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Confucius and Fanaticism

Tu Weiming describes the ideal Chinese thinker as "a scholar-official who is informed by a profound historical consciousness, well-versed in the fine arts of poetry, music, and calligraphy, and deeply immersed in the study of government."¹ According to Confucius, the fully cultivated moral agent is the *jun-tzu* and often as "gentleman," though literally meaning "lord's son," a *jun-tzu* has developed a central harmony of certain attributes, such as *jen*, *chun*, *ch'ang*, *shu*, *yi*, and *yi*, and a knowledge of *li* and *wen*, that are required for moral action.

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April 2001

The central quality for the *jun-tzu* is *jen*, most often translated as "benevolence." *Jen*, which can be described as a general concern for others, is the foundation of right action. In the very character of the word, we can see the social aspect of benevolence. The character consists of the ideograms of "person" and the number two. Simply from the symbol, one can ascertain that *jen* necessitates more than one person. It rests on the premise of a society of interacting people in which it can manifest itself. The two characters that compose the ideogram for the number two are often thought of as depicting a person's relationship to another.



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Tu Weiming describes the ideal Chinese thinker as “a scholar-official who is informed by a profound historical consciousness, well seasoned in the fine arts of poetry, lute, and calligraphy, and deeply immersed in the daily routine of government.”¹ According to Confucius, the fully cultivated moral agent is the *chun-tzu*. Translated often as “gentleman,” though literally meaning “lord’s son,” a *chun-tzu* has developed a central harmony of certain attributes, such as *jen*, *hsueh*, *chung*, *shu*, *yong*, and *yi*, and a knowledge of *li* and *wen*, that are required for moral action.

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in the *Analects*--105 times. Fifty-eight of the *Analects*' 499 chapters are dedicated to the discussion of *jen*, making it the subject most attended to in the whole collection.² *The Analects* are, of course, composed of the sayings of other men besides Confucius, but even they were at least his pupils. Emphasizing the necessity of *jen*, Confucius said, "It is only the benevolent man who is capable of liking or disliking other men"/(IV.3).³ Likewise, "Of our neighbourhoods benevolence is the most beautiful. How can the man be considered wise who, when he has the choice, does not settle in benevolence?"/(IV.1).

The requirement of *jen* is to "Love your fellow men"/(XII.22), but what is its foundation? The Confucian gentleman gains this perspective on humanity by *shu*--reciprocity, or the ability to liken oneself to others. When asked by a student whether there was a single word that can guide all of one's life, Confucius answered, "Wouldn't it be *shu*? Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire"/(XV.24). Here we see that Confucius recognized that a good moral agent must see herself in others, using herself as a measure to gauge them (IV.15). After all, "If I am not a man among other men, then what am I to be?"/(XVIII.6).⁴ Confucius asserts that as humans we live with other humans and that this is as fundamental as any aspect of our being. We are all "men among other men." For a person to imagine herself as an island is fruitless because in such an isolated state, she cannot find fulfillment.⁵ People, to a certain extent, though not fully, define themselves by their relationships with others, and hence the concern for other people, *jen*, follows naturally.

Shu is the method by which a *chun-tzu* learns what is benevolent, but it is the virtue *chung* that puts it into practice. Though in modern Chinese *chung* means loyal, in the days of Confucius it meant something like "doing one's best." The meaning one might derive directly

from the character, which consists of a heart and the symbol for the concept “center,” coincides nicely with the classical definition from an early collection by Chia Yi of Confucian concepts: “Concern for and benefiting issuing right from the centre of you.”⁶

One of Confucius’ brightest students remarked that he examined himself daily on three counts. Recognizing the significance of the virtue *chung*, he first asked himself, “In what I have undertaken on another’s behalf, have I failed to do my best (*chung*)?”(I.4). When a student asked Confucius about benevolence, the master replied, “when dealing with others do your best (*chung*)”(XIII.19). Benevolence then has two components--*shu* and *chung*. The former is not a virtue, but the method by which a gentleman may come to know benevolence; the latter is the virtue of doing one’s utmost to apply benevolence.

The relationships that people have with each other are many and varied. Confucius only talks of five relationships in particular, but if we include the feminine counterparts, most relationships can be related to at least one of these easily enough. They are ruler and minister, father and son, husband and wife, older brother and younger brother, and friend and friend. None of the participants in any of these relationships is equal to the others. In all cases, one of the agents is superior, and naturally, the other is inferior. Consequently, each person has certain obligations and duties that pertain to his position.

All can achieve *jen*; “no sooner do I desire it than it is there”(VII.30). From this we know that morality is not limited to a particular class or those with money, and thus Confucius took students from all economic and social levels. Though people may be born with the same moral potential, no two people are equal. Whether it be education, intelligence, knowledge of the rites, position in the family, or age, some factor will distinguish one person from another, and

this separation inherently creates a natural hierarchy of moral agents. Confucius acknowledged the importance of each position in the hierarchy (VI.30), but did not believe in moral equality. No person should be treated with a blind indifference to his unique position; rather, he should be treated in a manner appropriate to his location in the matrix of society.

The correlation of unique responsibilities with unique social positions, an important aspect of Confucian thought, is embedded in the Rectification of Names. The name of one's place in society implies certain duties, and these duties give the name part of its value and meaning. To call a man a son is to point out his position in the web of obligations in the world and likewise for other names. Conversely, failing to fulfill these duties constitutes grounds to losing the respective title. "If something has to be put first, it is, perhaps, the rectification of names," Confucius told a questioning student. "When names are not correct, what is said will not sound reasonable," and complete disorder will subsequently follow, but "when the gentleman names something, the name is sure to be usable in speech, and when he says something this is sure to be practical. The thing about the gentleman is that he is anything but casual when speech is concerned"/(XIII.3). The *chun-tzu* has the cultivation to know how to appropriately correlate names with reality and is keen to the seriousness of the matter. Therefore, when he speaks, his words will be intelligible and meaningful.

The *chun-tzu* must also know and observe the rites, or *li*. By rites, Confucius refers to all rituals, from the ceremonies associated with paying respect to the dead all the way to social etiquette, including various customs, conventions and manners.⁷ So important are the rites that Confucius said, "Do not look unless it is in accordance with the rites; do not listen unless it is in accordance with the rites; do not speak unless it is in accordance with the rites; do not move

unless it is in accordance with the rites”/(XII.1). Clearly, learning the rites is a matter that Confucius considered utterly critical.

Li is primarily an expression of *jen*. Confucius said, “The gentleman has morality as his basic stuff and by observing the rites puts it into practice”/(XV.18). Morality needs a form, such as a rule or custom, through which it can take effect. “Any act that puts a principle into effect will, in fact, be an exemplification of some rule or other,” asserts D.C. Lau. “This dialogue between rule and principle constitutes the essence of Confucius’ moral thinking.”⁸ For Confucius, rules and principles may certainly be thought of as different only by degree. Lau, I think, is pointing to the application of *li*, the specific action, in articulation of *jen*, the general moral notion.

With a firm grasp of *li*, the *chun-tzu* “moves with an effortless grace within the framework of fixed convention, informing every action with consideration and respect for the other person.”⁹ And after all, the purpose of the rites is to create a smooth flow of social interactions. More than that, *li* injects the energy of *jen* into human relations causing actions to become harmonious, not just right.¹⁰ For example, people will *revere* their ruler, not merely *obey* him. In other words, *li* has a certain legitimacy because it is sustained by *jen*. This is why Confucius said, “When those above love the rites, none of the common people will dare be irreverent”/(XIII.4).

Given this background, one can see how *jen* needs *li* to give it “a concrete context for the successful execution of *jen*-actions.”¹¹ Without the ceremony, the moral principle would remain an intention with no expression. This word ‘ceremony’ connotes a certain emptiness, and without *jen*, that is exactly what it would be--hollow convention. Confucius was a stickler for

ritual, but not a zealot about ceremony for its own sake, and without doubt, it was his commitment to *jen* that led him to say, “The gentleman is devoted to principle but not inflexible in small matters”/(XV.37).

The rites, being more than empty customs, have a purpose to fulfill. Confucius’ student Yu Tzu said, “Of the things brought about by the rites, harmony is the most valuable”/(I.12).

Referring to a ruler, the master himself said, “If he is unable to govern a state by observing the rites and showing deference, what good are the rites to him?”/(IV.13). *Li* is charged with an objective; without such an aim, it is meaningless.

Li represents the accumulation of past moral knowledge and thus has great authority.¹²

This reverence for history is so great that when one of his students asked what to do with the younger disciples who knew the details of the rites but did not understand the basic moral principles, Confucius admonished him for not understanding what is more urgent and should be taught first (XIX.12). The existing rites have been considered with great care by the generations before and contain great moral insight. If people follow the conventions without knowledge of the underlying morality, society will, for the most part, run smoothly.¹³ Confucius ends the lesson by claiming that, in fact, it is only the sage who will ever “see it through to the end” and understand the full import of the rites. The sage can see the broad meaning behind the details, whereas “The common people can be made to follow a path,” declares Confucius, “but not to understand it”/(VIII.9).

Several qualities are necessary, but not sufficient, to make a gentleman. The understanding and observance of *li* is certainly one of them. Confucius was emphasizing this point when he said, “Unless a man has the spirit of the rites, in being respectful he will wear

himself out, in being careful he will become timid, in having courage he will become unruly, and in being forthright he will become intolerant”/(VIII.2).

Along with *jen* and *li*, Confucius also highly valued courage, or *yong*. Though not as important as either of the above virtues, *yong* is still a requisite virtue for the gentleman. Confucius said, “A benevolent man is sure to possess courage”/(XIV.4), and “Faced with what is right, to leave it undone shows a lack of courage”/(II.24). Courage, however, must be used “in the service of morality.”¹⁴ Without morality, a gentleman with courage will make trouble (XVII.23), and without the spirit of the rites, a courageous man will be unruly (VIII.2). The force of courage is powerful and necessary for the *chun-tzu* to be an effective moral agent, but it can also be very dangerous if not surrounded by other virtues.

Confucius was emphatic about the importance of learning, or *hsueh*, stressing it on many occasions. Without loving learning, said Confucius, benevolence will lead to foolishness; cleverness, to deviation from the right path; trustworthiness, to harmful behavior; forthrightness, to intolerance; courage, to insubordination; unbending strength, to indiscipline (XVII.8). Along with *jen* and *li*, learning is required to complete the gentleman.

Enthusiasm for acquiring knowledge and understanding is one of the most basic characteristics of a gentleman. Confucius was never one to praise himself and denied that he was a gentleman, much less a sage. He did say, however, that “In a hamlet of ten households, there are bound to be those who are my equal in doing their best for others and in being trustworthy in what they say, but they are unlikely to be as eager as I am to learn”/(V.28). Likewise revealing his zeal for *hsueh*, he said, “I was not born with knowledge but, being fond of antiquity, I am quick to seek it”/(VII.20).

The content of the gentleman's learning is *wen*, often translated as "culture," "pattern," "literature," or as an adjective, "refined." Considering these translations together, one might understand *wen* as the pattern of the interactions of people or the culture of civilization. *Wen* also consists of the refinements that suit a gentleman. Some of these refinements are skills that one can master such as calligraphy, archery or charioteering. *Wen* is also composed of a knowledge of concrete material which can be committed to memory such as literature, music and the rites. "Be stimulated by the Odes, take your stand on the rites and be perfected by music"/(VIII.8), spoke the master indicating the three most important aspects of *wen*.

Literary text of Confucius' time consisted predominately of the Odes. Though today we are left with only the verbal content of the Odes, they were originally songs, not mere poems, and "may serve to stimulate the imagination"/(XVII.9). As accounted for in the *Analects*, a father once told his son, "Unless you study the Odes you will be ill-equipped to speak"/(XVI.13). Once a gentleman has mastered the Odes he can then refer back to them in conversation for guidance in social interactions. Confucius said, "The pelt of a tiger or a leopard, shorn of hair, is no different from that of a dog or a sheep"/(XII.8). His point is that along with the inner qualities like *jen*, the outer refinements are also needed to distinguish the *chun-tzu* from the common man.¹⁵ With a knowledge and understanding of *wen*, the gentleman can fluidly move through the "pattern" of society and gracefully maneuver through delicate social situations.

Given this context in *wen*, the subtle shades of *hsueh* can be better explained and comprehended. *Hsueh* is most commonly translated as "to learn" or "to study". Aspects of both English words help us understand the Chinese, but neither by itself quite captures the meaning of *hsueh*. One might say: "I am studying Spanish." Or she might say: "I am learning Spanish."

“Study” refers to an endeavor that can go on indeterminately. “Learn,” on the other hand, is a success verb and connotes the intent of mastery. Studying does not entail learning, but learning does presuppose studying. Therefore, one must study X in order to learn X, but not vice versa. If one has mastered the Spanish language, when she says, “I studied Spanish,” she is accenting the absence of a conclusion to her education in the language. If she were to say, “I learned Spanish,” she is pointing to the fact that she has, at least to a certain extent, mastered the language. In this sense, we can also see how “to learn” pertains to the acquisition of a skill. One does not study a skill; she learns it. So when Confucius says that a gentleman should *hsueh* the Odes, he means that one should *learn* them with the intent to master them so that he will have them at his beckoning when he needs them. Also, he knows that although the Odes can be memorized, they will never be completely mastered. A *chun-tzu* will constantly read and reread them, and in this sense, *hsueh* is like “study.”¹⁶

Though acting morally requires concrete knowledge of such things as the rites and the Odes, Confucius does not depict moral action as a process wherein one merely refers back to a textbook of sorts to find the “answer” to a moral dilemma. Rather, acting morally is a skill¹⁷ that can be “*hsueh*-ed.” The gentleman, by his cultivation, synthesizes the internal qualities with the external and thus carries with him an ability, not a list of rules. The *chun-tzu*, one might say, is an artisan whose medium consists of the interactions of people. His skill consists in shaping these relations into a harmony.

Chinese philosophy, Confucian philosophy in particular, has often been accused of lacking critical thought.¹⁸ Perhaps it is a different kind of thought, certainly not a thematization of analytical thinking, or a set procedure for decision, but to deny the existence of a legitimate

method of evaluation simply reflects a poor understanding of Confucius. His thinking is more of a mindfulness, a practical consideration of different factors, such as *jen* and *li*. Confucius advocates that people follow the conventions established by history, but he does not promote blind faith in rites and customs. Rather, Confucius reflects deeply on his practices and examines the rites with careful attention. The prominence of learning is without doubt, but this learning cannot go unaccompanied. "If one learns from others but does not think, one will be bewildered," said the master (II.15). Studying the rites and the Odes must be tempered by thinking (*ssu*).

Thinking is a significant part of successful moral agency, but it should only check learning, not replace it. After spending a whole day and night in thought without eating or sleeping, Confucius left the experience having gained nothing and concluded that "it would have been better...to have spent the time in learning"/(XV.31). Similar to the way in which *li* should be learned prior to, and often completely without, understanding what it is based on, one should follow the path of learning even if she is never to evaluate it. At least something would be gained, whereas thinking alone without learning will accomplish little.¹⁹

The following passage illustrates Confucius' critical evaluation of two rites in particular.

The Master said, 'A ceremonial cap of linen is what is prescribed by the rites. Today black silk is used instead. This is more frugal and I follow the majority. To prostrate oneself before ascending the steps is what is prescribed by the rites. Today one does so after having ascended them. This is casual and, though going against the majority, I follow the practice of doing so before ascending. (IX.3)

Clearly, in this instance, Confucius is analyzing the rites and not just mindlessly heeding them. The criterion that he uses is their conformity to the moral principle upon which they are founded.²⁰ Wearing the silk cap shows just as much reverence as the linen one, and all things being equal, it is better to be frugal than extravagant (III.4). So the practice of wearing the silk hat is in accordance with the moral notion upon which it was grounded. The act of lying prostrate before ascending is a way of requesting permission from the ruler to climb the steps; lying prostrate after ascending, however, presumes permission. The purpose of the gesture is to show respect for the ruler; therefore, Confucius lies down before ascending because this act demonstrates the proper reverence, thus conforming to the underlying moral principle. In fact, A.C. Graham writes that the “rebuilding of contemporary culture” is precisely this “process of selecting and evaluating past and present models.”²¹

But how does one correlate the rule to the principle or the principle to the rule? The answer lies in *yi*.

Yi is sometimes translated as “moral” (adjective), indicating its fundamental position. Other translations include “righteous” or “right,” and for the remainder of this work, the latter of these two will be used. Rightness has a grounding outside of the agent, and thus the agent must appeal to *yi* to find the appropriate action. If an act is morally fitting, then it is considered right, or *yi*, and its being right remains separate from the feelings of the agent involved. In this way, *yi* is the standard by which all moral acts are deemed appropriate or inappropriate. Because *yi* is the ultimate criterion, no further standard remains by which *yi* might be gauged.²²

If one returns to the virtues already discussed, she can see how *yi* has been present throughout. In evaluating whether or not a practice corresponded to the underlying moral notion,

it was *yi* to which the agent was appealing. The concept of fittingness pervades Confucius' thought. Though devoid of moral content, the Rectification of Names fits this idea quite well. Words must match a certain reality, and rites must match the moral notion; both must appeal to a standard of fit. *Yi*, then, is "resolutely situational and pragmatic,"²³ a making the most out of a particular set of conditions. So, for Confucius, right action is the fitting or appropriate action. *Yi*, then, might be considered the moral principle that the act should fit the occasion.

The *chun-tzu* is the ideal moral agent--cultivated by *wen*, immersed in *li*, inspired by *jen*, able to think, and involved in government. Based on the primacy of a human world in which social relations are the basic components, Confucius views government as the highest forum wherein the gentleman can execute his superior morality to guide others in harmonious interactions. Therefore, the culmination of all moral preparation is holding a government position, and Confucius' main task was, ultimately, to train government workers. If the government were run by those unworthy to take office, society would surely exist in a state of chaos. As explained above, Confucius did not hold equality as a virtue. To him the reality of the world was that people are morally different, and, therefore, not equal (though perhaps they began with equal moral potential). This is not to say that each person does not hold an important place in the hierarchy of society, but society is a hierarchy nonetheless. Aware that a few men would control the fate of many, he did his best to instill morality in those few. These few men would manage the others by way of the government, and so Confucius trained his disciples to be government officials.

The goal of the *chun-tzu* in office is to achieve the proper order of society, which is realized when there is harmony of man's inward states as well as among people and events in the

world. It is recognizable when man is at ease with his world.²⁴ Confucius offers a synthesized view of life, or perhaps we should say a view that was never de-synthesized to begin with, informed by the contemplation of texts, rites, the Odes, music, and stories of great historical figures.²⁵ The *chun-tzu* “embodies the traditional Confucian virtues, such as humanity, righteousness, wisdom, and ritual propriety.”²⁶ In his daily encounters, he confronts a world of varying circumstances and acts in a way that fits those circumstances. “Achieving harmony with the world is a temporal fittingness of one’s action to what is required by the actual, particular situation,” writes Antonio Cua, and this “concrete rationalism is a form of reasonableness rather than an abstract rationality that complies with logical canons.”²⁷

This reasonableness as a rightness, we can equate with *yi*. And from above we know that what is being fit together are actions and moral ideals. Notice that Confucius did not preach ideals in the forms of “archetypes that establish patterns of behavior” or “admit of programmatic articulation,”²⁸ like the commandments of the Bible. Rather, Confucian morals should be comprehended as *open*, not *complete*, terms. Open terms are not molded solely by moral viewpoints, but require additional judgments to discriminate their right- or wrongness. Complete terms, however, are formed by moral views alone. “To kill” requires a moral judgment to make it either right or wrong.²⁹ “Murder,” on the other hand, already includes a moral judgment and is thus a complete term; the words “right” or “wrong” are only needed as reminders. “For the agent reared in the tradition of the *Analects*, the moral notions, if they are deemed applicable to exigent cases, are open notions, that is, open to discriminating judgment,”³⁰ and the standard is *yi*. Of course, all moral terms require some qualification and judgment. Consider laws. They are extremely specific but still require interpretation in many cases. The moral terms of Confucius,

however, differ from those of Hare by such a great degree that the difference should be recognized and noted. I have used, and will continue to use, the expression "moral notion" to communicate this concept of an open moral term.

Several passages indicate Confucius' belief in the openness of moral notions.

The Master said, "The gentleman is devoted in principle but not inflexible in small matters."

(XV.37)

Tzu-hsia said, "If one does not overstep the bounds in major matters, it is of no consequence if one is not meticulous in minor matters." (XIX.11)

The Governor of She said to Confucius, "In our village there is a man nicknamed 'Straight Body'. When his father stole a sheep, he gave evidence against him." Confucius answered, "In our village those who are straight are quite different. Fathers cover up for their sons, and sons cover up for their fathers. Straightness is to be found in such behavior." (XIII.18)

The Master said, "In serving your father and mother you ought to dissuade them from doing wrong in the gentlest way. If you see your advice being ignored, you should not become disobedient but remain reverent. You should not complain even if in doing so you wear yourself out." (IV.18)

In these last two cases, the moral notions in point needed other factors to determine whether or not the act was *yi*, or right, thereby revealing the openness of the moral principle. Embracing the

view that one should testify against a criminal is, generally speaking, a good moral notion to have, and in most cases will be the right thing to do. To close the case there, however, is myopic. The gentleman must take into account other considerations to determine whether the act is ultimately right or wrong. In the case of XIII.18, the notion, when also determined by his reverence for his father, turns out to be wrong and inappropriate for the circumstances. In IV.18 we see the notion of persuading one to do right being determined to be wrong (or at least qualified) when taking into account parental reverence.

Though Confucius never lists a set of moral principles, neither does he claim they do not exist. Instead, he outlines moral notions by particular practices, allowing us to trace the underlying concepts by the contours of their application in real life. Remember, Confucius was a teacher, and he taught his students what to do in particular situations with particular people at particular times, always deferring to the immediate and concrete.³¹

To simply say that one action was appropriate, while another was not is to oversimplify the matter. The difficult part, of course, is to know how to recognize the standard of rightness--to recognize *yi*. We must remember certain qualities of the Confucian moral agent, the *chun-tzu*.

Let us return to the virtue *jen*. Linda Holler, from whom I will draw to augment Confucian ethics, conceives of acting morally as a "particular mode of being such that we are drawn out of ourselves and into action on behalf of others."³² Though never in her article does she mention Confucius, this notion corresponds quite well with *jen*. Professor Graham, recognizing the individual in the social context, presents *jen* as "the right balance between self and others, a precarious balance."³³

As we already know, the extent to which a gentleman has *jen* is based on *shu*, the ability

to liken himself to others and others to himself. Realizing that we are beings in the world and that “our world at the very core of its being is connected,”³⁴ Confucius declared that *shu* was the “single word which can be a guide to conduct throughout one’s life”/(XV.24). Again Holler presents a similar concept--that a person is “the counterpart of other selves.”³⁵ Confucius and Holler both notice that we depend on others to make us whole. Never falling into the Cartesian problem of other people, Confucius describes a world in which man exists amidst a context of other individuals, and this relatedness exists prior to any kind of separation of the self from others. In fact, though man is not completely defined by his position in the social web, a complete abstraction from it is no more than an illusion.

Words and events, like people, are not arbitrary or discrete; rather, they are fitting and connected to each other in the contextual nature of the world.³⁶ Nowhere is this more evident than in the Chinese language itself. Chinese verbs have no conjugation at all. Given a verb in isolation, tense, mood, and declension remain unknown. In fact, only hearing or reading the whole sentence allows these characteristics to be known. As with people, words have a meaning to themselves, but are largely defined and understood by the words that surround them.

Take for example the verb “to give.” Imagine that it has just been removed from an English sentence and been placed on its own. We find it in the form “gives.” Simply from this one word, we can ascertain numerous things about the sentence it came from. We know that the subject is singular, a third person, and that the action is in the present. A Chinese verb so removed would yield no more information than the content of the verb itself thus displaying the Chinese reliance on context to supply a considerably larger portion of the meaning. People, like words, are “not perceived as...agents who stand independent of their actions--but are

rather...defined functionally by constitutive roles and relationships as they are performed within the context of their specific families and communities--by *li*.”³⁷

In translating too, Chinese words are simply more ambiguous. The English words we use to define them often run a wide range of loosely related meanings. It is not uncommon to use a whole sentence to define a Chinese word to then discover that the definition still depends on other factors. To the extent that a Chinese word depends on context to define it is the extent to which it is undefined when alone. Because central concepts are surrounded by so much context, it should come as no surprise that in Chinese “the more crucial or central the concept, the greater the ambiguity.”³⁸ Coming from another language, many Chinese words can only be understood gradually and require the learner to draw from a broad background of years of speaking the language.

By *shu*, which is necessary for *jen*, the gentleman understands the connectedness of people in the social structure of the world. Accordingly, the better the *chun-tzu* can visualize himself as others and related to others, the more effective a moral agent he will be. This does not mean that the gentleman regards all the same. As we know, Confucius does not consider all people equal. “Obligation to love,” writes Lau, “decreases by degrees as it extends outwards,” beginning with the family and then stretching to neighbors, villagers, and so on.³⁹ Holler claims, “given our situatedness, the world narrows in such a way that we attend only to what immediately affects us.”⁴⁰ Though she maintains that we should overcome this situatedness, I think Confucius would say *that* we all have a position in society is unavoidable and certain obligations follow from that naturally. We have as much control over these duties as we do in choosing the station that demands them.

Combined with benevolence, of course, is the gentleman's knowledge of the rites, Odes and the rest of the content of *wen*. Finally, before the gentleman can act morally, he needs an understanding of the circumstances. Confucius' *chun-tzu*, therefore, needs a broad perspective on the world in which he lives. His attitudes toward others, the rites and Odes, and to the relevant facts of the situation all imply a certain mode of being.

This mode is an awareness of *li*, *shu*, and the relevant facts. This awareness is a sensitivity to these factors. It is not a distant observing, but an engaged participation. In this mode of awareness, the gentleman omits nothing relevant, and his surroundings and own knowledge reveal themselves as immediate and conspicuous, yet not as obstacles. This posture, grounded in *jen*, allows the possibility of recognizing an act as fitting, the possibility for moral action,⁴¹ i.e. the ability to recognize an event as no longer appropriate for the habitual or morally unnoticed. Take the case of Rosa Parks. Her action brought the everyday act of riding the bus from the domain of the routine onto the stage of morality. Before the Confucian gentleman can apply any of his skill or knowledge, he must be in a state of openness to interpret just such an event. Confucius' awareness of how times change and his willingness (enthusiasm, really) to critically examine the rites demonstrates his own openness.

The *chun-tzu* draws from a wide variety of sources to act morally, especially the history and collected wisdom that is embedded in the rites and the Odes. In this sense, the gentleman has a certain temporal regard. He must have an openness toward the past. By being open toward the past, the gentleman allows the possibility that his understanding of history may be wrong and consequently open to reinterpretation. Confucius acknowledged that times change and the rites must change with them, thus he said, "The Yin built on the rites of the Hsia. What was added and

what was omitted can be known. The Chou built on the rites of the Yin. What was added and what was omitted can be known”(II.23). Even though Confucius obviously valued what we can gain from the past, one can assert without doubt that Confucius encouraged its reinterpretation, as can be inferred from this passage and others above [(XIII.18),(IV.18)].

As the background against which we comprehend and act in our world, history can profoundly affect how we act in the present. Consider Thomas Jefferson. We generally admire him as one of the great defenders--indeed, one of the creators--of human rights, especially because of the words he wrote in the Declaration of Independence. In this day and age we read about all men being created equal and envision Jefferson and the other forefathers as intending our country to be a place where freedom would be for everyone. The fact that he owned slaves was seldom considered. When this piece of information became prominent, most notably in the case of Sally Hemings, we were forced to reinterpret the past. Perhaps he and the other forefathers did not conceive of a nation, as we have tended to believe, in which *everyone* was created equal. The recognition of these facts does not make our forefathers evil men, but it does require us to come to a new understanding of them.

Considering this appreciation for the past, the great respect Chinese have for elders is fitting. In making judgments, the old sage can refer to countless experiences over many decades. He has witnessed the effects that a small action may produce, and he has known many people with various personalities and motivations, making him an expert judge of character. The sage, because of his ability to see the connectedness of things in the world from a greater perspective, is a legitimate source of guidance. Confucius had so much reverence for the sage that he did not even consider himself to be one (VII.34). The sage is so rare that Confucius even claimed that he

had “no hope of meeting a sage”/(VII.26).

In regard to the present, the *chun-tzu* must have the openness to question his current situation, implying the possibility that it may be unfitting. The habit and taken-for-grantedness of every moment tempts the gentleman into a false sense of satisfaction with the status quo and creates in him docility. The *chun-tzu*'s finely-tuned awareness permits him to call into question the present state of affairs and causes him to contemplate his circumstances. “What’s going on?” Singer Marvin Gaye took this question, usually passed over as a mundane greeting, and loaded it with the message of a dying earth. His song made people evaluate what was going on in the world and whether their actions were appropriate. A question calls for reflection.

In walking down the street, the walking goes unnoticed. While eating, we do not think about our chewing. As I type now, I pay little attention to my fingers on the keys (until this sentence). The way people arrange themselves on the bus usually receives the same regard. But when Rosa Parks sat in the front, this ordinarily inconspicuous act took on a whole new meaning. Suddenly, people were forced to confront the issue of where one sat on the bus as a moral issue. The *chun-tzu* must have the awareness to recognize such an event as calling for moral consideration.

The Confucian gentleman must also have a regard for the future. From his knowledge of the Odes, the *chun-tzu* has come to cultivate his imagination (XVII.9), and this is the proper orientation toward what is to come. Founded on the belief that the world does not end when he does and that humanity will continue to inhabit this world, the gentleman must be able to imagine the possibility that his plans may create a destitute and horrible future and appraise them in light of his progeny. Consider the efforts taken to ensure that our economy benefits in the

short run, such as drilling for oil in wildlife refuges or allowing harmful amounts of toxic gas to enter the atmosphere. Occasionally, someone calls attention to our plans by offering his imagined picture of an earth with a destroyed environment, and it causes us to reconsider our plans and acknowledge the possibility that they are not fitting for future generations of people. In imagination, there is also the possibility of creating an environment in which humans may thrive. If this were not possible, a dead earth would be imminent. One could say that the creators of such above policies lack the ability, or simply refuse, to imagine the earth in more than a few years from the present as either better or worse than it is presently.

Observing Confucius' appreciation for the fluctuating nature of the world, we see why Roger Ames describes a person from the Chinese perspective as a human "becoming," rather than a human being; "something that one *does*, rather than what one *is*. It is how one behaves within the context of human community rather than some essential endowment that resides within one as a potential to be actualized."⁴² As time passes, the *chun-tzu* must constantly recreate himself amidst the changing events that surround him, "underscoring the primacy of process over form as a grounding presupposition in this tradition."⁴³ Confucius reveres the *how* over the *what*.

Professor Graham describes Confucius as one "who generally gives the impression of synthesizing a view of life from the contemplation of rites, texts, pieces of music, [and] persons in legend or history."⁴⁴ The way that Confucius' *chun-tzu* can fuse together different aspects of life is similar to Holler's description of human perception. Just as we hear a "melody rather than disjointed individual notes," read "a sentence rather than a hodge-podge of words," or see a whole object rather than a series of profiles, we create a "passive synthesis" of the structures

within the relational world.⁴⁵

A *chun-tzu* must also “explore the world as active or oriented to the world in an interested manner,”⁴⁶ to use Holler’s words, and I do not think she would disapprove of my correlating this with *chung*, especially since Confucius represents the world as a world of connected people. *Shu* enables the gentleman to see himself amidst this context of seemingly disjointed, but actually related entities in the world. *Chung* actively puts that sense of *shu* into effect. This “blending of perspectives into sense”⁴⁷ and then acting “in an interested manner” is exactly what it means to have *jen* and separates moral action from everyday action.

* * *

Learning the capacity to act morally was compared above to learning a skill. The gentleman is like a master artisan who works people into a harmony. Though all analogies have limits, I shall now create one that will help to communicate the way that the Confucian gentleman acts--the musician, in this case, the guitar player. Confucius would certainly approve, considering his love for music. After listening to the music of Shun, a virtuous ruler, he was so overwhelmed that “for three months [he] did not notice the taste of the meat he ate”/(VII.14). Valuing music so highly, Confucius advised his disciples to “be stimulated by the Odes, take your stand on the rites, and be perfected by music”/(VIII.8). And when he asked three of his students what they would like to do, he was in favor of the one who, after an afternoon bathing in the river, returned home singing poetry (XI.26). Music can quite literally create a harmony among men, capturing the ultimate goal of the *chun-tzu* in an aesthetic form.

Many philosophers tend to think that to be a moral agent one must separate himself from the situation and consider all the participants in a disinterested manner. Likewise, the musician

understands that she must put her guitar on the stand and study music theory, learning the significance of keys and dynamics. Just as it is the nature of human existence that we live among other people, the musician, by definition exists only in so far as she plays music. Notes on a page are not music; thus the guitarist must pick up her instrument and *play* to be a musician.

The musician must listen to the greats to develop her skill in the same way that the gentleman must learn the stories of historic figures and regard the wisdom of the elders. By imitating and evaluating them, she cultivates her own skill. If this skill is well developed, the strings, frets and pick go unnoticed, though at one time they were perceived as obstacles. In real life these obstacles may be things like new circumstances or new people.

Confucius said, “at sixty my ear was attuned”/(II.4).⁴⁸ The apt musician, too, has a finely tuned ear and a keen awareness of her context. Think of this context as her instrument, the other musicians, their music, the audience, the style, the key, and the meter in which she plays. If the key changes, she can follow because in learning (more than just studying) the theory, she grew to have every note of every key at her fingertips. Additionally, if the rhythm changes, she can adjust her sound to correspond with the new beat. The sound that she creates must be appropriate to the context of key, meter, style, etc. Similarly, the *chun-tzu* seeks to create a harmony among his people.

The grasp that the guitarist has of the notes in each key or the style of music being played is more than just a memorization. She knows all the notes of the D major scale, but while playing she need not refer back to them. Accordingly, the *chun-tzu* has an awareness of the Odes, but need not constantly recite them. In this kind of awareness, the musician “knows” which note to play without explicit thought or a reference to already learned information. In this

sense, playing music, like being a Confucian moral agent, involves a spontaneity. The basic notion is as follows.

In awareness of everything relevant to the issue I find myself moved towards X;
overlooking something relevant I find myself moved towards Y.⁴⁹

In the case of the musician, everything relevant would be all the elements of the above context. Therefore, with knowledge of these concepts, sensations, experiences, and facts, the musician plays the note that she becomes naturally inclined to play. With different knowledge, she would be inclined to play a different note. The gentleman operates in the same way. With full knowledge of a given circumstance, the rites, Odes, etc., he has a spontaneous inclination to act in a particular way. This manner of going about moral action is based on the assumption that motives for action materialize before the question "What should I do?" can even be asked.⁵⁰

One may be tempted to believe that because the gentleman acts on an inclination, all *chun-tzu*'s in the same circumstances would arrive at the same inclination, thus exposing a sort of determinism in Confucius. The idea is that the circumstances of the situation combined with the knowledge of the Confucian moral agent pronounce what action to take, leaving him with no actual choice in the matter. This is simply untrue. His knowledge and the circumstances certainly do lead him to an inclination, but every situation allows many ways that one can act fittingly. For this reason, the *chun-tzu* is best compared to the jazz musician. In jazz, the performers often follow a chart which simply displays the chord progressions, while in classical music, every note is accounted for. These charts allow the artist to improvise within a certain

context. Obviously in jazz, there is no one set of notes that the musician must play, and in life, there is no one way to be a mother, cousin or ruler. For Confucius, a situation does not always (although it may sometimes) demand that the actor choose between either one right course of action or an infinite number of wrong ones; rather, the emphasis is on whether the actor has the benevolence, courage, and knowledge of the rites to do what is fitting.

Moral action, as already stated, is based on a concern for others (*jen*) arrived at by a likening-to-oneself (*shu*) and doing one's best (*chung*). The musician has a similar motivation. She tries to create an accord with her fellow musicians, playing off them and for them. When appropriate, the guitarist takes center stage, and other times she shows deference to the other musicians by supporting them in the background, always aware of her relation to them by way of *shu*. In this way, she exhibits a concern for her companions in music much like *jen*. Like the gentleman, she does not function independently of others, and in fact, they are necessary to create the best sound, which is her ultimate goal.

Introducing *jen* into the analogy of the musician leads to another point. To the extent that her knowledge of theory, the legends of music, the other musicians, the key, meter, and fret board has developed into a sense, the guitarist will not have to consider these things in an overly-calculated way and can then focus on playing the right notes. For the gentleman, his awareness of everything relevant allows him to concentrate on achieving the harmony he seeks as opposed to dealing with more superficial obstacles. When the musician began playing music, the project was difficult. The strings and scales all presented themselves as obstacles. Yet with practice, she overcame them. The gentleman, likewise, must practice at being a moral agent. As one grows as a moral agent, he can reach a certain point at which all his actions are naturally in line

with that harmony. "At seventy I followed my heart's desires without overstepping the line"/(II.4), said Confucius. For Confucius, what the cultivated moral agent desired turned out to be right, in contrast to others who conceive of the supreme moral agent as desiring what is already established as right.

* * *

From this description of proper moral agency, we can come to understand improper moral agency. Omitting one of the necessary features of the *chun-tzu* would explain wrong action. Though *jên* is certainly the central theme of the gentleman, none of the parts alone will suffice to create the balance that he pursues as can be observed from the following passages.

The Master said, 'When there is a preponderance of native substance over acquired refinement, the result will be churlishness. When there is a preponderance of acquired refinement over native substance, the result will be pedantry. Only a well-balanced admixture of the two will result in gentlemanliness.'/(VI.18)

The Master said, 'If one learns from others but does not think, one will be bewildered. If, on the other hand, one thinks but does not learn from others, one will be in peril.'/(II.15)

The Master said, 'Unless a man has the spirit of the rites, in being respectful he will wear himself out, in being careful he will become timid, in having courage he will become unruly, and in being forthright he will become intolerant.'/(VII.2)

The Master said, 'Being fond of courage while detesting poverty will lead men to unruly

behavior.)/(VIII.10)

The Master said, '...To love benevolence without loving learning is liable to lead to foolishness.

To love cleverness without loving learning is liable to lead to deviation from the right path. To

love trustworthiness in word without loving learning is liable to lead to harmful behavior. To

love forthrightness without loving learning is liable to lead to intolerance. To love courage

without loving learning is liable to lead to insubordination. To love unbending strength without

loving learning is liable to lead to indiscipline.)/(XVII.8)

The Master said, '...Possessed of courage but devoid of morality, a gentleman will make trouble

while a small man will make a brigand.)/(XVII.23)

The Master said, '...The gentleman...dislikes those who, while possessing courage, lack the spirit

of the rites. He dislikes those whose resoluteness is not tempered by understanding.)/(XVII.24)

Clearly, all the qualities of the *chun-tzu* must be present if one is to come to a fitting spontaneous

inclination. The absence of one quality, due to poor education or natural ineptitude, is

understandable. Sometimes, however, there are those whose actions seem to be charged with a

whole other quality. Certain features set them apart from most of us who commit occasional acts

of wrongdoing. We call such people fanatics. How do we recognize such people? And what

can Confucius tell us about them?

Since Confucian moral ideas have never been used to examine fanaticism, I will refer to the moral philosophy of such figures as R.M. Hare, Gabriel Marcel, and Soren Kierkegaard who explicitly address fanaticism (“madness” in the case of Kierkegaard). Also, I will insert the analogy of the musician as a reminder that the Confucian moral agent is like someone with a well developed skill. As the many different qualities of which the Confucian *chun-tzu* is composed are necessary to maintain the balance that engenders fitting moral action, not one can be omitted. Occasionally, when one or more of these aspects is neglected or rejected, the imbalance becomes so intense that the person has extreme difficulty existing in the world with other humans. Such a person is a fanatic.

Oftentimes the fanatic has the wrong purpose, positing a particular moral code as the ultimate end in place of right action. We know that Confucius was acutely aware of this distinction, and he warned his students not to exercise the rites without the spirit of *jen* (XV.37, IX.3). Though Confucius obviously never spoke of them, he would argue that the actions of such figures as Mao, Mohammed, or Jesus would probably offer great guidance to one looking to act with *yi*. Obsessing over every detail of their lives, however, would be the equivalent of meticulously practicing the rites with no sense of *jen*. Marcel observed that the fanatic often centers not on an ideal, “but upon an individual who is the embodiment and source of the idea.”⁵¹

Marcel likewise noticed that texts can become the focus of a fanatic. As propaganda, these texts are used to spread the ideals that they embody. Distributed or read by a fanatic, however, these works can take on a whole new character for which they were not created. The fanatic obsesses about the words and in his passion forgets the underlying idea for which the

book is merely the medium. The way the Nazis used the works of Nietzsche to support their cause is a perfect example of this. Hare describes the fanatic as one who oversimplifies a principle or takes it too far, ignoring other principles that should override it.⁵² Here, we are not talking about particular principles, but the concept of absolutism, which allows no exceptions or compromises. This relates nicely with Confucius' claim about how the rites and Odes should not be regarded. The rites should express *jen*. Likewise, though many will disagree, the Bible should express Christianity, not be equated with it.

By forfeiting his ability to judge and replacing it with an explicit set of rules, the fanatic loses his autonomy, allowing himself to be possessed. This possessor, be it another person, text, or idea, determines the actions of the fanatic instead of the fanatic governing himself. The theme of possession runs through many aspects of fanaticism. This possession does not fit as well as some other aspects of the fanatic in the analogy of the musician, but it is certainly obvious that one who adheres to a piece of music, regardless of where the rest of the group is going with the song, has the wrong priority. She should be more concerned about how the song sounds, which means that she must do her part in creating a sound that fits with the group.

Challenging the *telos* of the fanatic begs an obvious question: if the fanatic is confused about the proper end to be pursued, what then is the proper end? First, one must accept, as Confucius did, the premise that all humans in the world are primarily social. In other words, living and interacting with other people is as fundamental to the human experience as anything else. As Marcel put it, man "finds his bearings in relation to other people, and also to physical objects, that are not only close to him in space but linked to him by a feeling of intimacy."⁵³ This then brings about a focus for human awareness. Since each of us is a "man among

men”/(XVIII.6), it is only fitting that *jen* be the proper *telos*. For the musician, this would be like saying that one particular style is not what is important, but rather an accord with the other musicians so that they create a unified sound.

The fanatic frequently lacks *jen*, and the source of this deficiency lies in one or both of the components of *jen--shu* and *chung*. The refusal to acknowledge that they are in the world with others and intimately connected to them is precisely the problem of some fanatics. Holler writes that the self as a separate being is an illusion.⁵⁴ This imaginary division between people results in an over-developed attitude of “us and them.” Subsequently, the fanatic identifies himself with a small group, severing his ties with the rest of the world and denying their connection to him.⁵⁵ Imagine if our musician tried to play a rock song while the rest of the group was playing in the style of baroque. This is not to say that different musicians cannot bring to the table different influences, but the production of anything resembling music is here completely precluded because of the incompatibility of the players.

Johannes Climacus (a pseudonym of Kierkegaard) uses the example of Don Quixote to illustrate “aberrant inwardness.” The quixotic fanatic has a “subjective madness, in which the passion of inwardness embraces a particular finite fixed idea,” but this fixed idea is something “which does not really concern anybody,”⁵⁶ except, of course, the fanatic himself. In this inwardness, the fanatic abandons certain norms such as *li* or *yi*. In their stead, he creates or adopts his own, rendering him inaccessible and unintelligible to others. It comes, then, as no surprise that the fanatic cannot recognize himself as a fanatic⁵⁷ and often makes the claim that he is misunderstood. To the fanatic in his isolated kingdom, everything does make sense, and his actions are based on the logical corollaries of his fanaticism.⁵⁸ To those of us outside of that

realm, his actions remain irrational. The fanatic also alters what is acceptable as a means to his end. In doing so, he becomes “numb and unresponsive to everything to which [his] own compass needle does not respond.”⁵⁹ This explains why a common symptom of fanaticism is an insensitivity to the fate of others. Take the case of the Nazi. He went to the extent of literally exterminating other people to achieve his end. There exists no greater example of insensitivity to and rejection of *shu*. Recall the guitar player. Imagine that she placed herself in a separate room from all the other musicians, but continued to play despite the fact that she could not hear them. Part of her skill is being able to play with others. Clearly, this is impossible if she refuses to listen to them. A fanatic lacks the level of awareness that Confucius contends a moral agent must have.

By rejecting *shu* and pretending that human beings are separate, discrete entities, the fanatic can pursue his own self-interest unchecked. Confucius was quite clear on this point. One must “overcome the self”/(XII.1) to act benevolently. In three chapters (XIV.12, XIX.1), the master said that the allure of profit can obscure what is right and the gentleman must “turn his thoughts to...what is right at the sight of gain”/(XVI.10).

Based on the “primacy of relation” between humans, argues Holler, one must regard larger horizons beyond that of self-interest.⁶⁰ Indeed, self-interest hinges on the belief that people are distinct units. If people and events between them are fundamentally connected, then any action that one takes to harm another will harm the actor, at least indirectly; thus, the illusion of self-interest is broken. The guitar player too, imagining that she is distinct from the others and playing for herself primarily, is delusional. Trying to outplay or play over her bandmates will make the song sound worse, not better.

Though it seems that for Confucius an extremely intense bent on personal gain would explain fanaticism, Hare describes the true fanatic as having motivations beyond self-interest. Hare also supplies a test congruent to Confucius' negative golden rule (XV.24) to distinguish the true fanatic from the merely self-interested moral actor. A true fanatic, claims Hare, will maintain his stance even if he were to reverse the positions and be the one whose interests were trampled upon. For example, if the Nazi were to find out that he was a Jew and then abandon his position that all Jews should be killed, he would be merely a self-interested agent. If he maintained his position against Jews and was prepared to suffer execution for this ideal, then he would be considered a true fanatic.⁶¹ In other words, Hare's fanatic recognizes *shu*, but proceeds to act regardless of it.

The recognition and then disregard of *shu* allows a poisonous overflow of *chung*. *Chung*, when translated as "doing one's best," is difficult to imagine as harmful to others, but here in the story of the Nazi, we observe the devotion of *chung* go unchecked. His fervor and loyalty to Hitler and Nazism went uncurbed by a regard for humanity in *shu*, and the result was great harm to others. In fact, this unregulated passion toward an idea, person, or text is one of the characteristics of the fanatic. Undoubtedly, *jen* must have both elements--*shu* and *chung*--to be successfully exercised.

Concurrent with Confucian thought is the notion of harmony and balance, and this is true of *jen* also. The *chun-tzu* must reach a careful balance between himself and others by way of *shu*. When this is achieved, the gentleman will instantaneously act with *jen*.⁶² Such a balance within the *chun-tzu* might be described as "reconciling his own self-respect with respect for others, his inner freedom with his outer responsibilities."⁶³ This harmony of self and others is

quite tenuous and can only be realized intermittently, but this does not mean that in those moments of failure the actor is a fanatic. Such moments are inevitable and actually the norm. The fanatic is characterized by one who rarely, probably never, achieves this balance and, in fact, spends the majority of his time at an extreme imbalance.

Secondary to *jen*, but still crucial to right action is courage, or *yong*. As Confucius' student Tseng Tzu said, "The Gentleman⁶⁴...takes benevolence as his burden. Is that not heavy?"/(VIII.7). Confucius himself said, "to act is difficult"/(XII.3) and considered the quality so rare that he denied that he himself was benevolent, asking, "How dare I claim to be a sage or a benevolent man?"/(VII.34).

In the absence of courage, fear exists, and fear can lead to fanaticism. For the fearful man, stepping outside of his isolated world to examine the possibility that it may be wrong requires courage because he may discover that all his beliefs have no foundation. One might notice of fanatics that they often rove in packs. Knowing that other people out there are as he is, the fanatic finds reassurance from others and thus forms a support group. The fanatical fear is "an unconfessed emotional insecurity that converts itself into outward aggressiveness."⁶⁵ Remember that the fanatic, as refusing *shu*, has an over-developed "us versus them" mentality. This attitude coupled with fear-induced hostility creates in the fanatic a belligerence towards those who are not members of his group. Consequently, we find that fanatics often pass beyond mere attempts to convert others to their beliefs and often employ violent tactics to force others to their side. Those who do not comply are considered "material obstacles to be overturned or smashed down."⁶⁶ To add to the Nazi movement, consider the Spanish Inquisition of the 16th century and American McCarthyism of not long ago as prime examples of fanatical groups

exercising devastating and tragic means to accomplish their ends.

Thinking (*ssu*) is a quality that the gentleman should possess, and its absence in a person can often be due to a direct refusal by the agent, or it can be explained by imbalances or deficiencies of other traits. The ways in which imbalances in other qualities can produce a denial of *ssu* has been presented above. But she who is consciously unwilling to think critically about herself and the situation is what Hare considers the “pure fanatic.”⁶⁷ Those who cannot think critically because they are ignorant, afraid of acting wrongly, or under conditions of extreme stress are, though I think Confucius would disagree, of the “less than pure-blooded” variety of fanatic. The pure fanatic “could admit all the facts adduced by a critical thinker, and all the logical inferences which she used, and still, without offence to logic, reject her utilitarian conclusion.”⁶⁸

Hare’s moral theory involves universalization and prescriptivism. For Hare, all moral judgments and actions must be universalizable, i.e. the actor must consider all people involved equally and be willing to apply his ideal consistently. For example, if the Nazi did not pass the above self-interest test (because he would change his mind were he to discover he was a Jew), he would fail in his obligation to apply his principle consistently to all. This universalism is similar to Confucius’ *shu*, but they are not the same. Both entail a consideration of all the parties involved, but Hare’s moral agent imagines himself in the place of the other, regardless of who this other is. Confucius likens himself to others, but minds their unique positions. If, for example, Hare’s moral agent were considering the principle of showing respect for others, he would regard all people the same. If one shows respect for one person, then he shows it for all. Confucius, on the other hand, considers all those involved, but regards each person individually.

For the case in point, he would conclude that a son, because of his place, should show respect for his older brother, father, ruler, etc. while an older gentleman would have different obligations.

Hare's prescriptivism coincides fairly well with *chung*. After judging whether or not a moral principle can be applied universally, the agent has a commitment to put this ideal into practice. The prescription is the implementation of that ideal which was arrived at by universalization. Similarly, *chung* puts into effect what became known by *shu*.

To illustrate what is typically conceived of as a fanatic, Hare creates the case of a medical doctor who is faced with a moral dilemma. The condition of her patient has just slipped to an awful state. If he does not go under intensive care, he will certainly die almost immediately. If he goes under intensive care, though, he will suffer greatly and still die in a month. The doctor knows all of this because she has a magical angel sitting on her shoulder who can disclose all the relevant information, thus eliminating the need to rely on mere probabilities and predictions. This doctor happens to have a very strong belief that physicians should keep their patients alive at all costs. If she were in the place of her patient, however, she would not want to suffer so. Now, according to Hare, the doctor is faced with two conflicting moral convictions, one to preserve life and one to end suffering.⁶⁹

Since the doctor would have both of these convictions prescribed universally, what is she to do? These convictions are merely the expression of preferences, claims Hare, and so she must weigh these preferences giving equal consideration to all. Since this doctor is a fanatic, she will maintain her stand on sustaining the patient's life; thus, she must have judged that her preferences are stronger than those of the patient. Hare actually does not deem such a person a fanatic because she followed all the proper steps in making her moral decision, and the result is

not contrary to critical thinking. The doctor appears to be a fanatic, but really just has fantastically strong preferences, according to Hare. Queer cases will result in queer answers even when considered critically.⁷⁰

Contrast this case with the one about “Straight Body” that is presented to Confucius by the Governor of She (XIII.18). Confucius judges that covering for one’s father is more appropriate than testifying against him. In this example along with that of the doctor, we see exactly why Hare’s principle of universalizability applied equally can produce dangerous, or, as Hare claims, at least queer conclusions. When the concern is consistency in considering others, the moral agent ignores uniqueness of people’s relationships. According to Confucius, the doctor should not regard her patient as she would any other person, and “Straight Body” should not have regarded his father the same as he would just anybody. In other words, when weighing preferences, an adept moral agent pays attention to the singularity of each person connected to the circumstances. Confucius’ style of critical thought is a matter of finding the right moral fit for a particular set of circumstances. He would say, I claim, that such a person, like the doctor or Straight Body, is a fanatic, but his reason for rejecting thoughtful analysis is due to a deficiency of one of the above virtues.

Another explanation for fanaticism might lie in the way the fanatic perceives the world, or, perhaps, *refuses* to see the world. As a being in time, the gentleman must have a particular regard for the past, present, and future. He must be open to the possibility that others from the past can affect him, that he can affect others in the future, and that the present may demand moral action. Perhaps where Confucius differs most from other philosophers is in his temporal regard, principally as it appears in the rites and Odes. The fanatic dismisses these conventions, seeing

them as hollow or irrelevant to his situation. He refuses to acknowledge that social conventions have been refined by each generation that has employed them, and that their present forms are far from empty and arbitrary. The fanatic may also reach the opposite conclusion from the same closedness to the past. He may view the rites as unalterable under any circumstances, ignoring the *jen* they should be expressing. Such a posture is unacceptable to Confucius, and he makes this clear in several passages (IV.4, XIX.3, XVIII.8).

Toward the past, the *chun-tzu* also considers his experiences. The fanatic may be characterized as one who fails to learn from previous mistakes, or successes either. Though he has followed his ideal many times in the past to disastrous consequences, the fanatic will continue to implement the practices his focus requires.

By choosing to focus on his own fanatical world, the fanatic refuses to place himself in the context of time. Just as we must liken ourselves to others in the present, we must also apply *shu* to history and the future. The fanatic refuses to liken himself to people in the past. The gentleman must imagine himself in the conflict in Vietnam or as a slave in the old South. Such images can influence the way he lives today.

Likewise, the mindful moral agent imagines himself in the future as, say, someone in an age in which all fossil fuels have been completely exhausted. Such impressions from the future will certainly affect the policy he pursues today. The fanatic, on the other hand, is overly-consumed by the present, and in concentrating himself inward, he dismisses *shu*, and with it *jen*. In our regard to the present, there is the most urgency, but it must be tempered by a regard for the future. Confucius taught his disciples to have a careful attention to the potential repercussions of their acts, warning, "He who gives no thought to difficulties in the future is sure to be beset by

worries much closer at hand”/(XV.12).

* * *

Now that this account of the fanatic has been given, how can we help him? Since a refusal to think about the situation is often one of the defining characteristics of the fanatic, insisting on the logic of your reasons about an issue will far from suffice. According to the Confucian account of the fanatic, much more than this explains his fanaticism. As we know the fanatic does not see himself in the context of others. By virtue of his inward orientation, he creates a separation and a distance from others. It is precisely this distance that must be erased to cure the fanatic.

A gentleman can effectively imagine himself in, as above, the jungles of Vietnam amidst gunfire or in the shackles of a plantation owner. The fanatic, however, cannot relate to such distant images, and must witness them through someone close to him or experience them directly for them to have meaning. Confucius considers inclination an extremely potent force in morality, and direct experience essentially appeals to the fanatic in a way that logic cannot. Even Hare admits the effectiveness of a genuine taste of the reality of a situation: “A few months spent as a coolie building the Burma railway is worth more to one’s moral thinking than the reading of a great many novels or even factual reports about underdeveloped countries.”⁷¹

* * *

Confucius’ position begs a few questions. Morality is achieved when the rites are appropriately applied, or not applied at all, to a particular situation. How does one know when to

apply the rites? In other words, what is the standard for *yi*? True, Confucius does not linger on epistemology, seeing it as insignificant compared with what to do right now. What is appropriate, *yi*, is based on what Confucius holds as the most fundamental aspect of our human experience--that we are here among other humans. Given this social context, the greatest motivation, and the very purpose of the rites themselves, is concern for others--*jen*. Hence, the ultimate goal is harmony among men as well as between man and nature, and an act is determined to be *yi* when this harmony is achieved.

The natural follow-up question: how does one know when harmony is realized? Remembering that Confucius was training the future rulers of the kingdom, he taught them how to achieve harmony using the government. One indicator of harmony is nothing. When the ruler has governed his people well, i.e. when there is accord in the kingdom, he appears to have done nothing. A virtuous ruler, says Confucius, is like the Pole Star, remaining motionless while the people revolve around him (II.1). Though not moving from his central location to command the people, this ruler is not inactive. Describing a competent ruler, Confucius says his policies and edicts were so subtle and effective that "he left behind nothing the common people could acclaim"/(VIII.1). Confucius lauds another ruler as "so boundless that the common people were not able to put a name on his virtues"/(VIII.19). The king who governs with *jen* and creates order in his kingdom creates an equilibrium that is seemingly static and effortlessly maintained.

Confucius' student, Shang, understood that the rites, like "patterns of color upon plain silk," come after *jen*, giving it a structure in the world (III.8). Morality is defined in explicit practices, and we are left to discern the underlying moral notions. In this way, the ruler can look to disorder to see where harmony does *not* exist. If the people starve or revolt, then the sovereign

knows that harmony does not pervade his domain. In those places, he can begin to dissolve the tension of discord and move toward harmony.

Consistent with his emphasis in the concrete and actual, Confucius would suggest looking to the actions of a well refined gentleman to determine right action instead of a hard and fast standard. Returning to the musician, if one were to ask John Coltrane what the principle of good jazz was, he would not be able to explain it. He would simply play for the inquirer and let him hear good jazz in action.

Before lingering here too long, let me remind the reader that the intent of this work is not how to conclusively solve any and all moral dilemmas, but rather to understand fanaticism in a new way. Certain questions, such as those about the nature of heaven or man (XI.12, V.13),⁷² Confucius would say, are not pertinent or helpful for developing moral character or guiding our actions. Questioning the means by which Confucius would settle highly-debated moral disputes can only advance the task of understanding fanaticism so much. It is precisely the nature of the fanatic that he does not attempt to solve moral conflicts in the “normal” way. Fanaticism is a whole other approach and orientation to life, another way of being.

How do we know when someone is a fanatic and not just a little crazy about a particular idea? For some people, the judgment that they are fanatical comes easily because they meet every imaginable criterion; they reject the rites and Odes, deny *jen*, and refuse to examine themselves and their situation critically. For others, though, the verdict is more difficult. They lead normal lives and have normal stances toward most issues, but about certain subjects, they dismiss the above aspects of life as irrelevant. Confucius would claim, I believe, that such people exhibit a fanatical quality in the way they approach particular issues. In a way, one could

say that fanatics are qualitatively different from “normal” people, in that they consciously refuse a particular aspect of life altogether, such as the rites or benevolence. Really though, the difference is by degree, albeit a great degree in some cases. We all display fanatical features in our everyday tasks, sometimes readily ignoring pre-established convention or disregarding others and acting selfishly. In fact, Confucius would identify the majority of people so, leaving the status of the *chun-tzu* for those very few who are thoroughly cultivated in the ways of morality. After all, most of us “attain benevolence merely by fits and starts”/(VI.7).

In the West, one of the greatest havens of fanaticism is in those religions with a transcendent *telos*. How would Confucius distinguish between a man of good faith and a fanatic? The God of Christianity, Judaism and Islam, among others, besides being unknowable, is unquestionable by definition. Choosing such a force to be that which determines one’s actions would seem quite foreign to Confucius. Something that by its very nature is unknowable offers little assistance in defining what should be done in particular circumstances at particular times. As always, Confucius defers to a here and now grounded in the past, regarding the unknowable as impertinent to his present affairs. The only attention he directs to such things is to say that he will not address them (XI.12).

* * *

Confucius offers us an account of fanaticism that mirrors the richness of life. Man is more than just a rational being who can do no more than weigh preferences evenly among those involved. How does one even go about weighing preferences? In the case of Hare’s doctor, the principle of consistency in the application of a moral conviction was shown to be unfit for the

task of explaining and understanding the fanatic. This endeavor requires a multidimensional examination which reflects the multidimensional nature of people.

Denying many of the other important aspects of moral agency for a completely rational perspective, as Hare suggests we do, can also lead to fanaticism. In viewing the world strictly as a rational being and only seeing others as mere preference carriers, one can easily slip into the madness of fanaticism. Hare's own obsession to maintain his claim that the above physician is not a fanatic exemplifies fanaticism. Confucius would have no reservation in judging Hare's doctor to be a fanatic, or at least wrong. She dismisses *jen* due to her inability to empathize by way of *shu*, and she ignores the standard custom of letting patients die with as little suffering as possible. Why is it that Hare cannot see his doctor as acting fanatically? His resistance lies in his own denial of the other parts that make a person human. Hare approaches the case of the fanatic as a rational being and only as such, disallowing inclination, moral convention, and the uniqueness of people and circumstances. Like a religious fanatic, Hare refuses to question his *telos*, which is to prove how the awareness of facts and logical thought can solve any problem. In other words, he approaches the case of the fanatic as a fanatic and fails to appreciate the many dimensions of the human experience.

Simply regard the way that people typically go about making moral decisions, and then think of the last time that you made a decision by following a moral formula such as the one Hare suggests--defining your moral conviction, determining who is involved, regarding them all equally, weighing their and your preferences, etc. Such a technique may be valuable sometimes and is not precluded by the Confucian model; rather, it can be incorporated into the many tools that the moral agent, as an artisan, uses to shape each moral work. Such techniques, however,

are impractical in many cases, and their limits should be conceded.

The human character and experience consists of many aspects. We live in a world full of other people with whom we must associate. We have inclinations, yet we can also reason. As part of our humanity, we bring a myriad of human traits such as courage, fear, and honesty onto the moral scene. By our being in the world, we also have a repertoire of social procedures refined by years of practice. People have many (or few, depending on their education) texts to which they may refer for guidance, and everyone, some more than others, has experience in the world from which to draw.

Because life is explained and directed only by a complex set of events, ideas and circumstances, fanaticism cannot be reduced to a simple principle or standard. Confucian morality is based upon a person acting in a particular place, at a particular time, and this is how we live every moment. Following Confucius we understand the fanatic in just such terms, and we should not understand him any other way.

1. Tu Weiming. "Chinese Philosophy: a synoptic view." *A Companion to World Philosophies*. ed. Eliot Deutsch and Ron Bontekoe. Malden, Massachusetts and London: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1997, p.3.

2. Chan, Wing-Tsit. "The Evolution of the Confucian Concept *Jen*." *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 4, no. 4, January 1955, p. 296.

3. *Confucius: The Analects*. Translated and text by D.C. Lau. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Classics, 1979.

4. *Analects of Confucius*. Translated by Arthur Waley. London: Allen and Unwin, 1938. I have used the Waley translation for this passage only.

5. de Bary, William. "Individualism and Humanitarianism." *Self and Society in Ming Thought*. ed. William de Bary. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1970, p. 149.

6. *Chia Yi hsin shu*, B, 32A.

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7. Graham, A.C. *Disputers of the Tao*. Chicago, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1989, p. 11.
 8. Lau, D.C. "Introduction" to *Confucius: The Analects*, p. 50.
 9. Graham, p.11.
 10. Ibid., p.11.
 11. Cua, A.S. "Practical causation and Confucian ethics." *Philosophy East and West*. vol. 25, no. 1, January 1975, p. 4.
 12. Lau, p. 49.
 13. Ibid., p. 20.
 14. Ibid., p. 24.
 15. Ibid., pp.37-38.
 16. Ibid., pp.43-44.
 17. Ibid., p.44.
 18. Hansen, Chad. "Should the Ancient Masters Value Reason?" *Chinese Texts and Philosophical Contexts*. La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1991, pp. 179-207.
 19. Lau, p. 47.
 20. Lau, p. 48.
 21. Graham, p. 12.
 22. Ibid., p.27.
 23. Ames, Roger T. "The Chinese conception of selfhood." *A Companion to World Philosophies*. ed. Eliot Deutsch and Ron Bontekoe. Malden, Massachusetts and London: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1997, p. 150.
 24. Cua, A.S. "Confucian vision and experience of the world." *Philosophy East and West*. vol. 25, no. 3, July 1975, p. 326.
 25. Graham, p. 20.
 26. Cua, "Confucian vision and experience of the world," p. 328.

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27. Ibid., p.328.
 28. Ibid., p.326.
 29. Kovesi, Julius. *Moral Notions*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967, p. 109.
 30. Cua, "Practical causation and Confucian ethics," p.7.
 31. Ames, p. 152.
 32. Holler, Linda. "In Search of a Whole-System Ethic." *Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 12, no. 2, Fall 1984, p. 233.
 33. Graham, p. 22.
 34. Gray, Elizabeth D. *Green Paradise Lost*. Wellesley, Mass.: Roundtable Press, 1979, p. 68.
 35. Holler, p. 233.
 36. Ibid., p. 222.
 37. Ames, p. 150.
 38. de Bary, William. "Explanatory Note." *Self and Society in Ming Thought*. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1970, p. ix.
 39. Lau, p. 18.
 40. Holler, p. 228.
 41. Ibid., p. 232.
 42. Ames, p. 149.
 43. Ibid., p. 150.
 44. Graham, p.20.
 45. Holler, pp. 223-224
 46. Ibid., p. 224.
 47. Ibid., p.224.
 48. The translation here is uncertain. Arthur Waley translated the sentence as "At sixty, I heard

them with docile ear." Both versions convey the notion of an ear that has the stillness to receive the subtlest of signals.

49. Graham, p.29.

50. Ibid., p.29.

51. Marcel, Gabriel. *Man Against Mass Society*. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952, p.102.

52. Hare, R.M. *Moral Thinking*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981, p. 173.

53. Marcel, p.109.

54. Holler, p. 220.

55. Marcel, p. 102.

56. Kierkegaard, Soren. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941, p. 175.

57. Marcel, p. 101.

58. Ibid., p. 112.

59. Ibid., p. 108.

60. Holler, p. 220.

61. Hare, R.M. *Freedom and Reason*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964, p. 160.

62. Graham, p. 22.

63. de Bary, "Individualism and Humanitarianism," p. 150.

64. In this translation (Lau), 'Gentleman' refers to a *shih*, the lowest rank of officials. A *chun-tzu*, however, is designated by 'gentleman.' The *shih* is a *chun-tzu* that has taken office. This comes from the footnote on p. 12 and text from the body of p. 229.

65. Marcel, p. 105.

66. Ibid., p. 111.

67. Hare, *Moral Thinking*, p. 176.

68. Ibid., p.176.

69. Ibid., pp.177-178.

70. Ibid., pp.178-182.

71. Hare, *Freedom and Reason*, p. 183.

72. There are no passages about the nature of man save two. One says that by our nature, we are near to each other (XVII.2). The other simply states that the master does not speak of human nature at all (V.13).

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