

THE PHILOSOPHICAL MULTIDIMENSIONALITY OF CONFUCIANISM

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The main objective of this paper is to explore the philosophical multidimensionality of Confucianism as (1) a moral religion, (2) a moral metaphysics, (3) a moral metapsychology or a theory of human mind/nature (hsin/hsing), (4) an ethical theory, (5) a politicosocial theory, and (6) a critical theory, in order to shed a new light on the contemporary relevance of the Confucian tradition to the ecumenical movement in world philosophy (as well as in world religions). My preliminary attempt at a philosophical rediscovery of the multidimensional depth and profundity of Confucianism is primarily intended to show its philosophical/religious contributions for a more meaningful and fruitful philosophical/religious dialogues between this particular Chinese tradition and the other traditions, as well as for the ecumenical enrichment of world philosophy (and world religions) in our modern, pluralistic world.

At the beginning of my recent article, "From Ultimate Concern to Ultimate Commitment: A New Inquiry into the Essence of Mahayana Buddhism" (Ts'ung chung-chi kuan-huai tan chung-chi chen-shih: Ta-sheng fo-chiao te chen-ti hsin-t'an), I observe that most Chinese intellectuals, past and present, tend to take pride in the cultural heritage of the Great Tradition (the philosophy of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism as inherited by the intellectual elite) at the expense of the Little Tradition (folk religion, religious Taoism, Pure Land Buddhism, or other forms of religion as followed by the less cultivated Chinese populace). I further state that this unfortunate bias against the Little Tradition has much to do with the Chinese intellectuals' lack of understanding the nature and meaning of religion. One of the most conspicuous examples is the Chinese scholars' failure to understand Confucianism, the main tradition of China, as first

and foremost a moral religion. Under the profound influences of Neo-Confucian philosophy and/or Marxism-Leninism, nearly all the representative Chinese philosophers today, including Professors Fung Yu-lan and Mou Tsung-san, mistakenly insist that Confucianism is basically a philosophy and not a religion. For example, in his early work entitled Hsin-yüan-jen (An Inquiry into Humanity), Professor Fung Yu-lan of Beijing University attempts an hierarchical classification of what he calls "the spheres of human life" (jen-sheng ching-chie) into four, namely (1) the natural sphere, (2) the utilitarian sphere, (3) the moral sphere, and (4) the sphere of Heaven and Earth. Part of his intention to make such a classification is to stress the philosophical (non-religious) nature of the sphere of Heaven and Earth, where great Chinese philosophers like Confucius or Lao Tzu are said to have finally attained sagehood, with no need of relying upon what is called "religion" (tsung-chiao). In his most recent autobiographical work, San-sung-t'ang tzu-hsü, Fung again reiterates his pro-philosophical thesis that "the sphere of Heaven and Earth is what is attained by those who are well cultivated in philosophy." He then speaks of the four points of difference between philosophy and religion: (1) religion is no different from superstition, while philosophy is dependent upon reason and opposed to superstition; (2) religion resorts to thought-fabrication--God being its result, while philosophy relies upon theoretical reason; (3) the mode of the world as fabricated by religion is a reflection of social structure, whereas the mode of the world as conceptualized by philosophy is a creation of human spirit, and (4) the spiritual sphere attained by the religious believers is never really high, for it is either the natural sphere or the utilitarian sphere, whereas the sphere of Heaven and Earth as the highest sphere of human life is what can be attained by philosophy. Fung further states that in the process of human achievements, religion and sciences are always opposed to each other while philosophy and sciences complement each other. It can be said that Fung's anti-religious attitude in his early years was primarily influenced by Neo-Confucianism, which was already interpreted one-sidedly by most contemporary Chinese

scholars as a non-religious philosophy, and that the ever-intensified attack upon religion in his later years apparently resulted from his ideological commitment to Marxism-Leninism as the one and only system of ultimate truth.

Despite his ideological differences with Fung Yu-lan, Professor Mou Tsung-san of Taiwan also insists on Confucianism as basically a philosophy and not a religion--again a result of the commonly accepted one-sided view of Neo-Confucianism as a non-religious philosophy. In his recent work, Chung-kuo che-hsue shih-chiu-chiang (Nineteen Lectures on Chinese Philosophy), Mou critically contrasts Confucianism as moral metaphysics with Kant's metaphysics of morals (which implies moral theology), and states that "Confucianism does not deal with moral theology; it is only concerned with moral metaphysics, for it is not a religion."⁵ That is to say, Confucianism as moral metaphysics is essentially a philosophy free from religion. And in his Chih te chih-chüe yü chung-kuo che-hsue (Intellectual Intuition and Chinese Philosophy), he states: "The penetrativeness or influence of jen (humanity or human-kindness) cannot in principle have any boundary or limit; it, therefore, must ultimately become one with Heaven and Earth and all things. The mind of jen realizes all things and nothing is left alone. Thus, it is objectively established in the vertical (transcendental) direction as the substance or reality (t'i) of all things, and nothing whatsoever can stand outside of it. Thus, it is called jen-t'i (jen-substance or jen-reality), that is, jen is none other than t'i."⁶ In the Preface to his Hsien-hsiang yü wu-tzu-t'i (Phenomenon and Thing-in-itself), he further says: "The autonomous creativity of the moral mind, which is the original mind as identical with the (original) nature or Principle (Li), must not be neglected; nor should we undervalue the Chung-yung (Doctrine of the Mean) and Yi-chuan (Great Treatise on the Yi-ching) and speak of them in opposition to the Analects of Confucius and the Book of Mencius. The reason is that the original mind as identical with the (original) nature or Principle is a free and infinite mind. It is not only subjective but is objective as well; it is even absolute."⁷

My comment on Mou's statements is that, from the metaphilosophical point of view, there is no way of justifying the "absolute objectivity" or "moral reality" of things as they are in their perpetual change and transformation in the world. What Mou calls "the moral metaphysics" of Confucianism is no more than a quasi-philosophical reorientation of the pre-Confucian religious ideas of Heaven (t'ien) and the Mandate of Heaven (t'ien-ming). I must contend that the Confucian moralization of the process of perpetual change and transformation of all things in terms of "ever-creative production and reproduction" (sheng-sheng chih hua) is at best an external (cosmological) projection of the Confucian moral mind and nothing else. The claim Mou is making here, that Confucian moral metaphysics is "objective" or "absolute," is either semantically vague or metaphilosophically unjustifiable: semantically vague, because "objective" or "absolute" here can only be subjectively (meaning "within the mind") "objective" or "absolute"; metaphilosophically unjustifiable, because the Confucian pan-moralistic way of seeing things can hardly prove to be more "objective"--let alone "absolute"--than the other ways, such as the Mahayana Buddhist or the philosophical Taoist. In short, Confucianism is originally a moral religion, deeply rooted in the pre-Confucian idea of Heaven and the Mandate of Heaven, before it is reoriented as a moral metaphysics. It must be pointed out, in this connection, that even Neo-Confucian thinkers as philosophers, such as Chu Hsi or Wang Yang-ming, had never abandoned the moral-religious notion of the Mandate of Heaven in their sayings or writings, in spite of their attempts at a radical philosophization of Confucianism with a view to demonstrating its moral-metaphysical "superiority" over the philosophy of Sinitic Mahayana.

In sharp contrast to Fung's and Mou's pro-philosophical views of Confucianism as above, Professor Ren Jiyu, formerly Director of the Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Beijing), gives a strictly Marxist-Leninist interpretation of Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism as ideologically a reactionary religion. In his paper "Chu Hsi and Religion,"

for instance, Ren challenges, from the Marxist-Leninist point of view, the prevailing view in the Chinese academic world that "Chu Hsi's thought belongs to the realm of philosophy"; he holds, to the contrary, that it belongs "to the realm of religion, with his philosophical ideas understood as having been in the service of his religious system." As we all know, Chu Hsi is generally regarded as one of the most philosophical-minded thinkers in the history of Chinese thought; if Chu Hsi's thought belongs, in truth, to the realm of religion and not of philosophy, as Ren interprets (or, rather, critically depreciates by applying a dogmatic Marxist-Leninist analysis of social classes), then the entire traditional Confucian and Neo-Confucian thought will have to be put in the same category. Marxist-Leninist scholars like Ren, who have faithfully (blindly) followed Marx's anti-religious thesis that "religion is the opium of the people," can never see the distinction between the sociopolitical evil in history created by the so-called "religion" (or, better, the "established religious institutions") and the soteriological/ethical depth and profundity of a genuine religion, which can be well understood in terms of the following six elements, namely ultimate concern (in Paul Tillich's words), ultimate reality/truth, ultimate goal, ultimate commitment, Weltanschauung, and Lebensanschauung. Hence their relentless but baseless denunciation of religion per se.

While disagreeing with Fung's as well as Mou's view that Confucianism is essentially not a religion but rather a philosophy, I must say that it is originally a moral religion deeply rooted in the Mandate of Heaven before it can be understood or emphasized as a philosophy or as a moral metaphysics; and, while I agree with Ren's point that Confucianism is originally a religion, I must also add that, as a moral religion (but not as a superstition-like religion as misinterpreted by Ren) it is entirely free from any unhealthy superstitious beliefs. The real question now is: What is meant by "a moral religion"? In what sense is Confucianism first and foremost a moral religion, wherein lies the root or basis for Confucian moral metaphysics and metapsychology?

I have already mentioned the six elements necessarily constitutive of what is called "religion."

If we care to dig out, so to speak, the deep structure of Confucianism in terms of these six elements, namely (1) ultimate concern, (2) ultimate reality/truth, (3) ultimate goal, (4) ultimate commitment, (5) Weltanschauung, and (6) Lebensanschauung, then we cannot fail to see its religious depth and profundity. To begin with Confucian ultimate concern, Confucius' moral deepening and enrichment of the pre-Confucian li-culture or institution is clearly indicative of his ultimate concern for the Way, that is, the Way of jen (humanity or human-kindness). Confucius is not only concerned about man's social engagements in the daily practice of ceremonial conventions (li) but also deeply concerned about the moral perfecting of man and society for the full realization of the Way of jen, traditionally understood in terms of "inner sagehood and outer kingship." He says thus: "The chün-tzu (Confucian aspirant for sagehood) is concerned (yu) about the Way, not worried (yu) about poverty." The character yu in this sentence means "ultimate concern" and "worldly worries" in two entirely different contexts, the former being insightfully re-rendered by the late Professor Hsü Fu-kuan as "the consciousness of concern and care" (yu-huan yi-shih). Confucius' ultimate concern consists, in one word, in each and every person's existential self-awakening to the morally universal foundation of human existence and practice, the foundation that is none other than jen itself. It is indeed based on jen that Confucius is able to successfully transform the traditional religious belief and culture into the moral, humanist way of his own. But this moral transformation of the religiously transcendent (Mandate of Heaven) does not mean that Confucius is a sceptic, agnostic, or irreligious man, for the pre-Confucian notions of Heaven and the Mandate of Heaven is now only humanistically (morally) deepened and enriched; he had, throughout his entire life, never abandoned his belief in the religiously transcendent at all. It should be added that Confucian morality as well as religiosity does not lie in the Confucian man's idle talk about Heaven or the Mandate of Heaven; it rather consists in his day-to-day concern and caring for humanity or the human kind (jen) and in his conscientious engagement in the

perpetual moral perfecting of both man and society. As Confucius says: "It is man that makes the Way great, and not the Way that makes man great." The following passage from the Analects also exemplifies Confucius' moral-religious interpretation of Heaven or the Mandate of Heaven, by way of replacing the utilitarian prayer to or sacrificial rites for the personal t'ien (Heaven) with the chiün-tzu's existential acceptance of his natural lot (ming) as his moral destiny (ming) or as what Mencius calls "the correct ming" (cheng-ming):

The Master was very ill. Tzu Lu asked leave to pray for him. The Master said, "Is there such a thing?" Tzu Lu said, "There is. In the Eulogies it is said, 'Pray to the spirits above and below.'" The Master said, "My praying has been for a long time."¹¹

In Confucius' autobiographic note, the most important saying is, in my view, "at fifty I knew (realized) the Mandate of Heaven."¹² When the young Confucius decided to seek the Way for the human fulfillment of the Mandate, he was not quite clear about what the Mandate would mean to him. But, after thirty-five years of hard learning and moral cultivation, he began to understand and embody the Mandate (t'ien-ming) as his own heavenly appointment (t'ien-ming) or moral destiny (t'ien-ming)¹³ at the age of fifty. This was indeed the most important religious turning point of his life, for he was at last able to realize that human life is a (heavenly) task or assignment. It is here that ultimate concern turns into ultimate commitment, as best expressed by the age-old Confucian proverb, "Do your very best in handling human affairs and await the Mandate of Heaven." Thus, Confucius was able to say, in spite of his political disappointment, that "if my Way is to prevail, it is a matter of ming; if my Way fails to prevail, it is also a matter of ming."¹⁴ It is of great moral-religious significance that the word "ming" in the Confucian Way, which means "life-span," "(natural) lot," or "fate," can be read in two different ways at the same time: (1) natural lot as a matter of (accepting) one's own fate; or (2) moral destiny as a matter of morally immanent t'ien ("heavenly nature"), as deeply rooted in the

Mandate (ming) of Heaven (t'ien). To Confucius and his followers, man's natural lot, which refers to his inborn capacity, determined life-span, insurmountable physical limitations, secular success or failure beyond his control, etc., is to be existentially identified or taken over as his own moral destiny--as a matter of Confucian ultimate commitment to the Way. It was indeed only after his deep and profound moral internalization of the Mandate that Confucius was able to become completely at ease with whatever he heard. That is why he was able to reply, when his disciple Tzu Kung asked him what he meant by saying "No one knows me," that "I do not complain against Heaven, nor do I grumble against men. My studies lie low, and my penetration rises high. Only Heaven knows me!"¹⁵ Confucius' moral-religious acceptance of the Mandate of Heaven as his life-assignment or life-task was emulated by Mencius, who spoke not only of the correct ming but of "(how to become) a citizen of Heaven (t'ien-min)"¹⁶ as well. The Neo-Confucianist metaphysical/metapsychological revitalization of early Confucianism may look, on the surface, philosophical rather than religious, but none of the Neo-Confucian thinkers, including Chu Hsi and Wang Yang-ming, had ever left behind the deeply religious notion of the Mandate of Heaven, which does and must constitute the original (primordial) source or root of the Neo-Confucian (moral-cosmological notion) t'ien-tao (the Way of Heaven or Nature) as well as of its (moral-ontological and moral-metapsychological notion) t'ien-li (Principle of Heaven or Nature). To see this point more clearly, we must turn to the Confucian and Neo-Confucian conception of ultimate reality/truth in terms of t'ien and its multidimensional meanings.

Like many other primitive or folk religions in the world, Chinese religion at its formative stage some three or four thousand years ago was highly polytheistic and anthropomorphic in nature, juxtaposing fetishistic belief and worship of various kinds of supernatural beings such as ghosts or demons of the dead (jen-kuei) and heavenly spirits or gods (t'ien-shen). Fetishistic belief refers to the primitive Chinese deification and worship of numerous natural

objects or phenomena and artificial objects, including sun god, moon god (or goddess), earth god, gods of the soil and grain, kitchen god, wind god, rain god, mountain and river gods, and so on.

The worship of ghosts or demons of the dead refers to both ancestor worship and the worship of the nonancestral deceased; it is partly based on the popular belief that the departed soul has the dual nature of hun (the heavenly or yang component) and po (the earthly or yin component), and that hun would send down blessings to the living while po would turn into a harmful demon if not placated by proper burials or sacrifices. Coupled with this utilitarian religious idea is a genuine sense of human gratitude, remembrance, deep grief and respect on the part of the living in their mortuary and sacrificial rites for the dead. In particular, the uniquely Chinese cult of ancestor worship is, as Professor C. K. Yang observes in his Religion in Chinese Society, "basically a device to cope with the emotionally shattering and socially disintegrating event of the death of an intimate member in the family group....[It] was the belief in the continued existence of the dead in the form of the soul and the further assumption of mutual dependence between the soul and the living that gave rise to much of the cultic behavior in ancestor worship." Through the Confucian moral purification and humanistic deepening, ancestor worship became the most significant religious practice in traditional China. In the legendary period of Chinese history, prior to the rise of the Yin (or Shang) dynasty (c. 1520-1030 B. C.), heavenly gods were called shen (the spiritual, spirits) or ti ("emperors," "heavenly lords"). Some Chinese historians contend that the legendary Five Emperors, including Yellow Emperor (deified by the religious Taoists) and the sage-emperors Yao and Shun (greatly honored by the Confucianists), were all mythological figures created as a result of "ancestral" transformation of the heavenly gods, whose origin can be traced back to the primitive Chinese worship of the moon god or goddess. This may or may not be true; in any case, it is incontestable that the distinction between the human emperor and the divine "emperor" hardly existed in the mind of the primitive Chinese.

After their conquest of northern China, the rulers of the Yin dynasty began to promote their own tribal god ti to the quasi-monotheistic status of shang-ti ("supreme emperor," Lord-on-High), in order to secure their politico-ideological control of the nation. The Lord-on-High thus became the divine Emperor (ti) or Heaven (t'ien), sending blessings down to the dynasty as well as governing the cosmic order and human destiny. He was anthropomorphically believed to live with numerous spirits or divine beings who flank, obey, and serve Him as his subordinates in the heavens; He should not be mistaken, however, as an omnipotent creator-deity comparable to God in the Abrahamic-religious tradition. Although some simple creation myths did exist in the early written history of China, they have never been taken seriously by the Chinese populace, nor have they ever been developed into a religious or theological doctrine. Like Buddhism, Chinese religion from the beginning has taken very little interest in the problem of creation. The tribal character of ti or shang-ti was completely dropped after the Chou (c. 1030-221 B. C.) overthrew the Yin dynasty, but its monotheistic status was strengthened and utilized for the religious sanction to and moral justification of the new regime. The belief in ti or shang-ti as the supreme deity continued in the early Chou dynasty, the deity that was said to govern, in a very vague manner, the cosmic order and human destiny, to give protection in battles, to send down blessings and cause calamities, as well as to pass on the appointment and dismissal of government officials. But the religious and moral emphasis was gradually shifted from the concept of ti to that of t'ien. For a while ti and t'ien were used as two interchangeable terms for the supreme Heavenly Master. However, by the time Confucius was born, t'ien or Heaven had completely taken the place of ti. This terminological change reflects, in a deeper sense, the beginning of an ideological transition from pre-Confucian quasi-monotheism through religious transcendentalism to Confucian moral religion and yin-yang cosmology.

In his A History of Chinese Philosophy, Fung Yu-lan analyzes five meanings of the word "t'ien"; this was probably the first, detailed semantic analysis given of the word before World

War II. With Fung's account of the five meanings of t'ien as a point of reference, we can re-analyze the notion of t'ien in terms of the following six meanings: (1) heaven-and-earth or the universe (t'ien-ti chih t'ien); (2) what is natural (t'ien-jan chih t'ien) or natural lot (t'ien-hsing chih t'ien); (3) the supreme deity or Lord-on-High (huang-t'ien chih t'ien); (4) the Mandate of Heaven (t'ien-ming chih t'ien), which is Confucianly humanized in terms of (4a) the general will of the people (politicosocially manifesting the Mandate of Heaven) and (4b) the human mind/nature (hsin/hsing) as originally good (metapsychologically manifesting the Mandate); (5) the Way of Nature (Heaven) cosmologically manifesting the Mandate of Heaven (t'ien-tao chih t'ien); and (6) the Principle of Nature (Heaven) ontologically manifesting the Mandate of Heaven (t'ien-li chih t'ien) inherent in man (yi-li) and things (wu-li).

Had the early Confucianists attempted to "promote" the divine status of the quasi-monotheistic Lord-on-High to that of God or omnipotent creator-deity, China would have had a strictly monotheistic religion comparable to Abrahamic religion. Curiously, it has never happened. What did happen was, through Confucius' and his successors' moral humanization (4a and 4b), moral cosmologization (5), and moral ontologization (6), there had been a gradual shift of emphasis from Confucian religion to Neo-Confucian metaphysics, which culminated in the Ch'eng-Chu school of "Nature is Principle" (hsing chi Li) and the Lu-Wang school of "Mind is Principle" (Hsin chih Li); that is, while the former derives (4b) from (6), with which is (5) identified, the latter attempts to ontologically extend (4b) to (5) and (6) and identify them all together. It cannot be emphasized too much that these two Neo-Confucian schools had never denied or deviated from (4), which remains religiously transcendent, without, however, being totally severed from the aspect of moral immanence--as is expressed at the beginning of the Chung-yung: "T'ien-ming (the Mandate of Heaven or what is imparted by Heaven) is the (original or heavenly) nature (of man)." What I wish to suggest here is that, if we are to rediscover the deeply moral-religious nature of Confucianism (and Neo-Confucianism), we

must take (4) as the original source or root of Confucian (and Neo-Confucian) moral metaphysics in terms of (5) and (6) as well as of moral metapsychology in terms of (4b). The Confucian emphasis on (4) instead of (3) clearly indicates the functional ("how to see") approach typical of the Chinese religious/philosophical tradition in sharp contrast to the substantive ("what to see") approach typical of the Western theological/philosophical tradition. But there is no denial of the fact that both Confucian moral metaphysics and moral metapsychology are deeply rooted in the religiously transcendent Mandate of Heaven. In other words, Confucianism is a kind of holistic multiperspectivism in the functional form (4, 4a, 4b, 5, and 6), with the religious dimension (4) as its original source. Herein is to be found the philosophical multidimensionality of Confucianism/Neo-Confucianism in the following logical order: first and foremost Confucian moral religion; then Confucian moral metaphysics and moral metapsychology, both to be derived from Confucian moral religion by way of a philosophical reorientation; then Confucian ethical theory rooted in Confucian moral metaphysics and metapsychology; then Confucian politicosocial theory (the way of outer kingship) as a macromoral application of Confucian ethical theory (the way of inner sagehood); and then Confucianism as a critical theory, to be developed out of Confucian ethics and politicosocial philosophy.

It is generally understood that Confucian moral metaphysics and moral metapsychology, which is based on Mencius' theory of human nature as originally good, constitute the twofold ("objective" and "subjective") ground for Confucian ethical and politicosocial theory. As I have argued, however, Confucian moral metaphysics is at best an external projection of the original, moral mind and can hardly be considered an "objective truth." To make my point clearer, I would say that Confucian moral metaphysics is, if metaphilosophically reexamined, no more than an ontological/cosmological "objectification" of Confucian metapsychology, according to which man's original (primordial) nature, as dynamically manifested in human morality as the

original mind of jen-yi (humanity and righteousness, human-kindness manifested in terms of situational oughtness), is morally good, simply because it is a result of t'ien-ming (what is imparted by Heaven as constitutive of man's original mind/nature). It was through Mencius' ingenious philosophical reorientation of Confucian moral religion that the Confucian (Mencian) theory of (the original) mind/nature as morally good became the metapsychological basis for Confucian ethics and morality. The Confucian thesis, that all ethics and morality must be grounded upon a theory of human mind/nature is one of the great human insights Confucianism has shown in the history of ethical thought. This thesis can hardly be refuted for lack of universal validity or intersubjective acceptability. It is, as a matter of fact, shared by many other great philosophical schools or religious traditions. Today more and more philosophical and religious thinkers, as well as scientists, have come to agree that we must have a basic and sound understanding of man's nature (and mind) before we start to talk about ethics and morality. The question is: What is the best possible way of understanding human nature and mind for the sake of ethics and morality? It seems to me that Mencius' theory of human nature/mind as originally good is the best possible philosophical answer. His theory is well summed up in the following doctrine of the "fourfold mind" or "fourfold beginning":

As far as his ch'ing (sentiment or feeling) is concerned, man is capable of becoming good. If he does what is not good, that is not the fault of his own capacity. All men have the mind of commiseration. All men have the mind of reverence and respect. All men have the mind of right and wrong. The mind of commiseration points to jen (human-kindness); the mind of shame and dislike points to yi (righteousness or situational oughtness); the mind of reverence and respect points to li (propriety or sociomoral norms); the mind of right and wrong (approving and disapproving) points to chih (moral knowledge or wisdom). Jen, yi, li, and chih are not imposed on myself from without; they are what I originally have....It is said thus, "Seek and you will find it; neglect and you will miss it."...The Classic of Poetry says, "Heaven produces the

teeming multitude. As there are things, there is their order. As long as the people keep to their constant good nature, they will love this beautiful virtue." ¹⁸

In my article, "The Mencian Theory of Mind (hsin) and Nature (hsing): A Modern Philosophical Approach," I have tried to reconstruct ten arguments, based on my hermeneutic reading of the Book of Mencius, in favor of Mencius' theory. Not all the ten arguments look philosophically forceful and convincing. The (last) argument from religious transcendence, for instance, is based on the Confucian belief in the Mandate of Heaven and cannot be considered a philosophical argument at all. The "argument from religious transcendence" rather discloses the moral-religious root of Mencius' theory of mind/nature. But, there are at least two arguments out of those ten, namely "argument from moral self-awakening" and "argument from metaethical necessity," that can be philosophically sufficient in support of Mencius' thesis. The "argument from metaethical necessity," which can be regarded as a modern, metaethical enrichment or deepening of the "argument from moral self-awakening," is specially designed to give the Mencian answer to the question (hypothetically raised by a rational egoist): "Why should I be moral to such an extent that I may be morally obligated to sacrifice my life in the existential border-situation?" The main part of the argument I have developed for Mencius is the following: "Since man's nature is originally good, he is certainly able to extend his own original mind to the same original mind of other men. Man's original goodness is the (humanly) ultimate ground for jen and moral reciprocity, which constitutes the basic moral context of human living. If, for example, your life, which has been in great danger, is now saved by a man of jen, you cannot help, as a human being, being awakened to moral reciprocity deeply rooted in the original goodness of man; you must also reach a nonegoistic conclusion that man (including yourself) ought to lay down his life for the sake of morality (jen-yi) in the border-situation. This point is not a matter of logical reasoning or purely intellectualistic argument; it is a matter of human awakening to the original goodness of man on the higher level of human nature.

It is this very point that ultimately sustains or justifies the human truth, that it is due to moral reciprocity that you ought to endanger your life in the border-situation in order to, say, save your own child's or a stranger's life. If you still try to escape from this moral reality, you are to be considered a coward, but not a rational egoist. A coward would not endanger his life for the sake of morality in the border-situation, but he certainly knows in his heart (hsin) that he is a coward. Your so-called 'rational egoism' is in truth an inauthentic camouflage for your own cowardice and nothing else; it should rather be called self-deception or "bad faith," to borrow Sartre's term. Of course, you may still honestly insist that you do not believe in the original goodness of human nature and that jen or moral reciprocity means nothing from the view-point of rational egoism. In that case, you ought to be thrown out of the human society, all members of which are to abide by the principle of moral reciprocity. A rational egoist cannot and should not deceive himself. Are you, then, willing to be thrown out of the human society?" It should be pointed out in this connection that this metaethical argument and the remaining arguments are to be taken as strictly human (intersubjective) and existential in nature, as distinguishable from the typical Western philosophical arguments in a purely logical form. Existentially speaking, Mencius could indeed quote Confucius' disciple Tseng Tzu's saying, "When a bird is about to die, its notes are sad; when a person is about to die, his words are good," to illustrate the ultimate meaning of human morality most strikingly revealed in what Karl Jaspers calls "the border-situation" (Grenzsituation), where man is able to realize his original mind/nature, by (e. g.) deciding to "give up life and choose yi (moral oughtness)" or by courageously facing his own "death and dying," which Dr. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross thanatologically characterizes as "the final stage of human growth." In short, that man is at least able to realize his original mind/nature in the existential border-situation not only points to the ultimate meaning of ethics and morality, but also existentially justifies the Mencian theory as the metapsychological foundation of Confucian ethics and morality, to which we now turn.

As I understand it, Confucian ethics and morality consists of the following five theses: (A) all ethics and morality must be grounded upon a theory of human mind/nature; (B) the Mencian theory of (the original) mind/nature, which is none other than Mencius' theory of man's mind/nature as originally good reaching its existential-ontological culmination in the Neo-Confucianist Wang Yang-ming's teaching of "extending man's liang-chih (innate knowledge of the good)," is the metapsychological basis for Confucian ethics and morality; (C) the Mencian theory of (the original) mind/nature makes it possible in principle and practice for each and every human individual to fully develop his moral potential for the attainment of inner sagehood (nei-sheng), wherein lies the Confucian goal of life; (D) jen-yi (humanity/righteousness, or human-kindness manifested through situational oughtness) constitutes the highest principle of Confucian morality, and governs all the Confucian moral virtues, moral judgments, and moral actions; and (E) the way of inner sagehood (in terms of day-to-day moral perfecting of each and every member in the society, beginning with the political leaders who must set a good example for the people) is the ethical prerequisite and assurance for the eventual realization of the way of outer kingship (in terms of moral perfecting of the entire society through humane government). Since we have already dealt with (A) and (B), we can now turn to (C) and (D), both making up the fundamentals of Confucian ethical theory, as well as to (E), which refers to Confucian politicosocial theory as a macromoral application of Confucian ethical theory.

Thesis (C), that (the Confucian) man can and should (try to) become a virtuous person (a man of jen), or even a sage, through day-to-day personal cultivation and moral practice is, of course, grounded upon (B) that man's mind/nature is originally good. Mencius argues that there is no difference at all between ordinary men and ancient sage-emperors, such as Yao and Shun, insofar as man's moral potential for the attainment of sagehood is concerned, for the simple reason that the moral nature of all men on the highest level of human nature always remains one and the same. What really distinguishes those who follow the "great part" (moral nature) from

those who follow the "little part" (animal instincts) is twofold: environmental conditions and human efforts. Mencius eloquently says thus:

Take the barley for instance. Sow its seeds and cover them with soil. The place is the same and the time of sowing is also the same. The plants grow rapidly and by summer solstice they all ripen. If there is any unevenness, it is because of the difference of the soil, of the unequal nourishment afforded by the rains and dews, and of the difference in human efforts involved. Thus, things of the same kind are all alike. Why should we doubt with respect to [the primordial nature of] man? The sage and I are of the same kind.²²

If we can make a distinction between two kinds of human morality, namely what I would call "maxima moralia" (maximum morality) and "minima moralia" (minimum morality), then Confucian ethics in terms of (C), that is, the way of inner sagehood, can be said to advocate maxima moralia. Confucius and his followers earnestly encourage us to make maximum efforts in our day-to-day personal cultivation and conduct, and strongly urge us to exert our mind to the utmost and perfect our moral nature for the eventual attainment of inner sagehood, wherein is to be found the Confucian summum bonum of the human kind. By contrast, minima moralia, which fairly represents the prevailing ethical understanding in almost all well developed and modernized nations or societies, only requires our strict observance of the established sociomoral rules or "law and order," often expressed in strictly legalist terms, the ever-intensified legalizations of ethics and morality in the United States being a most conspicuous example. Unlike maxima moralia, minima moralia need not make any high-minded moral demand that each and every member of the society ought to constantly perfect his moral nature beyond his merely external observance of the legalistically stipulated sociomoral rules or conventions. It can, therefore, be said that while minima moralia takes a radically realistic (hence more and more legalistic) approach to the presentday moral problems, such as divorce

or abortion, traditional Confucianism as maxima moralia idealistically promotes the way of moral perfection (inner sagehood) as a matter of (the Confucian) man's ultimate concern. Indeed, Confucianism as what Professor Mou Tsung-san calls "moral idealism" and Confucianism as what I have called "moral religion" are ultimately one and the same.

With regard to (D) that puts forward jen-yi as the highest principle of human morality, our attention must be first drawn to the ethical meaning of "jen," the Chinese word that is composed of two character-parts, "erh" (two) and "jen" (man); this etymological feature certainly signifies the fundamental moral context of humanity that morality begins with the concrete and genuine human relationship and intercourse between two persons as autonomous moral agents. As Mencius says, "jen (human-kindness) is [what constitutes the essential nature of] jen (man)."²³ As to the word "yi," which means "moral appropriateness," "situational oughtness," or "righteousness," and which can perhaps be best translated (in Kant's German word) as Sollen, it is often expressed in The Analects of Confucius in moral opposition to the word "li," which means selfish profit. Confucius says, for instance, "One who, when he sees a chance to gain, stops to think whether it would be morally appropriate (yi) to do it, when he sees [someone in] danger, is ready to sacrifice his life....Such a man can be called a man of [moral accomplishment]."²⁴ He also says, "The chün-tzu in worldly dealings is freed from [the morally one-sided] 'for or against'; he takes yi (Sollen or oughtness) as the standard [of moral judgment or decision]."²⁵ It is clear, then, from these yi-expressions that the idea of "jen-as-the Way manifested through yi-as-Sollen" is already implied in the Analects, though Confucius never tried to combine yi with jen. In any case, it was through Mencius' ingenious ethical reasoning that jen-yi became the highest principle of Confucian morality. Mencius also creatively developed Confucius' idea of ch'üan (situational weighing) as a situational concretization of yi-as-Sollen, and attempted thereby an ethical resolution of the problem of ching-ch'üan (ching or the constant moral principle situationally weighed or reinterpreted, so as to accord with yi-as-Sollen). Jen is the

Way, and yi as moral oughtness is the situational and timely Mean, which is to be attained as a result of situational "weighing" (ch'üan) or reinterpretation of jen as the ultimate moral standard (ching). Mencius' resolution of the following moral conflict between jen and li (propriety or sociomoral convention in a particular historical period) illustrates well the ethical application of the jen-yi principle as a matter of ching-chüan:

Ch'un-yü K'un said, "Is it a rule of propriety (li) that, in giving and receiving, man and woman do not touch each other?" Mencius said, "It is." "When one's sister-in-law is drowning, should one stretch out a hand in order to rescue her?"

Mencius said, "He who does not stretch out a hand when his sister-in-law is drowning is a brute. That in giving and receiving man and woman do not touch each other is a rule of propriety, but to stretch out a hand in order to rescue the sister-in-law is a matter of situational weighing (ch'üan)."²⁶

Based on the above example, we can reconstruct Confucian ethical theory as follows in terms of ching-ch'üan resolution as a kind of situation ethics: (1) Jen (human-kindness) manifested through yi-as-Sollen is the ultimate and invariable moral principle for Confucian morality; (2) since jen-yi only gives us the overall ceteris paribus condition with no rule-like specifications, the moral agent has to carefully "weigh" (ch'üan) the situational meaning of jen-yi when unusual or exceptional occasions arise; (3) the decision made or action taken after the situational "weighing" must be morally right (yi) and meet the "timely Mean" (shih-chung) requirement. It should be noted that Mencius' ethical resolution of the ching-ch'üan problem was attempted two thousand years earlier than Kant's discussion of moral conflict and its ethical resolution.

Thesis (E) is that the way of outer kingship (politicossocial morality in our modern term) is and should be a natural extension or application of the way of inner sagehood (individual morality). That is to say, constant moral perfecting of each and every member of the

society--especially the rulers and their ministers who must set a moral example for the people--will not only lead to the individual attainment of sagehood but also assure the eventual sociopolitical realization of what is called "the world of grand unity." The traditional Confucianists as moral idealists were optimistically convinced that social harmony and political order could be well maintained if the rulers were able to set a personal, moral example for and exert a politico-moral influence on their subjects. As against the legalist theory of government by "law and order," Confucius and his followers advocate government by virtue (jen-cheng) or humane government. By identifying "to govern" (cheng) with "to rectify" (cheng), Confucius puts forward the doctrine of "rectification of names" (cheng-ming) and makes a moral demand that each and every member of the society fulfill his daily duties or obligations as a real father, a real son, a real official, and so on. Confucius and his followers are firmly convinced that, if the political leaders set a good example, the people will spontaneously follow in their moral steps and become virtuous themselves as well. Unfortunately, the over-optimistic traditional Confucianists have seldom tried to see a big gap between "Everyone can become a sage" and "Nearly all of us humans have and will never become a sage," nor have they realized that the Confucian sage may also make a moral mistake insofar as the consequence of his moral action is concerned--despite the moral goodness of his intention or will from the Confucian standpoint of motive-centered morality. As a matter of fact, history has shown to us that no perfect sage-emperors have ever appeared in the history of Confucian-related Asia, China in particular. Aren't all these clearly suggestive of the macromoral necessity that a more realistic and practicable theory of government by law, as having achieved a great success in the democratic and free modern nations such as the United States, should replace the idealistic theory of government by virtue as unsuccessfully propagated in the Confucian-influenced Asian nations for the past two thousand years? In other words, politicsocial morality as a matter of minima moralia must be well maintained first, before we begin to explore the individual and

politicossocial goal of life as a matter of maxima moralia. My argument concerning the Confucian way of outer kingship is that it can never be naturally extended from the way of inner sagehood, and therefore that Confucianists must abandon the age-old ethical dream that the "world of grand unity" will eventually be attained as a result of the macromoral application of the way of inner sagehood to the way of outer kingship.

To be highly critical of Confucian politicossocial theory as a natural extension or application of Confucian ethics and morality does not mean that this theory must be totally abandoned. What I wish to suggest here is that Confucian politicossocial theory can be modernistically reoriented to become a kind of "critical theory." That is to say, the Confucian notion of jen-yi as the highest principle of ethics and morality can still remain as the "regulative principle," though not the "constitutive principle"-- to borrow a pair of Kantian terms-- for our modern day politicossocial and legal institutions. The Confucian mistake in politicossocial philosophy can be said to result from its naive conception of jen-yi as not only the highest principle of individual morality but the constitutive principle of government and (legal) laws as well. Hence their idealistic politicossocial conclusion that government by virtue should and can replace government by law. If, however, the Kantian distinction between the regulative principle and the constitutive principle is well made from the outset, Confucian philosophers can still develop a critical theory in regard to politics and government, by taking jen-yi as both the ultimate principle for individual conduct and the regulative principle for the governmental and legal matters. In short, Confucian jen-yi as this twofold principle can never be challenged, for it is what defines man as what he is in metapsychological terms (as distinguishable from a beast) and what he ought to be in ethical terms.

Notes:

1. See Tang-tai (Con-temporary) Monthly, No. 11 (March 1, 1987), Taipei, p. 16.
2. Fung Yu-lan, San-sung-t'ang tzu-hsü (Autobiographical Notes at San-sun-t'ang), Joint Publishing Co., Beijing, 1984, p. 268.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 268-269.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 269.
5. Mou Tsung-san, Chung-kuo che-hsüe shih-chiu-chiang (Nineteen Lectures on Chinese Philosophy), Student Press, Taipei, 1983, p. 76.
6. Mou Tsung-san, Chih te chih-chüe yü chung--kuo che-hsüe (Intellectual Intuition and Chinese Philosophy), Commercial Press, Taipei, 1971, p. 191. Both t'i (substance or reality) and yung (function or manifestation) are functional terms, and are ultimately nondifferentiable from each other in Chinese metaphysical thought. According to Confucian moral metaphysics, there is no reality (God, Being, Substance, or the like) to be posited as separable from the unceasing process of production and reproduction of things.
7. see Mou Tsung-san's Preface to his Hsien-hsiang yü wu-tzu-shen (Phenomenon and Thing in Itself), Student Press, Taipei, 1976.
8. See Wing-tsit Chan, ed., Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism, University of Hawaii Press, 1986, p. 355.
9. The Analects of Confucius, 15:31.
10. See Hsü Fu-kuan, Chung-kuo jen-hsing-lun-shih (The History of the Chinese Philosophy of Human Nature), Tunghai University Press, Taichung, Taiwan, 1963, p. 20.
11. Analects, 7:34.
12. *Ibid.*, 2:4.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, 14:38.

15. Ibid., 14:37.
16. The Book of Mencius, 7A:19.
17. C. K. Yang, Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1961, pp. 29-30.
18. Mencius, 6A:6.
19. See my "The Mencian Theory of Mind and Nature," in Journal of Chinese Philosophy, vol. 10, no. 4 (December, 1983), Honolulu, pp. 399-400.
20. Analects, 8:4.
21. Mencius, 6A:10.
22. Ibid., 6A:7.
23. Ibid., 7B:16.
24. Analects, 14:13.
25. Ibid., 4:10.
26. Mencius, 4A:17.
27. We can find a standard account of "the world of grand unity" in the Li-yün (Evolution of Rites), one of the most fascinating chapters in the ancient Confucian text Book of Rites.