

***Tiyong* and Interpenetration in the *Analects* of Confucius: The Sacred as Secular**

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Abstract

This is the third in a series of essays on the seminal role of the paradigms of essence-function and interpenetration in East Asian religious and philosophical thought. The first article, entitled “The Composition of Self-Transformation Thought in Classical East Asian Philosophy and Religion” ⁽¹⁾ was a general introduction to these paradigms over the broad expanse of indigenous East Asian thought religious/philosophical thought. The second article, entitled “Essence-Function (*t’i-yung*) : Early Chinese Origins and Manifestations,” ⁽²⁾ examined the earliest precursors of these notions in classics such as the *Book of Changes*, the *Great Learning*, and the *Doctrine of the Mean*, paying special attention to the unique role played by the concept of “sincerity” in manifesting and mediating presence of essence-function and interpenetration. In this essay, we look at the role essence-function and interpenetration play in the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語).

Through examination of the two major Confucian classics, the *Great Learning* and *Doctrine of the Mean* (carried out in the prior essay), we have been able to introduce some of the most important interlinking concepts for establishing the main themes of this discourse : (1) the “roots-and-branches” (本末) worldview ; (2) the relationship of essence-function (體用) thinking to the work of self-and-other-transformation, (3) the quality of sincerity (誠) as a main operator in that process, and (4) the necessity of a view of holism, transparency, interconnectedness and mutual containment as a prerequisite for the essence-function and self-and-other-transformation worldviews to operate.

We should pause here for a moment to begin to underline the central role of the discourse of “transformation” that accompanies essence-function/interpenetration religious thinking. In all three traditions of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, the possibility and need for self-(and other)-transformation is presumed. This is based on a shared intuition that within the human mind there lies a pure, good, luminous and enhancable basis. In most people, this basis is clouded over by ignorance and selfishness and thus does not readily manifest itself. But in some people, such as sages

(*shengren* 聖人), worthies (*xianren* 賢人), the superior man (*junzi* 君子) or the ruler in the *Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學) who “manifests his bright virtue,” this excellent aspect of humanity is much more readily apparent. No matter how foolish or depraved one may be, one’s ability to manifest this bright virtue is replete, awaiting attention. A main catalyst for enhancement of this luminosity has been identified in the prior essay as “sincerity,” a quality that has been shown to contain the potential not only to bring forth one’s own luminosity, but to foster it in others as well. Thus, in the matter of transformation, the concepts of “training (of oneself)” and “influence (on others)” are distinctively germane to all three traditions. The “learning” of the *Great Learning* is not an accumulation of factual information : it is a dynamic process of self-and-other transformation.

These characteristics are epitomized in thought-systems that are essence-function oriented. I.e., in order for such a system of self-transformation to have relevance, one needs the basic conceptual framework wherein the human being possesses a fundamentally pure mind, which, regardless of the present purity of that manifestation, is believed capable of transformation through self-training and external influences. The belief in the possibility of transformation through self-or other-influences is precluded by a belief, to one extent or another, in a world that has some measure of interconnection, or mutual containment.

Since the “essence” being discussed here is not an eternal, unchanging entity, but is instead contingent upon situations, the relationship of essence and function is fluid and flexible. For instance, in the series of stages outlined in the *Great Learning*, it would be conceivable to identify each prior stage as the “essence” of that which comes after it, and each subsequent stage as the “function” of the stage that comes before it. In the *Analects* as well, there are passages in which the most fundamental concept being referred to might change according to the situation. For instance, when Confucius says “filial piety (*xiao* 孝) is the great root of heaven and earth” he is characterizing filial piety as something relatively essential. The same can be said, according to the situation, of the concepts of “righteousness” (*yi* 義), “wisdom” (*zhi* 智) and “propriety” (*li* 禮).

There is no unchanging and immutable “essence”—in the Platonic sense, in indigenous Chinese philosophy, and accordingly, no such notion in the *Analects*. Yet there is one concept that stands out in its relative “essentiality”, serving as the most fundamental basis for all forms of virtuous qualities and behavior : this is the notion of *ren* (仁). Translators of the Chinese classics have always had a difficult time in providing an adequate English rendering of this term, since such equivalents as “benevolence,” “humanity” and “altruism” are too limited in scope to indicate the depth and breadth of the connotations of the term as it is used in these texts. In the Confucian classics, it is not merely a form of warm-heartedness, but designates an

innate capacity of the human mind that serves as the basis for all altruistic motivations and capacities of intellectual and spiritual development.⁽³⁾

From the perspective of the *tiyong* paradigm as it is manifested in the *Analects*, *ren* is the penultimate “essence.” It is never seen manifested in daily activity as a thing in itself, but rather in various forms of virtuous and altruistic human characteristics and behavior, such as the “wisdom,” “propriety” and “righteousness” introduced above. Those who are familiar with the influential little book *The Secular as Sacred*, written a generation ago by Herbert Fingarette, will recognize that I am here disagreeing with the central tenet expressed in that work—that it is the concept of propriety (*li* 禮) that is most fundamental to the world-view of the Confucian classics, with *ren* having only secondary significance.⁽⁴⁾

Fingarette has been duly praised for his interesting and profound analyses regarding the pervasiveness of the unconscious uses of propriety, not only in ancient Chinese society, but society in general. But in his prioritization of *li* over *ren*, he ignores a mountain of evidence in the Confucian classical texts that belies his position, as the textual evidence in the *Analects* that points to a greater “psychological interiority” for *ren* than the other virtues of the sage or *junzi* is overwhelming. And to merely state that *ren* is more internal, deeper than the other virtues is to stop short—as the relation between *ren* and the other virtues is quintessentially *tiyong* in its nature.

That is to say, *ren* is a quality that necessarily lacks its own manifest function. It is not something discernable or identifiable in and of itself. Rather, it is only apprensible through other “functional” virtues, such as loyalty, wisdom, filial piety, humility, unselfishness, fairness, etc. In making judgments about *ren* based on the presence of these other virtues, the testimony of a few instances alone is never considered sufficient for Confucius to qualify a someone as a “person of *ren*” (*renren* 仁人). To be counted by Confucius to be a person in this category, one must demonstrate a wide range of virtuous qualities in various situations over a long period of time—and even then, Confucius is reluctant to fully acknowledge a person as truly manifesting *ren*. To be called a *renren* by Confucius is tantamount to being called a perfected being. As can be seen in the passage below, such virtues as obedience and filial piety are considered to be “enactments” of *ren*. *Ren* needs a mode for its performance, since it is not a quality that is in itself visible.

Yuzi said : “There are few who have developed themselves filially and fraternally who like offending their superiors. Those who do not like to offend their superiors are never troublemakers. The Superior Man concerns himself with the fundamentals. Once the fundamentals are established, the proper way (*dao*) appears. Are not filial piety and obedience to elders fundamental to the

enactment of *ren*? (*weiren* 爲仁) (1:2)

The concept of Superior Man is one that is integral to the discussion of *ren*, being, as it is, one of the most seminal concepts in the *Analects*. “Superior Man” is the rendering for the Chinese term *junzi* (君子) which originally means “Son of a Prince”—thus, someone of noble birth. In the *Analects*, Confucius imbues the term with a special meaning. Though sometimes used strictly in its original sense, it usually refers to a person who has made significant progress in the Way of self-cultivation, by practicing righteousness, by loving treatment of parents, respect for elders, honesty with friends, etc. Though the *junzi* is a highly advanced human being, he is not perfect, and is thus distinguished from the category of *sage*, who is, in the *Analects* more of a “divine being,” usually a model from great antiquity.

The Superior Man is established in contrast to the inferior or “petty” man (*xiaoren* 小人) who is small-minded and selfish. The predominant distinguishing quality between the two is a presence or absence of “righteousness” (*yi* 義, also translated as “justice”) a concept that in the *Analects* refers primarily to the ability to distinguish right from wrong and to act accordingly. When a new situation arises, the inferior man thinks of how he may use it to his best advantage, while the Superior Man first considers what would be the fair and correct thing to do. The fact that righteousness is taken to be the primary defining characteristic of the Superior Man gives us another piece of evidence of the deeper interiority and subtlety of *ren*, since Confucius makes it clear that one who has fully actualized his *ren* is something of a higher order than the rubric of Superior Man. He says, in regard to this:

There are some cases where a Superior Man may not be a man of *ren*, but there are no cases where an inferior man is a man of *ren*. (14:7)

A similar interiority is indicated in the next passage:

Confucius said : “The virtuous will certainly have something to say, but those who have something to say are not necessarily virtuous. The *ren* man is always brave, but the brave man is not necessarily possessed of *ren*.” (14:5)

As essence, *ren* must be a necessary constituent of all externally demonstrated virtues. Such qualities in themselves, as mere “function” not containing essence, are empty of real value. That is to say, “function” has two general types: function that contains essence, and function that does not contain essence:

Confucius said : “If a man has no *ren* what can his propriety be like? If a man has

no *ren* what can his music be like?" (3:3)

Conversely, if *ren* lacks its means of expression—its functions, it cannot be seen. For most people, the only way to cultivate and to manifest *ren* is through its various functional modes.

Confucius said : "If your wisdom can grasp it (the *dao*), but your *ren* is incapable of maintaining it, even though you have grasped it, you will certainly lose it. If your wisdom grasps it and your *ren* is sufficient to maintain it, but you don't manifest it, the people will not revere you. If your wisdom grasps it, your *ren* is sufficient to maintain it, and you manifest it but don't act according to propriety, you are still not perfect." (15:32)

Because of the unparalleled high position that Confucius accords to the quality of *ren*, and because of the fact that determinations about individual degrees of actualization of *ren* are not a matter of simple functional evidence, he is reticent to admit that any particular person has fully manifested it, regardless of that person's fame or other accomplishments. Therefore, we see in the *Analects* this type of dialogue:

Meng Wubo asked Confucius whether Zi Lu was a man of *ren*.

Confucius said, "I don't know."

He asked again. Confucius said, "Yu could direct the public works manpower in a state of 1,000 chariots, but I don't know if I would call him a man of *ren*."

Meng again asked : "What about Qiu?"

Confucius said, "Qiu could be the governor of a city of 1,000 families, or of a clan of 100 chariots, but I don't know if he is a man of *ren*."

Meng asked : "What about Chi?"

The Master said, "Dressed up with his sash, placed in the middle of the court, he could make conversation with the guests, but I don't know if he is a man of *ren*." (5:7)

And . . .

Zizhang asked : "The Chief Minister Ziwen was appointed three times, but never showed any sign of pleasure. He was fired three times, but never showed any sign of disappointment. He would always inform the incoming minister on all the details of the prior government. What do you think of him?"

Confucius said, "He was loyal."

“Was he *ren*?”

Confucius said, “I don’t know what he did to deserve to be called *ren*.”

Zi Chang again asked : “When Qiuqi assassinated the prince of Qi, Chan Wenzhi, who had a fief of ten chariots, abandoned them and left the state. Arriving to another state, he said, ‘The government here is just like that of the officer Qiuqi.’ and he left it. Coming to another state he said, ‘They are again just like the officer Qiuqi.’ and he left. What do you think of him?”

Confucius said, “He was pure.”

“Was he *ren*?”

“I don’t know what he did to merit being called *ren*.” (5:18)

There are certain functional qualities, which although usually viewed as admirable, are regarded as suspect by Confucius when it comes to assessing a person’s actualization of *ren*. The most prominent among these are intelligence and eloquence:

Someone said : “Yong is a man of *ren*, but he is not sharp enough with his tongue.”

Confucius said, “Why does he need to be sharp with his tongue? If you deal with people by smooth talk, you will soon be disliked. I don’t know if Yong is a *ren* man, but why should he have to be a clever speaker?” (5:4)

Confucius said : “Someone who is a clever speaker and maintains a ‘too-smiley’ face is seldom considered a person of *ren*.” (1:3)

Sima Niu asked about the meaning of *ren*.

Confucius said, “The *ren* man is hesitant to speak.”

Niu replied, “Are you saying that *ren* is mere hesitancy in speaking?”

Confucius said, “Actualizing it is so difficult, how can you not be hesitant to speak about it?” (12:3)

In these three passages, we can see the beginnings of a tendency which will also be prominent in Taoism, and consummated in Zen Buddhism—a distrust of intellectual cleverness and eloquence. This distrust is not because these abilities are in themselves inherently bad. Indeed, their relative value is contingent upon the degree to which they are infused with *ren*. However, since people who possess these abilities are apt to deceive themselves and others in regard to their own goodness, these abilities are regarded with suspicion, here and elsewhere.

The problem of the personal actualization of *ren* is something that is dealt with in the *Analects* a wide variety of ways. Being the core of our mind, it is something that we are fully intimate with, yet at the same time often fully unaware of. Generally speaking however, the nurturing of one’s *ren* requires great effort and vigilance. There are some people like Confucius’ favorite disciple (Yan)hui who are by nature highly

attuned to their *ren*, but most others must work hard to be in touch with it.

Thus, *ren* is sometimes far.

Confucius said : “Hui could keep his mind on *ren* for three months without lapse. Others are lucky if they can do it for one day out of a month.” (6:5)

Then, approachable:

Confucius said : “With firmness, strength, simplicity and caution in speaking, you will be close to *ren*.” (13:27)

Then, right at hand:

Confucius said : “Is *ren* far away? If I aspire for *ren* it is right here!” (7:29)

This kind of paradox of simultaneous distance and immediacy of *ren* can also be seen as something that prefigures the much later Zen Buddhist notion of sudden enlightenment. As we will see when we treat that area, they are both based on the same fact, that *ren*, like the buddha-nature, is the essence of our own being, and therefore is not to be sought as something to be gradually attained.

In any case, one’s manifestation of *ren* is always ultimately the defining mark of his or her humanity, or closeness to sagehood. The person who has significantly actualized his or her *ren* is comfortable, self-possessed, free of anxiety. The *ren* person has no need to press to advance him or herself toward the superior actualization of its functional attributes, since benefit from such attributes, such as “wisdom,” or “loyalty,” become irrelevant.

Confucius said : “If you lack *ren* you can’t handle long periods of difficulty or long periods of comfortability. The *Ren* person is comfortable in *ren*. The wise take advantage of *ren*.” (4:2)

Confucius said : “Riches and honors are what all men desire. But if they cannot be attained in accordance with the Way they should not be kept. Poverty and low status are what all men hate. But if they cannot be avoided while staying in accordance with the Way, you should not avoid them. If a Superior Man departs from *ren*, how can he be worthy of that name? A Superior Man never leaves *ren* for even the time of a single meal. In moments of haste he acts according to it. In times of difficulty or confusion he acts according to it.” (4:5)

Confucius said : “The wise enjoy the sea, the *ren* enjoy the mountains. The wise

are busy, the *ren* are tranquil. The wise are happy, the *ren* are eternal.” (6:21)

Since *ren* is the basis of our ability to assess goodness, it is actually impossible to form proper value judgments that are not based on a *ren* perspective.

Confucius said : “Only the *ren* person is able to really like others or to really dislike them.”(4:3)

Confucius said : “I have never seen one who really loves *ren* or really hates non-*ren*. If you really loved *ren* you would not place anything above it. If you really hated the non-*ren*, you would not let it near you. Is there anyone who has devoted their strength to *ren* for a single day? I have not seen anyone who has lacked the strength to do so. Perhaps there has been such a case, but I have never seen it.” (4:6)

Zigong asked : “Suppose there were a ruler who bestowed benefit on the people far and wide and was capable of bringing salvation to the multitude, what would you think of him? Might he be called *ren*?” The Master said, “Why only *ren*? He would undoubtedly be a sage. Even Yao and Shun would have had to strive to achieve this. Now the *ren* man, wishing himself to be established, sees that others are established, and, wishing himself to be successful, sees that others are successful. To be able to take one’s own feelings as a guide may be called the art of *ren*.” (6:28)

World-penetrating *ren*

While the above discussion regarding the character of *ren* has hopefully provided some measure of new insight into its connotations as essence, we still have some way to go in the task of fully plumbing its depths, especially regarding a dimension of it which has not been discussed at length prior to this. This is the degree to which, especially in the *Analects*, *ren* not only shows an essential aspect in terms of its relative internality/fundamentality within the human mind, but also in a universally penetrating aspect, an aspect that might be interpreted by the modern consciousness as supramundane or magical. We are referring here to the references to the transformative power of *ren* which seem to extend far beyond normally acknowledged boundaries in terms materialistic perceptions of space and time.

In the *Great Learning*, we were taught that the person who “manifests his bright virtue” (i. e., who corrects the incorrect function of his mind and manifests its inherent goodness), has the power to bring peace to the entire realm. As the process for this accomplishment is explained in a series of stages, it is fairly easy for us to comprehend its logic, regardless of whether or not we personally feel that it is possible

in our own lives. The *Analects*, however, has numerous references of the same sort, directly pointing to the powerful effect that virtuous (or non-virtuous) behavior has on those around us. Although those of us brought up in the modern world certainly can recognize the fact that we absorb influence from those around us, the extent to which this kind of influence was believed to penetrate in the early East Asian world is far beyond that which we could possibly imagine through the materialistic paradigms of our own culture.

The early East Asians possessed a view of humanity that was radically different from our own, in that they clearly believed that the transformative power of the human mind extended limitlessly throughout the world. Such a view of the world is paralleled to some extent in the doctrines of the Buddhist school of Consciousness-only, and the combination of these Indian Buddhist and indigenous Chinese perceptions would be consummated in the philosophy of Huayan school—which contained the hallmark teaching of a world in which all things were connected, not only in principle, but at the level of individual phenomena—the world of interpenetration, or *shishi wuai* 事事無礙. Thus, although *shishi wuai* is ostensibly a Buddhist doctrine, I would argue that its precursory intuitions can be seen equally as clearly in pre-Buddhist classical East Asian thought as they are in Indian Buddhist thought.

We have, in the *Analects*, numerous passages that allude to the notion of an interpenetrated world, or at least a world where mind may penetrate and permeate to an extraordinary degree. The most notable of these is passage 12:1, which, if we translate holding as strictly as possible to basic semantic implications and grammar, should read as follows:

Yanyuan asked about the meaning of *ren*. The Master said, “To completely overcome selfishness and keep to propriety is *ren*. If for a full day you can overcome selfishness and keep to propriety, everyone in the world will return to *ren*. Does *ren* come from oneself, or from others?” (顏淵問仁 子曰 克己復禮爲仁 一日克己復禮天下歸仁焉 爲仁由己而由人乎哉)

If we translate this passage keeping faithfully to its basic semantic and grammatical components, we have no choice but to reflect the meaning that the complete transformation of a single person into a condition of fully actualized *ren* is sufficient to transform his/her surrounding world. This interpretation necessarily takes *ren* from being relegated to a mere a static, inner quality of human beings into a powerful, world-transforming force.

Unwilling to acknowledge the possibility that Confucius could have had such a “magical” (Fingarette’s word) intention in mind, translators and commentators of the

Analects have interpreted this sentence in such a way as to explain away its most vital, and yet quite plainly expressed connotations by adding extra language, or translating in an unnatural manner.

For example, Wing-tsit Chan translates : “If a man (the ruler) can for one day master himself and return to propriety, all under heaven will return to humanity,”⁽⁵⁾ thus implying that the widespread transformation from and through *ren* is dependent upon the political power held in the position of kingship. For those well-studied in the *Analects* and related Confucian texts, such a rendering should draw an immediate red flag, since, in such texts, when the term for “king” (*wang* 王) or “ruler” (*jun* 君) needs to be invoked, it is done so without reservation. If Confucius had wanted to delimit the possibility of this kind of power and influence to the king, he could have easily done so by including the appropriate vocabulary. But since he did not do this, why should later commentators take it upon themselves to add it? I would say that they did not share in the interpenetrated view of the universe held by Confucius, and thus could not possibly communicate his vision properly.

James Legge also ignores accepted grammatical and semantic conventions when he translates : “If a man can for one day subdue himself and return to propriety, all under heaven will ascribe virtue to him.”⁽⁶⁾ In the *Analects*, as well as the other Confucian classics, when writers want to communicate a meaning such as “ascribe” or “to be called” they readily use the appropriate vocabulary which they had fully in their possession. Nowhere in classical Chinese literature is the term *gui* 歸 translated as “ascribe.” Why should Legge have arbitrarily forced such an interpretation in only this place? D.C. Lau contorts the meaning in a similar manner by rendering “If for a single day a man could return to the observance of rites through overcoming himself, then the whole Empire would consider (? *gui* 歸) benevolence to be his.”⁽⁷⁾

Why should all three of these acknowledged experts in Chinese language and philosophy insist on contorting a sentence whose grammar and vocabulary are among the simplest we will find in classical Chinese literature? The answer is simple: None of them were able to accept (or perceive) the interpenetrated worldview experienced by Confucius and some of his more eminent disciples, a worldview which is expressed everywhere in the *Analects*. Another good example can be found in 12:19, which says:

Li Kangzi asked Confucius about government saying : “Suppose I were to kill the unjust in order to advance the just. Would that be all right?”

Confucius replied : “In doing government, what is the need of killing? If you desire good, the people will be good. The nature of the Superior Man is like the wind, the nature of the inferior man is like the grass. When the wind blows over the grass, it always bends.”

This is the Confucian view of the active power of virtue, which is expressed throughout the *Analects*, and later in the *Mencius* (孟子).

With a bit of further consideration we can also translate 12:1 literally without making it seem so magical. First we should reflect on what is meant by “overcoming oneself for one day and returning to propriety.” Considering what is involved in such an accomplishment, what Confucius is referring to here is no small feat. “Overcoming oneself” for a full day and keeping in full accord with propriety (without a moment's lapse?) is an experience no doubt attained by very few people, and can be equated with the achievement of sagehood—perfection in human form. Once we are willing to acknowledge the immense scope of this accomplishment, then its consequence—the awakening of all the people in the world to *ren*, is not at all incongruent with the generally understood view of the influence of the sage in a spiritually transparent world. All we need to do here is recall the teaching contained in the *Great Learning* and *Doctrine of the Mean*.

One other point we might want to keep in mind is that even though Confucius says that the overcoming of the self occurs in a single (full?) day, he does not say that the *transformation of the world happens in a day*, so this could conceivably take a bit of time. For example, Confucius says elsewhere : “Even if you have the position of kingship, it would still take a generation for *ren* to prevail.” (13:12)

More on the Language of Penetration

In the effort of further grasping the distinctive nature of this interpenetrated world view, we will be well served by taking into consideration the role played in early Chinese thought by the twin concepts related to penetration, the usage of which reflects to a great degree the way the actions of consciousness and the transference of information were perceived. The two concepts we are talking about here are those of *tong* (通) and *da* (達). The basic meaning of *tong*, which has changed surprisingly little over three millennia of East Asian history, is to “go through,” or “pass through.” It especially carries the connotations of passing, or going through a path, or moving along a course that is already opened and which merely needs to be traversed. The ideograph *da* is close in meaning, and is often used in direct conjunction with *tong* in binome form, but has an interesting and important etymological difference, as it originally signifies piercing through a barrier, or breaking open a passageway where there was none before. Thus, when the two are combined together a complementary connotation is being created which indicates both passing through that which is already open, and piercing through that which was heretofore closed.

Tong and *da* are ancient concepts to which strong philosophical overtones were added in early Confucian thought, notably in such texts as the *Analects*, *Book of*

Changes and the *Record of Rites*. Especially relevant among these implications is the function of the mind of the sage, which is able to penetrate without limit in time and space. The sage's mind is capable of "penetrating to (i.e., "understanding") the principles of things." Other shades of meaning include "to unify" or "be the same" in the sense of the dissolution of barrier. Both *tong* and *da* could mean to "apprehend," "understand," "grasp," "permeate," "fill," or "influence." They were used adjectivally and adverbially to the same effects. The nuance of "penetration" (even if not specifically indicated by the words *tong* and *da*) is ubiquitous in all the texts that reflect the early East Asian intuitively transparent worldview. It is a basic underpinning of both the *Great Learning* and the *Doctrine of the Mean*, in both of which the inner and outer aspects of the person are understood to penetrate each other such that quality of the person's inner mind is always discernible in her/his outer appearance. *Da* is commonly used to indicate situations that would be expressed in English as "understand" or "influence." The context of the usage of these terms, along with their etymology, indicates that in the consciousness of their original users, such terms actually reflected the operation of some form of "penetration." It is noteworthy that the action of *da* is always a positive one, whether that penetration be the attainment of understanding, expertise or whatever. Let us look at a few examples:

Li Kangzi asked whether Zhongyu was capable of serving in the government.
 Confucius said, "Yu is efficient. What problem could he have in handling government work?"
 Kang asked : "Is Ci capable of serving in the government?"
 Confucius said, "Ci is intelligent (*da*). What problem could he have in handling government work?" (6:6)

The *ren* man, wishing himself to be established, sees that others are established, and, wishing himself to be successful (*da*), sees that others are successful (*da*). To be able to take one's own feelings as a guide may be called the art of *ren*." (6:28)

Zizhang asked what a *shi* (士) should be like, that he may be called "excellent (*da*)."
 Confucius said, "What do you mean by" excellent (*da*)?"
 Zizhang replied : "It means to be famous in your town, and famous in your clan."
 Confucius said, "This is *fame*, not *excellence*. One who is *excellent* has an upright character and loves justice. If you listen carefully to what people say, observe their facial expressions and are careful to be humble to them, you will be excellent in your town, and excellent in your clan. As far as 'fame' is concerned, if you put on a show of goodness and do otherwise, and are not the least bit bothered in doing so, you will indeed be 'famous' in your town and 'famous' in your

clan.”(12:20)

Fanchi asked about the meaning of *ren*.

Confucius said “love others.” He asked about the meaning of “knowledge.”

The Master said, “Know others.” Fanchi couldn’t get (*da*) it. (12:22)

Confucius said : “The Superior Man penetrates (*da*) that which is above. The inferior man penetrates (*da*) that which is below.” (14:24)

Confucius said : “I have no resentment against Heaven, no quarrel with men. I study from the bottom and penetrate (*da*) to the top. Who understands me? Heaven does!” (14:37)

The concept of “penetration” thus has an active connotation. For example, the act of “understanding,” which in English has relatively passive, receptive connotations, in classical Chinese is indicated (and not only in the *Analects*) by the concept of *da*—piercing through, penetrating, permeating. There is an image of a consciousness that goes out to the things of the world, and enters into them. In the same sense then, the “study” or “learning” understood by Confucius and his disciples was one of a “bringing to” or “penetrating through” by the person, indicating not only the reception and storage of knowledge, but a personal, embodied attainment.

This is, indeed, the very essence of the Confucian notion of *xue* (學), as it is to be measured not as accumulation of factual knowledge, but as the extent of the process of self-transformation. What is important about this notion of study is the degree to which the same understanding of penetration is found in the systems of self-transformation contained in the Daoist, and later East Asian Buddhist—especially Chan traditions. Even though the concept of text-based study is often included, such textual study is the type in which an embodiment of the deepest instructions of the text in question—such that one might be fully transformed by it—is always assumed.

Thus, the meaning of *xue* is equivalent to what we have introduced in the first essay as “integral practice”—meaning a dynamic form of study that includes the spiritual transformation of oneself and others. The Confucian concept of *xue*, by its nature, needs to have an essence-function/interpenetration matrix in order to operate. The type of transformation associated with *xue* occurs because of (1) an originally pure nature, which can (2) manifest itself in proper function because of (3) the interpenetrated nature of the human being and the world in which he exists. Let us now look at some more examples.

Confucius said : “Is anyone incapable of following words of correct instruction?

But it is self-transformation according to them that is important. Is anyone incapable of enjoying the words of gentle guidance? But it is inquiring deeply into their meaning that is important. If I enjoy without inquiring deeply, and follow without changing myself, how can I say that I have understood them?" (9:23)

Confucius said, "Si, do you think that I am a person who studies widely and memorizes all of it?" (15:2)

Si replied, "It seems that way. But perhaps not?"

Confucius said, "The answer is *no*. I penetrate all with one."

Confucius knew what he knew, not because he had read and memorized every text in existence, but because he had grasped the gist of what all the texts were pointing to. This is comparable to the famous Chan metaphor, where the student is advised not to look at the finger pointing to the moon, but to see the moon itself.

Confucius said: The superior man does not, in the act of eating, seek satisfaction; nor in dwelling seek comfort. He is diligent in handling affairs and cautious in his speech. He makes sure that he has contact with those who possess the way, and thereby rectifies himself. Of such a man it can be said, "he loves learning (*xue*)."

(1:14)

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Notes

- (1) *Bulletin of Toyo Gakuen University*, vol. 4 (March, 1996), pp. 141-152. this article has been further developed under the new title of "East Asia's Unexplored Pivot of Metaphysics and Hermeneutics: Essence-Function/Interpenetration," available on the Web through <http://www.human.toyogakuen-u.ac.jp/~acmuller/index.html>.
- (2) *Bulletin of Toyo Gakuen University*, vol. 7 (1999), p. 93-106. Also available on the Web at the link listed in note 1.
- (3) Because of the difficulty of communicating this depth of meaning, I have in my works on the topic, often chosen to leave the term untranslated, with a note explaining its depth of meaning.
- (4) The third chapter of Fingarette's book, entitled "The Locus of the Personal" is primarily an argument for a greater interiority of *li* as opposed to *ren*. His argument is filled with flaws and incomplete reasoning, at the center of which is a belief that Confucius was clueless regarding the dimension of psychological interiority. The citations in this chapter ignore most of the significant definitions of *ren*, and the ones that

are used are both taken out of context and mistranslated. Fingarette badly missed the point.

(5) Chan, p. 38.

(6) Legge, p. 250.

(7) Lau, p. 112. Compared to the above-mentioned two translators, such misreadings of the deeper connotations of the classical Confucian and Taoist texts are far more profuse in the renderings of Lau than any translator that I have read.