

XI. Closing review

1. VOLUNTARISM AND EUDAIMONISM

In order to see the foundation of preference and choice in Confucius' thinking it is important to determine whether the emphasis in his moral philosophy is on the moral action or on the agent. In voluntarism the moral action is important, and so morality is based on the choice of which action to take. Talents, weaknesses and improvements are important concepts for the voluntarists.

According to eudaimonism, the moral agents are born. Choices and actions can change the moral agent, but they cannot produce a moral agent. The moral agency is more fundamental than choice and actions are.

The Confucian Analects contain elements of voluntarism and of eudaimonism; Confucius does not follow either theory exclusively. The moral agent can be changed not necessarily by the action, but rather by learning and by the socio-ethical environment. In learning, the agent's talent is important, as in voluntarism. However, Confucius also regards the agent, such as his favorite disciple Yuen Hui, and a Gentleman in general, as important. In this way he approaches eudaimonism.

Confucius very seldom chose any specific person to be the agent of Goodness. His favorite disciple Yen Hui was closest to it. Confucius did not regard himself as Good. Confucius is free to develop his ideas of preference and choice without being forced to do so by voluntarism and without being prevented from doing so by eudaimonism.

2. MONISM AND PLURALISM

In order to discover the basis for moral preference and choice in Confucius' thinking, we have to clarify what his intellectual attitude towards monism and pluralism is, since choice presupposes pluralism. In pluralism, the qualitative differences, lacks and different sorts of judgement are central to choice. In opposition to this, according to monism there is one single value and only one fundamental ethical principle according to which ethical behavior is assessed. There are monistic choices, but in this type of choice we do not sacrifice one value for another, and in a sense they are not 'real' choices.

If Confucius is a monist he must have one single most important value according to which he evaluates all other values and actions. He must not have any characteristics of pluralism, such as allowing for qualitatively different evaluative considerations or that even the best act can be lacking in some way.

If we can conclude that Confucius was a monist, then a proper choice did not occur to him.

Confucius has monistic statements which refer to the only right Way, *tao*. This does not imply that this *tao* cannot include different values and assessment of them.

The materials testify that Confucius did speak about the qualitative differences between values. He spoke about different sorts of goods, not different sources of the same good, as monists do. In Confucius' thinking there are values which compete with each other. He accepted to some degree other values than those which he was advocating. He recognized that one may pursue one value and forgo another. In this way, according to Confucius, one may choose values from a set of values. Some qualities of a certain value in his mind could be irrelevant to that value. Confucius also speaks about sacrificing one value because of another. This presupposes that both values are good, but that the chosen value is preferred. A value which is not preferred, can be obtained only when certain conditions prevail. Confucius goes even further than that. He places values into an order of preference. He has schemes in which all the values of the lower rank are subsumed into the higher rank.

This shows that Confucius has the first characteristic of pluralism in which he assesses or evaluates different types of values and considers which values can be sacrificed and for which values.

It should be mentioned that this characteristic, of qualitative differences of values, is only very little discussed in the Analects, but it appears clearly enough to legitimize the conclusion. This trend of pluralism in the Analects will be better defined when we examine the second characteristic of it, namely the notion of lack. Confucius' thinking about lack or defects is a special and mostly unexplored area although all the sayings about lack can be easily found in the Analects, including several functions of lack or defects.

Certain lacks are detrimental to a good life, others are necessary and contribute to a good life. Some lacks are not necessary, but are recommendable and their presence is advantageous for one's life. Certain lacks are allowed because of the circumstances. About some lacks it is understood that they are not tolerated. Some lacks are irrelevant. One chooses rationally which lacks are regrettable and which are recommendable and which are in between, more or less indifferent lacks. Generally, Confucius is concerned about lacking a particular sort of good rather than thinking about a defect in that one value or good. In holding these views about lack, Confucius shows a genuine pluralistic mood. In terms of pluralism Confucius' thinking about lacks is comparatively well developed.

The third characteristic of pluralism is that it is a kind of construction, where one has the main higher-level synthesizing categories. Each of these consists of lower level goods which have certain complex preferences and interconnections and relationships to their higher level synthesizing category.

In the higher-level synthesizing categories, the Analects testify to the existence of such categories. In the case of *tao*, *jen* and *te*, we note that these are divided into lower-level categories. However, Confucius handles these on a less rational level than he

should if he were a strong pluralist. He discusses the relationships between the lower-level and higher-level categories, but mainly leaves the relationships between the lower-level categories without attention, except that in connection with *tao* he has different lower-level characteristics according to the usage of *tao*.

The lack of rational thinking which is in Confucius' thinking about lower-level categories of the higher-level synthesizing categories is offset by the more sophisticated thinking in his ideas of lack. This notion corrects the weaknesses of Confucius' position as a pluralist and redeems to some extent his chances of approaching proper choices.

We do not do justice to the materials if we label his thinking exclusively as monism, since methodologically he has clear and distinct features of pluralism. On the other hand, we cannot label him exclusively a pluralist either, because part of his thinking about higher-level synthesizing categories and the lower-level categories lacks sufficiently distinct and proper balancing and consequently it cannot be said that it follows pluralism. On the other hand, we cannot expect this kind of rational quality in thinking which is from the time when philosophical thinking was only beginning on Chinese soil. Nevertheless, the materials show that in some aspects the thinking is quite well developed rationally, especially in the sophisticated discussion of lacks.

In all, it is fair to claim that Confucius' thinking has pluralistic and monistic characteristics, but the main balance rests on pluralism. Since he displayed a rich and deep thinking about the negative characteristics, a closer study of these could reveal new features in his moral thinking.

Confucius recognized different values. This raises the a question of whether he recognized that contradictions or dilemma situations may occur between values.

3. DILEMMAS

Confucius often tried to balance between extremes and to avoid a dilemma situation, in which there is no right act open to be chosen by the agent and every option is wrong. Confucius was in this kind of situation when he could not serve the prince according to his principles. He solved this problem by choosing to resign, and thus the situation was not a real dilemma, because he knew how to solve it. On another occasion he had to serve although the situation was not according to his principles. He had to serve because it was his duty and because he had the talent and ability to do so. However, he felt he ought not to serve, because the lord did not follow the principles which Confucius thought to be correct. In this situation he found himself doing wrong, whichever course he chooses. This was a true dilemma situation. The question why Confucius in one occasion did not serve and in another similar occasion when the lord did not follow his principles, served, remains open. One solution may be that the latter occasion when he served, is not a true historical event. Nevertheless, the Analects still recognize that the dilemma situation is possible. When not in office Confucius had a compensatory choice: that of devoting himself to the profession of a teacher.

A dilemma also could occur when one has given a promise, but the circumstances have changed in such a way that one cannot keep the promise any more. Confucius recognizes this possibility and often stresses that one has to keep promises. He does not start discussing the situation in which one cannot keep one's promise. Implicitly, however, one would think that because Confucius so much stressed the importance of keeping promises and being true to one's word, he ought to have understood the difficulty arising when one has given a promise and cannot keep it in a new situation.

A genuine dilemma in the form of two contradictory requirements occurs in the example of a Good Man in the well. Another Good Man ought to join the man in the well in order to rescue him, but this would involve a situation which is too dangerous for the rescuer.

Confucius replies to the question of whether one should at once put a maxim into practice when one has heard it in two different ways. According to one reply, one cannot put the maxim into practice because the father and younger brother of the agent are still alive and according to another reply one should put the maxim into practice right away. In his reply Confucius does not follow the principle of universalizability of preferences which requires that different persons in similar situations should have similar preferences. Confucius seems to follow eudaimonistic ethics, in which the moral agent is important, here.

In a situation in which the son should punish his father but in which this would be against filiality according to the Confucian principles, Confucius avoids the dilemma by overvaluing the principle of beneficence towards one's father over the principles of retributive justice and obligation to the moral community by citizens. In this connection Confucius recognizes the existence of comparable moral requirements, and by this he recognizes the existence of plural values.

We can conclude that Confucius admitted the existence of a dilemma situation, but he tried to avoid such situations. A special type of dilemma, that of dirty hands problem, tests Confucius' attitude towards dilemmas.

4. DIRTY HANDS

The dirty hands cases are in some ways wrong, but still they are justified and even obligatory. Confucius faced the problem. He accepted the necessity of but did not value an occupation which involved actions of dirty hands in the form of beating the slaves. When refusing to teach a student who was not talented enough, Confucius caused dirty hands effect to the student.

The dirty hands actions are often connected with punishments of criminals. Confucius wants to avoid punishing anyone on principle and he points out that the real criminal is the bad ruler who gives a bad example by his bad desires to the people, who in desiring material wealth become burglars. The ruler has to win the confidence of those under him and use the kind of methods that ensure that he does not need to use dirty hands in governing. One has to rule with the charismatic ability of *te* and not by strict means. Confucius is not fully consistent in this requirement, since he gave some value to the

punishments. One can avoid dirty hands by not approving the sort of position where one would be obliged to perform dirty hands acts, or by causing suffering to oneself rather than to other people.

Dirty hands problem appears often in connection with war. The Analects illustrate a typical dirty hands case in which the situation is immoral and the immoral action of attack is justified, even necessary, to avoid the future harm which could be even greater than the present dirty hands action. The case is also a typical dirty hands case in the sense that Confucius saw that in this dilemma situation one is forced to choose one from two artificially limited bad alternatives, and that other alternatives must not be considered. He could not accept this. He wanted to re-analyze the situation and to show that there was no real reason for the war activity, but that the problems needed to be solved elsewhere.

Allowing a second effect means choosing not to prevent something happening which causes harm to someone else. For example, preventing the death of the prince would have cost the life of another person, who later could benefit the people greatly. Also, the death of the prince could be foreseen as a second effect, but the intention of the person was not to kill the prince, and Confucius did not condemn his behavior. This case is not consistent with Confucius' emphasis that no one should cause sufferings to anyone else due to one's faults. Confucius accepted the choice of behavior in this particular case because the final result was positive from a utilitarian point of view.

Confucius also lets the second effect happen when it is seen as useful in one's training. He does not touch the problem of remorse, which is important in the dirty hands issue. He displays some of the typical features of an utilitarian rationalist here.

5. UTILITARIANISM

Utilitarianism is probably the most common theory which relates to preference and choice. It is a combination of two principles: the consequentiality and hedonist principles. The consequentialist principle means that the action is judged by the goodness or badness of the results which flow from it. According to the hedonist principle, the only good thing is pleasure, and the only bad thing in itself is pain. In the extreme type of utilitarianism, in act-utilitarianism, the aim is 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'. This means the 'maximization of pleasure and the minimization of pain'. In the less extreme type of utilitarianism, in rule utilitarianism, there are rules to regulate the agent. Some of these rules are rules of thumb, which rules can be overridden in certain circumstances. The other type of rules are critical rules which cannot be overridden or broken whatever the consequences may be.

As in act-utilitarianism Confucius places a high value on the utility of the whole state. In his Golden Rule he values the preferences of other people as much as his own, but the motive is to promote one's own personal utility. This links the Golden Rule to egoism, but Confucius does not support extreme egoism. Although one should not be selfish, the ruler uses Goodness, *jen*, to get authority which is the self-interest of the

ruler. In his ethical egoism, Confucius makes other persons' self-interest of equal value to his own and gives up his own self-interest to some extent. In ruling, one's own desire for rank and standing should be reversed with the same desire of other agents. It is in this reversibility of roles that the persuasive power in Confucius' Golden Rule resides. Confucius connects this with political power. The ruler spreads his virtue as a mana-like power and unites the state. The ruler gains authority, and the roles are not reversed any more. The salvation of the whole state is the highest utility, and *jen* and the Divine Sageliness are instrumental virtues for this end. *Jen* cannot be used for one's own personal utility, but for the utility of as many as possible.

Jen is also regarded as an intrinsic value in itself, which is not used as an instrument to gain certain ends. This *jen* belongs to the realm of volition rather than to that of choice.

In ruling the state, promise-keeping as truthful communication is essential. The rule of keeping promises is a critical moral principle which cannot be overridden in any circumstances, not even when keeping promises is harmful for general utility. The fact that Confucius upholds this critical rule means that he follows rule utilitarianism, in which there are rules to regulate the moral agent.

In choosing students, Confucius appreciates the value of the utilitarian views. The person should be intelligent and well-motivated to learn in order to deserve the response of being accepted as a disciple. The utilitarian consequence would be that he (or she) becomes a successful student. Confucius educated people to become government officials. However, he did not overvalue the political influence. An individual's competence and qualifications for any position in general or his deserving a certain position is far more important than the position itself.

Confucius pays due attention to economic considerations when performing the rites. Even changes to the rites were possible because of economic reasons. In this, economic utility is the criteria when deciding which changes to prefer for the rites.

In accepting rewards, in Confucius' mind, the way of accepting is more important than the reward itself. One can accept rewards, but only in the right way. The reward or salary can be regarded as a kind of purpose or goal, but the means can be regarded as a goal themselves as well. There is no clear difference between means and the goal or purpose. One should always be ready for poverty. Confucius prefers *tao* to the material personal utility. If utility is defined as an abundance of personal material wealth, Confucius ranks this kind of utilitarianism as inferior to *tao*.

For Confucius, salary and reward were a matter of choice and not of rights. In this he follows an idealized version of choice in which he is free and autonomous as an ethical agent to choose acceptance or rejection of material rewards. Confucius understood the value of material wealth however. When he had to pay the wealth as an opportunity cost for whatever option, *tao*, for example, this meant a real cost to him, a sacrifice. Confucius was faced with a 'real' choice here.

When the desires of the ruler are good, the people will be good as well. Good desires attract the approval of the people. When they approve the norms, this provides the ruler with a political utility in the form of political power and influence. The Good desires

work as a persuasive power much like the virtue of *te*. One gets the right desires through learning and education.

According to Confucius utility is maximization of pleasures and minimization of harms, but even so his conception of utility may perhaps be far from what is meant by this statement connected with utilitarianism, namely, Confucius regards pleasure got from comfort and ease as harmful. According to Confucius art and intellectual activities should be chosen as pleasures. One should prefer these kinds of pleasures to comfort and ease. Material wealth provides conditions under which the cultural activities, the Confucian pleasures, can be exercised. The Confucian suggestion is that the utilitarian principle misses the point, even if one wants to be utilitarian. We should first define what the pleasures are and then apply the utilitarian principle, if we want to be utilitarian.

The utilitarian means or method must be used according to what is right. The method and the goal must be in harmony with each other. The pleasures aimed at have to be in conformity with the method with which one reaches the goal. The utilitarian method is active. The pleasure has to be active as well, and not a pleasure of laziness, but a cultured one.

Confucius approves of sacrificing one's life in certain circumstances, but he does not support this idea without consideration. (In his mind, the utility overrules the idea of sacrificing one's life.) He prefers utility to sacrificing one's life. Martyrdom does not outrank utilitarian considerations. Confucius does not regard such a sacrifice as heroic. Confucius does not agree with the general admiration of such a sacrifice. It is more heroic to live and to produce more utilities for all through one's life.

The ways and means chosen to reach the utilitarian goal must be commensurable with the utility itself. According to this, if the utility is conceived as continuous slack pleasures, which condition has been reached by diligent activity, this process will turn against itself. When the goal of continuous slack pleasures have been reached, this will cause slackness, the society will deteriorate and become corrupt, and the goal cannot be maintained. The utility or goal should be diligent activity as well. This point of view is especially important for the Chinese. Do they aim at the slack continuous pleasures and ease with many appliances which are thought to make life easier? This is the way introduced to the Chinese by Westerners, by business people, tourists and missionaries alike (although there are some missionaries and some researchers who form an exception.) This leads to the deterioration of morals in the society, as we have already seen in the West. Will this be adopted by the Chinese? Or will the Chinese honor their own identity, will they concentrate to the quality of the utility? Are their pleasures going to be diligent activity, which will strengthen the nation, or not? These slack pleasures can be seen as a new opium offered to the Chinese. However, we do not need to be afraid that the Chinese will accept it, since before all of China has been filled with cars, entertainment electronics and household electronics and summerhouses, the world will have become so polluted that there will not be too many people left to enjoy the achievements. If we follow the Confucian lines, our pleasures should be redefined in the present situation as the pleasures of protecting the environment.

The purpose of Confucian utilitarianism is also regional: to benefit the whole state.

6. REGIONALISM

In the Analects regionalism and the choice of place relates to moral choice. Region was important for Confucius. Confucius regarded morality as an essential element of the identity of a place. In his mind, morality was a symbol of a place. When the morality in a certain place was good according to Confucius' standards, then a good choice was to migrate to such a place or region. In this way Confucius wanted to identify himself with such a place.

Confucius preferred to resign and choose a new region when he was in a dilemma situation in which his deontology, the requirements of his duties and axiology, and his moral principles were in contradiction. In a way, in principle, Confucius identified morality with certain regions. However, empirically it was hard to find a place where the morality accepted by Confucius would prevail. Partly because of this reason, he had to move from place to place.

It belonged to the traditional pattern that a morally bad dynasty had to be superseded by a new one which advocated better morality. Confucius changed this pattern of thought by solving the problem simply by choosing a new region for his activities.

According to Confucius, when one moves to a new location, one has to create a social structure which is suitable for one's identity. When one has changed the moral image of the place, one can root one's identity into that place. In this way Confucius emphasizes the horizontal structure of the place's image, which is 'that of the social distribution of knowledge of places within and between individuals, groups, and the mass'. In this distribution of knowledge the Gentleman is the central person. The knowledge here is the knowledge about the morality of Goodness.

The ruler is a perfect example for the people, who emulate the model of their ruler. The ruler spreads *jen*.

If the morality is intense, then it spreads. Here the intensity is not an intense experience of the place, but it is an intense experience of the morality. The morality works as a binding tissue of the region. Morality is a kind of determining special characteristic of a region. Confucius sees places in terms of how Goodness has been spreading in them. He also wants to experience Goodness spreading everywhere. In this moral imperialism, morality would bind 'all under Heaven'. In this way all places would finally be included in a single region, where the totalitarian morality of Goodness and Righteousness would prevail.

One should prefer to avoid too limited a region and too strict a situation in which one cannot enlarge the region of virtue.

Confucius wanted morality to be the binding tissue of all China. To spread morality this wide could be done through a network of people. When friends and admirers came to Confucius, he had an opportunity to spread his virtue amongst them, who in their turn then spread the same morality in their home regions or states. In this way, according to this ideal picture, all of China would be combined in one single region, where the Holy Sage would rule and the morality of *jen* prevail.

7. PREFERENTIAL MORAL CHARACTERISTICS

When spreading virtue amongst people and by them, Confucius had to choose the most suitable persons to be good moral agents. Close to the ideal is the Gentleman.

The social relations are very important for the Gentleman. He is a lenient, gentle, charismatic and humane but remote administrator. He does not need law enforcement in governing. Secondly, he is able and skillful in his duties, a specialist on general principles. He corrects his faults. Thirdly, his personal character is important. He is Good, humble, emotionally balanced and neutral. However, he favors nepotism. Through the emphasis on efficacy, talent and personal improvement the Gentleman is more a voluntarist than an eudaimonist. This idea of efficacy is also utilitarian. Another of his utilitarian characteristics is that he aims at the maximum good for the maximum number of people when governing them. However, he is not an egoist. He is a pluralist through his faults and when he has to forgo some values in order to keep other values. In his pluralism he even has to invent substitute values for those which he has to be without, such as those of sensual pleasures.

Confucius has a type of dialectical thinking when he brings forth the opposite or antithesis of the Gentleman, a small man. He does not try to balance between these opposites, as he tends to do in other contexts between opposites. (WANG Shou-ch'ang 1987: 139.) The small man is an unsuccessful administrator. In work he is not efficient, does not honor superiors, is not influential, is one-sided, only critical, he is sentimentally unbalanced and has faults of over-elaboration.

To be a Good Man is more demanding than to be a Gentleman. His likings and dislikings are well balanced. He is rational. A Good Man follows Goodness.

In his choice of agents, Confucius does not follow the classes of society: In principle both the knight and the common people could be agents of Goodness. (Cf. T'ANG I-chieh 1987: 73; CHÜ Tsai 1962: 135-146; CHANG Chi-ping 1987: 176-177.)

8. CHOOSING DISCIPLES

Confucius assessed his disciples. Those disciples about whom the Analects tell most could be placed into an order of preference according to Confucius' opinions:

First would be Yen Hui, who was morally and intellectually superior to the other disciples, but he died when still young. Second would be Tzu-kung with whom Confucius shared a wide variety of topics and discussed even personal matters. Third would be Tzu-lu, who was efficient and capable and kept his promise, but who was criticized by Confucius for exaggerating and for intellectual incapacity. Tzu-Lu also criticized Confucius. Tzu-lu can be regarded as a normal disciple who had his shortcomings, but nevertheless had some success. The fourth probably would be Jan Ch'iu. He was versatile and capable in office. Confucius valued his dexterity. He asked Confucius about several

important matters. He was not active enough intellectually, but was slow or backward. He did not try to advise Confucius, as Tzu-lu did. He was quite remote from Confucius.

When assessing his disciples, Confucius generally valued capability, talent and progress in a rather voluntaristic and utilitarian manner. When speaking about moral agents, Confucius placed a high value on their emotional balance. According to Confucius, feelings guide one's moral choices. When other people came to see the Gentleman, this meant a feeling of enjoyment. Feelings, too, have a moral significance.

9. EMOTIONS

According to Confucius, feelings guide one's moral choices. In this emotionalized Goodness feelings are one's guide. According to this theory the reward comes in the form of good feelings in the mind of the agent and also as a response in the form of positive feelings from other people. This exchange of feelings is thus an emotional reciprocity. The Good Man has feelings of concern because of his inability to recognize other people sufficiently. The agent of *jen* is the leader, and he should have authority. The Gentleman should be benevolent in order to gain the people's feeling of confidence. In this way he gains authority over them. However, the leader has also some who hate him, those who do not want to obey him. The Gentleman should not feel upset even if his rights are withdrawn by his superiors.

The Gentleman may have negative emotions also. These do not mean that he is morally bad. The Gentleman is safe when he has the right moral choices, and is favored by the people. By carrying out his duties well, the Gentleman gains social acceptance. This helps him to reach emotional balance.

The emotional attitude to one's parents is shown by a feeling of respect. One has an obligation towards one's parents. In this contractual-situation one should take care of the mourning period after the death of the parents. The feelings of respect towards one's parents is also because one has a special relationship to them. These reasons form a causal determination for respecting one's parents. This means that one cannot choose freely whether to respect them or not.

Confucius mentions contradictory feelings when one feels in opposite ways about the same object, and when one emotion is overcome by a stronger one. The former case shows that an irresolvable moral conflict is possible according to Confucius.

Contradictory feelings are overcome by the good moral agent. Confucian feelings are well regulated. The right moral choices contribute to one's personal happiness. Knowledge helps one to overcome one's inclinations and to prevent any possible trend towards vice.

* * *

Although Confucian thinking is not presented in a well formulated form and although ideas in the Analects often remain unformulated in the background of different sayings, we have seen that Confucius has 'real' moral choices according to any standpoint. These choices have the logical legitimation of voluntarism and pluralism. However, Confucius' thinking is not 'pure' or a thinking from which all other views are cleaned away, as is the case in eudaimonism and even monism, for instance. These phenomena may mislead one to conclude that Confucius always avoided 'real' choices, although he sometimes certainly did. The Analects bring out certain issues of moral choice, which are not liked by Confucius and which he rather wants to avoid. In a way the Analects provide a certain amount of criticism against Confucius' tendency to ignore important issues.

The method used in this study has been to compare early Confucian thought with modern moral issues of moral choice. This has brought to light new issues in Confucius' thinking. Moreover, it has appeared that in certain areas Confucian thinking is so well developed that it compares well with the modern literature on moral theory. Some topics even work as incentives to develop theories of moral choice on a more general level. These topics, the system of lacks in the Confucian pluralism, the ends-means continuum in Confucian utilitarianism and even the moral geography, i.e. choice of a place according to the moral tradition or moral characteristics which dominate there, would deserve further research and development.