 500 Korean adults (aged 19 to 59 years old) participated in the survey. There were 250 male and 250 female participants, and the average age was 44.23 years. Participants read statements related to humility and rated the degree of agreement between 0 points (do not agree at all) and 3 points (completely agree). We found that the average response value of the six categories excluding the self-lowering category was significantly higher than the median value of the scale. This indicates that the statements tended to agree that the six factors of suppression of self-expression, respect for others, courtesy, objective self-evaluation, self-development, and self-confidence explain humility.

However, when we examined the individual questions and the average value of the self-lowering factor, we found that the third question among the four questions used to measure self-lowering, which is "humility is to think less of one's ability or value," was significantly lower than the other three questions (Its average was 0.95.). The remaining three questions were "humility is downplaying one's abilities, achievements, status, etc. in front of others (M = 1.70, SD = 0.97)," "humility is treating others by lowering oneself (M = 1.80, SD = 0.95)," and "humility is lowering oneself relative to the other person (M = 1.50, SD = 0.90)." This shows that the participants recognized that self-lowering, particularly by underestimating or thinking less of oneself, is not a significant characteristic of self-lowering relevant to humility. When the third question was removed, the average of the self-lowering factor became 1.67, which was significantly higher than the median value of the scale, 1.5.

The above new research unequivocally demonstrates that Confucian humility persists as a prominent feature in the lay theory of modern Korean experiences. In particular, the research confirms that Koreans conceive of humility as a means of showing respect to others. Furthermore, it reveals that self-deprecation, often cited as a hallmark of modesty-bias, is not perceived by Koreans as a key component of their humble attitudes or behaviors in daily life. This underscores the fact that interpreting Korean humility solely through the lens of modesty-bias is likely to result in confirmation bias, perpetuating incorrect preconceptions about modern Koreans.

VII. Concluding Remarks

The twofold challenge facing this paper lies in understanding the historical roots of Confucian humility and its contemporary expression among East Asians. The paper questions the validity of "modesty-bias," which is said to be a characteristic of collectivist East Asian cultures, and argues that it may not accurately reflect the historical roots of Confucian humility or contemporary East Asian attitudes and behaviors related to humility. By disentangling modesty-bias from Confucian humility, the paper aims to provide a clearer understanding of tradition and contemporary experiences. It is essential to avoid distorting traditional concepts by examining them through contemporary frameworks and experiences. Additionally, distinguishing between past and present experiences can aid in gaining a better understanding of the impact of tradition on modern life.

Section II provides a concise overview of previous research on Confucian humility, exploring its original form in early Chinese thought and its conceptual development in medieval times. The humble person in the Confucian sense treats others as better and avoids highlighting their own achievements or self-worth, guiding them to focus on the other person's strengths and avoid being viewed as superior. This is a unique manner of respecting others. Confucian humility has evolved beyond its original form in medieval times, as Confucian humility and *yi* ("righteousness") are more clearly connected, with *yi* carrying the connotation of appropriateness and every individual occupying their proper social position. Therefore, Confucian humility seeks to achieve an ideal state where all people are treated properly.

Sections III and IV critically review recent discussions of contemporary East Asians in terms of one of the hallmarks of collectivist cultures, modesty-bias. The contrast between collectivism and individualism has been a significant framework for comparative studies of Eastern and Western cultures for decades in cultural psychology. Four different ways to comprehend modesty-bias based on its relationship with positive self-regard are divided. First, it is unclear how effective the first two individualistic perspectives on modesty-bias are in describing modern East Asians. These depictions may suggest a limited or flawed

psychological disposition among East Asians, and may either cause cultural conflict or use humble or modest attitudes or behaviors as a disingenuous strategy to project a positive image. Therefore, the fairest explanations currently available need to be reconsidered.

After discussing these individualistic construals of collectivist tendencies, in Section IV, the need to examine other perspectives that interpret modesty-bias consistently through a collectivist lens emerges. The two collectivist perspectives do not portray East Asians as having internal discordant self-images, unlike the previous individualistic perspectives. In this line of interpretation on modesty-bias, one notable attempt in cultural psychology suggests that East Asians affirm themselves through self-criticism instead of self-enhancement. Another defining characteristic of collectivist cultures is self-deprecation. However, Section IV points out that the common belief that East Asians are self-critical and self-deprecating could be contributing to confirmation bias, which is the tendency to interpret information in a way that reinforces existing beliefs. Modesty-bias, which includes self-criticism and self-deprecation, may be rooted in an excessive binary contrast between the East and West. Recent studies also suggest that cultural tendencies may be adaptable and context-dependent, which means that the dichotomy between East and West should be approached with caution. However, the issue of confirmation bias remains regarding the understanding of modesty-bias itself in the sense that it is still perceived as the opposite of the West, reinforcing the dichotomy at an individual level. This concept can lead to the distortion of traditional thought through the East-West dichotomy, which is the most pressing concern that this paper aims to address.

Section V addresses the question of whether modesty-bias and Confucian humility are aligned. While self-criticism and self-depre‑ cation, which are linked to modesty-bias, may seem similar to Confucian humility at first glance, a closer examination reveals that they are actually quite unrelated. Confucian humility involves de-emphasizing oneself to demonstrate respect for others, and does not necessarily entail a self-critical focus or irrational self-underestimation. For this reason, it is important to note that attempting to understand traditional humility through the lens of modesty-bias can lead to

misrepresentations of traditional thought.

In the final section of this paper, it is pointed out that attempts to understand traditional Confucian humility through the lens of modesty-bias may fall short in accurately representing modern East Asian attitudes and behaviors towards humility. To gain a deeper understanding, we must delve into the lay theory that modern East Asians employ in their everyday lives to comprehend themselves and others. An interdisciplinary study of East Asian philosophy and psychology is therefore crucial to truly understand the fusion of traditional and modern elements in contemporary Korean experiences of humility.

To further support this argument, two studies conducted by the author in collaboration with psychologists are introduced. These studies unequivocally demonstrate that Koreans view humility as a means of showing respect to others and that self-deprecation is not perceived as a key component of their humble attitudes or behaviors in daily life. Therefore, interpreting Korean humility solely through the lens of modesty-bias may result in confirmation bias and perpetuate incorrect preconceptions about modern Koreans. It is important to consider these new findings when attempting to comprehend humility within the context of modern East Asian society.

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Why the Military Needs Confucian Virtues

Marcus Hedahl*

Abstract

There are few institutions that talk about virtues as much as military organizations. These military virtues are not, however, possessed by individuals in isolation; they are inculcated and influenced by the countless ways in which values are shared, both among military members and between individuals and the military itself. Unfortunately, a normative framework that is extremely well-suited to capture this significant link between individual virtue and shared valuing, namely Confucian virtue theory, is too often underappreciated in militaries in general and in military moral education in particular. Focusing on the normative significance of ritual and decorum, I analyze this shortcoming and consider how more explicitly incorporating Confucian virtue theory into military education could provide a sturdier foundation for the essential link between individual virtue and collective valuing.

Analyzing the Confucian the virtue of princispled ritual etiquette (*li* 禮), I demonstrate that while such attention to ritual might seem questionable when considering the classic rituals often used as examples, once the pervasive presence of military rituals becomes apparent, such attention to principled ritual etiquette begins to seem far less anachronistic. Analyzing principled ritual etiquette in relationship to righteousness (*yi* 義) and benevolence (*ren* 仁), I argue that Confucian virtue theory provides a significant and distinct way to analyze modern military virtues, concluding with an analysis of how that framework can highlight the significance of ritualistic behavior on virtue development without promoting excessive and corrosive subservience.

Keywords: Virtue theory, military virtues, military education, righteousness (*yi* 義), principled ritual etiquette (*li* 禮)

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I. Why the Military Needs Confucian Virtues

Philosophers do not always make the best officer candidates. I learned this the hard way during basic training when asking why we were required to shine our shoes. Now, I understood the importance of habitual action, how easy it is for the brain to reinforce patterns of behavior, that shining my shoes today meant that I was more likely to do so tomorrow. I understood that shining our shoes is something that connects us with military members in the past, and I understood the importance of attention to detail in countless military tasks. But I saw no need in an age of cyber-security and quantum physics to hold onto any and all connection with every military tradition. I also knew that military members were intelligent enough to distinguish between contexts; we did not, for example, iron a crease in our jeans when we went into town on a pass. [Or at least most of us did not, there were a few cowboy-boot wearing squadron-mates I fondly remember insisting on always ironing a firm crease in their Wranglers—always Wranglers—before going anywhere off base].

Nonetheless, those were the reasons given to shine our shoes: virtue, habit, tradition, and of course, the reason one hears in military training when all else fails, "Because we say so." None of those reasons ever spoke to me; or, more accurately, none of those reasons except the last one spoke to me. Yet when the desire to act is based solely on avoiding punishment, that motivation often evaporates as soon as the training—and the associated threat of punishment—is over. So, on my very first trip to the uniform store as a freshly minted Second Lieutenant, I bought a pair of glossy corfam dress shoes, not shining my shoes again for several years. I took pride in that fact as an independent thinker—or at least I did until I read *The Analects* by Confucius and I learned the real reason to shine my shoes that had so eluded me, a reason that is essential to developing a more robust understanding of the virtues needed for military officers.

Unfortunately, for many members in the military in Western nations, Confucian philosophy can often feel like a difficult theory to grasp. This is in no small part because Confucian thought has been used for a wide variety of different purposes: At different times, Confucius has been

portrayed as a teacher, an advisor, a philosopher, and a prophet—the name has even been used as shorthand code for a particular, traditional way of life. Unbeknownst to most military members even the name "Confucius" can be controversial, with many scholars preferring "Kongzi," a moniker more akin to the Mandarin original.[1]

Now there are, of course, countless confusing, even enigmatic philosophical figures that military members need not familiarize themselves with. Service members need not concern themselves with even a cursory understanding of the intricate predicate calculus of Frege, or of the complex moral criticisms of Nietzsche—even if some of them are far too quick to misapply the latter philosopher's aphorisms.[2] As I argue in this paper, however, Confucian virtue theory is different. Military officers would be well served to appreciate it as a distinct way of considering what virtue is and what it requires; or, at the very least, they ought to be able to appreciate the Confucian reasoning that undergirds the importance of ritual, righteousness, and demeanor in military service.

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[1] In Mandarin, the philosopher's moniker combines a surname, Kong (孔) with the suffix fuzi (夫子), an honorific for "Master." Scholars writing in English today therefore generally refer to him as "Kongzi" or literally "Master Kong." Many are much more likely, however, to be familiar with the moniker of "Confucius," a result of the initial European translation of the Analects into Latin. In Latin, the name results from: Cong (family name) + Fu (from Master) + Us—the last syllable being a common Latin suffix (think of Marc-us Aureli-us) (Ivanhoe and Van Norden 2001). The moniker "Confucius" has remained prevalent in English in no small part because of the gravitas the Latinization of the name bestows on him, a fact that is simultaneously appropriate, given the significance and wide-ranging influence of his philosophy, and a bit problematic, because the moniker brings with it the tacit suggestion that to be significant, one must be part of a traditional lineage stemming from Greece and Rome (Csikszentmihalyi 2020). In recognition of this historical dichotomy, the rest of this piece refers to the philosopher as "Kongzi" and the philosophy as "Confucian." Hopefully doing so can serve as a useful reminder of the fact that when we come to study theories outside of our own familiarity, we generally tend to frame them through a lens of understanding we already possess.

[2] "That which does not kill us makes us stronger" ([1889] 1968, maxim 8) and "He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how" ([1889] 1968, maxim 12) are common examples of this phenomenon.

II. Values and Virtue, Individual and Collective

There are few institutions that talk about virtues and values as much as military organizations. West Point preaches "Duty, Honor, Country" (Ambrose 1999); The British Army specifies its values as "Loyalty, Courage, Integrity, Discipline, Respect for Others, and Selfless Commitment" (Values and Standards 2018); the U.S. Air Force has instantiated the core values of "Integrity first, Service before self, and Excellence in all we do" (Little Blue Book 1997); and the U.S. Marine motto "Semper Fidelis" ("always faithful") expresses a value as well.

Indeed, individuals in the military generally tend to value things like honesty, integrity, and courage. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the possession of these values is not entirely contingent. The military stresses the significance of these values in the drilling, training, and education. These forms of valuing are set out explicitly and passed down through training and teaching, a fact that allows new recruits to rapidly and reliably acquire evaluative capacities that can play a role in coordinating behavior. Since human beings tend to act habitually in these situations, these deeply entrenched forms of evaluative cognition must be generated to sustain coordination and cooperation—even in situations involving high stress and high cognitive loads (Crockett 2013; Schwabe and Wolf 2013). Furthermore, any pre-exiting habits that would be problematic in these situations must be overwritten. Training must therefore be conducted in a way that prevents the trainees from backsliding into previously accepted forms of valuing.

These values are not, however, merely held by individuals, they are, in many significant ways held together.[3] The virtues and values typically possessed by individual members of the military, for instance, are intentionally cultivated, shaped, and entrenched through an insti-

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[3] I do not intend to make a claim here about the underlying ontology of who or what values or possesses a given virtue or what structural mechanisms are required to value something together, as those distinctions are highly contested. I believe nothing I say here depends upon taking a stand on those debates, however. For a detailed analysis of all the possible ways agents could be claimed to value something together, see Hedahl and Huebner (2019).

tutional training program that is subject to group level pressures. That fact is significant as these training programs can be altered when empirical evidence indicates that members are not acting in accordance with those forms of valuing, i.e., when it becomes obvious that their individual virtues are not consistent with the collective's shared values. Consider, for example, difficulties with Iraqi Security Forces as U.S. forces have tried to transition out of that country. While the exact number of desertions, defections, and outright refusals to fight remains unclear, there are several documented cases where thousands of Iraqi Security Personnel either refused to fight or abandoned their post (e.g., in the Battle for Bashra in 2008 [Cordsmen and Mausner 2009, 24] and fights with Daesh forces in Mosul in 2014 [Fahim and Al-Salhy 2014]). Regardless of whether the problem could be traced to some deficiency of individual virtues, it would be incredibly shortsighted of leaders not to seek out the systemic conditions that made such displays of vice more likely. To be clear, the point is not that culture impacts individual virtue, although it certainly does, but rather that organizational and institutional structures, policies, and decisions will often have as great an impact on the display of individual virtue as will the particular virtues or vices of the individuals who comprise those organizations.[4] In fact, in the wake of these incidents, military leaders concluded that it is almost impossible to separate questions about the individual virtues of courage and fidelity from the collective questions about planning, training, and leadership that shape the background conditions in which those virtues can be displayed (Cordsmen and Mausner 2009, 25–26). Military values can be analyzed as robustly shared, therefore, because failures to live up to them can lead not only to a change in training but also a change in collective behavior and institutional procedures in an attempt to make such failures less frequent.

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[4] For more on the impact of organizational structures and decisions on individual virtue, see Olsthoorn (2011). For more on the various ways these kinds of decisions can shape the way virtues and values are shared, see Huebner and Hedahl (2017).

III. Kongzi and Aristotle

While doing so risks some of the problems considered in the intro-
duction, in order to argue that Kongzi's virtue theory offers a distinctly
significant way for military officers to analyze the collective component
of military values and virtues, it will be helpful to analyze it in rela-
tionship to another theory more commonly emphasized in military
education: the ethics of Aristotle.[5] Like Aristotle, Kongzi offers a virtue
theoretical account of ethics, taking a person's dispositions to act in
certain ways to be more fundamental than are her deliberations about
particular actions. In Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, for example,
Aristotle claims that just as the appearance of a single swallow does not
make a spring, one right action does not make one virtuous (chap. 7).[6]
Similarly, in Book 1 of *The Analects*, Kongzi considers how cultivating
patterns of good behavior opens up the possibility of adhering to the
most befitting modes of being and acting in the world.[7] To develop
these patterns and to navigate the challenges of life well, the exemplary
person studies and builds up the roots of her behavior rather than
focusing on particular actions. According to Kongzi, "Once the roots are
established, the appropriate way to live comes to life" (1.2).

Aristotle also offers an expansive account of the virtues, focusing on
the social aspects of a life well lived. For example, in addition to the kind
of virtues one might expect to see on any list—courage, temperance,
pride, practical wisdom, and justice—Aristotle includes other virtues
that may surprise a first-time reader. *Wit* is a key example. After some
reflection, however, the inclusion of wit into the list of necessary
virtues might strike us as much more reasonable, for while one would
be hard pressed to imagine a great military leader never passing up
a chance to display their buffoonery for a laugh, there may well be a
deficit of excellence in those who could never tell a joke or lighten
the mood in tense situations. A person without wit, expressed at the

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[5] Or at least, Aristotle is much more commonly emphasized in the military ethical educa-
tion in English-speaking countries.

[6] All citations of Aristotle are from *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by Roger Crisp (2014).

[7] All citations of Kongzi are from "The Analects," translated by Edward Slingerland (Kongzi
2001).

right times, in the right manner, and for the right reasons would often fail to demonstrate other virtues. They would fail to be generous and beneficent; they would often fail in their duty to help others. Aristotle also cares deeply about the social aspects of a life well lived, famously claiming that human beings were fundamentally "*zoon politikon*," i.e., social animals (book 1, chap. 5). Moreover, Aristotle believed that a virtuous community was essential for a virtuous individual, in part because virtue is largely a product of the habits inculcated in us through education (book 1, chap. 3) and in part because a person could not lead a flourishing, fulfilling life if they did not have the good fortune of living in a flourishing, fulfilling community (book 4, chap. 1).[8]

IV. Rituals and Righteousness

Unlike Aristotle's virtue theory, Kongzi's virtue theory does not merely highlight the social elements of human excellence, it also centers on the way we are embedded within a particular social structure in order to advance a role-based morality that is deeply enhanced by the virtue of principled ritual etiquette (*li* 禮) (Rosemont and Ames 2016). In other words, Kongzi believed that a central part of virtuous behavior is tied up in the psychology of ritual, because rituals help dictate how social structures regulate individual action. For Kongzi, these rituals were not rare events; rituals are not confined to infrequent observations like wedding ceremonies and funeral rites. For Kongzi, rituals included a wide variety of everyday activities: the way a person receives guests (*Analects* 10.3), the manner in which they carry out daily prayers (*Analects* 10.8 and 15.1), even the demeanor with which they play the chimes (*Analects* 14.39). In all these cases, Kongzi stressed the psychological states the practitioner uses to perform these tasks, for the performance of ritual without reverence (*jing* 敬) is to be condemned

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[8] In the *Politics*, Aristotle also gives a robust account of which social arrangements are more likely to cultivate excellence in both communities and individuals. Unlike Kongzi, however, Aristotle does not contend that analyzing one's particular role within that system is central to understanding virtue. I will have more to say on this distinction in a moment.

(*Analects* 3.26).

This kind of attention to ritual might seem outdated if we focus on some of the particular, perhaps antiquated rituals Kongzi used as examples. Once the way in which such rituals are ubiquitous to life in the military becomes apparent, however, such attention to principled ritual etiquette starts to seem much less anachronistic, for these kinds of military rituals are everywhere. *Reveille, Retreat, Taps,* salutes, callsigns, change of command ceremonies, attention on deck, the way one enters a superior's room or office, and the way one interacts with superiors, subordinates, and peers are all highly ritualized in a military setting.[9] For Kongzi, all of these daily rituals can help one to develop the attitudes and affects essential for the dispositions required to play one's part well.

To better understand the role of ritual in Kongzi's theory, it's important to contrast rituals with two other related but distinct practices: traditions and habits. Like traditions, rituals are something done repeatedly, but rituals are much more prescriptive in the manner in which they are performed. Consider as a contrast the tradition of the Herndon Climb at the U.S. Naval Academy. The first year at the Academy is formally completed when Midshipmen are able to place a uniform hat atop a 21-foot monument, a tradition going back almost a century. Although there are similar techniques used every year, there is no one prescribed way to meet the challenge; part of the assignment is to figure out the best way to accomplish the task. Contrast that tradition with the ritualistic way in which flags are lowered each day at military bases around the world. The way in which military members approach the flagpole, the music played, the speed at which the flag is lowered, and the way the flag is folded are all heavily prescribed.

A ritual like the lowing of the flag is also not a mere habit. In Aristotle's framework, for example, one becomes virtuous through habituation: doing the right action, in the right way, again and again, and developing a certain positive affective response to doing so. Consider, for example, the virtue of beneficence: Doing beneficent actions, in the

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[9] Reveille is a bugle call used to awaken military personal, typically at sunrise. The name comes from the French term for "Wake Up. Taps is bugle called used in the U.S. military to signal the end of the military day and at military funerals. I have more to say about Retreat below and more to say about callsigns and attention on deck later in the paper.

way beneficent people do, doing so habitually, and developing a positive affective reaction for doing so helps to develop the virtue of beneficence, a fact that in turn makes one more likely to perform beneficence actions in the future. Compared with habits, however, rituals are both more prescriptive about the way in which actions are performed and more indirect in their aims. Aristotle's virtue of beneficence does not necessarily require, for example, a robust etiquette about the precise ways in which beneficence is to be offered. Moreover, while rituals and habituation are both meant to develop a moral psychology that leads to virtue, for rituals the purpose is more indirect; the intention of the ritual is to lead to virtues much more extensive than merely becoming excellent at ritualistic behavior.

The importance of this aspect of moral psychology can be further highlighted by considering the significance of the Confucian virtue of righteousness (*yi* 義). Righteousness requires the ability to be uncorrupted when being entrusted to act for the good of another. In such cases, the exemplary person must be able to ignore the trappings of wealth and rank such positions often bring with them, even if doing so means eating fewer fine foods, drinking only water, or sleeping with only one's bent arm as a pillow (7.16). In short, righteousness requires a lack of self-centeredness rooted in steadfastness in the face of temptation when entrusted with the ability to act for the good of another. It is the fundamental virtue of one who takes an oath to defend the public good and the public order (Csikszentmihalyi 2020).

Of course, numerous frameworks emphasize the importance of this kind of stewardship for public servants. For Kongzi, however, this virtue is central for all moral agents, not only for those who have taken an oath to serve the public good.[10] This is the element of Confucian

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[10] Of course, numerous frameworks have the requirement to play one's part well (For more on the Stoics with respect to this requirement, for example, see Section III of Brennan [2007]). Unlike Confucian virtue theory, however, these are universal theories of morality that analyze one's current role as part of the circumstances that shape what would be the right thing to do for anyone in similar circumstances. These theories would not be properly analyzed as offering the kind of role morality in which one's role *itself* has a central part to play in moral deliberation, such that, for example, a lawyer and a non-lawyer might be required to act differently in the exact same circumstances, or soldiers and citizens might be required to act differently in the same exact circumstances.

virtue theory that is significant for present purposes, for this paper is not advocating that militaries ought to teach Kongzi merely because his theory includes a virtue of stewardship, but rather because of the role this particular virtue plays with his larger system. For Kongzi, the point of rituals and stewardship—both a near constant part of all our daily lives—is to reinforce within each of us the ability to play our particular role well within a larger collective endeavor, a fact that implies that the scope of actions that contribute to our virtue and vice is much broader than many may initially suspect.

Another way to highlight the significance of these virtues is to realize that for Kongzi even the virtue of benevolence (*ren* 仁), is heavily influenced by role morality. For while Kongzi sometimes equates benevolence with a general "caring for others" (*Analects* 12.22), in most of the textual passages, he is clear that benevolence requires much more specific behaviors. An agent ought to treat those she encounters on the street as important guests and she ought to attend to them as if they were attendants at a sacrifice (*Analects* 12.2). Therefore, she ought to reject the use of clever speech while helping others (*Analects* 1.3),[11] being respectful where she dwells, reverent where she works, and loyal whenever she deals with others (*Analects* 13.19). Benevolence entails a lack of self-centeredness in the Confucian system, not because an agent put the needs of others above her own, but because this virtue requires forming moral judgments from the collective perspective involving both one's self and others (Hall and Ames 1987). In other words, even benevolence for Kongzi involves *acting together*. In providing charity to another, for example, one should look at the act as connecting two people in a dyad. This perspective of beneficence requires not only that an agent giving charity should refrain from looking down on those requiring help, she should also look to those in need with gratitude, for they are helping her by providing the opportunity to become a better person. This kind of attitude, while perhaps less familiar to those not

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Confucian virtue theory is different in this respect. For more on this distinction, see Applbaum (2000).

[11] In other words, those who uses the opportunity of helping others to demonstrate their own intelligence or their own acuity in moral perception are not, in actuality, helping others but rather merely looking for an opportunity to demonstrate their own virtue.

in uniform, is much more common in military settings, captured in countless military maxims like "leaders eat last"—the best, most virtuous leaders are often the ones who recognize that a hierarchy's true value comes from those at its lower ranks, not its higher ones (Sinek 2017).

Analyzing righteousness (*yi* 義), benevolence (*ren* 仁), and principled ritual etiquette (*li* 禮) in this way demonstrates that for Kongzi, virtue (*de* 德) requires not merely actions, dispositions, and attitudes but a particular demeanor as well. The way a person stands, the tone of her voice, the expression on her face, her general comportment, these can all influence others, either reinforcing their capacity to play their parts well or undermining their ability to do so. We can see the significance of these Confucian virtues better by considering the case of former Secretary Thomas B. Modly. On April 2, 2020 Secretary Modly fired Captain Brett Crozier from his command of the *USS Theodore Roosevelt* after Captain Crozier had sent an email that criticized the Navy's management of a COVID-19 outbreak (Welna 2020). In order to analyze the two aspects of this case most commonly considered, whether Crozier's decision to send the original e-mail or whether Modly's choice to relieve Crozier of command were appropriate, an extensive amount of information about the conditions on the *Roosevelt*, and the previous steps taken by Captain Crozier, Secretary Modly, and countless others would be required.[12] Such information is not required, however, to consider Secretary Modly's actions on April 6, when he gave a speech over the Roosevelt's 1MC[13] in which he implied that Captain Crozier must have been either "naive or stupid" and that the crew were failing to "[keep] their sh*t together"—even acting cowardly (at one point Modly used the phrase "f@#&ing scared") (CNN 2020). Modly himself quickly recognized his error in addressing the crew in this manner, resigning his position the next day while claiming that he spoke to the crew "as if [he] was their commander, or their shipmate, rather than their Secretary" (Harkins 2020). This was a self-realized failure to embody Confucian

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[12] Doing so would also take us too far afield from the purpose of this paper since it's less clear than an analysis of those aspects of the case can be distinctly benefitted from a Confucian analysis.

[13] "1MC" or "1st Main Circuit" is the name for the shipboard public address circuit on U.S. Navy and Coast Guard vessels.

virtues, virtues that require not only certain actions and dispositions but a wide-range of demeanors based on the particular roles we inhabit at different points of our lives—even different points of the day—virtues that are necessary for each of us to be able to play our particular role well within a larger collective endeavor (Harkins 2020).[14]

In short, Confucian virtue theory is both more extensively tied to everyday activity and more intimately and explicitly connected with the roles an agent plays within a larger community. The first feature makes the theory more widely accessible as a way of life. The second helps justify its normative force: We are called to behave in certain ways not only because doing so leads to *our own* character development but also because it leads to the development of the shared virtue *of our community.* Both of these differences ought to resonate with those who serve in the armed forces. After all, a member of the armed forces ought to think of themselves as embodying a deeply collective way of life, a way of life that ought to be understood in distinctly moral terms.

V. Context Makes Virtues Matter More Not Less

Kongzi's virtue theory is not just helpful for understanding the role of ritual and demeanor in the military, the expansive and socially embedded nature of virtues in Confucian theory is particularly important for responding to one of the most pressing objections against virtue theory, an objection that particularly significant in military contexts: People routinely underestimate the extent to which minor situational variables influence morally significant behavior.[15] In *Stanley* Milgram's infamous studies, for example, the vast majority of subjects were willing to administer dangerous lethal shocks merely because they were told to

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[14] To wonder, as many schooled in discussions about virtues in the English-speaking world are likely to do, what *particular* virtue Modly failed to display is to reveal the Aristotelian assumptions often lurking beneath the surface. The significance of Kongzi's framework for cases like these lies in the essential role of demeanor and personal comportment for virtue (*de* 德), such that one cannot be said to display virtue without those elements— *even if* one's actions would not by themselves count as contrary to a particular virtue.

[15] The next three paragraphs are inspired by Hakop Sarkissian (2010).

do so by an experimenter (1963). During Zimbardo's equally infamous Stanford prison experiment, the treatment of make-believe prison guards quickly turned sadistic, forcing the study to shut down mere days into experiment (1973).[16] In another often-cited experiment, whether seminary students were willing to help a needy bystander on their way to a lecture on the parable of the Good Samaritan hinged greatly on how pressed they felt for time (Darley and Batson 1973). How likely an agent is to behave appropriately turns out to hinge on numerous minor, ethically insignificant variations in context (Flannnagan 1991, 281). As many have argued, it's difficult to reconcile appeals to virtues with the empirical fact that our interactions with others are often considerably altered by minor, morally insignificant details.[17]

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[16] There are, of course, numerous criticisms of the Stanford Prison Experiment and its conclusions. Some have argued that numerous participants did not conform to their role: There were prisoners who refused to conform and guards who refused to engage in the worst forms of cruelty (See, for example, Reicher and Haslam [2006]). Others have argued that the experimenters played an active role in eliciting behavior (See, for example, Gray [2013]). For example, guards were encouraged to discard their personal identity and to adopt a collective identity (See Haslam et al. [2019] for an excellent analysis of this critique). In essence, many object that the guards were playing a role that they were encouraged to adopt by those in leadership. The extent to which these criticisms undermine the significance of the Stanford Prison experiment depends to a large extent to what conclusions one is intending to draw from it, and to what extent those kinds of features of the case are replicated in the world. (Perhaps unsurprisingly, I suspect that the roles we take on even outside of these kinds of artificially constructed scenarios have a far greater influence on our behavior than many realize. When I served at various times as a guard, drill instructor, or basic trainer, for example, it was only in retrospect that I realized how much my behavior had been influenced by my preconceived idea of how those acting in those roles ought to behave.) Regardless of these general criticisms and the impact they ought to have on how the experiment ought to be presented and interpreted, however, so long as there was ethical misbehavior on someone's part—whether it was students or social scientists who behaved inappropriately—and so long as that misbehavior was atypical for them (i.e., they did not generally go around torturing or encouraging torture), then the experiment presents a situationalist challenge for virtue theory as it is generally presented.

[17] The literature on what is often referred to as the "situationist objection" is both sizable and growing. It would be far too long a list to consider it all here, but the list would have to include Doris (2002), Webber (2006), Prinz (2009), and Harman (2000). There are countless responses to this objection, but as Sarkissian (2010) adroitly notes, Kongzi's theory offers the opportunity for a particularly salient response not available to other virtue theories.

Now, the impact of minor changes in background conditions on virtuous behavior may well pose a problem for any virtue theory that locates the possibility for virtuous actions less expansively than Kongzi's theory does. For if virtue can be demonstrated by refusing to obey an unjust authority, by maintaining empathy and professionalism in the face of a sadistic sub-culture, and by helping others even while focusing on more self-interested tasks, then the challenge is how to explain the ways in which minor and ethically insignificant background conditions often have such a significant impact on individual behavior. This problem becomes even more salient in military contexts, for far too often military leaders demonstrate an unwarranted faith that character will overcome context, come what may.[18] Even those who seek to criticize the military's display of virtue often do so within a larger framework that assumes that expressions of virtue and vice will likely transcend the context in which they are expressed.[19]

This problem dissolves, however, if one contends that virtue also requires focusing on the ways in which subtle differences of behavior can make *other people* more or less comfortable with morally in-appropriate behavior as well as on to the ways in which even one's tone of voice could make other's virtuous behavior more or less likely.[20] Kongzi's insight is to highlight this deep interconnectedness of virtue. In Confucian virtue theory, we are inextricably implicated in the virtue of others, such that even minor modifications in our individual moral behavior—changing our facial expressions, posture, and other seemingly minor details of comportment—can lead to major modification in the moral actions of others. In other words, the actions of any one of us— even things as minor as one's tone of voice—become the background conditions for the actions of countless others (Sarkissian 2010). The fact

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[18] Much of military training follows rather closely to Aristotle's understanding of how virtues are developed, namely through repetitive practice under appropriate guidance and coaching. For more, see Skerker et al. (2019).

[19] A great example here is Leonard Wong and Stephen Gerras's "Lying to Ourselves" (2015) in which they argue that the surprisingly common habit of lying about the completion of ancillary training will have detrimental impacts on the honesty of the troops in other contexts.

[20] For a much more detailed analysis of this point, see Sarkissian (2010).

that we routinely underestimate the way in which minor situational cues influence moral behavior does not undermine the importance of virtues. On the contrary, Kongzi's virtue theory implies that this fact reinforces the need for an understanding of virtue that reaches into the vast majority of our daily interactions.

With this understanding of Kongzi's virtue theory, we can return to reconsider my one-time disdain for shining shoes. We can notice, for instance, that the act of shining one's shoes is first and foremost a ritual: It's an activity performed regularly that must be done in a certain way: the polish, the brush, the water, the cotton balls—each has their place and proper function. It allows us the chance to approach this perpetual task as a burden (as I once did) or as a chance for reflection on the days that have passed and the days to come. It provides the opportunity to remind us of our social placement, both as a member of the armed forces and as someone who has gone through however many iterations of our common rites and rituals. In other words, it offers the chance to cultivate humility, for the military is one of the few places in which those with great authority would be seen as in some way deficient if they viewed themselves as too important, too high-ranking, or even too busy to shine their own shoes.

These kinds of Confucian rituals thereby offer us a key insight into the ways that individuals are bound together with the different levels of society with which they interact. In the context of ritual practice, an agent is cultivating ways of monitoring herself, but she is doing so in a way that opens up the possibility of monitoring by others. By integrating social and self-monitoring, Confucian ethics helps to internalize values in ways that will extend beyond the context in which they are first inculcated. These minor changes in appearance and behavior shape how others are likely to interact with any particular service member, in a way that, in turn, has the ability to shape the behavior of other service members, either towards virtue or vice. In other words, this practice allows a routine opportunity to practice reflection, humility, principled ritual etiquette (*li* 禮), reverence (*jing* 敬), and righteousness (*yi* 義).

VI. Avoiding Subservience

Some may worry that given this focus on role and hierarchy, Confucian virtue theory necessarily requires military members to become excessively deferential—perhaps even submissive and subservient—and that military members will thereby become passive in the face of the military's many structural deficiencies, both moral and strategic.[21] That kind of concern, however, elides an oversimplistic view of rituals, customs, and curtsies in the Confucian framework. To the outsider or the poorly instructed service member (which is, unfortunately, far too many) military decorum and practice can look like nothing more than an oppressive kind of fetishism for "the way things have always been." When we consider the relationship between these practices and the larger military mission, however, they can begin to look quite different. The rituals, customs, and courtesies worth maintaining lay the foundation for a moral psychology in which proper performance of these activities is a key to reforming one's desires and beginning to develop the right kind of moral dispositions and demeanor required to play one's part well. This need not imply that *all* current practices ought to be venerated, nor that the military ought to fetishize ritual, decorum, or cleanliness.[22]

To see why, consider first those rituals clearly worth maintaining, rituals like saluting and calling attention when a commanding officer enters the room. These rituals are useful not because they reinforce subservience, but because they remind everyone of their role in the larger collective endeavor.[23] Those standing at attention are reinforcing their responsibilities to and through their commander, while their

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[21] For example, see Dixon (1976, 185-207).

[22] The excessive focus on cleanliness because of the significance of rituals like polishing shoes was the primary concern of Dixon's (1976).

[23] Some may contend that the function of these activities is that they connect current members with the organization's history, but that more specific function can be also captured by the more general function considered above once it becomes evident that in order to play one's part well in any collective organization, members will often be required to view one's fellow participants not merely as limited to those currently engaged in the collective activity, but also as including those who have and will participate in that activity across time.

commanding officer is being reminded of her responsibility for and to her troops.[24] Reminding the commanding officer and those under her command of their respective roles (for the commander to constate, specify, and prioritize tasks and for those under her command to execute those priorities) need not reinforce a sense of superiority on the part of the commander, nor an attitude of subservience on the part of the subordinate. Indeed, excellent execution can be consistent with, and sometimes even require discussion, disagreement, and dissent—even disobedience in cases involving unlawful or immoral orders (Roush 1998).

Consider as well the multifaceted norms regarding *call signs.* Anyone who seen movies like *Top Gun* will recognize the uncommon monikers pilots use to refer to one another (e.g., Maverick, Goose, Ice Man, Hilts, etc.). What may be harder for the casual viewer to discern are the rich contextual conditions that dictate when a pilot ought to refer to a superior officer by their call sign (generally, when discussing the activities essential for flying) and when they ought to refer to her by rank or honorific (generally, when the superior officer is constating, specifying, or prioritizing orders). The subtilties of these norms help maintain the kind of egalitarian standing that better fosters aviation excellence, without undermining the kind of command authority required for military execution.[25]

Appropriate customs, courtesies, rituals, and decorum can thereby play an important role in fostering those military members who have an almost effortless way of dealing with subordinates that is amicable and sympathetic without undermining either the significance of their rank differences or the importance of accomplishing the mission. They can also help develop those military members who approach their superiors (especially those in their chain of command) with deference without becoming anything close to docile, passive, or meek. Both of these categories of service members have a way of demonstrating what Kongzi said over two thousand years ago, that when it comes

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[24] For more on why military duties are generally not analyzed as directed duties owed to a commanding officer, see Hedahl (2013).

[25] See, for example, Helmreich and Davies (2004).

to the countless ritual encounters we find ourselves in every day, it is harmonious ease which is to be valued (*Analects* 1.12). The virtuous subordinate displays righteousness (*yi* 義) when telling their superior a hard truth even if doing so could have negative consequences on her career. The virtuous leader displays righteousness when she seeks to demonstrate the kind of tough love required for improving the character of the subordinates with whom she has the most cordial of relationships, and when she seeks to acknowledge the noble features of those under her command who are most likely to cause her difficulty. We recognize a lack of this kind of righteousness when we notice the vices created from its absence: when one is too quick to kiss up the chain of command and kick down it. Thankfully, once both the underlying purpose of military rituals, customs, and courtesies and the link between these practices and the virtues of principled ritual etiquette (*li* 禮), reverence (*jing* 敬), and righteousness is better understood, military leaders can better delineate the rituals, customs, and courtesies that are worth maintaining from those that are not.

VII. Conclusion

Militaries spend so much time focusing on character traits that are on public display because those virtues are not just essential for making *each of its members* more virtuous, they are essential for making all its members more virtuous *together*. So, while some may try to reduce ethics to nothing more than "doing the right thing when no one else is looking"—something that is merely a part of a life well lived— Confucian virtue theory helps highlight that doing the right thing when everyone else is equally important, and that it is a requirement that requires much, much more of its members than many may have initially suspected.

　　Through its embedded practices, militaries often tacitly demonstrate the significance of the ways in which individual virtue is deeply integrated with collective values. Far too often, however, the way that military virtue is taught often downplays the significance of this relationship. The most obvious way to fix that oversight is to ensure that

Confucian virtue theory is explicitly included in more military education classes. Fortunately, those changes are already underway: Confucian virtue theory has been taught at the United States Naval Academy since 2017 and at the United States Naval Community College since 2020. I hope that this article can perhaps encourage that change to become more widely adopted. Doing so would not only offer a chance to present a distinct theoretical approach to virtue, it could challenge students to consider just how broad the scope of activities that influences their virtue may be. Moreover, this change offers the opportunity to present a distinct—and far too often unconsidered—theoretical defense of the countless norms of ritual, custom, and decorum that are central to the lives of service members. Even if that kind of virtue education is not widely embraced, my hope is that military educators and trainers will better familiarize themselves with this particular theoretical framework in order to improve the way that they talk with their students about the underlying theoretical justifications for so many of the military rituals and curtsies that those students will encounter throughout their military service.

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Book Review:
Handbook of Confucianism in Modern Japan

Alex Haskins*

I. Introduction

Almost inevitably, with any "revival," there will be omissions. Drawing on his own previous work and enlisting the talents of scholars worldwide, Shaun O'Dwyer attempts to ameliorate one particular omission with the recent "revival" around Confucianism, particularly in Anglophone philosophical circles: that of Japanese Confucianism(s). As O'Dwyer and others tell it (and I happen to agree), "mainstream" assessments of Confucianism's modern genealogy reveal a Sinocentric bias, especially among political and moral philosophers and intellectual historians. To counter this bias, O'Dwyer and others hone in on modern Japanese Confucianism, spanning from approximately the 1850s to the present. The volume explicitly foregrounds the political in its chronological sweep (though without ignoring the economic, social, religious, etc.), emphasizing reflections on Japan's modernization, imperialism, and liberal democracy. It seems that the selection of these chapters was motivated by the novelty of the figure(s) featured therein (and they certainly merit additional inquiry, analysis, and research). However, the main aim is to caution philosophers, political theorists, and others against equating "Confucianism" (or "Ruism" or "Confucian" learning for those allergic to "isms") with China and/or trying to fit "Confucianism" into a Western liberal democratic mold. To the former

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concern, it is true that China was Confucius' home and point of origin, but it is hardly sufficient to presume that the practice of "Confucianism" in modern Japan was mimetic or derivative (in some pejorative sense) of Chinese models. In this respect, the volume is indeed a helpful corrective and will (or at least should) inspire similar volumes for other contexts, as I allude to below. To the latter concern, O'Dwyer is (re-) sounding an alarm many (including O'Dwyer himself) in comparative philosophy and comparative political theory have been ringing for years. Dangers loom on the horizon if we continue to fold everything into Western (or Chinese) models. There is perhaps a lesson in there that goes beyond philosophy.

This book review proceeds with three core sections and a conclusion. In the second section, I provide an overview of the book as a way of summarizing some of the main claims made by each of the authors of the wide-ranging chapters. The third section briefly takes up a tripartite framework provided by O'Dwyer in the introduction—namely, that of "tacit," "subordinate," and "explicit" invocations of Confucianism in modern Japan—with the aim of highlighting potential strengths and limitations to such a framing. The fourth section centers on more conceptual considerations of the politicization of the "Kingly Way" (王道 *ōdō*) and the "Imperial Way" (皇道 *kōdō*) both in modern Japan and now. I assess the extent to which Jiang's and O'Dwyer's push for "conscientious" Confucianism is compelling and gesture toward work that remains to be done. I conclude with a brief overall assessment of the value of the book and how it might set up for future research.

II. Book Overview

For the book overview, I organize the chapters according to rough chronological focus. Chronologically, the *Handbook* begins with the Edo period (roughly 1600–1868) and chapters one and two largely focus here. (As an aside, several chapters bridge eras, hence why my localizing of chapters within certain periods is tentative.) Chapter one focuses on the Edo-period figure Matsumiya Kanzan (1686–1780). Song Qi demonstrates Matsumiya's both fiercely loyalist and deeply ecumenical

approach to three dominant religious and philosophical traditions of his time: Shinto (of Japanese origin), Confucianism/*Ruxue* (of Chinese origin), and Buddhism (of Indian origin). Matsumiya remains significant not only for his ecumenicism (and favoring of Shinto for Japan)—which was often paired with harsh criticisms of certain tendencies of "national learning" (*kokugaku*) and Ogyū Sorai's disciples—but also, as Qi contends, for how Matsumiya was taken up in the twentieth century by Japanese nationalists who aimed to enshrine State Shinto as official doctrine for an ascendant, imperial Japan. In chapter two, Han Shuting centers the late Edo/*bakumatsu* figure Sakuma Shōzan (1811–1864). In opposition to tendencies to overemphasize the impact of "Western learning" on Sakuma's outlook and reception in more recent scholarly literature, Han argues for the significance of Sakuma's grounding in, and political use of, the Confucian classics. Han further seems to endorse a kind of "early-modernization" theory (in opposition to "modernization" theory developed in the post-WWII U.S.) that would foreground Sakuma's (and others') reliance on Confucian thought as a way of recovering the positive contributions of Confucian learning for the modern era.

Chapters three through five focus largely on the Meiji era (1868–1912). Lee Yu-ting emphasizes in chapter three that the *Meiji Six* Magazine (Meiroku Zasshi) was largely in debt to Confucian-derived ideas. In contrast to narratives that would position the Meiji Six society and its publication as a repudiation of older (Confucian) ideals in favor of modern (Western) ones, Lee demonstrates through statistical analysis that such narratives are far from the truth. The Meiji Six society used Confucian-derived ideas and frameworks to debate, refute, appeal, and express a variety of views, while also retaining some level of deference to Japan's Confucian heritage. Mizuno Hirota's work (chapter four) on Tokyo Imperial University (now the University of Tokyo) and its relationship to the Confucian classics in its early history (from the 1870s and 80s onward) emphasizes the growing importance of teaching the Confucian classics among early scholars of the period, most notably Inoue Tetsujirō (1855–1944, who will reappear in several chapters). Mizuno's recovery is significant at least insofar as it challenges teleological narratives of Confucianism's move from a pre-

war political ascendancy to a "decline" in the modern (nineteenth–and twentieth–century) era; Inoue and others recognized the importance of not marginalizing the teaching of Confucian texts and this had (and has) ramifications both within Japanese academic circles and beyond, particularly in the fields of philology and philosophy. Yamamura Sho's chapter five considers how Inoue in the 1890s and early 1900s took a more "ideological" approach to Confucian learning and national unity in Japan. Yamamura contends that Inoue, in attempting to preserve Japan' social order from the detrimental influences of Christianity and other Western ideologies through Confucian Yangming learning, paralleled (and drew upon) earlier Edo-period Mito learning scholars.

The Taisho period (1912–1926) and pre-war/war time Showa period (1926–1945) chapters include chapters six, eight, nine, and ten. In chapter six, Masako Racel foregrounds the thought and advocacy of educational reformer Shimoda Utako (1854–1936). Racel depicts Shimoda as a complex figure; while, early on, she was an advocate for modernized women's education and critical of Confucianism's restrictive views on women (and thus, did not identify as a Confucian), she nevertheless defended the work of nationalist Confucian scholars like Inoue later in her life in order to resist radical Western ideologies like socialism and feminism, which she viewed as threatening Japan's national identity and Japanese women, in particular. Kang Haesoo's chapter (eight) shifts to colonial Korea (1910–1945) during the 1930s and 40s. Kang details how conceptions of "Imperial Way" (kōdō) Confucianism (as opposed to "Kingly Way" [ōdō] Confucianism, which feature in other chapters) were transmitted from the Japanese metropole to the colonial Korean Gyunghakwon [Gyeonghagwon] by the Korean graduates of the Daitō Bunka Gakuin, Ahn [An] In-sik (1891–1969) and Joo Byung-kon [Ju Byeong-geon] (1890–?). Beyond historical recovery, Kang's chapter also raises further concerns about this imperial legacy in the Korean Peninsula, particularly as we consider "unaccounted for" histories (e.g. Confucianism within the Park Chung-hee [Bak Jeong-hui] regime). Park Junhyun takes a more philosophical approach in chapter nine in locating "Imperial Way" discourse within Japan's broader history of philosophy, with specific emphasis on the first systematization of "Imperial Way" Confucianism by Takada Shinji

(1893–1975) during the 1930s and 40s. Park concludes that Takada was not simply a propagandist, but rather a measured scholar attempting to conceptually delineate imperial rule on grounds akin to those of the ideal rule of Plato's philosopher-king. Finally, Kyle Michael James Shuttleworth, in chapter ten, offers a new reading of Watsuji Tetsurō's (1889–1960) magnum opus, *Ethics* (1939, 1942, 1946), and attempts to absolve him of charges of totalitarianism (i.e. dissolving the individual into the state) even while leaving the possibility open that he could be charged with cultural conservatism (e.g. hierarchical gender relations), given his reliance on a certain Confucian understanding of the family. Shuttleworth notes, however, that even these charges of conservatism might be contested, given Watsuji's reconfiguration of filial piety, but that such efforts would require further research.

Chapter seven, like (but perhaps more than) other chapters, is difficult to periodize since it evenly covers a range of time periods. Chang Kun-chiang explores the Edo, Meiji, and Showa periods in an attempt to illustrate how both Shinto-ized "Imperial Way" (*kōdō*) and "Kingly Way" (*ōdō*) Confucianism transformed roles over time. Through charting a variety of "contextual turns" brought about by scholars, military personnel, journalists, Buddhist priests, and others, Chang chronicles "Imperial Way" Confucianism's seed in late Edo, incubation in Meiji and Taisho, and maturity in Showa as well as the sustaining (but increasingly marginalized) influence of "Kingly Way" Confucianism in the production of this modern, "invented tradition."

The remaining chapters (eleven through thirteen) focus mostly on Confucian developments from the post-war Showa (1945–1989), Heisei (1989–2019), and Reiwa (2019–present) periods. Alexandra Mustățea (chapter eleven) revisits Watsuji, largely in an effort both to recover the significance of his reflections on Confucianism for Japanese modernity as well as to locate the significant role Confucianism played in Watsuji's work. She contends that if we understand Watsuji's *Ethics* as representing his search for principles of universal ethics and his *History of Ethical Thought in Japan* (1952) as representing his search for the particularity of those ethics within Japan, then we can begin to see potential for the universalistic value of Confucianism as a critique of totalitarianism and a defense of communal life. Moreover,

Watsuji's conception of Confucianism's dynamic relationship between the divergent historical forces of "tradition" and "creativity" (in opposition to Maruyama Masao's conception of Confucianism as a feudal-era holdover) complicates simplistic narratives of Confucianism's "decline" or "incompatibility" with modernity. In chapter twelve, Eddy Dufourmont explores the role Yasuoka Masahiro (1898–1983) played in giving expression to a new brand of post-war Confucianism that simultaneously distinguished itself from its disgraced pre-war forebears while also achieving much of the same effect of forging national identity, particularly by winning the allegiance and support of conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP or *Jimintō*) and business interests in the post-war era. However, Dufourmont concludes that, like Yasuoka's post-war influence, Confucianism (since the 1970s) has had diminishing returns, portending potential obsolescence in the near future. Finally, Dongxian Jiang and Shaun O'Dwyer use chapter thirteen to reflect on possible futures for "Kingly Way" Confucianism. In contrast to dangerous "exemplary" forms of nationalism (e.g. the Shibunkai of the 1930s, contemporary China), Jiang and O'Dwyer argue for a "Kingly Way" or "conscientious" Confucianism that can avoid cooptation from state-centric projects of global self-assertion while nevertheless affirming and propagating potentially universal Confucian values and practices.

III. The "Tacit-Subordinate-Explicit" Framework

Building on the book summary in the previous section, I now turn in the next two sections to my assessment of the volume as a whole. To take up the volume's tripartite *tacit-subordinate-explicit* framework first, overall, I find it a helpful heuristic (perhaps especially for those less familiar with Japanese or Asian history) that is potentially theoretically meaningful, though it suffers some from a lack of clarity on the criteria for inclusion in a given category. I walk away from this volume grateful for the attempt at systematization, but with enduring questions: What counts as "tacit" versus "subordinate" versus "explicit"? Are there clear criteria for inclusion into a given category? Are these im-

posed categories? Did the figures themselves think in these terms? And if they did, was it a principled commitment to a specific kind of Confucian influence or can it largely be seen as reflective of (the constraints imposed on them by) their times?

I offer three examples from the volume to flesh this set of reflections out, one from each of the *tacit-subordinate-explicit* categories. First, we might consider chapter three from Lee Yu-Ting on the *Meiroku Zasshi* (*Meiji Six Magazine*). O'Dwyer explicitly lists this chapter as an example "covering the tacit dimension to the Confucian influence in Japan's Meiji-era modernization" (xx). However, while as Lee acknowledges that "there is little direct debate over Confucianism in the *Meiroku Magazine,*" he qualifies this by noting, "references and allusions to Confucian ideas are frequent, and for diverse purposes" (34). To cite two examples, Fukuzawa Yukichi, whether strategically or genuinely, explicitly names (and blames) Confucianism for Japan's current subservient global status (36)—this hardly seems tacit. Further, Nishi Amane explicitly credits Confucius, Mencius, and other well-known Confucian figures and texts with positively informing Japanese culture (36)—again, it is unclear how this is tacit. Lee convincingly demonstrates (to this reader) that the number of times personages, texts, and Confucian-derived ideas are cited by the *Meirokusha* raises the question as to how this can be deemed tacit, even generally speaking. The *Meirokusha* were aware of their use of Confucian categories and often used them explicitly, regardless of it was for critical or celebratory ends. Lee's framework of Confucianism as target, pathway, or instrument is helpful in this respect, but I struggle to read any (or all) as being tacit. Indeed, Lee even notes that differences notwithstanding, hard lines cannot be drawn even between the latter two categories (42). This means that even if we could (rightly, I think) identify certain invocations of Confucian categories as tacit (however defined) or "subtle" (as Lee does on page 45), we would still struggle to know when its instrumental use is tacit/subtle or not, especially in the absence of clear criteria.

O'Dwyer enlists Masako Racel's chapter as an example of a "subordinate" use of Confucianism (xxi), but again, I struggle with where to draw the line between "subordinate" and "tacit." Racel, for her part,

convincingly demonstrates Shimoda Utako's complex relationship with Confucianism throughout her life, as I noted above in the book summary. To say that a move from being critical of Confucianism's restrictive views on women and lack of identification with Confucianism to (strategically, perhaps) embracing Confucianism to resist the tide of radical Western ideologies like socialism and feminism is "subordinate," might be correct in some sense (and I am sympathetic to reading Shimoda this way), but when put in conversation with the *Meirokusha* (to stick with the example—but others could be used), I am less clear on what constitutes a "subordinate" use of Confucianism, even if we account for differences in historical context. Shimoda may have strategically subordinated Confucianism toward the end of female empowerment and anti-Western Japanese identity formation, but I have trouble seeing (at least some of) the *Meirokusha*'s uses of Confucianism (either for reifying tradition or critically overcoming it) as being any less "subordinate." Maybe both Shimoda's and the *Meirokusha*'s usages are "subordinate." But then what difference is there between a "subordinate" use and a "tacit" one? Are these meaningful distinctions?

To round this out, we might consider the categorization of Han Shuting's chapter on Sakuma Shōzan as an "explicit" use of Confu-cianism (xxii-xxiii). Sakuma's usages are explicit according to O'Dwyer because he used (1) a classic Neo-Confucian approach to justify the publication of a dictionary and to study abroad and (2) Confucian ideals and exemplars to justify arguments for studying Western technology (xxiii). Again, though, arguably the *Meirokusha* and Shimoda (among others) were engaged in similar methodologies, contexts notwithstanding. Lee and Racel note that regardless of critical or celebratory posture, the *Meirokusha* and Shimoda were influenced by Confucianism and used Confucian categories toward a range of ends. Does that mean Sakuma's usage is "subordinate"? Or is it "tacit"? Or, on the contrary, can we read the *Meirokusha* and Shimoda as engaging in "explicit" uses of Confucian categories? This is not to say the *tacit-subordinate-explicit* framework is meaningless, though; I happen to think it can do helpful conceptual work. That said, greater synthesis and clarification across chapters is needed to do this.

IV. State Co-optation

The rest of my review will be dedicated to exploring the theoretical and political stakes of (what I take to be) one of the primary objectives of the volume—namely, the recovery of a kind of Confucianism from historical abuse and co-optation by the state. This is most explicitly stated in O'Dwyer's and Jiang's final chapter, but several other chapters speak to this aim in one way or another. To focus on the final chapter for a moment, O'Dwyer and Jiang argue for a "conscientious" Confucianism that can avoid cooptation from state-centric projects of global self-assertion while nevertheless affirming and propagating potentially universal Confucian values and practices (186). Whether we consider the Shibunkai of the 1930s, contemporary China, or perhaps other historical examples in other chapters, the message seems clear enough—Confucianism has been politicized in ways that have given it a bad reputation. Rather than allow actors like Xi Jinping, the CCP, and (perhaps) the new meritocratic Confucians (e.g. Jiang Qing, Daniel Bell and Wang Pei, Tongdong Bai) to define what Confucianism is for our contemporary moment, O'Dwyer and Jiang argue (somewhat similarly to Sungmoon Kim and others—though there are significant distinctions), that we need to recover alternative, less-state centric forms of Confucianism.

The historical case studies in this volume underscore this point in several ways. We might consider three examples. First, Qi's focus on Matsumiya in chapter one reminds (or informs) the reader that historical cooptation of Confucianism is arguably as old as Japanese modernity. Though Matsumiya held his own partisan loyalties in his time, his effort to synthesize Shinto, Confucianism, and Buddhism can be seen as genuinely ecumenical and even-handed, even if it was put by Matsumiya toward partisan, pro-Shinto ends. Moreover, when we turn to the twentieth century, we witness how such measured approaches can (and were) politicized toward problematic imperial ends. Second, Chang's survey of the contextual turns of "Imperial Way" (*kōdō*) and "Kingly Way" (*ōdō*) Confucianism from the Edo to Showa periods in chapter seven reminds us that a variety of contexts and actors can (and did) contribute to the politicization and marginalization of

salutary forms of Confucianism over several centuries. The obstacles facing modern or contemporary Confucianism, then, have deep roots and ostensibly require sustained, coordinated action to overcome. Finally, Dufourmont's sobering analysis of Yasuoka's and the LDP's politicization of Confucianism in the post-war era reminds us that, even though Confucianism is not enjoying the heyday it once did, this is not pure happenstance. In fact, we might go as far as to conclude that it was precisely because of such politicizations of Confucianism before, during, and after the war that we find ourselves where we are in the twenty-first century. Confucianism's potential obsolescence in Japan is a product of politicized abuse toward nationalist ends.

When we consider what led to such co-optation, the answers seem to cohere across the volume as well. In many cases, state co-optation of Confucianism was facilitated by scholarly and/or lay concerns over a sense of insecurity or loss of Japanese culture. To take but one instance of this, consider Yamamura's analysis of Inoue in chapter five. In the context of mid-late Meiji, Inoue was concerned by what he perceived as an increasing Western influence on Japan and its loss of a certain sense of its culture and social order. Of course, Inoue's approach can be problematized in several ways, not the least of which being his reliance on Yangming learning, which many nativists of previous generations would have viewed as "too Chinese" and not "properly Japanese." However, the point still remains: since the Meiji era, Japan was becoming too Westernized, too democratic, too Christian. Therefore, Inoue enlisted his philosophical talents toward the end of shoring up Japan's social order. Regardless of his motives, this approach opened his recovery of a certain kind of Confucian learning up to state co-optation. As O'Dwyer notes, like Martin Heidegger and Carl Schmitt, Inoue Tetsujiro's early work is largely understudied due later state co-optation (xxiii). Such concerns about state co-optation of Confucianism appear less the exception than the norm; perhaps, co-optation is even cyclical in nature.

This brings us back, then, to O'Dwyer and Jiang and the critiques and solutions they pose to Confucianism's marginalization. As a reminder, generally, they take issue with forms of Confucianism co-opted by the state for "exemplary" nationalistic purposes. In particular,

though, they take issue with contemporary efforts by Jiang Qing and Daniel A. Bell to systematize a theory of Confucian polity. While they remain sympathetic to Jiang's issues with the Western imposition of liberal democratic norms across the globe, chief among O'Dwyer's and Jiang's concerns is a "total ignorance of the role Confucian Kingly Way ideology played in the justification for Japanese imperialism" (194–5). They worry that Jiang Qing is insufficiently attentive to the ways his project of Confucian revival can be coopted by the state—namely, Xi Jinping's CCP—to the detriment of Confucianism in China, Japan, and elsewhere. Jiang Qing is not solely to blame, though. Chinese Straussians (e.g. Liu Xiaofeng) and others have reinforced such approaches to China's Confucian heritage. In response, O'Dwyer and Jiang—following Stephen Angle, Joseph Chan, Sungmoon Kim, and others—push to "stake out a space for Confucian values reconfigured within a protected domain of conscience, belief, and associational life, guaranteed by basic liberties and freedoms of association" (197). In affirming such political and legal commitments, conscientious Confucians might concede the contingent and particular East Asian cultural origins of different Confucian practices and doctrines but, importantly, they deny the state any exclusive authority to define those practices and beliefs, thereby allowing potentially universal Confucian values to be indigenized in different contexts in ways suited to those contexts (197–8).

However, even though O'Dwyer and Jiang present compelling critiques and solutions, some unresolved issues and tensions persist for this reviewer. For starters, both Kang Haesoo's recovery of Anh and Joo's complicity in the Japanese empire (chapter eight) and Park Junhyun's recovery of Takada Shinji's philosophical defense of the Japanese empire (chapter nine) raise questions about how to assess intent, effects, and the constraints of one's given context. Are we to blame Anh and Joo with the same degree of scrutiny as Takada for aiding and abetting the Japanese empire through Confucian justifications? And to what extent can we say that Anh and Joo were simply a product of their time or less culpable given power differentials and the non-ideal or constrained circumstances in which they found themselves? Or is there something to be said for strategic appeals to the state for greater ends? Does it

matter at all that some of Anh's and Joo's Korean contemporaries (e.g. the Donghak revolters, Seo Jae-pil, Choe Ik-hyeon, Shin [Sin] Chae-ho, etc.) held few qualms about subtly and outrightly criticizing the Japanese empire, often from (neo)Confucian perspectives? How do we assess intent, culpability, and agency in such circumstances? This series of questions is relevant because we might also introduce them to the debate between democratic Confucians and meritocratic Confucians. Appeals to, and complicity with, the state are not always regarded as negative aspects.; indeed, such strategic actions are often the basis for realistic (i.e. non-quixotic) political and social change. Further, if meritocratic Confucians are making their case strategically (or, at the very least, within the constraints of being under the CCP as perhaps other, geographically dispersed Confucians may not be), how does that affect the terms of the debate? Is working with the state to enact genuine, Confucian-based political and social change always wrong? Do Confucians not have the agency to attempt to co-opt (or at least pressure) the state in return? Or does the state (co-optation) always win out in the end?

The second set of unresolved issues and tensions are related to the first set, and they deal with the relationship between state partiality and criticism. To return to chapter one, we will remember that Matsumiya Kanzan balanced his ecumenical outlook on the three religions (Shinto, Confucianism, Buddhism) with a preference for Shinto, at least in Japan. And while this led to co-optation some two centuries or so later, it seems relevant to note that, within his context, his partiality to Shinto did not prevent him from criticizing would-be "co-religionists." Regardless of his motivations, Matsumiya was a strident critic of *kokugaku* scholars as well as Ogyū Sorai's followers. In other words, preference for (or even partiality toward) the state need not equal blindness or an inability to critique. Meritocratic Confucians, at least on my reading, have not baptized the CCP and absolved it of any wrongdoing. Similarly, democratic Confucians seem less than willing to endorse everything that liberal democracies claim is good for the world. Put simply, there is much grey area, and all sides seem willing to engage in considered and measured critique. This should not prevent robust debate. It is merely a call to clarify the terms of such debate and

ensure that our own preferences and ideological commitments do not stand in the way healthy and vigorous dialogue. Any vision and political alignment can be accused of being co-opted by *some* state (or states)—meritocratic and democratic, included.

Finally, I would like to consider the question of totalitarianism. O'Dwyer and Jiang (and perhaps other authors in the volume) are (rightly!) concerned with the potential rise of Confucian-inspired totalitarianism. Still, I cannot help returning to the chapters from Alexandra Mustățea and Eddy Dufourmont and querying what counts at "totalitarianism." As reminder, both Mustățea and Dufourmont are engaged in projects of recovery. Mustățea balances Watsuji's *Ethics* and *History of Ethical Thought in Japan* to encourage us to see potential for the universalistic value of Confucianism as a critique of totalitarianism. Dufourmont problematizes simplistic readings of Yasuoka Masahiro as a totalitarian in favor on one that might view him as conservative—though, that is also up for debate. In short, both Mustățea and Dufourmont challenge dismissive impulses toward categorizing certain political and intellectual moves as "totalitarian." This seems like a fruitful approach not only with Watsuji and Yasuoka, but perhaps also with meritocratic Confucians. Could they be engaged in a similar endeavor to those of Watsuji and Yasuoka—namely, critiquing totalitarianism in terms that might read as "totalitarian" itself? Given our current geopolitical climate, it might be tempting to assuage fears that meritocratic Confucianism could usher in a China-led "Asian Century" in opposition to the longstanding hegemony of Western liberal democracy (Auslin 2017; Zhu 2017). And perhaps such moves are necessary. But part of the challenge here is that it seems we are still very much beholden to outmoded debates that hamper our discussions—debates that include implicit assumptions about "the end of history" (Fukuyama 1992), "clashes of civilizations" (Huntington 1996), and "Asian values" (Jenco 2013), among others. What might it look like to uphold Confucian values as of global significance without reducing them to their compatibility with liberal democracy? How can we ensure Confucian legacies neither harbor a Sinocentric bias, limit human flourishing, nor become fetishized as culturally specific objects of inclusion in a (still?) globalizing world? These are thought-

provoking questions that, in my opinion, merit sustained consideration and the *Handbook of Confucianism in Modern Japan* gestures at them in productive and insightful ways. Its contribution is likely to stimulate further research, hopefully extending to the examination of Confucian legacies in Southeast Asian contexts (such as Vietnam, Singapore, Myanmar) and diasporic communities. On that account, I whole-heartedly recommend it.

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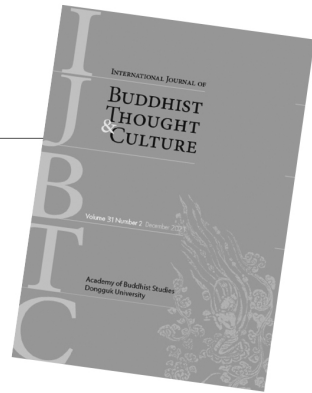*Journal of Korean Religions*
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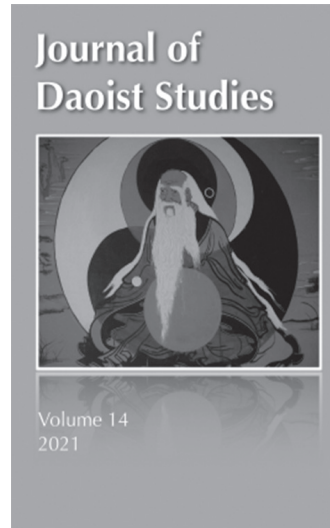
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