

## Spotlight

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## Eagle & Phoenix

[Old Society, New Belief: Religious transformation of China and Rome, ca. 1st-6th Centuries](#) edited by Mu-chou Poo, Lisa Raphals, H. A. Drake [Oxford University Press, 9780190278359]

[How Should One Live?: Comparing Ethics in Ancient China and Greco-Roman Antiquity](#) edited by Richard King, Dennis Schilling [De Gruyter, 9783110252873]

[Ancient Worlds, Modern Reflections: Philosophical Perspectives on Greek and Chinese Science and Culture](#) by G. E. R. Lloyd [Oxford University Press, 9780199270163]

In the first century of the Common Era, two new belief systems entered long-established cultures with radically different outlooks and values: missionaries started to spread the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth in Rome and of the Buddha in China. Rome and China were not only ancient cultures, but also cultures whose elites felt no need to receive the new beliefs. Yet a few centuries later the two new faiths had become so well-established that their names were virtually synonymous with the polities they had entered as strangers. Although there have been numerous studies addressing this phenomenon in each field, the difficulty of mastering the languages and literature of these two great cultures has prevented any sustained effort to compare the two influential religious traditions at their initial period of development.

[Old Society, New Belief](#) brings together specialists in the history and religion of Rome and China with a twofold aim. First, to show in some detail the similarities and differences each religion encountered in the process of merging into a new cultural environment. Second, by juxtaposing the familiar with the foreign, it attempts to capture aspects of this process that could otherwise be overlooked. This approach is based on the general proposition that, when a new religious belief begins to contact a society that has already had long honored beliefs, certain areas of contention will inevitably ensue and changes on both sides should take place. There will be a dynamic interchange between the old and the new, not only on the

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narrowly defined level of "belief," but also on the entire cultural body that nurtures these beliefs. Thus, [Old Society, New Belief](#) aims to reassess the nature of each of these religions, not as unique cultural phenomena but as part of the whole cultural dynamics of great traditions and human societies. The synthesizing power of strong editorial vision in this volume comes through in the comprehensive Introduction by Mu-chou Poo and H. A. Drake. The vigorous, though tentative, analytical conclusions authored by Lisa Raphals ties together thematically what might seem taken in isolation as quite distinctive points-of-view of each proffered essay.

[How Should One Live?: Comparing Ethics in Ancient China and Greco-Roman Antiquity](#) edited by Richard King, Dennis Schilling [De Gruyter, 9783110252873]

Chinese and Greco-Roman ethics present highly articulate views on how one should live; both traditions remain influential in modern philosophy. The question arises how these traditions can be compared with one another. Comparative ethics is a relatively young discipline. [How Should One Live?](#) contributes to the field in unique ways. Fundamental questions about the nature of comparing ethics are treated in two introductory chapters, and core issues in each of the traditions are addressed: harmony, virtue, friendship, knowledge, the relation of ethics to morality, relativism, emotions, being and unity, simplicity and complexity, and prediction.

[Ancient Worlds, Modern Reflections: Philosophical Perspectives on Greek and Chinese Science and Culture](#) by G. E. R. Lloyd [Oxford University Press, 9780199270163]

Geoffrey Lloyd's pioneering book uses a study of ancient Greek and Chinese science and culture to throw light on fundamental problems, both intellectual and moral, that we still

face today. The issues range from the debate about realism and relativism in philosophy of science to doubts concerning the universal applicability of the discourse of human rights. [Ancient Worlds, Modern Reflections](#) provides compelling evidence that ancient civilizations have much to offer contemporary debates in many fields of study. <>

[OLD SOCIETY, NEW BELIEF: RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATION OF CHINA AND ROME, CA. 1ST-6TH CENTURIES](#) EDITED BY MU-CHOU POO, LISA RAPHALS, H. A. DRAKE [OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 9780190278359]

**Curated excerpts:** At opposite ends of the Eurasian land mass, two great empires began to take shape at roughly the same time. At the eastern end, Qin Shi Huang brought the seven "warring states" of China under his sole control in 221 BCE and took for himself the title of "emperor" (huangdi). His short-lived

dynasty was replaced in 202 BCE by the Han, who ruled for the next 400 years. In that same year, 202 BCE, the city state of Rome emerged from its wars with Carthage to become the sole power in the western Mediterranean, and in the next fifty years extended its control over the great Hellenistic kingdoms of the eastern Mediterranean. By 146 BCE, it stood as the sole superpower in the Mediterranean. The strain of these conquests underlay a series of civil wars in the first century BCE that ultimately led to an imperial system created by Julius Caesar's heir, Octavian. Emperors ruled for the next five centuries in the west, and in the eastern Mediterranean for another millennium.

There is another chronological coincidence. In the first century of the Common Era, both empires were challenged by the arrival of new belief systems with outlooks and values that radically differed from long-established social and cultural norms. In the west, missionaries

started to spread teachings of Jesus of Nazareth that focused on the denial of earthly pleasures, the fundamental equality of all God's children, and refusal to worship any deity but the One True God in a society that was intensely materialistic, hierarchical, and polytheistic. In China, missionaries brought word of the Buddha, an Indian prince who had achieved enlightenment through rigorous attention to ritual and contemplation. Like Christians in the west, Buddhists brought ideas, practices, and values that seemed to threaten the very basis of Chinese cultural identity. They challenged, for example, such well-established facets of indigenous culture as



*TIME PASSES, DAY BY DAY.  
THE GREATNESS OF THIS COUNTRY LIES  
IN THE INEXORABLE JOURNEY  
IT HAS TAKEN THROUGH TIME.  
TIME IS LIKE AN ENORMOUS POT,  
INTO WHICH ALL UGLINESS  
AND BEAUTY ARE THROWN,  
ALL HAPPINESS AND GRIEF,  
ALL LIFE AND ALL DEATH.  
CYCLE FOLLOWS CYCLE,  
LIVING LIFE AND DYING DEATH.  
ONLY THE GREAT RIVER ROLLS ON,  
UNENDING.*

[Ghost Tide](#) by Yo Yo [HarperCollins Publishers (Australia) Pty Ltd, 9780732280833]

correlative cosmology, the imperial cult of Heaven and Earth, ancestor worship, Confucian notions and practices of family and social ethics, and the premier authority of the imperial government over people's lives. Yet within a few centuries, the two new faiths had become so well established that their names became virtually synonymous with the polities they had entered as strangers.

With the growth of world history as a field of study, there has been no lack of works comparing Rome and China; and there is an even older interest in comparing Buddhism and Christianity as religious systems. But relatively little attention has been paid to comparing the way these new religions interacted with the well-established religious and cultural traditions of the states in which they spread. That is the topic of this book. It is a large topic, and one that can easily become drowned in generalities. To avoid that fate, we asked specialists in the history of both traditions to provide concrete examples that show in some detail the obstacles each religion faced and how each succeeded in surmounting them. By bringing together these two storylines, we aim to show how comparative history can lead us to newer and deeper understandings of both experiences.

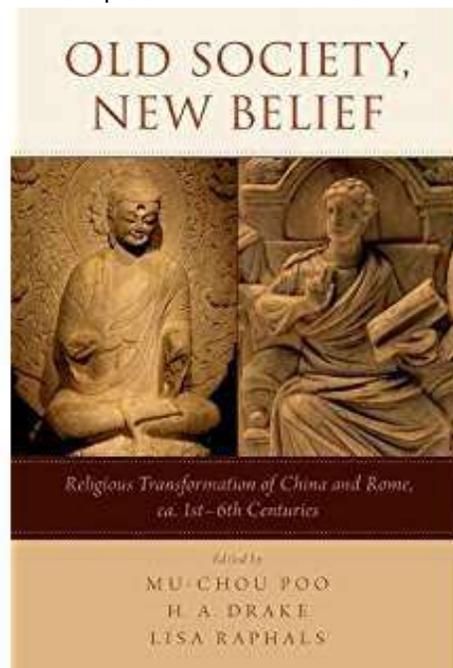
Such an approach is based on the general proposition that when new religious beliefs, practices, institutions, or values are brought into a society that already has beliefs, practices, institutions, and values of long standing, contention will inevitably ensue and complex dynamics of interchange and contestation will occur, resulting in alterations both in the newly arrived religion and in the newly transformed host culture. Juxtaposing Christian and Buddhist studies can reveal aspects of these processes that are often overlooked when studying the history of just the one or the other.

For instance, a trait common to both Rome and China that is easily neglected is the fact that ancient states were religious institutions; a principal duty of their leaders was to conduct negotiations with divine forces. These new religions were distinct from other religions in that they both brought a new understanding of those relations in a way that effectively undermined the rulers' authority. Yet despite these obstacles, both religions persuaded and transformed the various groups of people in their respective empires and knit them into a new worldview.

In keeping with recent trends in the study of world history, our approach is thematic as well as comparative. Rather than

pretending to offer a comprehensive study of these phenomena—something that, even if it were possible, is well beyond the scope of this volume—we provide a series of essays focusing on a few key questions and specific aspects of the very complex, multifaceted processes of accommodation, assimilation, and contestation that played out in each society. Our aim is not to provide final answers but to spur further research. The authors of our essays also employ a variety of analytical methods. In addition to historians who focus on source analysis and change over time, other essays by philologists use literature to identify cultural values, and still others reflect the methodologies of economists and specialists in religious studies.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND



Between the third and fifth centuries of the Common Era, the cultural landscape of China underwent fundamental changes with the downfall of the Han empire (202 BCE to 220 CE) and the importation of Buddhism. The new religion not only challenged the cosmological assumptions and philosophical reflections of human nature that Han intellectuals had been operating with for centuries; it also gradually infiltrated the entire society and nurtured the growth of a new group of professional religious specialists as well as followers who provided them with

material support and legal protection. Such support came from laymen and laywomen of all social levels, from the ruling class to the common people, all of whom were attracted by the religion's message and methodologies of salvation, its new etiologies of illness and suffering, and in some cases its sheer power as an exotic import from a prestigious cultural and geographic Other.

One can argue that the arrival of Buddhism was made easy by the political fragmentation and cultural and religious turmoil caused by the downfall of Han and the rise of Daoist religion and skepticism. The political fragmentation began with a struggle among the remnants of the Han from 220 to 265 CE, followed by a brief unification brought about by the Jin Dynasty (265-420 CE). The Jin, however, was forced to retreat south beyond the Yangtze River due to the invasion of nomadic peoples from the north, that is, the so-called Five Hu people who established their regimes in north China. The Jin (now called the Eastern Jin, 317-420 CE) was followed by the Southern Dynasties (420-589 CE). In the north, among those nomadic states, the most successful was the Northern Wei (386-

534 CE, established by the Xianbei nomads); which was followed by their successors Western Wei (535-557 CE), Eastern Wei (534-550 CE); and their successors Northern Zhou (557-581 CE) and Northern Qi (550-577 CE). Throughout the Northern Dynasties period (386 to 581 CE), foreign cultures, mainly from the north and northwest, including Buddhism, made deep inroads into Chinese society and permanently changed the cultural landscape. Many of the Buddhist monuments discussed in this volume date to this period.

At about the same time, Rome experienced a similar calamity with the collapse of the Augustan "iron ring" defense policy in the third century. Rome could reorganize and hold off Germanic invaders in the west until the fifth century, but at the cost of enormous changes to its political and military structure. By the end of the fourth century, Christianity, an originally insignificant cult originating in the East, was proclaimed as the only official state religion. The conversion of the Emperor Constantine, traditionally as the result of a miraculous Vision of the Cross in 312 CE, has long been recognized as a pivotal event in this process. But fascination with the miracle story has frequently obscured more than two centuries of fruitful exchange between Christians and "pagans" that preceded this event.

In a similar fashion, Buddhist concepts, parlance, and customs were fused into Chinese mentality, language, literature, and art over the course of many centuries, becoming organic parts of the whole. But this process was neither smooth nor uniform nor inevitable. Many key aspects of Buddhism—an Indian religion that grew out of a very different soil—were long resisted by some intellectuals as well as commoners. Some Buddhist ideas, practices, and values even seemed to threaten the very basis of Chinese cultural identity—challenging, for example, such well-established facets of indigenous culture as correlative cosmology, the imperial cult of Heaven and Earth, ancestor worship, notions and practices of family and social ethics based on Confucian ideals, and the premier authority of the imperial government over people's lives. To give these up seemed tantamount to abandoning something essential to the nature of being Chinese. Resistance to the new Buddhist teachings sometimes even took the form of outright persecution, entailing the forcible shuttering of monasteries and the return of monks and nuns to secular life. Some of these misgivings concerning aspects of Buddhism persisted even into modern times. Thus, the issue is far more complicated than the

traditional historiographic models of simple "conquest" and "reception" would indicate.

Under the Roman empire, Christians endured sporadic persecution from the time of Rome's Great Fire in the year 64 CE down to Constantine's conversion. Most of these persecutions were localized until the mid-third century, when the first empire-wide persecutions began. Although Christians and pagans grew closer at both the intellectual and popular level during these centuries, the legacy of persecution played a major role in the development of Christian identity. A century after Constantine, the new religion was so well established that the Roman empire became a Christian empire. But should emphasis be placed on "Christian" or on "empire"? For most of the modern period, scholars have viewed the increasingly coercive means by which Christians suppressed other religious practices, and later violence against Jews and nonconformists, as being driven by Christian priorities. But a newer strain of scholarship has emphasized, instead, the demands of both a

broader religious marketplace in the Roman empire and imperial demands for unity and consensus. According to this newer model, Christians were not so much introducing many of the trends that have traditionally been associated with the Christianization of the empire—such as concern for an afterlife and a closer, more personal relationship to a deity—as they were responding (along with many other religions) to broader trends that were developing in society as a

whole.

Thus, in both China and Rome, the story of a new religion cannot be told in simple terms of "conquest" or even "success." Both Buddhism and Christianity faced resistance from elites and commoners alike; to gain acceptance, both religions engaged in processes of accommodation and adaptation that changed the new faith as much as they changed the old culture. In both cases, then, adaptation and assimilation must be considered as part of the process. An old saying that "The Romans became Christians, but the Christians became Romans" applies equally well to Buddhists in China.

#### THEMATIC SECTIONS

As a focus for this study, we have chosen the theme of "Religious transformation"; and under this heading, we have



I was not born knowledgeable,  
I am devoted to antiquity and  
am quick to seek knowledge.

The Analects of Confucius translated with notes  
by Burton Watson [Columbia University Press,  
9780231141659] Lunyu, 7, 19.

asked contributors to consider the process by which these two ancient cultures reacted to and dealt with the new religion. What were the structural similarities and differences of the two phenomena, and what can these tell us about the larger picture of human societies in transition? How can we arrive at an understanding of the principles of cultural dynamics by comparing these two stories?

The authors' essays are grouped under three major headings.

The essays in part 1, "Initial Encounters and Causes of Resistance," consider the obstacles each new religion encountered. Both religions brought with them radically new concepts of the role of the individual and society. Christians taught humility, equality, and the importance of the afterlife to Romans who celebrated wealth, status, and enjoyment of material comforts. Similarly, Buddhists preached against the strong family ties and ancestor cult and even the authority of the rulers that characterized Chinese society. In this section, the authors explore problems raised by this initial conflict. They specifically address the complex intellectual and sociopolitical situations as well as the value systems that both religions encountered.

In "Buddhism Enters China" in *Early Medieval China*, Robert Company creates a framework for subsequent analyses by calling into question the use of such terms as "conquest" and "transformation" to describe these encounters, and the use of the term "religion" itself. As a better means to conduct comparative study, he urges us to think in terms of "constantly changing repertoires of resources," a concept that considers the manifold ways communities react to new stimuli. Narratives—stories—prove to be an important tool for identifying these changes.

H. A. Drake picks up this theme in *Christianity and Rome: A Study in Power Relationships*, using two famous encounters to isolate factors that distinguish the Christian experience in Rome from the reception of Buddhism in China. The story of Nero's persecution of Christians in 64 CE—a scandal in later, Christianized ages—stigmatized this new sect in the eyes of elite Romans, branding them as outlaws and arsonists. The second story, Constantine's Vision of the Cross in 312 CE, gave new legitimacy to the faith and paved the way for Christians to use the levers of power to suppress their rivals.



Although usually taken as a sign of Christian "intolerance," Drake suggests that these actions are better understood under the rubric of power relationships.

In the next four essays in this section, the authors bring out the difficulties Christians and Buddhists faced in getting their ideas accepted by the dominant culture.

In *Aesthetics of Enlightenment: Philosophical Continuity and Rhetorical Innovation in the Poetics of Roman Architecture*, Mira Seo takes an in-depth look at one of the primary obstacles to the acceptance of Christianity by Roman elites: a strong difference regarding material goods. Whereas Christians taught their followers to deny worldly possessions and store up their treasure in heaven, classical elites depended on displays of wealth to underscore their moral and cultural superiority. But the empire opened opportunities for merchants to amass great wealth, and these nouveaux riche found themselves scorned by the traditional aristocracy who looked down on them for putting wealth before cultural attainments. Enter the poet Statius (ca. 45-96), who, Seo observes, harnessed the tropes of elite literature to the task of describing the McMansions built by these nabobs. He thereby created an entirely novel "poetics of real estate" that could not have been more at odds with the Christian emphasis on amassing an otherworldly treasure.

Hyun Jin Kim spells out the depth of this conflict in *Justin Martyr and Tatian: Christian Reactions to Encounters with Greco-Roman Culture and Imperial Persecution*. At the end of the second century CE, the Christian writer Tatian defiantly rejected the values of those Roman elites who thought of Christians as barbarians. In doing so, as Kim makes clear, Tatian also was rejecting standards of taste and virtue that had prevailed since

the days of Plato and Aristotle. But Kim also shows that Tatian's was not the only voice. Earlier in the same century, his teacher, Justin Martyr, also defended the faith; but he did so in a way that suggested the values of the new faith could be reconciled with those of classical culture.

In *When Buddhism Meets the Chen-Wei Prophetic and Apocryphal Discourse: A Religious Encounter in Early Medieval China*, Lu Zongli returns to the Chinese situation and looks at the persistent presence of the chen-wei prophetic and apocryphal tradition in this era of the growth of

Buddhism. The chen prophecy and wei apocrypha, that is, texts

with the claim to be a kind of divinely inspired esoteric hermeneutics of certain Confucian Classics that often carried political implications, began to appear in the late Western Han (ca. first century BCE) and became very influential in the political discourses of the Eastern Han; current rulers wished to use the chen prophecy and wei apocrypha to support the legitimacy of their rule, while the potential contenders of the throne would use them to overthrow the current regime or to gain advantages. Lu points out that during the third to the fifth centuries, when Buddhism was introduced into China, the propagators deployed a strategy for integrating their homegrown skills and knowledge of magic, divination, and mysticism with their Chinese counterparts that involved the chen-wei prophetic and apocryphal learning at that time. It could be called a successful strategy, as Lu demonstrates in this essay how Buddhism integrated imported doctrines with indigenous religious discourses and celebrated its orthodox status in a way that was sanctioned by political authorities. At the same time, however, Buddhism itself was transformed by integration of the Chinese chen-wei tradition and became something distinct from its Indian roots.

Huai-yu Chen closes this section with a specific case study in *Honoring the Dead: The Buddhist Reinvention of Commemorative Literature, Ritual, and Material Culture in Early Medieval China*, which tracks the spread of Buddhist ideas through the uniquely Chinese tradition of the portrait elegy, a method of commemorating the deceased by combining a depiction of this person's "true appearance" with a brief poetic description of his legacy. Begun to commemorate high officials, the portrait elegy gradually spread to the family level, and was used by Buddhist monks to infuse the portrait eulogies with their own values and norms.

Part 2, "Interaction, Influence, and Accommodation," pursues this theme of adaptation and cross-pollination. In both Rome and China, there were signs that the new faiths could find a way to live in these old societies. While making their beliefs palatable to potential converts, Christians and Buddhists entered dialogue with elites and philosophers. Despite significant countercultural attitudes that remained, the two religions adapted their message because of this dialogue to suit prevailing political and cultural norms. At the same time, elites modified their thinking to compete with the new faiths in addressing cultural needs. Thus, the process was by no means one-sided.

In *Buddhism Challenged, Adopted, and in Disguise: Daoist and Buddhist Interactions in Medieval China*, Gil Raz returns to the concept of "conquest" challenged in essay 1 and shows how the interaction of Buddhism with native Daoist teaching presents a complex picture of opponents who adopted parts of the same message they were rejecting. Although Daoists claimed that Buddhism threatened the family structure that was the social and political basis of the Chinese state, they also incorporated Buddhist language and concepts into their own philosophy. Elite literature gives the impression of deep divisions, but evidence

from stories and inscriptions shows a "social reality" of intermingling that explains the hybrid identity that emerged.

To illustrate a similar process of adaptation in Christian history, Roberta Stewart turns in *Roman Allotment and the Selection of Bishops* to the all-important question of how Christians chose their leaders—the priests and bishops who became the mainstay of an organization that kept Christians united to a degree that was unprecedented for an ancient religion. Jesus himself chose the twelve Apostles, and he promised that the Holy Spirit would guide them in the future. The first replacement to their number was selected by the process of allotment, a well-established Jewish custom for selecting priests. But Stewart shows how later generations turned away from this method because it was too closely identified as a peculiarly Roman procedure that was more administrative than spiritual. Instead, they first adopted the language of divine

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*I know not how the Christians order their own lives, but I know that where their religion begins, Roman rule ends, Rome itself ends, our mode of life ends, the distinction between conquered and conqueror, between rich and poor, lord and slave, ends, government ends, Caesar ends, law and all the order of the world ends; and in place of these appears Christ, with a certain mercy not existent hitherto, and kindness, as opposed to human and our Roman instincts.*

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[Quo Vadis: A Narrative of the Time of Nero](#) by Henryk Sienkiewicz, translated by Jeremiah Curtin [Dover, 9780486476865]

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selection used by Greeks and Romans for centuries and then adapted it to a process that combined popular election with the "laying on of hands" by other bishops.

Sometimes, the new religions could win popular support by infusing old ideas with new meaning or demonstrating the superiority of their methods. Sze-kar Wan shows in *Colonizing the Supernatural: How Daimōn Became Demonized in Late Antiquity* how Christians took the old Greek concept of the "daimon," a supernatural figure who could be good or bad, and turned it into the now more familiar concept of the "demon," an evil spirit whose only function is to exploit and pervert human weaknesses. They were then able to show how

their God was the most effective protection against these malevolent spirits. Thus, in Rome, Christians dealt with the old gods by, literally, demonizing them.

Like demons in Rome, ghosts played an ambiguous role in Chinese thought, although unlike their Western counterparts, Chinese ghosts could be nonhuman as well as human spirits. In *The Taming of Ghosts in Early Chinese Buddhism*, Mu-chou Poo shows how Buddhists made inroads into elite ranks by using these native ideas to interpret and explain their own texts. Popular tales of ghosts who were subdued by Buddhist practices after traditional and Daoist methods had failed were used to teach less-educated Chinese that the new religion was more effective in dealing with their fears.

In *Life and Death: The Development of Nirvana Images in the Northern Dynasties*, Yen Chuan-Ying studies the development of the nirvana image in the northern dynasties and shows how Buddhist iconography adapted to local traditions as it spread into China. The image of the nirvana of the Buddha, once it entered China, was detached from its original Indian context and began to adapt to the needs of the Chinese Buddhist propagators and artists who constructed ensembles of various imageries according to the current emphasis of Buddhist teachings. Thus, it began from a relatively minor position at the beginning of the fourth century to become one of the more popular themes in the late sixth century, corresponding to the ascent of the importance of the Lotus Sutra, which has since become one of the most popular Buddhist scriptures in China. Yen shows how Buddhist ideas seeped almost imperceptibly into Chinese society via images such as the nirvana of the Buddha, as both the Chinese mentality and Buddhism itself were transformed through this process.



What emerges from this middle section, Interaction, Influence, and Accommodation, are clues to the way these new cosmologies gained a foothold among old belief systems and philosophical traditions. In these essays, the authors show how Christians and Buddhists could address—and frequently offer

better remedies for—a broad range of needs and aspirations that manifested themselves at the popular, as well as elite, level. Both religions, for instance, introduced means of controlling malevolent supernatural forces that helped them establish strong bases across a wide cross section of the population.

In part 3, "Synthesis and Assimilation," the authors look at a further stage in this process whereby these new belief systems not only altered, but also were altered by, the material life of the old society, including art and architecture as well as daily life. By the end of our period of study, the two new faiths were so well established that they could surmount attacks that, under previous conditions, should have spelled defeat for their beliefs. Instead, as the authors of the essays in this section show, a new synthesis of old society and new faith occurred.

The authors of the first two essays in this section examine this process through the lens of material culture. The spread of Christianity is frequently linked to the destruction of pagan temples and statues. But in *Ancient Statues, Christian City: Constantinople and the Parastaseis Syntomoi*, Paroma Chatterjee shows how, in later centuries, Christians in the capital city of Constantinople used the pagan statuary that still adorned their city to provide links to their pre-Christian past and as harbingers of future events.

For a similar situation in Chinese history, Zhou Yin shows in *Adaptation and Assimilation of Buddhism in China* as reflected in *Monastic Architecture*, the adoption of Indian monastic architecture in north China beginning from the first century CE and its gradual adaptation to the local environment and architecture style through the sixth century—until a uniquely "Chinese Buddhist style" was formed and transmitted to the later generations. The change and adaptation of the monastic architecture style, as Zhou points out, had its special historical and urban-geographical circumstances that were not necessarily all driven by Buddhist ideology but by practicality, such as the adoption of the traditional Chinese residential design of placing the main elements on the medial axis.

The authors of the final two essays of this section examine ways in which the two new religions challenged traditional concepts of justice. Traditionally, Chinese believed that perpetrators should be punished in their lifetimes, and they had trouble accepting the Buddhist idea that penalties were exacted through cycles of reincarnation that were not foreshadowed in a person's current life.

In *Understanding Retribution in a Changing Religious Landscape: The Case of Yan Zhitui (531-591 CE)*, Natasha Heller uses the writings of an influential sixth-century Buddhist, Yan Zhitui, to show that even when Chinese Buddhists accepted the concept of retribution in a future existence in theory, in practice they continued to expect wrongdoers to face punishment in the present. The difference, Heller writes, emerges when comparing Yan's theoretical writings with the

stories he tells, all of which involve retribution enacted on unjust individuals. The resulting blend of Buddhist and native ideas of retribution led to a *modus vivendi* that endured for hundreds of years.

introduction of Buddhism and Christianity, respectively. Such a comparison also allows us to consider broader problems and cultural dynamics of human societies in transition. Such a comparison also aptly illustrates the capacity of comparison to



Christians had far less difficulty teaching that retribution would be exacted after one's death. But Romans were justly proud of their contributions to the theory of jurisprudence, and according to those principles Christianity was not a "religion" (*religio*) but a "superstition" (*superstitio*). How Christian emperors, starting with Constantine early in the fourth century, began to reshape *superstitio* is Michele Renee Salzman's subject in *From Superstitio to Heresy: Law and Divine Justice (Fourth-Fifth Centuries CE)*. Connecting their laws to "God's will" in a way that Roman legal experts never had, Christian emperors added a divine sanction to their rule. Thus, Salzman writes, Roman ideas of justice ultimately helped Christians absorb traditional Roman views in a way that was "far different from the ways in which Buddhist views of retribution through transmigration were articulated."

The authors of the essays in this book show that the process by which Christianity and Buddhism became established in their respective regions was much more complex than the language of conquest or triumph would suggest. In neither China nor Rome did the new religions simply sweep away the beliefs and customs of the old society; rather, over centuries of interaction and dialogue, the old societies changed the new religions as much as the religions changed the old societies. But these case studies can do little more than indicate the rich rewards that await further research. In a concluding essay, Lisa Raphals draws some preliminary conclusions about the comparative experience of Christians and Buddhists and lays out a methodology for comparative study to serve as a guide for that research.

### Conclusion: Comparative Perspectives on China and Rome by Lisa Raphals [modified]

The two very different social and cultural contexts of China and Rome allow us to ask in comparative perspective what structural similarities and differences informed two complex and diverse sets of transformations occasioned by the

"provincialize" the familiar, including the comfortable terminology of "religions transformation," "tradition; and "innovation."

A first useful caveat for comparison is the need to compare—and balance—both intellectual and social institutions and contexts.<sup>1</sup> A second and related point is that it is important to avoid both grand generalizations and what Geoffrey Lloyd usefully calls "piecemeal" approaches that pick and choose isolated items for comparison. Any comparison must consider both change and debate within each cultural manifold.<sup>1</sup> One way to do this is to compare contexts rather than isolated concepts. For these reasons, Raphals suggests that it is important to start with culturally and historically specific "interior" readings rather than generating comparisons from preselected comparative perspectives.

A related methodological issue is how comparison should be done: by individuals or teams and with what kind of training and specialization. There is no one template for successful comparison, and both approaches can succeed or fail. Well-known collaborations include the very different collaborative comparisons of Chinese and Western culture by Roger Ames and David Hall and of early Greek and Chinese science and medicine by Geoffrey Lloyd and Nathan Sivin. A growing roster of scholars provides counterevidence to claims that nontrivial comparison by one individual is impossible.

The essays in this volume are neither team efforts nor individual comparisons. Most are not explicitly comparative, and each presents an in-depth investigation of a topic in one tradition. Nonetheless, they suggest many avenues for comparison in the future.



These essays contain a mixture of traditional themes and methodologies and problematics based on emerging disciplines. This mixture offers an important opportunity to avoid a kind of "balkanization," both topical and methodological. Their topics include justice, morality, mortality, rhetoric, and the history of narratives of authority; the religious, political, and social importance of suffering, danger, and risk; the importance of popular narratives; the role of magic and binding spells; and the importance of images and material culture. Taken together they suggest the importance of looking at history, and even more so, comparative history, as webs rather than as lines.

Robert Campany's opening essay (chap. 1, this volume) creates a useful framework for the entire volume by calling into question the use of such terms as "conquest," "transformation," and even "religion." Campany prefers a notion of "constantly changing repertoires of resources," addressed through narratives. Campany argues that religions and cultures are well described as "constantly changing repertoires of resources created and used by participants in imagined communities of identity, discourse, and practice." He adds that these



repertoires consist in diverse resources created over many generations: ideas, words, values, images, stories; and patterns of action, texts, strategies, goals, methods, and collective memories. At any moment, communities use some of these resources and ignore others, creating a temporally specific style or idiom based on those selections.

Campany's essay ("Buddhism Enters China" in Early Medieval China) builds on his earlier research on the roles of narratives

in early medieval China, and evidence for understanding early pro-Buddhist miracle tales as arguments that arose at points of friction between the Buddhist repertoire and elements of indigenous Chinese repertoire. He suggests a potential typology of narratives of the introduction of Buddhism into China, and this approach is very amenable to comparison. For example, what genres or types of stories in Roman sources justify Christianity? A comparison of Chinese and Roman story types suggests several issues: (1) claims for the efficacy of new practices, contrasted with indigenous apotropaic methods; (2) claims for state or military efficacy; (3) accounts of retribution; (4) rhetorical responses to opponents (or the lack of them); and (5) the reconfiguration of individual or community suffering.

Campany ("Buddhism Enters China" in Early Medieval China) introduces the possibility that different and changing repertoires of resources addressing changing conditions—including the interests and temperaments of several Roman emperors—may account for some of these differences, without need of recourse to "mentalities" or other grand cultural essences. Further, his exploratory taxonomy of story types suggests a starting point for comparison of the complex work of narratives.

The authors in the essays of the book present instances of opposition, resistance, interaction, influence, accommodation, and assimilation in the entry and assimilation of Buddhism and Christianity into China and Rome. Some of these obstacles are comparable; others quite culturally specific. Each new religion introduced radically new concepts of the roles of individuals and society, but the kinds of resistance they encountered were very different. Buddhists rejected the centrality of family ties, ancestral cult, and imperial authority. These views initially met with a range of responses, but not with violence or systematic

persecution. Christians advocated humility, equality, and the importance of the afterlife to Romans who celebrated wealth, status, and the enjoyment of material comforts. They initially met with violent opposition, but ended up with a degree of state patronage that effectively transformed Christianity into a Roman state religion. Why were

these responses so different? In what follows, Raphael addresses several issues of comparative interest raised (or not) by these essays: the very different experience of intolerance and religious violence.

#### (IN)TOLERANCE AND RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE

An immediate issue that confronts any comparison is the highly visible difference in apparent violence and intolerance: the

very visible persecution of Christians in Rome and the nonviolent Chinese response to Buddhism. Why was there such a difference?

### Christian Violence

H. A. Drake (*Christianity and Rome: A Study in Power Relationships*) addresses this issue head-on by using two Christian narratives as accounts of power relationships: Tacitus's description of Nero's persecution of Christians and Eusebius's account of Constantine's dream vision of 312 CE. He compares the Constantine dream narrative to an account of the Han emperor Ming's (Han Ming Di, r. 57-75 CE) dream of the Buddha. In both cases, an imperial narration provided legitimacy that was further solidified (quite literally) by the commissioning of skilled craftsmen to create material and visual representations of these dreams.

But as Drake points out, a significant difference between these two narrative/material accounts is that Emperor Ming limited his patronage to founding a monastery that met Buddhist needs. By contrast, Constantine admitted Christians within the sphere of imperial power, with the result that the Roman empire soon became a Christian empire that actively compelled adherence to the orthodox Christianity of the time.

Drake (*Christianity and Rome: A Study in Power Relationships*) argues that to understand this important difference, we must return to narratives of Nero's persecution of the Christians: Tacitus especially, and the categories of intolerance and violence they established. In Campany's terms, this is a culturally particular repertoire of resources that usefully provincializes Christian violence. Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* identifies intolerance as the first of five causes for the success of Christianity:

Christians, being monotheists, are intolerant; they refuse to recognize even the existence of other deities; polytheists, on the other hand, can live comfortably alongside any number of deities; in contrast to Christians, they are tolerant beings, filled with peace and love for all living things. Hence it is no surprise that Buddhists did not monopolize worship in China, whereas Christians moved rapidly to eliminate other means of access to the divine realm.

What do we make of the ideological category of (in)tolerance, foregrounded here by comparison to Buddhist relative nonviolence? Is this a fundamental difference that frustrates or enhances comparison? Chinese temples are famously heterodox and include images of Buddhist figures cheek and jowl with

figures from traditional Chinese religion and figures from local cults. By contrast, Christian churches may include images of many saints, but all are from one tradition only.

Drake (*Christianity and Rome: A Study in Power Relationships*) suggests several comparative categories for violence in religion outside of an explicitly theological explanation. These categories point to an important difference between the introduction of Christianity in Rome and of Buddhism in China. A first is government or ideology. In both political and social contexts, imperial legitimacy required divine support, but the rhetoric of the Roman version of imperial ideology also demanded public display of a consensus omnium, with the result that Christian leadership obtained a leverage unavailable to their Buddhist counterparts. It also presupposed an increasingly close link between the Roman emperor and a personal deity. Constantine's conversion to Christianity changed the deity, not the ideology. Equally, important is the role of rhetoric in the structuring of narratives of coexistence, conflict, incorporation, triumphalism, and so forth. For example, Drake,



in *Christianity and Rome: A Study in Power Relationships*), centrally uses dream narratives of Emperor Ming and Constantine. But dreams are uniquely private, and their reportage is especially subject to rhetorical treatment because of their inherent powerful and unverifiability. Christians also developed narrative genres to tell their own story to a potentially hostile audience, and Drake describes the genres of apology, martyrology, and sermon in some detail.

### Buddhist-Daoist Hybrids

A strongly contrasting picture is the complex range of Buddhist-Daoist hybrids introduced in Gil Raz's (*Buddhism Challenged, Adopted, and in Disguise: Daoist and Buddhist Interactions in Medieval China*) rich study of Daoist and Buddhist interactions in medieval China. It is immediately striking that none of the interactions he describes were violent. But to ask why the Chinese interaction displayed an absence of violence would be the wrong question. The question Raz does ask is whether any European cultural or religious developments corresponded to

the emergence of medieval Daoism with its variegated responses to Buddhism. What Chinese religious, social, and cultural resources allowed for the emergence of a Daoist religion that could challenge Buddhism? The equivalent question in a European context might be, what European religion could challenge Christianity?

Raz's questions are important for several reasons. First, he implicitly rejects any notion of a Buddhist "conquest" of China by demonstrating at length the depth and range of Daoist attitudes toward Buddhism. He examines three very distinct fifth-century CE Daoist responses to Buddhism: the relatively hostile discourse of "conversion of the barbarians" (huahu), the nominally friendlier but ultimately assimilationist response of the Lingbao (Numinous Treasure) scripture authors, and a Northern Wei stele (mid-fifth to mid-sixth century CE) that seems to offer a Buddhist-Daoist hybrid. The three attitudes toward Buddhism range from the simple rejection of the huahu discourses to rhetorical (and theological) strategies of the Lingbao authors to accept Buddhist teachings by subsuming them within a Daoist cosmological framework. The stelae of the northern Wei communities suggest practices that accepted, but separated, both.

Nothing like these responses seems to have existed in the Roman world, and it is instructive to ask what was missing. An immediate answer is the absence of violence, physical or psychological. Whatever their underlying hostility to Buddhism, none of the Daoist responses described by Raz approach the violence of what Gibbon describes as "the intolerant zeal of the Christians."

Here it is useful to recall Jan Bremmer's remark that advocates of the intolerance of monotheism argument tend not to consider comparative evidence. Bremer argues that East and Southeast Asian polytheism can be, and has been, as violent as modern Europe. But his sources are instructive. He details accounts of the execution of Christians in fifteenth-century Japan and sixteenth-century China; the destruction of the mosque at Ayodhyâ by fundamentalist Hindus in 1992; and several examples from Greek antiquity, including the Athenian execution of Socrates and the expulsion of the Jews and worshippers of Isis from Rome by Tiberius in 19 CE. But he argues that all five of these religious contexts—Japanese, Chinese, Hindu, Greek, and Roman—are "local, locative, national religions" in a social and political context that makes it all but impossible to distinguish religious factors from others.

And this may be the instructive difference. Bremmer is of course right that monotheism has no monopoly on violence, but the more salient point for Raz's (Buddhism Challenged, Adopted,

and in Disguise: Daoist and Buddhist Interactions in Medieval China) examples may be that all three occurred at some remove from direct political, ideological, and institutional conflict. If we imagine an alternative history in which Buddhism aggressively entered China during the reign of the expansionist emperor Wu of Han (Han Wu, r. 141-87 BCE), the story might have been different. Such an approach allows us to consider the nonviolent and nuanced encounters between various Buddhist and Daoist groups as accidents of microhistory rather than as encounters between grand, and problematic, essences.

Perhaps it was this distance that allowed contests between Buddhists and Daoists to take the philosophical and rhetorical forms outlined in several essays of this volume. Raz (Buddhism Challenged, Adopted, and in Disguise: Daoist and Buddhist Interactions in Medieval China) emphasizes that an important impact of Buddhism was the development of the notion of "religion" as an autonomous institution. He notes that it was in the context of religious contestation and rivalry that traditionally amorphous Chinese religious practices and traditions were constructed by contemporaries as social institutions with specific names, of which the most important was the tradition we call Daoism. In other words, the very development of what we now call Daoism—and there are

some important caveats here—was heavily indebted to Buddhism.

As the "son of Heaven" (Tianzi) and the pivot between heaven, earth, and humanity, Chinese emperors clearly had

important ritual functions. Nonetheless, their roles did not correspond to the role of Roman emperors as the apex of both political and religious hierarchies. Therefore, it is not surprising that we do not find in medieval China a situation equivalent to Constantine's conversion to Christianity and "changing the deity but not the ideology." Nor do Chinese responses to Buddhism arise out of self-conscious social movements or organizations—such as the Daoist Taipings, "Five Pecks of Rice" and other communitarian uprisings at the end of the Han.

The texts—especially the huahu texts—are strongly rhetorical. They did lead to the "textual violence" of suppression when Buddhist challenges led to some Tang emperors issuing orders for the destruction of the texts, which were not recovered until fragments were discovered in the "library cave" at Dunhuang (Buddhism Challenged, Adopted, and in Disguise: Daoist and Buddhist Interactions in Medieval China). Nonetheless, the destruction of a small group of texts does not compare to the physical violence associated with the rise of Christianity. By contrast, both Christian apologists and the Lingbao approach to Buddhism described by Raz apparently sought to minimize conflict. But their goals were very different. Christian apologists addressed their messages to potential converts; the

## IS IT NOT A PLEASURE WHEN FRIENDS COME FROM AFAR?

[The Analects of Confucius translated with notes by Burton Watson \[Columbia University Press, 9780231141659\] \(Lúnyú\) 1 1](#)

Lingbao authors sought to subtly assimilate, and thereby undermine, Buddhism.

A different comparative point that emerges from the complex ranges of (in)-tolerance and violence is the distance between the human and divine orders. Drake (this volume) describes this distance as less in polytheistic religions than monotheistic, but there may be more fundamental differences. Lloyd and Sivin warn us against comparing concepts—such as transcendence or immanence—but we can compare the broader contexts of the relations between humans and gods in Judeo-Christian and Daoist-Buddhist cosmologies and cosmogonies. Here, it is worth noting that in both cases, the introduction of a new religion in an old tradition introduces a cosmological or theological rupture. In the Buddhist case, it is the introduction of a



metaphysics of transcendence, in the sense of the claim that the world of everyday experience is in some sense illusory. In Christianity, it is the claim for a divided godhead in the introduction of a "son of god." Here the "comparable" is the introduction of a rupture, not its details.

But the Buddhist and Christian responses to cosmological and theological rupture were very different. As Raz (Buddhism Challenged, Adopted, and in Disguise: Daoist and Buddhist Interactions in Medieval China) points out in his third example, the polemics and apologetics of medieval Daoists and Buddhists suggest deeply demarcated religions, but the social reality of lived religion in medieval China was far less contentious, and these textual rhetorics do not represent Daoist and Buddhist interactions in local communities. This pattern stands in strong contrast with Drake's (Christianity and Rome: A Study in Power Relationships) account of the transition from a pagan to a Christian empire in fourth-century CE Rome, and of the increasing use of physical violence to suppress traditional forms of worship.

## FATE, JUSTICE, AND RETRIBUTION

The practical need to adapt teachings to the beliefs of potential converts led both Buddhists and Christians into dialogues with indigenous intellectual elites, and narratives of these encounters provide another repertoire of resources. These interactions were bidirectional. They affected the teachings of Buddhist and Christian exegetes, as they adapted to prevailing Chinese and Roman political and cultural norms. They also influenced Chinese and Roman elites, who were forced to compete with "exotic" ideas and beliefs.

An important element in these encounters were accounts of fate, justice, and retribution. These accounts roughly correspond to the third comparative issue suggested by Campamy in essay

1 (this volume). Or, as Cicero put it two millennia ago: "Now I am aware of no people, however refined and learned or however savage and ignorant, which does not think that signs are given of future events, and that certain persons can recognize those signs and foretell events before they occur" (Cicero, *De Divinatione* 1.2)

Comparable, and perhaps universal, human concerns about the future are expressed very differently in the essays presented in this book.

### Fate and Retribution

Stewart's (Roman Allotment and the Selection of Bishops) study of the Latin vocabulary of divine allotment and the changing role of sortition and "divine allotment" in choosing Christian priests and bishops examines both intellectual and social structures. On one hand, she documents changes in the social practices of Christian communities to

select their priests. She documents a shift by Christian communities away from both Jewish and Roman practices of sortition, by the Jews to select priests and by the Romans to select individuals for political office and other roles, a custom also followed by many Greek poleis. But the new Christian practice of election of bishops has implications for ideas of fate and predestination precisely by the absence or sortition or any comparable mechanism.

Stewart's essay (Roman Allotment and the Selection of Bishops) deals with tensions between Roman and Christian attitudes toward lots and "allotment": the use of lots in ritually defined space to select officials and legitimate public decision making. The use of administrative allotment to assign duties to individuals continued into the Empire. Tacitus conceptualizes the random process provided by lots as an administrative tool that promoted the Roman value of equity. In addition to its widespread use in Rome, this practice had significant Greek counterparts in the use of the Delphic oracle to confirm the selection of officials by lot, as well as Jewish precedents. In the first apostolic succession, lots were used to select Matthias to

replace the apostle Judas (Acts 1:23-26). But allotment procedures were replaced by a form of election to appoint Christian bishops in the third century.

The inhabitants of the Roman pan-Mediterranean world, including Christians, would have recognized allotment as a mechanism of Roman government for voting and judicial process. This use of lots is not comparable to Buddhist practices because of the lack of comparable political context. The practice of the Christian church to use allotment to choose priests from a preselected group had close parallels to Roman procedures. Stewart (Roman Allotment and the Selection of Bishops) contrasts these methods with new church procedures of popular election, ostensibly to reflect communal consensus and a corresponding view of bishops as incarnations of the community.

For example, Stewart (Roman Allotment and the Selection of Bishops) describes Tertullian as deeply acculturated to and aware of Roman political and social practices (and literary traditions) concerning allotment of administrative posts. Yet he inveighs against the private use of lot divination as daemonic and fraudulent and rejects the practice of choosing *sortes*, or oracles, from utterances of prophets or sacred texts, a practice also condemned by the Church. Stewart goes on to describe an ongoing debate on whether allotment reflects mere chance or the judgment of God.

A different aspect of Roman "lots" is comparable to Buddhist notions of fate and retribution. A lot (*sors*) could also refer to personal fate or fortune. Cicero uses the term in the explicitly mantic contests of the oracle of Zeus at Dodona and the oracle of Apollo at Delphi." This understanding of *sors* is reflected in the prevalence of oracular lot shrines in Italy and the continued use of Greek mantic sites. This type of belief in fate figures in rejections of popular divination practices and the rejection of text-based *sortes* by Tertullian and others; but in rejecting these practices, the Church exegeses step back from engagement with questions of personal destiny and moral responsibility. Indeed, as Stewart (this volume) puts it, "early imperial authors emphasize a rational, instrumentalist understanding of allotment and show that even private destiny was construed as influenced by the emperor. Rejecting Roman allotment was not rejecting a religious belief but rejecting Roman governmental practice."

Buddhism and Christianity stressed spiritual strengths that were especially appealing on the popular level and at moments of crisis. Both promised freedom from an unyielding fate, control over unseen forces, and protection from malevolent spirits.

#### Ghosts and Spirits

Jean-Pierre Vernant famously argued that the ancient Greeks defined the human condition as one element of a triadic

relationship between animals and gods in which mortal humans were contrasted with immortal gods. Sze-kar Wan (Colonizing the Supernatural: How Daimōn Became Demonized in Late Antiquity) and Mu-chou Poo's (The Taming of Ghosts in Early Chinese Buddhism) accounts of ghosts and daimons/demons reveal a notion of moral agency that can be historicized and that invites comparison, even more so in that it occurs in a changing political and social context. Their essays also reflect on mortality in a potentially comparative context.

Another comparable are changing concepts of the boundary between life and death. Following the path-breaking work of Philippe Descola, Raphals avoids unnecessary terminologies centering on culturally specific notions of "natural" and "supernatural." In "Colonizing the Supernatural: How Daimōn Became Demonized in Late Antiquity," Wan illustrates the Christian transformation of the Greek daimon, a figure who could be good or bad, into the purely evil demon. This shift enabled the promulgation of Christian apotropaic practices by which the Christian god could offer efficacious protection

against malevolent spirits. But for the protection to be efficacious, the danger must first be created.

In addition to winning converts, Buddhist and Christian missionaries needed to provide services that addressed the beliefs and fears of their less-educated



clientele. A particularly powerful service was the ability to ward off or expel ghosts and evil spirits. In a Chinese context, ghost stories became a powerful means to showcase the magic powers of Buddhist monks. Mu-chou Poo discusses several Buddhist techniques for expelling these entities, such as worshipping the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, reciting sutras or exorcistic spells, performing rituals with sacred objects, and the power of advanced monks to expel spirits by their very presence.

Buddhist monks also had to compete with the exorcistic powers of indigenous cults, and some Buddhist narratives featured direct competition or confrontation with Daoists. In some stories, Buddhism and Daoism acted as opposing powers, each protecting its own followers. These interactions show the Buddhist need to demonstrate their own powers while acknowledging beliefs and cosmological assumptions about ghosts and spirits in the broader population. Another factor that affected proselytizing strategies was the very different Buddhist and Daoist popular assumptions about what caused ghosts—specifically the Daoist view that ghosts resulted from unresolved circumstances at death and the Buddhist view that one became a ghost due to personal moral deficiencies.

Thus, both Buddhists and Christians claimed efficacy against dangerous spirits, albeit quite differently conceptualized. Because we all die, ghosts are endemic. Demons, on the other hand, must be created. Nonetheless, both Buddhist and Christian clergy made efficacy claims that were a powerful draw to a less-educated clientele. Each claimed that their new religion was more effective in dealing with their fears.

#### Justice

A third comparable is how new religious innovations challenged preexisting concepts of justice. Natasha Heller (*Understanding Retribution in a Changing Religious Landscape: The Case of Yan Zhitui (531-591 CE)*) addresses tensions surrounding notions of fate and its implications for moral responsibility and retributive justice in her study of tensions between Buddhist accounts of reincarnation and indigenous Chinese accounts of ghosts and retribution.



Heller (*Understanding Retribution in a Changing Religious Landscape: The Case of Yan Zhitui (531-591 CE)*) uses the writings of the prominent Shandong exegete Yan Zhitui (531-591 CE) to argue that notions of reincarnation based on the moral influence of past deeds had far-reaching implications for the adaptation of Buddhism to China, in part because the linkage of reincarnation and retribution did not fit easily into Chinese culture. One problem was that Buddhist explanations of the interactions of moral choice and the circumstances of one's present incarnation were in competition with indigenous accounts of fate (ming) and of the afterlife. For example, indigenous techniques for altering apparently preordained fates included the deliberate (and at times deceptive) ritual manipulation of spirit registers of allotted lifespans. Extending one's ming through good deeds was compatible with Buddhist doctrines, but ritually giving the wrong address or time of death to the gods of the underworld was not!"

Heller (*Understanding Retribution in a Changing Religious Landscape: The Case of Yan Zhitui (531-591 CE)*) examines two of Yan's writings: the "Returning one's Mind" (Gui xin) essay of the Yanshi jiaxun (Family instructions of the Yan clan), *Records of Requiring Injustice* (Huanyuan zhi), and *Instructions against Killing* (Jiesha xun). They contain important accounts of the afterlife and provide the basis for an account of the difficulties of Chinese-Buddhist interactions in sixth-century CE China.

In "Returning One's Mind," Yan responds to accusations leveled against Buddhism and uses the example of retribution by ghosts to argue that some aspect of a person does persist after death, and that the living possess the means to influence their fates (*Understanding Retribution in a Changing Religious Landscape: The Case of Yan Zhitui (531-591 CE)*). Several of these anecdotes involve animals. Humans who treat animals with cruelty are punished in ways that invoke their actions; for example, a man who loved fishing becomes ill and feels as if he is being gnawed by fish (236). Here, Yan provides what may be called a "temporal" account of Buddhism. On this account, our future lives—which we cannot truly imagine—are closely linked to the present, and the existence of ghosts shows the influence of past deeds on the present. In Yan's examples, retribution has a close temporal link to the original misdeed(s) and typically occurs within the lifespan of the moral perpetrator. Thus, Yan's view of retribution focuses on the present life rather than the multiple lifetimes he refers to in his more general arguments. Retribution also shows a porous boundary between individual and family because retribution sometimes afflicts not the transgressor but his descendants.

*Records of Requiring Injustice* contains more complex accounts that involve concepts of justice. Some describe vengeance by the ghost of a person wronged when alive. In others, deceased victims appeal to the heavenly bureaucracy to rectify their wrongful death. In a third type of tale, ghosts intervene directly to right a case of injustice (*Understanding Retribution in a Changing Religious Landscape: The Case of Yan Zhitui (531-591 CE)*). In the past, such tales have been described as "Buddhist rationales," but the situation is considerably more complex.

Michele Salzman (*From Superstitio to Heresy: Law and Divine Justice (Fourth-Fifth Centuries CE)*) makes a similar move in her study of Christian notions of justice and retribution. Salzman juxtaposes Christian claims that retribution would come after death with Roman theories of jurisprudence in which Christianity was "superstition" (superstitio) rather than a "religion" (religio). She shows how Constantine and his successors tried to reshape



superstitio by connecting Roman laws to "God's will." This juxtaposition added divine sanction to imperial rule. In this way, Roman ideas of justice helped Christians absorb Roman views in a way that was unavailable to Buddhist ideas of justice and retribution.

Salzman's essay (From Superstitio to Heresy: Law and Divine Justice (Fourth-Fifth Centuries CE)) raises several issues of comparative interest. First, Buddhism and Rome are incomparables in that Buddhism is not a state. Buddhist religious transformation may have occurred at the popular level, but there is no equivalence to Roman state ritual, at least in the periods under consideration in this book. So, we seem to have an initial incommensurable. Similarly, Chinese sources do not present equivalents to mantic responses to disasters, in court and battlefield mantic inquiry. Further, we seem to have competing notions of efficacy, but not warfare, because the state was not Buddhist.

### CHANGING AND INTERACTING GENRES

Both Buddhists and Christians faced difficulties in making their ideas acceptable to the dominant culture. This problem affected established genres and the reception of the past. Several authors in this book address these issues. These essays are especially interesting because the authors document phenomena that are often culturally specific and have no obvious comparable.

#### Praise Genres and Material Wealth

One example is Mira Seo's (Aesthetics of Enlightenment: Philosophical Continuity and Rhetorical Innovation in the Poetics of Roman Architecture) account of Roman attitudes toward material goods as a cultural obstacle to the acceptance of Christianity by Roman elites. How could Christians preach the denial of worldly possessions to Roman elites who used displays of wealth to underscore social status and looked down on the nouveaux riche merchants who (in their view) preferred wealth to cultural attainment? Seo's example is the opposition between Christian values of denying worldly wealth and the "poetics of real estate" of Statius (ca. 45-96 CE), which used the tropes of elite literature to extoll the mansions and riches of the new merchant class. Statius's new poetics provide a microhistorical example of changing ethical discourses in the Roman world, seen here in the innovative regional poetics and distinctively Greco-Roman hybrid philosophy of the Bay of Naples. Statius's *Silvae* (90-93 CE) are architectural, occasional poems that commemorated visits to palatial estates and featured substantial architectural detail and poetic innovation. Statius pioneered a new rhetorical approach to the display of material wealth and its social significance, expressed in a distinctive and local Epicurean framework.

Statius's descriptions of a tour of lavish villa invert expectations by positive references to figures such as Midas and Croesus. Statius praises the Epicureanism of Pollius Felix through

depictions of the lavish house through Epicurean symbols of tranquility (*ataraxia*), a philosophical move that might have left Solon turning in his grave. Statius also invokes the poetic voice of Horace, although Horace himself never endorsed this new Epicurean economics and depicted more conservative Epicurean attitudes. Finally, Seo (Aesthetics of Enlightenment: Philosophical Continuity and Rhetorical Innovation in the Poetics of Roman Architecture) turns to Martial as a direct opposite to Statius in poetic strategies and *personae*. Whereas Statius represents himself as an epic poet with a light touch, Martial attacks Roman social hypocrisies.

An interesting comparison here would be to the descriptions of capitals in the *Wen xuan* (Selections of Refined Literature), a compilation of poetic and prose essays from the late Warring States period to about 500 CE, but the risk here is comparing content rather than context. Why are buildings being described? What philosophical, economic, or political rhetoric overstands the description? It may be that the best comparanda for Statius are not architectural poems but other writings that express counterparts or equivalents to Epicureanism and its economic implications.



#### Something Completely Different: The Case of Nirvana Imagery

A very different approach to material artifacts was the physical representation of claims that it was possible to escape the wheel of reincarnation entirely, a view that has no clear Christian (or Roman) counterpart. Yen Chuan-Ying (Life and Death: The Development of Nirvana Images in the Northern Dynasties) shows how Buddhist traditions adapted to a Chinese environment in the portrayal of nirvana images. Indian and Central Asian imagery of the Buddha typically portrayed four major events (*sixiang chengdao*) in his life as the historical Sākyamuni: his birth, enlightenment, dharma preaching, and attainment of nirvana (also his death). By contrast, Chinese Buddhist iconography initially depicted his birth and rarely depicted imagery linked to his death and attainment of nirvana.

Over time new styles emerged for depicting the life of the Buddha as Buddhism adapted to local traditions. Early northern Wei scenes of the Buddha's life centered on his birth and an endless succession of Buddhas, starting with the Bodhisattva Maitreya. In a Chinese context, nirvana scenes were detached from their historical context, and nirvana scenes came to symbolize the transmission of dharma rather than the death and enlightenment of one individual. By the end of the northern dynasties, nirvana wall paintings or sculptures appeared, especially at Dunhuang. In these images, the nirvana image symbolizes transmission of the dharma and was blended with popular images of scenes from the Lotus Sutra (caves 420 and 428). These images de-emphasize the death of Sākyamuni and emphasize a more accessibly positive message of the constant regeneration of dharma.

Another culturally specific material genre is the Chinese "portrait elegy" (xiangzan). Huai-yu Chen (*Honoring the Dead: The Buddhist Reinvention of Commemorative Literature, Ritual, and Material Culture in Early Medieval China*) explores a different rhetorical evolution by tracking the spread of Buddhist ideas through the culturally specific Chinese traditions of the portrait elegy (xiangzan) and its specifically Buddhist reinvention. Chen argues that Buddhist influences transformed a purely indigenous "genre" into a hybrid tradition. Chen traces the development of the portraiture—also linked to an indigenous textual genre of "life stories"—in historiography. Begun to commemorate high officials, the portrait elegy gradually spread to the family level. It was adopted by Buddhist monks, initially in "true appearance" representations of the Buddha. It subsequently diffused to a broader Buddhist community where it was used for the worship of subordinates and followers. In this broader hybrid context, portrait elegies were used by Buddhist subordinates, by relatives and disciples; for sacrificial offerings and funeral rites; and for visualizations by relatives of the deceased.

Like Seo's (*Aesthetics of Enlightenment: Philosophical Continuity and Rhetorical Innovation in the Poetics of Roman Architecture*) real estate poems, portrait elegies are material representations of core values. But Statius's poems embody a conflict between two opposed value systems, while the evolving portrait elegy tradition seamlessly blends Chinese and Buddhist iconographic traditions.

Yin Zhou's (*Adaptation and Assimilation of Buddhism in China as Reflected in Monastic Architecture*) study of the dynamic interchange between Indian and Chinese indigenous styles of architecture is another case of culturally specific interaction. The evolution of Chinese-Buddhist architecture provides yet another example of a material transformation of Buddhism in China from the first through sixth centuries CE.

#### Assimilating the Past

Another cultural and interactive problem that seems to have taken culturally specific form was the representation of the

past. Once the new religion had taken root in the old society, how should the pre-interaction past be represented?

One example is Hyun Jin Kim's (*Justin Martyr and Tatian: Christian Reactions to Encounters with Greco-Roman Culture and Imperial Persecution*) analysis of three early Christian apologetic texts that defended Christianity against Greco-Roman intellectual and political elites who associated it with the uneducated social strata of the Roman world. Kim argues that the hostility of fourth-century Athenian literature toward "barbarian" founders and the Athenian claims to superiority and civilization were a radical revision and denial of past Greek attitudes toward foreigners and foreign influences. The Greeks of the Classical Period were aware of their debts to foreign neighbors and open to the possibility that barbarians could possess wisdom that surpassed their own, and Kim documents these attitudes at length across a range of genres. He argues that Tatian and the pseudo-Justin writers, by staking claims for a biblical culture and historical tradition, claimed a legacy that was both older than and superior to Greco-Roman culture. This move allowed the Christian church to articulate a parallel tradition from which to claim historical legitimacy and cultural authority. Thus Justin, Tatian, and other early Christian apologetic writers attacked Greco-Roman intellectual and cultural chauvinism through its own rhetoric and conventions.

Lu Zongli's essay (*When Buddhism Meets the Chen-Wei Prophetic and Apocryphal Discourse: A Religious Encounter in Early Medieval China*) documents a comparable process in China with the dissemination of Chinese Buddhist apocrypha: a group of ostensive translations of Buddhist sutras that were selected, edited, or even composed by indigenous Chinese monks. Lu argues that these texts marked a significant step of indigenization of Buddhism in China because Chinese Buddhist missionaries began to prefer the "indigenized" sutras to translations of original Sanskrit or Pali texts.

Buddhist missionaries also incorporated indigenous mantic and magical practices and prophecies and apocrypha to attract Chinese converts. This strategy has distinct parallels in the Christian adoption of elements from Greek philosophy and prophetic literature. But although Buddhist missionaries could avoid polemical encounters with Chinese traditions and imperial authority, the early Christian apologists were not.

Kim (*Justin Martyr and Tatian: Christian Reactions to Encounters with Greco-Roman Culture and Imperial Persecution*) accounts for the disparity in results from similar strategies in the specifics of Christian religious doctrines, namely, their explicit challenge to imperial authority, as perceived by the Roman elite, a problem only worsened by Greco-Roman chauvinism toward the new "barbarian" religion. Buddhist missionaries faced no comparable Chinese "occidentalism" or the obstacles that might have come with it. Kim's essay raises the important issue of whether to stress similarity or difference for purpose of comparison.

These essays also show that prophecy and responses to it are an important issue for comparison because mantic activity was an important area of "religion" in both cultural contexts, and they bear important relations to politics and power.

Paroma Chatterjee (*Ancient Statues, Christian City: Constantinople and the Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai*) documents a very different case of treatment of the past in an urban, material form. Although the spread of Christianity is frequently linked to the destruction of pre-Christian temples and statues, in "Ancient Statues, Christian City," Chatterjee argues that in later centuries, Christians in Constantinople used the city's pre-Christian statuary to provide visual and material links to Constantinople's pre-Christian past. But the same statues and temples also had mantic functions and were consulted as harbingers of future events.

In conclusion, the essays in this book show that the process by which Christianity and Buddhism became established in their respective regions was much more complex than the language of conquest or triumph would suggest. In neither China nor Rome did the new religions simply sweep away the beliefs and customs of the old society; rather, over centuries of interaction and dialogue, the old societies changed the new religions as much as the religions changed the old societies. But these case studies can do little more than indicate the rich rewards that await further research. <>

HOW SHOULD ONE LIVE?: COMPARING ETHICS IN ANCIENT CHINA AND GRECO-ROMAN ANTIQUITY EDITED BY RICHARD KING, DENNIS SCHILLING [DE GRUYTER, 9783110252873]

Ethics in Ancient China and Greco-Roman Antiquity:

Comparative philosophy brings together philosophical traditions that have developed in relative isolation from one another and that are defined quite broadly along cultural and regional lines — Chinese versus Western, for example.<sup>1</sup>

This is David Wong's formulation: Philosophy is picked out by reference to traditions and their development. "Bringing together" of such traditions leaves open what the upshot is going to be. For the question remains whether one is going to find a common language subsuming both traditions, or find that, as a matter of fact, one tradition delivers the conceptual framework to discuss the other; or the traditions may, after all, remain stubbornly incompatible. Now, of course, not only is great diversity to be found within each tradition, different positions may, but need not, contradict one another: Plato and Aristotle cannot both be right about the good, nor can Mencius and Confucius both be right about benevolence (*rén*). Traditions are not monolithic, as Geoffrey Lloyd has emphasized, any more than the identities of those living in them; nor are they exclusive. One consequence of this observation is that cultural relativism cannot be taken in a simple manner. Even supposing that, at some level, ethics are

relative to culture, this by no means ensures the unity or coherence of each conception of ethics.

The following remarks do not constitute a positive, independent contribution to this volume. Rather, I wish to serve up a pottage of problems, some of which I think can be solved and others which may well turn out to be intractable, referring to contributions as appropriate. What are the challenges facing our project? Much of what I should say concerns virtue. For it is not an exaggeration to say a new epoch in modern western ethics dawned, or dawned again, when people turned back to the concept of virtue. What was true for the wider picture of ethical thought is also true for the comparative project: new ways of connecting discussions within Chinese ethics to current work became, apparently, available. For neither deontology nor utilitarianism has obvious affinities with ancient Chinese thought; nor, for that matter, with Greco-Roman antiquity.

In the West, our problems in confronting ancient ethics do not begin when we turn to China, by any means. One variant of relativism is to ask whether the norms of antiquity, particularly Greek antiquity, are subsumable under what we understand by morality. A negative answer was given half a century ago by Elizabeth Anscombe:

"If someone professes to be expounding Aristotle and talks in a modern fashion about 'moral' such and such, he must be very imperceptive if he does not constantly feel like someone whose jaws have somehow got out of alignment: the teeth don't come together in a proper bite. We cannot then look to Aristotle for any elucidation of the modern way of talking about 'moral' goodness, obligation etc."

One conclusion might be: we have our institutions, including those of the norms of behavior (in great variety) as did antiquity, and there is no call to mix the two. Such an answer, if given in advance of any investigation, carries no weight; and the mass of workers in the field of so-called "ancient philosophy", that is, Greco-Roman philosophy, would suggest that there is great interest at the very least in understanding this tradition. Now, our problems are here not merely those of conflating modern and ancient western ethics; we are concerned with the desirability of comparing the two traditions. Here, we shall not face the general question whether philosophy existed in China, only the much more restricted question about ethics. Now, we do not mean this question in the sense that the ancient Chinese had customs (*mores*) by which they regulated their social affairs, distributed wealth, honor, liberty, offices, punishments and power, but whether there is a branch of reflection or discussion concerned with ethics. Some years ago (1989), the late Angus Graham entitled a book *Disputers of the Tao*; this title points to the dialectical nature (in an Aristotelian sense) of normative reflections in China. And in this project, we are very much engaged in dialectic: representatives of several disciplines are collected within these covers — Hellenists, Sinologists and Philosophers. So, besides the interesting historical question of how to find a suitable way

of discussing those texts which would appear to be ethical in intent, and are considered so by the venerable exegetical traditions they gave rise to, there is also a question of whether these texts can "speak to us." Just as the ethics of the Greeks still play a not inconsiderable role in modern discussions (Elizabeth Anscombe notwithstanding), we may wonder whether this might also become true of Chinese ethics (Wong).

In contemporary work, the branches of philosophical ethics are metaethics, normative ethics, applied ethics. To what extent can these distinctions be useful in a discussion of ancient ethics? For ethics is not obviously divided in this way either in Greece or China. At which level should or can comparison between ethics be conducted? Greek ethics do not distinguish these questions in so many words, but it is clear that these areas are covered; for example, the views that Plato has about the tyrant's life, in contrast to his view that nothing is good without the presence of the Idea of the Good.<sup>1</sup> One advantage of using the distinction between metaethics and normative ethics is that one may be able to accommodate relativism on the level of normative ethics within a universalist account of metaethical features of ethics (meaning, epistemology, ontology relating to ethical language) (Ernst).

#### The Socratic Question

The Socratic question asks: what kind of life should one lead? (Plato, Republic 352D, 344D-C): The question concerns all goods whatever that may affect the quality of a life. Bernard Williams<sup>2</sup> has used this question to great effect in his critique of modern moral conceptions. It is by no means clear a priori which goods are decisive for the quality of a life, unless you think it trivially true these are moral ones; so the possibility of asking this question is a gain in rationality.

In fact, this question is one that Kwong-loi Shun uses when introducing his discussion of Mencius: In discussing the ethical thinking of Mencius and other early Chinese thinkers, I make several assumptions. One is that such thinking existed in China. By "ethical thinking" I mean thinking concerned with how one should live.

Of course, the interesting thing is what should or ought to mean in each case; and the kind of considerations that are brought to bear to decide the question; and also, the particular concept of "life" is crucial to understanding the question. For the Greeks, a bios is a way of life, which Aristotle, for example, distinguishes into political, hedonistic and theoretical bioi (Nicomachean Ethics I 5). But different kinds of animals also have their bioi; and, conversely, humans are, famously also zôa with their zôê, animals with a life. In a Chinese context, the concept of life is also controversial: in the tradition shēng is interpreted as biologically determined through sex and food (Yang Zhu, Gao Zi) or as determined through traditional norms ("rites", 11) (Mencius, Xun Zi). A second concept, míng, may refer to the life-task set someone or else their life-span also determined by Heaven, but also more generally to carry out the task

entrusted to one. Compare Confucius' potted autobiography (Lunyu 2 4):

The Master said: At fifteen my will was directed at learning. At thirty I stood firm. At forty I had no doubts. At fifty I knew the command (míng) of Heaven. At sixty my ears were obedient. At seventy I followed my heart's desire without overstepping the mark.

We appear to have here a conception of a biography spent learning what one ought to want "without overstepping the mark". This kind of life is perhaps meant as a norm, for judging the way one ought to live. The meaning of "ought" is, in the West, one of the core questions of ethics, even if it is not at all clear that in antiquity the meaning of "ought" is identical with the moral "ought" known to modern philosophy (Hübner). For what lays the obligation on one may be (one's own) well-being (Aristotle), an activity according to reason; or else universal reason or nature (Stoics); and for Plato, at least for his Philosopher Kings, it is determined by the good.

One might compare Xun Zi: He sets out the ten thousand things and sets up the balance amid them. For this reason, the multitude of differences do not manage to obstruct and so disorder (luàn) the relations (lún) [of the things to one another]. What is the balance? I say: the way. Hence it is not allowable (bù ké) for the heart not to know the way (zhī dào): if the heart does not know the way, then it thinks the way is not allowable, and thinks that what is not the way is allowable. (Jiébi pīān Harvard Yenching XXI 29, Knoblock 21.5a, b)

The subject here is the ruler, or possibly his advisors. That means that the way not only serves as a general standard for leading one's life but also as standard for political norms. Here the way (dào) serves as the standard for what is allowable (kě) in governing, and more generally leading one's life, and what is not. Because of this, it is "not allowable not to know the way". One might say: we are under an obligation to know the standard. For only then can we distinguish between what is allowable and what is not. But the precise valency of allowable (ké) in this text remains unclear: what kind of norm is the way here? What kind of obligation are we under to know it? If one were to pursue this question further in those thinkers who attach themselves to Confucius, then one would have to discuss the fundamental need for avoiding political chaos (luàn). Here, for example, is Xun Zi on the good:

What everyone has always agreed was good is an orderly pattern and peaceful government. (Xing'è pīān).

Xun Zi's remark may serve as a representative taste of "Confucian" views about the evils of social unrest. But we are mainly talking about good rule; two further aspects are tradition and respect for one's own person (cf. Lunyu 7 1, 4 14).

The sources of normativity

Asking about what "ought" means is, as the above considerations show, connected to showing the grounds of obligation, the source of normativity, to use Christine Korsgaard's useful phrase, which answers the normative question: "When you want to know what a philosopher's theory of normativity is, you must place yourself in the position of an agent on whom morality is making a difficult claim. You then ask the philosopher: must I really do this? Why must I do it? And his answer is his answer to the normative question."

She gives us a modest list of four possibilities, drawn from early modern ethics. The fourth, her preferred candidate, following Kant, is the reflexive nature of consciousness as the basis for the will's ability to legislate for itself, that is, for its autonomy. I don't think this can be found in antiquity in China or Greece; but the other three candidates may well be. A very schematic, and perhaps provocative list, with no attempt at serious specification of the various concepts might run as follows:

- A. Realism (Reality or truth serves as the basis for ethical knowledge.)
  - a. Nature (Aristotle, Mencius, Stoics)
  - b. Dao (Lao Zi, Xun Zi)
  - c. Heaven (Mo Zi, Zhuang Zi, Mencius)
  - d. The good (Plato; = God; cf. legitimate authority)
- B. Legitimate authority (Confucius, Mencius, Stoics)
  - a. ruler; fate; god(s), the good human
  - b. Reflexive Endorsement
- C. reflection (si) in Mencius: good knowledge, good capacity (liang zhi, liang néng); emotions, desires: pleasure as the canon of the good for Epicurus.

As the appearance of Mencius under all three headings makes apparent, it would appear either difficult to classify some positions, or else it might indeed turn out that these possibilities do not really exclude one another; or reveal that such positions are internally incoherent.

In this form, the question of what the source of normativity is, does not occur explicitly either in ancient China or Greece. I know of no text in which available options in either culture is discussed. But, as a matter of fact, it is subject of intensive debate, (e.g. Nicomachean Ethics I 4). Of course, claiming that ancient ethics is interested in this question is to claim that there is an interest in the grounding of ethics: "why must I do this? why must I be like this?" are questions that receive answers in many ways. This assertion which may seem banal enough is in the context of comparative ethics of singular importance. For it implies that there is an interest in reasoning, at least implicitly. This goes without saying for the Greeks, but does not entirely in the case of our Chinese texts (mainly: Lúnyú, Mòzǐ, Mencius, Zhuāngzǐ, Xúnzǐ, Lǎozǐ, Hainfēizi Lushì Chūnqǐū). In other words, we are justified in attributing to these texts an interest in what we call metaethics.

Korsgaard approaches the normative question from the way it was answered in the 17th and 18th centuries in the West, and she does not imply the answers given are the only one's available. And when we extend the historical frame to include the Greeks and the Chinese, this is just as well; although in fact her four suggestions are flexible enough to encompass some of the answers on offer elsewhere. Presumably no one would claim to have deduced a priori the only possible sources of normativity. Aristotelian dialectic starts from what the many or the wise or both groups think (Nicomachean Ethics VII 1, Metaphysics B 1), with the purpose of saving the phenomena; in this question, at least we would do well to follow him.

#### Virtue ethics

The revival of virtue ethics seems to offer an important bridge between China and Greece. Lists of virtues abound in Greek and Chinese ethics. Whether or not one thinks that virtue is a useful addition to the modern ethical arsenal, for comparisons such as those under discussion here, virtue is bound to be an important topic, since it is essentially connected to Greek conceptions of well-being (*eu zên, eudaimonia*) (Yearley).

Why virtue? It is very probable that few if any contemporary readers have used the word "virtue" or its translation in anger, that is: without scare quotes, in a situation untouched by professional philosophy." But this need not mean that we do not need the thing, even if we do not use the word.

Nonetheless, words are where we must start, even if they are the second-best way of sailing. The on-line Thesaurus Linguae Sericae should provide an invaluable resource for mapping Western normative terms onto Chinese ones. A brief remark about terms will have to suffice here. We are familiar with *aretê* and its meaning of excellence. Its meaning is then generalized from that in functional situations (tools, artisans), and situations in which (traditional) social roles (soldier, wife) are performed well, to meaning virtues belonging to humans or rational agents. As such, they perform their functions well, if with *aretê*.

Less familiar, perhaps, is the Chinese conceptual arsenal. So here are some "virtue" terms in Chinese:

- A. *dé*: power or authority, which is present through way of life or ancestry, and which places others under an obligation (Gassmann). Not merely a disposition (a species of quality, rather than a relation), more a kind of power exercised on subjects by rulers, and conversely. Not identical with character, although it may be connected to character.
- B. *rén*: "benvolence", "humaneness", a mode of conducting rites, especially the quality of the *jūn zǐ*, the "gentleman", i.e. the ruler or his advisors.
- C. *yì*: "justice, righteousness", especially the relation between ruler and subject or minister.

- D. zhì: "knowledge", especially of people, but also of the way (dào) i.e. the order and regulations of heaven and of the spirits and of rites (lǐ).

Some comparative remarks:

- A. Note justice in Aristotle as the whole of virtue insofar as it concerns others (Nicomachean Ethics V 1 1129b27ff). This suggests connections with dé, rén and yì.
- B. How does virtue relate to forms of knowledge? Zhì appears to be just one virtue among the others. For the Greeks, forms of knowledge are fundamental to virtue. Is virtue constituted by knowledge (Plato sometimes), or is it guided by knowledge, which itself constitutes a kind of virtue (Aristotle)?
- C. These Chinese concepts are "political"; and for Aristotle and Plato at least, ethics is merely a branch of politics. This similarity may, however, mask a different weighting of interest in individual and community.

It is to be noted that none of these terms is a general term such as "virtue"; Aristotle's view of justice, a virtue which may also be general, may be a useful comparison. One might take virtue as a genus with different species falling under it; but that would-be rash. The unity of virtue remains problematic in both cultures. It is moot in Greece, for example, if possession of one virtue implies necessarily the possession of the others (Hardy). What about China? In Lúnǚ XIV 23 Confucius suggests that self-denial (shù) may combine all he has to say on leading one's life. Another question concerns completeness: Is this list of virtues open-ended or in principle subject to closure? Here we may contrast e.g. the four "cardinal" virtues from Plato's Republic (courage, justice, temperance, wisdom) with the lengthy Aristotelian lists. In the Lúnǚ we have different lists, whereas Mencius would appear to be committed to four (benevolence, justice, knowledge and rites).

So one is justified in asking whether it is really so attractive for comparative philosophy to use the concept of virtue: there is no Chinese concept comparable to Greek *aretê*. The word dé, often translated by virtue, largely for historical reasons (translated as *virtus*, which means power as well as virtue) is by no means obviously suited to serving as the general concept which encompasses all the virtues which one may name. One may well wonder whether a conceptual framework might be developed to find common ground for both *aretê* and dé, rather than the simple transposition of dé into talk of *aretê*. But the proof of that pudding would very much be in the eating.

For, of course, individual Chinese virtues which are named are very different indeed from Greek ones — zhì, knowledge, may sound like *phronêsis* or *Sophia*, yòng may sound like *andreia* (courage), but there the purely verbal similarity ends. Clearly, some virtues are closely bound to their historical and social context, for instance, filial piety (xiào), and indeed Greek conceptions of courage (in Aristotle, strictly a battle-ground affair; contrast Plato's *Laches* 194E-199E. See Hardy).

Justice occupies a central position in Greek accounts of virtue. Not only is it the subject of Plato's Republic, which is often seen to be about the justification of morality itself. In a similar vein, if incomparably finer grained than the earlier discussion, Aristotle's analysis in *Nicomachean Ethics* V distinguishes between general and justice. General justice is claimed to be the whole of virtue insofar as others are concerned. Justice in turn is intimately connected with the functions of state — distribution of divisible goods (wealth, honor i.e. office, and freedom), as well as punishment and the regulation of contracts.

Here we may see important comparisons with rén, humaneness or benevolence, as a disposition (it is called a support yī in Lunyu 7 6), even if it is a traditionally aristocratic virtue (cf. Lunyu 12 1), unrealizable in all its perfection, but using the wise (shèng Lunyu 6 30) as orientation. For Confucius rén is the central concept of ethics, connected with character, well-being and others, and above all the quality of rulership or advice to the ruler. The concept would seem to be the great innovation due to Confucius, going beyond the mere performance of traditional rites to a consideration of the agent himself. This step is decisive in allowing comparison with ethics based on character, rather than traditional norms.

Not only is there (arguably) no general term in Chinese corresponding to the English "virtue", furthermore a very important question for Greek thinkers, namely the ontological status of virtue, would not appear to be asked. Virtues are more than capacities for Aristotle in that they are only present along with a history of realization. Thus, Aristotle defines virtue as a kind of disposition: a disposition that arrives at decisions, and that depends on the mean relative to us, determined by a correct formula (*orthos logos*), in the way a wise man would determine it. *Nicomachean Ethics* II 6.

In this definition, another pivotal point comes to the fore: apparently, the wise man serves as an indicator of just what the determining, correct formula is; the good man serves as criterion, in Lee Yearley's phrase. Virtue ethics, to be an interesting ethical position, should posit the primacy of virtue — for naturally both utilitarians and duty ethicists think that virtues are important, insofar as dispositions of persons conflict with or contribute to fulfilling duties or maximizing utility. But they are derivative in these systems; they may be derivative to the kinds of action, or the motivation for actions. Yet the question of why virtue is to be taken as central to ethics, prior to other sources of normativity cannot be ducked. It should be argued that virtue is the crucial concept. Yet the very need for this argument undermines the very hopes of virtue ethics. This can be seen by use of a variant of Prichard's famous argument about the obligation to be moral. For if the reason for this obligation is moral, then we are moving in a circle; morality is grounded in morality. If the reason for the obligation to be moral is non-moral, well then it cannot ground morality. So too with virtue. The reason virtue is important cannot be virtue; and if something else grounds the importance of virtue, then that

something else is the real reason, not virtue. In this way, we are again forced, as comparative ethicists, to face the normative question.

This fact is surely one of the reasons that virtue ethicists are so keen on Aristotle and not Plato; it might appear that Plato clearly does not believe that virtues are the source of normativity: that honor belongs of course, to use the common if mysterious phrase, to "the Good". In contrast, Aristotle may be thought to accord human life an independence which implies that human virtue constitutes and determines human good. His arguments do not use natural sources of value above and beyond human nature or, and rather differently, apart from human life-forms. It is worth noting, however, that Aristotle does not try to justify ethics either in the style of the Republic (it is in my own interest to be just), or in a modern way (e.g. that the very concept of rationality requires all rational beings to be moral).

Does it then make sense to say that virtue grounds norms for Aristotle, if he himself makes no effort to prove this very strong link? In fact, of course, if one wishes to argue that Aristotle has a universalist ethic, in the way Martha Nussbaum does, then one will base the argument on human nature or human function. This serves as Aristotle's way into the conception of virtue. He thinks a good life, one in which the peculiar function of humans is realized, is an activity of the soul with reason, in accordance with virtue (Nicomachean Ethics I 6). Even so it is debatable if Aristotle can escape Prichard's argument.

#### Moral psychology

Elisabeth Anscombe claimed that there was no point in doing moral philosophy since the then state of the philosophy of psychology did not allow it. Whether there is such a close connection between ethics and psychology is perhaps a moot point (at least some things may be said even in the absence of a satisfactory moral psychology), but it remains one of the most important topics certainly for readers of ancient ethics. One point for comparative ethics concerns the absence of a contrast between a rational and a non-rational part, made by Plato (e.g. in Republic X, and contrast IV) and taken up by Aristotle in Nicomachean Ethics (I 13). For there is no exact correspondence between this psychology and what the Chinese should offer.

There are great distinctions between the various models on offer in the West, when rational and non-rational parts of the soul are distinguished. For Aristotle reason is set off against desire and the vegetative part, for Plato reason is opposed to temper (*thumos*) and desire. Given the leading function of reason, the question is urgent what one is to do about this in China. The central question here concerns the heart (*xīn*), or heart-mind as it is sometimes translated: it has a controlling function, and cognitive function like reason, but is also subject to emotions (Lloyd); and for Mencius humans as such have various "hearts" or senses (Gassmann).

#### Universality

According to one tradition in the west, one characteristic of ethics is their universality. This is a fundamental area for comparative ethics. One approach is then to ask what the grounds for universality are. This question is clearly connected to the source of normativity: if the norms are the norms for everyone, that fact is grounded in the reasons for these being the norms. But before this question can be approached we are confronted with what "universality" means. For it by no means always refers to unconditional duty, as one might expect from a Kantian standpoint.

There are many contrasts and distinctions that are relevant when considering the universality of ethics. While it may be taken as a trivality that every group of humans that continues to exist for any time at will have ways of distributing goods and making decisions, sanction some forms of behavior and strongly favor others (a concrete morality or *Sittlichkeit*) it is far from obvious that there is some one kind of morality binding for all or that should be binding for all.

So what kinds of universality are we faced with? I think that the facets in which universality is relevant are very multifarious. A brisk look at a list of a few aspects of universality in both cultures will make this clear. We have a vague, and rather tantalizing recommendation from Lao Zi not to "dismiss anyone", on the part of the holy man (Ch. 27). Aristotle thinks that all humans have the same "function" (Nicomachean Ethics I 6). Plato thinks that any individual is a locus for the love towards the *kalon* (good/beautiful); the good is the same for all. Mo Zi pleads for doing good to all, without regard for the familial relationships, *jīān ai*, often translated "universal love", better rendered as "care without gradations". And, finally, Mencius has at least two crucial forms of universality: everyone possesses the four shoots (*sì duān*), that is, very roughly, the capacities to develop ethical behavior, and he is also well known for his plea to spread rulership out to all in the empire, or, it may be translated: the world (*tiān xià*). Xun Zi also thought that anyone in the street can become a Yu, that is, one of the legendary Kings of antiquity, renowned for his self-sacrificing rulership, if only the man in the street were ready to.

From this rapid sketch, the ethical phenomena one may call universalist are by no means, even within one culture, always the same. Virtue ethicists have often tended to move towards particularistic views of ethics, in part because of the difficulty of specifying universal rules, of saying what it means to follow rules and of proving the universality of rules. Because of the connection between rationality and rules, there is a tendency here to see the limits to systematic philosophizing. Virtue ethics, it is implied, is a loose way of talking compared to utilitarian or deontological strictness. This tendency is surprising in that at least in Aristotle, ethics is systematic and philosophical (Hübner), even if he does emphasize the need to slacken the claims of strictness when doing ethics (Nicomachean Ethics I 3). He also restricts ethics to those things which are in our power,

us being in this case a polis or any sub-group of a polis. At any rate, because we are deliberating what to do, and in philosophical ethics reflecting on the process of decision making, we are restricted to our own concerns. In a similar vein, perhaps, Christine Korsgaard writes of ethical agents "acting in the first person".

Connected to the question raised above whether one can draw up a finalized list of virtues is the problem of virtues which are relative to roles; this conception is one we meet with in both cultures. For "Confucians", the question concerns above all the virtue of the ruler and his advisers, and is conceived of as analogous to relations in a family. This process was then extended, so that one has later a classification or catalogue of female virtues illustrated by historical examples. Of course, if this is the conception, then the claims of universality of these

"To become aware of what is constant in the flux of nature and life is the first step in abstract thinking. The recognition of regularity in the courses of the heavenly bodies and in the succession of seasons first provides a basis for a systematic ordering of events, and this knowledge makes possible a calendar. ... Simultaneously with this concept, a system of relationships comes into the idea of the world. Change is not something absolute, chaotic, and kaleidoscopic; its manifestation is a relative one, something connected with fixed points and a given order."

### — Hellmut Wilhelm

ethics are greatly reduced; and may of course then be exploited by those who think that ethical conceptions are only ever relative to a culture and a tradition.

One aspect of virtue ethics deserves to be emphasized because of the profound effect it has on the conception of moral philosophy generally: there are no universal rules or moral laws to be used in determining actions, rather the value of actions depends on character. This is important because it runs counter to modern rationalistic ethics of all kinds. Independently of the character of agents, there is no sense in asking about the moral quality of actions. But one may well ask whether it really corresponds to what Aristotle would have said. On the one hand, he is aware of the lack of universal laws: ethics should do with things that change and in the world of change there are no invariable generalizations. This is for example one reason for his championship of equity (*epieikeia*) as a principle resource of justice (Nicomachean Ethics 5 10). But on the other hand, he thinks that justice also consists in obeying the law. Law in general plays a cardinal role in his ethical system. For of course his ethics is written for statesmen: they must reflect on how to run states in such a way that people turn

out good and can-do science and philosophy. Good laws produce good people. Thus, there is an intimate connection between law and goodness, not, to repeat myself, strict universal law, but still general laws. And Elizabeth Anscombe's original strictures against law-based ethics were predicated on the claim that such ethics only make sense in the context of a God who hands down commandments. But Aristotle's ethics is not God given, and has plenty of room for law, and even for the idea that there is such a thing as law that is such above and beyond states passing laws (Nicomachean Ethics 5 7). And of course, he gives a well-known list of things that are quite simply not allowed, without any obvious connection with his doctrine of the mean. Thus, although one may think that Aristotle's virtue ethics are not based on universal formulae, there remains room for generality, at a fundamental level.

The fact that virtue ethics is not committed to strict universals of human conduct has led some of its proponents to see here limits of systematic philosophizing. But even here there is room for disagreement — for example Martha Nussbaum claims to find virtues of universal value, where Alasdair MacIntyre makes no such claims. This debate is of course particularly interesting for comparative philosophy when it deals with traditions that have nothing to do with one another, as suggested by David Wong's account of the discipline from which we started. At first blush, claims to universality would have to be supported by a lot of spadework uncovering the same conception of virtue, or even the same virtues in two traditions. So here again a conceptual framework would have to be constructed, if there is no simple compatibility between virtue and the virtues in the traditions compared.

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### Comparative ethics

Some methodological considerations by G.E.R. Lloyd

So, we must start with the question, how is comparison possible? Is the other intelligible? If so, how, on what basis? The dilemma is: we cannot use our conceptual schemata (our categories) without distorting theirs. Yet it seems that we should. The first problem is that of inter-translatability, possibly even the incommensurability, of belief systems. Then there is the problem of the basis on which value judgements can be made, and such judgements are inevitable, first because they are implicit in any conceptual schema, our own included, and secondly because values are the subject that we are discussing.

We are concerned with values, then, and the concepts used to express them, but they should be contextualized, i.e. set against the background of a study of the whole society/culture in question, its economics, politics and religion. So how can it

make sense to compare Confucius and Aristotle, for example, given that the societies they lived in were so different? We cannot ignore or bracket out that Aristotle lived in a slave-based society: nor that the target Confucius set himself was a ruler worthy to receive his advice. Nor is it the case that the ancient societies we are dealing with were static and totally homogeneous. There is a temptation to talk about 'ancient Greece', 'ancient China', globally, but that should be resisted. That would be to ignore the changes that were taking place at different times over the centuries, those leading up to the unification, let alone later, in China, and again between classical and Hellenistic Greece. And of course, if we want to bring back lessons from antiquity for us today, our society, our world, is massively different from either of theirs.

Are the difficulties such as to block all progress? If we set ourselves modest aims, of getting just a bit more insight into individual writers or texts, maybe progress is possible and surely comparison is a useful tool. Even those who work on a single ancient culture or set of traditions, endeavor to throw light on Confucius, Mozi, Mengzi and the rest, by comparing them with one another. That is the usual way of doing ancient philosophy. It is obvious that much of Aristotle is a response to Plato and cannot be understood without understanding him. Similarly, with Xunzi's reactions to Mengzi among many others. Comparing across cultures is more difficult, but it too can help, if we are careful, because we can gain a new perspective not just on one philosopher, but on a whole series, by contrasting their 'solutions,' with those proposed by thinkers working in a very different culture. Sometimes the difference lies in the 'solutions', but often in the problems on which the ancient thinkers focused.

The very fact that their situations are so different, the societies are so different, becomes an advantage, because we can see that in different circumstances different 'solutions' become possible. That is the abstract, theoretical goal. But are there lessons we can learn on substantive philosophical questions, how to live, for instance, in our very different situation? What difference does it make that human rights are such a central question nowadays? Some comparative studies read as if their hope or aim is to resolve philosophical issues since an inquiry into the past. But we should ask what it is to resolve an ethical issue. Does that mean merely to clarify it? Or is a resolution possible only if we can provide a set of recommendations for life?

Here the fundamental issue that looms is: are there cross-cultural universals in ethics? Or are values essentially and ineluctably relative to the society/culture/even group concerned? Evidently, we are faced here too with a dilemma, for on what basis can claims to ethical universals be made? Yet to insist on relativism seems to run into the opposite difficulty of incommensurability.

It is very easy at this point to get bogged down in dichotomies. Is human nature the same always and everywhere? That's the

way a naturalistic approach to ethics might pose the question. On the supposition that human nature is (up to some point) the same everywhere, and on the larger supposition that nature provides the basis of values, then could we arrive at some universal basic values (and hope that those who have inveighed against moving from an 'is' to an 'ought' have got it wrong)? On that basis, some critics might then set about seeing where individual thinkers approximated to those basic values and where they went off course. Or one might try to mount a similar argument from society. Are human social relations — of whatever sort — predicated on certain basic principles of social interaction, however different those relations appear to be regulated in practice?

The trouble is that the first approach runs into muddle and confusion on what 'human nature' comprises, and the second faces both empirical and philosophical difficulties. By 'human nature' what do we mean? We don't get very far because of shared physical characteristics. But as soon as we add mental ones and consider the whole range of our cognitive, conative and affective capacities, we should factor in the influence of culture, language, upbringing, and so encounter more differences than commonalities. But if we try to base a universal ethics on social arguments, the prime empirical difficulty comes simply from the observation that in practice they differ radically from one another, as even a modicum of anthropology shows. It is not that there is a problem with the prohibition on murder: the problem relates to widely differing views on what counts as murder. The same difficulty arises also with the rule that was once held up as the best candidate for a universal principle, the prohibition on incest. But what counts as incest? More fundamentally, the philosophical difficulty is that of the criterion we should invoke to get to those principles.

We are back to a sharper form of the dilemma I started with: how can we evaluate without ethnocentricity? But though both the substantive issues and the methodological issues are extremely difficult, it is not that we should give up in despair. The very difficult to understand other conceptual frameworks, belief systems, values, can be turned to advantage. I put it that we cannot or should not use 'our' conceptual schemata, and yet we should. The trick is to unpack what 'our' conceptual schemata amount to. The dilemma is only insurmountable if 'our' conceptual system is rigid. But of course, it is not, or rather it does not need to be. We each acquired notions of values as we became incorporated into the society we grew up in (and there are no doubt important differences between different individuals in any group: 'our' conceptual schemata are not only not rigid, they are not uniform). But that process of learning about values is not just a matter of childhood experience. We can continue to expand our horizons, our understanding, as adults: nor do we need to study philosophy at University to do so.

One way, perhaps even the best way, to do this is to study the other, where ancient China and ancient Greece, in all their variety, provide outstandingly challenging examples, where

the comparison and contrast between different views for which we have evidence can serve to open stunningly provocative questions. Why did Confucius, Laozi, Mengzi, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus and the rest come up with the recommendations they did? How did they construe their own role as advisers? Whom were they trying to persuade and based on what kinds of consideration? How did they react to the traditions they inherited and the views of their own contemporaries? Granted that it is extremely difficult to reconstruct what the man or woman in the street of any given Chinese kingdom, or Greek city-state, did sign up to, we certainly should think hard about what they did and have always to see the work of the elite individuals whose texts we study against that background.

These and other questions are in the background, sometimes in the foreground indeed, of the series of explorations in this volume. The delight of studying antiquity, one antiquity on its own, and better still two across time and space, is that it provides such a marvelous opportunity to expose the limitations, the parochialism, of our own preoccupations, in ethics as in other fields of investigation. But we can never afford to underestimate the difficulty of the enterprise.

#### Understanding Ancient Societies

How can we hope to understand societies that existed long ago? Is what we think we understand about them merely the reflection of our own ideas and preoccupations? The problems are particularly severe versions of the general difficulty, much discussed by philosophers and anthropologists in the 1950s and 1960s, of understanding alien cultures. Today's field anthropologist can at least cross-question the people he or she is studying, to check whether his or her interpretation of their ideas and behavior is along the right lines, and at least sometimes they will confirm that it is, though whether that is simply out of politeness or deference remains an open question. For the student of ancient societies, by contrast, most of the evidence has long been in. Occasionally a new Greek papyrus is found in the sands of Egypt or wrapped around a mummy: far more often silk scrolls or bamboo slips come to light in Chinese tombs. But the point holds as a generalization, and besides, we certainly cannot question any of our ancient subjects. I shall be returning to the problems of the bias and lacunae in our sources at the end of this chapter.

While the problems of the range of evidence are serious, those of the conceptual framework within which interpretation can proceed are even more so. The difficulty can be put in the form of a dilemma. On the one hand are the risks of distortion if we use the conceptual tools familiar to us. In the case of the history of science, especially, that has led to both anachronism and teleology. To talk of the ancients' chemical theories, for instance, is bound to distort what they were doing, since chemistry as we know it today is a product of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: I shall be dealing with the problem of talk about science as such in the ancient world in the next chapter. But teleology is even more pernicious, in that it

assumes that the ancients aimed to approximate to modern ideas—and as they did not get there, they must have failed miserably. But of course, they could not see into the future.

Like ourselves, they were doing the best job they could in dealing with their own contemporary issues.

On the other hand, if the reaction to that first difficulty is to insist that we use the conceptual framework of our ancient subjects, how is that possible? We are used to pointing out that certain ancient concepts, Chinese *qi* or *yin yang*, Aristotelian *ti en einai*, or Greek *logos* more generally, are untranslatable. Up to a point we can tolerate transliterations in a study interpreting the ancients. But that interpretation, sooner or later, must render the ancients' ideas, not just singly but in complex wholes, into English. An interpretation of Aristotle that proceeded entirely within the framework of Aristotelian discourse—in ancient Greek indeed—would be no interpretation, but at best a replica of some ideas of his.

So, the dilemma stands. We cannot, on pain of distortion, impose our own conceptual framework. Yet we have to.' The problems of interpretation are particularly challenging when we encounter what seem to be irrational or absurd beliefs and practices in the society we are studying. The reported Nuer notion that twins are birds, and the Dorze one that the leopard is a Christian animal, became famous in anthropological and philosophical debate. But it is easy to suggest similarly extravagant statements, from ancient Greece or China—and indeed from our own society and time. What are we to make of Plato's claim that the Idea of the Good is 'beyond being' (Republic 509b), or of the statements in Zhuangzi (2: 27) that 'no thing is not that, no thing is not this', and again that neither the assertion that it is nor again the assertion that it is not is permissible? But then every day in modern Christian churches the belief that God is three and that God is one is solemnly repeated.

There are three reactions to this general problem that are tempting, but misleading. The first is to postulate different mentalities as the source for the apparent unintelligibility of certain ideas or behavior: the second is to claim that that reflects incommensurable belief systems; the third is, on the contrary, to invoke a principle of charity in interpretation that, so far as possible, makes others' statements turn out to be true—by our standards.

The mentalities postulate would offer a quick—all too quick—resolution to the problems. The apparently absurd beliefs merely reflect a different mind-set: the idea has been applied not just to so-called 'primitive mentality' but also to early modern Europe and to China. Yet this will not do. Since I engaged in a detailed critique of the whole idea of mentalities in my previously, here I can be brief.

The gist of my critique can be summed up in four points.

- (1) First the notion of mentalities at best merely re-describes the phenomena it is supposed to explain, and is itself no explanation of them.
- (2) Secondly, it blocks, rather than furthers, explanation, by psychologizing the issues, by postulating a cast or casts of mind that, if they existed, could not in any case be investigated independently of those phenomena.
- (3) Thirdly, the questions of how a mentality is acquired, and how one could ever be modified, remain utterly mysterious, whether we are speaking of individuals or of whole groups.
- (4) Fourthly and finally, some of the advocates of mentalities attribute a plurality of mentalities to the same subject, and that is incoherent, for how does the individual in question switch between one and another?

The second interpretative strategy comes in different forms and it is only the extreme version that is vulnerable to the most obvious objections. The idea that different systems of belief are incommensurable was introduced by Thomas Kuhn to underline, among other things, the difficulty of identifying common criteria to adjudicate between them. The history of science provides plenty of examples where the status or interpretation of crucial concepts—such as mass, force, weight—has changed, thereby making any direct comparison between them problematic. Yet in the strongest form incommensurability suggests that different systems are, strictly, mutually unintelligible. In that form, the hypothesis is open to severe empirical objections.

We can indeed say that Ptolemy's view of the world is, in certain crucial respects, radically different from that of Copernicus. Yet Copernicus of course had a fair understanding of Ptolemy. He did not think of Ptolemy's theories as dealing with a different set of issues from his own: he thought of them as in certain respects inferior solutions to the problems he tackled himself. Again, no field anthropologist has ever returned from the study of a culture announcing that he or she could understand nothing. When the Buddhists, or the Jesuits, first came to China, it was not as if all communication between them and their hosts was impossible, however frequently misunderstandings, whether willful or inadvertent, arose.' In general, any commentator who diagnoses two strictly incommensurable belief systems is implicitly claiming to be able to understand both sufficiently to be able to make such a diagnosis—and what is to stop the adherents of one or other system arriving at that level of understanding?

Thirdly there is the principle of charity in interpretation, which again has been advocated in different forms by Quine, by Davidson, and others. Delpla provides a survey of the history of, and variations in, the use of some such principle. Sometimes the principle just covers the interpretation of logical connectives

in different languages: There is more to say of the problem of alternative logics. More often it is extended to apply also to beliefs, where in one version the aim is to make others' statements come out true, so far as possible, in our terms. Obviously when an alien informant uses the term 'gavagai' in the presence of a rabbit, but not when there is an ostrich, it is more economical to suppose that he or she may be saying something about rabbits. Not that we can ever be certain that the substance (as we call it) is meant, rather than, say, the appearance or the process, the rabbit-event-slice, or even the mass of rabbit-hood in the world. In that form, the radical skeptical challenge cannot be met. Translation and interpretation are always going to suffer from a certain indeterminacy.

But further limitations on the principle of charity, if construed as a rule with universal applicability, can be illustrated with examples that do not involve translation between different natural languages. We can use our own not so uncommon experiences to extract certain guidelines for the interpretation even of ancient beliefs. Part of what I should say concerns paradox, part deception, part learning.

The principle was often invoked, in the debate I referred to, in relation to exotic beliefs, attitudes, modes of behavior, statements, the fruit of ethnographic fieldwork among the Nuer, the Dorze, or whoever. But it is all very well to diagnose strangeness in others. We should bear in mind that we are strange ourselves. Our own society, our own language group, provide plenty of similarly puzzling items—not that the idea of a language group is at all hard-edged. Indeed who

The arguments of Lloyd forthcoming are that misunderstanding between Ricci and his Chinese hosts was not inevitable, and further that Ricci was as partial in his grasp of ancient European ideas as he was of contemporary Chinese ones counts as belonging to 'our society', and in which contexts, is equally problematic.

However, our own familiar European theology, poetry, philosophy, and science all yield examples of paradox. One of the more obvious scientific instances is that of the wave-particle duality of light. Here it is a matter of the student coming to see how it is that light exhibits some of the features of waves, some of particles, and seeing indeed how these can be combined. It is not that this is paradox for paradox's sake. But that may be the case elsewhere.

Let me return to the Trinity. What are we to make of the doctrine that God is three and God is one? When an attempt at interpreting this was made by Hobbes, the outcome was instructive. Hobbes initially registered considerable bafflement and then suggested that perhaps what was meant was that the three, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, were each representations of the same person. One might have thought that that was quite a sensible suggestion, but it got him into deep trouble, and he had to back down. No, the theologians insisted, it is not

the case that God is one person, with three representations, but three persons—three persons and yet still one. In some contexts, in fact, paradox is there not to be resolved, but to be insisted upon: it may, for instance, underline the very special nature of talk about God.

We should not underestimate the varieties and usefulness of different modes of paradox and of apparently irrational behavior. Some such behavior may be sanctioned as conventional. At weddings in Christian churches, the bride and groom should be sprinkled with confetti, never mind that it does not ensure in fact that they will be fertile. Not to do so would somehow not be right, not as it should be, not felicitous.<sup>1</sup> Some puzzlements are fun or entertainment, verbal conjuring tricks, play. Many paradoxes may be intellectual teases, like some of the insoluble of the medievals. One such goes back to the Liar paradox of Greek antiquity. I, the person speaking to you, am lying. If I am telling the truth, I lie. If I lie, I am telling the truth. Some have the not unimportant function of arresting attention, as we can illustrate from both ancient Greece and China. Heraclitus is recorded as having said that 'the

kingdom is the child's', and quite what he meant may have been as difficult to fathom as it has ever since remained for modern commentators.<sup>1</sup> A similar point may apply also to some citations from Hui Shi and from Gongsun Long. The latter was famous for the White Horse paradox (the white horse is not a horse), where our Chinese sources also record some typically deflationary responses. In one story, when a man tried to get past a customs post on his white horse with the claim that it was not a horse, the customs officer would have none of it. [This is the story told about Ni Yue in Hanfeizi. The work of Hui Shi in the fourth century acs and Gongsun Long in the third is discussed by Graham 1989 for instance. The extant text known as the Gongsun Longzi has often been thought to be, in the main, a forgery of between the fourth and seventh centuries CE, though the chapter on the White Horse paradox has been accepted as authentic. I should, however, stress that the relationship between this material, the Mohist canon, and the Zhuangzi writings is the subject of considerable ongoing controversy.]

Most poetic discourse, whether exploiting paradox, invites the exploration of multilayered, potentially inexhaustible, meanings. 'The expense of spirit in a waste of shame is lust in action', as the Shakespeare sonnet begins. Once we see that waste may be a play on waist, that spirit may be used of semen, and that expense may be ejaculation, we recognize that this may be sexual lust, but that is certainly not all that it is. Poetry is, no doubt, exceptionally open-ended. But closure of meaning is a crass assumption to make with most prose too.

Again, some puzzling statements, some rituals, are designed to stress the distance between the outsider and the insider, between the apprentice and the master, to emphasize the superior knowledge that the cognoscenti have or the special character of what it is knowledge of. You may not understand

the astral plane at first, but when you have been initiated into the coven, with the appropriate ritual, you will come to understand, indeed you will come to visit it, to be more familiar with it, even, than with the common-or-garden world that surrounds you. I am here talking not of Azande witches, but of witchcraft practiced in London in the 1980s, studied by Tanya Luhrmann, whose analysis brings to light obvious parallels with the notion of empty concepts studied in the Fang by Fernandez and more recently by Boyer.

Different responses are appropriate for the different modes of puzzlement with which we may be faced. The principle of charity dictates that we must assume that the message sent will be intelligible. Only if it is intelligible, Davidson insisted, can disagreement be meaningful. Now with any complex message, if we are not in possession of the fullest contextualization, who was communicating with whom and against what background of what assumptions and conventions, we are liable to make mistakes. That has not stopped outsiders from diagnosing what must be going on, among the Nuer or the Azande: but most of that is mere armchair speculation. When we do have more of the context, in the case of our own cultures (and others, if we work hard at it), we may still be at a loss, but at least have a surer grip of the conventions. But the experience of our own culture, in optimal communication situations, teaches us that intelligibility may take different forms. Sometimes it is not content that is being communicated at all. The statements may look like propositions, the words may seem to convey a straight message, in our own natural language, which requires no translating, no decoding. But that is not the point. Rather, in many of the situations I have described, we should recognize that the language use is designed to mystify, to deceive, to mislead, to exploit, to convey a claim to superiority. In such cases the message is the mystification.

No doubt Quine and Davidson themselves were aware of the richness of the possible illocutionary and perlocutionary force of certain types of speech acts. In the anthropological debate, some of Tambiah's early studies on magic, particularly, drew heavily on Austin's work. But to look to the decoding of the content of the problematic or puzzling statements may, on some occasions, be to look in the wrong direction. Humans are not the transparent, honest, cooperative creatures they would need to be for the principle of charity to be universally and straightforwardly applicable in that manner. Davidson claimed that we have no option but to assume intelligibility as a rule. But, to insist on the obvious exception, unintelligibility is sometimes deliberately cultivated. The only way the principle applies in those cases is at the meta-level, when we can recognize unintelligibility as the intelligible phenomenon it is. At the primary level, we do not need, in fact we can do without, the assumption that there is a direct content there to be decoded.

When deception is in play, charity may be a distraction. But it may be premature, when we have resources for learning. Puzzling and paradoxical statements may and do pose acute

problems of interpretation: but they also represent an opportunity. We cannot, of course, exactly put ourselves in the position of an ancient Greek or Chinese audience, when they first encountered the strange language of Platonic metaphysics, or an Aristotelian treatise on logic, or the *Dao De Jing* or the *Zhuangzi* or *Huainanzi*. But just as their incentive was to come to understand what these texts had to say about the world, about knowledge, about values, about themselves, so ours is similar. We are introduced to perplexing new ideas. Initially we may be quite baffled—until we come to have some inkling of their significance. That opens new possibilities for us, not that our interpretation can ever be definitive, nor that arriving at some understanding implies in any sense agreeing with the ideas to which we have been introduced.

Of course, we need some assumptions to start building bridges, from which interpretation can be developed and greater understanding won. The possibility of bridgeheads has, indeed, to be assumed: indeed, how could it be denied without solipsism? Is that an a priori assumption? Against saying that, we might invoke the point I made earlier when I urged that the ethnographic evidence has yet to come up with a society with which communication is impossible, however many misunderstandings may and do arise.

We are likely to start from (it could be said to be more economical to start from) our own ontological assumptions, to enter the field assuming that rabbits are more likely to be named than rabbit-event-slices. But if we should concede that, it does not mean that we must stay with those initial assumptions, as if they were un-revisable. Rather, we can modify them as we achieve greater understanding. Did we not do that repeatedly as we learnt science at school? Indeed, did we not also revise some of our own basic assumptions about the world as we studied works of great literature, from *King Lear* to *War and Peace*? Similarly, in the field of pragmatics, we should no doubt start with the assumption that we are not normally going to be willfully misled and that those who are communicating with us are serious about that. But that too should be subject to revision. In the process, we may learn more about being misleading, about being misled, about play, than we perhaps bargained for.

The double-bind is obvious. On the one hand in some way we should make sense of our subjects in our terms, for our audiences. I usually speak English, of course, when discussing the Greeks or the Chinese, though as I noted, like other commentators, I often simply incorporate certain key terms from each language untranslated. I gave *logos* and *qi* as examples, to which many others could be added.

Yet on the other hand our primary obligation is to make sense of our subjects in their terms, to allow them their voice, their differing viewpoints on fundamental issues. To be sure I cannot consider myself as one of them: I cannot even identify fully with my modern audiences or readership. But then I am not identical

myself with the person I was twenty-five years ago, if we are speaking of what I know or believe.

That is where the opportunities arise, both for expanding our notions about ontology and in matters to do with pragmatics. We may think of the insights that have come from the careful investigation of the differing views on time, space, causation, number, color, sound, that are found in different cultures, ancient and modern. Some such differences are, to be sure, more fundamental than others. Those within the experience of time, for instance, between a purely quantitative view and one marked with qualitative differences, for example between sacred and profane time, appear to be deeply entrenched (Leach 1961). Yet even in the case of color we have come a long way from the studies of Berlin and Kay (1969) who assumed—and set out to prove—that all color vocabularies follow set rules for the acquisition of terms for hues, when it is now understood that in many natural languages, it is not hue that is salient, so much as luminosity, and where many terms in the color vocabulary do not primarily connote colors at all.

We may be at a loss to explain, in general terms, how such learning can occur, how new insights into underlying ontological questions can

be gained. It may seem that it cannot happen, as if either other ideas will be reduced to our own, or they will remain forever unintelligible. Yet to that the reply is twofold. First that it does happen. Secondly that it is essentially no different from the processes of learning that we have constantly been engaged in, since childhood, in our own society, in all its diversity, acquiring and using our own natural languages. Even if we have no algorithm for this, there is much to be said for reflecting on where all of our own experience of learning begins, to make the most of what those reflections suggest, as we confront the more arcane problems of understanding the exotic. Of course, the difficulties increase, as we find that we should acquire further languages, ancient ones such as Greek and classical Chinese, as well as modern, though while that is obviously hard work, it is equally obviously not impossible, even if perfect fluency is always going to escape us: it does in one's own mother tongue, does it not? But if that means that the problems mount up, so too do the potential rewards—since one can learn more about the parochial quality of some of our most cherished assumptions.

Those are the opportunities. Yet we must be clear as to the barriers to full understanding that exist. Let me now return to the problems of the nature of the evidence available to us. There is the double difficulty of bias and of incompleteness. The texts that have come down to us have been selected—in some cases many times over. They have been handed down in complex but clearly defined processes of transmission and at each stage decisions have been taken by individuals, known or unknown, named or unnamed, to preserve or not to preserve.<sup>1</sup> We can only guess at the contents of what was not transmitted. Where we have references to no longer extant texts, we may

suspect that the reporting is not always fair. Rather, we often know for certain—because the authors doing the reporting tell us—that it is downright hostile.

So, the first bias is in the transmission. And the second is that most of our evidence takes the form of literary texts. They can be supplemented, for sure, with the inscriptional evidence (texts of a different kind) and by other archaeological data. But what we gain insight into is, overwhelmingly, the products of the privileged literary elite. It is indeed hard to resist being mesmerized by them—to remember just how exceptional most of the individuals in question were in their own culture. How far what they believed was shared by other people is, in most cases, an unanswerable question. The ideas, reactions, preoccupations, attitudes, of many of the members of those ancient societies are mostly beyond our reach or at least a matter very largely of pure guesswork. What did the slaves think of slavery, or young brides of child marriage? The gap between the ancient historian and the modern ethnographer is particularly large in such domains.

We should bear these problems constantly in mind as we engage in studies of detailed texts and issues in subsequent chapters. The proposal of this introductory discussion is that with two principal exceptions, understanding ancient societies is not radically different from understanding our own contemporaries. The past is certainly not a country we can visit. We cannot go and see for ourselves how ancient institutions functioned, what attendance at the Athenian assembly felt like to the various participants, what the experience of working in the Chinese Astronomical Bureau amounted to for the officials concerned, or the nature of the hopes and fears of individuals who jockeyed for position in the entourages of Greek tyrants or Chinese emperors.

That is the first exception—not that presence in a society, visiting it, attending the Commons or the High Court or even a university or a research laboratory, is any guarantee of success in understanding what is going on. Then the second exception is that ancient languages are of course no longer spoken, though to describe them, conventionally, as 'dead' is rather to neglect the fact that their range of resonance is no less than that of contemporary English or Chinese. But otherwise, the problems of interpretation we encounter are in principle like those we always face, even if in practice we are so much more restricted in the evidence available to us where the ancient world is concerned.

I would claim, furthermore, that the strangeness of ancient ideas can be turned to advantage. We can study bewilderingly diverse worldviews. I shall explore, in what sense there is a common ontology underpinning them all. We are confronted too with apparent differences in modes of reasoning. I shall ask, whether or in what sense there is a common logic underlying all human rationality. What sense, if any, does it make to talk of alternatives in the matter of reasoning itself? Can we, in this context, redefine and redeploy

the notion of divergent styles of enquiry? The ambition is to use history to help resolve the philosophical problems associated with the dichotomies of realism and relativism, objectivity and constructivism, truth as correspondence and truth as consistency. Throughout we shall be coming to terms with, and hopefully learning from, unfamiliar ideas. Some will undoubtedly defeat explanation. All the interpretations offered are provisional conjectures to be tested in further enquiry. But the ancients can, and should, be used as a resource for new understanding of the world, of the capacity of humans to understand, and of ourselves. That is the strategic aim of this set of studies.

### The Ethics of Confucius and Aristotle: Mirrors of Virtue (Routledge Studies in Ethics and Moral Theory) by Jiyuan Yu [hardcover, Routledge, 9780415956475 Paperback]

As a comparative study of the virtue ethics of Aristotle and Confucius, this book explores how they each reflect upon human good and virtue out of their respective cultural assumptions, conceptual frameworks, and philosophical perspectives. It does not simply take one side as a framework to understand the other; rather, it takes them as mirrors for each other and seeks to develop new readings and perspectives of both ethics that would be unattainable if each were studied on its own. The book includes an admirable, Greek glossary, Chinese glossary, Notes, Selected bibliography, Index of names, and Index of subjects.

Why draw together Confucian and Aristotelian ethics? What can we expect to achieve by comparing them? Is it theoretically possible to compare two ethical systems that originate in different traditions? Do Confucius and Aristotle have comparable views about how ethics should be done? This introduction seeks to answer these questions. In explaining the nature of this project, I also try to provide a defense of comparative philosophy as a philosophical enterprise.

In "Modern Moral Philosophy," Elizabeth Anscombe pointed out that "anyone who has read Aristotle's Ethics and has also read modern moral philosophy must have been struck by the great contrasts between them." Anscombe claimed that all modern major moral philosophers were wrong and that we should stop doing moral philosophy until we have an adequate philosophical psychology. Ethics should be grounded in the notion of virtue, and we must get a better grip on terms like "intention," "wanting," "pleasure," and "action" in order to explain what type of thing a virtue is and how it relates to the virtuous actions. Her paper effectively initiated the contemporary revival of virtue ethics which takes Aristotle as the dominant model and which significantly changed the landscape of contemporary ethics.

Anscombe's paper was published in 1958. In the same year, a group of Confucian scholars published "A Manifesto for a Re-Appraisal of Sinology and Reconstruction of Chinese Culture." This was intended to show the contemporary philosophical significance of Confucian ethics by contrasting it to modern Western moral philosophy:

In Western ethical studies, discussion of morality is usually devoted to consideration of the regulations of human behavior, or the social or religious values of moral codes. Few writers have particularly stressed this thorough transformation of man's natural life by moral practices so that his attitudes and manners manifest his inner virtues and enrich and illuminate this life. In contrast, it is precisely what traditional Confucianism has greatly emphasized.

This document became the landmark of the contemporary revival of Confucianism, a movement that has been called "New Confucianism," or "The Third Epoch of Confucian Humanism." New Confucianism can be traced back to the 1920s and 1930s when scholars tried to identify the unique value of Confucianism in the wake of the systematic introduction of modern Western culture into China. The 1958 Manifesto made the revival of Confucianism an international movement. The revival was greatly encouraged and promoted in the 1970s and 1980s by industrial success in nations that share Confucian culture. Confucianism was seen as being able to provide an alternative view to modernity.

The revival of Aristotelian ethics is mainly an academic phenomenon, whereas the revival of Confucianism appears to have broad cultural and sociological dimensions. Nevertheless, these two revivals share the same target of criticism, that is, Enlightenment values and modern Western morality. Indeed, their philosophical orientation of these two rivals is the same, that is, a virtue approach to ethics. The major differences between Aristotle's ethical thinking and modern moral philosophy are usually said to be the following. First, whereas modern ethics focuses on moral acts, Aristotle's ethics concerns the goodness of the agent's whole life. Second, whereas modern ethics considers the task of ethics to formulate rules and principles to govern moral acts, Aristotle's ethics centers on the character and virtue that a person must have to live happily or to flourish. The value of an action can only be judged in relation to the character of the agent.

It is not difficult to see that these two features of Aristotle's ethics also characterize the ethics of Confucius. First, the concern of Confucius is to find the human dao, i.e. the way to become a good person. Second, to become a good person, one must cultivate de, that is, a dispositional character (indeed, de has been generally translated as "virtue" in English translations). Confucius calls this dispositional character ren. Ren has been generally translated as "benevolence" or "humanity," but is also widely referred to as "virtue," "complete virtue," or "cardinal virtue." James Legge (1815-97), who laid down the foundation of the Western translation of Chinese classics,

translated junzi (the Confucian concept of the good man, that is, the man equipped with ren, usually translated as "gentleman") as "a man of complete virtue."

It is in elaborating how one can become a good person by cultivating ren that Confucius reflects and discusses issues such as human nature and its fulfillment, the doctrine of the mean, the role of social custom and traditions, self-cultivation and moral education, love, family, virtue politics, moral emotion and reasoning, and so on. These are also central themes in Aristotle's theory of virtue. Aristotle's ethics is taken as the paradigmatic model in contemporary virtue ethics precisely because these important ethical concerns have been left out or at least marginalized in dominant modern moral theories. The contrast between Confucianism and modern Western moral theory is not simply a contrast of East and West, but also one between a character-based ethics and a rule-based or rights-based ethics.

Since both revivals share a virtue approach to ethics, but point to Confucius and Aristotle respectively, a sense of wonder naturally arises about the extent to which the ethics of Aristotle and Confucius compete or complement, and about the philosophical significance we can draw from their similarities and differences. Propelled by this curiosity and the desire to know, I venture to develop a philosophical comparison of these two ethics.

Philosophy does not occur in a vacuum. Hence, our comparison considers all kinds of contexts (social, political, cultural, and theoretical backgrounds) in ancient China and Greece that affect Confucian and Aristotelian ethics respectively. The focus of our comparison, however, is on what each ethics says, that is, on the ideas and arguments in ethical texts of each side. This is essential for the sake of avoiding bold and ill supported comparative generalizations.

The Aristotelian corpus contains four treatises on ethics: Nicomachean Ethics, Eudemian Ethics, Magna Moralia, and On Virtue and Vice. We leave aside On Virtue and Vice, as it is generally agreed not to be authentic. The thinking of the Magna Moralia is Aristotelian, but most, although not all, scholars treat it as lecture notes by one of Aristotle's disciples. The Eudemian Ethics and the Nicomachean Ethics cover almost the same range of subjects, and indeed share three books in common: Nicomachean Ethics books v, vi, vii are Eudemian Ethics' books iv, v, vi. In the history of Western ethics, it is the Nicomachean Ethics that has been read as the canon for Aristotle's ethics and has been referred to as the Ethics, whereas the Eudemian Ethics has been thought to be inauthentic until Jaeger who, in his interpretation of the development of Aristotle, argued that it belongs to an earlier period of Aristotle. In the current prevailing position, the Eudemian Ethics and the Nicomachean Ethics are not two entirely different treatises. The Nicomachean Ethics appears to be a partial revision of the other, and represents Aristotle's last and most mature thought about the topics it treats. I follow this general

position and take the Nicomachean Ethics as the definitive presentation of Aristotle's ethics, although I shall quote the Eudemian Ethics and the Magna Moralia where I find they help to clarify or supplement the ideas in the Magna Moralia.

To better understand Aristotle's ethics, however, we cannot confine ourselves to the Nicomachean Ethics. At the beginning of the final chapter of the Nicomachean Ethics (x.9), Aristotle himself emphasizes that his program remains incomplete (1179a33). Towards the end section of the Nicomachean Ethics, we read:

Now our predecessors have left the subject of legislation to us unexamined; it is perhaps best, therefore, that we should ourselves study it, and in general study the question of constitution, to complete to the best of our ability the philosophy of human nature. (Nicomachean Ethics, 1181b12-15)

According to this passage, what he says in the Nicomachean Ethics is a part of "the philosophy of human nature" (*è peri ta anthròpina philosophia*, literally, "philosophy of human affairs"). The work that is entitled Politics is the sequel to his ethical philosophy and forms another part of the same effort. For Aristotle, one cannot study ethics in isolation from politics. The goal of ethics is to make one become good, and for this goal habituation is crucial. Right habituation requires the law of the political community. A study of legislation and therewith the constitution (*politeia*) generally is therefore indispensable. "The constitution is so to speak the life of the city" (Pol, 1295b1). The best political arrangement is the one "in which every man, whoever he is, can act best and live happily" (Pol, 1324a24-25).

The treatise Politics covers many topics that are closely related to the discussion of virtue. Even in the Nicomachean Ethics itself Aristotle emphasizes the political nature of his study. At the beginning of the Nicomachean Ethics, the investigation of the supreme human good is said to be the proper business of the science of politics, and Aristotle keeps referring to his discussion as "politics." He also maintains that the goal of politics is to make people good, and that it is the province of political science to study pleasure and pain. Accordingly, in constructing Aristotle's ethics, I shall include the Politics (especially its discussions that are closely related to theories of character, such as the human being as political animal, the role of family and politics in the cultivation of virtue, the relation between the political life and philosophical life, etc.)

On the Confucian side, my discussion is not confined to the Analects. When I first embarked on this project, I intended to just compare the Nicomachean Ethics and the Analects. But it quickly became clear that, although conceiving the project in that way appeared to have a kind of neatness that one would like, it was philosophically less rewarding and interesting. Indeed, it could not even go very far.

There are two main reasons for this. First, the Analects itself is not Confucius' own work, but rather a collection of sayings and conversation fragments attributed to Confucius, compiled and edited by his disciples and their disciples over several centuries. Disciples who contributed to the contents of the Analects out of their recollections had different understandings of Confucius' teachings, and editors who brought these pieces together over many generations had different interests and agendas,

Furthermore, the inclusion of the materials must have been selective. Many sayings found in other classic texts such as the Mencius, the Zuo Commentary to the Spring and Autumn Annals, and the Xunzi are not included. Hence, the Analects is actually a mixture of Confucius' own thought and his disciples' interpretations. This means that, even if we reconstruct Confucius' ideas solely out of the textual evidence of the Analects, it is already a Confucius that is transmitted by compilers and editors. There have been scholarly efforts to distinguish authentic Confucian dicta from later interpolations; yet a consensus is difficult to achieve, if it is in fact achievable.

The second, and more important reason, is theoretical. Confucius explicitly says that his moral reflection has a unified vision (A, 4:15). Nevertheless, he never elaborates how his *dao* is unified. We need to gather scattered sayings to piece together a complete picture. One has to admit, however, that if based solely on the evidence of the Analects the picture we can get, no matter how it is construed, is a skeletal vision or a basic blueprint, which must be extended, improved upon, and filled with details.

In Chinese intellectual history, Confucianism refers more often to the ideas that are presented in the "Four Books," which include, in addition to the Analects, the other three crucial Confucian texts of the classical period: Mencius, The Great Learning (*Daixue*) and The Doctrine of the Mean (*Zhongyong*). The Mencius, written by the second Confucian Master, Mencius (c. 372-289 BCE), is a collection of sayings and dialogues of considerable length. Historically, the Mencius exerted enormous influence. "It is not an exaggeration to say that what is called Confucianism in subsequent times contains as much of the thought of Mencius as of Confucius."<sup>47</sup> The Great Learning was a chapter of The Records of the Rituals (*Li Ji*), and it contains, in the arrangement of the Sung Neo-Confucian Zhu Xi (1130-1200), one text and ten chapters of commentary. Zhu Xi claimed that the text was the words of Confucius, while the ten chapters of commentary were the ideas of Confucius' disciple Zengzi (505-436 BCE). This view of the authorship has been controversial, but there is little doubt that thoughts expressed in this classic are consistent with the thoughts of Confucius. Indeed, the Learning concisely outlines the Confucian moral and political project. The Mean was also originally a chapter of The Records of the Rituals, and contains many quotations that are attributed to Confucius himself and that are about ideas of Confucian psychology and metaphysics. Traditionally, its authorship was ascribed to Confucius' grandson, Zisi (491-431

BCE), although it is controversial. The Sung Neo-Confucians group these four texts together as the essential Confucian corpus. Zhu Xi edited them and wrote an influential commentary. Since then, they have been the core of the classics of orthodox Confucianism. They were the basic textbooks in early education until the twentieth century, and became the basis of the civil service examination from 1313 until 1905.

Although the grouping of these four texts is a Neo-Confucian work, it seems to me that to put them together represents a profound philosophical insight about what classical Confucianism is about. Of course, there are differences among these Confucian texts, which we will explain in due course. Yet overall, the ideas found in these texts enable us to grasp the unified and systematic dao that Confucius claims he has, but does not deliver in the Analects. The seed ideas of the Analects grow up in the other three texts, which share the same framework and same dominant concerns central to Confucius in the Analects. The other three texts shed a great deal of light on the Analects and help make sense of its many concepts and the relations between these concepts. They also defend Confucius' dao in the Analects by responding to the critics of Confucius and extending Confucius' thinking to deal with new problems.

More important, it is the virtue ethics found in the Four Books that matches well with the scope of Aristotle's ethical theory. Many ideas that are major themes in Aristotle's ethics are only hinted at or are completely untouched within the Analects; but they, or their comparable counterparts, are developed in the other three texts. We shall see this as we move on, but here I have to mention the following three major corresponding aspects.

First, Aristotle's ethics is inseparable from his politics, for the aim of the state is to nurture the virtues of its citizens. Confucius holds the same idea by claiming that to do politics is to rectify the virtue of the rulers and to restore the rule of li (the rituals or rites). This Confucian virtue politics, however, has its full-fledged unfolding in Mencius' theory of benevolent government and in the Learning.

Second, Aristotle's ethics is related not only to politics, but also to other branches of knowledge, particularly to psychology. His ethics is based on the "function argument" according to which what determines humanity is the activity of the rational soul. Hence Aristotle requires that "clearly the student of politics must know somehow the facts about the soul" (Nicomachean Ethics, 1102a20). The Analects lacks a counterpart of Aristotle's function argument or moral psychology, but Mencius' theory of innate goodness fills the gap. Indeed, a rich moral psychology can be extracted from the Mencius and the Mean.

Third, Aristotle's ethics has a metaphysical basis. The theory of potentiality and actuality developed in the *Meta.* is heavily used in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the theology of *Meta.* xii is connected to the theory of contemplation in *Nicomachean Ethics*

x.6-8. Confucius in the Analects presupposes a notion of heaven and thus a cosmological foundation for his ethics. Yet it is in the Mencius and the Mean that a Confucian moral metaphysics is fully developed.

To sum up, Aristotle's ethics is a part of his whole knowledge system, and a good discussion of it needs to draw on the relevant ideas from his politics, metaphysics and psychology. The version of Confucian ethics that matches Aristotle's ethics is the ethical theory extracted and reconstructed from the Four Books. This is the "ethics of Confucius" that is compared with Aristotle's ethics in this book. Together, these four books can be taken to present an integrated Confucian virtue ethics in which ethics and politics are inseparable and which has strong metaphysical and psychological foundations. Of course, among them, the Analects is the center of focus, and other texts are read as elaborations and extensions of the central points of the Analects.

The book is divided into seven chapters. Eudaimonia, dao, and virtue compares the central questions and approaches of the ethics of Confucius and Aristotle, and explores how they are shaped by their respective cultural and philosophical traditions. Aristotle is concerned with how one can achieve eudaimonia (happiness, or human flourishing), and he approaches this issue by focusing on the cultivation of aretê (translated as "virtue" or "excellence"). Confucius is concerned with the dao (way) for one to become good, and he approaches this issue by focusing on the cultivation of de (virtue) or ren (human excellence). Clearly, both ethics are concerned with the whole life of a human being rather than moral acts, and both choose to focus on the qualities that make a person a good person.

Aristotle, however, works within the eudaimonistic framework that Socrates set. In contrast, Confucius is the founder of Chinese ethics. Eudaimonia, dao, and virtue therefore also discusses the status of Socrates by investigating how Socrates and Confucius initiate their respective ethical traditions and how Aristotle responds to Socrates. The chapter ends by demonstrating why the Confucian approach is closer to Aristotle's than to Socrates.

Both Confucius and Aristotle approach the issue of how one should live in terms of virtue, and then relate virtue to the characteristic features of being human (that is, humanity or humanness). Both happiness and human dao lie in the actualization or fulfillment of what is genuinely human. 2 Humanity: xing and ergon proceeds to explore their respective views on what is genuinely human. In Aristotle's ethics, it is based on the function argument, and in Confucian ethics, it is given by the Mencius' theory that xing (usually translated as "nature" or "human nature") is good. Each side adopts a humanity-based approach by emphasizing the importance of the development of humanity and connecting virtue with the fulfillment of humanity.

Aristotle, based on the function argument and a theory of soul, classifies the virtues into practical virtues (including habit-based moral virtue and practical wisdom) and theoretical virtues. There is no such classification in the ethics of Confucius. The general Confucian virtue, ren, largely corresponds to Aristotle's practical virtues. Yet its final stage, cheng (translated as "self-completion" in this book) is the full actualization of what is genuinely human, which formally corresponds to Aristotle's contemplation (the exercise of theoretical virtue) insofar as contemplation is also the final actualization of human rational function and is primary happiness.

Virtue, the mean, and disposition; Habituation and ritualization and Practical wisdom and appropriateness focus on Aristotelian practical virtues and Confucian ren as virtuous character. Both ethics claim that virtue is the mean, and both identify the mean with what is right. Virtue, the mean, and disposition attempts to explain why they independently develop a doctrine of the mean, and my position is to link the doctrine to the model of archery. A virtuous agent forms and exercises his virtue, just as an archer develops and exercises his archery. Both ethics also claim that virtue is an entrenched disposition, and my study shows that for both, the virtuous disposition is constituted of three major aspects: (1) internalized social value; (2) moral feeling; and (3) moral wisdom. It is the fusion of these elements that forms a virtuous character.

Habituation and ritualization focuses on how an agent internalizes social values and shapes moral feeling. For Aristotle, it is a process of habituation (*ethismos*), and for Confucius, it involves a process of ritualization. I argue that behind Aristotle's theory of habituation there is his thesis that a person is a political animal; correspondingly, behind Confucian theory of ritualization there lies the concept of the relational self. Virtue has a natural basis, but must be formed through ethical training. The recognition of the importance of human interrelationships and social nature leads both Confucius and Aristotle to stress the role of family and politics in the cultivation of virtue. Their views on the role of family in ethical education and on the relation between virtue and politics are therefore compared.

Practical wisdom and appropriateness focuses on ethical wisdom. Both ethics pay special attention to the intellectual aspect of virtue. For Aristotle, it is practical wisdom (*phronesis*),

and for Confucius, it is appropriateness (*yi*). This chapter covers several topics that are heavily debated in the scholarly works on either side, including ethical wisdom and tradition, reason and character, reason and emotion, and moral particularism, etc. Towards the end of the chapter, I examine the relation between the general notion of virtue and the virtues, as well as the issue of the unity of virtues in each ethics.

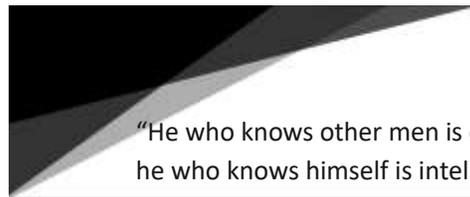
I then turn to the highest good in each ethics, that is, Aristotle's theory of contemplation, and the Confucian doctrine of cheng ("self-completion"). Aristotle's theory of contemplation brings forth two distinctions which are essential to Aristotle's ethics but which are missing in Confucian ethics. First, there is a clear-cut distinction between virtue and activity in Aristotelian ethics. Contemplation for Aristotle is not a virtue, but a virtuous activity. Yet Confucian ethics does not seem to admit this

distinction. Cheng is the highest virtue, and is also the highest good. Second, there is a distinction between practical virtue and theoretical wisdom and between practical activity and theoretical activity in Aristotle. The theory of contemplation gives rise to a tension with the theory of practical virtue in the middle books of the NE. Aristotle concludes that a life of contemplation is primary happiness, whereas a life of practical virtue is happiest in a secondary way. In contrast, Confucian cheng as the highest good is the ultimate stage in the cultivation of ren, and there is no tension between them.

They refer to one and the same virtuous disposition. These distinctions make our comparison more intriguing but

also more exciting. For they reveal several significant differences between the general projects of the ethics of Confucius and Aristotle.

6 The highest good and external goods explain the difference between virtue and activity in Aristotle's general framework of ethics and from there I develop a new understanding of Aristotle's conception of happiness (*eudaimonia*), namely, that happiness in his ethics is applied to both "acting well" and "living well." It turns out that whereas for Aristotle the end is happiness but not the possession of virtue, for Confucius possession of virtue is the actualization of *dao* and hence is the end. Cheng and contemplation, as the highest goods in their respective ethics, have two major similarities: (1) both are the highest fulfillment of humanity; and (2) both ethics relate the highest good to the divine being (for the ethics of Confucius, it



He who overcomes others is strong;  
he who overcomes himself is mighty.

He who works hard gets wealth;  
he who knows when he has enough is truly rich.

He who does not fail in the requirements of his  
position continues long;  
he who dies yet is not forgotten has longevity."

— Lao Tzu

is the unity between human being and Heaven, and for the ethics of Aristotle, it is the unity between human being and God). However, cheng as a virtue is only a first actuality in Aristotelian sense, whereas contemplation as activity is a second actuality.

Both Aristotle and Confucius believe that external goods are significant in a virtuous life. 6 The highest good and external goods also undertake to compare their theories of the role of external goods. It turns out that for this comparison, the distinction between virtue and activity is also essential. Whereas Confucius concentrates on the relation between external goods and virtue, Aristotle focuses on how external goods contribute to acting well and to living well. 6 The highest good and external goods ends by exploring the problems that the distinction between virtue and activity causes for each ethics.

The practical and the contemplative turns to the comparative implications of the second distinction, that is, the practical and the theoretical. Although both self-completion (cheng) and contemplation represent the actualization of what is genuinely human, there is a fundamental difference. Contemplation is not directly related to practical function and is only a partial actualization of humanity, whereas self-completion is the realization of humanity. This is because whereas Aristotle, in his notion of human function, draws a distinction between practical reason and theoretical reason and implies an internal split or tension, the Confucian conception of humanity is unified. I first explore the nature of the tension between the practical and the contemplative in Aristotle's ethics, and provide an answer to the dominant inclusivism-intellectualism debate by applying the thesis that happiness refers to both "acting well" and "living well." Then I show that with or without the distinction of the practical and the contemplative, the two-ethics present important differences in (1) their conceptions of the self in self-actualization; and (2) their views on the relation between the self and the good of others, that is, the role of moral virtue in the actualization of the highest good. Finally, I discuss the different attitudes towards the value of theoretical inquiry in Chinese and Greek philosophical cultures.

The ethics of Aristotle and Confucius are concerned with the development and realization of what is human qua human. Their overall frameworks are strikingly parallel, but there are significant differences in unfolding their visions of human self-fulfillment. Now let us get into the details of their visions.

### [Virtue Ethics and Confucianism](#) edited by Stephen Angle, Michael Slote [Routledge, 9780415815482 paperback]

This volume presents the fruits of an extended dialogue among American and Chinese philosophers concerning the relations between virtue ethics and the Confucian tradition. Based on recent advances in English-language scholarship on and

translation of Confucian philosophy, the book demonstrates that cross-tradition stimulus, challenge, and learning are now eminently possible. Anyone interested in the role of virtue in contemporary moral philosophy, in Chinese thought, or in the future possibilities for cross-tradition philosophizing will find much to engage with in the twenty essays collected here.

Excerpt: This book presents the fruits of an extended dialogue among American and Chinese philosophers concerning the relations between virtue ethics and the Confucian tradition. Based on recent advances in English-language scholarship on and translation of Confucian philosophy, as well as on corresponding advances in the familiarity of Chinese scholars of Confucianism with current Western philosophical trends, the book demonstrates that cross-tradition stimulus, challenge, and learning are now eminently possible. This Introduction will speak of some major themes that lie behind and are exemplified in the present volume, and of the potential pitfalls, but also the likely intellectual promise, of the present sort of cross-traditional enterprise.

#### Context

Virtue ethics dominated the ethical landscape of Western "classical antiquity," that is, of ancient Greece and Rome; but during much of the period of "modern philosophy" in the West, virtue ethics has been dead or dormant, and it is only in the last half-century that interest in virtue ethics began to revive. The original impetus to that revival was G. E. M. Anscombe's "Modern Moral Philosophy," an article that appeared in the journal *Philosophy* in 1958 and that expressed dismay about and even contempt for the utilitarian and Kantian moral philosophies that were then dominating the scene in theoretical ethics. Anscombe called for a return to Aristotelian moral psychology and Aristotelianism more generally, and that call did not go unheeded. It helped to crystallize discontent with the reigning Kantian and utilitarian approaches to ethics and led, not surprisingly, to a new interest in trying to develop contemporary ethics along Aristotelian lines.

Initially, that interest was anti-theoretical—as the theoretical character of utilitarianism and Kantian ethics were blamed for the deficiencies of those approaches. But Aristotle himself was a theorist rather than an anti-theorist, and eventually forms of contemporary virtue ethics appeared that viewed themselves as theoretical alternatives to utilitarianism and Kantianism. In this process the emphasis shifted from an exclusive focus on Aristotelian ideas and methods to include other figures in the history of virtue ethics: Plato, the Stoics, Nietzsche, and, especially, Hume. This was part of the general emphasis on history and historical figures that one finds in almost all recent moral philosophy, but in the case of virtue ethics, what developed was two incipient traditions of contemporary virtue-ethical thinking: the older and more dominant one stressing the insights we can gain from working with Aristotle, the other and recently strengthening one emphasizing what can be done with

ideas originating with Hume and the other British moral sentimentalists.

Equally important for the dialogue that this volume represents are important developments in the study of Confucianism in the West that now enable U.S.-trained philosophers to engage seriously with Confucianism. Two issues are particularly significant. First, over the last several decades, a few pioneering scholars have been able to teach Confucian texts and ideas within the framework of U.S. philosophy departments. They and their students have explored various aspects of the Confucian tradition while at the same time being cognizant of styles of reasoning and salient theoretical concerns within contemporary Western philosophy. The result has been a developing body of English-language literature that shows the fruits of viewing Confucian texts through some of the lenses of contemporary philosophy. A second and related trend has been the production, by many of these same scholars and their students, of translations that are scholarly and philosophically informed. For many of the key early Confucian texts, we now have multiple translations whose different strengths complement one another. The combination of a burgeoning secondary literature and quality translations seems to have passed a critical threshold, such that philosophers without Chinese-language background can now access the Confucian tradition in a serious way.

There are important resemblances between Aristotle's virtue-ethical views and views to be found in Confucianism, but the same can also be said about Humean virtue ethics and other views that can be found within the Confucian tradition. (There are reasons to think that comparative work with Stoic, Platonic, or Nietzschean thought may be fruitful as well, but so far this has been less-well explored.) The idea for a seminar on the relation between Confucian thought and Western virtue ethics originated with Stephen Angle, and on the recommendation of Roger Ames, he contacted Michael Slote about the possibility of applying to the NEH to do a joint Summer Seminar for American academics. We agreed about approaching the NEH, and the NEH in turn rewarded our efforts by agreeing to fund the seminar and offering additional money for a conference, involving both Chinese and American philosophers, to be held subsequently in Beijing.

The seminar took place during the summer of 2008 with fifteen participants from American colleges and universities. Some of the time was spent getting ourselves on the same page in regard to the nature and variety and traditions of virtue ethics; but the largest part of our efforts was devoted to reading classics of Confucian and neo-Confucian ethics and attempting to understand them both for their own sake and in relation to ideas that have been developed, either historically or more recently, in Western virtue ethics. Seminar participants began thinking about possible topics on which to write papers for the conference in Beijing that was being planned for a later date—and that would also involve participation from the Chinese end.

To set the stage for the conference, let us take a step back and look both at "Confucianism" and at philosophy in China today. The tradition of thought and practice stemming from Confucius (551-479 BCE) is rich and complex. It can plausibly be divided into at least five phases of development, including the classical era (from Confucius's lifetime until the Qin unification in 221 BCE); Han Dynasty and thereafter (two highlights are a focus on institutions and on a broad cosmological vision; 200 BCE-1000 CE); the "Neo-Confucian" revival that is centered on the Song and Ming dynasties (including significant exchange with Buddhism, resulting in a more complex metaphysics and epistemology; 1000 CE-1648 CE); the Qing dynasty reaction to Neo-Confucianism and early encounters with Western thought (1648-1911); and the modern/contemporary period of "New Confucianism," which is ongoing. Our seminar focused on the classical and Neo-Confucian periods, both because these have been the most influential and because they have been the most studied (and translated) in the West. Clearly, though, the broader Confucian tradition offers many other opportunities for lines of comparison and engagement.

In contrast to the Confucian tradition, explicit concern in China with something categorized as "philosophy" (or with "zhexue," the neologism coined to translate "philosophy") has been much briefer. Chinese intellectuals began to talk about "Chinese philosophy" around the turn of the twentieth century; this concept took on a more concrete meaning with the publication of the first histories of "Chinese philosophy" by Hu Shi in 1919 and by Feng Youlan in 1934. In a sense, then, we can see the work of these pathbreaking Chinese scholars as helping to lay the groundwork for our comparative endeavor. Today, specialists in Confucianism (and other Chinese traditions) can be found on the staffs of philosophy departments throughout China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Korea, alongside colleagues who teach Plato, phenomenology, Marx, analytic philosophy of language, and so on. However, things are not quite so simple as this picture makes it appear. The category of "Chinese philosophy" is quite controversial in China today, and at the present time, Chinese scholars trained in Chinese traditions rarely engage in significant comparative endeavors. This latter fact is partly a reflection of the kind of (historically and philologically focused) training that these scholars have received, but underlying both this and the controversy surrounding the category of "Chinese philosophy" are some important concerns that we believe must be taken seriously if an endeavor like ours is to have a constructive result outside the somewhat parochial limits of the U.S. philosophical scene.

The concerns have two complementary aspects. On the one hand, viewing Confucianism as "philosophy"—and viewing Confucian ethics as "virtue ethics"—can seem to privilege a historically contingent Western way of categorizing the world. Indeed, it might seem to make Confucian moral teachings in all their complexity into one sub-type of Western morality—and a relatively minor one (until recently) at that. The other side of this concern is that when one construes Confucianism as "philosophy," one loses out on many other important aspects of

the tradition, and one may also misunderstand even those aspects on which one focuses. Some examples of what may be lost are the "practical" character of Confucianism (including both concrete moral education and broader policy objectives) and its spiritual dimension. Critics of the "Chinese philosophy" category charge that by shoehorning Confucianism into categories like "ethics," "metaphysics," "epistemology," and so on, one turns it into something unrecognizable and of little relevance to Chinese culture.

We offer three distinct responses to these challenges. First, nothing in our approach nor in those of the authors collected in this volume suggests that Confucianism must or should be understood solely as "philosophy." The exact configuration of practice and theory that has made up "Confucianism" has varied over the centuries; its future today is very much contested. Our contention is that in all these phases it is both interpretively valuable and philosophically rewarding to view at least some of the relevant theorizing as "philosophy," and to think about it about other traditions of philosophy.' Second, while some of the contributors to this volume are primarily engaged in an interpretive exercise, for others the goal of creative, constructive philosophizing is at least as important. No matter whether one is American or Chinese, as philosophers we must be cognizant of new realities, and critical of limitations in past philosophical efforts. To some degree, then, viewing Confucianism as philosophy (and as virtue ethics) be an effort to make philosophical progress. Finally, we share with some of the critics of "Chinese philosophy" a sense that professional philosophy as it is currently practiced may be narrower than is wise, and narrower than philosophy has been in the past. In Pierre Hadot's memorable phrase, Hellenistic Western philosophy was "a way of life." Contemporary Western philosophy is certainly not. One strength of virtue ethics, though, is the connections that it encourages to serious work in the human sciences (like psychology) and to practical efforts of school teachers and educational policy makers concerning moral education. This response suggests that even regarding critics of our enterprise, there is ample room for us to learn from one another—a theme to which we shall return below.

The conference occurred in May of 2010, and on the American side involved papers given by ten of the original fifteen attendees of the Summer Seminar and by several other scholars from the United States. Because of earlier planning and a Chinese-language Workshop on contemporary Virtue Ethics at Tsinghua University in Beijing that we both organized and attended, many philosophers from China (including Taiwan and Hong Kong) also gave papers during the conference, and the American organizers—Angle and Slote—then sought out papers that had been given at the conference for inclusion in an English-language volume of such papers. (Those helping to organize things from the Chinese end are also hoping to put together a Chinese-language volume of original and translated papers from the 2010 conference.) The results of that process are visible in the present book.

## Mutual Learning

The presupposition of our 2008 Summer Seminar was that Western as American, virtue ethicists would be able to learn something interesting from studying Confucianism: that ideas gleaned from studying some of the classics of Confucian philosophy would be useful or helpful to Western virtue ethicists in their doing of virtue ethics. This hope and belief was partly encouraged by the fact that so much Confucian thinking seems virtue-ethical or close to virtue-ethical in character, but in studying the Confucian classics one also finds many instances of ideas that can be helpful to the Western virtue ethicist. Let us mention one example.

The Confucians stressed moral humility in a way that traditional Aristotelianism never did. If someone harms you, retaliation or punishment shouldn't be the first thing one thinks of, and various Confucian texts tell us to consider, rather, whether we ourselves may not be (somewhat) at fault for what is being done to us. Perhaps we have hurt or insulted the person who hurts us in ways we have previously ignored and perhaps we ought to immediately consider or worry about what we have done to the person who has decided to harm us. Such advice exemplifies a kind of moral humility that Aristotelianism never encouraged. Aristotelianism treats proper pride as a virtue and leaves no room for the just-mentioned form of Confucian humility (which differs from the Christian kind in ways we needn't enter here). But, as Jerome Schneewind has noted in his paper "The Misfortunes of Virtue," the fact that the virtuous Aristotelian individual was supposed to have no reason to defer or even listen to other people's (putatively mistaken) moral views meant that Aristotelianism wasn't well suited to dealing with the kinds of mutual concession and tolerance that are essential to the functioning of modern-day (religiously or ethnically) pluralistic societies. Schneewind argues that this helps to explain why Aristotelianism went into eclipse in modern circumstances, but if that is so, then contemporary Aristotelian virtue ethics needs to find a way of dealing with this issue without giving up on its own essential Aristotelianism.

Humility in the Confucian manner may well be helpful toward that end, so contemporary Aristotelianism has reason to learn or even borrow from Confucian thought. But, interestingly, contemporary Humean virtue ethics may have less of a problem here because of the emphasis that Hume placed and it places on empathy. Empathy means seeing things from the other's point of view, and when the Confucian asks us to consider whether we have harmed or insulted the person who has harmed or hurt us, they are in effect asking us to consider things from that other person's point of view. So Confucian moral humility has much in common with the empathy that Humean or, more generally, sentimentalist virtue ethics recommends to us, and this alliance, as it were, may be useful both to the Humean virtue ethicist who rejects Aristotelianism and to the contemporary or new Confucian thinker who seeks a more universal support for ideas that have their historically original place in Confucian thought.

And this, in turn, indicates a way in which contemporary Chinese/Confucian philosophers can learn from Western thought. Chinese thinkers seem to have latched on to the notion or phenomenon of empathy long before this happened in the West: arguably, Cheng Hao, Wang Yangming, and even perhaps Mengzi had the notion long before Hume first described empathy in modern terms. But we in the West have subsequently worked on empathy. Our psychologists of moral

learning stress its importance in the development of altruism and have studied how empathy varies in strength with various degrees and kinds of relationship to or with those in need of our empathy. In addition, some Western ethicists have stressed the importance of empathy to understanding basic moral distinctions and to motivating morally good or acceptable behavior. But the Chinese, who originated the study of empathy, haven't yet taken much advantage of what ethical argument and psychological studies in the West have shown or suggested about the moral importance of empathy, and doing so might very well enrich the possibilities for ongoing Confucian ethical thought.

So far, the kind of learning from one another that we have described is in keeping with what Angle has called "rooted global philosophy," which means to work within a live philosophical tradition, but to do so in a way that is open to stimulus and insights from other philosophical traditions. For example, the "roots" of some of our contributors lie primarily within contemporary Aristotelianism and contemporary moral philosophy and extend ultimately to Aristotle himself. Others are clearly rooted in the Confucian tradition and are exploring ways that the language and argument of contemporary virtue ethics might be productive from their Confucian vantage point. We should note, though, that the question of rootedness and of distinct traditions of inquiry is not always so clear. For example, Jiyuan Yu is Chinese, educated in both China and the U.S., and much of his scholarship has focused on ancient Greek philosophy. Yet he also explores and reflects on Confucianism, and in his article here relates both Greek and Chinese philosophy to current trends in Western moral philosophy. A complementary example is Bryan Van Norden, educated in the U.S. but a specialist in ancient Confucianism, who here offers us thoughts on how Confucianism and Aristotelianism might contribute to one another in a contemporary context. Are these (and other) projects best understood as rooted in a tradition?

"According to a Confucian view, there are four steps in social development," wrote Wilhem, Sr. "There are the individual, the family, the state, and mankind. The West had always emphasized the individual and the state. Individual development is extolled, and the single human being is regarded as central and as an atom of society. Over-emphasis on the function of the individual has led to deterioration of the family. Unlike Westerners, the Chinese have given greater weight to family and mankind. The consciousness of the individual is contained in the family, and since traditional China considered itself the world, Chinese considered themselves responsible for humankind rather than for the state."

— Hellmut Wilhelm, *Understanding the "I Ching": The Wilhelm Lectures on the Book of Changes*

Our suggestion is to consider that in addition to the possibilities of enrichment that exist both for Confucianism and for Western virtue ethics on the basis of what each individually can borrow or assimilate from the other, there is also the possibility—in the light of what we know about these similar but historically separate traditions—of occupying a theoretical position that remains uncommitted to either one, but that, on the basis of good arguments and evidence, seeks to construct or articulate a viable ethical perspective borrowing from each of

them and from other sources as well. We do not mean to suggest that there exist uncontroversial, standpoint-independent criteria for "good argument" and "good evidence"; the possibility that we are exploring is not a "view from nowhere." Rather, as communication, travel, and translation all become easier, there may be emerging not just rooted global philosophy, but a transnational philosophical community that can itself be a source of criteria and evaluation. As those of us involved in organizing the 2010 conference are acutely aware, there remain many barriers and limitations to the fluid development of such a transnational philosophical community. In fact, some of these challenges are in their own way good things, since we are certainly not calling for abandoning the study and development of distinctly rooted traditions of inquiry. We believe that the conference and this volume demonstrate that whether one envisions oneself as working within a single tradition, or as working within a transnational framework, we can still successfully communicate with and learn from one another.

#### Applicability

Debate over the meaning and applicability to Confucianism of "virtue" and "virtue ethics" constitutes one of the core themes that one finds in the essays of this volume. Even those papers that do not take up these questions explicitly, but instead proceed directly to work on issues by drawing on resources and concepts from both Confucianism and Western virtue ethics, can still be addressing the issue of "applicability" indirectly. After all, if the approach of such papers tends to produce fruitful results, this offers some confirmation for their implicit premise that Confucianism and virtue ethics do have things to say to one another. Admittedly, judging fruitfulness itself can be a contested matter, so it is well that many of our papers address the question of applicability head on.

One important piece of context is the prominent role of Kantian categories in the thought of Mou Zongsan (1909-95), the most important twentieth-century Confucian philosopher. In part to combat the common view among his modernizing contemporaries that Confucianism was a rigid morality of adherence to conventional hierarchies, Mou insisted that at the core of Confucianism lay the autonomous moral heartmind (*xin*), which he explicitly compared to Kant's notion of the free, good will. (We translate "*xin*," sometimes rendered as simply "mind" or "heart," as "heartmind" in order to express the fact that for all Confucians, including Mou, the *xin* is understood as the seat of both cognition and conation.) Mou parts company with Kant in several crucial ways, though, not least of which is his insistence that the human heartmind can access or even partly constituting moral reality. Mou borrows Kant's term "intellectual intuition" to label this phenomenon, in full knowledge that Kant denied the possibility of human intellectual intuition. It is not our purpose here to fully introduce Mou's complex philosophy, nor to assess its relation to virtue ethics.<sup>1</sup> For our purposes, the key issue is whether Confucian ethics is correctly understood as centered on the autonomous moral heartmind, and if so, whether this means that Confucianism entails a variety of deontological ethics, rather than virtue ethics.

Several issues are tangled together here. First, it is now common practice to distinguish between "virtue theory" and "virtue ethics." "Virtue theory" refers to that aspect of a given ethical theory dealing with the ideas of virtue and character; Kant and Confucians—and even, on some accounts, consequentialists—clearly have virtue theories. The question, though, is how central these aspects are to the overall theory. Only when virtues are understood to be appropriately central or fundamental to an ethical theory can we speak of a "virtue ethic" as opposed to a "deontological ethic" or a "consequentialist ethic."<sup>2</sup> Second, "deontology" is also subject to multiple interpretations, and a virtue ethics seems to be able to account for at least some understandings of deontology. For example, Slote has argued that the idea of deontological restrictions—that is, that certain sorts of positive acts like killing are *prima facie* wrong—can be explained within a broadly virtue-ethical framework. Third, some ways of developing the distinction between deontological and consequentialist theories rest on whether value is understood to be strongly "heterogeneous": deontologists deny and consequentialists accept that "moral" value is ultimately reducible or dependent upon "non-moral value." So, for example, Lee argues in this volume that since Confucians insist upon an autonomous moral heartmind, distinct from considerations of "profit," they are best seen as deontologists; a related view is defended in Wong's essay. At least two lines of response may be open to those favoring a virtue-ethical reading of Confucianism: (1) one can argue that virtue ethicists, too, can make a distinction between what is moral and what is prudentially rational, or (2) one can deny that Confucians make such a hard distinction between moral and non-moral value.<sup>3</sup> Fourth, there is the issue of "principles." It is common to associate both deontological

and consequentialist ethics with principles for action, and virtue ethics with standards of character or types of agents, but we should grant both that a virtue ethics often says quite a lot about principles and that its rivals—and particularly deontology—may have quite a bit to say about the nature of agents and agency.<sup>4</sup>

Our goal here is not to prejudge the debate that takes place in the volume, but simply to clarify some of the issues at stake. It is worth dwelling briefly on a further question that may seem prior to any argument about "virtue ethics": is there actually an idea of "virtue" present in Confucianism? There has been some considerable discussion of this matter in both the Chinese and English secondary literatures, but our authors appear convinced that Chinese term *de* and words like *arête* and *virtue* are closely enough related that there is no barrier here to comparative investigation. Both Liu's and Chen's essays discuss some of the dimensions of *de*'s meaning. Liu rightly emphasizes the vexed nature of translated terms and neologisms, and proposes a distinctive translation for "virtue ethics" into Chinese. For his part, Chen explores some of the different aspects of *de* as he seeks to spell out certain crucial, but lesser-appreciated dimensions of virtue within early Confucianism. Among other things, Chen argues that we can see a "dualism of meaning" in Confucius's *de*, simultaneously covering internal character and the "practical application and development of the requirements of the social system of that time," by which he means ritual practices. To be sure, *de* is not rigidly encoded in any practice, but the "understanding" and "love" of the rites—and thus its expression in public practices—is a vital part of *de*. The importance of ritual practices to Confucian ethics is also emphasized in our volume by Hourdequin, who sees rituals as crucially (albeit somewhat problematically) involved in giving Confucian ethics an adequately determinative content. Angle's essay also discusses the role that external ritual standards play, though his emphasis is on the ways in which conscientious behavior—that is, consciously forcing oneself to follow norms like rituals—is seen by early Confucians as falling short of virtue. Each of these essays contributes to a growing body of literature that recognizes the distinctiveness and importance to theories of virtue of Confucian ideas about ritual.<sup>5</sup>

### Symmetry

As mentioned above, most of the volume's essays do not explicitly raise questions about the overall relationship between Confucianism and virtue ethics, but rather engage in more piecemeal argumentation concerning particular points of contact. Before turning to some discussion of the themes we observe running through these essays, let us first pause to consider an important methodological issue. In a recent essay, Kwong-loi Shun has observed that studies in comparative ethics, no matter whether Anglophone or Sinophone, have tended to exhibit a troubling asymmetry:

"There is a trend in comparative studies to approach Chinese thought from a Western philosophical perspective, by

reference to frameworks, concepts, or issues found in Western philosophical discussions. ... Conversely, in the contemporary literature, we rarely find attempts to approach Western philosophical thought by reference to frameworks, concepts, or issues found in Chinese philosophical discussions.”

We agree with Shun that there has been such an asymmetry, and find much of his analysis to be compelling: among other things, we agree that Western philosophical categories are not more universal than Chinese ones, nor are Chinese traditions somehow more historically limited. However, we believe that the present volume represents a step toward a more symmetrical kind of philosophical practice. These essays do not simply attempt to fit Confucian texts or ideas into pre-existing Western categories, but in many cases, use Confucian concepts and insights to challenge Western views or to provide creative solutions to Western conundrums. Huang's essay argues that the Cheng brothers' "one li of differences" framework is more persuasive than either the generalist or radical particularist ideas seen in Western writings. In somewhat similar ways, Walker and Huff maintain, respectively, that Mengzi and Wang Yangming show us how to conceive the structure of human flourishing or happiness. Liu repeatedly uses ideas from Confucianism to rebut criticisms against virtue ethics, even though the criticisms were initially launched in a purely Western and Anglophone context. Rushing draws on early Confucians to articulate a notion of humility with an important political dimension; she submits that this understanding of humility would be extremely valuable in communities around the globe. Hourdequin argues—explicitly engaging with recent work by Slote—that Mengzi shows us both why empathy has a vital role in morality, and why it should not be our sole moral guide. One aspect of Van Norden's essay is the argument that a contemporary virtue ethics of flourishing (to borrow Ivanhoe's term from this volume) should be more Mengzian. In all these cases (and there are more) we see Western thought being interpreted via, or challenged by, Chinese and Confucian categories.

Even when essays in this volume "approach Chinese thought from a Western philosophical perspective," as when Terjesen uses Western research to interrogate the possible meanings of shu in relation to the idea of empathy, or when Angle asks whether we can find the idea of conscientiousness in early Confucian writings, we submit that this is not a simple privileging of Western perspectives. Angle's motivation, after all, is the lack of clarity about conscientiousness in recent Western writing, and he argues that there is a satisfying consistency and cogency about conscientiousness in the Confucian texts that may be useful not just in understanding Confucianism, but also in settling some of the confusion in Western debates. For his part, Terjesen is drawing on a recent body of philosophical and psychological work concerning (various senses of) empathy that seems to have no parallel in China, although Terjesen does acknowledge and refer to the relevant insights of Dai Zhen. Slote's essay on the impossibility of perfection, finally, both takes its point of departure from a

Western philosopher (Aristotle) and serves as a challenge to Confucian ideas of perfection. Since the gauntlet that Slote throws down is equally aimed at Western perfectionisms, though, it is hard to see this as in any way troubling.

Still, it might still be maintained that our whole framing of the Summer Seminar, Conference, and volume reflects an asymmetry: "virtue ethics" is stripped of its Western origin and becomes putatively universal, while "Confucianism" remains a kind of local knowledge. Our response is to return to some of the themes from earlier in this Introduction. First, as "virtue ethics" has emerged as a name for a family of ethical theories, it has emerged as something potentially universal. Virtue ethics is not simply another name for the thought of Aristotle. Still, its universality exists in relation to the growing variety of texts and textual traditions that provide it with specificity, and some of this clearly comes out of China. Second, though Confucianism was understood by most of its practitioners over its long history to be universal in scope, that idea came under radical challenge in the twentieth century and is only now being reborn. We believe that the contributors to the present volume treat Confucianism not just as a historically specific set of texts and terms, but also as a source of universal categories and knowledge.

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