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# Building Bridges to Distant Shores

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## Building Bridges to Distant Shores: Pragmatic Problems with Confucian Role Ethics<sup>1</sup>

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Late in 1987, having graduated from college and headed to Taiwan to study more Chinese, I decided to attend an international conference on Confucianism. At lunchtime on the first day I was sitting by myself, intimidated by the luminaries all around, when a smiling scholar sat down across from me, introduced himself as Roger Ames, and immediately made me feel at home. (Although he did question the wisdom of my intention to attend a graduate school other than Hawaii.) 1987 also saw the publication of *Thinking Through Confucius*, Roger's seminal collaboration with David Hall; shortly after I met Roger I obtained a copy and was inspired. This, I felt sure, was just the kind of thing that I wanted to do: engage deeply with the Confucian tradition in a manner that also challenged Western philosophy. A basic premise of *Thinking Through Confucius* is that the ideas and practices expressed in a text like the *Analects* are centrally relevant to philosophy; insofar as they differ from long-standing assumptions within Western philosophy, this has to do with the narrowness or even parochialism of the Western tradition, rather than with preordained limits to the practice of philosophy itself. Studying Chinese philosophy is therefore not just an intensely interesting interpretive project, but also an enterprise with great significance for the ways we moderns—no matter which “we” one may find most apt—understand our world.

Over the years since I have continued to be stimulated by the work that Roger has done, alone or in collaboration, and I have consistently felt a significant kinship between his general goals and my own. Although he was never formally my teacher, I have learned a great deal from

him. I have repeatedly found myself sympathetic to his positions on controversial issues like transcendence, creativity, relational selfhood, the processural world, and so on. It is with some puzzlement, therefore, that I have recently found myself unable to agree with his views about Confucian Role Ethics (hereafter, CRE). Even if I have sometimes not agreed with a given formulation of one of his other views, I have generally felt that I endorsed its spirit; so what is different about CRE? Or is CRE finally revealing to me an underlying difficulty that I had long missed?

This essay aims to uncover what is at stake in my concerns with CRE by examining a series of potential objections to Roger's general approach, most of them methodological. Even if there are nuances to be gleaned from thinking about these concerns, I will find Roger to be on solid ground. Next I examine the context in which CRE emerged as an interpretation of Confucian moral philosophy. I then argue in the essay's final section that we should resist the CRE interpretation primarily because of pragmatic issues, especially focusing on the positioning of Chinese philosophy vis-à-vis Western philosophy today. We are now at a point when, for reasons that have their roots in contemporary China as much as in the U.S., bridging gaps and emphasizing common conversations are at least as important as keeping our distance and emphasizing our differences.

I begin with several key difficulties that any given aspect of Roger's interpretive-cum-philosophical project may face. One premise of my approach here is that together with important collaborators like David Hall and Henry Rosemont, Jr., Roger has developed a broadly consistent

method and that many of his specific findings follow from the broader picture. In this section I identify four central features of this approach, each of which may appear to be vulnerable to criticism. On balance, though, I find Roger's rebuttals to these criticisms to be quite convincing, which is precisely why our difference on CRE is intriguing.

### *Different Sameness*

In many different ways throughout his writings, Roger has emphasized the differences between the assumptions and approaches of Chinese traditions, on the one hand, and those of Western traditions, on the other hand. Near the beginning of *Thinking Through Confucius*, we find:

This present book is written in the belief...that in the enterprise of comparative philosophy, difference is more interesting than similarity. That is, the contrasting presuppositions of the Chinese and Anglo-European traditions are...a presently more fruitful subject for philosophical reflection than are the shared assumptions.<sup>2</sup>

We will have ample opportunity to reflect later in this essay on the significance of David and Roger's caveat that the difference-emphasizing approach is "presently more fruitful." For now, given that in all of Roger's work this stress on difference has continued, it seems fair to ask why difference is so important—and to examine whether, for all his talk of difference, Roger simply relies on a different form of sameness.

The basic worry about sameness is that too often, observations of cross-cultural similarity are the result of "inadvertently...foist[ing] upon an alternative culture a set of criteria drawn

from our own tradition.”<sup>3</sup> Starting from categories that are familiar to us, we unwittingly misconstrue the ideas of others by interpreting them as saying the same types of things as we do. Sometimes this process is more consciously chosen: in *Anticipating China*, David and Roger emphasize the role of what they call the “transcendental pretense,” according to which the scientific rationality that emerged in the sixteenth century in Europe “names a universal norm for assessing the value of cultural activity everywhere in the planet.”<sup>4</sup> Those in the grip of the transcendental pretense look for uniformities, patterns, and regularities—in other words, for “rational order.”<sup>5</sup> Their goal is a single set of categories that can be applied everywhere. While David and Roger distinguish between “transcendental monism” and “transcendental pluralism,” even the latter insists that there is a single best metatheory of philosophy, a single taxonomy into which all philosophical views across all cultures may be placed. In contrast, David and Roger favor an “interpretive pluralism” that emphasizes the unique, irreplaceable elements that are found in “aesthetic order.”<sup>6</sup>

The history of cross-cultural encounters makes it clear that Roger’s worry about misunderstanding stemming from hasty identification of similarities is well-founded. Later I will raise a concern about his suggestion that different philosophical discourses may be “incommensurable” with one another, but for now my attention is on a different issue. Let us accept that we often go awry by relying on familiar categories when interpreting others. My question is: do David and Roger do the very same thing? Notice that one of the ways in which they characterize their “interpretive pluralism” is as based in a “distinctly literary, historicist, ‘Jamesian’ form of pragmatism.”<sup>7</sup> Their indebtedness to American pragmatism and to process philosophy are of course well-known and not at all hidden. In their earlier book, David and Roger acknowledge that they are relying on contemporary Western ideas in order to “sharpen

[their] focus” on the ideas of Confucius.”<sup>8</sup> Why is this not a straight-forward instance of the overfondness for sameness that they elsewhere reject?

The first thing to say in response is that no one can ever completely eschew the familiar and still hope to communicate. Some reliance on “sameness” is necessary. But this does not get us very far, since the more monistic approaches to comparative philosophy can also make this same move. David and Roger’s main reply is to stress the value of unusual or esoteric elements of one’s home tradition:

Alterations in the character of Western culture have called attention to unusual elements in our own milieu that strongly resemble the ideological mainstream of the classical Chinese. To the extent that we are able to shift our perspective away from the dominant toward some of the more esoteric of the elements of our cultural milieu we are in a position to recognize and appreciate the distinctive significance of classical Chinese thought.<sup>9</sup>

I take it that the point here is not that esoteric elements of one’s own culture are always central to understanding another culture’s thought, but rather that: first, the presence of multiple strands or elements within our culture provides us with a wider range of starting points when trying to understand another; and second, in this particular case, the specific esoteric elements on which David and Roger focus are in fact helpful in understanding classical China.

Let me elaborate on each of these points. An excellent lens through which to view the first point is offered in Jeffrey Stout’s *Ethics After Babel: The Languages of Morals and Their Discontents*. Stout argues that all creative ethical thinking involves what he calls “moral

*bricolage*.” *Bricolage* is originally employed by the Claude Lévi-Strauss to describe the so-called “primitive” mind: “drawing on a collection of assorted odds and ends available for use and kept on hand on the chance they might prove useful.” Stout’s insight is that we all engage in linguistic *bricolage* when working out what to make of a foreign other; Lévi-Strauss’s distinction between the *bricoleur* and the (“modern”) engineer is completely unhelpful.<sup>10</sup> Unlike some theorists who think of a language or culture as a monolithic set of concepts and values, Stout emphasizes the plurality of resources that we have at hand, some currently dominant, others esoteric or even all-but-forgotten. Stout argues that intellectual creativity is to “take the many parts of a complicated social and conceptual inheritance and stitch them into a pattern that meets the needs of the moment”; he says that it is no accident that our greatest moral thinkers—he cites Aquinas, Jefferson, and King—were as eclectic as they were.<sup>11</sup> Precisely the same is true, I would say, for those of us working on cross-cultural philosophy. We must be *bricoleurs*, open to all resources, very much including the unusual and esoteric.

The second point above was that Roger’s *bricolage*, employing elements of pragmatism and process thought in order to understand classical Chinese philosophy, is in fact quite successful, but this is a contingent fact rather than a necessary one. For any given foreign tradition that we are trying to understand, it could turn out that we make more headway by relying (mainly) on mainstream or dominant ideas, rather than anything esoteric. It also may turn out that we need to leave our familiar categories even further behind than do non-dominant contemporary views like pragmatism. For example, Brook Ziporyn makes a powerful argument that Roger is still too beholden to traditional Western distinction between realist and nominalist (and between objective and subjective) to fully grasp the central role that “coherence” plays in Chinese thinking.<sup>12</sup> However we adjudicate that particular dispute, it clearly could be correct,

and so there is nothing magical about embracing a given set of esoteric terms. Indeed, the final point to make for now is that Roger's pragmatism quite explicitly avoids prejudging what counts as "success" in a cross-cultural encounter. Understanding will almost always be a desideratum, but rarely will purely intellectual, de-contextualized understanding be the only thing that matters. I will return to this point below.

### *Counterexamples*

Broad claims of the kind that we find throughout Roger's work on Chinese thought generally live in fear of one of the basic weapons in philosophical argumentation, the counterexample. In light of these types of criticisms, it is striking to hear David and Roger assert that "comparativists will be prevented from making sense of a culture if they do not diligently avoid the Fallacy of the Counterexample."<sup>13</sup> They continue, asserting that generalizations about cultures are often vindicated rather than falsified by the "resort to counterexamples" because even the successful search for counterexamples can be an indication of precisely how dominant a given overall view is within the culture. David and Roger therefore reject the idea that the "mere presence" of a given idea or doctrine has real significance, insofar as their goal is to map the "cultural determinants" of classical China. Critics might worry, though, that what is really happening is that they are insulating their grand theory against any evidence that might falsify it. Is the Fallacy of the Counterexample itself fallacious?

I believe that we should endorse Roger's position here, albeit with one significant caveat. We should endorse it because cultures, traditions, and discourses are complex, contested, and often made up of competing elements that we can call, following David and Roger, dominant and recessive. If an interpretive theory tells us that the dominant cultural problematique is X,



then pointing out that someone says “not-X” is not a problem for that theory unless one can show that not-X is itself a central concern. To put this in less abstract terms, consider the view that early Chinese conceptions of knowing center on the ability to understand something and make relevant distinctions, rather than on propositional belief. As Chris Fraser summarizes:

Perhaps the most frequent use of the word *zhi* (know) in early Chinese texts is in contexts in which it is best interpreted as “knowing-of” or “knowing-about,” a sort of recognition, familiarity, or understanding. A second common use is to mean roughly “know-to” or “know-how-to,” referring to a kind of competence or ability. Occasionally, *zhi* is used in contexts in which it is interpretable as “knowing that” and seems to refer to propositional knowledge.<sup>14</sup>

What are we to make of Fraser’s concession that *zhi* sometimes seems to mean “knowing that”? Is this a counterexample to the interpretive theory he expresses here? No, probably not, because these uses can probably be explained as either: (1) a second, recessive strand of thought that competed with the dominant view, or (2) a special type of one or the other more general types. If either of these explanations is successful, then we are not faced with a genuine counterexample.

The caveat that I would like to register is related to the word “if” in the previous sentence. It must be the case that apparently countervailing evidence is taken seriously and has the potential to have an effect on the overall theory. As we have learned from Thomas Kuhn and others, large-scale theories are rarely subject to straight-forward tests of falsifiability. But by examining the ways in which a theory handles anomalies, and comparing this with the ways that alternative theories do so, we can do our best to judge whether a given explanation is

“successful.” As Roger (the pragmatist) will certainly agree, these judgments of success will be relative to our current purposes, but those purposes themselves will adapt over time. A theory that is judged successful at one point may be judged less successful at another.

### *The Goal(s) of Comparative Philosophy*

In *Anticipating China*, David and Roger write, “Our ultimate purpose is to create a context within which meaningful comparisons of Chinese and Western culture may be made.”<sup>15</sup> I am troubled by this formulation of their goal, as it suggests to me an ultimately passive outcome, and implies that the most we can hope to accomplish is to discover how one thing (Chinese culture) relates to one other thing (Western culture). Notwithstanding its name, “comparative philosophy” should not be, in my view, merely about comparison. This is not to trivialize the amount of work that is necessary to arrive at meaningful comparisons, but to insist that the fruits of such labors should provoke active transformations among all concerned. In fact, on closer examination of David’s and Roger’s position I think we can see that they are largely in agreement with me, even if their collaborative project focuses more on the comparative stage than on the transformative one.

The most obvious reason for taking a second look at what David and Roger might mean in the sentence quoted above is that in *Thinking Through Confucius* they say the following:

One main consideration we are attempting to defend through this work is that the differences of emphasis that exist between the rich and diverse fabrics of Confucian and Anglo-European cultures are not merely meant to be charted or celebrated in some dispassionate manner. On the contrary, we hold that it is precisely the recognition of

significant differences that provides an opportunity for mutual enrichment by suggesting alternate responses to problems that resist satisfactory resolution within a single culture.<sup>16</sup>

This both suggests that cultures are not single, unified entities but instead are “rich and diverse fabrics,” and also points directly toward transformative outcomes. Indeed, the idea of “mutual enrichment” here sounds quite a bit like what I have come to call rooted global philosophy: that is, taking one’s own philosophical tradition as point of departure, but being open to stimulus from other philosophical frameworks as one strives to make progress (as progress is measured from one’s own, current vantage point). So perhaps the reference to “meaningful comparison” from *Anticipating China* really means “mutual transformation,” and there is no problem?

Perhaps. One reason for hesitation is David’s and Roger’s skepticism about what they call “real philosophical progress” emerging out of “dialectical engagement among alternative theories which aim at getting at the truth.”<sup>17</sup> To be sure, there are notions of “progress”—for example, as assuming a universal and/or linear convergence on a single set of truths—that we can well do without, but we do not have to conceive of progress as “progress-towards” a specific end. Instead, we can think of “progress-from”: an improvement as compared to our own previous state. The determination that a given change is an improvement, resting as it does on the standards to which we are currently committed, is itself defeasible. In situations of considerable complexity, it will also often be at least somewhat unclear whether a given change is an all-things-considered improvement. Be this as it may, I see no reason why philosophers should be barred from aspiring to precisely this kind of progress. Given that David and Roger imagine that their work may facilitate the discovery of “alternate responses to problems that resist satisfactory resolution within a single culture”—alternate responses which are, I presume, more

“satisfactory”—then it seems that they, too, endorse the aspiration for this kind of progress. Indeed, in the Prologue to *Thinking From The Han*, they explicitly endorse an approach to cross-tradition encounters according to which, “traditions as historical narratives [can]...at a practical, concrete level, intersect and even overlap. At this level, comparisons can be formulated and understood that are productive in identifying alternatives to familiar modes of expression and action.”<sup>18</sup> Contrary to the sense one sometimes gets from their talk of “aestheticism” and sometimes even “incommensurability,” in short, they very much endorse the idea that actual encounters between traditions can lead to positive, transformative effects.<sup>19</sup>

### *Our Practical Predicament*

Writing in 1987, David and Roger say that “[it] is abundantly clear from the situation of Chinese philosophy in Western institutions of learning, [that] the sort of commonality that eventually will allow thinkers to engage in important conversations grounded in shared values and concerns is yet to be realized between Chinese and Western societies.”<sup>20</sup> Based on this evaluation of the practical situation—that is, the pragmatic needs of the moment—they proceed with their project of stressing the differences between mainstream Chinese philosophy and mainstream Western philosophy. I have no disagreements with their assessment. However, as a way of clearing space for the argument I will make in Section 3, let me note three limitations of David’s and Roger’s characterization of the predicament we face. First, of course, things might have changed in Western institutions of learning, or in Western culture more generally, over the course of nearly three decades. Second, given what we have seen so far it is not clear to me why transformative cross-tradition encounters must be “grounded in shared values and concerns.” There must be some level of mutual understanding, but a grounding in shared values may be

setting the bar too high. Third, it is striking that David and Roger refer only to the situation in the West. To be fair, they do make a few references to contemporary China (such as questioning how deep the influence of Marx really goes<sup>21</sup>) and they make a point of saying that they are writing for Sinophone as well as Anglophone audiences (the former can access the books in Chinese translations). Over his career, Roger is among the top North America-based scholars in terms of his efforts to reach audiences in China and to be open to what he can learn from them, in turn. So my point is not that he and David were ignoring China, but rather to emphasize that as “we” (however defined) consider “our” current practical situation, we may well want to take seriously the pragmatic effects that our scholarly choices will have in China as well as elsewhere.

## 2

I now turn to a summary of the discourse context into which Roger and Henry Rosemont, Jr. intervened with their articulation of CRE, and an overview of CRE itself. Because of the roles played in both Roger’s and my arguments by assessments of the pragmatic impact of comparative philosophy, it makes sense to go into some detail on how we have reached the present moment.<sup>22</sup>

### *Anglo-European Moral Philosophy and the Rise of Virtue Ethics*

In the mid-twentieth century, moral theory (like the era’s psychology) was dominated by questions related to behavior and “right action.” The key question was “what should one do?”; the key notions were individual duty, liberty, and so on. In 1958, Elizabeth Anscombe’s scathing essay “Modern Moral Philosophy” questioned the foundations of this enterprise, arguing that is

was based on an abandoned conception of divine moral law and on an inadequate approach to psychology.<sup>23</sup> These general lines of critique were reemphasized by Iris Murdoch a decade later when she argued that matters of inner agency—such as motivation and perceptiveness—were at least as important to morality as were our actions.<sup>24</sup> A good example of mainstream moral philosophy’s reaction to these challenges is John Rawls’s 1972 *A Theory of Justice*.<sup>25</sup> On the one hand, Rawls gives considerable attention in the later sections of his opus to motivation, moral education, and psychology. On the other hand, such issues only penetrate to a limited degree into his conception of morality. His influential taxonomy of morality is still based on the idea of right action, and is divided into “teleology” (i.e., those theories that determine the moral action through the maximization of some “end”) and “deontology” (i.e., those theories for which moral rightness is defined independently from the goodness of our ends). This closely matches the slightly earlier dualism proposed by John Silber, according to whom teleological moral theories were “homogeneous” because they derived the moral good from the non-moral good, and deontological moral theories were “heterogeneous” since they viewed moral and non-moral goodness as fundamentally distinct.<sup>26</sup>

Through the 1970s and into the 1980s, the centrality of right action and the exhaustive dichotomy between teleological and deontological theories continued to characterize moral philosophy. The volume of critics’ voices was rising, however. Alasdair MacIntyre’s influential 1981 book *After Virtue* argued that the biggest difference among moral theories was actually between those, like Aristotle’s, that were committed to a substantive end (such as nobility or virtue), and those that were not. On this account, utilitarianism had more in common with deontology than either did with Aristotle, despite the fact that on Rawls’s account, both Aristotelianism and utilitarianism had been versions of teleology.<sup>27</sup> As more and more attention

started to be paid to virtuous character as an end, Gary Watson offered another critique of Rawls, arguing in considerable detail for a threefold typology of “teleological/maximizing” or “ethics of outcome”; “teleological/non-consequentialist” or “ethics of virtue”; and “deontological” or “ethics of requirement.”<sup>28</sup> Over the last two decades, MacIntyre’s and Watson’s efforts to define the territory of virtue ethics have been complemented by those working to articulate more clearly what “virtue” or “character” is, as well as some attempts to spell out full-fledged systems of virtue ethics. Rosalind Hursthouse’s *On Virtue Ethics* marked a new level of confidence on the part of virtue ethicists; in the 2000s, we can say that virtue ethics was increasingly firmly ensconced in the now-enlarged field of Anglophone moral philosophy.<sup>29</sup> In addition, one of the critical developments in virtue ethics from the 2000s to the present has been its pluralization. Aristotle had been the touchstone for almost all prior writers in the field (Murdoch being a significant exception), but now it is widely accepted that many philosophers in the Western canon can be read as virtue ethicists, including not just Stoics and medievals, but also moderns such as Hume and Nietzsche.

The recent expansion of the scope of virtue ethics has by no means led to an end to the controversy over the category of “virtue ethics,” though; a number of theorists have emphasized the degree to which Kantianism and some forms of consequentialism can accommodate a significant role for virtue and inner psychology, and some have argued on this basis that the category of “virtue ethics” is in the end unnecessary or even incoherent. In response, it has become common to distinguish between “virtue theory,” which is the portion of a moral theory dealing with issues like virtue (no matter how peripheral it might be to the overall theory), and “virtue ethics,” which is (at least purportedly) a distinctive category of moral theory itself.<sup>30</sup> For our purposes, one of the more interesting kinds of resistance to the category of virtue ethics

comes from Martha Nussbaum, herself often identified as a virtue ethicist. To the contrary, she argues that virtue ethics is a “misleading category” because the ideas really shared by all so-called virtue ethicists are too few to support an independent category, and are in fact also shared by some non-virtue-ethical theories. She argues that it is more perspicuous to divide the purported virtue ethicists into two clusters, those who are pro-reason and anti-utilitarian, and those who are pro-sentiment and anti-Kantian; she places herself in the former group.<sup>31</sup> The problem with such a taxonomy is that while it might be true to the genealogy of current views, it defines its categories around existing approaches in Western philosophy, and is thus necessarily Eurocentric. It does not even make sense to ask whether Confucius is an anti-Kantian, nor are we likely to find very many Chinese philosophers who are “pro-reason” in Nussbaum’s sense—at least, if anything like Roger’s core argument about different conceptions of order is correct.

Despite Eurocentric thinking like Nussbaum’s, the idea that Confucian ethics are centrally concerned with virtue—and perhaps should be characterized as forms of virtue ethics—gradually began to find some traction in U.S. academia.<sup>32</sup> The idea of virtue in the *Analects* and, especially, the *Mencius* loomed large in a series of important lectures given by David Nivison at Stanford in the early 1980s, though the lectures were not published until 1996.<sup>33</sup> Another important step was the publication in 1990 of *Mencius and Aquinas* by Nivison’s colleague at Stanford, Lee Yearley. Yearley’s book shows the fruits that can come from a detailed, sophisticated reflection on the idea of virtue in an early Confucian work.<sup>34</sup> With the nurturance of Nivison and Yearley, Stanford proved fertile ground for virtue-ethical readings of Confucianism. The writings of Philip J. Ivanhoe, Stephen Wilson, Edward Slingerland, Bryan Van Norden, and Eric Hutton—all with Ph.D.s from Stanford—over the course of the 1990s and early 2000s increasingly come to make explicit arguments that early Confucianism should be



interpreted through the lens of virtue ethics.<sup>35</sup> The year 2007 is a watershed year for Anglophone virtue-ethical readings of Confucianism, with three books published that defend such a thesis.<sup>36</sup> In the last few years, finally, scholars of Confucianism have begun explicitly engaging with contemporary developments in virtue ethics.<sup>37</sup>

Aristotle has loomed large in many of the virtue-ethical approaches to Confucianism that I have reviewed so far, both directly and *via* MacIntyre's version of contemporary Aristotelianism. Still, it is important not to conflate virtue ethics with Aristotle, and in this section's final paragraph, I mention some ways in which current thinkers have examined Confucianism in light of certain non-Aristotelian approaches to virtue ethics. First, though, it makes sense to look at the most explicitly Aristotelian approaches of all. Two books came out in 2007 arguing for significant similarities between Aristotle and Confucius; according to both authors—Jiyuan Yu and May Sim—we should interpret the *Analects* as a work of virtue ethics.<sup>38</sup> Both books are complex and have occasioned considerable debate; in the context of the present essay, it is only possible to touch on certain key themes. In both books, the conclusion that early Confucianism offers a virtue ethics is more the outcome of the larger comparison than a specific theme: they do not argue against alternative (Kantian or other) interpretations, but rather present considerable evidence that key Aristotelian ideas have correlates in Confucius, and *vice versa*. Both Sim and Yu hold that while Confucius and Aristotle share a great deal, each one also has some insights from which the other can learn, and the juxtaposition reveals certain lacunae in the thought of each. For example, according to Sim, there is a striking difference between the role of the individual, metaphysical soul in Aristotle's account, and the pure, role-based relationality she finds in Confucius. She suggests that both approaches leave something to be desired: Aristotle lacks the capacity to handle the thick relationality that his ethics in fact requires, while Confucius

needs some independent substrate to anchor moral norms that would allow criticism of existing role relationships.<sup>39</sup> For his part, Yu sees less difference on this score. He argues that Aristotelian *eudaimonia* and Confucian *dao* are quite analogous to one another, and that Aristotle's understanding of humans as "political animals" is tantamount to Confucius's emphasis on the relational nature of the self.<sup>40</sup> I will return to his issue below, because the question of relationality turns out to be crucial to Roger's and Henry's argument that Confucianism presents a role ethics rather than a virtue ethics.

The large majority of the analyses and arguments that I have canvassed so far take Aristotle, or at least contemporary developments of Aristotelianism, as their point of departure for understanding virtue ethics. It is vital to recognize that virtue ethics need not be tied so tightly to Aristotle's distinctive approach. Some of the most creative developments within Western virtue ethics over the last decade have been distinctly non-Aristotelian. In order to create the most room for a juxtaposition of Confucianism and virtue ethics to spark insightful interpretation and fruitful dialogue, we would be wise to think broadly about what virtue ethics can encompass. Indeed, there are already signs that Confucianism may fit better into an expanded understanding of virtue ethics. Among Chinese scholars, Chen Lai and Wong Wai-ying are notable for arguing that Confucian ethics can be constructively viewed as virtue ethics only so long as we recognize the important differences between Confucian ethics and the theories of Aristotle: Confucian ethics has its own distinctive concepts and emphases, from which Western virtue ethics may well want to learn.<sup>41</sup> For their part, American philosophers have also been looking for broader models. Philip J. Ivanhoe has suggested that in Western traditions we see both "virtue ethics of flourishing" and "virtue ethics of sentiments," and then gone on to argue that representative Confucian thinkers actually cross-cut these two categories, implying that virtue ethics cannot be

satisfactorily understood simply in terms of extant Western models.<sup>42</sup> In recent work, Amy Olberding has drawn on yet another emerging strand of Western virtue ethics, the “exemplarism” of Linda Zagzebski, to help us understand the *Analects* in particular.<sup>43</sup> It is evident that no one model is dominant, but this is probably as it should be; in the words of Christine Swanton, virtue ethics is a “genus” that contains many particular species.<sup>44</sup>

### *Confucian Role Ethics*

For Roger and Henry, “Confucian Role Ethics” is simply a name meant to refer to the moral and religious vision that they find in early Confucianism. In the Preface to his 2011 book on Confucian role ethics, Roger notes that Henry began developing the idea of Confucian role ethics as early as a 1991 essay that drew a contrast between the “rights-bearing individuals” of Western moral theories and the “role-bearing persons” on Confucian ethics.<sup>45</sup> As far as I know, though, Roger and Henry only began using the term “Role Ethics” in print in 2009.<sup>46</sup> At the heart of Confucian role ethics is “a specific vision of human beings as relational persons constituted by the roles they live rather than as individual selves.”<sup>47</sup> The roles that Roger and Henry have in mind are, in the first instance, family-based: son, daughter, mother, older sibling, grandfather, and so on. Traditional Confucian roles of ruler, subject, husband, wife, minister, and friend fill out the picture. Their point is not that these roles themselves are distinctively Confucian, but rather that the idea of human as fundamentally constituted by our on-going living in roles ramifies throughout Confucian thinking in a way that renders it dramatically different from Greek or contemporary Western alternatives.

Their argument in favor of a role-ethical interpretation of early Confucianism depends on two important premises. The first is a wide-ranging interpretation of early Confucian thinking

that emphasizes its anti-foundational, anti-essentialist, and processual character; part of the argument for this reading can be found in their individual and collective writings on CRE, but much of the background has been laid in the earlier scholarship that I have discussed above. The second premise is that even though Confucian role ethics comes closer to virtue ethics than to Kantianism or consequentialism, relying on virtue-ethical vocabulary to understand Confucianism “forces the Master and his followers more into the mold of Western philosophical discourse than they ought to be placed...and hence makes it difficult to see the Confucian vision as a genuine *alternative* to those with which we are most familiar.”<sup>48</sup> This claim should be familiar, given what we saw in Section 2. As Roger and Henry see it, Confucian ethics is both similar and different from Western ethics, and they are choosing to emphasize the differences. This is a strategic choice, reflecting not just the degree of difference but also our contemporary situation in which differences with dominant Western frameworks tend to be downplayed. Roger and Henry note several instances in which, in the course of their comparisons of Aristotle and Confucius, Sim and Yu stress what seems to be lacking, missing, absent, or ignored in Confucian ethics, when seen in the light of Aristotle.<sup>49</sup> To be fair, both Sim and Yu announce that their projects are to see what each of their subjects can learn from the other, and both Sim and Yu note problems for Aristotle, including that his “insistent individualism...fails to account for the thick relations his own theory requires,”<sup>50</sup> and that his overly strong distinction between virtue and activity “inappropriately reduces the value of having virtue.”<sup>51</sup> I will not try to settle here whether Sim or Yu in fact give us problematic comparisons, but the fact surely remains that comparative philosophy overall has been characterized by what Kwong-loi Shun has called an “asymmetry” between Western and Chinese categories, and it is with this in mind that Roger and

Henry “want to resist tailoring what we take to be a distinctively Confucian role ethics into a familiar category of Western ethical theory.”<sup>52</sup>

3

In Part 1, I reviewed four types of concerns that might be expressed about Roger’s general argumentative strategy, and in Part 2 examined some of the contexts out of which contemporary Western virtue ethics, virtue ethical interpretations of Confucianism, and CRE have emerged. It is now time to ask why I am so resistant to CRE, which I will do by returning to each of the topics from Part 1 with virtue ethics and CRE in mind. My basic argument is that Roger’s own methodological commitments should incline him toward virtue ethics, rather than insisting on a *sui generis* category like CRE.

*Sameness Revisited*

A summary of Roger’s reaction to the current prevalence of virtue-ethical interpretations of Confucianism might run something like this: as English-language efforts to interpret Confucian ethics in philosophical terms emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, scholars helped themselves to the Western language of virtue in order to understand the Chinese texts, thus re-enacting the same error that Western analysts have been making ever since the Jesuits first encountered what they labeled as “Confucianism” in the sixteenth century. In contrast to this reliance on sameness, Roger and Henry have advocated the CRE interpretation in order to stress difference.

There is certainly some degree of accuracy in this account. However, we might note two further facts. First of all, as I mentioned above, Anglo-American moral philosophy has been dominated for the last century by variations on two schools of thought: Kantian deontology and the heirs of British utilitarianism. It is only quite recently that what we now are calling “virtue ethics” has started to be taken seriously again. Second, over the last century in the Sinophone world, the dominant philosophical interpretation of Confucian ethics has been based on Kantian deontology. I will not rehearse the history here, but from the early twentieth century down to the present day, the mainstream position in Chinese scholarship is that Confucianism is a form of autonomous, duty-based ethics.<sup>53</sup> Based on these two facts, it is possible to see the idea of Confucianism as virtue ethics in a different light: not as the imposition of hegemonic Western categories, but rather as exploring an interpretation based on minority—even “esoteric”—position within Western thought. To draw on virtue ethics would then be to use a “different sameness” in order to emphasize broad East-West differences, much as David and Roger did by using ideas from pragmatism to stress differences between mainstream Chinese and Anglo-European assumptions. This is all the more attractive as a way of understanding the role of virtue ethics if we move away from an exclusively Anglophone context and enter a discourse that attempts to bridge Chinese and English scholarship: as I have said, virtue ethical readings of Confucianism are rare, even heretical, in most Chinese-language contexts today.<sup>54</sup>

So from a broader perspective, virtue ethics might be just the stance we need to adopt in order to see Confucian moral thought in its true distinctiveness. A related reason why Roger should find virtue ethics appealing is that powerful arguments have been made to the effect that the ethical thought of Dewey and other American philosophers is itself a form of virtue ethics.<sup>55</sup> I will not attempt to summarize or adjudicate these claims here, but this is a good place to reiterate

the crucial idea that the contemporary understanding of virtue ethics is not confined to the frameworks of Aristotle. Even without taking Confucianism into account, virtue ethics has been rapidly diversifying. Admittedly, there are on-going debates about how to understand the scope of virtue ethics and whether seemingly related views like “care ethics” should also be understood as part of a single genus. It is too soon to judge how these debates will work themselves out, but in my view the value of an inclusive “virtue ethics” is evident, not least because of the ways it allows for substantive conversations across Eastern and Western traditions, as I will go on to emphasize here.

One final point before moving on: it is worth noting how close Roger already comes to something that we can easily call virtue ethics. In one place that he discusses *de* (which is often translated as “virtue”; he renders it “excelling morally”), Roger says:

Each of these [terms that make up the vocabulary of Confucian role ethics] is a perspective on the same event, and functions to highlight a particular phase or dimension in achieving the consummate life. There is a sense in which *de* is used as the more general term for expressing the cumulative outcome of coordinating the shared experience effectively—both the achieved quality of the conduct of the particular person and the achieved *ethos* of the collective culture. Hence, the other terms we have explored above are all implicated in excelling morally (*de*).<sup>56</sup>

Roger makes it clear elsewhere that his concern with the term “virtue” is with its implication that virtues are reified, metaphysically independent things, rather than as aspects of our complex, socially articulated experience. Instead, he insists that “whatever we call virtue...is nothing more

or less than a vibrant, situated, practical, and productive virtuosity.”<sup>57</sup> Seen in this light, I wonder whether his ideas are really, at bottom, about roles. When we foreground virtuosity and interdependent flourishing instead, it starts to sound like such a “virtuosity ethics” has things to teach to, and things to learn from, virtue ethics—and indeed, that they may ultimately be two species of the same genus.

### *Counterexamples*

As discussed above, David and Roger encourage us to avoid the Fallacy of the Counterexample. If readers are willing to grant that virtue ethics today is much broader than merely about Aristotle, then one of the core arguments used to buttress CRE—namely, that it is fundamentally different from Aristotle—starts to look like an over-reliance on a single counterexample. We can readily grant the difference with Aristotle but reply that Aristotle is only one strand of virtue ethics: that CRE is “not-Aristotle” does not mean that it is “not-virtue ethics.” Henry and Roger, in other words, have themselves committed the Fallacy by over-emphasizing a single counterexample. This is not to say that any Western examples of virtue ethics is exactly like any specific instance of Confucian ethics: Cicero, Hume, Dewey, and Swanton all have certain areas where there are strong resonances with particular Confucian positions and other areas in which the differences are apparent, and the same can be said for Aristotle. That there are significant differences with Aristotle is not enough to end the conversation.<sup>58</sup>

*The Present State of (Comparative) Philosophy, East and West*



In addressing the pragmatic challenges faced by Chinese and Anglo-European philosophers today, I combine the final two issues from Section 1. There, we saw that Roger and I are in general agreement that comparative philosophy aims at positive, transformative effects on participating traditions of thought. I also agreed that the situation in 1987 was not terribly conducive to constructive conversations across traditions, and thus that David and Roger's stress on differences—on striving for an account of early Chinese philosophy that better captured its distinctive concerns than did then-current interpretations—was very valuable. Here, I argue that the pragmatic situation is significantly different today, both in the U.S. and in China.

To begin with, there is more openness to non-Western philosophy as philosophy, with things to teach “us,” in the American philosophical world than was the case three decades ago. This can be seen in several ways. Some significant pan-philosophical institutions now routinely include material on Chinese and other “Non-Western” traditions: examples include all three major encyclopedias of philosophy, the most active on-line philosophical book review site, the major volunteer-run on-line site indexing philosophical publications, and the only proprietary bibliographical database on philosophy.<sup>59</sup> Panels, conferences, and anthologies have put specialists in Western and Non-Western traditions into conversation around particular topics. And there have been instances of “mainstream” philosophical journals publishing articles in which Non-Western traditions are major foci or major sources of inspiration. Admittedly, there are other ways in which things have not changed very much: most notably, it is still the case that very few graduate programs in Philosophy have a specialist in any form of Non-Western philosophy. But if our question is whether it is more likely now, than thirty years ago, that challenges arising from Non-Western traditions will be taken seriously, the answer is certainly affirmative.

If this modest change in the U.S. were the only factor to be considered, my case for the pragmatic importance of viewing Confucian ethics as virtue ethics would be fairly weak. Consider, however, the changes that have taken place in China. Certainly, China's traditions are much more discussed and much more carefully studied in China today. (When I was travelling as a student on a train in China in 1986 and told a fellow traveller that I was interested in Chinese philosophy, his reply was "Oh, you mean Marxism and Leninism?") But some of the main ways that they are being framed is very worrying. A good example of the potential problems is the growth of *Guoxue*, or National Studies. The National Studies paradigm encourages Chinese to think of their traditions as a holistic body of knowledge and values, to be studied and revered but not criticized, relevant in the first instance only to Chinese.<sup>60</sup> The increasing numbers of Schools and Institutes of National Studies fit well with the current government-supported efforts to promote a relativist resistance to "universal values" (generally seen as exclusively Western). Instead of seeing Confucian (and other Chinese traditional) values as themselves universal—that is, as making claims on all people, Chinese and otherwise—the anti-universal values discourse suggests that Confucianism is a "cultural resource" or (in the view of some) a "religion" relevant only to Chinese.<sup>61</sup> Insofar as these trends are motivated by a desire to avoid forcing Chinese traditions into pre-existing (and perhaps problematic) Western molds, it is easy to sympathize. But rather than withdrawing from global conversations, a better answer is challenging the sufficiency of potentially problematic Western frameworks, such as a conception of philosophy as purely professional, of little or no relevance to daily life.

A central reason why withdrawal from conversation is unsatisfactory is that it discourages critical engagement with Chinese traditions. Some contemporary Chinese

philosophers have indeed recognized that for Confucianism to be relevant today, it must also be vulnerable to critique and open to change. Writing in 2001, here is Zheng Jiadong:

As an ancient spiritual tradition, Confucianism is facing a more serious test than it has ever before encountered. This test will not be resolved by shouting stirring slogans about how this next century will be the “Asian Century” or the “Confucian Century.” From another perspective, though, this kind of test can at the same time provide contemporary Confucianism with a favorable opportunity for self-transformation and development. A simultaneous test and opportunity, a crisis and a turning point: this is the fundamental reality that Confucianism today must face.<sup>62</sup>

While Prof. Zheng’s open-minded attitude is shared by some, the National Learning movement pushes in the other direction. My chief concern about CRE is that at this point, emphasizing the uniqueness of Confucian ethics has the effect of resisting efforts to pursue piecemeal, critical dialogue. It plays into the hands of the relativism represented by National Learning.

The form of universalism that I favor—open-ended and open-minded critical conversations aimed at improving one’s own values and institutions—does not suffer from the “transcendental pretense” about which Roger is concerned. I make no assumption that we will eventually converge on a single set of values or concepts. I readily grant that the dangers about which Roger is concerned are real and must be avoided. But we have reached a point at which the dangers of encouraging both West and East to think of their philosophies as fundamentally different are also increasingly pressing. We should search for ways to keep differences in mind even while we engage in constructive conversations. One way to do this is to find ways to

undermine the idea that the West is the sole source of worthwhile methodologies and meta-theories, a project to which Roger is one of the important contributors.<sup>63</sup> If we are cautious, we can build on the foundation that Roger has established in order to provoke more pluralistic and more productive philosophical conversations both at home and abroad.

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<sup>1</sup> My thanks to Max Fong for his assistance preparing this essay and for discussion about its contents, and to James Behuniak for his helpful comments.

<sup>2</sup> David Hall and Roger Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> David Hall and Roger Ames, *Anticipating China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), xiv.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 116.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 143f.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 144.

<sup>8</sup> Hall and Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Jeffery, Stout, *Ethics After Babel* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 74.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 292.

<sup>12</sup> Brook Ziporyn, *Beyond Oneness and Difference: Li and Coherence in Chinese Buddhist Thought and its Antecedents* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2013), 42.

<sup>13</sup> Hall and Ames, *Anticipating China*, xv.

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<sup>14</sup> Chris Fraser, “Knowledge and Error in Early Chinese Thought.” *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 10 (2011), 131n9.

<sup>15</sup> Hall and Ames, *Anticipating China*, 111.

<sup>16</sup> Hall and Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius*, 5.

<sup>17</sup> Hall and Ames, *Anticipating China*, 152.

<sup>18</sup> David Hall and Roger Ames, *Thinking from the Han* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), xv.

<sup>19</sup> David and Roger say that the “pragmatist approach...accedes to the incommensurability of discourses whenever there is a lack of common conventions to which all parties to a dispute appeal in the attempt to adjudicate conflict.” They do not particularly emphasize incommensurability, though, and reject the cogency of claims that radical translation can fail. Hall and Ames, *Anticipating China*, 153-4 and 174-5.

<sup>20</sup> Hall and Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius*, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Hall and Ames, *Anticipating China*, xv.

<sup>22</sup> The next few paragraphs are substantially drawn from Stephen Angle, “The *Analects* and Moral Theory,” in *Dao Companion to the Analects*, ed. Amy Olbergding (New York: Springer, 2013): 225-257.

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Anscombe, “Modern Moral Philosophy,” *Philosophy* 33:124 (1958), 1-19.

<sup>24</sup> Iris Murdoch, “The Idea of Perfection.” In *The Sovereignty of the Good* (New York: Routledge, 1970), 1-45.

<sup>25</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

<sup>26</sup> Silber develops this idea in a variety of articles; see, for example, John Silber, “The Copernican revolution in ethics: The good reexamined.” In *Kant: A collection of critical essays*,

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ed. Robert Paul Wolff. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959-60). Lee Ming-huei notes that a similar distinction is made in German moral discourse between “*Gesinnungsethik*” and “*Erfolgsethik*” in Lee Ming-huei, “Confucianism, Kant, and Virtue Ethics,” in *Virtue Ethics and Confucianism*, ed. Stephen Angle and Michael Slote (New York: Routledge, 2013), 47-55.

<sup>27</sup> Both on this specific point, and more generally concerning the topic of this section, I have found Wang Yunping, “Are Early Confucians Consequentialists?” *Asian Philosophy* 15 (2005): 19-34 to be very helpful.

<sup>28</sup> Gary Watson, “On the Primacy of Character,” in *Identity, Character, and Morality*, ed. Owen Flanagan, and Amelie Rorty (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990) 449-70.

<sup>29</sup> Representative works include Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Michael Slote, *Morals from Motives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Christine Swanton, *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), and Lisa Tessman, *Burdened Virtues: Virtue Ethics for Liberatory Struggles*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>30</sup> See Julia Driver, “The Virtues and Human Nature,” in *How Should One Live? Essays on the Virtues*, ed. Roger Crisp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 111-129. Various other terms are used to mark roughly the same distinction. Van Norden prefers to speak of a spectrum from moderate to “radical” virtue ethics in Bryan Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism in Early Chinese Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Adams refers to “the ethics of character as an important department of ethical theory” in Robert Merrihew Adams, *A Theory of Virtue: Excellence in Being for the Good* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>31</sup> Martha Nussbaum, “Virtue Ethics: A Misleading Category?” *The Journal of Ethics* 3:3 (1999), 163-201.

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<sup>32</sup> Although it has had little direct effect on English-language interpretations of Confucianism, it is worth noting that starting in the early 1990s, influenced by their Catholic/Aristotelian training and stimulated by Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, some Taiwanese scholars began arguing against the deontological readings of early Confucianism that were dominant in Taiwan, and in favor of a virtue-ethical interpretation. Vincent Shen (Shen Qingsong) is a good representative of this movement. See Vincent Qingsong Shen, 沈清松, “德行伦理学与儒家伦理思想的现代意义 [Virtue Ethics and the Modern Significance of Confucian Ethical Thought],” in 沈清松自选集 [*Vincent Shen's Self-Selected Works*] (Jinan: Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe, 2004), 315-45. For further discussion, see Angle, “The *Analects* and Moral Theory.”

<sup>33</sup> See David Nivison, “‘Virtue’ in Bone and Bronze,” in *The ways of Confucianism: Chinese philosophy*, ed. Bryan Van Norden (Le Salle: Open Court, 1996), 17-30, and David Nivison, “The paradox of ‘Virtue,’” in *The Ways of Confucianism: Investigations in Chinese philosophy* (Le Salle: Open Court, 1996), 31-44.

<sup>34</sup> As can be seen from his glowing back-cover endorsement, Alasdair MacIntyre was also clearly aware of the book. This is perhaps an apt moment to mention MacIntyre's fairly extensive engagement with Confucian ethics—as seen in Alasdair MacIntyre, “Incommensurability, Truth, and the Conversation Between Confucians and Aristotelians About the Virtues.” In *Culture and Modernity*, ed. Eliot Deutsch (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), Alasdair MacIntyre “Once More on Confucian and Aristotelian Conceptions of the Virtues: A Response to Professor Wan.” In *Chinese Philosophy in an Era of Globalization*, ed. Robin R. Wang, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), 151-62, and Alasdair MacIntyre, “Questions for Confucians.” In *Confucian Ethics: A Comparative Study of Self-Autonomy, and Community*, ed. Kwong-loi Shun, and David B. Wong (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 203-18.

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<sup>35</sup> This is more implicit than explicit in Ivanhoe's dissertation (published as Philip Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition: The Thought of Mencius and Wang Yangming* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1990)), though it is explicit in that work's revised second edition: Philip Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition: The Thought of Mencius and Wang Yangming*. 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002): ix, 2n5, 9. The theme of virtue is also central in Philip Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*. 2nd ed., (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000), the first edition of which was published in 1993. See also Stephen Wilson, "Conformity, Individuality, and the Nature of Virtue: A Classical Confucian Contribution to Contemporary Ethical Reflection," in *Confucius and the Analects: New Essays*, ed. Bryan W. Van Norden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 94-115, and Edward Singerland, "Virtue Ethics, the *Analects*, and the Problem of Commensurability," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 29:1 (2001): 97-125. The most mature statement of Van Norden's position is Bryan Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism in Early Chinese Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), on which see below.

<sup>36</sup> In addition to Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism*, two important comparative studies of Aristotle and Confucius were published, May Sim, *Remastering Morals With Aristotle and Confucius* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and (Jiyuan Yu, *The Ethics of Confucius and Aristotle: Mirrors of Virtue* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> Eric Hutton's Stanford Ph.D. thesis is an early instance of this trend, see Eric Hutton, "Virtue and Reason in the *Xunzi*" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2001). In addition, see many of the recent essays by Huang Yong, of which Yong Huang, "The Self-Centeredness Objection to Virtue Ethics: Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian Response." *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 84(4) (2010): 651-92, is a good example; Bryan Van Norden, "Response to Angle and Slote." *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 8 (2009): 305-09; Stephen Angle, *Sagehood: The*



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*Contemporary Significance of Neo-Confucian Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Philip J. Ivanhoe, “McDowell, Wang Yangming, and Mengzi’s Contributions to Understanding Moral Perception.” *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 10 (3): 273-290; and Edward Slingerland, “The Situationist Critique and Early Confucian Virtue Ethics.” *Ethics* 121:2 (2011): 390-419.

<sup>38</sup> For example, Sim says, “ethics for both [Confucius and Aristotle] centers on character”; Sim, *Remastering*, 134. For his part, Yu begins his first chapter by saying, “For both ethics of Confucius and Aristotle, the central question is about what the good life is or what kind of person one should be. More strikingly, both ethics answer this central question by focusing on virtue....” Yu, *Mirrors of Virtue*, 24.

<sup>39</sup> Sim, *Remastering*, 135.

<sup>40</sup> Yu, *Mirrors of Virtue*, 108.

<sup>41</sup> Chen Lai 陈来, “古代德行伦理与早期儒家伦理学的特点 [Ancient Virtue Ethics and the Special Characteristics of Early Confucian Ethical Learning],” *河北学刊 [Hebei Academic Journal]* 22:6 (2002): 31-39, Chen Lai, “Virtue Ethics and Confucian Ethics,” *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 9 (2010): 275-87, Wong Wai-ying, “Confucian Ethics and Virtue Ethics,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 28, no. 3 (2001): 285-300, (Wong Wai-ying, “Confucian Ethics and Virtue Ethics Revisited,” in *Virtue Ethics and Confucianism* ed. Stephen Angle and Michael Slote (New York: Routledge, 2013) 74-79.

<sup>42</sup> Philip Ivanhoe, “Virtue Ethics and the Chinese Confucian Tradition,” in *Virtue Ethics and Confucianism* ed. Stephen Angle and Michael Slote (New York: Routledge, 2013), 28-46, and see also Michael Slote, “Comments on Bryan Van Norden’s *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism*

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in *Early Chinese Philosophy*,” *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 8:3 (2009): 289-95, and Van Norden, “Response,” 2009.

<sup>43</sup> Amy Olberding, *Moral Exemplars in the Analects: The Good Person is That* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>44</sup> Swanton, *A Pluralist View*, 1.

<sup>45</sup> Roger Ames, *Confucian Role Ethics* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2011), xv.

<sup>46</sup> Rosemont Jr., Henry, and Roger T. Ames (trans.). *The Chinese classic of family reverence: A philosophical translation of the Xiaojing* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009).

<sup>47</sup> Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont, “Were the Early Confucians Virtuous?” in *Ethics in Early China*, ed. Chris Fraser, Dan Robins, and Timothy O’Leary (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), 17.

<sup>48</sup> Ames and Rosemont, “Early Confucians,” 17.

<sup>49</sup> Ames and Rosemont, “Early Confucians,” 18.

<sup>50</sup> Sim, *Remastering*, 164.

<sup>51</sup> Yu, *Mirrors*, 194.

<sup>52</sup> Ames and Rosemont, “Early Confucians,” 18. For Shun’s asymmetry argument, see Shun Kwong-loi, “Studying Confucian and Comparative Ethics: Methodological Reflections,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 36, no. 3 (2009): 455-78.

<sup>53</sup> I sketch this history and some of the attendant arguments at more length in Angle, “The *Analects* and Moral Theory.”

<sup>54</sup> I do not mean to imply that Roger eschews Chinese-language scholarship. To the contrary, in many ways he shows that he takes it seriously; witness, for example, the central role that the twentieth-century philosopher and scholar Tang Junyi plays in Roger’s writings.

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<sup>55</sup> See, e.g., Philip Cafaro, *Thoreau's Living Ethics: Walden and the Pursuit of Virtue* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), and Jennifer Welchman, *Dewey's Ethical Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

<sup>56</sup> Ames, *Role Ethics*, 207.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 181.

<sup>58</sup> It also bears noting that in a fascinating series of blog posts, William Haines has argued that “in most respects, Aristotle accepted Confucian role ethics as Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont describe [it].” William Haines, March 22, 2012, “Comment on Stephen Angle, ‘Role ethics as virtue ethics?’” Accessed July 13, 2015. <https://warpweftandway.wordpress.com/2012/03/07/role-ethics-as-virtue-ethics/>.

<sup>59</sup> I refer respectively to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://plato.stanford.edu/>), the Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<https://www.rep.routledge.com/>), and the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://www.iep.utm.edu/>); Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews (<https://ndpr.nd.edu/recent-reviews/>); the PhilPapers site (<http://philpapers.org/>); and the Philosopher's Index (<http://philindex.org/>).

<sup>60</sup> John Makeham, “Disciplining Tradition in Modern China: Two Case Studies,” in *History and Theory*, *Theme Issue* 51 (2012), 89-104, offers an excellent, critical account of National Learning.

<sup>61</sup> There are a number significant countervailing voices, including not only liberals who deny that issues like human rights and rule of law are distinctively Western concerns, but also “New Cosmopolitans” who seek to discover new international possibilities inspired in part by Chinese traditions, as well as those contemporary Confucian who argue for the universal relevance of (a possibly updated version of) Confucianism. For some discussion, see Stephen Angle, “Western, Chinese, and Universal Values,” in *Telos* 171 (2015): 112–17.

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<sup>62</sup> Zheng, Jiadong 郑家栋. *断裂中的传统：信念与理性之间* [*Fractured Tradition: Between Belief and Reason*] (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 2001), 519.

<sup>63</sup> See also Leigh K. Jenco, ed., *Chinese thought as global theory: diversifying knowledge production in the social sciences and humanities* (Albany: State University of New York Press , 2015).