Appendix
Liberalism and Confucianism: A Disputatious Dialogue between Andrew Brennan and Ruiping Fan

Introduction

What follows is a critical examination, in dialogue form, of the question whether a communitarian ethic such as Confucianism can be made compatible with liberal individualism. It presents, in microcosm, a case for the claim that distinct configurations of values cannot readily be merged with each other. Further, it reveals how convergence in judgments over the rightness or wrongness of particular matters is compatible with profound disagreement on the basic commitments which underwrite such convergence. It presents evidence for believing that two incommensurate value perspectives can provide a basis for everyday communication and agreement while being incapable of being united within some more general, unifying perspective. If the case made through the dialogue is plausible, then there may be substance in the idea that “western” and “Asian” values cannot be readily assimilated within a single, all-embracing value perspective.

In the course of the discussion, the liberal voice – Dr. Lib (defended by Andrew Brennan) – attempts to persuade the Confucian – Mr. Con (defended by Ruiping Fan) – that a rapprochement between the two positions is possible. After reviewing some of the disadvantages faced by Confucian and individualistic societies, respectively, the liberal side attempts to suggest that a combination of the two views might produce an ethic which improves on both Confucian and liberal-individual morality. Mr. Con resists this “imperialist” conclusion, insisting that from his perspective any combination of the different positions would lose the core values upon which each is founded, and arguing instead that “liberal Confucianism” would be no more than a modified liberalism, not a form of Confucianism at all. In the final part of the dialogue, the participants consider whether their conversation may have been part of a transformative and interpretive process in which each side has subtly shifted its understanding of itself and the other. However, neither a Gadamerian account of conversation as transformation, nor a Quinean account of translation as indeterminate, is able to bring the two parties into agreement that they have been exploring a position that merges Confucianism and liberalism. While Dr. Lib remains moderately optimistic that liberalism, as he understands it, can incorporate elements of Confucian familialism without losing its core commitments, Mr. Con is skeptical that...
any “merging” between the positions can occur, although he maintains there will be benefits from respectful and sympathetic interaction between the two perspectives. The dialogue restricts its attention largely to philosophical issues, illustrated by reference to questions about arranged marriage and female suicide in China. Nonetheless, it is intended to resonate with contemporary reflections on such matters as the clash of cultures or civilizations and to reveal some of the problems encountered in the search for universal agreement on matters of ethics and politics. ¹

The Scene

Mr. Con is walking by a river one day, when he encounters Dr. Lib fishing. After watching for a while, Mr. Con compliments Dr. Lib and an exchange of pleasantries follows. They decide to sit down to drink some tea from the flask Dr. Lib has brought.

The Dialogue

Mr. Con: This tea is indeed pleasant, just as it is delightful to encounter a Western scholar who comes from afar to fish in the local river.

Dr. Lib: As you saw, I was trying to glorify what was good in my technique while hiding the bad. You see, even as a liberal, I am willing to follow some of your Master Kung’s own teaching.

Mr. Con (giggles, and chokes on the tea): Very droll. You would have been a good student of his had you not been unsympathetically critical of tradition. But you have failed to understand that human values cannot be defended without appeal to tradition. Just as you respect me as your elder, you ought to respect the wisdom of the established Confucian tradition.

Dr. Lib: Actually, I do have some faith in tradition. You know, the values central to liberalism are ones that emerged from a European tradition which combined elements of Christianity, especially the Golden Rule, with a high regard for individuality, freedom and dignity. Despite the disagreements nowadays about ethics and politics – when it’s right to go to war, arguments about abortion, euthanasia, and so on, there’s an enormous amount of agreement about basic ethical issues in all the countries that call themselves liberal democracies.

Mr. Con: You are partly right, my doctor, and partly wrong. There may be agreement at formal levels – such as about the need for justice, fairness, the importance of maintaining appropriate standards. But there is no consensus at any level about

¹See, for example, Huntington (1996). We have no complaint with the UNESCO universal ethics project when it claims that there are “universal human ethical aspirations”, but the present dialogue is meant to encourage skepticism that there will ever be agreement on fundamental universal principles of ethics. See http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001126/112681eb.pdf, accessed February 2009.
the matters of substance. There is no consensus at the international or national level. There is no consensus even at a local level in many so-called liberal democracies – dissenters about important ethical and political issues are always there. This is because the matters of substance are entrenched in diverse traditions, and liberalism is only one of them.

**Dr. Lib:** Of course there are dissenters everywhere, which is why liberalism is so widely supported in the globalized world. The liberal accepts that different people hold different conceptions of the good even within individual societies. The liberal insists that all individuals have a right to their preferred ways of life. Of course, this does not mean that anything goes, that good is entirely relative to point of view. As Richard Rorty – among others – has pointed out, pluralism should not be confused with relativism. According to him, the difference between philosophical pluralism and cultural relativism is the difference between a kind of tolerant pragmatic approach on the one hand, and a really inappropriate, and foolish, failure to stand up for what is right on the other. Liberalism supports pluralism, letting Confucians live alongside Christians, Muslims alongside atheists, without imposing some overarching standard on everyone.

**Mr. Con:** I don’t think we disagree about the need for tolerant and pragmatic approaches to resolving disagreements. Actually, all traditions carry their own packages of moral substance for social practice: they encourage certain characters, tolerate certain behaviors, and prohibit other conducts. So, let me point out a problem with your general claim on behalf of liberal pluralism. Liberals regard all other moralities as particular and parochial, but take their own moral principles as universally justified, ready for export to liberal and non-liberal societies alike. However, ethical substance must be understood in much more local terms than general liberal principles predicate, namely, the nuances of the particular ways of life – such as the rituals (li) of Confucian societies – lived by local people in specific contexts. In short, I don’t think liberalism has the moral resources to deal with Confucian disagreements with its general principles.

**Dr. Lib:** I fear you exaggerate the problems, just as you exaggerate the extent of substantial moral disagreement. In any case how can you seriously maintain that liberalism lacks the capacity for coping with ethical disagreements? You are well aware that the leading liberal thinker of the late 20th century, John Rawls, famously proposed a theory of justice to allow for the co-existence, under a fair system, of groups who profoundly disagree with one another. Whether you apply the theory at the international, or at the local, level, it allows for diversity and pluralism. What better method could there be for ensuring that each

---

2 Rorty actually expresses the distinction as “the difference between pragmatically justified tolerance and mindless stupidity” (1999, p. 276).

3 Rawls envisaged “a stable and just society of free and equal citizens profoundly divided by reasonable though incompatible religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines” (1993, p. xviii).

4 Rawls claims that his theory of justice permits “a diversity of doctrines and the plurality of conflicting, and indeed incommensurable, conceptions of the good affirmed by the members of existing democratic societies” (1985, p. 225).
individual is able to live up – or indeed down – to whatever religion, morality, or a way of life she or he wants?

Mr. Con: Aha, you also know the problems with this theory as well as I do. Because it puts no emphasis on the substance of any ethics, religions, or ways of life, Rawlsian liberalism focuses ultimately on the individual as in authority to decide about issues of value. That inevitably results in emphasizing one special value – that of promoting individual sovereignty over oneself, together with self-fulfillment and self-satisfaction. What this emphasis on independence, autonomous choice, and self-determination means is that people are disconnected from any structures carrying a particular tradition and claiming special communal authority. If liberalism were successfully exported to a Confucian society, the very fabric of the society would be destroyed. In a liberal culture, one should seek one’s “own” values and make independent decisions according to one’s “own” view. A young person would be ridiculed for consulting with parents for a marriage arrangement or with teachers for a career plan.

Dr. Lib: Many people in Europe and the United States consult their friends and families, their parents and teachers over matters of career, marriage, medical treatments and so on. I remember asking my teachers – at school and at university – for help in choosing a career. Of course, consulting is not submitting. Liberals would object to people having to submit to marriages they don’t want, being forced into careers that they have no interest in, and being made to undergo medical procedures that their family chooses for them. So the point is that the individual should be left as the final authority to make her or his own choices, with all kinds of consultation encouraged. I would be surprised if you support female genital mutilation – still practised in many cultures today – simply on the grounds that families approved of it. Certainly if you believe girls should be made to submit to such practices, then your Confucianism is considerably less humane than my liberalism.

Mr. Con: It is tactful of you to mention genital mutilation rather than, say, foot-binding – a real Chinese case – to make your point. However, I don’t think one should pick out an odd or accidental example to attack the probity of a moral tradition. Bizarre cases occur in every tradition. Only focusing on such cases to evaluate a tradition would shortchange, mistreat and even distort the comprehensive ethical structure and rationality of the tradition. For example, the Chinese case of female foot-binding involved sophisticated esthetical, sociological and historical issues in addition to the issue of the approval or disapproval of the family. Most importantly, the fact that Confucian scholars were largely silent on the custom does not mean that Confucianism espouses it in principle. No doubt, the

---

5The custom of foot-binding most probably took place in the Song dynasty (960–1278) and lasted until the early 20th century. See Gao (1995). The tiny femal feet produced by binding were generally taken to be a manifestation of femal beauty for a long time. They might be analogous to the “tight lacing” generated by squeezing the waist in the “Victorian corset” in Western history.

6Some Confucian scholars did object to the foot-binding custom. For example, one of the representative Neo-Confucian scholars in the Song dynasty, Cheng Yi (程頤, 1033–1107), insistently
Confucian family is in authority in determining its members’ important issues, such as education, marriage, and career. But the family is not an authority on moral standards – it is the entire Confucian community, the tradition as a whole, and the Confucian sages in particular that are the real authority carrying the Confucian moral standards, regardless of whether particular families follow them or not. It is a distortion to think that Confucianism would support anything insofar as it is approved of by the family.

**Dr. Lib:** All right – I admit my argument was ad hominem – the fact that some Australian liberals do not object to kangaroo hunting or massive clearance of native vegetation does not mean that liberalism in principle espouses hunting and land clearing. But I am intrigued to know how Confucianism can limit family determination. Can you explain just where in the Confucian tradition we find protection for the individual against harms that may be inflicted by the family? Actually, since – like many other traditions – Confucianism has been highly patriarchal, I should perhaps ask for evidence that Confucianism can deliver real protection of the individual from overbearing males – whether fathers, rulers, elder brothers, or teachers. The point is that foot-binding, like genital mutilation, is something that causes harm – physical and psychological – to the individual. And if liberal democracies can claim anything, it is their commitment to protecting the individual from these kinds of harm.

**Mr. Con:** Just a moment, my doctor! Let’s clarify your liberal point first. From my understanding, Confucians should object to foot-binding, no matter whether it is voluntarily chosen by women or imposed on them. This is because, from a Confucian moral view, foot-binding causes unjustifiable harm to the women. However, you, as a liberal, would hold a different position. Although foot-binding causes harm to women, you would not object to it if it is performed voluntarily by individual women, just as you would not object to women wearing harmful, high-heel shoes today. According to your liberal view, the individual is in authority to decide any value or choose any act as long as it does not harm others. So foot-binding would not be a problem for you if it is voluntarily chosen. What you really oppose is the foot-binding imposed on the child by the parents. So your liberal view is based on a sharp individualist distinction between “self” and “other” concerning who is in authority to make a decision, regardless of whether that decision is normal or good. From the Confucian view, this individualist distinction, together with its basic dichotomy between choice and circumstance, is a grave distortion of the nature of human lives. For Confucians, all humans are born into naturally “given” roles and relationships, such as father,

rejected it. Even after his death, no woman in his family clan subjected to the custom for several generations. See Gao (1995, p. 18).

7 Strange as it may seem, some women return to foot-binding and waist-squeezing in a contemporary Western “feminist empowerment” movement, the so-called “modern primitives,” for esthetical and other interests. See online [http://foottalk.blogspot.com/2006/04/modern-primitives-foot-binding-and.html](http://foottalk.blogspot.com/2006/04/modern-primitives-foot-binding-and.html) (access February 2009). Mr. Con would not support such movement, either voluntarily or nonvoluntarily.
mother, son, daughter, brother, sister. . . . You became your parents’ child and your sister’s brother not through your individual choice or contract. Rather, these roles are naturally attached to or supervene on you – whether you agreed to them or not. And they generate natural “sympathetic” obligations on you – whether you find them burdensome or not.

Dr. Lib: Yes, I can sympathize – so to speak – with that. If we look for parallels in Western thinking, we can say that Confucianism is more Humean than Hobbesian. I always thought the Song Neo-Confucian Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130–1200), as well as the classical master Mencius, had a rather Humean view – that we are born with a certain natural sympathy, a mechanism which is triggered by contact with people, especially those closest to us. For the Confucians, self-cultivation would be a means of nurturing that affection so that it could spread out beyond the family, and result in a more general altruism and benevolence.

Mr. Con: (chuckling) That’s right, although as a liberal I don’t suppose you would be a strong supporter of Master Zhu’s rewriting of Mr. Lü’s village compacts. Forgive me, my doctor – I should not engage in *ad hominems* after criticising you for making them! Back to my argument, then. Given the existence of families into which we are naturally born and the circumstances we did not choose, virtues and obligations arise from the very soil in which we find ourselves planted. For instance, the father should have a father’s natural virtues (such as kindness (慈) to his children), and the child should have a child’s natural virtues (such as filial piety (孝) to its parents). This is the Confucian principle of the “rectification of names.” “Father” and “child” are not just biologically descriptive terms; to be a father is already to be in a role to which responsibilities attach. A good father is not just one who is biologically fit, but one who fathers well in a moral sense.

Dr. Lib: I am not so sure about this. I might argue, after all, that “father” is a biologically descriptive term, and you and I simply have different moral expectations about fathers. However, I would not want to defend such a simplistic claim – and the fact-value distinction on which it depends – if you put pressure on me. Like you, I think the term “father” denotes more than a biological category, hence we can sensibly talk about the duties, cares, and importance of fathers in a way that goes far beyond their biological roles. So let me grant that when we talk about

---

8 Mr. Con is here referring to Zhu Xi’s *Zeng su Lü shi xiang yue* (*The Lü family compact, with additions and deletions, 襄氏鄉約*). The Lü brothers’ compact set out orderly regulations for conducting village life according to Confucian precepts. Zhu Xi’s extension of these was rather more hierarchical than the original, requiring that the compact leader be senior in years, and well-educated, and that the leader’s assistants should likewise be well-educated people. See Übelhör (1993). Thanks to Harald Böckman for this reference.

9 “Tzu-lu (諸儒) said, ‘If the Lord of Wei entrusts enforcement of the correct to you, what will you do first?’ ‘Correct names, surely,’ the Master said. . . . ‘If names are incorrect, saying is out of accord. If saying is out of accord, tasks are not fulfilled. . . .’” (*Analects*, 13:3).

10 For considerations against putting much weight on the supposed distinction between facts and values, see Griffin (1996).
“fathers” we are talking about people with moral roles to play, although of course I don’t think we will share a view on just what those roles should be.

Mr. Con: Thank you. Now let me move to the main point. Distinct human traditions hold different philosophical anthropologies. These include different views regarding what proper roles individuals hold as well as what the basic entity is in human society, depending on their mutually incompatible understandings of the nature of human life. Since Confucians recognize the profound human need of the interdependence of the family rather than the independence of the self, they see the nature of human lives as family-role-based and thereby relationalistic rather than individualistic. While liberal individualists take the individual, and only the individual, as a basic entity of society, Confucians see the family also in that place. Such different metaphysical views lead to different, incommensurable moral standards regarding who is in authority on issues of value. For Confucians, although individual interests are taken into account, the family as a whole holds the natural obligation and authority to work out its members’ marriage arrangements and career choices. The ideal is to integrate individual interests and family values into a harmonious system. Accordingly, Confucians cannot accept the cardinal value of liberty or autonomy as self-determination. Instead, their cardinal value is family-determination. This constitutes a fundamental disagreement between liberals and Confucians in ethics and politics.

Dr. Lib: This is quite right. The self-governing individual and the harmonious family – these are the two core ideas around which two different accounts of human well-being are built. Many people who are not Confucians can understand the benefits and security that accrue when we belong to a caring and supportive family. On the other hand, the liberal recognizes that family harmony is an ideal that is not always achieved, or is achieved at too high a cost to the individual family members. So we need to distinguish the ideal from reality, and consider the best ethical and political means for protecting the individual from an abusive family, the family from an abusive local government, and so on. One moral theorist once remarked that we need ethics because things often have a tendency to go badly. Confucianism and liberalism are two of the many attempts to prevent things going too badly. However, if you force me to choose between the two perspectives, my choice would be for the one which respects and protects the individual most. Is this what you mean when you say that we liberals take self-determination as a cardinal value?

Mr. Con: You have hit the nail on the head. Actually I disagree strongly with the idea that liberalism can best protect the individual from abuses. The truth of the matter is that a liberal ethical and political environment also harms the individual, for example, by not protecting him or her from self-damaging behavior. Humans are not born to be capable of rational choices – they have to be trained, disciplined, and cultivated in order to act well. That is why Confucians recognize the importance of the rituals (li, 礼), the communally accepted good practices, to be educated by families for their children to observe in order to achieve the good life. Now the liberal self-determination for the individual is acquired at the cost of reduced freedom of families to do what is best for their members.
In an ideal liberal society, parents are not supposed to cultivate their children with their own faiths or values. Rather, they should provide multiple options to their children and encourage them to make their own choices and shape their own ways of life – whatever they may be (Buchanan and Brock, 1989, pp. 227–228). Children then confidently announce to their parents: “It is my right to do x, even if x is wrong!” Consequently, individual self-determination is often achieved at the cost of reduced freedom for families to do what is best for their members. You notice the evils of foot-binding in my traditional society or genital mutilation in other societies, but have not mentioned obvious evils in current liberal society: broken families, homeless vagrancy, loneliness, drug addiction, sexual promiscuity, alcoholism, and hooliganism. . . . Many secondary schools now have a difficulty functioning as effective educational institutions given the high levels of misconduct, violence, and drug use. My point is that these are not simply accidents, but reflections – so I would argue – of what you called the focus on the individual as the moral center: families are restricted from joining the decision-making of their individual members and so fail to offer effective assistance in their self-cultivation and development.

Dr. Lib: Hold on, hold on, my friend. I think I may be able to sharpen the point, or at least some of the points, you may be making. Let us pretend that each of us wants to focus primarily on one moral center. For me, as a liberal, the primary focus is on the individual, the center of beliefs and desires, surrounded by other similar centers. Society, for me, is a collection of such individuals, all equal in value, all with a right to self-determination, to education, to competition for office, to mobility, even – if they wish – to cut themselves off from their families. For you, let us suppose, the primary focus is the family, not the individual. The family is the center within which new life emerges, is cared for, is educated, and also in which people are cared for when they are young, distressed, ill or aged. The family may give stability to the life of the individual, but does so by drawing on forms of hierarchy and authority that are alien to the liberal. While the liberal seeks to maximize the autonomy of the individual, the Confucian might be thought to aim at retaining the autonomy of the family. The focus on these two different moral centers, in short, will inevitably involve support for rather different sets of underlying principles. Is that a good way of putting the matter?

Mr. Con: If we stick for a moment to your pretence, then yes – this is just how the matter stands. There are two sharply different types of autonomy: autonomy of the individual and autonomy of the family (Fan, 1997). Individual autonomy, you see, has its price. In the liberal state, families are discouraged from protecting, much less cultivating, their children from self-abuse. An American woman told me that she wished her parents had stopped her from getting cohabited at the age

11Meanwhile, children do not have a moral obligation to take care of their elderly parents in need. This is because, according to the liberal view, the parent-child relation is at best a friendship relation based on voluntary assistance to each other, and is at worst an ill-grounded contract relation, one whose terms do not include the requirement of looking after the elderly parents (see English, 1979; Daniels, 1988).
of fifteen, so that she could have at least finished her middle school! In Confucian states, however, individuals are discouraged from abusing themselves by family pressures generated by shared family decision-making on important individual issues. Since liberalism fails to recognize the depth of the interdependence of human lives in the family, it abandons the effective familist ways of protecting the individual from a possibly abusive self, overplaying the hand of protecting the individual from a possibly abusive family. The result is a soaring amount of broken and violent families which in turn abuse individuals, especially children, both physically and psychologically, in severe extents in modern liberal societies.

Dr. Lib: Mmmhhhh... You are right in one important respect. This is that we often see the blight in other societies while being blind to the diseases in our own. Moreover, our favored theories of politics and ethics are often silent on their undesirable effects. Although I am very aware of the possibility of coercion of the individual under Confucianism, it was not until I talked to you that I became aware of how a liberal society could be regarded as coercing the family by the state! Since the family is not the moral center on which liberal theory focuses, this kind of coercion is often hidden from discussions of justice, freedom, and autonomy. But then, I suggest, a parallel point applies to your own theory. Since the individual is not at the center of our crude version of Confucianism, then his or her coercion is largely invisible within Confucian societies. Given these blind-spots, should we not, each on our own side, try to become aware of what is more visible, and of what is less visible, from our own theoretical points of view?

Mr. Con: Of course we should. But the issue is deeper than that. Perhaps, at this point, we should first clarify a basic difference between liberalism and Confucianism – a difference that is involved in our dialogue but is not clearly spelled out. The difference, as I see it, is this. Liberalism is ethical individualism, which holds that only individuals ultimately count, while Confucianism is ethical familism, which holds that both individuals and families ultimately count. It is necessary to note that Confucianism gives weight to individual interests or values, such as individual life, enjoyment, and preference-satisfaction. At the same time, Confucianism also holds that there are intrinsic family values, such as the integrity, continuity, and prosperity of the family. These are holistic family interests and cannot be reduced to individual life, enjoyment, or preference-satisfaction. For Confucians, individuals should not purpue their individual interests in separation from the family values. Instead, they should set out to seek a harmonious unity of individual and family values and strive to have both of them gratified. That is why, as you know, Confucianism emphasizes virtue cultivation through ritual observation, in which shared family determination plays an essential function. In contrast, liberalism only focuses on individual interests.

12 In the dialogue, the terms “familism” and “familist” are used to refer to moral views in which the family unit (however demarcated) has a special role to play. This has nothing to do with the use of “familism” to refer to the 16th century religious sect “das Haus der Liebe” or “family of love” in the West.
It takes family values as nothing but the sum total of individual interests – accordingly, the family, as somewhat instrumentally useful, is only a contract-based, “artificial” institution that is subject to reshaping, revision, dissolution, or rejection solely depending on relevant individuals’ desires or wishes.\(^\text{13}\) Compared to the two-dimensioned Confucian ethics, liberal ethics is one-sided, incomplete and imbalanced.

**Dr. Lib:** Thank you for the clarification. But as a liberal, I cannot conceive that there could, ultimately, be any intrinsic family values that transcend individual values, given that the family is composed of individuals. If the integrity, continuity, and prosperity of the family contribute to individual dignity, liberty, equality, or enjoyment, they are certainly instrumentally valuable. But if they infringe upon individual wellbeing, why should they still be preserved as values? “The harmonious unity of individual interests and family values” sounds beautiful, but I am more interested in knowing the real Confucian approaches to their tensions and conflicts. In order to realize a balanced ethics, what else can be better than treating every individual as an equal end, having mutual respect, peaceful negotiation and eventually self-determination to be secured in society, as liberal ethics proposes? So I have to reject your claim that “liberal ethics is one-sided, incomplete and imbalanced.”

**Mr. Con:** A balanced ethics cannot be an individualist ethics. The family is not a political unit based on individual contracts. On the contrary, the existence and flourishing of each member is inseparable from the continuity, prosperity and integrity of the family. The liberal political principle of self-determination prevails only after real, balanced ethics declines. Today’s ever increasing amount of indecent individual behavior and broken families are closely related to the one-sided liberal emphasis on individual liberty, autonomy, and self-determination. Self-determination makes the general affirmation of young people’s consensual sexual gratification the norm. Pre- and extramarital sex, abortion, and divorce become commonplace behaviors. Look at Norway, for example, the country that presently is top of the United Nations’ Index of Human Development. The same country also – according to a survey by Durex – leads the world in casual sex.\(^\text{14}\) Ever increasingly, single-parent families permeate societies.\(^\text{15}\) Moreover, under

---

\(^{13}\)We appreciate Daniel Bell’s suggestion that Confucian ethical familism and liberal ethical individualism be clearly distinguished in the dialogue.


the excuse of exercising one’s liberty or autonomy, one can easily get married this year, divorced next year, and abandon his spouse and children to join in a bizarre association the third year. In short, the liberal idea of self-determination, regardless of family interests, facilitates individuals – especially young people – to gratify their immanent physiological impulses and whims rather than cultivate proper moral habits.

Dr. Lib: You are more conservative than I am about marriage, premarital sexual relations, and single-parent families. Surely, though, I don’t need to remind you that abortion and divorce are by no means unique to liberal societies. I agree that it can be heartbreaking for parents when they find themselves powerless to stop one of their children getting involved with drugs or criminals, yet the law states that once our sons and daughters have reached adulthood, we cannot force them to live at home or give up bad company. So you are right that focusing on the self-determination of the individual in our political and legal arrangements does not always result in the enhancement of individual well-being. But instead of trading evils, and pointing to what is bad in one culture as a foil to what is bad in another, let’s return to our main philosophical theme. As you recall, my argument is that liberalism, with its focus on the autonomy of, and protection for, the individual, at least takes account of the fact that not everyone is born into happy circumstances. Liberal societies put limits on the ways families can dominate their members, or harm them, even if this means that on some occasions the family is hindered in its efforts to protect its members.

Mr. Con: Yes – so we are now agreeing, are we not, that there are two different ways of moral life, each with its own character. Central to the Confucian way of life is the question of what sort of person one ought to become in relation to one’s family. Still, Confucian familism does not mean that there are no limits on the ways families can dominate their members: Confucianism supports family determination, not parental domination. Family determination does not mean that the individual at stake does not have a say. For example, for a child’s marriage, it is not the imposition of parental authority on an unwilling child. Rather, an agreement must be formed between the child and the parents. This requirement of agreement is implicit in the meaning of the Confucian marriage ritual which includes a series of interactions between the two families, ending up with the final step in which the groom must personally bring the bride to his home from her parents’ home. That is, in practice, both the parents and the child have a decision power that is like “a veto right” in the modern terminology. The parents should not force the child to marry someone the child does not like. Similarly, the child should not be free to marry another person when the parents do not accept.

Dr. Lib: So you are half a liberal at least – you allow that it would be wrong for parents to coerce a child into marriage.

Mr. Con: No, I am not a liberal. I am a full-fledged Confucian! In fact, I am reporting the Chinese folk model of marriage: if a boy and a girl come to love each other, they will go back to ask their parents for approval; and the parents will appoint a matchmaker to contact the other family for agreement. Accordingly, a successful marriage reflects a harmonious coordination between the two families.
as well as between the parents and the child in each family through a series of ritual behavior (Zheng and Hu, 2006, p. 170). You may call this model arranged marriage. But it is not that the parents coerce their child into a marriage that the child does not want. As you know, Confucian virtue calls for benevolent parents and filial children (\textit{jucizixiao}, 父慈子孝). If parents practise the Confucian moral commitments to virtue and ritual, they should not coerce their children into marriage. Similarly, if a child is filial, he should not get into a marriage without his parents’ agreement. Even if we only consider individual well-being, not family values, once we recognize that individual well-being must be fulfilled through an appropriate, long-standing, and stable marriage, we would not want to move to a radical liberal strategy to assign the child a legal right to self-determination on marriage, depriving the parents of a veto right. Parents are more mature, more experienced, and more balanced in their reflections than their children regarding marriage issues. If parents don’t help their child decide and realize a good marriage, they have failed in their moral obligation to their child as well as to the whole family. Given the benefit to be drawn from the parents’ experience and wisdom regarding marriage issues, the Confucian family-based folk model of marriage will turn out to be more beneficial than the liberal self-determination model.

\textit{Dr. Lib}: I wonder if your last statement is as empirical as it sounds. Would you give up the Confucian model if you discovered that its costs outweighed the benefits? You and I both know the kind of society that Confucianism has supported through history. The story of the \textit{Butterfly Lovers}, for example, reminds us that at some times in China, the only “veto” – as you call it – which a young woman could exercise was to kill herself if she did not want to marry the man chosen for her by her parents.\(^{16}\) In theory, it sounds reasonable to say that decisions on marriage involve negotiation, agreement, and comparable veto powers on both sides. In practice, a society in which this theory was put into practice was impotent to stop the domination of children by their parents. The folk stories that are so popular, where lovers meet as ghosts, or daughters assert their individuality against their fathers’ wishes, represent a strain of resistance – as I see it – within Chinese culture, a resistance that has something in common with the liberalism I espouse, and to which you object. So let us try to uncover, by all means, just where the two kinds of determination – self and family – lead.

\textit{Mr. Con}: It sounds that you are totally ignorant that your popular story of the \textit{Butterfly Lovers} is the “iconoclastic” version that has been recast by the 20th century radical Chinese intellectuals in terms of the “revoluntary” themes of child

\(^{16}\)In the popular legend of the butterfly lovers, a young girl who disguised herself as a boy in order to become educated is promised in marriage to a rich man, because her classmate sweetheart comes from a poor family. The sweetheart dies from a disease after the woman’s family refuses his marriage proposal. On the day of her wedding, and faithful to her one true love, the young woman casts herself into the tomb in which her lover is buried. Shortly afterwards a pair of butterflies emerge, disporting themselves in the open air above the tomb – the spirits, perhaps, of the ever-faithful lovers.
resistance against arranged marriage as well as the class struggle between the poor and the rich. You don’t know that, however, the traditional version of the story that was spread over a thousand years in China and other Asian countries before the 20th century, was dramatically different. That traditional version more accurately reflected the Chinese marriage reality under the influence of Confucianism than the modern, distorted version. The two protagonists in the traditional version, Liang Shanbo (梁山伯) and Zhu Yingtai (祝英台), did not at all resist the Confucian family-based folk model of marriage. Rather, they attempted to follow the model as the proper procedure to fulfill their marriage wish. Neither were there such episodes as Zhu’s father forced her to marry a rich man instead of Liang. Their marriage wish failed, in the traditional version, primarily because Liang failed (due to his mistakes that did not suggest any moral defect or flaw in him, though) to come in time to Zhu’s parents for a marriage proposal. The tragedy was not one of the family-based marriage model, much less of the class struggle between the rich and the poor. The tragedy lied rather in and served as a wonderful illustration of an inevitable human imperfection in which both a normal institution and morally proper individual acts under the institution may bring about a tragedy. This is part of the fate of human finitude and the mystery of life in the Confucian understanding. The Chinese have for many centuries viewed the tragic beauty of this legend in a realistic and somewhat pessimistic way: they have been sensually accepting the unavoidable sorrows of reality and rejoicing in these sorrows with recognition of fate (ming, 命), without naively trusting the power of reason to unveil all of the mysteries of life or relying on the hope of revolution to build a perfect society that will eliminate all tragedies once and for all. Of course, there must have been some parents, though it is not Zhu’s parents, who have made wrong judgments on their children’s marriage issues. But it is unfair to over-emotionally generalize the problem and even monsterize the Confucian family-based marriage model as the radical Chinese liberals have repeatedly done since the May Fourth movement in 1919.

Dr. Lib: What you see as actions stemming from regrettable errors of judgment, I see as deeds marked by the moral stigma of injustice or unfairness. These are, of course, political categories as much as moral ones, in keeping with my earlier view that the family itself is a political entity. Not only are there political issues of justice that arise within the family, families themselves – as history shows – have played a considerable part in setting the agenda for national and international relations. Many of Europe’s wars have involved the political intrigues and powerful families, big business is often the province of family power, and the dynasties of China are a wonderful example of family power and influence.  

---

17 For an excellent exploration of these issues regarding the *Butterfly Lovers*, see Zhu Suli (朱蘇力), 2003.

18 Aihwa On (1999) argues that the Chinese family is inextricably bound up with the politics of international relations and can be seen as itself an agent that is in negotiation with a number of nation states.
I agree that the *Butterfly Lovers* might be more sophisticated than what we modern Westerners have seen from the version that was exported to us from modern China. But I don’t think your realistic or pessimistic manner of viewing tragedy can get you away from the real moral issue in our debate. Seen in this way, suicide was – and maybe still is – a form of moral protest. Even though the 1950 Marriage Act in China permitted women freedom of choice in marriage, a very large number of arranged marriages still occur, particularly in the countryside. While 21% of the world’s women live in China, 56% of all female suicide in the world occurs in China. That suicide is a strategy of female resistance in a male-dominated society has been suggested by a number of independent studies (Lee and Kleinman 1997, 2000). You may know the figures as well as I do. How are you going to comment on the findings of a recent carefully prepared and very thorough research report, “Suicide rates in China, 1995–1999” (Phillips et al., 2002a), provided by scholars at Beijing Suicide Research and Prevention Center and the Department of Social Medicine of Harvard Medical School?

Mr. Con: All right. Let’s take these in turn. First, I doubt the reliability of the figure that as much as 56% of all female suicide in the world occurs in China – I wonder how the scholars you mentioned investigated in China to obtain this figure. Second, I think the Chinese communist government’s 1950 Marriage Act went to a wrong extreme – complete individual determination. That parental domination is wrong does not imply that self determination is right. Both extremes are deviations from what I claim is the Confucian ideal of judicious family determination – pursuing the harmonious agreement between the parents and the child and where each side has a veto power. As to the issue of suicide, the researchers at Beijing Suicide Research and Prevention Center found that rural suicide rates were an average of three-fold higher than urban rates - these differences held true for both men and women and in all age-groups. In particular, they found that suicide rates among elderly rural residents in China are among the highest reported for any country (ibid., p. 837). I think this finding demonstrates the miserable fate of the Chinese peasants in China’s process of modernization. You would probably share the researchers’ surprise over the high suicide rate among elderly people in China’s rural areas: “Given the high status accorded to the elderly in Chinese culture, this finding is particularly noteworthy” (ibid., p. 838).

Dr. Lib: That’s true. I was surprised about the rates of suicide among elderly people. I suppose this may be a reflection of how badly they feel when – for whatever reason – the status and care they expected to receive was not forthcoming. However, I am surprised to hear you denouncing two extremes as being alien to the Confucian ideal, as you call it. My point is that the ideal never has been close to what is practiced or what is practicable. And what have you to say about their second finding - that suicide rates among young rural women (aged 15–35 years) were 66% higher than rates among young rural men (ibid., p. 837)? I don’t think you will want to argue that it is simply the low status and limited opportunities of rural women in China that is responsible for the higher suicide rates for rural women as compared to rural men. The research you have been studying contends that this is insufficient to explain the unique characteristics of suicide in China,
because rural women in many developing countries have low social status but don’t have suicide rates nearly as high as those found in rural China.

Mr. Con: If you meant to hint that it is the family determination of their marriages that were accountable of their suicide, you forgot – or were unaware of – other findings by the same research group. In their other study (Phillips et al., 2002b), 519 Chinese suicide cases (mostly by rural residents) were investigated to explore the suicidal causes. Given that they found 87% of rural suicides could be attributed to economic difficulties and serious illness or injury, these are clearly much more significant risk factors than family conflicts – including those conflicts that might be generated by the family-determination model of marriage, as you would like to conceive. Moreover, they also found that, of the 108 women aged 15–34 years who killed themselves (presumably most of them were rural women), a small, but significant, proportion was associated with government policies to restrict population growth. You, my doctor, are well aware of contemporary Chinese politics, including the government’s birth-control policy. Based on all the information, should you not be arguing that suicide may be understood as a strategy of resistance by rural Chinese women who feel desperate in their contemporary economic and political situations? However, if you claim that it “is a strategy of female resistance in a male-dominated society” in general or a strategy of female resistance against the family determination of marriage in particular, aren’t you being prejudiced by your preconceived liberal ideas?

Dr. Lib: I doubt that looking at the statistics will settle our dispute. As I see it, the point is this. That 87% of the suicides in the second study are attributed to disease, injury, and “economic difficulties” does not explain the discrepancy between the lower rate of male suicides and the higher rate of female ones. If you forced me to make a conjecture, I might propose that women in rural China are victims of the tension between contemporary Chinese politics and traditional Confucian values – for example, the very tension illustrated in birth-control-related issues. Traditional, patriarchal values push women to produce more children, especially sons, for their families, while government policy forces them to accept sterilization after one child is born. The horror induced by this clash of commitments does not show that the traditional values are all well and good. You cannot deny, surely, that Confucian values are patriarchal and so play a part in supporting the mistreatment of Chinese women both now and in the past.

---

19 “The two most frequent negative life events among the 519 people who killed themselves were economic difficulties (44%) and serious illness or injury (43%)... had had a severe marital dispute in the 2 days before death, 10 (2%) had had conflict with parents, 10 (2%) with children, and 17 (13%) with other relatives. Nine (2%) people had experienced an acute loss of face or social embarrassment and six (1%) had been beaten by their spouse” (ibid., pp. 1732–1733).

20 “17 (16%) of the women encountered negative life events related to childbirth and pregnancy, including unwanted pregnancy, fines for exceeding the birth quota, abortion, and sterilization” (ibid., p. 1732).
Mr. Con: I confess that I am not – neither are you – in a position to fully explain the higher suicide rates of rural women than men when so many factors could be involved. The researchers we are referring to carefully did not offer an explanation. I don’t think your “tension” account can settle the issue, either. If women are the victims of the tension between contemporary Chinese policies and traditional Confucian values, so are men. As everyone who knows the situation understands, the husband has to confront the pressure and deal with the difficulty as much as the wife – if not more than – the wife. The wife faces the risk of a forced sterilization, while the husband has to undertake all the relevant political, social, and economical responsibilities around the issue. This is because, under the Confucian “patriarchal” – as you mention – values, the husband is taken to be head of the family responsible for all family-relevant issues.

Dr. Lib: Yes, indeed, the values of what I would call the “patriarchal polity,” one that has been largely silent on women, although the Master supposedly praised Jing Jiang (敬姜) for her knowledge of the rites (Raphals, 2002). And I could always remind you of the apparently misogynistic remark that “only women and petty men are hard to rear” (Analects 17: 25). One of the most influential Neo-Confucian scholars, Cheng Yi (程頤), commented that poor widows should not get remarried even if they had to starve to death without remarriage. This is because, for him, it was a small matter to starve to death, but a large matter to lose “integrity” (jie, 節) (Yishu 22, 逸書 22), a concept that would not be intelligible outside a particular kind of patriarchal framework.

Mr. Con: All right! I would not deny that Confucian values are patriarchal. And I cannot see what is wrong with that! Even a liberal like youself can appreciate the benefit of a family order where the father bears primary responsibility for the well-being of the family. I trust that you would not want to propose cancelling family names. Would you? And you would not want to toss a coin to decide which family name your child should take. It is a misunderstanding to hold that the necessity of a family order – the very essence of the Confucian patriarchy – implies rankings of personal dignity between man and woman. Confucianism holds that the husband and the wife possess the same moral dignity with different familial functions. Regarding the saying you took from the Analects, there has been a careful study showing that the original Chinese phrase “nuzi” (女子) used by Confucius in his time referred to maids only, not women generally. So the correct translation of the sentence is “only maids and petty men are hard to rear” Li, C. (2000b). On the issue of a widow’s remarriage, Cheng Yi made a mistaken judgement. He was wrong to hold that a widow’s remarriage violated her moral integrity. But he is hardly idiosyncratic in arguing that moral integrity is more important than physical existence. At least most non-utilitarian moral systems hold a similar view, as you know well. In any case, Confucius never said that the widow should not marry again.

Dr. Lib: How interesting! You admit that in fact the traditional Confucian values have been patriarchal, even though you earlier insisted that the Confucian ideal is “family determination” as you put it. Let’s not be distracted by arguing about the exact meaning of certain sayings or indeed about the context of their introduction
to the Confucian corpus. 21 I am more concerned with the basic character of the entire Confucian morality with regard to women and children. You have not answered my earlier question; namely, how Confucians are able to protect children from abusive parents, or wives from abusive husbands.

Mr. Con: I don’t think there has to be a contradiction between family patriarchy and family determination. Confucian family patriarchy takes the grandfather or the father as head of the family, who should possess virtue, bear responsibility, and undertake hard work in taking care of the well-being of the whole family, every member included. It was not the case that head had the power of imposing his decision on everyone. Instead, a systematic set of Confucian family rituals or rites (li, 禮) directed every member, including head himself, to achieve harmonious agreements within the family. In the case of problems or abuse, a series of formal and informal “appeal” institutions was available for everyone – women and children included – to turn to: from the great grandparent of the family to meetings at the family temple, from a prestigious Confucian scholar in the village to a whole village meeting, and all the way up to the formal court set up by the government. This is what I meant earlier when I said that Confucianism has procedures that recognize the ethical significance of the private sphere, instead of allowing anything short of cruelty to be practiced in the name of “self-perfection.” These procedures may not satisfy Rorty’s ideal for democratic decision making, but they ensure that what happens within the family is subject to ethical scrutiny, rather than being confined to a “private” sphere. For Confucians, even when they are alone, the ethical is not absent. 22

Dr. Lib: This is all very well in theory, and as usual you reply to my concerns about facts by appeal to ideals, procedures, and principles. But I maintain that in the past the Confucian moral establishment has, in fact, condemned people to life within a system of human relations that are asymmetrical, unequal, and hierarchical in nature. Think, for a further example, of the authority of the ruler over the minister, the father over the son, and the husband over the wife – the so-called “Three Bonds” (san gang, 三綱). I suspect you don’t want to deny that the Three Bonds constitute an essential element of the Confucian tradition, even if the term was initially proposed by Legalists (fajia, 法家). In any case, the authoritarianism of the Three Bonds has dominated Chinese society for more than two thousand years. You face a real dilemma here: if you cut the doctrine of the

21 As has been argued by some scholars, the Analects is likely a text which contains a core of sayings attributable to Confucius, together with later accretions which often reflect political and moral understandings different from those of Confucius himself. The remark from Analects 17.25 is very likely one such later accretion (see, e.g., Brooks and Brooks 1998). Whether the details of the Brooks’ analysis are right or not, the Confucian tradition is, like many other traditions, an “accumulated record of a series of individuals who struggled to interpret a shared set of texts in light of their different circumstances and times” (Ivanhoe, 2002, p. 129).

22 Mr. Con is in mind the Confucian remark that the gentleman “must be watchful over himself when he is alone” while “there is no evil to which the mean man, dwelling retired, will not proceed” (The Great Learning; Legge, 1892, vol. I, pp. 366–367).
Three Bonds from the Confucian tradition, how can you maintain the logic of Confucian ethics? On the other hand, if you want to defend the Three Bonds, how can you treat children and women as equal elements in the Confucian family?

Mr. Con: I certainly don’t deny that some Confucian principles and rituals were misinterpreted, misused, or otherwise abused in Chinese history, such as restricting the remarriage of the widow after the Song dynasty. No history is all bright or dark. But isn’t our disagreement primarily one of principle or ideal – self-determination versus family-determination – in directing human lives? I think you mistake what is essential to the so-called Three Bonds in the Confucian doctrine. You read them far too narrowly, forgetting that they were first established when Chinese society was marked by very severe economic scarcity. Whether the character of the “Three Bonds” in the past was a regrettable, unavoidable adaptation to circumstances or an instance of avoidable moral abuse does not matter for the discussion we’re having. Here it is enough to point out that the “Three Bonds” should be understood as cardinal dimensions of social interconnectedness. They are examples of central social ties that bind people into networks and institutions marked by responsibilities and virtues. As bonds of social interconnectedness, it would be a mistake to interpret them as necessarily involving rankings of personal dignity or commitments to personal inequalities. Instead, the Three Bonds represent the net of most important relationships (between government and citizens, husbands and wives, parents and children) that should be appreciated as proper and central ways in which we pursue human flourishing. Now if you are unable to appreciate these cardinal elements of social embeddedness, this would reflect something of great significance; namely, that liberal individualism fails to appreciate the essential nature of the familial interdependence and social interconnectedness of individuals. The result – as you and I surely both agree – is the very disconnectedness and anomie we have already mentioned. For instance, do you not admit that there are enormous social costs imposed on persons and families by the weakening, if not the collapse, of familialist social structures?

Dr. Lib: Very clever, my friend, but I can’t let you get away with this. At the heart of the Three Bonds were relations of power or authority. But now you try to sidestep this fact by claiming that they are just dimensions of social interconnectedness. You can’t have it both ways.

Mr. Con: You should refer to Legalists, such as Han Fei (韓非), for such accounts of the Three Bonds as the relations of power. Their accounts have been used by past despotic emperors to maximize their selfish interests. I don’t want to deny that the Confucian doctrine of the Three Bonds has been distorted by the Legalist view in Chinese history. For example, some Confucians, including the famous Han Confucian Dong Zhongshu (董仲舒, c.179 – c. 104 BCE) in explicating the Three Bonds, failed to distinguish their accounts clearly from the Legalist accounts. I would argue that the Confucian Three Bonds must be reconstructed.

---

23 A careful reading of Dong Zhongshu’s work would disclose two different accounts of the Three Bonds: one in terms of a relation of power or authority (like the Legalist accounts), the other in
from a correct Confucian perspective – a perspective that can offer the most complete, least one-sided, and most powerful portrayal of the Confucian reflections on proper ways in which we must pursue human flourishing. The true meaning of the Three Bonds is the characters of the profound reality and the foundational human relations that are not only irreplaceable for individual well-being, but are also intrinsic values to be pursued by individuals. They guide us about which way of life we ought to lead, what kind of persons we ought to become, and what type of humans we ought to procreate. For example, since the husband and wife relation is profoundly real and morally normal, it would be wrong to procreate homosexual, bisexual, or neutrasexual individuals, even if it becomes biotechnologically possible.

Dr. Lib: For my part, I believe that not only are we nested in moral communities – the family being a clear example of such a community – but also I would go so far as to claim that our capacity to say the things we say, and even think the thoughts we think, depends on the existence of networks that bind human beings together into social, moral, and cognitive communities. I too share the worry that excessive individualism threatens social and familial bonds. Now, by admitting all these things, as well as making other concessions in today’s conversation, it seems to me that I have been like the Confucian you described at the start of the conversation, to the extent that I have been flexible and compromising in our discussion. Yet my view has been predicated – and still is predicated – on the basic ideals of liberal individualism. Is it not time for you to follow my lead and practice what you preach by showing some of that local flexibility you mentioned earlier? Why not admit that liberalism can combine to some extent with Confucianism and that we can therefore forge a kind of ethics that blends each with the other, building on the best features of the two philosophies?

Mr. Con: The problem is your attempt is not really an attempt at compromise of any genuine sort. On the contrary, you want to appropriate the fundamental insights of Confucianism – that humans are beings oriented to sustaining and flourishing within a set of bonds expressing social interconnections, virtue and status responsibilities, and ritual propriety. Confucian familism will then become a new cure for the ailments of liberal society. Worse, once you have appropriated these elements from Confucian thinking, you will want to proclaim the pluralistic terms of equal, complementary relations manifesting the proper ways of human existence. Both accounts are based on his doctrine of yin-yang (陰陽). The former account involves unequal rankings of personal dignity in the relations: ruler is the authority of minister, father the authority of son, and husband the authority of wife. But the latter account does not involve such rankings. Rather, ruler and minister, husband and wife, and father and son are metaphysically and morally complementary to each other to form profound social unities and central human relations. See Dong (2002) (especially, pp. 349–352). Mr. Con is arguing that Dong’s latter account is the correct Confucian account of the Three Bonds.

24For a defence of a form of “social holism” see Pettit (1993). Jeff Malpas has argued, following Alasdair MacIntyre, that the unity and content of an individual life presupposes a broader place, including other people and things, within which the narrative of that life is located (see Malpas, 1999, Chapter 3).
tolerance and richness of the liberal tradition in terms of equal individual entitlements, rights or liberties – this is, as I see it, the very purpose of so-called “global ethics” today. But I see this not as a compromise but as a kind of imperialism, admittedly gentle and subtle, because it does not sustain the basic Confucian concerns with virtue, ritual, and family. If the Three Bonds and the social holism they involve are absorbed into the mainstream versions of liberalism, this will not entail a primary focus on the family, or a recognition that the individual is not solely in authority regarding moral values.

Dr. Lib: As I’ve already pointed out, the authoritarianism of the Three Bonds would not fit well with the kind of liberalism I’m espousing, so I have to reject your claim of imperialism! Moreover, many Confucians themselves are more flexible and pluralist than you. You know the works of the contemporary Neo-Confucians. In their arduous intellectual struggles against past feudalism and contemporary Marxism, they have attempted to restructure Confucianism as a moral theory that stands in no contradiction with liberal ethics. Indeed, they have accepted liberal values such as liberty and democracy as the ultimate social ideals that Confucianism must embrace. Think of their dominant view regarding the Confucian thesis of “sageliness inward and kingliness outward” (neishengwaiwang 內聖外王). The “new external kingship” (xinwaiwang 新外王) they took pains to develop from the Confucian internal virtue appears to be nothing but liberal democracy! The issue for them is no longer whether the basic ideals of liberal individualism and democracy are to be resisted. Rather it is how the Confucian tradition could generate and adopt such ideals so as to establish a modern polity and society to which a selection of Confucian moral concerns – such as family values – can still contribute in some way.

Mr. Con: I have a great deal of respect for and sympathy with the Neo-Confucians you mention. They made strenuous efforts to develop the Confucian tradition at a period of the 20th century that was most hostile to Confucianism, especially in mainland China. Unfortunately, they failed to recognize that Confucianism is incommensurable with liberalism: the Confucian way of life would be fundamentally changed if core Confucian commitments (such as ren and li) are recast in terms of liberal concerns (such as liberty and democracy). The essence of the Confucian individual resides in values like family-interdependence, the Three Bonds, rites, and harmony, not values like individual independence, equality, rights, or self-determination. In short, the contemporary Neo-Confucians, in attempting to reconcile the Confucian commitments with the liberal values, have substantially downplayed and even distorted the Confucian conception of rite-based and family-oriented individuals. I hope you will appreciate some recent

25See, for example, Peter Singer’s assessment of claims on behalf of family members as being akin to racism, and his recommendation that “we should raise our children to know that others are in much greater need, and to be aware of the possibility helping them, if unnecessary spending [within the family] is reduced” (2002, p. 180).

26For the most influential Neo-Confucian works in this direction, see Mou (1985), (1987), and (2000).
vigorous criticism of the contemporary Neo-Confucianism: Confucian ethical principles should not be abstractly formulated without reference to substantive Confucian rituals, and Confucian politics cannot be adequately developed without primarily relying on its own resources.\textsuperscript{27}

\textit{Dr. Lib:} It surprises me that you should defend the Confucian tradition in quite this way. As I see it, your fear is that if we start from the liberal conception of the individual, free and equal to all other individuals, and then add Confucian insights to this picture, we have not really reconciled the two views. Rather, the liberal has simply stolen – as it were – materials from Confucianism to help with some of the problems that liberal societies face nowadays. On the other hand, you would say that if we put the harmonious family and the Three Bonds at the center of our ethical thought, then we see clearly why isolation and anomie unavoidably mark a liberal, individualistic society. If Confucian thinkers, for their part, now modify some of the traditional doctrines – for example, giving children power over their own lives and marriage choices – then this, by parity of reasoning, would not be a reconciliation of Confucianism with liberalism either. Rather this would produce a new position which no longer honours and holds sacrosanct the fundamental Confucian commitments to humanity, family, and harmony. So we seem to have a stand-off, at least as long as we pretend that we are examining the collision of two very different moral worldviews: one which puts the self-determining individual at the center of a morally pluralist universe while the other puts the family at the center of a settled structure of rites and commitments. Have I expressed your fears correctly?

\textit{Mr. Con:} So it seems. But I think maybe we can be more sophisticated in how we put our positions. For you have admitted that many elements of the Confucian conception of the moral agent in relation to other – situated – agents can be made intelligible within the liberal tradition. And, as you delight to point out, I have been happy to permit what you would call the “rights” of children to resist parental choices on occasion. Yet we must not imagine our two traditions are close enough to converge. We see incommensurable values and commitments in the traditions at the very early stage of their history. For instance, while Aristotle regarded the gentleman as a lover of self – he loves a friend because a friend is another self, aspiring to a life of rational deliberation – Confucius regarded the ideal agent as a lover of relatives, one whose self-cultivation is integrated with concern for others and with fulfilling the duties and rites appropriate to his or her station.\textsuperscript{28} We know that moral situations are complex, involving many different rites, interests, and conflicts. It is not that Confucians believe that only the family matters. Neither is that liberals do not care about relatives at all. None the less,

\textsuperscript{27}For a critique of contemporary Neo-Confucians in their ignorance of essential Confucian rites, see Chen, Guo, and Zhou (1998). For a vigorous critique of contemporary Neo-Confucianism for its overlooking and/or distorting the essence of political Confucianism, see Jiang (2003).

\textsuperscript{28}For a comparative study of Aristotelian and Confucian views of love and human relations, see Fan (2002). For more discussion of the relation between Aristotelian and Confucian self-cultivation, see Tao and Brennan (2003).
our traditions, in thinking about and treating individual and family, have begun
from distinct points of departure and held different and incompatible values,
emphases, and core commitments.

**Dr. Lib:** You are right. We have surely reached the point where we can go beyond a
simple reductive position. Neither of us wants to reduce, and simplify, all moral
considerations to ones primarily focused on the individual alone, or on the group
alone. Notice how different theorists, such as Michael Walzer and David Miller,
disagree about matters such as the distribution of goods within a society, or the
degree of concern it is right to have for people in other societies. So liberal the-
orists will disagree among themselves just as much as you and I will. Actually, as
a liberal I have no problem in recognizing the situatedness of the individual in a
family and a social context. And you, as a Confucian, are aware that families are
made out of individuals, just as towns and societies are built from families. We
have also made, I think, an important discovery; namely, that each has the capac-
ity to borrow from the other, without having to lose its own identity. During our
conversation, each of us has emphasized some of the bad aspects of the other’s
value orientation, the extreme cases, where – for example – a focus on individu-
alism can lead to selfishness, self-harm, and hooliganism, or too much cultivation
of the familial self can lead to oppression, alienation, and self-sacrifice. And that
means, doesn’t it, that each tradition can act as a mirror to the other, forcing it to
reflect on what is good and bad in the tradition itself?

**Mr. Con:** Excellent metaphor, my doctor. But each tradition has its own starting
point and its own conception of values. Just as a mirror cannot reflect object in
every dimension, a tradition has no way to comprehend another tradition in all
respects. The significant moral of your mirror metaphor, to me, is that by looking
at another tradition, we can clearly find the irreplaceable identity and character
of our own tradition – as they say, one cannot really understand one’s moth-
erland until one has lived abroad for some time. The attempt to “modernize”
Confucianism by bringing it within the ambit of liberal ethics would be a way
of destroying it. Likewise, if I tried to colonize your liberal view by placing the
family and already situated individuals at the center of the moral canvas, then the
resulting Confucianized system would no longer be liberal. For in that system,
the individual would find him- or herself born into a world and a network of rela-
tionships that already involve constraints on action that are intolerable according
to the liberal view. To be truly Confucian, this new system would recognize the
rational agent as not merely connected, but as “already connected” (J. Chan,
1999; Di Stefano, 1996) – first and foremost in the familist way – so as to mani-
fest a familist intrinsic value that goes beyond the merit of individuals. So, I rest
on my earlier contention: that Confucianism can never accept the cardinal value
of liberty or self-determination as understood in the liberal tradition, while still

---

29 For example, while Walzer thinks we only have minimal responsibilities to people living in
societies different from our own, Miller argues that we have substantial obligations to people in
other societies. Neither holds that it would be morally appropriate to eliminate all economic and
Appendix

retaining its identity as a distinctive moral tradition that carries both individual and trans-individual values.

*Dr. Lib:* I wonder if you are rather too much “at rest” – anchored to absolute ideals that have little relation to what is actually being practiced in China or elsewhere. You need not be so essentialist in your defence of the Confucian tradition. Let me suggest that all traditions evolve, and that you and I are both participating, right now, in the evolution of our own traditions. Remember what Gadamer said about conversation – that in any exchange the parties do not remain what they were (Gadamer, 1992, p. 378). We did begin our conversation from very different starting points, you from within one configuration of values, me from within another. Yet we communicated from the beginning using terms like “individual”, “parent”, “abuse”, “right” and other terms which, surely, draw their meaning from the relations and contrasts they have with other terms in our language. We were thus like two people trying to communicate with each other across two different dialects, hoping that there was enough overlap between our two worldviews to enable genuine communication to take place. At the same time, each of us has understandings – say of individuality, or of the parent-child relation – which are anchored in our own system of beliefs and values. So we faced a problem about translation.

*Mr. Con:* Aha – forgive my interruption – but I think this is an important point. My worry all along has been about what is in danger of being lost in translation in a cross-tradition dialogue! Would you not agree that we are like the linguist in the situation that Quine describes as “radical translation”? We can have agreement – say in rejecting foot-binding – while yet the very terms in which we express that agreement are not determinately translatable from the one language to the other.30 This is why you accepted, earlier in our conversation, that terms like “father” or “child”, are more than biological descriptions, yet you also wanted to disagree with me about the roles associated with these terms, roles that are central to the Confucian understanding of what is valuable and important in human life. Put in another way, Confucianism can be thought of as a theory in which a number of connections are made between concepts such as parent, child, husband, wife, ritual, wisdom, filial piety, self-cultivation, self-deception, and so on. Now each of these concepts, or the terms that express them, also occur in your theory. But the connections between them are very different in your theory from the connections between them in mine. A map of the two theories would depict two very different moral landscapes. As Wittgensteinian points out, the meanings of these concepts are determined by a kind of grammar, which covers all the rules regarding how these concepts can appropriately be use in specific contexts. That grammar determines, and is determined by, a shared particular way of

---

30W.V.O. Quine puts the point in terms of a general thesis of indeterminacy of all translation (see Quine, 1960, Chapter 2). Mr. Con is suggesting that agreement in what might be called “moral observation sentences” still leaves alternative translations of moral terms indeterminate.
As a result, our agreement about some statements hides deeper divergence about the configurations of concepts – the webs of beliefs and meanings – from which these statements draw their full sense.

**Dr. Lib:** Of course that is true to a point. But consider also this, my friend. We are communicating, and making sense of what we are saying to each other. So, however much theoretical indeterminacy exists in translation, there seems to be a clear sense in which we are also in agreement on the meanings of the concepts we use during our conversation. And that is part of what I think Gadamer had in mind when saying that conversation means transformation. You said a while ago that liberalism just did not have the resources to deal with the very substance of Confucian disagreements with the liberal position. Yet I think we may both agree, now, that this whole question of resources, of the identity of a tradition, is itself subject to the very indeterminacy you have mentioned. Conversation of a productive kind is like a successful dance, one where the partners do not stand on each others’ toes. Instead, each partner accommodates the movements of the other, so that co-ordination is achieved. To the extent that we can communicate like dancers, then there is a mutuality in our interactions, not a hijacking of the one by the other. There is creativity, not the dominance of one partner by the other.

**Mr. Con:** I see what you are driving at, though I – conservative and inflexible as I appear to you – would be more comfortable with a modification of your analogy. From a Confucian view, a traditional dance is a ritual, which represents that tradition’s understanding of the meaning of life, its relation to the divine as well as the root of its civil conoduct. Two different traditions carry incommensurable rituals. You cannot create a third type of rituals neutrally covering all the important dimensions of the original rituals from both traditions. That “the partners do not stand on each others’ toes” is far from being a sufficient condition for a genuinely successful dance. As an Australian liberal, if you ever joined in an Australian aboriginal dance, I am afraid that your dance couldn’t be successful in any profound, more than entertainment sense, because you do not share their basic beliefs, feelings, or their taken-for-granted commitments and interactions. It seems to me that our cross-tradition conversation can best be likened to a series of musical variations in which each player responds to the other. The possibility of continuing the performance – the conversation – implies that we respond to each other, yet the fact that we can keep our parts – our voices – distinct shows that each of us has our own distinct set of motifs. The Confucian configuration of values brings one voice to the composition, the liberal another. Do you really mean to suggest that even this conversation may have changed what Confucianism means for me, or what liberalism means for you? Is that what you think?

**Dr. Lib:** Something like that may be true. But not all conversations need necessarily involve transformations. Some are just dialogues of the deaf, and many are

---

not as respectful and co-operative as ours has been. Worse, not all dialogues aim
to avoid domination, and you are right, in my view, to be suspicious of liberals
who claim that their view has the capacity to accommodate all others. Although
we can think of each of our traditions in terms of “value configurations,” such a
way of speaking may be misleading – suggesting something static and fixed on
each side. Yet, as we both know, there are varieties of Confucianism and vari-
eties of liberalism. Each tradition faces challenges not only from outside but also
from within. Your own appeal to Quine’s doctrine of indeterminacy now makes
me wonder about the extent to which the core values of any moral system are
well-defined at all. As Quine once put it, “indeterminacy of translation begins
at home” (Quine, 1969, 46). Each conversation of the kind you and I have been
having today makes its contribution to the evolution of each tradition, the rein-
terpretation of its values, even to the definition of questions as yet unsolved.
Some of our arguments, maybe, are like this: attempts at reaching understanding
about duties, bonds, values – understanding which is still subject to interpreta-
tion, revision and negotiation within each of our own traditions. Our previous
disagreement about the moral role of fathers was also like this. Perhaps we are
both still trying to understand what fatherhood, or parenthood, is – from a moral
point of view.

Mr: Con: I think you, in criticizing the “static” or “anchored” view, exaggerate the
possibility of indeterminacy of a moral tradition. The development of a moral
tradition should not be understood from the indeterminacy of its core values.
You may be right that the core values of a moral tradition cannot be well defined
even in its native language. Perhaps, due to the particularity of moral practice
and the infirmities of the human faculty of articulation, core values can never be
fully conceptualized and formulated as general principles. For example, while
Confucians agree that the virtue of ren is a core value of the tradition, it is
inevitably controversial regarding how to spell it out as a general principle –
is it a principle of love, or ritual, or both? Nevertheless, even if such disagree-
ments are always existent even within a moral tradition, the core values of the
tradition are still practiced and embodied in the tradition – in the people’s actual
way of life, especially in the commonly conducted practices, like the Confucian
li. This is to say, there is the determinacy of core values embedded in practice,
not in theory. I would stress that it is the priority of praxis over theory that distin-
guishes one tradition from another. For Confucians, the moral role of fathers, for
example, is well determinate in the ritual practices that the fathers must under-
take in the community. It cannot, and should not, be transformed in a simple
conversation.

Dr: Lib: You are saying that core values are theoretically indeterminate, but practi-
cally determinate. From my view, they are also practically indeterminate. You are
well aware how Confucians themselves “practice” differently in contemporary

32See Chapter 11 for an exploration of the Confucian view on the relation between general
principles and specific ritual rules.
society. We face the situation of double disagreement – disagreement between Confucians and non-Confucians as well as disagreement between Confucians themselves. Then why should you emphasize only cross-tradition disagreement to the overlook of intra-tradition disagreement? Wouldn’t it be more reasonable and beneficial for a tradition to learn from the challenges of another tradition and attempt to transform, improve, and develop itself, just as it must be doing so from the challenges and problems it faces from within the tradition?

Mr. Con: I don’t deny that traditions learn from each other. But I am not yet convinced by your attempt to persuade me that our conversation may be contributing to the simultaneous reinterpretation of liberalism and Confucianism. What I am prepared to admit, though, is that your liberal critique of the Confucian parental dominance of the child’s marriage does push Confucians like myself to reconsider the meaning of the Confucian virtues like ren (humanity) and he (harmony) and the practice of the Confucian rituals regarding marriage arrangement. When pushed in this way, I do not become a liberal. Rather I stay within my own value configuration, and consider whether that configuration may allow us to come to the conclusion that family determination is more true than parental domination in the Confucian tradition. It is not that we should overlook disagreements inside a tradition. It is rather that individuals within a tradition participate in a series of taken-for-granted patterns of behavior – or procedures, if you wish – to attempt to resolve their disagreements, while cross-tradition procedures for such purposes are dramatically different. The point is that all such reflections as what we are making in this conversation should first be played out through a reconstruction of the core values in a tradition itself, without being forced to dilute or compromise its fundamental moral commitments. It is theoretically groundless and practically imperialist to insist that everyone accept a liberal moral framework by calling it “universal” or “global.”

Dr. Lib: I think that – yet again – we are in condition of partial agreement and partial disagreement. I have no more desire to claim universality for my liberal individualism than you would claim it for the Confucian humanity or righteousness. The Gadamerian conception of conversation certainly tempts me to think that each of us may have been transformed by today’s meeting. Time and reflection will show whether that is so or not. Our conversation today will no doubt lead me to reflect once more upon my own values and how to interpret them in the light of your challenges. To that extent we are both in the same position, I think. Such indeterminacy is not itself a bad thing. Think of it like this, my friend. If enough of these creative conversations occur, who knows what effect they will ultimately have on each of the traditions we see ourselves belonging to? They may well evolve in ways that lead to greater separation, or again they may inspire some new understandings and reinterpretations of a kind that we cannot at present foresee. At least we have found some forms of agreement today.

33See Chapter 12 for more detailed analyses of this issue.
Mr. Con: Yes – we agree to disagree on fundamental human values – Confucian familist versus liberal individualist. We also agree that cross-tradition dialogue should not be made by a dominance of one over the other in the name of “global ethics.” Finally, we agree that friendly conversation can stimulate each side to reflect on its own position and develop its argument. These are great achievements. Aren’t they? However, if you are speculating that one day our two different themes may fuse to produce something that is neither one nor the other, neither Confucian nor liberal, I cannot take that as right. The Confucian tradition takes itself following the Mandates of Heaven (天命). The authentic familist way of life through ritual performance and virtue cultivation cannot, and should not, be changed. A tradition develops through reconstructing, not changing, its core values. Reconstruction is needed because a tradition often faces incomplete interpretation, misinterpretation, malpractice, or even distortion of its core values, just as what has happened to the Confucian tradition. However, reconstructing is not changing – if the core values of a tradition are changed, the tradition is ended. Yet I agree that there is a possibility for more interaction between the liberal and Confucian perspectives, one that avoids the effective hijacking of one by other. I hope we can meet some other day – after we have both reflected on today’s discussion – to see if we can make more achievements on these matters. It has certainly been an interesting meeting today and I have enjoyed the stimulation of playing my theme against yours and engaging in mutual understanding.

Dr. Lib: I agree, old friend. Even if we have failed to make a synthesis between our two views, we have benefited from the exchange. And it has been a pleasure to find some agreement despite our diversity. Next time, perhaps, you can supply the tea, and I will try to be more successful in my fishing, so that we can enjoy some food together as well.

Mr. Con: And we will surely continue our humane – that is, our musical – endeavours. For remember that the Master said, “If a man be without the virtues proper to humanity, what has he to do with music?” (Analects 3:3).
References


References


References


References


Index

A
Abortion, 13, 21, 179, 197, 205, 208, 210, 217, 223, 227–228, 252, 260–261, 265
AIDS, 71
Ai you cha deng (care by gradation/love with distinction), 53
Althusser, Louis, 235
Altruism, 9, 50, 234, 237, 239–245, 256
Ames, Roger, 46n, 57n
Animal rights, 12, 223
Annas, Julia, 49n
Anthropocentrism, 147–148
Appropriateness, 46n, 73, 76, 159
Aquinas, Thomas, 151n, 176
Aristocracy, Confucian, 55–56
Aristotelianism, 15n, 49, 49n
Aristotle, 5, 15, 26, 34n, 45n, 176, 271
Asia, East, 21, 24, 75, 83–85, 95, 106, 116, 122, 136, 189
Avian Flu, 71
Avineri, Shlomo, 24n

B
Bayertz, Kurt, 189–191, 196, 211–212
Beauchamp, Tom, 105n, 190
Beijing, 84–85, 89, 98, 99, 102, 119, 124n, 264
Bi (certainty), 209
Bianco, Lucian, 237n
Bie, 54, 157, 205
Binity (diplomatic li), 171
Brandeis, Louis, 27n
Brody, Baruch, 13, 218–220
Buchanan, Allen, 45n, 258
Buddhism, 88n, 148, 156, 210
Bu ji an g yuan ze (unprincipled), 31
Bürgerliche Gesellschaft, 24n
Buyi (unrighteousness), 228n

C
Ceyin (sympathy), 203
Chan, Joseph, 57n
Chan, Wing-tsit, 46n
Cheng-xin (sincerity and fidelity), 72, 75–80
Cheng Yi, 254n, 266
Chen, Zhongyi, 65n, 109n
Childress, James, 105n
Confucian cultural heritage of, 7, 84, 135, 166–168, 170–171, 180, 231, 233
Dynasties, 17, 35n, 65, 67, 144, 171n, 181, 183n, 201, 247, 254n, 268
moral vacuum in contemporary, 231, 235–236, 241–247

289
Republic of, (Taiwan), 60, 83, 107, 136, 166
traditional, 31, 35, 65n
Warring-State Period of, 65n, 109n
Chinese nationalism, 237
Chiren (eating the people), 166
Chou, Cedric, 38n
Christianity, 27, 30, 88n, 148, 216, 235, 252
Ch’u, T’ung-Tsu, 60n
Civil society, 24, 26–40
Consensus, 4–5, 7
Contractarianism (social contract theory), 15, 24n, 27, 76, 107, 109–133, 203, 256, 258, 260
Contracts, 143, 176, 197, 209–212, 238
Corruption, 3–4, 6, 9, 36, 39, 66–67, 69–71, 73, 81n, 119–133, 201, 231, 240n, 243–246
medical, in contemporary China, 81n, 119–133
Cosmopolitanism, 200–212
liberal, 200, 212
libertarian, 212
Critio, 38
Cultural Revolution, The, 75

D
Da, 76
Daniels, Norman, 95
Dao (ways), 50n, 60n, 100, 101, 102n, 151, 156, 202
Daoism, 149n, 151, 153, 156, 158n, 161
of Heaven (tiandao), 100, 102n, 148, 202
De (virtue), 95–96, 102
Debate on Salt and Iron, The, 67, 67n
liberal, 26–28, 32–33, 34n, 36, 61, 105n
Deng Xiaoping, 238–240
De Vitoria, Francisco, 151n
Dialogue, 209–212
Discrimination, 20, 28, 53
Dissensus, moral, 189–201, 203–206, 208, 210–212
Doctrine of the Mean, 19–20, 31, 52n, 53n, 59n, 109
Dogs, 148
Domination, 18–20, 151, 261, 264, 275–276
- cum-subordination, 18–20
Dong Zhongshu, 153n, 268
Duan (sprout), 76
Du Zhizheng, 81
Dworkin, Ronald, 18n, 26
Economy, 64–66, 75, 110–113, 120, 125n, 126, 156, 240n, 244–245
Chinese, 120, 240, 240n
market, 64, 65n, 75, 110, 120, 125n, 126, 133–134, 155, 231, 239n, 240n, 245
planned, 111, 126, 128, 239n, 244–245
Egalitarianism, 45, 119–134, 233
Confucian, non, 5, 204, 234, 237, 239–242, 245
Maoist communist, 233
Ehrenberg, John, 24n
Elitism, Confucian, 31, 77, 109n, 234, 240–241, 245
Embryos, 195–197, 227–228
the supposed right to life of, 220, 227–228
Engelhardt, Jr., H.T., 74–75, 99–100, 151n, 197–200, 218, 221–222, 223n
Enlightenment, 101, 212
Environmentalism, 147–149, 155n, 159
Ethics, 5, 14n, 21, 69, 71–72, 75–76, 85, 110, 212, 222–223, 229, 254, 257–260, 269
business, 136–146
Confucian, 14n, 75–76, 85, 130, 171, 173, 177n, 190, 222–223, 229, 234, 260, 268–269
environmental, 147–150
global, 106, 190, 252n, 270, 277
Kantian, 143
liberal individualist, 21, 196, 260, 270–272
medical, 69, 106n, 123, 128–134, 192
virtue, 76, 134n
Eudaimonia, 49
Europe, 9, 27, 102, 107, 114, 116, 119–120, 135, 189–193, 211–212, 254
Eastern, 242
Western, 9, 102, 114, 116, 119–120, 135, 254
European Union, 189–193, 212

F
Fajia (the Legalists), 267
Familial favoritism, 4–7, 9
Familial obligation, 5, 31, 59–60, 78, 95–6, 101n
Familial roles, 12–20, 203
Familism, 18, 29–31, 39, 77, 206, 251, 259, 260n, 261, 269
Family values, 38–40, 90, 99, 110n, 257–260, 270
Feinberg, Joel, 58n
Feudalism in China, 15, 138, 201, 270
Filial piety (xiao), 3, 7, 18, 38, 59, 73, 83–85, 90, 95–97, 100–101, 194, 256, 273
Fingarette, Herbert, 109n, 202n, 203, 224–226
Fishkin, James, 33, 54n, 193, 194n
Fletcher, Joseph, 50n

G
Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 273–274
Gang, Zhou, 65n
Gen zhe you qi tian (right to own land for work), 65n
Globalization, 189–193, 198–201, 211
God, 27, 30, 148, 153, 198, 202–204, 216–218, 225, 229
Gods, Confucian, 153
Goods, 46–48, 61, 66–67, 144–145, 195, 199
instrumental, 48, 51, 61
intrinsic, 48, 51
Government institutions, 26, 111, 114, 244
Gray, John, 64n
Great Learning, The, 77, 175n, 267n
Gu (inflexibility), 209

H
Habermas, Jürgen, 48n
Han Dynasty, 67, 247
allocation of, 13, 65n
basic, 69, 78, 116n, 119, 193–194
costs, 81
long-term, 83–102
public, 13, 111, 127
reform, in China, 110–15, 122n
rights to, 13, 74
Hedonism, 235, 241–244
Hegel, G.W.F., 6, 24, 24n, 100n
Heng chan (private property), 65, 65n
Holism, 30, 269n, 270
Confucian, 30
social, 269n, 270
Index

Hong Kong, 83–85, 88n, 89, 93, 97–99, 98n, 99n, 101n, 102, 105–106, 113–116, 120, 166

Honorable, 31, 53n, 122, 129–146, 178
Honoring men of virtue (zun-xian), 19, 52n
non-profit, 70, 81, 127
private, 70, 81, 116, 119n, 120, 123–4, 126, 127n
public, 81, 99, 114, 122n, 123–124, 126n, 127–128
Houston, Texas, 84–85, 88, 88n, 89–90, 97–99, 101n
Huan, 158
Huang, Tsung-his, 35
Hui, Edwin, 11, 13–14, 21
Hui-kuo (kickbacks), 121n
Human dignity, 14, 101n, 192, 195, 217
Humanism, 147–148
Humanity (ren), 3n, 18, 30–31, 48, 50n, 53n, 73, 143, 149, 153, 155, 171–172, 180, 218, 271, 276–277
Human nature, 9n, 14–15, 17, 19, 29, 50n, 52, 75–76, 96, 132, 203, 205, 234
Human rights, 11, 14, 21, 56–61, 142, 151, 179, 190
Hume, David, 203n

I
Ideology, 73, 74, 110, 113n, 123, 128–129, 237–239, 246–247
communist Egalitarian, 129, 246–247
Confucianism as reactionary, 74
liberal, egalitarian social-democratic, 110, 113n, 246
Maoist, 238, 241
Marxist, 126n, 237
socialist, 123, 128–129, 237–238, 241
Individualism, 27, 34, 40, 57, 60, 211, 251, 259, 260n, 268–270, 272, 276
Inequality, 52–53, 55, 65, 193
Ip, Po-keung, 11–13, 18, 20–21

J
Japan, 135, 244
Ji, 76
Jia (home), 100, 102
Jiali (propitious li), 171
Jiang Zemin, 240, 240n
Ji (auspicious li), 171
Jing (reverence), 96, 175, 226
Junli (military li), 171
Junzi (gentlemen), 76, 234

Jury nullification, 24
Justice, 24, 26, 32–33, 34, 34n, 45–48, 50n, 51–56, 59, 61, 64, 68, 76n, 78n, 80, 102, 177, 193–195, 246, 252–253, 259
distributive, 45, 45n
retributive, 45, 45n
social, 26, 32, 34, 45–48, 50n, 51–56, 59, 61, 64, 68, 78n

K
Kantians, 5, 29, 143, 189, 212, 222
Kant, Immanuel, 5, 6, 143, 151n, 212, 222
Kavka, G.S., 66
Kefi, 186, 186n
Kickbacks, 71, 121n
Korea, South, 83–84
Ku Hung Ming, 144
Kui, 158
Kun, 153, 158, 158n
Kuo, 76
Kymlicka, Will, 18n, 26, 29, 33, 51n

L
Labor, Division of, 31, 64–65, 110, 131, 234, 241
Lau, D.C., 46n, 157
Chinese, 9, 35n, 39
civil, 60
common, 141
natural, 151n, 161, 173
Roman, 27
Lee Kuan Yew, 106n
Legal system, 13, 14, 28, 60n
Chinese, 60n
Liang Shu-ming, 75, 110–111
Libertarians, 28, 107, 110, 196–201, 206–207, 211–212
Li Gou, 182
Liu, Qingping, 4–7, 9, 9n, 105n
*Lizhishi* (substance of the ritual), 184
Christian, 50n, 204, 204n
Confucian, 50n, 204
with distinction, 20, 31, 53, 54, 59, 194n
erotic, 204, 204n
familial, 30–31, 205
relational, 204–205, 207–208, 212–213
universal, 4–6, 46n, 77, 207, 207n

M
MacIntyre, Alasdair, 49n, 58n, 174n, 204n
functional concepts and, 174
*Majiang*, 170
*Mandate of Heaven* (*tianming*), 159, 224
Maoism, 233, 238, 240–241, 246, 247n
Mao Zedong, 238–240
directed, benevolent, 105–107, 110, 114, 116
free, 64–65, 197, 212, 236
reforms, 231, 238
Marxism, 74, 237n, 239–240, 270
Marxist-Leninist ideology, 237n
Material wealth, 157, 233–236, 237n, 239, 239n, 242, 244
May Fourth Movement, 75
Medical care, China, 61, 70, 80, 111, 111n, 115, 121n, 123–125, 127
cooperative, 111
free, 70
labor-protection, 111
public-fee, 111, 115
Medical ethics, 106, 123, 128–133, 135, 192
Chinese, 123, 128–133
Medical professionalism, 125, 133–34, 134n
in China, 125, 133–34, 134n
Meritocracy, 27–28, 32–33, 234
Mohists, 5–6
Moral life, 7, 77, 140–141, 144, 166, 198–200, 229, 243, 261
communitarian, 199–200
Confucian, 166
Moral norms, 5, 141
Moral obligations, 5, 30, 143, 192
Kantian account of, 143
Mou, Z., 65n, 270n

N
*Nicomachean Ethics*, 45n, 51
Nozick, Robert, 12, 197, 197n

O
Opium Wars, The, 236

P
Paradox, deep (*shen du bei lun*), 4
Personality, 97, 101n, 143, 231–247
Confucian, 231–247
post-communist, 235–244
Personhood, 11–16, 18, 21, 57, 178, 215–229
Confucian concept of, 14, 57n, 216, 224–229
Judeo-Christian concept of, 14n, 29, 215–218, 221–222, 224, 229
transcendental concept of, 216, 221–224
Petroni, Angelo, 189–190, 196, 211–212
Philanthropy, 209–212
Plato, 24, 38, 99, 204n
Politics, 20–21, 26, 34, 36, 71, 109, 110, 252, 257, 259, 265, 271
Confucian, 36, 110, 271
of imperial China, 20
liberal, Western, 21, 34, 36
of the People’s Republic of China, 110, 265
Prescription medication, 71, 120, 121n, 123–125, 128
over-prescription of, 71, 120, 121n, 123–125, 128
Index

prescription of more expensive, 120, 121n, 123–125, 128

Private property, 64–67, 109, 111, 116, 116n, 148

Private sphere, 33, 267

Profit, 45n, 48, 67, 70, 71, 77, 80–81, 110, 121–122, 126n, 129–132, 142, 234, 239n, 242, 244–246

Public health, 13, 111, 126–127

Public sphere, 36

Q

Qi, 225n, 227

Qian, 153, 153n, 158, 158n

Qin (affection), 54, 96, 157, 205

Qin Dynasty, 171n

Qing Dynasty, 144, 171n, 247

Qi Huitian (Neo-Confucian scholar), 171n

Qin-qin (affection towards relatives), 20, 53

Quli (minute rituals), 171, 171n, 172n

R

Raciality, 144, 151n, 156, 198, 212, 221–223, 226, 254


Rule of law, 7, 24, 28, 32, 34–36, 39–40, 55, 60n, 121, 241–242

Confucian, 7

Rules of propriety, 30–31, 53n, 202–203

S

Sages, Confucian, 74, 96, 138, 149, 151, 156, 158–159, 173n, 206, 255

San Gang (Three Bonds), 267

Sakamoto, Hyakudai, 11, 13, 14

Self-Consciousness, 219–223

Self-Cultivation, Confucian, 20, 53, 166, 178, 258, 271, 271n, 273


Self-Determination, Confucian, 20, 53, 166, 178, 258, 271, 271n, 273

Self-Determination, Confucian, 20, 53, 166, 178, 258, 271, 271n, 273

SARS, 71
Index

Self-Indulgence, 200
Self-Sacrifice, 97, 233, 237, 272
Sex, 27, 28, 31–32, 100, 200, 208, 260
Shame, 130, 135–137, 139–141, 143–146, 176–179
Shendu (watchfulness over one’s self), 175n
Shi chang hua (marketization), 122n
Shike, 156
Shu (reciprocity), 57, 59n
Shuangguizhi (the dual-track system of reforms), 239n
Shun (the Confucian sage king), 9n, 14n, 38, 157–158
Singapore, 105–107, 110, 113–116
Central Provident Fund, 61, 78
Sittlichkeit, 6, 40
Social contract, 27, 203
Social democracy, 106–107
Socialism, 238–40, 247n
with Chinese characteristics, 239–240
Social justice, 26, 32, 34, 45–48, 50n, 51–56, 59, 61, 64, 68, 78n
Confucian, 48, 51, 54, 64
Social network, 142, 234, 272
Social practices, 53, 77, 96, 167–171, 180, 183, 202, 205–206, 225
closed, 168–171
regulative rules of, 168, 168n, 169–174, 174n, 175, 177, 179–181, 183
Social relations, 5, 18, 27, 34, 77, 173, 234–236
American, 170
Communist society, 73, 237
Confucian family-oriented, 32, 35
Liberal democratic civil society, 24, 26–40
pluralist, 46, 198, 216, 229, 269
social democratic, 34
Socrates, 38
Song Dynasty, 181, 182n, 254n, 268
Stoicism, 151n
Stout, Jeffrey, 49n
Substance, 14, 21
Sui, 158
Suicide, 83–84, 197, 208, 252, 264–266
Sympathy, 15, 203, 203n, 207–208, 210, 256, 270
Symposium, 204n
T
Tang Dynasty, 247
Tao, Julia, 11, 13–14, 20–21, 106–107, 135, 271n
Teleology, 49, 49n
Theory of Justice, A, 33, 46, 48n, 49, 49n, 64, 67, 73, 78, 195, 253, 253n
Tian (Heaven), 76, 151, 224
Tiananmen Square movement, 240
Tianming (Mandate of Heaven), 151, 224
Tooley, Michael, 220
Tui, 76
U
United Kingdom, 113–115, 236
United States, 114–116, 121n, 135, 166, 254
Universalism, 5–6, 143
Utilitarianism, 9n, 45n, 49n, 66, 181–182, 189, 266
V
Confucian, 19, 27, 29, 32, 34–35, 39, 52n, 75, 106, 106n, 110, 135, 235, 244, 265–266
Familist, 36, 40
Liberal, 29, 32, 34, 236, 270
Confucian theory of, 21, 141
human, 15, 17, 20, 30, 76, 100, 153, 203–204

W
Wang, Xiaoying, 231
Weber, Max, 231, 235
and the Protestant ethic, 231
Wei min zhi chan (building property for the people), 65n, 109n
Well-field system, 65n, 109n
Wenyan, 153
Wildes, S.J., Kevin Wm., 211n
Wo (egotism), 209
World Trade Organization (WTO), 240n
Wu, Emperor, 67

X
Xiao (filial piety), 3, 59, 73, 83, 85, 95–96, 102, 172
Xiaoguo, 158
Xiaoren (the masses), 234
Xici, 149, 149n, 150
Xin (fidelity), 54, 70n, 77, 157, 205
Xingli (Confucian greeting ritual), 169
Xiongli (Ominous li), 171n
Xiu Shen (self-cultivation), 53
Xu (order), 54, 205
Xunzi, 48, 55n, 110, 129n, 131, 137–139, 245–246

Y
Yellow Emperor, The, 157–58, 158n
Yi (respect, righteousness, appropriateness), 29, 31, 46n, 48, 53n, 73, 76–77, 129, 137–139, 153, 155, 157, 180, 205, 209, 245
Yijing, 149–153, 161
Yili (ceremonial rituals), 168n, 171, 171n, 172n, 181n
Yi-qi, 32
Yizhuan (ten wings), 149
Yo, Ronggeng, 35n
Youbi, 3n, 7, 9n

Z
Zhangzhang (aged), 185
Zhi-shan (the highest good), 49
Zhi (uprightness), 3n
Zhong (loyalty), 59n
Zhongyi, Chen, 65n
Zhou Dynasty, 17, 65, 201
Zhu Xi, 172n, 181n, 256
Zi Gong, 131
Zi ji ren (own people/family members), 89n, 99
Zi Lu, 131
Zun (honorable), 137
Zun-xian (honoring men of virtue), 19, 52n