Between Hierarchy of Oppression and Style of Nourishment: Defending the Confucian Way of Civil Order

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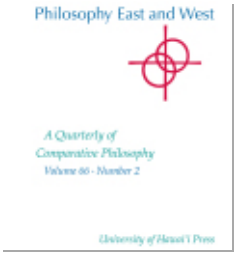

Philosophy East and West, Volume 66, Number 2, April 2016, pp. 559-596 (Article)

Published by University of Hawai'i Press
DOI: 10.1353/pew.2016.0034

BETWEEN HIERARCHY OF OPPRESSION AND STYLE OF NOURISHMENT: DEFENDING THE CONFUCIAN WAY OF CIVIL ORDER

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Despite a growing interest in and sympathy with Confucianism, there remains a stereotyped conception of Confucian civil order as a form of authoritarian hierarchy that is responsible for various oppressions in ancient China and is reprehensible from a modern egalitarian perspective. One central target of this modern criticism is the Confucian maxim of *sangang* 三綱, whose underlying idea is essential for regulating the relationship between sovereign and subject, father and son, and husband and wife in traditional Confucian society. Tu Wei-ming translates *sangang* as the "Three Bonds" and argues that it is the "least defensible legacy of Confucian ethics" from the "modern egalitarian and liberal perspective." For Tu, the "Three Bonds" dictates the "authority of the ruler over the minister, the father over the son, and the husband over the wife" and endorses "an oppressive system" that "totally undermines the weak, the young, and the female."[1] This antipathy to the Three Bonds has led Tu and many other scholars to make it a scapegoat for an alleged "Confucian authoritarianism," which they blame on the distortion and politicization of Confucian teachings in the Han dynasty. For them, the essence of early Confucianism consists rather in Mengzi's precept of Five Relationships (*wulun* 五倫)—a teaching bearing out the spirit of Humanism and still edifying for contemporary ethical discourse and practice.

In my view, the prevalent denunciations of the alleged "autocratic hierarchy" of the Confucian civil order based on *sangang* point to at least two major flaws in perception. First, the broad condemnations of *sangang* have never been informed by any fair and substantial analysis of the only major elaboration of the maxim, found in Ban Gu's *Baihutong* 白虎通. Remarkably, according to the eminent modern historian Chen Yinque, Ban Gu's theory of *sangang* "epitomizes the true meaning of Chinese culture as it reaches the highest realm of the abstract ideal, comparable to the 'Idea' of the Greek philosopher Plato."[2] Second, most critics of *sangang* and the Confucian "hierarchies" have taken the liberal values of equality, freedom, and human rights for granted without noting their great ambiguities and difficulties within contemporary Western political discourse. This romanticized conception of modern Western values and civilization has continued to foster a habit of moral absolutism and hermeneutical violence that not only defames the integrity of the original Confucian teachings, but also poisons the well for fair and open-minded comparative evaluation.

In what follows, I propose to clarify the true meaning and foundation of the Confucian civil order and defend it against liberal and feminist criticisms. My

Philosophy East & West Volume 66, Number 2 April 2016 559–596

investigation will be divided into four sections. The first two will establish "three norms" and "five tenets" as more opportune translations of *sangang* and *wulun* than "three bonds" and "five relationships." Through a careful study of Ban Gu's theory of *sangang,* I will demonstrate that the "three norms" idea dictates neither the *absolute* authority of superiors nor the blind submission of subordinates. Instead, the Confucian acceptance of the *provisional* authority of superiors is intended for the general cultivation of moral character and the promotion of organic associations that can function autonomously without any authoritative injunction. Therefore, the teachings of the three norms and five tenets exhibit a common spirit, namely a spirit of honor and reciprocity. In the next two sections, I will demonstrate the integrity of the Confucian civil order in the face of contemporary liberal and feminist criticisms. Through a comparative evaluation of Confucian and liberal political theories, I will argue that the graded structure of the Confucian civil order represents a hierarchy, not of power and domination but of honor and dedication. Besides, the essence of the Confucian *yin-yang* order consists in a general culture of devotion and a cosmic cycle of grace and sacrifice. It is oriented toward the rule of benefaction and the harmonious propagation of cosmic life forces for the nourishment of all beings. The heart of the Confucian civil order is the way of the gentleman and gentlewoman. It is the care and reverence for the dignity of all persons, who are *equivalent* in their common belonging to the poetical correspondence of sky, earth, and humankind.

Norms, Bonds, or Relationships: Recovering the Original Meanings of Sangang *and* Wulun

The interpretation of *sangang* requires a proper translation of the word "*gang*" 綱 in the first place. By translating *sangang* as "Three Bonds," Tu Wei-ming has presumed a modern conception of the maxim as a form of bondage and oppression. As I will demonstrate below, the more opportune translation of the maxim should be "three norms." The basic meaning of *sangang* is a civil order that instructs superiors to comport themselves as moral paragons for subordinates. The "three norms" do not dictate a one-sided hierarchy of absolute authority and unconditional obedience. They advocate rather a provisional scheme to cultivate the reciprocal respect and affinity essential for all civil societies.

The *Shuowen* defines *gang* as the "rope" that serves the function of maintaining, holding together, and ordering (*weihongsheng* 維紘繩). Duan Yucai's annotation identifies *gang* as the head rope (*wanghong* 网紘) or the major cord of a net, through the manipulation of which one regulates the secondary cords for the opening and closing of the meshes of the net.[3] As evidence, Duan alludes to a line in the *Shangshu* in which King Pan Geng stresses the importance of the head rope *(gang),* which is crucial to the well-organized function of the net. By analogy, the harvest of crops can only happen when the peasants follow the appropriate order of the king "to engage themselves in the lands with farming and reaping."[4] Likewise, the poem "Yupu" gives tribute to King Wen, who, personifying the paragon of dignity and diligence, is able

to invite talented persons to help "regulate" the people in different parts of the kingdom (*gangji sifang* 綱紀四方).[5]

The word "*gang*" carries two basic meanings in its early usage. It refers to either the "coordinator" whose regulative function compares to the head rope of a net or to the "norm" in accordance with which one can bring a range of different individuals or elements to order. For the ancient Chinese, order in an organization hinges on the regulator's capacity to personify its underlying norm. Hence, "three norms" should be a more suitable translation than "three bonds." Granted, the meanings of the English "bond" and the Chinese "*gang*" do overlap to an extent. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the literal meaning of "bond" as "that with or by which a thing is bound." In its earliest usage, "bond" often refers to the fetters or shackles with which "one's body or limbs are bound in restraint of personal liberty." But it also has a derivative meaning of "restraining or uniting force," for example in a gentleman's "duty and bond" to his lord, and the function of human speech as a "great Bond that holds Society together."[6] Apparently, it is this *derivative* sense of "uniting or cementing forces for a union of different individuals or elements" that substantiates a plausible correspondence to *gang*.

Yet, the translation of *sangang* as "three bonds" is also misleading, in three ways. First, this translation conveys the sense of "fetters and shackles of freedom," which is not at all indicated by the word "*gang*" in Confucian teaching. The original meaning of *gang* involves the relation between a net's major and secondary cords, which, when set in the right order, will assure the proper function of the net. Apparently, this relation between the major and secondary cords is different from the relation between the cords and the objects being caught in the net—a relation that is duly indicated by the word "bond" instead. Second, while both *gang* and bond imply an organizational structure holding things together, *gang* carries an important sense of "norm" that is absent in the word "bond," which underscores instead the binding or cementing forces (usually coercive). Third, only passive and submissive roles are assigned to the subordinates in a bond. In contrast, in the "three norms" both the superiors and the subordinates are *active* partakers in realizing the norm and well-functioning of the organizational structure.

In sum, since the primary meaning of "bond" is the coercive forces of binding and confinement, associations based on such binding forces often imply a dictatorial hierarchy of domination. In contrast, the basic meaning of "*gang*" is "norm." Hence, the regulative process directed by *sangang* is not a form of coercive domination but a way of *education*. Admittedly, it is increasingly common for the idea of "bond" to be understood as a positive experience of tight and intimate relationship between people, such as in the "marriage bond" and the "bond of friendship." Nevertheless, even in this positive usage, it sounds incongruous, for example, to describe the husband as the "bond" *(gang)* of the wife (*fu wei qi gang* 夫為妻綱). Rather, the word "bond" would be better understood as the rapport between husband and wife that can be realized when both act in accordance with the "norm" *(gang)* of honor and reciprocity.

My interpretation of *gang* as "norm" is substantiated by the use of the word and its derivative phrases *gangji* 綱紀 and *jigang* 紀綱 (composed of *gang* and its synonym *ji* 紀) in the early Chinese classics. The famous historian Sima Qian identifies the coordination of human activities with the rhythmic movement of the four seasons as the greatest principle of heaven: "Were one not to follow this order, there would be nothing to function as the norm and guidelines *(gangji)* for the world."[7] A line in the *Guanzi* compares law and order to the normative head rope (*faling wei weigang* 法令為維綱) that regulates the police officers who function as the net of justice for the state.[8] The "Yueji" contains a line by Confucius's disciple Zixia, who interprets the primordial time of cosmic harmony during which "the sages instituted the order of father and son, sovereign and subject as the guidelines and norms *(jigang)* [for regulating the world]. When such guidelines and norms were properly established, the world attained great peace."[9]

In the ancient Chinese mind, personalities count for more than principles. Accordingly, the sagacious personalities and their distinctive qualities established the archetypal norms. The poem "Yupu" acclaims the dignified personality of King Wen as a norm *(gangji)* for the Zhou people. The poems "Jiale" and "Juan'er" extol the affable and graceful temperament of those noble personalities who are regarded as guides and norms *(jigang)* for all.[10] The beginning chapter of the *Shangshu* features King Yao as the archetype of kindness for early Chinese statesmen. A canto in the "The Songs of the Five Sons" chapter, on the other hand, deplores how the guidelines and norms set by King Yao are disrupted (*luanqi jigang* 亂其紀綱) by the abusive King Taikang.[11] Remarkably, later Confucians also take the sages' exemplary moral quality as their norm. Cui Yuan's "Precepts" contains such a motto: "Worldly tributes are not worthy of admiration; let benevolence be my only guideline and norm."[12]

Remarkably also, there are numerous instances in which the words and phrases *gang/gangji/jigang* are used in the verbal sense of "to regulate, to order, to normalize."[13] Apparently, it does not make sense to construe *gang* or *gangji/jigang* as "bond" in any of these passages. There is also no text that ever uses *gang* or *gangji/jigang* in the sense of "bond" as a coercive bondage restricting one's freedom.[14] Therefore, the translation "three bonds" is unjustified and misleading. While *gang* may have no perfect equivalent in English, the "three norms" is arguably a more proper translation.

The clarification of the basic meaning of *sangang* helps to correct a naive presumption that equates the Confucian maxim with an endorsement of the hierarchy of oppression and confinement. Indeed, there is no Confucian text that ever judges a subordinate's disobedience of an unjust directive of the superior as contravening the "norm" *(gang).* On the contrary, we can find numerous Confucian judgments that blame the superior for disrupting the "norm" when such tyrannical dictates are imposed.[15] Indeed, the only justification for the authority of superiors consists in their primary responsibility to honor and exemplify such a normative order.

At the same time, it is relevant to take note of a prevalent misunderstanding of the Confucian teaching of *wulun* 五倫 as well. Tu and many other scholars have misrepresented *wulun* as the "five relationships." A better translation, however, should be the "five tenets" or "relational orders." The primary meanings of *lun* (kind, genus,

order, ethos, tenets) do not include "relationship." The authoritative *Kangxi zidian* defines *lun* as *chang* 常 (canon)—a definition confirmed by the interchangeable usage of *wulun* and *wuchang* in ancient Chinese texts.[16] The earliest exposition on the "five tenets" appears in *Mengzi* IIIA4, where Mengzi argues for the proper division of labor between those who regulate (who labor with their heart and mind) and those who are regulated (who labor with physical effort). For Mengzi, it is common sense for those who labor with physical effort (e.g., peasants) to provide for those who labor with heart and mind (e.g., governors/officials). This arrangement is justified by the regulators' opportune guidance and moral education of the people. The essence of such moral education is precisely the five tenets: "affinity between father and son, just companionship between sovereign and subject, distinction between husband and wife, order of precedence between senior and junior, and trust between friends."[17]

Thus, just as "norm," "tenet," and "canon" are synonyms in English, so as well are the Chinese words *gang, lun,* and *chang.* In fact, the five tenets and three norms are often coupled together in classical Confucian texts. In the ancient Chinese mind they were clearly not *antithetical,* as is asserted by Tu and other scholars today.[18] Though I appreciate Tu's good intention to rescue a vital dimension of Confucianism from modern condemnation, I believe his argument for the antagonism of the three norms and five relationships [tenets] is unfounded. In my view, when their correct meanings are understood, these two Confucian teachings are of the same spirit. In fact, there is little evidence that the early Confucian teachings were significantly distorted in the Han dynasty to serve the selfish interests of the rulers. The condemnation of *sangang* is based on an arbitrary conception that lacks any support from the earliest and most authoritative interpretation of the maxim in Ban Gu's *Baihutong.*[19] Based on a careful elaboration of Ban's exposition on *sangang* below, I will substantiate the conception of the common spirit of the three norms and five tenets. The primary purpose of the three norms is not to endorse the selfish interests of superiors, but to nurture the growth of all members of society. The foundation of the Confucian order of ritual, therefore, is not a hierarchy of power and domination but the promotion of a benevolent and just communal life based on honor and reciprocity. Moreover, the "authority" of superiors is not absolute but provisional. It is an "as if" mode of "authority" justified by the higher virtue and capacity of superiors to serve as moral paragons for their subordinates. The hope is that with the virtuous rule of benefaction personified by superiors, the whole society will function like an organic human body so that all, of their own accord, will perform their respective roles without the imposition of any authoritative command.

Authority versus Reciprocity: Recovering the Spirit of "Three Norms" and "Five Tenets"

In the "Sangang liuji" 三綱六紀 chapter of the *Baihutong,* Ban Gu defines the three norms and six guidelines (reverence for the father's brothers, just companionship with mother's brothers, proper order of precedence with other clansmen, affinity

with brothers, respect for teachers and elders, and lasting rapports with friends) as the primary and secondary rules for regulating the major and tributary human relationships in the family and society. Their primary purpose is to set up and organize civil relationships and to normalize human transactions. Because all human beings have the potential for realizing the five canons/tenets and are inclined toward love and affinity, civil leaders should use "the norms and guidelines to promote their moral transformation" (*gangji weihua* 綱紀為化).[20] Moreover, the civil relationships between superiors and subordinates all originate in the complementary functions of *yang* and *yin*: "the *yang* would obtain its completion when combined with the *yin;* the *yin* would attain its formal order when combined with the *yang*."[21] Thus, it is only when the *yang* (sovereign/father/husband) and the *yin* (subject/son/wife), the firm and the gentle, are in harmonious interplay that the munificent way of civil communion will come into being.

Apparently, this distinction between superior and subordinate roles on the basis of *yin-yang* order corresponds well with the distinction between the regulator *(yang)* and the regulated *(yin)* as advocated by Mengzi. This common social and political distinction demonstrates a basic agreement between the three norms and five tenets. Indeed, Tu's dichotomy will break down if we note further that Mengzi's division of labor has been subjected to the *same* kind of criticism as the three norms. Stephen Angle, among others, disapproves of Mengzi's distinction as "rigid and unchanging," representing the "structural oppression of the masses."[22] I will examine Angle's charges of "Confucian oppression" in a later section. For now, it is apposite to offer a preliminary defense of the social and political distinction that has been denounced by contemporary liberalism. Tu, for example, condemns such a distinction because it ratifies the "authority of the ruler over the minister, the father over the son, and the husband over the wife."[23] Although there is *no* exact counterpart of the Western concept of "authority" in classical Confucian writings,[24] it makes good sense to say that the three norms constitute a most *proximate* Confucian "theory of authority." However, Tu is too hasty to condemn this "authoritative" structure as sheer despotism and exploitation. In so doing, he has overlooked the great controversy over the meaning and validity of authority in contemporary moral and political discourse.

Now, the concept of authority is clouded by great confusion today. According to Hannah Arendt, assuming the constant progress toward "organized and assured freedom" and the corruptive nature of all power, liberal theories have continued to overlook the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate power, between tyranny and authority.[25] However, as the traditional forms of authority vanish, "a constant, ever-widening and deepening crisis of authority has accompanied the development of the modern world." Ironically, "the climate of violent oscillating public opinions" between liberalism and conservatism has resulted in a "simultaneous recession of both freedom and authority in the modern world." It is in this context that Arendt proposes to reexamine what constitutes "authority" as she makes an important distinction between tyranny/coercion (which dictates obedience through power and violence), authority (which "precludes the use of external means of coercion"), and persuasion (which "presupposes equality and works through a process of argumentation").

In the light of Arendt's analysis, it may well be a "liberal prejudice" to condemn the three norms as oppressive and despotic merely because of their recognition of the (provisional) authority of superiors; the key question here is whether and how the "authority" of superiors is "justified" in Confucian teaching. At the same time, it is important to remember that the essence of the three norms is not a form of authoritative control, but a way of *moral persuasion*. As I shall elaborate below, the teaching of the three norms epitomizes a distinctive Confucian way of civil organization that is centered neither on authoritative commandment nor on rational argumentation, but on empathetic persuasion and personal example. It is oriented toward the general cultivation of moral character, which will lead all members of a society, of their own accord and without any authoritative command, toward a benevolent and just way of life. Ban Gu's ensuing exposition in the *Baihutong* nicely demonstrates the kind of liberal and charitable associations envisioned by the three norms.

First, Ban Gu defines the sovereign as "he who is capable of bringing a community together." A sovereign is a supreme personality "toward whom the hearts and minds of his subjects would all turn."[26] Now, the sovereign's charisma is not based on his superb power or privileged divine sanctions. It stems rather from his sagely ability to communicate with the gracious forces of sky and earth and from his *selfless* devotion to the well-being of the people. According to Ban Gu, the proper function of a king (*wang* 王) is to be the source of benevolence and justice. The title of emperor (*huang* 皇) ideally belongs to the glorious personality whose order nobody would contravene because he "would not even disturb one single man or woman in his conscientious care for the world."[27] A Confucian sage leads by intuiting and emulating the benevolent heart and mind of heaven, which supports the life of all beings.[28] Thus, the sovereign's provisional "authority" originates in his ability to imitate the serene center of the cosmos—the paragon of a peaceful and tranquil mind free from selfish desires and partisan inclinations.[29]

Correspondingly, the primary duty of an official is to emulate the selfless personality of the sovereign and to hold fast to his bond with the sovereign (*chanjian* 纏堅).[30] This "bond" between sovereign and subject is not enforced by the ruler's superior power; it is induced instead by a contractual agreement. Remarkably, in contrast with modern Western theories of social contract, which focus on the legal entitlements of all parties, the Confucian contract sanctioned by the ceremonial rites arises from the gentle *invitation* of the sovereign by virtue of his moral charisma.[31] It is a contract that is honored first and foremost by reciprocal empathy and esteem. The binding force of the Confucian contract is not the external legal authority and sanction, but the internal senses of trust and affinity. So it is said that "when the heart and intention of an official is of the same orientation as that of the sovereign, their relationship will be solid and steady by itself."[32]

The modern historian Lü Simian traces an etymological kinship between the characters *chen* 臣 (subject, subordinate official) and *jian* 堅 (steady) in the earliest writings.[33] The earliest meaning of the character *jian* refers to the subject's duty to honor his commitment to serve the sovereign, and there was an apparent emphasis on the *friendship* between the sovereign and his ministers.[34] While such amicable

rapport gave way to a more hierarchical relationship in later times, there remained a sense of affinity and reciprocity in the order of ritual. From the Confucian perspective, friendship between the sovereign and his subjects should hinge on their common commitment to the beneficent way of heaven. Therefore, the true Confucian way of being a subject is "to follow the way but not the person of the sovereign."[35]

The father-son relationship, the second normative order, pivots on the senses of honor and reciprocity as well. Ban Gu states explicitly that the main responsibility of the father was to be a "moral paragon" who should teach his sons according to the proper laws and canons, so that his sons would be able to propagate the normative way of life through a continuous process of personification.[36] Now, in comparison with the sovereign and the husband, the father would seem to have an innate authority that the sons have a *natural* obligation to obey. However, precisely here, as he underlines "remonstrance" as the son's most important responsibility, Ban refers to a statement by Confucius: "When a father has a remonstrative son, he will not be set in the course of injustice." Now Confucius is correcting Zengzi's misunderstanding of filial piety as obeying the father's command. In an unusual display of agitation, Confucius retorts that when unjust and reprehensible consequences are imminent, "a son has no choice but to remonstrate with his father. . . . [A] minister has no choice but to remonstrate with his ruler!"[37]

The duty of remonstrance is applicable to subordinates in all three kinds of civil order.[38] Here, it is apposite to distinguish the Confucian emphasis on remonstrance from the "right" to revolt advocated by modern liberal thinkers. The purpose of Confucian remonstrance is not to promote one's rights and interests or to assert one's one-sided conception of rightness by "fighting" against an authoritarian order. Rather, the priority is to promote the *unselfish* way of benevolence and justice by working patiently *within* the established civil structure, but not to topple the structure altogether. Hence, the art of remonstrance involves prudent deliberation and action appropriate to the concrete situation. While there are certainly contexts in which a minister should resign his position so as to isolate a tenacious despot,[39] it may also happen that a son, when his gentle admonishment does not succeed, should still follow the improper command of his father—only expressing his disappointment by wailing over the father's unwise decision. After all, father and son are by nature two parts of one body and a son should not betray his father just because of a difference of opinion.[40]

As I see it, the Confucian ritual instruction on judicious reconciliation within civil organizations is not to endorse the absolute authority or interests of the superior, but to sustain a style of collaborative communal life that is crucial for nurturing all human beings. Xunzi identifies the essential signification of ritual as its function of "nurturing" (*lizhe, yangye* 禮者, 養也).[41] According to the Song dynasty Confucian statesman Sima Guang, the supreme duty and authority of the sovereign should not pivot on his unmatched power or superlative intellect, but on his instituting of ritual as the norm and guideline (*jigang* 紀綱) for social regulation. When such norms and guidelines are properly established, the whole society would function like a healthy human body: "The superior would employ subordinates as the heart and bosom man-

age the hands and feet; the subordinates would serve the superior as the hands and feet protect the heart and bosom. As a result, those in the upper and lower positions would care for one another and the peace of the family and state would obtain."[42]

Ban Gu's interpretation of the relationship between husband and wife—the third normative civil order—illustrates nicely the nourishing function of such organic unions. The basic role of the husband is to "unite with and provide for his wife in accord with the way" (*yi dao fujie* 以道扶接)—namely the way of benevolence and justice. The role of the wife, in contrast, is to "yield and serve her husband in accord with the rule of ritual."[43] While Confucian teaching indeed assigns a subordinate role to the wife, it neither endorses the absolute authority of the husband nor dictates the unconditional obedience of the wife. For the seemingly authoritative hierarchy is again regulated by the order of ritual based on reciprocal care and consideration. Although the Confucian order of ritual has often been taken as representing a fixed hierarchy of power, the true meaning of the word *li* 禮, as Ku Hung-ming insightfully brings out, consists in the fine feeling or *good taste* of the gentleman, that is, his *sense of honor.*[44] According to the *Liji,* the main consideration in ritual performance is the principle of reciprocity.[45]

Immediately after his exposition on the basic functions of husband and wife, Ban Gu accentuates a ritual action that exemplifies this principle of honor and reciprocity. According to this instruction, after entering the bedroom when the formal wedding ceremony is over, the husband should "personally undo the wife's hair ribbon (*ying* 纓)."[46] Why does Ban Gu add this seemingly trivial ritual performance to an otherwise authoritative and stylistically concise exposition? Here, it would be useful to unpack the two subtle significations of this ritual action and discuss them at length. First, the hair ribbon *(ying)* was what a woman would put on her head after she was betrothed to her fiancé. By tying the hair ribbon with the hairpin (which marked the maturity of a woman), she disclosed her belongingness to the family of her husband-to-be. Therefore, the bridegroom's untying of the hair ribbon in person was meant to *honor* the bride's firm commitment to their marriage. Second, by undoing the hair ribbon in person, a task usually done by a maidservant, the husband demonstrated his readiness to condescend to the service of his wife. This attitude of service had already been required by a preceding ritual, as instructed by the *Yili,* which prescribes that the bridegroom is to serve symbolically as the coachman for the bride as he welcomes the bride to her own house. In so doing, the husband should also offer to the bride the grab handle (*sui* 綏) on the carriage.

Zheng Xuan's commentary clarifies the signification of the bridegroom's service as a way to cherish his bride by lowering himself (*qin er xiazhi* 親而下之). In particular, Zheng notes the offering of the grab handle as a ritual for servants.[47] In other words, although the wife would indeed play a subordinate role, the husband should *not* take his authority over his wife for granted. This seemingly hierarchical relationship should not be imposed on the wife by dint of the superior authority of the husband or his family. Rather, it is the husband's responsibility to *exemplify* the attitude of service first and in so doing demonstrate his sincerity as he asks for the wife's service in the new household. Thus, the hierarchy between husband and wife is less

authoritative than functional and provisional. It is meant to promote a *collaborative* relationship essential for their harmonious development.[48]

In conclusion, none of the three norms prescribes absolute authority for superiors or unconditional obedience for subordinates. Instead, justification for the provisional "authority" of the sovereign, father, and husband is offered on two grounds. First, the well-functioning of all family and social organizations requires a head figure who is capable of giving proper orders to regulate the organization for the purpose of harmonious collaboration. Second, considering the overall biological, social, and economic conditions, as well as the conventional power structures in ancient societies, it was more natural and reasonable to assign the role of head figure to the sovereign, father, and husband, than to the subject, son, and wife. However, while the Confucian teaching recognizes this general social reality, it refuses to endorse the authority of superiors merely on the basis of their established power and position. Instead, it calls for a new basis for legitimate authority, namely their capacity to serve as the moral paragon for their subordinates—their ability to personify the norm of benevolence and justice in their leadership.

My exposition above shows that the three norms and the five tenets are of the same spirit. Both are intended to *humanize* the range of civil relationships that involve a basic order of hierarchy (namely the regulator/regulated or, better, the educator/educated). While the three norms instruct superiors to exemplify the spirit of honor and reciprocity, the five tenets spell out a concrete list of norms for the five specific relationships. In my view, Tu's theses on the dichotomy of the three bonds [norms] and five relationships [tenets] and the Han politicization of Confucianism are untenable. While it is right to say that pre-Qin Chinese writings contain no *exact* formulation of the three norms except a proximate account in the Legalist text *Hanfeizi,* his overall argument is defective in at least two ways.

First, it is mistaken to think of the power structure recognized by the three norms as a Legalist invention that was adopted later by Han Confucians. Instead, it is obvious from all historical and textual evidence that such a hierarchical structure was the mainstay of the pre-Qin Chinese social order—and it was a structure that had been affirmed by numerous earlier Confucian statements as well.[49] It is thus unfair to discredit the integrity of Han Confucianism merely because of its (provisional) confirmation of this hierarchy. In fact, the *Hanfeizi* takes the key difference between Confucianism and Legalism to lie in the Confucian sanction for deposing indubitably autocratic rulers, because this teaching defies the *absolute* authority of the sovereign.[50] Remarkably, both Dong Zhongshu and Ban Gu, the major exponents of the three norms, have continued to endorse the justice of this revolutionary approach.[51] Therefore, it is unwarranted to claim that there is significant Han distortion of early Confucianism to promote the absolute authority and selfish interests of rulers.

Second, the argument for the Han politicization of Confucianism assumes that Confucianism was originally a mere ethics of "personal cultivation" that had little to do with the political order and its regulation. However, there is convincing historical evidence that a virtuous and beneficent political order (*dezhi* 德治) is a central ideal that Confucius himself strived to realize. In fact, the school of *ru* 儒 (chivalry), which

to an extent has been mistranslated as "Confucian-ism," originated well before Confucius in the moral and political teachings of the ancient sages and government officials.[52] Mengzi, for instance, attributes the central Confucian teaching of the five tenets to Qi, an official in the service of Shun. Hence, it is no exaggeration to say that political stability is something that was desired by all Confucians, and the abusive autocrats are condemned precisely because they jeopardized the peaceful civil order essential for the general cultivation of the moral personality.

Admittedly, there were some new elements in Han Confucianism, as well as certain Han officials who manipulated aspects of Confucianism to promote their own interests and those of the Han rulers. However, there is no evidence (as presented by Tu and other scholars), except for a dubious construal of the three norms, that the *substance* of the Confucian teaching was deliberately and significantly distorted during the Han dynasty into a "politicized" ideology in order to sanction the unconditional authority of the rulers. Instead, it is noteworthy that in Ban's authoritative interpretation of the three norms, we find no reference to the concepts of power, privilege, or authority at all. In my view, this absence and silence reflect a subtle Confucian strategy to circumvent the hegemony of hierarchical structures while granting them a provisional or "as if" mode of authority. The seemingly authoritative structure of family and society, instructed by the ritual order, is not a rigid teleological or metaphysical order. It is rather a *heuristic* method for the general cultivation of moral character. The purpose of the Confucian institution of ritual is to gradually domesticate the hegemony of such authoritative hierarchies by instilling affinity and gracefulness into the various civil relationships. It is hoped that with a growing responsiveness and sense of kinship among its members a harmonious society will prosper naturally without the assertion of any authoritative control.[53]

III. Entitlement versus Embodiment: A Confucian Response to Liberal Criticisms

Remarkably, even a demonstration of the positive meanings and good intentions of the Confucian three norms and five tenets may be inadequate to curtail modern liberal and feminist criticisms of the so-called "Confucian oppressions" or the failures of Confucian civil order to prevent various forms of oppression in ancient China. For many modern critics, even if the three norms do not directly legitimize the right of the powerful to exercise unrestricted authority, they at least *facilitate* the customary forms of oppression by providing a *de facto* authorization of traditional power structures. Hence, they are seen as at least accessory to the various cases of despotism and subjugation in ancient China.

Admittedly, there were many instances of violence and oppression in ancient Chinese history. However, I have not seen any solid, empirical, unbiased evidence for the alleged general and systematic oppression of subjects, sons, and wives. In fact, considering the complex and capricious nature of social realities in different regions of China throughout its history, it might be unwise, if not senseless, to ascribe any *general* quality to such realities, be it oppressive or benevolent. As Rosemont and Ames argue, there were no abusive or oppressive attitudes and behaviors that were

ever "championed in the Confucian texts; on the contrary, they were all uniformly condemned in unequivocal terms." Moreover, the prevalent modern condemnation of Confucianism is informed by "a pervasive and seemly invincible misreading . . . that equates hierarchical structure with coercion and the absence of simple equality with oppression."[54]

In my view, there are at least two types of charges against "Confucian oppression" that are illegitimate. First of all, there is the tendency to conflate the question of whether the Confucian civil order is oppressive with that of whether such an order is viable for developing a modern China that can match the technological and economic prowess of the modern Western powers. Second, there is the persistent misinterpretation of certain Confucian texts and their social implications, compounded by various kinds of false reasoning based on flawed, circumstantial, or fictional evidence. While the modern condemnations of these two types are too numerous to examine at length here, they are both informed by a third form of criticism that comes out of modern liberal and egalitarian values. In what follows, therefore, I will concentrate on this liberal criticism, which is legitimate—at least on the surface: the charge that Confucian social and political hierarchies are oppressive because they fail to guarantee the basic rights and equality of women and the masses.

Let me start with a typical liberal criticism as presented by Stephen Angle in his *Contemporary Confucian Political Philosophy*. While acknowledging the active cultural contributions of ancient Chinese women that exempt Confucianism from "systematic oppression," Angle insists that "people do not have to be, or understand themselves to be, passive victims for them to be correctly characterized as subject to oppression."[55] For Angle, oppression is about "structural limitations on the way in which a group can flourish or develop." Hence, as long as there are regular *constraints* on the moral development of women within the *inner* realm of the household, the charge of oppression is justified by the "limited sphere in which women were expected to operate and thus the limited kind of virtue to which they can aspire." By the same token, Angle holds Mengzi's division of labor accountable for a "structural oppression of the masses," because such a "rigid and unchanging" division sets "distinct limitations" on the moral capacities of "small men." There is thus a persistent tension in the *Mengzi* that, while recognizing the moral potentiality of all individuals and the critical role of the people in *indicating* the legitimacy of political authority, still fails to grant the *right* of just rebellion to the common people by treating them as "a mere reactive mass, incapable of agency."

Angle's criticism demonstrates fairly the tension between Confucian civil order based on the three norms / five tenets and modern Western political institutions founded on the liberal values of equality, rights, and a constitutional/representative regime. For a fair comparative evaluation of these two political models, however, it behooves us first to recount briefly the liberal theory of equality and authority. Despite the great ambiguities and controversies surrounding the concept of "equality," Will Kymlicka affirms that "the idea that each person matters equally is at the heart of all plausible political theories" in the modern world.[56] While there can be numerous interpretations of "how" each person can matter "equally," the prevailing justifi-

cation for economic distribution in modern Western society "is based on the idea of 'equality of opportunity.' Inequalities of income and prestige etc. are assumed to be justified if and only if there was fair competition in the awarding of the offices and positions that yield those benefits." This deep belief in the freedom and equality of all is the foundation of the liberal social-contract theory of political authority, according to which the power and authority of the State is only justified "if the state used these powers *in trust* to protect individuals from the uncertainties and scarcities. If the government betrayed that trust and abused its powers, then the citizens were no longer under an obligation to obey, and indeed had the right to rebel."

Offhand, we should note at least one plausible agreement between the liberal and Confucian political theories on the government's authority: the exercise of that authority is only justified when it is used "to protect and promote the interests of the governed." However, there are two foremost theses in the liberal theory that are not forthrightly endorsed by Confucian teachings—or at least not so categorically—namely, the equality of opportunity and the right of just rebellion. I have noted above that Confucian teachings do endorse the justice of deposing blatant autocrats. However, concerned about the devastating violence and chaos inherent in all power struggles, Confucians have always taken this revolutionary approach as the last resort. There is thus no clear-cut Confucian authorization of the right and the conditions, especially for individuals, for a just rebellion.[57] Indeed, in contrast to the modern campaign for the general *empowerment* of all individuals with rights and freedoms, the Confucian project pivots on the moral *enlightenment* of all persons to accept and make the best of their heaven-sent calling and the resources that society has provided, in line with their personal attributes and abilities. Accordingly, equal opportunity (especially for women) to attain profitable offices and positions is not enacted methodologically; it is at least not a fundamental principle of Confucian institutions.

In any case, it is questionable whether the lack of open endorsement for just rebellion and the structural *constraints* on the economic and political advancement of women and the masses should be regarded as forms of oppression, especially when the alleged victims are contented with their social functions and do not regard themselves as the targets of oppression. Admittedly, it was a great advancement for the modern liberal movement to emancipate the individual from the constraints of medieval European society as the movement contested the philosophy of entitlement that undergirded the despotic theocracies that sanctioned the divine right of princes to wield absolute power and confine the populace within the rigid paradigm of the "common good" by means of collective punishment. However, effective as it may have been in revolutionizing conventional autocracies, the liberal approach has not proven successful in *constructing* truly nurturing and enlightening civil orders—an inadequacy that may have resulted precisely from its overgeneralized condemnation of all hierarchies and social distinctions. Here, it is important to note that structural limitations, though oppressive under certain circumstances, may well be favorable or even necessary conditions for nurturing the moral personality. After all, for human beings, whose very being is finite, development and perfection can only be possible

within limits. Even today it is hard to imagine how a society can maintain itself when there are no proper structural limitations—when a dentist and her assistants, a teacher and her students, a military commander and his soldiers all have equal authority over the direction of their respective professional transactions.

According to Martin Luther King, Jr., whether or not the law of a society is just relies on whether or not it "squares with moral law and the law of God," that is, whether it uplifts or degrades "human personality."[58] As I see it, the ultimate criterion for whether an organizational structure is a just one is not its dogmatic conformation to an abstract idea of equality and freedom, but whether it promises to nurture the persons within the organization in order to realize the ideal type of humanity. Arguably, what makes a hierarchical structure oppressive is not the structural limitation itself. It is rather the philosophy of entitlement, namely the absolute authority of law and punishment, that sanctions the rights and interests of the privileged few, rigidifies organizational relationships, and suppresses the proper growth of human personalities. Therefore, the structural constraints on the economic and political advancement of women and the masses should not substantiate the oppressive nature of the Confucian civil order—because these structural constraints are intended as expedient measures for the moral cultivation of all individuals.[59] Moreover, it is apposite here to discern a distinctive Chinese/Confucian understanding of humanity that is based not on the philosophy of *entitlement* but on the poetical way of *embodiment.* That is to say, a human person is not identified as the bearer of rights for economic and political empowerment, but is respected as a site of the embodiment of the poetical correspondence of sky, earth, and humankind. As the heart of the intersection of sky and earth, the human personality has as its goal the opening of and devotion to the harmonious circulation of cosmic vibrancy among all beings.

To be sure, the gentle approach of Confucian moral transformation has not always been successful in combating oppression, and there are valuable lessons that a Confucian society can learn from liberal ideas. However, when modern critics presume the *universal* authority of liberal values, when their condemnation of Confucianism is oriented toward the self-righteous imposition of liberal order and institutions, at least three problems become apparent.

First, the claim of *universality* for liberal values is highly disputable. I do not have space here to examine the manifold criticisms of the veracity of liberal theories.[60] Nor am I ready to illustrate the stupendous human and environmental losses caused by modern capitalist and industrial expansion, which receives its impetus from the liberal adulation of technological progress, free trade and competition, and the rational choices of atomistic individuals. For sarcasm is irresistible if one notes the savage inequalities and gross negligence of basic human rights that still haunt contemporary Western societies after the centuries-long promulgation of such foundational values.[61] It may suffice to note the rampant violence and oppression associated with the expansion of the modern Western powers in the name of democracy and freedom. If modern Western civilization represents a *genuine* promotion of equality, freedom, and independence, then it is paradoxical why "backward" countries like China should fear to be colonized and exploited by the Western powers at all.[62]

Second, with the moral vision of contemporary liberalism evaporating into abstract and instrumental conceptions of rights, equality, and justice, the liberal order and its institutions have not only fallen short of uplifting the human personality of all people, but also written off the very "relevance" of morality to political discourse. Michael Sandel has pointed out that the rejection by John Rawls and other deontological liberals of the relevance to political justice of various conceptions of the common good is already based on "an essentially utilitarian account of the good."[63] Here, let me pinpoint further a key presumption of Rawls's theory of the good that calculates the well-being of human life *in proportion to* one's command of "primary social goods," including income, wealth, opportunities, powers, rights, and liberties.[64] Since Rawls takes this utilitarian conception of the good as a condition of *all* rational life plans, it seems that under the cover of "neutrality," Rawls's theory has harbored an *absolute* endorsement of the Benthamian utilitarian value system.[65] Arguably, this single-minded imposition of the *index* of well-being can be most oppressive as it deprecates completely the invaluable moral quality of the human persons (*de* 德, as conceived by Confucianism) who readily live up to their humble familial and social functions unencumbered by the insatiable desire to compete for greater wealth and power.

Third, precisely because liberals have elected to revolutionize medieval theocracy and autocracy through a categorical reversal of the conventional hierarchy of beings, they are still entangled in both the conventional philosophy of entitlement and a conception of humanity dominated by the supremacy of Right and Law *(Recht)* and the prerogative and fixed identity of the self. Paradoxical as it seems, it is the very liberal idea of "rights" that has continually been manipulated into a form of "philosophical legitimation for the abuses and repressive force of bourgeois institutions, the justification of political exploitation, [and] social, economic, and sexual subjugation."[66] In my view, the greatest trouble with "rights" is not merely that it is a two-edged sword, and that it is almost always the mighty who are more able to wield this weapon to their own advantage. Rather, despite the liberal good intention to mend the blatant injustices created by a modern political economy, the very project to offset such injustices by institutionalizing individual rights harbors an even greater ratification of the underlying utilitarian framework, buttressed now by a philosophy of entitlement. Even the rights of equal opportunity have been used for the self-righteous justification of the prevalent utilitarian social and political structure, so that the disturbing conditions of the poor are now so routinely blamed on their own lack of talent and determination. In fact, entrenched within the utilitarian Weltanschauung, the very concept of rights has been reduced to a "convenient linguistic fiction," a "word-play" lacking any ontological foundation or common conceptual base.[67]

This imbroglio clouding the concept of rights is epitomized in what Hannah Arendt has described as the crisis of authority in the modern world. It is a crisis characterized by the oscillation of public opinion between liberalism and conservatism, between freedom and authority—a bipolar disorder that has resulted only in "further undermining both, confusing the issues, blurring the distinctive lines between authority and freedom, and eventually destroying the political meaning of both."[68] The

real crisis, as I see it, is not merely the decreasing amount of both authority and freedom, but also the great lack of a common and concrete moral vision. It is the nihilism that still accounts for the growing estrangement, partisanship, and materialism that threaten to undermine any real ground for constructive debate and collaboration between the advocates of freedom and authority. As a result, the political arena has more and more degenerated into a battleground in which different interest groups and ideological camps, both haunted by the dominance of machines and money-making, fight for their respective interests and entitlements. Admittedly, liberals in the United States, for example, are free to propagate the theory of just rebellion as they lay down charges of oppression against all forms of authority and social distinction. But at the same time, conservatives have managed to enact laws that effectively deter, or at least chastise, almost all "rational" and "law-abiding" citizens to the point of rebellion—just or not—or even challenging the decisions and regulations of the government in a substantial way (e.g., through civil disobedience or whistleblowing).

Remarkably, this modern crisis of authority was presaged decades ago by Tolstoy, who not only rejected the "superficial limitation of government power through the institution of representatives" as an "artificial and pompous method," but also praised the "prudential, peace-loving, agricultural life" of the traditional Chinese people as "the only way to the true life, to *Tao* . . . not only for China, but also for all mankind."[69] In a lengthy open letter to Ku Hung-ming in 1906, Tolstoy emphasized the need for all peoples to change their attitudes toward political power and authority in the modern age. However, the solution by "light-minded" Chinese reformers to emulate Western nations by establishing the same kind of constitutional government, army, and industry was "not only a frivolous one, but also very silly." This was so because the position of modern Western nations was seen as "a desperate one, and they must inevitably go under if they do not change their way of life, instituted as it now is on deceit, and the inveiglement and robbery of the agricultural nations." Thus, instead of imitating the Western model, the vocation of the Chinese should be to return to their "peaceful, industrious, agricultural life," and in so doing "indicate to the world the right way toward freedom." For Tolstoy, true freedom, which "Western nations have irrevocably lost," can be only realized by following the way of truth: "not to return evil for evil and not to take any part in evil." True freedom consists in the determination to endure violence to the end without retaliation, and this is also the surest means "not only of salvation, but also of victory over those who commit evil." Therefore, what the Chinese people should do is simply to follow the teachings of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism: "liberation from the power of man . . . , abstention [Verzicht] from doing to others what one does not wish done to oneself . . . , self renunciation, humility, and love towards all men and all living beings."

Tolstoy's analysis of the modern crisis of authority reveals that the real problem between modern liberalism and Confucianism is not a prima facie conflict between Western and Eastern values or civilizations. Rather, it involves the fundamental tension between the expansion of the utilitarian/commercial world order under the shield of high-sounding liberal catchphrases on the one hand and the classical ideal

of humanity inspired by a sense of openness, gentleness, and benevolence on the other. In other words, the real clash is between what Ku Hung-ming called the fake and the true civilizations, and in a sense between false and genuine liberal ideals.[70] For a civilization "is either a true civilization or a false or, as the Japanese say, a *magai* [紛い], make-believe civilization: there is no East or West."[71] For Ku, the essential meaning of a civilization is found not in its economic and technological prowess but in its enduring spiritual assets. The greatest achievement of modern Western civilization is not the higher standard of living, but the higher ideal of humanity envisioned in the greatest works of art and literature by such masters as Shakespeare and Goethe. The "chief and one aim of civilization," indeed, is not "to make and teach men to be strong, but to make and teach men to be gentle." Hence, the way to govern an empire entails not only the ideal of *virtus* ("not virtue in the English sense, but the virtue of the Japanese Samurai"), but also, and all the more, "a gentle and tender heart (the Latin *alma* as in *alma mater,* the extreme gentle tenderness of a mother)." The only purpose of a civilization is to cultivate this ideal type of humanity, possessed of a gentleness of heart and mind, of an imaginative reason that brings about the happy union of soul and intellect. It is the revival of this imaginative reason, which is the essence of the ancient Greek spirit epitomized in the poetry of Homer, that is the true mission of the European Enlightenment. The Spirit of the Chinese people, the essential meaning of Confucian ritual and music, indeed, consists also in this very "imaginative reason," in "the serene and blessed mood which enables us *to see into the life of things.*"[72]

All in all, I believe Angle's criticism of Confucian oppression rests upon a key misunderstanding of the early Chinese ideal of *dezhi* 德治 as a form of "virtue politics." This simplistic equation of *de* with the English "virtue" is equivalent to the prejudice that one must assume higher social and political positions in order to realize higher virtue *(de).* Arguably, this criticism of the Confucian denial of higher *virtue* to women and the masses as evidenced by the lack of equal opportunity to attain higher positions still presumes a liberal theory of the good life as indexed by the *ownership* of greater rights and power. Remarkably, despite certain overlaps between the meanings of *de* and virtue, the original meaning of *de,* as I have demonstrated in a recent study, refers to the "grant" and "grateful sacrifice" within the cosmic circulation of "spiritual power" essential for the nourishment of all beings.[73] Hence, the "structural constraints" in the Confucian ritual order are intended for *the general culture of devotion* according to which the "kindness and benevolence" *(de)* of every individual should be *equal* to their respective functions. Higher institutional positions certify not greater profits and entitlements but greater responsibilities and sacrifices. Despite their differences in social rank and responsibility, all beings are *equivalent* in their common *belongingness* to the grand cosmic cycle of grace and sacrifice; they are equally the sites of *embodiment* for the cosmic vibrancy that nurtures the evolution of all beings. Therefore, the provisional authority of superiors is not to ratify their *entitlement* to greater profit or privilege, but to facilitate their greater *responsibility* for protecting the benefits of the people. The essence of the Confucian rule of benefaction *(dezhi),* indeed, consists in nothing but the cultivation of the

"serene and blessed mood" that would enable sagacious personalities to devote themselves to beneficent civil organizations and in so doing foster the poetical correspondence of sky, earth, and humankind.

The Way of the Gentleman and the Heart of the Confucian Yin-Yang *Order*

To conclude this study, I will defend the integrity of the Confucian *yin-yang* theory as presented by Dong Zhongshu, who provided not only the first account of the three norms / five tenets, but also the most systematic exposition of Confucian political theory.[74] Ban Gu synopsizes Dong's theory of *yin* and *yang* nicely in his description of the reciprocal relationships between superiors and subordinates: "the *yang* would obtain its completion when combined with the *yin;* the *yin* would attain its formal order when combined with the *yang.*"[75] According to Dong, every kind of union (*he* 合) in nature and human society entails a primary part *(yang)* and a subordinate part *(yin)* that must combine with each other in order for harmonious union to take place. As the functions of the primary and secondary parts are only meaningful in their mutual contribution to union, the purpose of the secondary *(yin)* part is only comprehensible in its combination with the primary part *(yang),* and there is no way that either the *yin* part or the *yang* part could have a viable function by itself. Accordingly, those in the subordinate *yin* positions (e.g., minister/son/wife) should not monopolize the initiation of a collaborative work, nor should they take credit for themselves at the end of the work. The contribution of the secondary part *(yin)* is determined according to its collaboration with the primary part *(yang)* as they share the achievement of the whole union together.[76] In light of this dynamic and reciprocal union of *yin* and *yang,* Dong lays bare the heavenly ground of the three norms: "the sky is the sovereign who shelters and nourishes; the earth is the subject who preserves and holds. *Yang* is the husband who fosters; *yin* is the wife who assists. The spring is the father who begets; the summer is the son who cultivates."

Remarkably, Dong's theory of *yin-yang* order has incurred strong condemnation by modern critics informed by liberal and feminist values. Robin Wang argues that Dong's theory of *yin-yang* order degrades "the original spontaneous harmony (*he* 和)" of *yin* and *yang* in pre-Qin thought into "an imposed unity (*he* 合)." This distorted version of Confucianism is used to "validate the subordination of women" as it justifies the "social inferiority of women to men" based on "the alleged cosmic inferiority of the *yin* to the *yang.*"[77] Even Hall and Ames have condemned the Confucian *yin-yang* scheme as a form of "Chinese sexism which denies to the female the possibility of becoming a human being" and is thus "brutal in the extreme."[78]

Ironically, Hall and Ames's evidence for their own ultimate accusation seems rather circumstantial as it relies mainly upon hasty analyses of certain contingent linguistic phenomena: (1) a list of Chinese characters with the radical *nü* 女 (woman) that comprise a "rather damning collection of negative character traits and attitudes which are directly associated with the female gender," and (2) a lack of Chinese characters with the *nan* 男 (man) component, which allegedly substantiates a Chinese contrast between "female [woman]" *(nü)* and "person" (*ren* 人) (which is sup-

posedly defined by male features alone).[79] For one thing, Hall and Ames's assertion, that there is no character that incorporates the component 男, is too bold, as it obviously overlooks such common characters as 甥 and 舅, both with the component 男.[80] Moreover, there can be many possible reasons for fewer Chinese characters containing 男 than those containing 女, and this may have nothing to do with gender bias at all.[81] In contrast with the most common parallels between man and woman (*nannü* 男女), female and male (*cixiong* 雌雄), we can find almost no mention, let alone affirmation, of the presumed contrast between "woman" *(nü)* and "person" *(ren)* in any classical Chinese writings. There is also no proof that the meaning of 人, or the radical 亻 from which it derives, which refers neutrally to both man and woman, is ever dominated by exclusively male traits. In fact, Hall and Ames's argument would backfire if only we note such characters as *hao* 好 (good) and *miao* 妙 (wonderful), which, precisely because of their 女 component, denote the most laudable qualities not merely of women but of all human beings.

Admittedly, the Confucian *yin-yang* order could have implied a bias toward the biological frailty and political impotence of women, as well as the inferior capacity of the masses. In the case of women, this theory of inferiority may have implied a certain rigidity as it utterly denies the rightness of wives to take a superior position over their husbands. Nevertheless, these imperfections should not warrant a downright rejection of the integrity of the Confucian *yin-yang* order and its constructive differentiation of gender roles. This is so precisely because the structural constraints implicit in the Confucian *yin-yang* order, despite its potential biases and inadequacies, work to expedite the mission to achieve the true ideal of civilization, namely the cultivation of an ideal type of humanity expressed by openness, gentleness, and benevolence. At the same time, while there are certain valuable lessons that a Confucian society may learn from the more articulate voices and perspectives of women today, a fair evaluation of the *yin-yang* theory entails the clarification of some feminist/liberal prejudices and the ambiguities and inadequacy of the sexism charge itself.

Here, I am not inclined to question the "great progress," prompted by the feminist movement, in correcting certain hegemonic dimensions of traditional Western theories and in boosting the rights and entitlements of women in the playing field of modern political economy. My chief concern is that the single-minded effort by the feminist movement to *overturn* the conventional "male-dominated" economic and political structures foreshadows an even deeper entanglement with their underlying values and philosophy of entitlement, as well as the very dualistic categories this entitlement aims to annul. Despite all the controversies, let us consider for a moment the presumption of the sexism charge that the roles of men and women were not determined by their sexual differentiation, but were mainly an outcome of social and cultural construction. But it may still be a hasty generalization to denounce *all* the sexual differentiations and social constructions of gender roles as oppressive. Remarkably, the tenacious power struggles sanctioned by the feminist movement, with its current penchant to damn all indications of sexual or gender differentiation and to reverse the conventional gender roles, involve a new kind of social construction

themselves. But is the feminist construction of gender roles, based on the catch-phrases of equality and freedom, categorically superior to all other constructions based on sexual differentiation? Ironically, what the liberal feminist movement has produced is not a superlative civil order that has uplifted the human personality, or even the happiness of women. Rather, the women's liberation movement, as Hall and Ames rightly point out, has been directed largely by "the promotion of [the] female to the status of an honorary male."[82] What is more paradoxical is that what this honorary male strives mostly to realize is not the ideal human being imbued and blessed with imagination, reason, and serenity. Rather, it is the type of man indoctrinated with and corrupted by the spiritual nihilism and material elitism of industrial capitalism.

Take for instance the well-directed feminist criticism of the prevalent devaluation of women's contribution to "the traditional male-headed family, with women performing the unpaid domestic and reproductive work."[83] Despite the good intentions behind the feminist struggles to promote women's economic and political independence and dominance, it is questionable whether the very contemporary movement to "correct and reverse" the so-called male-dominated order is already *based on* an insensible commitment to the capitalistic grid of values, namely its *devaluation* of family and reduction of the whole significance of human life to the competition for monetary gain and material gratification. On this line of the feminist movement, it might be useful to recall Nietzsche's admonition that "whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster."[84] In my view, this entanglement within the mentality of competition and domination has made certain feminists liable for the same kind of abuse they assume to correct. It exposes a key snag in the feminist movement, namely its failure to achieve or even envision what is suggested by Gandhi as "a mutual liberation from a domination-submission symbiosis."[85] In light of Gandhi's and Tolstoy's teachings of nonviolence, indeed, the alleged emancipation of women through the single-minded struggle for equitable rights and interests can only be a superficial one. It is far from the true freedom that is achievable only by overcoming a narrow conception of equality and independence. The true path toward freedom, if Gandhi is right, is not to conquer your enemy with greater physical forces, but to convert your enemy with the educational forces of love and sacrifice. True freedom from an unjust order of domination entails that the liberators envisage a higher form of civil association as they personify first the spirit of love and tolerance toward their alleged oppressors—men.

From a different perspective and mode of practice, the so-called "confinement of women in the domestic sphere" may well be the coronation of women that frees them from the toils of industrial labor and the dirty maneuvers of power politics. After all, it may still be right to say that "the womanhood in a nation is *the flower of the civilization,* of the state of civilization in that nation."[86] For a true civilization such as envisioned by Confucian teachings, womanhood is the flower that personifies the purest ideal of beauty and dignity. Ours, to be sure, is a civilization that has quite thoroughly industrialized the art of gardening as well as women's education. Of course, we are still reluctant to forsake completely the element of beauty in our feminine model today. But beauty, except for its utility as a pleasant and practical cover,

has long ceased to be an ideal for women. It has increasingly been reduced to a kind of cosmetic fabrication without true fragrance. This dissolution of the ideal of beauty, this utter depreciation of the tender and delicate side of humanity by the competitive and calculative mode of human existence prompted by modern capitalism, exposes again the great lacuna of moral ideals in our age. Indeed, the very pressure felt by so many women to "struggle" for their rights and interests today may already have confirmed a great failure of our civilization: the disgrace of the industrialized man.

All in all, I believe a critical deficiency in the contemporary ideological battle over women's rights and interests is what Confucius calls "the way/law of the gentleman" (*junzi zhi dao* 君子之道), or, if one likes, the law of the gentlewoman, for they are one and the same to Confucianism. According to Ku Hung-ming, this law of the gentleman, which sums up the "whole system of philosophy and morality as taught by Confucius," comprises fine feelings and good taste as instructed by the teachings of ritual and decorum—the *moral sense* that is the "real authority" for our moral conduct.[87] To my mind, the way of the gentlewoman/gentleman has its essence in *the sense of honor* that originates in the genuine love and cultivation of beauty and in the true dignity of human life. The way of the Confucian gentleman reveals a distinctive Chinese understanding of the human person, whose essence has little to do with any prerogative identity of the self but consists in an empathetic openness (*gantong* 感通 / *ren* 仁).[88]

It is precisely here that we can be ready to view in perspective Hall and Ames's bold allegation that Chinese women were not allowed to be persons. For the truth is that an ideal Chinese woman would have no self. However, this selflessness is not a means to discriminate against women for slavish surrendering. Rather, it is inspired by the poetical sense of openness that is the essence of *all* Confucian personalities, and in particular the sagacious leader. In light of this poetical openness, the Confucian way of the gentleman requires superiors *(yang)* to readily reverse the normal structural order and to condescend to the lower positions so as to elicit sincere and sympathetic relationships with their subordinates *(yin)* (*yi yang xia yin* 以陽下陰).[89] It is important to recall that the Confucian strategy for civil organization relies on neither the ratification nor the radical overturning of the prevalent hierarchical order. Rather, guided by the principle of grace and gentleness, it aims to ameliorate the conventional power structures by fostering honorable and reciprocal unions for which the very concepts of power, dominance, and authority would become useless. Indeed, if women were to assume the leading positions *(yang)* in the family and state in a Confucian society, they should expect to take such higher positions not as an entitlement to greater privilege or personal gain but as a requisition to personify the norm (*gang* 綱) of selfless moral enactment. From an egoistic perspective, such superior positions are not even desirable, because the reward they promise is not the status of greater wealth and power but the station of honor for bringing about the well-being of the community through greater sacrifice.

Insofar as Dong Zhongshu's *yin-yang* theory is concerned, I believe one key problem in Robin Wang's interpretation is her insistence on the union (*he* 合) of *yin* and *yang* as "an *imposed* unity." Wang's injection of the sense of "imposition" seems

unwarranted by either the meanings of the word *he* (which signifies simply union, gathering, assembling) and Dong's theory itself. It is clear from all textual evidence that the civil order as envisioned by Dong is an organic association in which superiors and subordinates will live up to the norms of benevolence and justice *voluntarily* without the imposition of any injunction.[90] For Dong, the relationship between *yin* and *yang* is never an autocratic order that decrees only the obedience and service of subordinates. Rather, it always involves the reciprocal respect and devotion of both primary and secondary partners in the Confucian civil organizations.

Hence, the Confucian instruction to subordinates to treat their superiors with loyalty and filial devotion does not certify the *absolute* authority of their superiors. It does not approve of superiors taking their authority for granted. This is because the Confucian lesson for superiors is always a call to humility and benevolence. In his chapter on the way of kingship, Dong applauds the primeval sage-kings who "dared not have the intention to lord it over the people" (*bugan you junmin zhi xin* 不敢有君民之心). In his commentary, the Qing scholar Su Yu identifies the mentality of the primeval kings as one of supreme awe and reverence. Drawing upon a range of classical texts, Su brings out a perennial Confucian lesson for the sovereign: to dignify the people through humble and benevolent leadership. The Confucian strategy for civil organization is "to ask the people to venerate the sovereign and to ask the sovereign to dignify the people." It involves *two* sets of teachings, one for superiors and one for subordinates, *respectively.* Thus, the peace and harmony of the state would obtain when both the people and the sovereign realize this lesson of reciprocity. In contrast, the project of civil organization would fall through if one were to tell both the sovereign and the people that one was more dignified than the other.[91]

Therefore, the graded social and political structure in Dong's *yin-yang* theory is not a hierarchy of power and domination, but a hierarchy of honor and dedication. It is a heuristic order anchored in the ideal of the *general culture of devotion* and the *cosmic cycle of grace and sacrifice.* It is in light of this philosophy of sacrifice that we should understand the central Confucian lesson for the cosmic order: "to relegate the common persons so as to exalt the sovereign; to relegate the sovereign so as to exalt heaven."[92] Despite harsh modern criticisms that this statement sanctions the heavenly privilege of the sovereign to lord it over the people, it would be more appropriate to interpret this maxim as an instruction to respect the *proper* and *provisional* "authority" of the sovereign, who is the central intermediary for propagating the benevolent way of heaven—the prototype of the *yang* forces responsible for the lives of all beings. Remarkably, in contrast to Aristotle's teleology, which endorses a straightforward hierarchy of beings, Dong's cosmology does not reduce the signification of the common people as merely a means toward the highest end of divine contemplation privileged by royalty. Rather, Dong states *unequivocally* that it was *for the sake of* the well-being of the people that the king's rule was established by heaven.[93] The sovereign was only exalted because of his readiness to devote himself to the beneficent course of heaven, whose purpose consisted in the promotion of all lives between sky and earth. Thus, it is clear that the relationship of the people, the

sovereign, and heaven is not a pyramidal *hierarchy,* but a cosmic *cycle* of grace and sacrifice.

In light of this cosmic cycle of grace and sacrifice, the harmony of *yin* and *yang* is not confined by a symmetric equality, but stems from their graceful and reciprocal interplay. In my view, we do not have to base our understanding of *yin* and *yang* (as Robin Wang has done) on the Western metaphysical framework of a fixed order of beings. *Yin* and *yang* are not *substance,* let alone the properties of individual *entities.* The *Great Commentary* describes *yin* and *yang* as the two "indicators" (*yi* 儀) of the primordial cosmic manifestation.[94] They represent *two complementary phases* of the cosmic dynamism underlying the evolution of all lives. Thus, the phases of *yin* and *yang* are almost always *relative* to the contexts in which a being assumes a particulate role—a distinctive site of embodiment for the cosmic cycle of grace and sacrifice. Hence, one can assume *yin* and *yang* roles at once, just as a father is *yang* in relation to his son, but *yin* in relation to his own father. As Hall and Ames argue, *yin* and *yang* do not implicate a dualistic principle presupposing a metaphysical totality; they are "qualitative contrasts which are applicable to specific situations. . . . *Yin* is a becoming-*yang; yang* is a becoming-*yin.*"[95]

Granted, every being between sky and earth at once contains certain *yin* and *yang* properties that make it suitable for *yin* and *yang* positions in relation to other beings. However, to the Chinese mind, such *yin* and *yang* properties do not *define* the essence of a being, because the essence of a being consists in nothing but its *empathetic openness,* namely in its capacity to continuously harmonize its *yin* and *yang* properties with changing situations as it facilitates the gracious propagation of cosmic vibrancy. Indeed, in contrast to the prevalent Western dualism that takes life and death, mind and body, good and evil, male and female, light and darkness as categorical opposites, Dong's cosmology presents an alternative perspective that does not dictate a metaphysical order monopolized by *yang*'s superiority. Instead, *yang* and *yin* indicate the positive and negative phases of cosmic vibrancy essential for the evolution of all beings between sky and earth. They are two *complementary aspects/phases* of an ever-continuing poetic process of manifesting and concealing, opening and receding. The harmony of the *yin-yang* order is modeled not after a teleological *hierarchy* privileging the authority of *yang,* but after the miraculous and mysterious cosmic *cycle* of beneficence *(yang)* and sacrifice *(yin).*

For Dong, such a cosmic circulation of *yin* and *yang* forces is displayed primarily in the alternating phases of the four seasons. The *yang* forces are prevalent in the spring and summer, which sponsor the generation and growth of all lives. The *yin* forces preside over the fall and winter, which are characterized by the decline and degeneration of plants and animals as they preserve themselves for new initiations in the following spring. Hence, the priority of *yang* over *yin* in the human civil order represents a heavenly preference for life over death, love over hate, heat over cold, benevolence over resentment, and positive over negative cosmic energies. According to Dong, a benevolent political leadership should emulate such heavenly preference by employing a governing principle that prioritizes benefaction (*de* 德) over

punishment (*xing* 刑)—a principle that affirms and promotes human goodness instead of chastising human vitality through coercion and retribution. The provisional authority of superiors is not established through the use of intimidating penalty, but through kindness and benefaction, namely through their capacity to propagate the heavenly gift of being. Hence, the essence of the *yin-yang* civil order is a virtuous rule of benefaction *(dezhi)* that nourishes the growth of all beings.[96]

In light of this rule of benefaction, the lower position of the *yin* is not intended as a form of oppression or depreciation, but as a device to sustain the benevolent grant of the *yang.* The superior position of the *yang,* likewise, is not intended to endorse its entitlement to domination and exploitation, but to expedite its selfless way of giving and to induce an organic union to bring about a higher form of devotion and manifestation. The importance of both *yin* and *yang* stems from their organic union, and through this union they rise to the cosmic cycle of grant and gratitude as exemplified by the reciprocal exchange of the spiritual endowment of heaven and the material contribution of the earth. Therefore, there is *equivalent* respect for *yin* and *yang* partners in all three civil relationships, just as there is equitable reverence for mother earth and father heaven as the prototypes of *yin* and *yang.*

This would be an opportune time to illustrate this sense of equivalence with the functions of different notes in a musical performance. Unless instructed otherwise by the composer for certain peculiar effects, no musician would play every note in a composition with equal volume as this produces not harmony but only monotony. The art of performance requires the player to put more emphasis on some notes than on others. However, to play a note with a delicate touch is not to overlook its significance for the musical piece as a whole. For in terms of their internal relationship, there are some notes that are more "important" than others. But the art of performance requires that no genuine musician would treat even a single note with contempt. True harmony is achievable only when a player attends to all notes with awe and devotion. By the same token, despite the different levels of importance attached to particular *roles,* there remains an equivalent *respect* for all persons playing these roles in a harmonious Confucian civil organization. From the Confucian perspective, a civil organization is a chain that is no stronger than its weakest link. The weak and the lowly should not only not be oppressed, but deserve also equivalent, if not greater, care and protection.[97]

In conclusion, the Confucian theories of the three norms, five tenets, and *yin-yang* order are not intended to justify authority and entitlement to personal or political prerogative. Rather, they are oriented toward the gradual cultivation of sympathetic and sincere relationships, nurturing the organic functions of various civil organizations. The heart of the Confucian civil order is the way of the gentleman/gentlewoman. It is the sense of honor that consists in the genuine love and cultivation of the dignity of human life that would hearten *whoever* takes the position of a superior to motivate civil organizations toward the selfless embodiment of the cosmic cycle of grace and sacrifice. As such, this sense of honor is the only nostrum able to free a civil society from despotic political authority and the disruptive mentality of the mob. Indeed, the true meaning of freedom for a Confucian personality is only

possible through the serene release and openness (*wuwei*/*Gelassenheit*) that beckon the person to devote himself to his functions in the civil society, and in so doing to the cosmic cycle of grant and gratitude. It is in the poetical accord with this cosmic cycle, with the sustaining communal and ecological sphere, that a person achieves the *highest dignity* as a distinctive site of embodiment for the gracious and miraculous way of heaven.

Granted, with the prevalence of modern democratic institutions today, traditional Confucian civil organizations may appear more and more unsuited to the pace of progress prompted by the modern economic and political order. It at least seems apposite to make apt modifications, especially with regard to the roles of the sovereign and the wife. Be that as it may, this discrepancy should not be a pretext to defame the *integrity* of the Confucian civil order. After all, the essence of Confucianism has little to do with the particular modes of the social and political structure that it assumes to *civilize*. While Confucian moral and political teachings may always involve some particular sort of ritual at a given historical moment, the spirit of Confucian "moral education is not confined in the decree of any determinate ethical codes and regulations. In Confucius's view, the supreme ritual and music as practiced by benevolent leaders are formless and soundless." The true foundation of the Confucian civil order is not any fixed set of structures or heavenly/human requirement, but the openness of heart (*ren* 仁). It is the "care and respect for the dignity of life from the bottom of one's heart."[98]

On the other hand, if freedom is a real value cherished by modern civilization, then the mere "prevalence" of certain economic and political institutions should not command blind faith in their validity and authority. Democracy, after all, "has no greater enemies than her unthinking friends." She must have "an idea, a star [on which] to fix her eyes" so as to overcome the danger of shortsightedness "verging on blindness."[99] All in all, were I allowed to pick just *one* Confucian teaching to endure in the modern world, then it must be the care and reverence for beauty and dignity that are exemplified by the way of the gentleman and gentlewoman. It is this faith in the honor and dignity of humanity that has inspired generations of Confucian personalities to abide by the way of grace and gentleness in the face of insidious persecutions and intimidating conditions. It is hoped that this gracious way of Confucian civilization may point to a path toward true freedom that will liberate us from the domination of machine and money-making and the machination of an ever-expanding industrial capitalism.

Notes

I would like to thank Roger T. Ames, Chenyang Li, Peimin Ni, Charles E. Scott, and the two reviewers for the constructive advice and suggestions that were important for the development and improvement of this work. My sincere gratitude goes to my wife Dr. Xinfang Wang as well for valuable information and discussion on the various women's perspectives and experiences reflected in this article.

1 – Tu 1998, pp. 122, 129. Remarkably, the antipathy to the *sangang* can be traced to the New Culture Movement and especially Chen Duxiu's inflammatory attacks on Confucianism. See Chen Duxiu 1922, "Year 1916," 1:45; "Constitution and Confucius," 1:103–112; and "The Way of Confucius and the Modern Life," 1:113–124. There are some helpful elaborations of Chen's general views on *sangang* and Confucianism in Guo Zhanbo 1997, pp. 83 ff. At the same time, we should note also the modern defense of this Confucian maxim as presented, e.g., in Zhang 1900, 3:43–48.

2 – Chen Yinke 1993, p. 10. Translations of all Chinese texts are mine unless noted otherwise.

3 – See Xu Shen 2006, *"gang"* 綱, p. 655.

4 – *Shangshu zhengyi* 2007, "*pangeng"* 盤庚, p. 342: "若罔在綱, 有條而不紊."

5 – Luo 1998, "Yupu" 棫樸, p. 699.

6 – See "Bond" 1989.

7 – *Shiji* 1965, "Taishi gong zishu" 太史公自序 (Autobiography of the Taishigong): "夫春生夏長, 秋收冬藏, 此天道之大經也. 弗順則無以為天下綱紀."

8 – *Guanzi* 1965, "Jincang" 禁藏. See also Lü Buwei 2002, "Lisulan" 離俗覽 and "Yongmin" 用民, pp. 1279–1280, identifying the substantial use of reward and punishment as the guideline and norm *(jigang)* for employing the people.

9 – *Liji* 1965, "Yueji" 樂記: "聖人作為父子君臣, 以為紀綱. 紀綱既正, 天下大定."

10 – Luo Jiangsheng 1998, "Jiale" 假樂, pp. 744–746, and "Juan'er" 卷阿, pp. 753–758.

11 – *Shangshu zhengyi* 2007, "Wuzizhige" 五子之歌, p. 266.

12 – Cui 1997, "唯仁為紀綱."

13 – See, e.g., (1) *Mozi* 1965, "Tianzhizhong" 天志中: "制為四時春夏秋冬, 以紀綱之"; (2) Xu Yuangao 2002, "Luyuxia" 魯語下, p. 202: "山川之靈, 足以 紀綱天下者, 其守為神"; (3) Xu Yuangao 2002, "Jinyusi" 晉語四, p. 325: "此大夫管仲之所以紀綱齊國"; (4) *Qian-Hanshu* 1965, "Lülizhishang" 律歷志上: "漢興, 方綱紀大基." Note also the definition of the verbal senses of *gangji* and *jigang* as "to regulate" (*zhili* 治理), in Lin Yin 1985, 7:223 and 7:458.

14 – I have found only one use of *gang* in the sense of "to tie, to harness," which involves the duty of the official horse procurer to train wild horses (*gang e'ma* 綱惡馬). Zheng Xuan annotates the word *gang* here as to "hold and discipline the horses with the harness so as to form an intimate relationship with the horses" (*yi jisuo weigang xiaxi zhi* 以縻索維綱狎習之) (*Zhouli zhengyi* 1965, "Mazhi" 馬質). Notably, the goal of the horse procurer was not to shackle and imprison the horses, but to tame them with proper discipline. So, even here, *gang* does not connote a mere form of bondage or coercion, but still a sense of proper education and regulation.

15 – See, e.g., the criticism of King Taikang in *Shangshu* 2007 (referenced in note 11 above). It suffices to give one more example here. Liu Xiang's *Biographies of Women* records and praises the deed of an Old Lady of Quwo 曲沃 in the State of Wei who requested an interview with the king in order to criticize his decision to wed his own son's bride as a disruption of the three norms (Wang Zhaoyuan 2012, 3:14, p. 131–134).

16 – *Kangxi zidian* 2010, p. 109. According to Lin 1986, 1:1101, *lun* refers to the proper order (*shunxu* 順序) in human relations and is synonymous with such words as *dao* 道 (way), *li* 理 (order/reason), *ji* 紀 (guideline), *yi* 義 (principle/precept), and *xu* 序 (order). It is clear also that Mengzi is not referring here merely to the five relationships, but to the tenets that should regulate the five kinds of human relations.

17 – *Mengzi* IIIA4.

18 – Tu defines the "five relationships" (tenets) as the substance of Confucian self-cultivation representing an inclusive "Confucian Humanism." In contrast, he takes the "Three Bonds" (norms) as a Legalist doctrine attributable to the *Hanfeizi*. For Tu, the importance of the Three Bonds for moral education in the Han dynasty resulted from the efforts of the Han dynasty scholar-officials to "transform Confucian ethics into a political ideology" as a "mechanism of symbolic control" (Tu 1998, pp. 121–123).

19 – While the substance of the three civil relationships has been a constant subject of early Confucian discourse, the technical term *"sangang"* per se did not appear in pre-Qin texts. Before the *Baihutong,* the three norms are defined briefly in the *Hanwenjia* 含文嘉: "君為臣綱, 父為子綱, 夫為妻綱" (cited in Chen Li 1994, pp. 373–374; see also *Weishu jicheng* 1994, p. 499). Dong Zhongshu's *Chunqiu fanlu* also includes some passing references to the maxim, which I shall address in the final section.

20 – Chen Li 1994, "Sangang Liuji" 三綱六紀, pp. 373–374.

21 – Ibid., p. 374: "陽得陰而成, 陰得陽而序."

22 – Angle 2012, p. 119.

23 – Tu 1998, p. 122.

24 – There is no exact counterpart to the Western idea of "authority" in the Chinese language. The common Chinese translation "*quanwei*" 權威 is a modern construction. Considering the tendency to interpret the ancient Chinese political order as "authoritative" or "authoritarianism," it is crucial to note the differences between the Chinese and English words. In short, "authority" has its root in "author" and refers to the power of the *originator* or *creator* of an order that commands obedience ("Authority" 1989). In contrast, the Chinese word *"quan"* refers literally to the sliding weight of a scale and is used metaphorically to denote one's power and ability to make prudent evaluations and decisions

(*Kangxi zidian, "quan"* 權). The root meaning of the word *"wei"* may have referred to the position of the "sovereign." In ordinary usage, its basic meaning is the majestic power or appearance that induces awe and respect (*Kangxi zidian, "wei"* 威). Remarkably, neither *quan* nor *wei* (let alone *quanwei*) figures in Confucian moral and political discourse. Contemporary interpretations of Confucianism in terms of "authority" involve dubious renderings of Chinese words and are wary of imposing a suspicious Western conceptual framework. E.g., adopting Rosemont and Ames's translation of *ren* as "authoritative conduct," Sor-hoon Tan interprets the Chinese word *shang* 上 (up, superior) as "authority" (Tan 2010, pp. 2–3). Stephen Angle, likewise, translates *zheng* 政 (government, political order, sovereignty) as "authority" (Angle 2012, p. 36). For a critique of Rosemont and Ames's translation of *ren,* see Wang 2012.

25 – Arendt 1961, pp. 96–97. The next three quotes are from pp. 91, 100–101, 92–93.

26 – Chen Li 1994, p. 376: "君, 羣也. 羣下之所歸心也."

27 – Chen Li 1994, pp. 43–45, "Hao 號": "仁義所生稱王 . . . 不擾匹夫匹婦, 故為皇."

28 – *Shangshu zhengyi* 2007, "Xianyou yide" 咸有一德: "克享天心 受天明命." Remarkably, this Confucian ideal of the political leader resonated with the description of the sages in the representative texts of other schools of thinking as well. See, e.g., Xu Fuhong 2008, "Benjing yinfu qishu" 本經陰符七術, p. 202: "真人者同天而合道 . . . 懷天心施德養"; Liu Wendian 1989, "Taizuxun" 泰族訓, p. 664: "是以天心呿唫者也, 故一動其本而百枝皆應 . . . 故聖人者懷天心, 聲然能動化天下者也."

29 – According to an early political lesson recorded in the *Shangshu,* the just and right way of a king's leadership should be broad, open, and fair-minded, without any personal likes and dislikes, or any parochial preferences and discriminations. See *Shangshu zhengyi* 2007, "Hongfan" 洪范, pp. 463–464: "無偏無陂, 遵王之義; 無有作好, 遵王之道."

30 – The meaning of the phrase *chanjianye* 纏堅也 is not immediately clear. Chen Li (1994) takes the character *chan* as redundant. I take the character 纏 here as synonymous with its homonym 纏, which carries the signification of "bond" or "to bind, to tie." It makes good sense to interpret the meaning of 纏/纏 here as "to hold on steadily to the bond with the sovereign."

31 – Chen Li 1994, p. 376: "君處此, 臣請歸."

32 – I trust the phrase *lizhi* 厲志 (Chen Li 1994, p. 376) should be *zhuzhi* 屬志 (Ban Gu 1929, "Sangang liuji": "屬志自堅固也"). Chen Li's interpretation, which takes the phrase and sentence to mean that the minister should be steadfast in his will, makes sense also. But my rendering above fits better since the solid relationship between the sovereign and minister is a natural outcome of an invitation from the sovereign.

33 – Lü Simian 2005, 1:237 ff.

34 – See Lü Simian 2005, 1:241–243. E.g., Lü alludes to the poem "Jiale" (see Luo Jiangsheng 1998, "Jiale" 假樂, p. 744–746), which commends the normative friendship of the noble leader with his officials.

35 – *Xunzi* 1965, "Chendao" 臣道: "從道不從君." Cf. Lü Simian 2005, 1:240.

36 – Chen Li 1994, p. 376: "*fuzhe juye*" 父者, 矩也.

37 – Rosemont and Ames 2009, pp. 113–114. See also the Confucian judgments that devotion to one's family clans is *secondary* to one's honorable responsibility to the state (*Analects* 13.20) and that one should comply with the order of justice but not with that of the father (*Xunzi* 1965, "Zidao" 子道: "從義不從父").

38 – Chen Li 1994, "Zhengjian" 諍諫, pp. 226–242.

39 – Ibid., p. 228: *"guerjun"* 孤惡君.

40 – See the *Liji*, "Quli" 曲禮, cited in Chen Li 1994, "Zhengjian" 諍諫, p. 234.

41 – *Xunzi,* "Lilun" 禮論.

42 – Sima Guang 1956, "Zhoujiyi" 周紀一, 1:2–3.

43 – Chen Li 1994, p. 376: "以禮屈服."

44 – Ku 1922, p. 51.

45 – *Liji* 1965, "Qulishang" 曲禮上": "禮尚往來." See also the "Yueji" 樂記 and "Jiaotesheng" 郊特牲 chapters, both of which define the basic function of ritual and ceremonial sacrifice as *bao* 報, namely "to repay and reciprocate" ("禮也者, 報也" / "郊之祭也, 大報本反始也").

46 – Chen Li 1994, p. 376: *"qin tuo fuzhiying"* 親說婦之纓. See also *Yili zhushu* 2005, "Shi Hunli" 士婚禮, pp. 63–64, which contains further elaboration on this ritual action by Zheng Xuan and Jia Gongyan.

47 – *Yili Zhushu* 2005, "Shi hunli" 士婚禮, p. 60. The grab handle was important in this context because the rider with the handle could secure stability and comfort.

48 – Chen Li 1994, p. 376: "夫婦判合."

49 – Here, it suffices to note two references to this normative structure by Confucius's disciples Zixia (who commends the guideline and norm *[jigang]* of father/son, sovereign/subject as established by the early sages—see note 9 above) and Zizhang (who articulates virtually the maxim of three norms in a different format [*wuji liuwei* 五紀六位]. According to Yu Yue, *wuji* (five guidelines) is synonymous with *wulun* 五倫 (five tenets). Sima Biao interprets the concept of *liuwei* 六位 (six positions) as corresponding to the three sets of relationships (sovereign/subject, father/son, husband/wife) in the three norms (*Zhuangzi ji-*

shi, "Daozhi" 盜跖, p. 1004; cf. Li Rui 2003 for an elaboration on *liuwei* as the original pre-Qin form of *sangang*).

50 – *Hanfeizi,* "Zhongxiao" 忠孝.

51 – Su Yu, chap. 25, pp. 219–221; Chen Li 1994, pp. 336, 361: "湯武革命順乎天." Cf. Qian Mu 2003, pp. 218–222.

52 – See Qian Mu 2003, pp. 93 ff.

53 – According to Dong Zhongshu, this is the ideal state in which the people will pursue a virtuous life and cease their wrongdoings by themselves without the imposition of any government orders and prohibitions (不令而自行 . . . 不禁而自止) (Su Yu, chap. 31, p. 265). This corresponds to the ideal of *wuwei* 無為 (non-action) for the Confucian ruler: "one who reigns but does not rule" (Ames 1994, pp. 29 ff.).

54 – Rosemont and Ames 2010, pp. 4–5.

55 – Angle 2012, p. 117. The next four quotes are from pp. 117, 118, 119, 42.

56 – Kymlicka 2002, p. 4. The next two quotes are from pp. 57, 62.

57 – See Tiwald 2008 for an insightful study on the plausible right of rebellion as endorsed by Mengzi. See also Li Zehou 1993 for a Confucian critique of the revolutionary approach that brought modern China to chaos. I thank one reviewer for this valuable reference.

58 – King 1992, p. 89.

59 – Qian Mu has attributed the liberal values of rights and representative regimes to the corporate model of modern Western government. With the political leaders comparable to corporate executives and citizens to shareholders, it is reasonable to grant all shareholders the right to elect and dismiss the executives and to have a say about major operational decisions. In contrast, the traditional Chinese/Confucian government is like a comprehensive university. Therefore, just as the qualification of a master cannot be determined by his students, "the recognition and promotion of the worthy and capable cannot be successfully done by resorting to the will of the people alone" (Qian Mu 2003, p. 142).

60 – See, e.g., Kekes 1997 and Sandel 1984.

61 – For a recent criticism and demonstration of the unprecedented gap between the rich and the poor in Western society, See e.g. Chrystia Freeland, *Plutocrats: The Rise of the New Global Super-Rich and the Fall of Everyone Else* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013)

62 – See, e.g., Wang 2011.

63 – Sandel 1984, p. 160. Cf. Sandel 2009, pp. 215 ff. for a nice review and criticism of the moral neutrality of the government. See Rawls 1994 for a typical liberal argument for the priority of the right over the good. Note also that although

Rawls claims to have based his thesis on moral neutrality and priority of right on Kant (a claim that Sandel 2009 confirms uncritically on p. 216), Kant himself states clearly that "true politics cannot take a single step without first paying homage to morals" (Sullivan 1989, p. 252).

64 – Rawls 1971, pp. 396 ff.: "the index of well-being and the expectation of representative men are specified in terms of primary goods. Rational individuals . . . desire certain things. . . . *Other things [being] equal,* they prefer a wider to a narrower liberty and opportunity, and a greater rather than a smaller share of wealth and income" (emphasis added).

65 – Rawls's argument seems biased in that just because rational individuals desire certain things as a condition for a good life is no proof that they should desire these things insatiably and infinitely. It is important to note also a fallacy of presumption in Rawls reasoning caused by the *ambiguity* of "other things equal." In reality, wealth, power, and other social goods are never freebies that one can just choose to have—like winning a gratuitous lottery. Rather, one obtains them only as a result of social transactions and exchanges. Things are thus "never equal," as one has almost always to make due efforts and sacrifices in exchange for greater wealth and power (e.g., extra time and energy, a balanced lifestyle, health, friendship, family, conscience, and happiness). So, I believe that what Rawls really means is that a rational individual would always "strive" for greater wealth and power whenever such an equal "opportunity" presents itself. However, this poses further questions for Rawls's demarcation of the "primary goods" that is utilitarian in essence. For instance, as "conscience" and "family attachments" are not among the list of "primary goods," it seems that an individual "must be" irrational when he refuses an opportunity for higher income and power for preference to staying close to his family (which virtually constrains his liberty), out of either love or responsibility. If so, then Rawls's theory has presumed utilitarian values as the *absolute* condition for all rational beings.

66 – Herbert 2002, p. xii.

67 – Ibid., pp. xvi–xvii, xii; cf. pp. 258–272 for an elaborate utilitarian theory of rights. The next citation is from p. xvii.

68 – Arendt 1961, p. 101.

69 – Birukoff 1925, pp. 141, 136. Translation of the German text is mine. Some background of the letter can be found in Bodde 1950, pp. 49–58. The next eight citations are from pp. 136, 137, 141, 132, 133, 131, 131, 141–142.

70 – See Ku 1922, p. 156; cf. pp. 148 ff. for the resonance between Confucian and genuine liberal ideas.

71 – Ku 1921. Ibid. for the next two citations.

72 – Ku 1922, pp. 67–70; cf. Ku 1921.

73 – See Wang 2015.

74 – Kang Youwei 1990, pp. i–ii.

75 – Chen Li 1994, p. 374: "陽得陰而成, 陰得陽而序." In a way, it is pertinent to conceive the relation between *yang* and *yin* as analogous to that between form and matter, *energia* (actuality) and *dunamis* (potentiality), in Aristotle's philosophy. The *yang* is comparable with the mind, which informs the body (the *yin*) with a formal order as they combine with each other for the complete union.

76 – Su Yu 1992, "Jiyi" 基義, pp. 349–350. The next citation is from "Jiyi" 基義, pp. 350–351.

77 – Wang 2005, pp. 209, 218, 217. The next three citations are from pp. 217, 218, 209.

78 – Hall and Ames 2000, pp. 89, 77.

79 – Ibid., pp. 84, 93 n. 20, where Hall and Ames present their main argument).

80 – The *Shuowen* clearly includes the radical 男 and two characters composed therewith: *sheng* 甥 (nephew) and *jiü* 舅 (uncle) (Xu Shen 2006, p. 698).

81 – For instance, one can argue that it is more convenient to build characters from 女 (which is handy to use as it contains only four strokes) than from 男 (which is bulky as it contains already two parts and has a total of seven strokes).

82 – Hall and Ames 2000, p. 83.

83 – Kymlicka 2000, pp. 386 ff.

84 – Nietzsche 1966, sec. 146.

85 – Gandhi 1996, pp. 97 ff. See also Gandhi's criticism of early feminist movements as a form of "passive resistance" (pp. 51–57) and his resonance with Tolstoy's teaching of nonviolence (pp. 37–40).

86 – Ku 1922, p. 74 (emphasis added).

87 – Ibid., pp. 29, 44.

88 – See Wang 2012 for an exposition on the basic meaning of *ren* as *gantong* (empathetic openness) and on Confucian moral cultivation as a process of person opening.

89 – See Chen Li 1994, p. 459. Cf. *Xunzi,* "Dalue": "咸, 感也, 以高下下, 以男下女, 柔上而剛下." Dong affirms also that the sovereign *(yang)* should take the *yin* position in relation to the *yang* position taken by his subjects *(yin)* (Su Yu 1992, chap. 19, p. 172: "故人臣居陽而為陰, 人君居陰而為陽").

90 – See Su Yu 1992, chap. 31, p. 265: "不令而自行, 不禁而自止."

91 – Ibid., "Wangdao" 王道, pp. 101–102.

92 – Ibid., "Yubei" 玉杯, p. 32: "屈民而伸君, 屈君而伸天."

93 – See, e.g., Su Yu 1992, chap. 25, p. 220: "且天之生民, 非為王也; 而天立王, 以為民也." See also Dong's affirmation of the purpose of heaven and the sovereign as nourishment for the people in Su Yu 1992, chap. 64, p. 390; chap. 75, p. 439; chap. 7, p. 133; and chap. 27, p. 230.

94 – *Zhouyi zhengyi* 1965, "Jici" 繫辭: "是故易有太極, 是生兩儀." Cf. Lü Buwei 2002, "Dayue" 大樂, p. 258: "太一出兩儀, 兩儀出陰陽."

95 – Hall and Ames 1995, p. 261. One may object that Dong's correlation of *yin* with women and *yang* with men would invalidate this *contextual* interpretation of *yin-yang* order. In my view, this correlation applies *only* to women and men on the *same* level of a civil order, namely wife and husband. Dong remains equivocal about whether a woman (e.g., a mother) can take a superior position over a man at a *lower* level (e.g., a son). But he clearly affirms that *yin* in one order can be *yang* in another, and vice versa: "陰之中亦相為陰, 陽之中亦相為陽" (chap. 43, p. 325). For the mother-son relationship, I believe there are actually two sets of *yin-yang* order interplay here. On the one hand, the son represents the *yang* forces inherited from the father. Thus, the mother should *follow* and *depend* on the (oldest) son after her husband dies. On the other hand, there is no question that the son should respect the mother as his superior and serve her with utmost filial devotion. In fact, it was customary for a surviving mother to assume the highest position of honor in traditional Confucian families.

96 – See the *Qian-Hanshu* 1965, "Biography of Dong Zhongshu," and Wang 2015 for a detailed elaboration of this early Confucian rule of benefaction.

97 – The Han Confucian Liu Xiang compares the political community to a drinking party in a hall. The whole group would be unhappy if there were just one person crying in the corner. So, a sage dares not present sacrifices to his ancestors (to testify to his good rule) even when there is just one person in the kingdom who is unsettled (Liu Xiang 1987, "Gui de" 贵德, p. 97; cf. Chen Li 1994, pp. 43–45).

98 – Wang 2011, p. 215. See also Wang 2012 for a new interpretation of *ren* as "openness and sincerity of heart," which nurtures both the development of sagacious moral persons and harmonious Confucian communities without submitting to a rigid hierarchical order (see esp. pp. 482–486).

99 – Galsworthy 1921, p. 13.

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