Confucius

The Secular as Sacred

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Preface

When I began to read Confucius, I found him to be a prosaic and parochial moralizer; his collected sayings, the *Analects*, seemed to me an archaic irrelevance. Later, and with increasing force, I found him a thinker with profound insight and with an imaginative vision of man equal in its grandeur to any I know. Increasingly, I have become convinced that Confucius can be a teacher to us today—a major teacher, not one who merely gives us a slightly exotic perspective on the ideas already current. He tells us things not being said elsewhere; things needing to be said. He has a new lesson to teach.

Having the benefit of some acquaintance with recent developments in the philosophical study of man, I also saw that there are distinctive insights in the *Analects*, which are close in substance and spirit to some of the most characteristic of the very recent philosophical developments. In these respects, then, he was "ahead of our times" until recently, and this is an important reason for his having been pretty much neglected in the West for several centuries. Now, however, we can profit from the parallels in his thinking to certain new strands of Western thought, for here his way of putting the issues places them in a fresh perspective.

In coming to the conclusion that there are such important parallels in addition to what is more radically new, I have tried

to take into account the natural tendency to read into a text the ideas by which one is already seized. With what success this has been done, the reader will judge. I will only say here that my primary aim—and joy, when successful—has been to discover what is distinctive in Confucius, to learn what he can teach me, not to seek that somewhat pendantic pleasure we can find in showing that an ancient and alien teacher anticipated some point which is already quite familiar to us.

Among Confucius's earlier translators, learned Catholic scholars and priests and devout missionary Protestants, were men of intellectual integrity whom one can only respect for their great achievement. But they tended to admire Confucius in somewhat the way the Church used to admire Socrates—as one who, though pagan, was near saintliness in his dedication to the highest truths and most perfect life, but who, alas, aspired to what only Christian Revelation can bring to fruition. Where the *Analects* could be read as approximating Christian ethics, or as adumbrating Christian theology, Confucius, too, was found admirable. More to the point for present purposes—such readings were often favored in the translating. In any case, the text was read by men instinctively and still unself-consciously bound by thinking in Christian terms, in European terms.

In more recent times, more anthropologically sophisticated and secularly oriented scholars have applied themselves to translating the *Analects*. The specifically Christian element has disappeared in recent translations. But often the European background assumptions remain. Even where European ideas do not infect the translation, it is Buddhist and Taoist thought —now so much more familiar to Western scholars—which colors the rendering. Then the error is a cumulative one. For the Buddhist ideas, however different from European ideas in so many respects, share with the latter certain fundamental biases: they favor the individualistic and subjectivistic view of

man. It is individual mind, the inner life and reality of the individual, which is focal in understanding man as viewed throughout the main course of Buddhist and European thinking. I realize, of course, that this latter statement is an enormous generalization, subject to many kinds of exception being taken. I offer it, however, in this spirit; after the studies that issued in this book, I appreciated new, and to me, powerfully illuminating ways in which that generalization can be supported and understood.

In any case it came to appear to me that whatever the other differences of emphasis among individual translators, the subjective-psychologistic reading of the *Analects* is presumed throughout in every translation, and it is presumed in a quite unself-conscious, and hence all the more prejudicial way. It is a thesis of the present book that with respect to this fundamental bias, all the extant translations have misled: if I am right, they have introduced a way of seeing man which is not that of Confucius, and they have, as a result, failed to bring out, nor do their translations even allow for, certain distinctively non-European, non-Buddhist features of Confucius's view of man.

In finding this to be so, and now in trying to show here why it is so, one of my principal resources has been the original text, to try to see what it says, what it implies and what it does not say or need not imply. The original text can say with absolute obviousness only so much. Beyond this one must ask questions of it, and one may get answers; but the unasked questions are unlikely to be answered. One who is mainly concerned with stylistic issues will provide a translation geared to rendering the stylistic nuances of the original but blurring, perhaps, the psychological ones. One who is primarily concerned with psychological issues may be less interested to bring out, and even less able to appreciate those stylistic nuances. No modern translation of the *Analects* has been done by a Westerner who is a professional philosopher.

In consequence, I believe, no translation has been inspired by an adequate familiarity with contemporary philosophical ideas and techniques.

It is with these remarks as background that I say I have tried to discover Confucius's teaching by taking him at his word. One further thing I mean by this is that I have tried to stay as strictly as possible within the confines of the earlier and purportedly more authentic passages of the *Analects*, mainly the first fifteen books out of the total of twenty; and even here I have been cautious about what scholars have taken to be later interpolations into these earliest passages. However, for my present purposes, it is not essential to insist that the historical Confucius said all or any of these "sayings." After eliminating certain passages in this spirit, on the basis of independent scholarly studies (see the appended Note on Textual Matters), we are left with a text that has unity in terms of historical-social context, linguistic style and philosophical content. It is this text, and this one only, that I have tried to interpret here.

I have refrained to the utmost from introducing interpretative material from what we know to be later Chinese commentaries; it seems to me that the cross-fertilization and fusion of quite different lines of philosophic thought in China in the age of the "Philosophers" quickly gave a different cast to what Confucius was saying. Of course such an attempt to reach Confucius pure can only succeed in degree, never completely. *All* our texts and readings are irremediably infected with interpretation, commentary, editorial selection and sheer ideological skullduggery.

Ultimately, however, my interest is philosophical, and therefore what counts for me is the philosophical insight in the chosen text when it is responsibly read. And I have always tried to keep this in mind even though, as my remarks have already suggested, I believe one cannot completely divorce a responsible philosophical reading of such a text from careful

historical and linguistic analysis. Furthermore, it is consistent with my purposes and method that, not being a Sinologist myself, I have relied heavily on secondary materials and commentary by Western scholars, including, of course, their often excellent summaries of the vast lore of Chinese scholarship. But in my principal chosen task—the intensive and careful philosophical study of the *Analects*—I have done my own reading in the original text. Wherever relevant philosophical problems were rooted in textual problems, there I have done my own independent textual analysis so far as I believed it relevant to the philosophical point of that text.

I must therefore bear responsibility for the translations of passages offered here, though they are based upon wide consultation, heavy borrowing, and in a number of cases, simple quotation from leading translations and scholarly articles. My main object has been to select translations or to retranslate with an eye toward bringing out the philosophical nuances of the text. In some instances, these are in the nature of specific notions or implications distinctly present (though not always immediately evident). In other cases, and equally important, what is philosophically relevant is the ambiguity, vagueness, silence or other evidence of unconcern in the text with respect to distinctions that thinkers in other traditions might regularly introduce and attempt to be clear about. Naturally I have discussed the text and the issues in order to bring out my reasons for a philosophically critical point of translation, and I believe I have avoided what would be considered eccentric renderings designed to force the meaning in order to support my thesis.

I

Human Community as Holy Rite

The remarks which follow are aimed at revealing the magic power which Confucius saw, quite correctly, as the very essence of human virtue. It is finally by way of the magical that we can also arrive at the best vantage point for seeing the holiness in human existence which Confucius saw as central. In the twentieth century this central role of the holy in Confucius's teaching has been largely ignored because we have failed to grasp the existential point of that teaching.

Specifically, what is needed (and is here proposed) is a reinterpretation which makes use of contemporary philosophical understanding. In fact such a reinterpretation casts, by reflection as it were, illumination into dimensions of our own philosophical thought, which have remained in shadow.

The distinctive philosophical insight in the *Analects*, or at least in its more authentic "core," was quickly obscured as the ideas of rival schools infected Confucius's teaching. It is not surprising that this insight, requiring as it does a certain emphasis on the magical and religious dimensions of the *Analects*, is absent from the usual Western-influenced interpretations of modern times. Today the *Analects* is read, in its main drift, either as an empirical, humanist, this-worldly teaching or as a parallel to Platonist-rationalist doctrines. Indeed, the teaching of the *Analects* is often viewed as a major step toward the

explicit rejection of superstition or heavy reliance on "supernatural forces."[1]

There is no doubt that the world of the *Analects* is profoundly different in its quality from that of Moses, Aeschylus, Jesus, Gautama Buddha, Lao-tzu or the Upanishadic teachers. In certain obvious respects the *Analects* does indeed represent the world of a humanist and a traditionalist, one who is, however, sufficiently traditional to render a kind of pragmatic homage, when necessary, to the spirits.

"Devote yourself to man's duties," says the Master; "respect spiritual beings but keep distance." (6:20)* He suited the deed to the precept and himself "never talked of prodigies, feats of strength, disorders, or spirits." (7:20) In response to direct questions about the transcendental and supernatural he said: "Until you are able to serve men, how can you serve spiritual being? Until you know about life, how can you know about death?" (11:11)

If we examine the substance of the *Analects* text, it is quickly evident that the topics and the chief concepts pertain primarily to our human nature, comportment and relationships. Merely to list some of the constantly recurring themes suffices for our present purposes: Rite *(li)*, Humaneness *(jen)*, Reciprocity *(shu)*, Loyalty *(chung)*, Learning *(hsueh)*, Music *(yüeh)*, and the concepts by which are defined the familial-

1. In this middle third of the twentieth century, writers who disagree in many ways almost all tend to agree on the secular, humanist, rationalist orientation of Confucius. Waley says the turn toward the this-worldly was characteristic of tendencies of the age and not peculiar to Confucius. See Waley, *Analects of Confucius*, pp. 32–33. See also Leslie, *Confucius*, pp. 40–41; Chan, *Source Book*, p. 15; H. G. Creel, *Confucius and the Chinese Way*, p. 120; Kaizuka, pp. 109–119; Liu, *Confucius, His Life and Times*, pp. 154–156. Yu-lan Fung, in his various pre-Communist works, takes a more ambiguous position on this issue but seems to me to stress the rationalist, humanist aspects, ending by holding this to be a defect of one-sidedness in Confucius; cf. his *The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy*, p. 18.

*Quotations from the *Analects* are cited by chapter and paragraph according to the traditional text.

social relationships and obligations (prince, father, etc.).

The this-worldly, practical humanism of the *Analects* is further deepened by the teaching that the moral and spiritual achievements of man do not depend on tricks or luck or on esoteric spells or on any purely external agency. One's spiritual condition depends on the "stuff" one has to begin with, on the amount and quality of study and good hard work one puts into "shaping" it. Spiritual nobility calls for persistence and effort. "First the difficult. . . ." (6:20) "His burden is heavy and his course is long. He has taken *jen* as his burden —is that not heavy?"(8:7) What disquieted Confucius was "leaving virtue untended and learning unperfected, hearing about what is right but not managing either to turn toward it or to reform what is evil."(7:3) The disciple of Confucius was surely all too aware that his task was one calling not for amazement and miracle but for constant "cutting, filing, carving, polishing" (1:15) in order to become a fully and truly human being, a worthy participant in society. All this seems the very essence of the antimagical in outlook. Nor does it have the aura of the Divine.

Yet, in spite of this dedicated and apparently secular prosaic moralism, we also find occasional comments in the *Analects* which seem to reveal a belief in magical powers of profound importance. By "magic" I mean the power of a specific person to accomplish his will directly and effortlessly through ritual, gesture and incantation. The user of magic does not work by strategies and devices as a means toward an end; he does not use coercion or physical forces. There are no pragmatically developed and tested strategies or tactics. He simply wills the end in the proper ritual setting and with the proper ritual gesture and word; without further effort on his part, the deed is accomplished. Confucius's words at times strongly suggest some fundamental magical power as central to this way. (In the following citations, the Chinese terms all are central to

Confucius's thought, and they designate powers, states and forms of action of fundamental value. Insofar as necessary, they will be discussed later.)

"Is *jen* far away? As soon as I want it, it is here." (7:29)

"Self-disciplined and ever turning to *li*—everyone in the world will respond to his *jen.*" (12:1)

Shun, the great sage-ruler, "merely placed himself gravely and reverently with his face due South (the ruler's ritual posture); that was all" (i.e., and the affairs of his reign proceeded without flaw). (15:4)

The magical element always involves great effects produced effortlessly, marvelously, with an irresistible power that is itself intangible, invisible, unmanifest. "With correct comportment, no commands are necessary, yet affairs proceed."(13:6) "The character of a noble man is like wind, that of ordinary men like grass; when the wind blows the grass must bend."(12:19) "To govern by *te* is to be like the North Polar Star; it remains in place while all the other stars revolve in homage about it."(2:1)

Such comments can be taken in various ways. One may simply note that, as Duyvendak remarks, the "original magical meaning" of 2:1 is "unmistakable," or that the ritual posture of Shun in 15:4 is "a state of the highest magical potency."[2] In short, one may admit that these are genuine residues of "superstition" in the *Analects.*

However, many modern interpreters of the *Analects* have wished to read Confucius more "sympathetically," that is, as one whose philosophic claims would have maximum validity for us in our own familiar and accepted terms. To do this these commentators have generally tried to minimize to the irreducible the magical claims in the *Analects.* For it is accepted as

2. J. L. Duyvendak, "The Philosophy of Wu Wei," *Études Asiatiques* 3/4 (1947), p. 84.

an axiom in our times that the goal of direct action by incantation and ritual gesture cannot be taken as a serious possibility. (The important exception to this general acceptance of the axiom, to be discussed later, is contemporary "linguistic analysis." But the import of this work has as yet hardly extended beyond the world of professional philosophy.)

The suggestion of magic and marvel so uncongenial to the contemporary taste may be dissipated in various ways: only one of the sayings I have quoted comes from the portion of the *Analects*—Books 3 to 8—that has been most widely of all accepted as "authentic" in the main. The other sayings might be among the many interpolations, often alien in spirit to Confucius, which are known to be in the received text. Or one might hold that the magical element is quite restricted in scope, applying only to the ruler or even the perfect ruler alone.[3] Still another possible method of "interpreting away" the "magical" statements is to suppose that Confucius was merely emphasizing and dramatizing the otherwise familiar power of setting a good example.[4] In short, on this view we must take the "magical" sayings as being poetic statements of a prosaic truth. Finally, one might simply argue that Confucius was not consistent on the issue—perhaps that he was mainly and characteristically antimagic, but, as might well be expected, he had not entirely freed himself of deep-rooted traditional beliefs.

All of these interpretations take the teaching of a magical dimension to human virtue as an obstacle to acceptance by the sophisticated citizen of the twentieth century. The magic must be interpreted away or else treated as a historically understandable failure on Confucius's part. I prefer to think we can still learn from Confucius on this issue if we do not begin

3. Cf. Waley, *Analects of Confucius*, pp. 64–66, and especially "I do not think Confucius attributed this magic power to any rites save those practiced by the divinely appointed ruler."
4. See, for example, Ibid., p. 66.

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by supposing the obvious meaning of his words as unacceptable.

Rather than engage in polemics regarding these other interpretations, I shall devote the remainder of my remarks to a positive exposition of what I take to be the genuine and sound magical view of man in Confucius's teaching. I do not hold that my interpretation is correct to the exclusion of all others. There is no reason to suppose that an innovator such as Confucius distinguishes all possible meanings of what he says and consciously intends only one of these meanings to the exclusion of all others. One should assume the contrary. Of the various meanings of the Confucian magical teaching, I believe the one to be elaborated in the following remarks is authentic, central and still unappreciated.

Confucius saw, and tried to call to our attention, that the truly, distinctively human powers have, characteristically, a magical quality. His task, therefore, required, in effect, that he reveal what is already so familiar and universal as to be unnoticed. What is necessary in such cases is that one come upon this "obvious" dimension of our existence in a new way, in the right way. Where can one find such a new path to this familiar area, one which provides a new and revealing perspective? Confucius found the path: we go by way of the notion of *li*.

One has to labor long and hard to learn *li*. The word in its root meaning is close to "holy ritual," "sacred ceremony." Characteristic of Confucius's teaching is the use of the language and imagery of *li* as a medium within which to talk about the entire body of the *mores*, or more precisely, of the authentic tradition and reasonable conventions of society.[5] Confucius taught that the ability to act according to *li* and the will to submit to *li* are essential to that perfect and peculiarly

5. See, for example, H. G. Creel, *Confucius*, pp. 82–83. See also, *Analects*, 9:3.

human virtue or power which can be man's. Confucius thus does two things here: he calls our attention to the entire body of tradition and convention, and he calls upon us to see all this by means of a metaphor, through the imagery of sacred ceremony, holy rite.

The (spiritually) noble man is one who has labored at the alchemy of fusing social forms *(li)* and raw personal existence in such a way that they transmuted into a way of being which realizes *te*, the distinctively human virtue or power.

Te is realized in concrete acts of human intercourse, the acts being of a pattern. These patterns have certain general features, features common to all such patterns of *li*: they are all expressive of "man-to-man-ness," of reciprocal loyalty and respect. But the patterns are also specific: they differentiate and they define in detail the ritual performance-repertoires which constitute civilized, i.e., truly human patterns of mourning, marrying and fighting, of being a prince, a father, a son and so on. However, men are by no means conceived as being mere standardized units mechanically carrying out prescribed routines in the service of some cosmic or social law. Nor are they self-sufficient, individual souls who happen to consent to a social contract. Men become truly human as their raw impulse is shaped by *li*. And *li* is the fulfillment of human impulse, the civilized expression of it—not a formalistic dehumanization. *Li* is the specifically humanizing form of the dynamic relation of man-to-man.

The novel and creative insight of Confucius was to see this aspect of human existence, its form as learned tradition and convention, in terms of a particular revelatory image: *li*, i.e, "holy rite," "sacred ceremony," in the usual meaning of the term prior to Confucius.

In well-learned ceremony, each person does what he is supposed to do according to a pattern. My gestures are coordinated harmoniously with yours—though neither of us has to

force, push, demand, compel or otherwise "make" this happen. Our gestures are in turn smoothly followed by those of the other participants, all effortlessly. If all are "self-disciplined, ever turning to *li*," then all that is needed—quite literally—is an initial ritual gesture in the proper ceremonial context; from there onward everything "happens." What action did Shun (the Sage-ruler) take? "He merely placed himself gravely and reverently with his face due south; that was all." (15:4) Let us consider in at least a little detail the distinctive features of action emphasized by this revelatory image of Holy Rite.

It is important that we do not think of this effortlessness as "mechanical" or "automatic." If it is so, then, as Confucius repeatedly indicates, the ceremony is dead, sterile, empty: there is no *spirit* in it. The truly ceremonial "takes place"; there is a kind of spontaneity. It happens "of itself." There is life in it because the individuals involved do it with seriousness and sincerity. For ceremony to be authentic one must "participate in the sacrifice"; otherwise it is as if one "did not sacrifice at all."(3:12) To put it another way, there are two contrasting kinds of failure in carrying out *li*: the ceremony may be awkwardly performed for lack of learning and skill; or the ceremony may have a surface slickness but yet be dull, mechanical for lack of serious purpose and commitment. Beautiful and effective ceremony requires the personal "presence" to be fused with learned ceremonial skill. This ideal fusion is true *li* as sacred rite.

Confucius characteristically and sharply contrasts the ruler who uses *li* with the ruler who seeks to attain his ends by means of commands, threats, regulations, punishments and force. (2:3) The force of coercion is manifest and tangible, whereas the vast (and sacred) forces at work in *li* are invisible and intangible. *Li* works through spontaneous coordination rooted in reverent dignity. The perfection in

Holy Rite is esthetic as well as spiritual.

Having considered holy ceremony in itself, we are now prepared to turn to more everyday aspects of life. This is in effect what Confucius invites us to do; it is the foundation for his perspective on man.

I see you on the street; I smile, walk toward you, put out my hand to shake yours. And behold—without any command, stratagem, force, special tricks or tools, without any effort on my part to make you do so, you spontaneously turn toward me, return my smile, raise your hand toward mine. We shake hands—not by my pulling your hand up and down or your pulling mine but by spontaneous and perfect cooperative action. Normally we do not notice the subtlety and amazing complexity of this coordinated "ritual" act. This subtlety and complexity become very evident, however, if one has had to learn the ceremony only from a book of instructions, or if one is a foreigner from a nonhandshaking culture.

Nor normally do we notice that the "ritual" has "life" in it, that we are "present" to each other, at least to some minimal extent. As Confucius said, there are always the general and fundamental requirements of reciprocal good faith and respect. This mutual respect is not the same as a conscious feeling of mutual respect; when I am *aware* of a respect for you, I am much more likely to be piously fatuous or perhaps self-consciously embarrassed; and no doubt our little "ceremony" will reveal this in certain awkwardnesses. (I put out my hand too soon and am left with it hanging in midair.) No, the authenticity of the mutual respect does not require that I consciously feel respect or focus my attention on my respect for you; it is fully expressed in the correct "live" and spontaneous performance of the *act*. Just as an aerial acrobat must, at least for the purpose at hand, possess (but not think about his) complete trust in his partner if the trick is to come off, so we who shake hands, though the stakes are less, must have (but not

think about) respect and trust. Otherwise we find ourselves fumbling awkwardly or performing in a lifeless fashion, which easily conveys its meaninglessness to the other.

Clearly it is not necessary that our reciprocal respect and good faith go very far in order for us to accomplish a reasonably successful handshake and greeting. Yet even here, the sensitive person can often plumb the depths of another's attitude from a handshake. This depth of human relationship expressible in a "ceremonial" gesture is in good part possible because of the remarkable specificity of the ceremony. For example, if I am your former teacher, you will spontaneously be rather obvious in walking toward me rather than waiting for me to walk toward you. You will allow a certain subtle reserve in your handshake, even though it will be warm. You will not slap me on the back, though conceivably I might grasp you by the shoulder with my free hand. There are indescribably many subtleties in the distinctions, nuances and minute but meaningful variations in gesture. If we do try to describe these subtle variations and their rules, we immediately sound like Book 10 of the *Analects*, whose ceremonial recipes initially seem to the modern American reader to be the quintessence of quaint and extreme traditionalism. It is in just such ways that social activity is coordinated in civilized society, without effort or planning, but simply by spontaneously initiating the appropriate ritual gesture in an appropriate setting. This power of *li*, Confucius says, depends upon prior learning. It is not inborn.

The effortless power of *li* can also be used to accomplish physical ends, though we usually do not think of it this way. Let us suppose I wish to bring a book from my office to my classroom. If I have no magic powers, I must literally take steps—walk to my office, push the door open, lift the book with my own muscles, physically carry it back. But there is also magic—the proper ritual expression of my wish which

will accomplish my wish with no such effort on my part. I turn politely, i.e., ceremonially, to one of my students in class and merely express in an appropriate and polite (ritual) formula my wish that he bring me the book. This proper ceremonial expression of my wish is all; I do not need to force him, threaten him, trick him. I do not need to do anything more myself. In almost no time the book is in my hands, as I wished! This is a uniquely human way of getting things done.

The examples of handshaking and of making a request are humble; the moral is profound. These complex but familiar gestures are characteristic of human relationships at their most human: we are least like anything else in the world when we do not treat each other as physical objects, as animals or even as subhuman creatures to be driven, threatened, forced, maneuvered. Looking at these "ceremonies" through the image of *li*, we realize that explicitly sacred rite can be seen as an emphatic, intensified and sharply elaborated extension of everyday *civilized* intercourse.

The notion that we can use speech only to talk *about* action or indirectly to *evoke* action has dominated modern Western thought. Yet contemporary "linguistic" analysis in philosophy has revealed increasingly how much the ritual word is itself the critical act rather than a report of, or stimulus to, action. The late Professor J. L. Austin was one of those who brought the reality and pervasiveness of this phenomenon to a focus in his analyses of what he called the "performative utterance."[6] These are the innumerable statements we make

6. J. L. Austin, "Performative Utterances," in *Philosophical Papers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 220–239; *How to Do Things with Words* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962); "Performatif-Constatif," in *La Philosophie Analytique*, Cahiers de Royaumont, Phil. No. V (Editions de Mineit, Paris, 1962), 271–305.

I have offered a systematic analysis of the concept of the performative, which I believe concords with and amplifies the points I am here making in connection with Confucius, though my analysis of performativeness was in-

which function somewhat like the "operative" clause in a legal instrument. They are statements, but they are not statements *about* some act or inviting some action; instead they are the very execution of the act itself.

"I give and bequeath my watch to my brother," duly said or written is not a report of what I have already done but is the very act of bequeathal itself. In a marriage ceremony, the "I do" is not a report of an inner mental act of acceptance; it is itself the act which seals my part of the bargain. "I promise . . ." is not a report of what I have done a moment before inside my head, nor is it indeed a report of anything at all; the uttering of the words is itself the act of promising. It is by words, and by the ceremony of which the words form a part, that I bind myself in a way which, for a man "ever turning to *li*," is more powerful, more inescapable than strategies or force. Confucius truly tells us that the man who uses the power of *li* can influence those above him—but not the man who has only physical force at his command.

There is no power of *li* if there is no learned and accepted convention, or if we utter the words and invoke the power of the convention in an inappropriate setting, or if the ceremony is not fully carried out, or if the persons carrying out the ceremonial roles are not those properly authorized ("authorization"—again a ceremony). In short, the peculiarly moral yet binding power of ceremonial gesture and word cannot be abstracted from or used in isolation from ceremony. It is not a distinct power we happen to use in ceremony; it is the power *of* ceremony. I cannot effectively go through the ceremony of bequeathing my servant to someone if, in our society, there is no accepted convention of slavery; I cannot bet two dollars if no one completes the bet by accepting; I cannot legally plead

tended to be entirely general. See Herbert Fingarette, "Performatives," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 4 (1967).

"Guilty" to a crime while eating dinner at home. Thus the power of *li* cannot be used except as the *li* is fully respected. This, too, is Confucius's constant refrain. "The Three Families used the Yung Song . . . what possible application can such words have in the Hall of the Three Families?" (who were not entitled, according to *li*, to use this Song). (3:2)

For present purposes it is enough to note how many are the obvious performative formulas in our own language and ceremony,[7] and also to note that there may be less obvious but no less important performative formulas, for example, those formulas in which one expresses one's own wish or preference or choice. "I choose this one" excludes the objection, made after one receives it, that one was not speaking truly. For to say it in the proper circumstances is not to report something already done but is to take the "operative" step in making the choice.[8]

The upshot of this approach to language and its "ceremonial" context was, in the reasoning of Professor Austin, paradoxical. He came to feel forced toward the conclusion that ultimately *all* utterances are in some essential way performative. This remains an open question, but it suffices for us to recall that it is now a commonplace of contemporary analytical philosophy (as it was a basic thesis of pragmatist philosophies) that we use words to *do* things, profoundly important and amazingly varied things.

Indeed, the central lesson of these new philosophical insights is not so much a lesson about language as it is about

7. Though the list could go on interminably, I mention here just a few more terms which commonly enter into formulas having an obvious performative function: "I christen you," "I appoint you," "I pick this (or him)," "I congratulate you," "I welcome you," "I authorize you," "I challenge you," "I order you," "I request you."
8. For an extensive and characteristic example of the recent trend to treat as a special, crucial category these and other first-person present-tense expressions using "mental" or "action" verbs, see S. Hampshire, *Thought and Action* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959).

ceremony. What we have come to see, in our own way, is how vast is the area of human existence in which the substance of that existence *is* the ceremony. Promises, commitments, excuses, pleas, compliments, pacts—these and so much more are ceremonies or they are nothing. It is thus in the medium of ceremony that the peculiarly human part of our life is lived. The ceremonial act is the primary, irreducible event;[9] language cannot be understood in isolation from the conventional practice in which it is rooted; conventional practice cannot be understood in isolation from the language that defines and is part of it. No purely physical motion is a promise; no word alone, independent of ceremonial context, circumstances and roles can be a promise. Word and motion are only abstractions from the concrete ceremonial act.

From this standpoint, it is easy to see that not only motor skills must be learned but also correct use of language. For correct use of language is *constitutive* of effective action as gesture is. Correct language is not merely a useful adjunct; it

9. The literature on issues pertaining to this topic is now vast, and in general one might summarize by saying that there are two distinct and contrasting trends, easily the two most influential throughout the English-speaking philosophical world. One trend is the "formalistic" analysis of science, language, and "knowledge," a kind of analysis which, in a much more attenuated and sophisticated way, still leans toward a view, opposed to what I have here expressed, that denies the ultimate irreducibility of such notions as, e.g., "the ceremonial act" and argues instead for a behavioral or physicalist approach to human conduct. I have in mind here the movement inspired by Russell and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica* and by the work of the "Vienna Circle"; the more specific and recent tendencies may be sampled in such standard anthologies as that of H. Feigl and M. Brodbeck, *Readings in the Philosophy of Science* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1953); and in the series of the Minnesota Studies in Philosophy of Science. The other trend has its roots in the later work of L. Wittgenstein, G. Ryle, J. L. Austin, P. F. Strawson, John Wisdom and others. These analysts have concentrated on the natural languages (hence not "formal" languages) and have in one way or another argued that the physicalist-behavioralist approaches to "mind" and "action" are fundamentally misconceived. They have been elaborating in great detail alternative analyses which, though not identical, have family resemblances and which affirm a radical, logical gap between the language of "action," "mind" and, in effect, what I have here called the ceremonial act and on the other hand the mathematical-physical language of physical science.

is of the essence of executing the ceremony.

From this perspective we see that the famous Confucian doctrine of *cheng ming*, the "rectification of terms" or "correct use of terminology," is not merely an erroneous belief in word-magic or a pedantic elaboration of Confucius's concern with teaching tradition. Nor do I see any reason to read into it a doctrine of "essences" or Platonic Ideas, or analogous medieval-age neo-Confucian notions, for the *Analects* provides no other hint of any such doctrine.[10]

Of course we must be leery of reading our own contemporary philosophical doctrines into an ancient teaching. Yet I think that the text of the *Analects*, in letter and spirit, supports and enriches our own quite recently emerging vision of man as a ceremonial being.

In general, what Confucius brings out in connection with the workings of ceremony is not only its distinctively human character, its linguistic and magical character, but also its

10. This position is taken more or less explicitly in the various works of Fung Yu-lan. The *Analects* passage which is most explicit—indeed the only fully explicit passage on *cheng ming* in the *Analects* (13:3)—is evidently much later in style than and different in content from the core of the work. See Waley, *Analects of Confucius*, p. 172. Even so, the passage does not itself say that names must "correspond" to "actualities" (Fung, *Chinese Philosophy*, p. 60); also essentially Chu Hsi's interpretation in his commentary on the Lun Yu. Nor does it say names must be in "accordance with the truth" (Legge), nor that "language must concord with what is meant" (Waley). The text itself merely says that names (or language) must be concordant (what is needed, or what goes with). But this leaves it ambiguous: Must language be concordant with the activity *(li)* of which it is a part ("the prince *being* a prince"), or must it concord as name with thing named? My own view is that the distinction was not originally clear, and that both senses were tacitly in mind. Even in Hsun Tzu, if one reads carefully with this question in mind, the issue is not clearly formulated one way or another, though he is always read as if he were definitely speaking of name and thing named. But this is in large part due to our own Western bias toward this traditional (but now widely rejected) doctrine of how language works; it is supported by the analogous view which also developed in China and becomes part of the orthodox commentary. Once we are aware of the ceremonial or performative kinds of functions of language, the original texts begin to read differently.

moral and religious character. Here, finally, we must recall and place at the focus of our analysis the fact that for Confucius it is the imagery of Holy Ceremony that unifies and infuses all these dimensions of human existence. Perhaps a modern Westerner would be tempted to speak of the "intelligent practice of learned conventions and language." This has a fashionably value-free, "scientific" ring. Indeed the contemporary analytical philosophers tend to speak this way and to be suitably common-sensical and restrained in their style. But this quite fails to accomplish what Confucius's central image did.

The image of Holy Rite as a metaphor of human existence brings foremost to our attention the dimension of the holy in man's existence. There are several dimensions of Holy Rite which culminate in its holiness. Rite brings out forcefully not only the harmony and beauty of social forms, the inherent and ultimate dignity of human intercourse; it brings out also the moral perfection implicit in achieving one's ends by dealing with others as beings of equal dignity, as free coparticipants in *li*. Furthermore, to act by ceremony is to be completely open to the other; for ceremony is public, shared, transparent; to act otherwise is to be secret, obscure and devious, or merely tyrannically coercive. It is in this beautiful and dignified, shared and open participation with others who are ultimately like oneself (12:2) that man realizes himself. Thus perfect community of men—the Confucian analogue to Christian brotherhood—becomes an inextricable part, the chief aspect, of Divine worship—again an analogy with the central Law taught by Jesus.

Confucius wanted to teach us, as a corollary, that sacred ceremony in its narrower, root meaning is not a totally mysterious appeasement of spirits external to human and earthly life. Spirit is no longer an external being influenced by the ceremony; it is that that is expressed and comes most alive *in*

the ceremony. Instead of being diversion of attention from the human realm to another transcendent realm, the overtly holy ceremony is to be seen as the central symbol, both expressive of and participating in the holy as a dimension of all truly human existence. Explicitly Holy Rite is thus a luminous point of concentration in the greater and ideally all-inclusive ceremonial harmony of the perfectly humane civilization of the *Tao*, or ideal Way. Human life in its entirety finally appears as one vast, spontaneous and holy Rite: the community of man. This, for Confucius, was indeed an "ultimate concern"; it was, he said, again and again, the only thing that mattered, more than the individual's life itself. (3:17; 4:5, 6, 8)

2

A Way without a Crossroads

Confucius in his teachings in the *Analects* does not elaborate on the language of choice or responsibility. He occasionally uses terms roughly akin to these. But they are not developed or elaborated in the ways so characteristic of their central import in Western philosophical and religious understanding of man. To be specific, Confucius does not elaborate the language of choice and responsibility as these are intimately intertwined with the idea of the ontologically ultimate power of the individual to select from genuine alternatives to create his own spiritual destiny, and with the related ideas of spiritual guilt, and repentance or retribution for such guilt.

Precisely because we of the West are so deeply immersed in a world conceived in just such terms, it is profitable for us to see the world in quite another way, in Confucius's way. He was, after all, profoundly concerned to understand man and man's place in society. He was dedicated to defining and illuminating what we would call moral issues. He was a great and an original teacher. How, then, could Confucius omit this whole complex of notions centering around "choice" and "responsibility"?

We must recognize at once that the absence of a developed language of choice and responsibility does not imply a failure to choose or to be responsible. Some men were more responsi-

ble than others in Confucius's day as in ours. It is also obvious that men made choices in ancient China. I am not so sure we can speak as confidently about guilt, repentance or retributive punishment in the sense we use these words, but also the realities which we use these words to designate did not exist. The notion of punishment, which did exist in ancient China, was that of deterrent punishment—not due retribution to cleanse guilt, but a stern "lesson" or literal crippling which would deter future malfeasance.

However, without arguing this latter point here, we can allow that in the case of "choice" and "responsibility," the realities they designate did indeed exist. Yet, although we in the West have an elaborated language in which to express these realities and to trace out their inner shape and dynamics in detail, Confucius (and his contemporaries) did not possess such a language. And they had no significant concern with these moral realities so central to their contemporaries, the peoples of Greece and the Near East.

Perhaps the most revealing way to begin to bring out this "omission" is to consider the primary imagery in the *Analects.* It centers around the "*Tao.*" *Tao* is a Way, a path, a road, and by common metaphorical extensions it becomes in ancient China the right Way of life, the Way of governing, the ideal Way of human existence, the Way of the Cosmos, the generative-normative Way (Pattern, path, course) of existence as such. (In the *Analects,* "*Tao*" never takes its rare but possible alternative sense as "word" or "speak.")

The imagery in the *Analects* is dominated by the metaphor of traveling the road. Written characters that occur typically and frequently in the text are those meaning path, way, walk, tracks, follow, go through, from, to, enter, leave, arrive, advance, upright, crooked, level, smooth, stop, position.

The notion of a Way is, not surprisingly, congenial to the central Confucian notion of *li,* rite or ceremony. *Li,* for Confu-

cius, is the explicit and detailed pattern of that great ceremony which is social intercourse, the humane life. The transition from the image of walking the true Path uprightly to carrying out a ceremony properly is an easy and congenial one. We may even think of *li* as the map or the specific road-system which is *Tao*.

It is easy, if one is so inclined, to develop this path-imagery to bring in the notions of choice, decision, responsibility. We should need only to introduce the derivative image of the crossroads, an obvious elaboration of *Tao* imagery to us. Yet this image, so perfectly suited, so plainly available for use as a metaphor for choice, is *never* used in the *Analects*.

Indeed the image of the crossroads is so natural and even insistently available as an element of any richly elaborated path-imagery that only the most profound commitment to the idea of the cosmos as basically unambiguous, as a single, definite order, could make it possible to ignore in the metaphor the image of the crossroads as a challenge to the traveler on the Way. This Confucian commitment to a single, definite order is also evident when we note what Confucius sees as the alternative to rightly treading the true Path: it is to walk crookedly, to get lost or to abandon the Path. That is, the only "alternative" to the one Order is disorder, chaos.

Where does one finally arrive if one follows the Way? Is there a goal that puts an end to the travel? The imagery of Confucius does not lead us to dwell upon the person arriving at a destined or ideal place, whether it be depicted as harbor, home or golden city. Instead, the spiritually noble man arrives at a condition rather than a place, the condition of following the Way without effort and properly. He arrives at that tranquil state that comes from appreciating that it is the following of the Way itself that is of ultimate and absolute value. Thus in this respect it does not take time to "reach" the goal since one does not have to arrive at any particular point on the map:

to reach the goal is simply to set oneself to treading the Path now—properly, with correct appreciation of its intrinsic and ultimate significance.

One can be truly following the Way at whatever the level of one's personal development and skill in the Way, whatever the level of one's learning—for a wholehearted commitment to learning the Way is itself the Way for those who are not yet perfected in the Way. However, although the learner may be following the Way for the learner, he cannot rest; his burden is heavy for he is the apprentice, not yet the Master, the *jen* man, the man perfected in *li*, the truly noble man.

The basic conception of man in the *Analects* is that he is a being born into the world—more especially into society—with the potentiality to be shaped into a truly human form. There is, to begin with, the raw stuff, the raw material. This must be elaborated by learning and culture, shaped and controlled by *li*. Either this "cutting, filing, chiseling and polishing" (1:15) is done well or poorly. If it is well done, through painstaking and properly directed effort by the person and good training by his teachers, then to that extent he will walk straight upon the Way. If there is a failure to shape according to the ideal, then by virtue of this defect he will deviate from the Way.

Thus there is no *genuine* option: either one follows the Way or one fails. To take any other "route" than the Way is not a genuine road but a failure through weakness to follow *the* route. Neither the doctrine nor the imagery allows for choice, if we mean by choice a selection, by virtue of the agent's powers, of one out of several equally real options. Instead it puts the task in terms of either using one's powers to walk the Way or being too weak, *without* power, and of going crookedly nowhere, falling or weaving about pointlessly in quest of the mirages of profit, advantage and personal comfort.

It is true that the Master said: "If a man doesn't constantly

ask himself, 'What about this, what about this?' I can do nothing about him." (15:15) Our own tendency, reading this isolated remark, may be to read this as a concern with choice. But it need not be so at all. It need not be read as "What about this—which of the alternatives, to do it or not to do it, shall I choose?" Instead, one may suppose that the notion of equally valid alternatives is not implied, that there is presumed to be only one right thing to do and that the question then means in effect, "What about this, *is* it right; is it the Way?" Put in more general terms, the task is not conceived as a choice but as the attempt to characterize some object or action as objectively right or not. The moral task is to make a proper classification, to locate an act within the scheme of *li*.

There are two passages in the *Analects* in which Confucius comments on a matter that can be rendered as a mind "deluded" or in "error" or in "doubt," but which Waley translates as a matter of "deciding when in two minds." Although Waley's translation makes choice or decision the issue, the Master's elaboration of the notion reveals, I believe, that Waley's rendering is misleading for purposes of a philosophical understanding of Confucius. In both passages (12:10, 12:21), the meaning is not that of a mind in doubt as to which course to choose but of a person being inconsistent in his desires or acts. Paraphrasing the theme of these texts: one wants someone—perhaps a relative—to live and prosper, but out of anger, one wishes that he perish or one actually endangers him out of a blind rage. In such conflict, the task is not posed as one of *choosing* or *deciding* but of distinguishing or *discriminating (pien)* the inconsistent inclinations. Furthermore, in each passage, we have no doubt about which inclination is the right one when we have discriminated one from the other. In short, the task is posed in terms of knowledge rather than choice. *Huo,* the key term in the passages, means here "deluded or *led astray* by an un-*li* inclination or tendency." It is not doubt as to which to choose to do.

There is one other passage in the *Analects* that is of particular interest in connection with choice. More than any other passage, this one seems to me to present a situation where the issue, as we would define it, is one of internal conflict in the moral code, a conflict to be resolved by personal choice. We are told (13:18) of a man called "Upright" Kung whose father stole a sheep. Kung testified against his father. The Duke, who reports the case to Confucius, is proud of what he considers to be Kung's uprightness. But Confucius disagrees tactfully, remarking that in his country the son who would protect his father is the one who is considered upright.

The passage could be a model one for posing the need for choice between two conflicting moral requirements. A Westerner would almost inevitably elaborate on it by emphasizing that in this case we do have knowledge (it is right to respect the law; it is right to protect one's parents; both are profound obligations), but when two profound duties conflict, *we* must choose. And it is in this necessity to make a critical choice that lies the seed of tragedy, of responsibility, of guilt and remorse. But this way of seeing the matter, so obvious a possibility to us, is not even suggested by Confucius. It is the very obviousness of this view of the matter that makes Confucius's failure to show any recognition of it the more blatant. We could have no better proof than this that the problem of genuine choice among real alternatives never occurred to Confucius, or at least never clearly occurred to him as a fundamental moral task. Confucius merely announces the way *he* sees the matter, putting it tactfully by saying it is the custom in Li. There is nothing to suggest a decisional problem; everything suggests that there is a defect of knowledge, a simple error of moral judgment on the Duke's part.

We are supported in the view that Confucius saw nothing

distinctive in this sort of situation, i.e., the sort of situation that we see as distinctively posing a choice, by the fact that in all the *Analects* there is mentioned only one such case. We know there must have been many such situations in the actual daily life of the Chinese of those times—times of exceptionally great social turmoil and transformations. Furthermore, when we take into account Confucius's stature as a moralist and his insightfulness into human nature, his failure to see or to mention the problem of internal moral conflict in such a case as this can only be accounted for by supposing that his interests, ideas, concerns, in short his entire moral and intellectual orientation, was in another direction.

Any task that is as conceivable as that of *choosing* can also be formulated, instead, in terms of the Confucian task. This is the task of objectively classifying the *prima facie* alternative paths within the order of *li*, of discovering which is the true Path and of detecting which is only an apparent path, perhaps a clearing in the brush leading nowhere except into brambles. We need only make the tacit assumption that there *is* a Way, a self-consistent, self-authenticating way of universal scope.

The notion of choice as a central feature of man's existence is only one element in a closely related complex of notions, and the absence of such a concept of choice reflects the absence of the rest of this complex. Among the chief notions closely linked to choice are moral responsibility, guilt, deserved (retributive) punishment and repentance.

Sometimes when we speak of a person as responsible for something, we refer merely to his role as a critical causal factor in bringing it about. The problem of meaning here is complex, but the general drift in this usage is to treat responsibility as a matter of production or causality rather than moral obligation.

This causal notion of responsibility is quite familiar to the ancient Chinese. There is no lack of explicit discussion of the

question who or what brought about a certain state of affairs. But of course it is not discussed under a heading translatable as "responsibility." For the root sense of the latter term is the moral one, and its use with respect to mere causality is a de-moralized derivative use. The root of "responsible" is of course not "cause" or "produce" but "respond"; the root question is: Who must respond for the way things go? One who is obligated to respond for the way things go will have some actual or potential causal connection with the way things go, but not everyone who has a causal connection with the way things go is obligated to respond for how they do.

The intense concern of Confucius that a person should carry out his duties and act according to what is right reflects one aspect of our notion of responsibility. But if this were all that was characteristic of our notion of responsibility, it would be a redundancy—another way of saying that one should carry out one's duties and act rightly. What gives distinct content to the idea of responsibility is derived from the root "response." Herein lies the peculiarly personal commitment—*I* answer for this deed; it is mine—and this in turn links the notion of (moral) responsibility to those of guilt, deserved punishment and repentance. It is the one who must respond whose response may involve guilt, acceptance of punishment, repentance, restitution or merit, pride, reward.

The issues in the West can become confused because of a certain sort of utilitarian view to the effect that responsibility is ultimately a purely causal notion. On this view, "responsibility" ought to be considered merely as a matter of diagnosing past causes in order to influence future events; sanctions and reward are assignable anywhere in the human causal chain that promises future prevention. If present sanctions will deter future malfeasance, then they are justified; if sanctions will not deter, or if in a particular case they would increase tendencies to malfeasance, then countersanctions are indicated. The

ground for and value of repentance lie entirely in the future deterrent consequences of repentance, not in any relation to the moral aspect of the past deed. Such value as guilt-feelings have must on this view be justified by an analogous rationale. Subtler and more complex forms of utilitarian views have been emphasized in recent philosophical discussion, but these do not eliminate the possibility of the type of confusion so evidently generated by the simpler view. The fact that Confucius uses language that pertains to sanctions for law-breaking has led translators to render this as "punishment" and naturally misleads the unalerted reader to suppose that Confucius understood and used our concept of punishment (with its root implication of moral guilt).

The view that never appears in Confucius, the view that is peculiar to the Graeco-Hebraic-Christian tradition and for the most part profoundly contrasting with utilitarianism, is that punishment is justified not simply by its consequences but because it is *deserved* by virtue of what went before. Punishment is an appropriate moral response to prior guilty wrongdoing by a morally responsible agent. Repentance, in turn, is not simply a device which is appropriate or not depending on *its* psychological consequences; it is repentance *for* the past deed. Repentance is a moral response to a past wrongdoing for which one is morally responsible. Guilt is a moral (or spiritual) property accruing by virtue of accomplished wrong.

If punishment is given and received as a genuine moral experience, it is a kind of payment of a moral debt—a clearing of the slate. Of course a person may as a consequence also be inclined to be more averse to similar future wrongdoing, to the guilt-feeling it involves as well as to the quite nonmoral discomfort and the pain of the punishment. And if repentance is genuine, it constitutes an expression of repugnance with oneself for one's former course of conduct, an acknowledgment of moral guilt, and therefore it is expressed in a recommitment

to a different course in the future. Thus normally the *consequences* of guilt, punishment and repentance upon moral character and upon morality-related behavior are likely to be salutary. There is a utilitarian value here. But the moral *ground* for each, that which gives it its moral status, is the past wrongdoing for which one was (morally) responsible. Were "punishment," "guilt" and "repentance" to be unrelated to prior moral wrong for which the person was responsible, we would have social engineering rather than morality—and this was precisely why Confucius took the use of "punishments" as a main target and saw his own positive teaching as in direct contrast.

For Confucius moral education consists in learning the codes of *li*, in studying literature, music and the civilizing arts in general. One's own effort provides the "push," but it is the intrinsic nobility of the goal that provides the "pull." It is by *being* a spiritually noble man that the teacher—or Prince—draws others into the direction of the Way. It is the Way that has power, and this power is effortless, invisible, magical. It is characteristic of the *Analects* that in every case, except for one clearly late "Legalist" insertion (13:3), the use of sanctions and punishment is explicitly contrasted as the undesirable alternative to the use of virtue *(te)*, of humaneness *(jen)*, of ceremonial propriety *(li)* and of such related strategies as "yielding" *(jang)*. The *Analects* present the issue flatly: either one can govern by *li* and "yielding" or one can't (4:13); if one can't, then there is no use deceiving ourselves, and we might as well turn to "punishment," to sanctions and rewards. For these can influence people in a coercive way or by payment; but they are not truly human (i.e., moral) ways, nor do they establish a truly human life. Lacking any concept of moral guilt, or of moral responsibility as the ground for guilt and hence punishment as *moral* retribution, Confucius could see no humane potentiality in the use of sanctions.

We should not suppose that the contrary, pro-"utilitarian" point of view on these issues was alien to the Chinese mind of the times rather than being a view whose rejection by Confucius was distinctive of his own viewpoint. Confucius's outlook was in obvious contrast to that of a rival group which soon became very powerful, the so-called Legalists. Typically the latter taught that reliance on anything but the stick or the carrot was sentimental self-deception. They thought the moral approach a sham and ultimately a snare for the user.

> For the tiger is able to subdue the dog because of its claws and fangs. If the tiger abandons its claws and fangs and lets the dog use them, it will be subdued by the dog. Similarly, the ruler controls his ministers through punishment and kindness (i.e., the "advantages" of "congratulations and rewards").[1]

This Legalist text contrasts flatly with the Confucian teaching: the Master said, govern the people by regulations, keep order among them by punishments, and they will evade shamelessly. Govern them by moral force *(te)*, keep order among them by ritual *(li)*, and there will be not only shame but correctness (2:3).

There is tacit agreement, however, that punishment, if it has any role at all, has the purely utilitarian role of practical deterrent and not of moral desert. More to the point: the notion of punishment as *moral desert* does not even arise in either the *Analects* or Legalist thought. We must, therefore, avoid reading moral meaning into the term here.

Furthermore, as has been suggested already—and it now calls for more detailed comment—there is developed in the *Analects* no notion of guilt and repentance as a moral response to one's wrongdoing. It is recognized that one may regret for practical reasons one's previous actions; one may change

1. Han Fei Tzu (circa 250 B.C.), cited in Chan, *Source Book*, p. 256.

course and follow the Way. But the "inward" stain of guilt is absent. It will, as usual, repay us to consider in a little detail some apparent exceptions to this thesis, not merely in order to support the thesis but to see better how to read the text rather than reading our own ideas into the text.

One group of passages in the *Analects* deals with "shame" *(ch'ih)*, another group deals with inner flaws; a final passage seems to call for inward self-accusation. All of these, therefore, at least suggest a quasi-explicit concern with moral responsibility and guilt-related notions.

One reference to shame *(ch'ih)* has already been cited: where one relies on punishment (i.e., fear), there is no shame; where one relies on *te*, there is shame. (2:3) *Te* may be rendered as the power of virtue, or as the virtue of one who is *jen* and follows *li*; it is the power or virtue inherent in the Way. It is to be contrasted with physical or coercive power. Thus the passage cited, as well as others, makes it clear that shame is conceived by Confucius as a moral response. And this raises the question whether the term *ch'ih* really amounts to "guilt" rather than "shame." *Ch'ih* is certainly the closest that Confucius comes to mentioning anything like guilt. The word, therefore, calls for careful examination.

The notion *ch'ih* occurs in several contexts. One group of remarks deals with the concern for or the possession of material advantages for themselves alone—e.g., good clothes, good food, wealth. [4:9; 8:13(3); 9:26(1); 14:1] These, when acquired by departing from the Way, deserve *ch'ih*. Another group of comments concerns one's public commitments and *ch'ih* from the failure to keep them. [4:22; 14:29(1)] Another group concerns *ch'ih* deserved for excess in speech, appearance, obsequiousness, pride and dissembling. [4:22; 5:14; 5:24; 14:29(1)] Finally, and more generally, *ch'ih* is a specifically moral response several times paired with disgrace *(ju)*, and in these contexts it seems to be the analogue in private conduct of the

public officer's acting with disgrace in his official role. (1:13; 13:20)

If we are unaware of the crucial differences in perspective, these texts on *ch'ih* lend themselves easily to an assimilation of Confucian "shame" with Western "guilt." Yet the differences are crucial with respect to the issues that concern us here. Although *ch'ih* is definitely a moral concept and designates a moral condition or response, the moral relation to which it corresponds is that of the person to his status and role as defined by *li*. *Ch'ih* thus looks "outward," not "inward." It is a matter of the spoken but empty word, of the immorally gained material possession, of the excessive in appearance and in conduct. It is not, as is guilt, a matter of the inward state, of repugnance at inner corruption, of self-denigration, of the sense that one is as a person, and independently of one's public status and repute, mean or reprehensible.

It would be a basic error, however, to assume that shame is concerned with "mere appearances" rather than moral realities. The Confucian concept of shame is a genuinely moral concept, but it is oriented to morality as centering in *li*, traditionally ceremonially defined social comportment, rather than to an inner core of one's being, "the self." The violation of the moral order is thus of the essence in Confucian shame no less than in Western guilt. A personal response, a morally infused feeling-tone is also crucial in both cases. But the direction in which one turns to interpret and to deal with this feeling is different in the two cases. True, the ground for guilt is some immoral act or betrayal of someone other than oneself, but the object of guilt is oneself. Ultimately, guilt is an attack upon oneself, whereas shame is an attack upon some specific action or outer condition. Shame is a matter of "face," of embarrassment, of social status. Shame says, "change your ways; you have lost honor or dignity." Guilt says, "change yourself; you are infected." A St. Augustine can speak of the "disease of my

soul," of its "wound," of "sticking in the mire," of being plucked out of the mire and washed by God, of being soul-sick and monstrous. It takes no demonstration to remind even the casual reader of Confucius that such imagery, or analogous tone, is alien to the *Analects*.

There are two passages in the *Analects* that suggest moral corruption, which at first glance might be thought akin, say, to the corruption contemplated by Augustine. One passage is about Tsai Yu. (5:9) In this passage, how different in import from Orphic, Hebrew or Christian imagery is the imagery of Confucius. Tsai Yu is rotten wood which cannot be carved, a wall of dried dung which cannot be troweled, a man who sleeps all day. Here the active disease, the fulminating wound of Augustine, is replaced by a state of mere deadness, of passivity and inherent insensitivity to moral values. Tsai Yu is at the utmost stage of the loss of capacity to be a moral human being. But in Augustine's imagery, the intensity and dynamism of the corrupting guilt are the measure of the *vitality* of his moral concern and of his imminent conversion.

The second statement in the *Analects* about moral corruption does suggest inner sickness; it is to the effect that a man would naturally have no anxiety or fear if he looked within and found nothing ill (sick). [12:4(3)] But this is the single such use of the image of "illness." We can, I believe, treat this isolated comment about "illness" as an *ad hoc*, unelaborated metaphor, one which, unlike a number of others, receives no further sign of interest on Confucius's part. It certainly is not an enunciation or metaphor of a central doctrine. Its precise point remains therefore obscure, though we are not likely to feel this because the image is so familiar to us and has so rich a meaning for us in *our* usage.

There remain two other passages that call for comment here since they do explicitly call for an orientation "inward" and for "self-accusation." Confucius in one passage enjoins us to

look "in" ourselves when we see others who are not worthy. (4:17) In another place he bemoans the fact that no one is able to see his own transgressions and bring charges "within" himself. (5:26) Once again, our own rich background imagery of the inner life seems to make these passages stand as simple and plain evidence of Confucius's appreciation of the inner world of the self, of guilt or, as Legge suggests,[2] of conscience and of moral responsibility.

Perhaps the recognition that, together with the "inner ill" of 12:4(3), we find in the entire text of the *Analects* a total of only three such "inward-looking" comments ought to remind us to be more cautious in supposing that Confucius was talking of conscience and guilt. For if conscience or guilt are clearly appreciated at all, it must be clear that they are central to the moral life of most men. Why, if Confucius had in mind notions presupposing and stressing an "inner" life, should there be only three such references out of some 500 paragraphs (a number of which, in turn, treat more than one topic)? And why should these few references be so vague and unelaborated? We know that Confucius did not hesitate to repeat and to elaborate other notions such as *Tao, jen, te, li*; and the *Analects* as a whole and in all its detail is predominantly moralizing discourse, the kind that above all others invites elaboration of the themes of conscience, guilt and the inner life.

In fact these last two comments using the "look inward" image may be read in quite other contexts completely consistent with his main emphases. The comment in 4:17 tells us to concern ourselves with being like men who are worthy. But what of those men we meet who are not? The natural inclination in an age, like Confucius's of political in-fighting, social competition, military combat and contentious litigation, would be to seize upon the other's flaws, to hold them up to

2. See Legge, *Confucian Analects*, p. 183, note 26.

the light, to relish doing so and to profit from them. Confucius admonishes us instead to look "in ourself" (4:17), to "bring charges in ourself." (5:26) The former comment is entirely vague and unelaborated. The latter saying may well have been uttered in the specific, and at the time, very common context where public accusation and litigation were being explicitly discussed. Quite naturally in such a context Confucius says, in effect, don't look for the splinter in the other fellow's eye; better to discover the beam in one's own. In its juristic imagery, Confucius's comment in 5:26 is also similar to Jesus' "judge not." But whereas the language of accusation, trial and judgment pervades both Old and New Testament, it occurs as a moral metaphor only this once in the entire *Analects*. We in the West know all too well the aptness of this metaphor, too, for the moral life; therefore, from its being used and thereafter ignored, I believe we must draw, once again, the inference that Confucius was systematically oriented in another direction and saw only an *ad hoc*, topical reference in the metaphor.

There are more positive grounds for taking this "self-accusation" to be an *ad hoc* metaphor on Confucius's part, a metaphor incompatible with his main orientation and used only in a special context for special purposes. Not only is the whole spirit of the *Analects against* litigation (punishments, regulations, etc.) but Confucius says explicitly that "what is necessary is that there be no litigation." (12:13) The standard use of the word "*sung*" to mean litigation rather than a moral stance, the negative attitude toward litigation, and the single use of it with a moral nuance in this one passage suggest strongly that this emphatically exclamatory sentence is to be taken in an ironic sense: people today are constantly squabbling with each other, instituting charges against the real and fancied misdeeds of others—"If they are so quick to bring charges, why is it that I've yet to see anyone who could see his own misdeed and bring the charge to himself!" (5:26)

In the preceding commentary on the text, I have considered the possibility that Confucius does concern himself in substance with choice, responsibility, punishment as moral desert, guilt and repentance. The conclusions reached may be summarized as follows. Although the opportunity for explicitly and richly elaborating the notion of choice is latent in the central imagery of the Path, that opportunity is with remarkable thoroughness ignored. And, although there are isolated references to a moral illness, self-accusations, and inner examination—each potentially so fertile and apt for use by one concerned with responsibility, guilt and repentance—none of these is developed or in any way further remarked upon by Confucius. They remain isolated, *ad hoc* metaphors, very possibly with an ironic or topical meaning in their original context, a meaning now lost in the cryptic saying handed down to us. Finally, although there is more frequent and systematic reference to shame, this is associated with specific external possessions, conduct or status; it is a moral sentiment focused upon one's status and conduct in relation to the world rather than an inward charge against one's stained, corrupt self. The absence of the choice-responsibility-guilt complex of concepts, taken in the textual context, warrants the inference in connection with such an insightful philosopher of human nature and morality, that the concepts in question and their related imagery, were not rejected by Confucius but rather were simply not present in his thinking at all.

The language and imagery that *is* elaborated and that forms the main frame of Confucius's thought presents a different but intelligible and harmonious picture to us. Man is not an ultimately autonomous being who has an inner and decisive power, intrinsic to him, a power to select among real alternatives and thereby to shape a life for himself. Instead he is born as "raw material" who must be civilized by education and thus become a truly human man. To do this he must aim at the

Way, and the Way must—through its nobility and the nobility of those who pursue it—attract him. This outcome is not conceived as one that enhances a personal power as over against society or the physical environment, but rather as one that sharpens and steadies a person's "aim" or orientation to the point where he can undeviatingly walk the one true Way: he is a civilized human being. Walking the Way incarnates in him the vast spiritual dignity and power that reside in the Way. One who walks the Way rather than going astray, who does so "naturally," "yielding" rather than forcing, such a man lives a life of personal dignity and fulfillment, of social harmony with others based on mutual respect allowing to each just such a life.

Therefore the central moral issue for Confucius is not the responsibility of a man for deeds he has by his own free will chosen to perform, but the factual questions of whether a man is properly taught the Way and whether he has the desire to learn diligently. The proper response to a failure to conform to the moral order *(li)* is not self-condemnation for a free and responsible, though evil, choice, but self-reeducation to overcome a mere defect, a lack of power, in short a lack in one's "formation." The Westerner's inclination to press at this point the issue of personal responsibility for lack of diligence is precisely the sort of issue that is never even raised in the *Analects*.

To summarize finally in a schematic way, moral problems resolve into one of four forms for Confucius: (1) the wrongdoer is not well enough educated to be able to recognize and properly classify what is according to the Way and what is not; (2) the wrongdoer has not yet learned the requisite skills to follow the Way in some respect; (3) the wrongdoer has not *persisted* in the required effort (this is conceived as a matter of strength, not choice); (4) the wrongdoer knows enough to go through some of the motions, but he is not totally committed to the

Way, and he is then either erratic or he systematically perverts the outer forms of *li* to serve personal profit.

Confucius's vision provides no basis for seeing man as a being of tragedy, of inner crisis and guilt; but it does provide a socially oriented, action-oriented view which provides for personal dignity. Moreover, when we place the comments made here in the larger context of Confucius's view of man, a context further discussed in the other essays in this book, we see then that the images of the inner man and of his inner conflict are not essential to a concept of man as a being whose dignity is the consummation of a life of subtlety and sophistication, a life in which human conduct can be intelligible in natural terms and yet be attuned to the sacred, a life in which the practical, the intellectual and the spiritual are equally revered and are harmonized in the one act—the act of *li*.

3

The Locus of the Personal

There is no doubt that for Confucius "*jen*" is at least equal in importance to any other single concept such as *li*. Unlike *li*, however, *jen* is surrounded with paradox and mystery in the *Analects*. *Jen* seems to emphasize the individual, the subjective, the character, feelings and attitudes; it seems, in short, a psychological notion. The problem of interpreting *jen* thus becomes particularly acute if one thinks, as I do, that it is of the essence of the *Analects* that the thought expressed in it is not based on psychological notions. And, indeed, one of the chief results of the present analysis of *jen* will be to reveal how Confucius could handle in a nonpsychological way basic issues which we in the West naturally cast in psychological terms. The psychological, subjective use of *jen* in Chinese is a later development, a use whose import is exaggerated both by the profound psychological bias of Buddhist commentators and by the Western, Graeco-Christian outlook of translators. The truly novel aspects of Confucius's doctrine of *jen* are precisely what we need to see but fail to see because they *are* novel and hence not easily formulated in the psychologically biased language we have ready to hand.

Jen has been translated variously as Good, Humanity, Love, Benevolence, Virtue, Manhood, Manhood-at-Its-Best and so on. For various commentators *jen* has seemed to be a virtue,