

The Global Implications of the Doctrine of Ren:

The Humanistic Spirit and Ecological Awareness of Confucianism

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I am honored and delighted to have this opportunity to share my views with you on the issue of Chinese cultural identity and to highlight the global significance of the *Renxue* (Doctrine of Ren) at this elegant academy boasting ancient Han and Tang architectural style.

My topic today is the global implications of the Doctrine of Ren — the humanistic spirit and ecological awareness. This is an issue I have been considering for a period of time. I think that in the 21st century studies of the Confucian tradition, we must emphasize the concept of *ren* (*jen*, benevolence). This year in March, I discussed the same topic at Shanghai Jiao Tong University and Shanghai Wenhui Hall, though not quite as thoroughly. Today, what I would like to discuss will still be partial, not quite systematic, but I will explain how my view has evolved in the process, and will have the opportunity to engage in some exchange with you. This is very valuable to me because it will help further clarify my thoughts.

First of all, I would like to provide a brief overview of the first English paper on philosophy I published, *The Creative Tension between Jen and Li*, a work I began in 1966, completed and published in 1968, in *Philosophy East and West*. The reason for my reference to this paper is that among my published papers, this one is most frequently quoted and is much discussed. For example, in the 1980s, there was a so-called historical-philosophical debate in the realm of Chinese academia. The cause of the debate stemmed from criticism of my paper by Prof. He Bingdi, who was highly esteemed within the sphere of historical academia both in China and in the world. As a result, many scholars responded to the debate, which lasted for nearly ten years. In addition, the question of awareness I raised in that paper is closely related to my topic today. What I would like to discuss today is a seemingly simple and yet substantially difficult issue — Does ren fully represent the Human Subjectivity advocated by Confucianism?

Does human being have subjectivity? Does human being have the dignity of autonomy? Does human being have inherent value? If the answer to these questions is no, then Confucianism as I understand it is somewhat slanted. However, the Confucian spirit is like what is expressed in *The Analects*, “Men of antiquity studied to improve themselves; men today study to impress others.” When I taught the first class on The Philosophy of Confucianism at Peking University in 1985, the very first question I asked the students in the class was: what do you think the Confucian thought represents, for the self or for others? At that time, almost all the students answered uniformly: Of course, it is for others,

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for serving the people. That is the positive spirit of Confucianism. Confucian thought is for family, society, and the world, and never for the self and self-interest. A human being is not an isolated individual, and what Confucianism advocates is human sociality.

Nonetheless, since the Song and Ming dynasties many scholars have defined Confucianism as the learning for the self, or the learning of the body and the mind, the learning of the *junzi* (exemplary person), the learning of the sage, or the learning of the body-mind and human nature and life. However it is defined, the main idea can be summed up as follows: a human being must build up his own integrity. What we learn is not for our parents, not for simple social utility, and not for the country or for the needs of mankind. Rather, the core value of learning is to build up self-integrity, which fully reflects truth and falseness, profundity and banality, comprehensiveness and one-sidedness. This is the consciousness of the question that I considered in the paper I wrote in 1968. This question originated from a scholar's influence on me during the days when I was studying at Harvard. At that time the scholar was studying the tension between the Gospel and the Law in Christianity: a Christian gains salvation by faith. The Gospel originates from God, yet a Christian must obey social laws and regulations. Hence, there is tension between faith and social regulations. For that matter, Martin Luther, the founder of Protestantism, conducted a great revolution, advocating "do not seek salvation through the Church; gain it through your own faith." Before Martin Luther, the celebrated theologians of Christianity all claimed that man must be saved by the Church. However, Martin Luther proposed the view of full reliance on one's own faith for salvation, which is the key to the development from Catholicism to Protestantism.

In my paper I discussed the following: Confucianism requires that we should conform to social rules and regulations and that we should be courteous and responsible. From childhood we were taught xiao, ti, zhong, xin (filial piety, fraternal duty, loyalty, and faithfulness), and all these values are socially oriented. Therefore, a person who truly meets the standards of Confucian ethics must follow social ethics. This is the world of li (rites, propriety). However, ren is not exactly li. Does ren contain any additional basic emotional inner elements that li cannot encompass? It may be assumed that to study Confucianism one must know li, but if one only knows li without the inner emotional elements, can one possess the quality of ren? Is there a kind of tension between the value represented by ren within and li expressed objectively without? This tension can be wholesome and creative, and it may also be unwholesome and destructive. The wholesome [tension] is comprised of our most genuine inner feelings such as compassion, sympathy, or love, which must be displayed through normal and civilized channels, that is, through externalization. Hence, li becomes the externalization, objectification, socialization and concretization of ren.

It always takes a certain process to objectify, concretize, and realize any idea or value, and yet the process more or less distorts the original spirit. I had a strong impression when I was studying traditional philosophy, especially Greek philosophy and Platonic philosophy, that is, when an idea falls into the actual, concrete and objective context, it is bound to be distorted and lopsided. Thus, in the process of realizing an idea, it loses much of its most original quality. Nevertheless, Confucian thought is nothing like this. The value of ren must be realized through li; otherwise, it will become an abstract concept. If ren cannot be concretized, or even represented or actualized until li is realized, then in the process, there will be many issues worth considering. This is exactly the research topic I wanted to propose at that time.

There is an American philosopher named Herbert Fingarette, who conducted

research in many disciplines such as psychoanalysis, theology, law, and philosophy, who is a brilliant scholar among modern American philosophers. In the 1960s, Mr. Fingarette was an outstanding American philosopher who had never studied Chinese philosophy; however, later in 1972, he wrote a book called *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred*, which has been the most influential book on Confucianism in the past 40 years. In the preface of the book, he made a statement to the following effect:

I started to read *The Analects* thanks to Hegel's influence, and yet Hegel very much disdained the book, claiming that *The Analects* were nothing but a set of moral preaching. Many of us had practically accepted Hegel's bias, believing that all the moral preaching in *The Analects* were simply Confucius' claims, and that there was no profound thoughts, no clear inner connections. There was no philosophy. Lacking especially a large philosophical system created through personal meditation and tranquil reflection, there is nothing but a kind of simple moral preach, some outdated, old-fashioned remarks that have nothing to do with our contemporary life. People celebrate *The Analects*, but after reading it, I felt it was quite insipid. Afterwards, I read it again, thinking that since the book was so influential to the Chinese people, with its thousands of years of history, and its author Confucius was a great sage, could what Hegel said be possibly incorrect? Later on, the more I read it, the more I felt that there was a kind of magic power in it — a kind of charm or spiritual power that brought me into the book. After I entered the world of *The Analects*, I found that the book was a statement of wisdom, in which almost every sentence and every viewpoint were like the illumination of humanity's brilliance, so I once again set off to work on understanding the book.

This is my impression, but of course the text is very succinct.

Around 1963 or 1964 and before Prof. Fingarette wrote the book, Harvard Divinity School invited him to give the Williams James Lecture. This is a highly esteemed lecture at Harvard. Invited scholars would always start to prepare a publishable paper one or two years before the lecture. That was not long after I arrived at Harvard. After his lecture, Prof. Fingarette asked me to organize a seminar to discuss *The Analects*. I asked him, "Are you interested in *The Analects*?" He responded, "I'm really interested, so can you organize it?" Hearing him saying this, I felt that he had entered the context of *The Analects*. He had a sense, which I would call today as *tizhi* (bodily cognition). It is not what philosophers would call data, something that can be simply discussed verbally, or something that one can recite fluently and yet has nothing to do with one's body, mind, or life. It is rather a kind of mode of knowing that engages the body, or *tiyan* (bodily experience). In the following ten years after our meeting, he had been studying Confucianism, and then in 1972, he published the book *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred*, which means that anything Confucius observed would be sacred even if it might be simply secular and most ordinary life. He believes that the important view Confucianism emphasizes is no other than *li*. This book is currently the Chinese philosophy bestseller in the United States. With only 80 pages and a big Chinese traditional character *li* (• •the rites) on the cover, it has undergone countless reprints.

Under Fingarette's influence, most American scholars studying Confucianism, including Roger Ames who is now lecturing at Peking University, Henry Rosemont, and Stephen Angle, lay emphasis on *li* as the most important core value of Confucianism. However, in mainland Chinese academia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and among the overseas Chinese, as far as I know, Chinese scholars studying Confucianism all believe that *ren* is the most important core value of Confucianism. This is a topic worth our consideration. It involves a textual problem. As is known, the character *ren* appears approximately 109 times in *The Analects*. In fact, before *The Analects* and Confucius, the concept of *ren* had already appeared. It appeared in *The Book of Songs*, but back then it was

only an ordinary concept which means good or beautiful. However, in Confucius' opinion, he considered *ren* as a very important topic, which can be the essential one in various fields of aesthetics, ethics, and religious philosophy. When understanding *The Analects*, we encounter a problem that can be called a barrier. That is, what on earth did Confucius mean when he said *ren*? What is the definition of *ren*? Nonetheless, I think looking for a definition is a wrong method to understand *ren* in the first place. Offering definition is not the method of study Confucianism, but a method of conducting general scientific research such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, and so on. To study *The Analects*, we should take another path which we call the anthropological path, not the path of mathematical logic. The path of mathematical and logic is digital, which is perfectly clear from A to B to C. If A goes directly to C, then we may ask what about B? It is a linear mode of thinking with clearly defined causal relationships; otherwise, you cannot think rationally. The study of *The Analects* must go from sense to understanding and then to rationality, making everything perfectly clear and orderly. However, there must be some keen insight in order to see the whole from the parts.

Anthropology in China developed very well from the May Fourth Movement to the Founding of New China (1919-1949). However, after 1949 till the present time, there has been basically no significant progress in this field. In recent dozens of years, its research has been repeating at the same level as Mr. Fei Xiaotong discussed so before. Anthropology cannot be studied by means of simple definition. It requires a kind of penetrating perception or bodily experience, and it requires that you activate your resources of all different kinds, with no presuppositions. Take a simple example. If you want to know about Confucius Academy of Guiyang by the mode of anthropology, you certainly need to collect important data to gain a clear understanding of its history, such as how many people are working at the institute, what they have been doing, and other data you must know accurately. However, no matter how much data you may gather, you cannot truly understand what is called the Confucius Academy. The only way is for you to participate in the Academy's activities, to talk with the Head of the Academy, the teachers and students, and to understand what its architecture represents. This is my second time visiting the Confucius Academy. My first visit gave me only superficial impressions, and my second visit has given me a deeper one. If I come to visit the Academy a third time or more, my impression will be even deeper. Only by more visits can I gradually understand the place. We come to understand a person basically through the same channel: We must first of all know the person by meeting him, and through long-term communication gradually become acquainted with him. And how long will it take to become close friends? It will take a very long time. The study of anthropology follows the same procedure described above.

The study of the classics, such as expounding on a text of scripture, requires a similar process. There is no shortcut; you must understand the context. When Confucius talked about *ren*, the questions his students asked were basically all of this type: They were all about knowledge of bodily experience, and all the questions were raised after a longtime consideration and practice. Then Confucius made various responses. Among Confucius' disciples there were different kinds of people with different talents. Some might be very intelligent and very wise like Zigong; some might be very rash but courageous like Zilu; some might look very dull and incompetent but in fact be very solid in inner cultivation and possessed adequate capabilities like Zengzi; or someone might be extremely well versed in literature like Zixia. There were all different kinds of personalities. However, undoubtedly, among his students there was one who was the most unsuccessful by today's

standard, one who had no money, no power, no influence, and could hardly make a living. He was Yan Hui (also named Yan Yuan). However, Confucius not only very much liked him but even revered him. Few teachers would revere their own students like this. Why do we say that Confucius revered him? Here is the story.

Confucius knew that Zigong was very talented and always wanted to show his talent. So he asked Zigong, "How do you compare yourself with Yan Hui?" Knowing very well that Yan Hui was the teacher's favorite, Zigong thought that he could hardly compare with Yan Hui, so he replied, "How dare I compare with Yan Hui? Hui hears one point and thereby knows ten; I hear one point and know two." However, I don't think this is the response Confucius wanted to hear. It is not a question of who is more intelligent. Confucius wanted to console Zigong, so he said, "It's true that you are not as good as him, and neither am I." This is very important.

Why did Confucius also feel that he was not as good as Yan Hui? We know that in *Zhuangzi* many very serious and solemn philosophical questions are discussed, such as the question of *xiulian* (cultivating vital energy) and the question of *zuowang* (sitting in oblivion with a pacified mind). One of my teachers told me that if we want to understand the value of Yan Hui, we must read *Zhuangzi* and the dialogues between Confucius and Yan Hui. Their dialogues often reflect how Yan Hui reached the realm proposed in *Zhuangzi* such as sitting in oblivion with a pacified mind, which Confucius himself sometimes could not even reach. It shows that Yan Hui's spiritual world was extremely rich. Ordinary people like us can also detect valuable messages from *The Analects*. For example, Confucius said that Yan Hui "could adhere to *ren* for as long as three months."¹ I will explain this later.

He said that Yan Hui was *haoxue* (fond of learning). Nowadays we often encourage young people by saying, "Ni feichang haoxue" [You are very fond of learning], but in Confucius' vocabulary in *The Analects*, the word *haoxue* were rarely used. One student did not know how to describe Confucius, so Confucius said, "You can describe me like this: He is never bored about learning, and he is never tired of teaching." As we can see, Confucius described himself as *haoxue*. He claimed: you could find many people who are whole-heartedly devoted and trustworthy but very few who are fond of learning like me. Then someone asked Confucius if there was anyone among his students who was fond of learning. Confucius said, "Yes, he's Yan Hui, but unfortunately he is deceased." Thus, the idea of *haoxue* has extremely high value as far as Confucius was concerned. *Xue* (learning) in *The Analects* is not only the pursuit of knowledge and acquiring of skills, but a kind of awakening.

In the old tradition of the Chinese language studies, in *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* (*Explanation of Script and Elucidation of Characters*), we can find the following definition, "*xue* (learning) means *jue* (awakening)." That means a learned person has a strong sense of awakening. However, this awakening is not only a kind of intellectual awakening but also the awakening of the body, heart-mind, and one's nature and destiny. This is later expressed in the *Mencius*, "The earlier awakened awaken the later awakened and the earlier informed awaken the later informed." This awakening indicates that the person has abundant inner resources. We might not see the idea clearly in *The Analects*, but we sometimes can see it in the *Mencius*. Yan Hui would say, "Those extraordinary kings are in fact not so special. Any person with some ambition can act like that." As we

¹ From Yong Ye in *The Analects*: "Confucius said, 'Yan Hui could adhere to *ren* for as long as three months, and yet others could only do it for a short time.'"

consider Confucius or Wang Yangming as so extraordinary, another person might think that they are not so extraordinary, and if he behaves well, he may also be like them. This is the kind of *qi pai* (lofty air). Yan Hui had nothing, practically no money, power, or influence, and yet he had that kind of lofty air. Is this just a kind of true lofty air? Strictly speaking, it is not lofty air. If it were such an air, what Wang Longxi² phrased it as “an air bearing due responsibilities,” then the air may be very strong, but not necessarily be fully reasonable. Yan Hui was never that type of person. He believed that according to Confucianism, everybody can act as an independent person and promote the splendor of humanity through conscious and strenuous efforts of self-improvement. This is what he firmly believed, and it manifested well within him.

What does *ren* mean? Mencius said, “*ren* means human.” *Ren* is the human who is most authentically human, and who most splendidly represents human value. When meeting Goethe, Napoleon once said, “This man is extraordinary. He is a man.” In Napoleon’s eyes, Goethe represented the peak of the human integrity. In Nietzsche’s theory, there is a concept called Merely Human, which is what we commonly call “this is just human nature.” After all, human beings all have desires and sentiments and make mistakes of many sorts. This is what Nietzsche called general humans. However, the word “man” referring to Goethe has another meaning, which is *ren*, representing the highest value of humans. Both concepts have solid and objective grounding, that is, a man can reach the highest peak to represent human value, and a man can also be an ordinary human being. When Confucius was responded to Yan Yuan’s question about what *ren* was,³ he took it as a serious topic. Thus, Confucius’ response in my view is worth our deep reflection. My paper *The Creative Tension between Jen and Li* mainly delved into this idea.

Yan Yuan asking about *ren* is familiar to us all, but it is not as easy to understand it when we consider it as a serious philosophical question. Confucius said, “To subdue oneself and return to propriety is *ren*.” Those of you in the audience are all too young. If you were 1977 or 1978 graduates, or of the same age as Mr. Yu Huaiyan⁴ or us, you would be very familiar with the period of the Great Cultural Revolution, especially the period of condemning Lin Biao and Confucius, when over a thousand articles were launched to criticize the statement of subduing oneself and returning to propriety. Recently Prof. Xiang Shiling⁵ compiled a book on this topic. Why did they criticize the concept of subduing one self and returning to propriety during that period? According to the explications offered in that one thousand articles, subduing oneself is asceticism and returning to propriety is to restore the rites of the Zhou dynasty. The criticism of Confucian asceticism was very severe, and especially the criticism of Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties. What was taken to be Neo-Confucianism of the Song-Ming dynasties? It was to retain the principle of Heaven and eradicate human desires; it was to starve to death rather than lose one’s chastity. These were the ascetic views

2 Wang Ji (1498-1583): Named Ruzhong and styled Longxi, Chinese thinker of the Ming dynasty and one of the major members of the Yangming School of Confucianism in the Ming dynasty.

3 Yan Hui asking about *ren*: Confucius said••“Once to subdue oneself and return to propriety is accomplished, the world will succumb to *ren*. The practice of *ren* is determined by oneself, but how can it be determined by others?” Yan Yuan said••“I beg to ask how to do it.” Confucius said••“Look not at what is contrary to *li*; listen not to what is contrary to *li*; speak not of what is contrary to *li*; act not for what is contrary to *li*.” Then Yan Yuan said••“Though I am deficient in intelligence and vigor, I will practice what you tell me to do.”

4 Yu Huaiyan: Professor of Guizhou Normal University and Vice Chairman of Guiyang Wang Yangming Research Society.

5 Xiang Shiling: Ph•D•, now Professor of the School of Philosophy, Renmin University of China. His main research field includes Chinese Confucian philosophy and the relationship between Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism.

of Confucianism. They claimed that to return to the rites of the Zhou meant restoration of the rituals of the slave owners, which was not a progressive thought. To criticize the concept of subduing oneself and returning to propriety was to suggest that Confucianism lacked the wholly developed humans in the modern sense: It merely demanded asceticism, it forbade humans to make any mistakes, and it only called for returning to the old and completely unrealistic rules and regulations. That is why they criticized the concept of subduing one self and returning to propriety.

Evidently, during that period the thousand intelligent talents, conditioned by the influence of politics and the cultural context of that time, could not reflect themselves, so their scholarship was all political discourse. The thousand articles, misinterpreting the classical texts out of the context, could not truly reflect the actual situation of the academia or the scholars' academic abilities. Subduing oneself and returning to propriety is not Confucius' thought. His thought is restraining oneself and returning to propriety is *ren*. He was not discussing the issue of *li* but the issue of *ren*. This distinction is very important. "Once to subdue oneself and return to propriety is accomplished, the world will succumb to *ren*." This statement has never before been adequately explained, not even by Zhu Xi. How do we explain it then? Many scholars explicate it as: If the ruler can restrain himself and return to propriety, then everyone else will follow *ren*; or if a man can restrain himself and return to propriety, then everyone else will praise him. However, this is not how I understand it. Here is my interpretation: Since a broad-minded and resolute educated person takes *ren* as his obligation, then the tendency of the world conceding to *ren* will become stronger if he can restrain himself and return to propriety. Similarly, anyone can more or less contribute to the world succumbing to *ren*, not to mention Yan Hui! But it is only a suggestion.

The next sentence is more difficult, "The practice of *ren* is determined by oneself, but how can it be determined by others?" Here, what does *wei* (practice) mean, and then what does *ji* (oneself) mean? Then in the following, Yan Hui's question is made clearer: I beg to ask how to do it. Confucius said, "Look not at what is contrary to *li*; listen not to what is contrary to *li*; speak not what is contrary to *li*; act not for what is contrary to *li*." Then Yan Hui said, "Though I am deficient in intelligence and vigor, I will practice what you tell me to do." This is a crucial text, which makes Herbert Fingarette emphasize *li* as the most important value and most solid foundation of Confucianism. A key word in the passage is *ke* (subdue), which is rendered as restrain here. How do we interpret this word? The general interpretation is to take it as to overcome oneself, or to cultivate oneself. Another interpretation is to take it as to enable. If you take its meaning as to enable, then the meaning of the sentence would go as follows: to enable oneself to return to propriety, or one is able to return to propriety. Despite differences in syntax, many commentators in the Qing dynasty such as Liu Baonan⁶ had the following interpretation: as long as I can make myself to accord to *li*, that is *ren*. In this case, we come to a clear conclusion that *li* is more important than *ren*. If to be in accord with *li* is *ren*, then *ren* naturally becomes a condition it could provide to accord to *li*.

Arthur Waley⁷, a famous British translator, translated many Japanese works as well

6 Liu Baonan (1791-1855): Named Chuzhen and styled Nianlou, from Baoying, Jiangsu Province. He was the outstanding representative of the Yangzhou School. His works include over 20 books such as the *Interpretation of The Analects*, the *Interpretation of Guliangzhuan*, the *Record of Xunyang*, and the *Classic of Baoyingtu*. His *Interpretation of The Analects* does not only remedy the deficiency of Xing Bing's interpretation of *The Analects* in Song dynasty, but also makes much more elucidation, being the authoritative guide for research on *The Analects*.

7 Arthur Waley (1888-1966): Famous English sinologist and literary translator.

as quite a few Chinese works. The strength of his translation is the sheer beauty of his language. Some say that his translation is even more beautiful and better than the original. He decided to translate *ke* as *able to*, which follows the interpretation of Liu Baonan and others. All right, now let's follow the American scholar Fingarette's understanding of Yan Hui asking about *ren*. Confucius said that if you are able to restore *li*, or return to *li*, then that is *ren*. The practice of *ren* is determined by oneself but not others. Then Yan Hui said, "I beg to ask how to do it." Confucius replied, "Look not at what is contrary to *li*; listen not to what is contrary to *li*; speak not of what is contrary to *li*; act not for what is contrary to *li*." All the values are *li*, and therefore Yan Hui said, "Though I am deficient in intelligence and vigor, I will practice what you tell me to do." The emphasis of the concept of *li* is the most important value. Then, how does Fingarette explain *ren*? *Ren* is to use the best means to accord to *li*, and that is what he considers *ren*.

No doubt, philologically, *ke* may be interpreted as *able to*, as we all know that *ke ming junde* means to be able to promote your great virtue. However, *ke* can also be interpreted as conquering. In the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, there is an account titled Zheng Bo Ke Duan Yu Yan (Zheng Bo Defeating Gong Shuduan at the Place of Yan). Here, there is no question that *ke* is interpreted as conquering.

Here is something that calls our attention. It is a very crucial topic. Though it deviates a little bit from the context, I find it very interesting. I think that if we want to emphasize *ren* and make it the core value and inner value, then we must explain that *ren* is subjectivity. However, as I mentioned just now, many Chinese scholars always think that traditionally Confucianism has no subjectivity. What is important is our sociality, and *ren* only has sociality but no subjectivity. Yet because of this, I will try all my best to expound the subjectivity of *ren*. The most effective retort my contestants take against me is to interpret the character *ren* philologically. They analyze the form of the character •• (*ren*), which is composed of •• (*ren*, human) on its left and •• (*er*, two) on its right. Why is the character formed as two humans? The answer is, it refers to the idea of a social relationship. The Chinese usually say that humans must have social relationships; otherwise they would not truly be humans. It happens that there is a *two* in the character ••: There is no question about it. The character remained unchanged no matter how many years have passed. This poses a great challenge to me. I want to emphasize the subjectivity of *ren*, an undispellable subjectivity. I want to say that it is the learning for the self, for the body, the heart-mind, the human nature and destiny, and I want to discuss how to build up integrity of the self, and yet the character •• itself suggests sociality. However, in 1993, some cultural relics

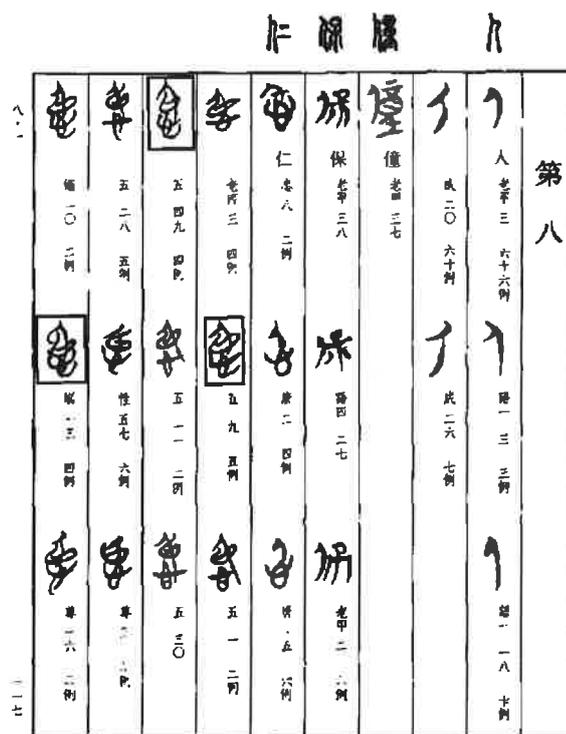


Figure 1

were excavated at Guodian (Guodian Chu Slips⁸). These cultural relics prove to be in the time when Mencius was still alive. How was the character 仁 written then? In fact, it was written in the form of 𠄎 (shen, body) above and 𠄎 (xin, heart-mind) below. We set up the World Ethics Institute at Peking University. The logo of the institute is this ideograph. For the newly founded International Confucian Ecological Association, we also use this ideograph.

Does this mean that the *Explanation of Script and Elucidation of Characters* is wrong in this respect? Xu Shen, the compiler of this first Chinese dictionary, lived in the Han dynasty. Obviously, Xu Shen did not have the chance to see the material in the 3rd century B.C.E., that is, four or five hundred years before him. In the dictionary, there is an ancient character that Xu Shen says he does not recognize. The upper part of the character is 𠄎 and its lower part is 𠄎. Now we have reason to explain that the so-called 𠄎 is very likely to be 𠄎 but written in the ancient times as 𠄎; and therefore, that character in the dictionary is no other than the character 仁.

My proposal of interpreting the character 仁 with the character in the form of 𠄎 above and 𠄎 below is called into question by a philologist from Fudan University. He believes that according to the general rules in philological phonology, the interpretation method by separating parts of the character is not acceptable because the phonetic symbol of the phonogram is meaningless. I sincerely accept this advice. In fact I never employ the method of separating parts of the character to interpret the meaning. Besides, Mr. Pang Pu reminded me many years ago that the upper part of the character is a phonetic symbol. However, I think that the Guodian script wrote 仁 in the form of 𠄎 and 𠄎 (see Figure 1) provides a semantic and rational proof to emphasize the subjectivity of *ren*. What is more important is that under the influence of Xu Shen's dictionary, scholars mostly emphasize the social relationship of *ren* by the form of double humans in the character. This must be reinterpreted.

By mentioning these, I intend to prove that the character *ren* has a special value in the Confucian tradition, or that in Confucius' doctrines the character *ren* indicates the most important and basic value. Let's first of all set Fingarette's discussion aside. The character *ren* appears by itself in *The Analects* 109 times, but it also appears together with some other core value concepts. For example, *ren* appears with *li*. In addition, it also often appears with *zhi* (wise, wisdom), "*Zhizhe le shui, renzhe le shan; zhizhe dong, renzhe jing*" (The wise find pleasure in water; the virtuous find pleasure in hills. The wise are active; the virtuous are tranquil). Mencius said that Confucius' teaching focused on *renyi* (benevolence and righteousness). Thus, *ren* may appear alone, or it may appear together with *li*, *zhi* and *yi*. It is said in *The Doctrine of the Mean* that the three most important great virtues in our culture are *zhi*, *ren*, and *yong* (courage). Mencius taught *siduan* (the Four Incipient Tendencies): *ren*, *yi*, *li*, and *zhi*. The recently-much-discussed School of Zisi and Mencius very much stress the importance of *wuxing* (the Five Elements).

In the period from the 1920s to 1950s, many Chinese scholars could not understand

8 Guodian Chu Slips: In October, 1993, at Guodian Village, Jinmen City, Hubei Province, the Guodian No. 1 Chu Tomb M1 was excavated. Some bamboo slips were discovered, altogether 804 pieces with ink marks on bamboo slips, 730 pieces of which are character slips recording 13,000 characters of the state of Chu. These Chu slips include many kinds of classics, two of which are Taoist works and the rest are mostly Confucian works. Most pieces of the recorded literature were first discovered and were appraised as the first-class national cultural relic. The written characters of the Guodian Chu Slips are typical [missing subject] of the state of Chu, with its special features of elegance and beauty as the finest calligraphy of the time. The discovery of the Guodian Chu Slips has provided valuable material for the research for Chinese philosophy, intellectual history, ancient philology, the ancient written systems and the art of calligraphy.

why Xunzi criticized Mencius, accusing him of teaching *wuxing* when teaching Zisi. Mr. Hou Wailu had a long article in *The History of Chinese Thoughts*, trying to prove why Mencius' thought is related to the Five Elements of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. That article was most strenuously written, but now it seems most absurd. Why? Because what Mencius taught about *wuxing* then is not metal, wood, water, fire, and earth, but *ren* (benevolence), *yi* (righteousness), *li* (propriety), *zhi* (wisdom), and *sheng* (sageliness), the five elements of virtue, not the five natural elements. In the Han dynasty, the book *Baihu Tongyi* (*Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall*) highlighted the Confucian core values. Until today, what have been regarded as the Confucian core values? They are *wuchang* (the Five Constant Virtues): *ren* (benevolence), *yi* (righteousness), *li* (propriety), *zhi* (wisdom), and *xin* (faithfulness). Then, from the time when Confucius started to propose the importance of *ren* to the Han dynasty several hundred years later in history, whether they discussed the relationship between *ren* and *li*, *zhi*, *yi*, or *zhi*, *ren*, *yong*, or *ren*, *yi*, *li*, *zhi*, or *ren*, *yi*, *li*, *zhi*, *xin*, or *ren*, *yi*, *li*, *zhi*, *sheng*, *ren* appeared all the time. This is very much worth our serious reflection, and it is the first point I want to share with you.

In addition, I consider *ren* as the general virtue which can be connected with all the other Confucian values. The meaning of general is twofold: One is that it can be compatible with other values, and the other is that any Confucian value must contain the element of *ren*; otherwise, the value it represents will be problematic. The meaning of being problematic here is also twofold: One is that it may be incomplete and the other is that it may alienate and turn into something without value. *Yi* is a very important value of Confucianism, but if it stays alone without *ren*, it will become too harsh, which is not the Confucian value. If *li* does not go together with *ren*, it will become merely formality. Confucius made clear illustrations: Upon arriving at the funeral you behave correctly, doing what ought to be done, but if you have no feeling of grief, that means you do not know *li*. Yet if a person has never learned how to behave for the occasion, but he feels much grief upon arriving at the funeral, which means he knows *li*. *Li* must contain the element of feeling within. Therefore, "If a man has no quality of *ren*, what has he to do with *li*? If a person has no quality of *ren*, what has he to do with music?" "When we talk about *li* again and again, do we only mean gems and silk? When we talk about music again and again, do we only mean bells and drums?" If a person has no wisdom, he only has petty shrewdness; if *xin* does not contain *ren*, it is petty trustworthiness and petty justice. Sometimes it is not easy to understand this ethic of Confucianism. Generally speaking, if we think that someone conforms to the ethic, the person should be trustworthy. That is, whatever is said must be implemented, and whatever is to be done must be carried through to the end. However, Mencius also made the following clear statement: Whatever is said may not have to be implemented and whatever is to be done may not have to be carried through to the end. So it is alright not to keep one's promise and it is alright not to do what is promised. However, here is a very important point: all depends on justice. This is very different from Kant's philosophy.

In Kant's philosophy, a promise creates a necessity. Once you make a promise, it must be carried out. Sometimes, Kant's thought now seems almost absurd to us: Under any circumstances, you cannot tell lies. Any kind of lying is immoral. However, sometimes not lying does more harm than lying, and sometimes accomplishing what has been promised does more damage than if the promise were unfulfilled. Therefore, "Whatever is said may not have to be implemented and whatever is to be done may not have to be decisively accomplished; all this depends on justice."

The content of *ren* is rich, encompassing all the values we just mentioned. Therefore,

it is impossible for a person who has *ren* to have no *li* while it is indeed possible for a person who has *li* to have no *ren*; it is impossible for a person who has *ren* to have no *yong*, no *yi* and no *zhi*, but it is all possible otherwise. That is to say, *ren* as the full representation of human splendor encompasses all other values. Only when the other values settle down in *ren* can they be rich in content. In addition, *ren* in Confucianism must be differentiated from the high values in other great traditions. For example, *ren* is not indiscriminate love. The reason why Mencius felt that Mozi's indiscriminate love was problematic is that if you force everybody to love others as he loves his parents, in effect that means he is as callous to his parents as he is to others. That is because every person's feeling is different, strong or weak, like water flowing, near or far, which cannot be disguised. Some water flows very near, and when there is a small hole in front, it fills it up and cannot flow down further. That is how far your *ren* can reach and your compassion can reach. Within this scope you do what you should do. Other water may flow very far, like Sakyamuni, his mercy and his water, not only reaching all mankind but also reaching animals, plants, and all species with no differences, and like Jesus Christ with his love reaching all humans on earth whether they are enemies or foes. However, Confucianism teaches us to put ourselves in the position of others, which is different both from indiscriminate love and from the Christian universal love which teaches us to love our enemy, enabling us to have the tolerance even to offer our right cheek having been slapped in the left. Confucius also encountered this matter when Tao accused him of his narrowness of returning good for evil. Confucius' response was as follows "Then what to return for virtue?" When others treat you poorly, you must first of all examine yourself to see whether others should have treated you so. When after self-examination you find it is not your fault but others' problems, then you should return justice for evil or return good for good.

This thought later on involves a broader methodological view, concerning the matter of dichotomy. Now I'd like to focus on this issue. Since Descartes, modern philosophy has been developing with a strong tendency towards dichotomy between mind and matter. In the field of philosophy in China, in the forty or fifty years since Liberation, the main controversy had been between idealism and materialism. It was believed that anything idealistic was problematic. Mencius' ideas belonged to subjective idealism, so the problem was quite serious, and others like Wang Yangming were condemned all because of the dichotomy between mind and matter. There is another problem about the dichotomy between body and mind. Descartes put forward the notion — I think; therefore I am. Following Descartes, many have held the belief that the mind that thinks and the body that can be touched and seen are entirely different substances. In Christianity soul and body are in dichotomy; in science subject and object differ greatly; now of course *ren* and *zhi* are dichotomous, et cetera. These trends of thinking are deeply rooted in our minds: Man and nature are separate; self and society are separate; it is either secular or sacred; people either esteem the past over the present or esteem the present over the past, and so on. Thus, Professor Feng Qi said: Now we are faced with a big problem, that is, the dispute between the past and present and between the Chinese and Western traditions. In addition, according to Western philosophy, Greek philosophy emphasizes rationality, and the Hebrew philosophy stresses faith, but rationality and faith are absolutely separate. This is our mode of thinking. Owing to these methodological presuppositions, it becomes very difficult for us to understand Confucianism, Confucius, and *ren* because he did not think in that manner.

There is a clue: we have all read *The Great Learning* in which the dichotomy is not mutually exclusive: such as beginning and ending, front and back, left and right,

above and below, parts and whole. Take another example. In Chinese philosophy, a very important concept is *yin* and *yang*. There is *yang* in *yin* and there is *yin* in *yang*; there are *yang* and *yin* in *yin*, and there are *yang* and *yin* in *yang*. They complement each other and contradict each other. Their relationship is not dialectic but very complicated. The Chinese tradition is not dialectic but dialogic. Dialectic has a violent tendency. For example, there are the positive and the negative. Only when they are both eradicated can there be harmony, but dialogs enable both sides to enhance each other's characteristics. This is Confucianism as well as the most important view in the discussion in Chinese philosophy since *The Book of Changes* about the *tai* hexagram, which says that harmony comes out of disharmony. Why is it that in the *tai* hexagram, *yin* is above and *yang* below? Many modern scholars, influenced by post-modernism, think that Confucianism, on the epistemological and especially ontological levels, discriminates against women, for it takes *yin* as the feminine. But *yin* in many places does not represent the feminine, such as in the phrases *yinmou* (conspiracy) and *yinxian* (sinister), so I think serious problems exist with this view. Some South Korean scholars, Korean feminists who completely identify themselves with Confucianism, have a view and question much worth our consideration: How do we dispel or eliminate gender from the views of *yin* and *yang* and cosmology? In fact this is not hard to understand: *Yang* is the creative principle and *yin* is the cohesive principle; *yang* is Heaven and *yin* is Earth. When these two principles are employed in the present world, if your superior is a female, then she is *yang* and you are *yin*. When the father is in his forties and fifties, his son in his teens and twenties, the father is *yang* and his son *yin*; however, in ten or twenty years the father will be *yin* and his son *yang*. The relationship between *yin* and *yang* cannot be considered as a static structure, but rather a dynamic process, for *qi* in Confucianism and Chinese traditions is a kind of energy, which is both spiritual and material. In Confucian thought, there is no material completely devoid of spirituality, what we call dead matter, and neither is there any abstract spirit completely devoid of spiritual substance. In this regard, *qi* is the best illustration. Some say that *qi* is a kind of materialism, which is an absurd view. In fact, *qi* is absolutely different from Western materialism. Zhang Zai's *qi* is the concept of the unity of everything between Heaven and Earth; Wang Fuzhi's *qi* is not ordinary material. It is material, but within it there is refined *qi*, spiritual *qi*, and intelligent *qi*, in which the orientation of spirituality is very important. If *yin* and *yang* can be liberated from gender, men may also represent the feminine *dao*. In fact, today we think that the development of Confucianism should represent the feminine *dao*, and not entirely the masculine *dao*, which is the great virtue of the Earth that sustains everything on it.

The emergence of human beings stems from a long process of evolution following the Big Bang. The existence of human beings is made possible because of minerals, plants, and animals. Human beings have an intimate relationship with them. Therefore, we can understand human beings by studying animals, plants, and minerals, for "the differences between animals and human beings are slight." If we try to understand human beings by definitions, such a statement would be an important view in Western philosophy. As far as we are concerned, we appreciate Western philosophy, but meanwhile we need to be aware that it does not enable us to understand the quintessence of our cultural tradition. According to the Greek philosopher Aristotle, human beings are rational animals as well as political animals; in Marxist thought, human beings are animals that employ tools, and if you do not work, you cannot become a human being; in many modern cognitive sciences and other fields, it is believed that human beings are animals that can use symbolic signs; from another perspective, human beings are animals that can use language. These are

some of the very important views developed through scientific rationality. These are all very reasonable, but when we use these, we exhibit a basic methodological presupposition called reductionism, that is, to make a complicated phenomenon simpler, to use a simple phenomenon and to find something with an essential characteristic to prove what it is, and so the general method of thinking is from complexity to simplicity. For example, in terms of games, these are many strategies in chess. However, our Chinese mode of thinking is the mode in the game of go, which goes as follows: The rules are very simple, but as you proceed, the game gets more and more complicated.

As you can see, now the human brain cannot defeat artificial intelligence in the game of chess, but if we use computer to simulate the game of go against the human brain, Mr. Chen-Ning Yang said, I don't know if the next generation would make it, but at least my generation cannot produce the computer that can win. Human life is more like the game of go, starting in a very simple way but getting more and more complicated as life goes on. Thus, we must use the complicated relationship system to understand Confucianism. As far as the basic Confucian view is concerned, a man can be regarded as a complex system. Man has feelings, and feeling is most important factor in Confucian thoughts. I very much appreciate the view of "feeling as the basis and feeling as the subject" proposed by Li Zehou. I may not agree with his view, but I appreciate the way he said it. In human experience, the relationship between feeling and reason is that between sensibility and sense. We hope to have less feeling, but it will inevitably be abundant, and it is bound to be excessive. What about reason? It is bound to be in deficit, and it is never sufficient. We want to use reason to designate a territory for feeling and to understand feeling, but reason is never as abundant as feeling, which is in fact a basic condition of human existence, and thus, feeling is especially important. In addition, human beings are political animals that are not isolated creatures. Since the remote ancient times, there have been social communities where politics inevitably existed. As a result, undoubtedly, human beings are social animals. Meanwhile, they are also historical animals, especially the Chinese people.

In the world, there are civilizations that have the past but no present, such as Egypt and Babylon; there are civilizations that have the present but no past such as Russia and the United States, which do not have long and rich histories. China is an exception: it has both the long and rich past and the present. The Chinese historical memories and consciousness are extremely strong. In addition, if we take a closer look at the oracle bone inscriptions, we find that they are already quite mature written characters, and before these inscriptions, even in the New Stone Age thousands of years ago, there were already earlier written characters which are also quite mature, and we have even longer historical memories. Now, unfortunately, among the Six Classics *The Book of Music* is lost, but we can still find some relevant materials in *The Book of Rites*. *The Book of Changes* as the first of the Six Classics pursues the ultimate human concern, human value, human meaning, and even human religious belief. What is humanity? Humans are not only rational animals, but we also have feelings; humans are not only working animals, but we also have recreation; humans are not only political animals, and many people do not want to be political animals; man is not even a linguistic animal, Bodhidharma being the best example as he faced the wall meditating silently for nine years and became an extraordinary man all the same without speaking. So what is a human being? We are the feeling, political, social, historical and aesthetic animals who seek the ultimate meaning. Our tradition of the Five Classics or Six Classics lets us understand the whole human being: They let us understand the world of feeling in *The Book of Songs*, our ideal politics in *The Book of History*, our sociality in *The Book of Rites*, our historicity in *Spring and Autumn Annals*, our aesthetics

in *The Book of Music*, and our pursuit of metaphysics in *The Book of Changes*.

Just now our host referred to the great contributions to the revival of Confucianism made by the five scholars Xiong Shili, Liang Shuming, Zhang Junmai, He Lin, and Feng Youlan from 1919 to 1949. Another scholar, Ma Yifu, deserves more of our respect as a role model in many aspects. He is a rare master of the ancient Chinese classics who went abroad at a very young age, stayed a year or two in the United States, mastered eight languages, and was the first Chinese to read Marx's *Capital* in the original German language. In 1905, he brought the original version of *Capital* back to China, more than ten years earlier than Li Dazhao. Then he restrained himself, set his mind to learning and made remarkable contributions to the traditional learning of the ancient Chinese classics. He had the following remark: to follow the classics as models. The so-called classics refer to the Five Classics. He used a method, claiming that the humanities, sociology, and the natural sciences are all related to the learning of the classics. Now many people ridicule him, saying that he was too conceited, but if you follow the line of thinking I just mentioned, humanity must consider the whole of human beings, and the Five Classics exactly represent the whole of humanity's values. The humanities, literary histories, and philosophy are the most adequate comprehension of human self-reflection and self-understanding. Humanity must understand itself, and philosophy serves to understand what humanity is, history serves to understand our historical memories, and literature serves to understand our deepest feelings expressed in the finest language. The social sciences, whether sociology, politics, anthropology, psychology, or other fields, serve to understand the various aspects of human beings; the natural sciences such as physics and chemistry in fact also serve to understand the world of human beings. Therefore, we can understand human learning coherently by studying human beings themselves, their sociality, their environment, et cetera. This is convincing, and it is general education truly built on the basis of human orientation.

The man cultivated by learning possesses the consciousness of the true scholar manifested in Mencius' philosophy of the mind. A complete person, a fully developed person must first of all have his own subjectivity. Mencius emphasizes *zi de* (self-possessing) and *da ti* (the great body) which are the Four Incipient Tendencies [of virtue] that can be elaborated as compassion. That is, every person has the sympathy of *ren*. This is the great part of one's person. Meanwhile, *xiao ti* (the small body) refers to the nature of having appetite for food and sex. On this Confucianism is very explicit. Why is man characterized by the nature of loving food and sex? We may not have noticed that in *The Analects* the statement appears twice that "I have never seen a person who is fond of virtue as much as sexual attraction." The pursuit of sex is a natural urge while the pursuit of morality requires introspection and effort. Likewise, it is natural that parents love their children even when you don't want them to, while a child has to be taught to be filial and may not acquire it until he himself has children and knows how to repay his parents. Human beings are different from animals in food and sex in that humans have undergone transformations. As a result, we must have self-possession and must build up our own inner resources of value; otherwise, we will not be Confucians or Confucian scholars. Of course undoubtedly, we must have sociality, that is, people-oriented thought, including scholar-officials, farmers, artisans and merchants. To accuse Confucianism of favoring agriculture over commerce is groundless. It is the School of Legalists that truly favors agriculture over commerce, for the society as the Legalists understand is for agriculture and war, which is to cultivate land and fight battles, so two kinds of people are the most important: farmers and soldiers. Businessmen are of little value. Scholars are even worse, for they do not observe

regulations, talk freely and affect social stability and unity, and in short, are no good, and therefore they must be executed and their books must be burnt.

I recommend you take a closer look at the part of Xu Xing in the *Mencius*, which discusses the division of labor. In Mencius' thoughts, there must be farmers in any society, otherwise daily necessities cannot be guaranteed; there must be workers, otherwise manufactured goods cannot be guaranteed; there must be businessmen, otherwise goods cannot be exchanged. In the whole book Mencius tried to expound why there should be scholars like himself who do no farming, manufacturing or commerce but who still need others' respect, patronage and certain social status. Here is his simple reply: Man is not an animal but has moral needs and pursues values, and the society needs the kind of people who can communicate between the ruler and the ruled. He even said, "The ruler and ruled merge with Heaven and Earth, so how can we say that scholars are of less importance!" We need these people who create value and meaning, and make strong criticism about politics, society and culture for the happiness of the populace. In addition, these people have other important resources which serve the purpose of the *tiandao* (the Way of Heaven). Therefore, here we touch upon how Confucian thoughts are connected with ecological awareness.

The connection is of four aspects, each of which is inseparable, and each of which is independent but also needs to be connected. Otherwise it would not be Confucianism. The first aspect concerns the matter of the individual. How should an individual behave, be a kind, trustworthy, beautiful person, and always try to improve oneself in the development of personal integrity? The second aspect concerns the relationship between the individual and others. How should the individual and society interact with each other in a wholesome manner? The third aspect is whether or not the whole mankind can maintain sustainable harmony with nature. The last and the most crucial aspect is whether our human hearts and the Way of Heaven can complement each other. Nowadays, when we try to understand Confucian thoughts, we usually think that the relationships between different people, man and society, man and nature encompass the whole of Confucianism. The fact is that they do not encompass the whole because one most basic question is that in the harmony between human nature and the Way of Heaven, there should be not only subjectivity, sociality, and nature, but also transcendence. The traditional Chinese thoughts are much influenced by the Confucian ideas with the emphasis on *tian*, *di*, *jun*, *qin*, and *shi* (Heaven, Earth, sovereignty, kinship, and teacher). *Tian* is the ultimate source of creation and value; *di* is nature; *jun* is our country and our nation; *qin* is our family; *shi* is our education. All five must be equally taken care of. On top of its characteristics of subjectivity, sociality, historicity, and transcendence, Confucianism indeed has the bearing of so-called "opening a peaceful and prosperous world for the future generations." Let me quote an African proverb to express the spirit in the best way, "The earth is not the wealth that our ancestors left us; the earth is the resource that our numerous offspring entrust us to well preserve."

I place this idea in the ecological awareness of Confucianism, deeply rooted in the Confucian self-development of interpersonal relationships, social harmony, long and sustainable relationships with nature, and the complementary relationship with the Way of Heaven. In *Mencius*, the view is proposed that "now that I am in possession of everything, it is my biggest pleasure to examine myself for my sincerity." If you do not try your best to understand him, you may become a self-conceited and narrow-minded anthropocentric person. Mencius said:

When you exert your heart-mind to the fullest, you become aware of your nature. When

you are aware of your nature, you begin to understand the Mandate of Heaven. By retaining your heart-mind and cultivating your nature, you are serving Heaven. Never change your attitude whether your life is long or short. It is through awaiting whatever is to befall you with cultivating your person that you stand firm on your proper destiny.

Why could Mencius propose exerting one's heart-mind to the fullest, being aware of one's nature, and getting to know the Mandate of Heaven? His theoretical basis is from the statement in *The Doctrine of the Mean* that "the Mandate of Heaven is human nature." Heaven confers human nature on us, and our human nature not only comes from our parents, but also from Heaven, so through our understanding of ourselves, we can understand Heaven. It is said in *The Doctrine of the Mean*:

Only the most genuine man can make the fullest development of his nature. When he can make the fullest development of his nature, then he can help others make the fullest development of their nature. When others can make the fullest development of their nature, then they can help everything make the fullest development of its nature. When everything can make the fullest development of its nature, then he can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth. When he can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth, he may together with Heaven and Earth form a ternion.

When this tradition was passed down to Song and Ming Confucianism, Cheng Hao has a view very much worth our attention. He said that if we want to understand *ren*, we'd better start with a statement in Chinese medicine, that is, *ma mu buren* (numb and callous to everything).

Nowadays, we have already admitted that our society is numb and callous to everything. In Chinese medicine, *ma mu buren* refers to the stagnation of blood and *qi*, resulting in the paralysis of limbs, and therefore such a condition is called numbness and paralysis due to stagnation. In the old tradition, an adult should retain a child-like heart-mind. This child-like heart-mind is what Taoism refers to a child's infinite potential and his intuitive response to new things. A truly great person will not lose such a heart; otherwise, he will become an egomaniac. The concept of *ma mu buren* demonstrates an essential human quality: sensitivity, that is, man must have feeling. Man without feeling is *ma mu buren*. This sensitive feeling enables one to truly connect with others. The others are very important conditions for our existence. You do not consider the others as outsiders who pose as competition to you. The others may be your parents, brothers and sisters, colleagues, or even strangers. You must gradually expand your scope to include various kinds of others, and that is the basic idea of the love of *ren*. It is to require you to be so with the nature of *ren*, not just for the sake of implementation, for yourself, or for your society. In between there is the process of human evolution, the creation of human beings and how human beings have become what they are today.

What has been said above also concerns the very deep Confucian understanding of Heaven: Heaven is omnipresent and omniscient, but it is not omnipotent, and therefore humans have responsibilities. As the ancients said, "Heaven creates and humans completes." Heaven and man are very close in relationship, responding to each other and interacting with each other. There is the idea of the "unity between Heaven and human." With this idea, people are the observers, admirers, and participants of Heaven. The cosmos has become what it is today because we human beings have participated in its creation together. The most obvious phenomenon in modern times is that humans are no longer the product of the process of evolution but humans directly influence the process of evolution. However, what is frightening and lamentable is that our human participation is all negative, and we have not positively promoted the creation by Heaven

and the completion by humans. On the contrary, what we have participated in is the contamination of air, water, and soil, which should not have been contaminated. Human beings have the potential to become the participants and joint creators of the evolution of the cosmos, but meanwhile they are also the most terrible destroyer, whose destruction is unimaginable compared to that of any other animal or thing.

On the original basis, in Confucianism there emerged a belief which later became a common belief of the Chinese “Disasters sent by Heaven can still be escaped; but when disasters are made by humans, there is no hope to survive.” The inheritance of the idea of that “the human will conquer Heaven” has profound significance. “The great virtue of Heaven and Earth is called growth,” constant growth, which is the value we human beings grant to Heaven. Nature is not simply Heaven. Heaven is constant creation and constant value, but it often comes together with various destructions of life and natural disasters such as earthquakes, violent storms, floods, et cetera, which in the Confucian view are not the true essential qualities of Heaven. Confucians believe that Heaven possesses the virtue of promoting life and growth but not destruction. The creativity represented by the Way of Qian and Kun in the divinatory symbols goes as follows, “As Heaven maintains its vigor through movements, an exemplary person should constantly strive for self-perfection. As Earth’s condition is receptive devotion, an exemplary person should hold the outer world with thick virtue.”

When there appear many disasters from Heaven, facing such disasters, how should we deal with them? Our ancient ancestors have given us some very profound messages. In the world mythology and cosmic mythology, when disasters occur as rampant floods, the Jewish tradition solves the problem with Noah’s Ark; there is also a legendary flood in India; the flood in China is curbed by Great Yu, which represents the paradigm example of the human conquering Heaven. To transform flood into a mechanism of irrigation for fertile fields is to implement the Way on behalf of Heaven, which is the way to achieve creation by Heaven and completion by human. As we all know, Great Yu’s success is first of all a scientific spirit. He did not follow his father’s old mode of blocking the flood. That is in defiance of science and nature, which is bound to fail. He spent several years observing and analyzing the causes, and understanding the landforms and the flow of water. Despite the lack of modern technology, with a sacrificing spirit and personal charisma, passing by his home three times without entering it, he was able to rally over three hundred thousand people to solve the problem with all their joint efforts. After thirteen years of effort, by way of complying with the law of nature, they gradually made the best of the circumstances and curbed the flood. Great Yu’s success in curbing the flood demonstrates human creativity, human power, and the culture human self-construction and creation. Consequently, the meaning of “human conquering Heaven” is not to let human beings change nature, but to enable human beings to achieve the creation by Heaven and completion by humans.

As you all know very well, we can tackle many natural calamities, but now there are two problems in the world that we human beings cannot tackle, which might be the two main forces that can wipe out the human species from the earth. One is sudden death, that is, the threat of nuclear wars; the other is slow suicide, that is, the deterioration of the ecological environment. What has made us what we are today, in essence, can be considered in view of what Cheng Hao said “men of great virtue are in unity with everything between Heaven and Earth” and the saying of *ma mu buren*. In addition, what is very illuminating and important to me is what Zhang Zai said, “Heaven is my father, and Earth is my mother. Small and insignificant as I am, in between I feel this is my sphere with warmth, for everything between Heaven and Earth is my body; what rules Heaven

and earth is my nature, all human beings are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions.” I have a friend much older than I who was a Japanese scholar named Okada Takehiko, extremely well versed in the study of Confucianism. Before he died at the age of 90, he wrote a very short article. Now I want to have it translated into Chinese, English, and Korean and have it published simultaneously. The article is titled On Worshipping Matter, calling us to respect matter. He combined Wang Yangming’s philosophy of the mind of the later Chinese Confucianism with the aesthetic concern about nature of the Japanese Shinto.

In the end, I would like to talk about Wang Yangming’s statement that “great people are in unity with everything between Heaven and Earth.” Some of Wang Yangming’s remarkable thoughts are in the dialogs and letters recorded in *Instructions for Practical Living*. For example, A Letter to Gu Dongqiao was definitely written by Wang himself and is truly remarkable. In his later work, *Da Xue Wen (Interpretation of The Great Learning)*, he explained his teaching, “Great men are in unity with everything between Heaven and Earth.” Right afterwards he said, “This is not what I sedulously strive to do.” It is but our ideal, which is in fact our human nature, shared not just by great people and small people but every human being capable of being in unity with everything between Heaven and Earth. Then he started to explain that, for example, if I see a child about to fall into a well, I will have a shock which proves that my heart is connected with the child’s because the child is a human being. Then he gave another example from the *Mencius*. When King Xuan of the state of Qi was about to sacrifice an ox, he felt some pity and let it go free. Later when Mencius asked King Xuan, he replied, “I have some pity in my heart.” Mencius said, “Since you feel pity for the ox, you should also have such compassion for humans, but in practice you show your pity for the ox, but not for humans. Obviously, the truth is that you are not willing to do it, not that you are unable to do it.”

Students from Peking University take a special liking to cats. They’d like to adopt every cat, and perhaps three or five students would adopt one cat, so the cats on Peking University’s campus are very happy, but perhaps there might be very fierce competition among the fellow students. Hence, is it definite that one can expand one’s compassion from the near to the far? In fact it is not so simple. However, undoubtedly, people have natural sympathy for animals. They are also living beings. But what about grass and trees? Now when you see the trees cut down, do you have a feeling of resentment? If you have, then you have built up connections with trees and grass. Grass has life too, but if you see rocks destroyed, what would you think? For example, recently in Guangxi and other areas we see mountains and hills become bare because of mining, and well forested mountains blasted, or whole old buildings and ancient walls pulled down. Will you tolerate all this destruction? Thus, Wang Yangming said that if you have sympathy for children, oxen, plants, or objects, then you build up connections with them. This generation on earth, thanks to the advancement of science and thanks to astronauts, can see the panorama of the earth with our bare eyes, a view which Hegel could not see, Einstein could not see, and Confucius and Mencius could not see either. The whole earth is within our vision with all its vegetation, minerals, water resources, soil, and air, and we can use data to demonstrate how much energy we still have and how many resources have been severely damaged. Now we can know all these facts.

In fact, from the Confucian point of view, ecological awareness is not very far-sighted or extraordinary wisdom but only common sense. Confucianism has a most profound belief: The highest value and the deepest truth must take effect in our daily life; otherwise it will not be of truly deep and authoritative value. Hence, ecological awareness and

the Confucian humanistic spirit, especially the spirit of human orientation, are closely connected. I myself, in over twenty years' of dialogs with Christianity, Buddhism and Islam, find that our Confucian tradition has such resources. A truly conscientious and rational Christian theologian today, with all his efforts, should not only strive for the celestial Heaven but also offer sufficient love and concern for our earth. Hence there is a theologian who said, "I don't want to be a theologian anymore; I want to be a geologist. My central concern is for the earth, not for God." This is a very profound idea regarding love and concern for the earth. A prominent Buddhist monk should not say that what he will teach people today is to wait for Sukhavati and wait on the other shore, and that this world is in nature the dusty world, and the dusty world is contamination. No, it should not be so. Now the main trend of Buddhism is Buddhism of the human world, and what we seek is Pure Land in the human world. Hence, loving earth is no longer an ethical condition that we can choose, but ethics itself, that is, the presupposed prerequisite. The Confucian ethic is the ethic of virtue and of responsibility as well as the ethic of care and concern, which is an indispensable and important intellectual resource for present humankind and the world's citizens. Why? Because we can choose to be Christians, Buddhists, Moslems, Marxists and so on, but we cannot choose not to be humans. Whether we wish to or not, we are still humans, and now one of the most serious and biggest problems we humankind face is how to care about and love the earth.

Thank you, everybody!

↳ besides our next and myself.

(This speech is scribed down by the Confucius Academy according to a recording on July 21, 2013, compiled and proofread by Wang Zheng, a Post Doctor from the Institute for Advanced Humanistic Studies, PKU, and finalized by myself. I would like to express my gratitude to my friends from the Confucius Academy and Dr. Wang, and I shall take the responsibility for all the remaining errors, if any.)

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