

Translating Concepts: Contemporary Encounters with Confucius

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Abstract

The scientific interpretation of Confucianism today formats its character before entering and translating it. Confucius's concepts were thus either rendered into Western terms in the manner of modern science close to fact-depicting, or became vessels containing demonstratively established beliefs and abstracted, lifeless meaning and sense. The problem is that not only does Confucius become the "straw man" for Western cultures, but the humanity told by Confucius slips away before English terms rooted in European experience. For this reason, something other than science is needed if Confucius's thought is to hold on its own terms. A phenomenological model of Confucian understanding for translators is involved here: Through delineating the deeper workings of Confucius's concepts right back from forgotten experience, does a humane opening of the self to the presence of Confucius come into light.

Keywords: Confucius, Concepts, Translation, Science, Phenomenology

Introduction

The general view that Confucius was a "founder of humanism" is in some sense misleading, since his pieces of writing are based on a more holistic and lived understanding of the harmonious world than is suggested by speculative and epistemological problems which embroil European minds in a maze of philosophy. But concepts in his *Analects*, something about which Confucius thought deeply are interesting and extraordinary enough to have exerted a strong influence on contemporary humane models of Confucian understanding. The Confucius's agenda in modern translation research is also often presented in opposition to Confucian tradition. Checking the connotation of concepts such as Dao, ren, li, and junzi reveals a discontinuity between the practical use of language and words in the original Confucian texts and the outlines of Confucius in their English versions. Those contemporary translation theorists, in insisting that all Confucius's concepts should be brought under the standard of equivalence, are advancing a thesis that many Confucians would have regarded as a paradoxical interpretation of that which, by its very nature, distances us from Confucius.

Confucianism was a practical art of living that required a conscious return to a way of life, or spiritual exercise and a unique framework for understanding the world. The underlying background is the problem of how Confucianism to be understood. Whereupon, our study begins with the journey toward concepts that are mainly traced out in the *Analects*. Rather other the relegation of Confucianism to a scientific discipline, translation of Confucian concepts can preserve the language about Confucius and the glory of Confucianism (in the *Analects* sense). The study brings Heidegger's phenomenology to Confucianism in order to breathe a flow of fresh vitality into the account of Confucius's concepts as well as translation of Confucianism. The vision of what phenomenology is about would lead to self-understanding and self-transformation and may greatly enhance our understanding of what it is to subscribe to the translation of Confucianism.

Our reference is from first to last structured by Confucius and the workings of his concepts that tend to be overlooked in contemporary translation of Confucianism. While such discussion is often ungainly, in the end the access to Confucius's utterance of an orderly and harmonious world is always enlightening. Confucius's concepts have the merit of offering a far rich and humane account of Confucianism, and one that resonates much closely with the reality of Confucius. Confucianism, though it may be temporarily eclipsed by the practices and experiences we call humane, seems more likely to retain its compelling power for human beings to come.

Evidence of Confucius's thought in the Analects

The best source for glimpsing Confucius is the *Analects*, a collection of utterances, aphorisms, and anecdotes related to him, compiled by his disciples from more than 2,000 years ago. Confucius, as the founder of Confucianism, believed in the importance of ritualism and social harmony, which still have a profound influence on belief, conduct and the way of thinking of today's Chinese people, and those in Korea, Japan, and Vietnam.

However, ever since the appearance of English translations and Western exegesis of the *Analects* Confucius and his thought, mysterious though they are, have been read and discussed in the rather narrow way that has become straightforwardly identifiable beliefs and arguments in the Western culture. Though the resulting image of Confucius is not unlike an old Chinese ink drawing, the idea seems to be that we can approach Confucius from the rational interpretation of Confucianism just as a kind of transparent goldfish bowl. And not only can we do this, but we should do so for there is a long tradition and a "surplus" principle in Western philosophy that maintains that word for word translation is always available to classics translation. Similarly, in the Chinese academic community, there were several very outstanding scholars of Confucianism and neo-Confucianism, for example, Zhu Xi (in his *Annotations on the Four Books*), and Liang Shuming (in his *Overview of Eastern Learning*) who also held that knowledge of Confucius was to be established in one way on the basis of the external transcendental philosophy, in Kantian term.

The positivistic and rational interpretation of Confucius and his *Analects* has become a reality in the fields of philosophy and translation, and is evidenced by collections and books on the subject by Chinese and foreign scholars in the past decades. These intellectual studies of Confucius are culturally displaced and spiritually disinherited. The presumption of this kind, has detracted from the essence of Confucius's thought as presented in the *Analects*, so that

not only do Confucius become the “straw man” for Western cultures, but the humanity told by Confucius slips away before Western terms rooted in European experience. To be sure, many a Confucian translator seems to go on like this.

What attitudes towards language and experience are advocated by Confucius? The language that Confucius used operates within a web of concepts that illuminate Confucian way of life significant. Concepts such as ren, Dao and tian in Chinese philosophy cannot be interpreted in the same way as the concepts of Idea, God, Will, and other absolute principles often found in Western philosophy (He & Jones, 2014). To be Confucian is to follow a certain mode of life, to take up certain commitments and to direct the destiny of the Chinese through the quest for being a junzi. Confucianism advocates the path of an exemplary person, by pursuing noble character and moral cultivation. In this sense it itself means a process of continuous improvement that are supported by practices, including ren (goodness), consistency of words and action, unity of man and nature, etc.

In regard to a completely new or surprising experience, it is certainly difficult for translators to reveal the eyes of revelation which at least earlier epochs and Chinese people had sought therein, and have found therein only; revelation which, in any case on the side of translation, was most closely and deeply linked with what Confucius expressed and experienced. For those committed to the embodied and phenomenological Confucianism of what makes translation worth doing, the word for word translation is undoubtedly inadequate or oversimplified to describe the realities of a radically different culture. Wittgenstein (1965) once used a striking image to convey the inadequacy of language in this context: Our words used as we use them in science are vessels capable only of containing and conveying meaning and sense, natural meaning and sense. Ethics, if it is anything, is supernatural, and our words will only express facts; as a teacup will only hold a teacup full of water [even] if I were to pour out a gallon over it. It is clear that the vision of what science is about appears to be a brute concatenation of facts, things or events with contingent structures, which is just there. But Confucius’s authorship is something that is not tailor-made for study and commentary, but “allow things to be present in all their embodied particularity” (McGilchrist, 2009), a phenomenological framework, or require the transcendent, in theological language.

The Knowledge of Confucius: Which Confucius

Confucius (551-479 BC) lived at the late Spring and Autumn period (770-476 BC) followed by that of Warring States (c. 475 – 221 BC), during which feudal and united China had been shaken to its roots, and ritual and music system since the Zhou dynasty (c. 1046 – 256 BC) lay in ruins. How China could get out of this chaotic state and how one could become a junzi with goodness character (ren), had been the central issues facing Confucius at that time. Confucius advanced patterned behavior as a path to the reconstruction of social order. “If one removes ren from a junzi, then wherein is he worthy of the name? The junzi does not deviate from ren for an instant. Though he may be hurried or in dire straits, he always cleaves to ren.” (*Analects* 4.5) The master accounted of his laid-back attitude towards life in the manner of simplicity, “Living upon the poorest fare with cold water for drink, and with my bended arms for a pillow, I could yet find pleasure in such a life, whereas riches and honours acquired through the sacrifice of what is right, would be to me as the floating clouds.” (*Analects* 7.15) And, what Confucianism as a mode of life links all on a single thread is Dao, as an exalted way used to build a harmonious relationship between nature and man. It should be added that Confucius

attached great importance to living experience and did not like to discuss the issues such as transcendence. He said "To hold in awe and fear the Spiritual Powers of the Universe, while keeping aloof from irreverent familiarity with them." (*Analects* 6.20) Although Confucius respected gods, he did not advocate using divination to ask for good luck.

It will be seen from the above distinction that Confucius's social ideal is much practical compared with the speculative intelligence of Western philosophy. More specifically, whereas Western thought seems to have begun with material entities described by science, Confucianism begins with a social problem connected with self-cultivation according to tianming, which, in a loose way, led all life towards virtue. This way of life is again reviewed in Confucius's thumbnail autobiography, "At fifteen I had made up my mind to give myself up to serious studies. At thirty I had formed my opinions and judgment. At forty I had no more doubts. At fifty I understood the decree of Heaven (tianming). At sixty I could understand whatever I heard without exertion. At seventy I could follow whatever my heart desired without transgressing the law." (*Analects* 2.4) The claims made by Confucius here, rather like scientific claims established on complex reasoning, demonstrate a model of personal transformation he experienced and his search for integration, which simply mean to see or observe or even worship. It is aimed "primarily at one's motivational heart, including one's will." (Moser, 2010)

It is in this context, that Confucius's language carries a rich charge of living experience that resonates with us on concrete, intuitive way of thinking, not approached by an abstract, analytic mind. Although one may be able to see something of the attributes to which Confucian fundamental words such as Dao, ren refer, it is held to be difficult for most of English-reading scholars to grasp what is only implicit in Confucius's thought. Benjamin Whorf, who made great contributions to the field of ethnolinguistics, reminded us to give language a new dimension. Whorf (2012) stated that, language produces an organization of experience. We are inclined to think of language simply as a technique of expression and not to realize that language first of all is a classification and arrangement of the stream of sensory experience which results in a certain world-order. So when concepts are liberated from bondage of linguistics, or the technique, we will be no longer in danger of hiding the nature of Confucius's thought in translation. Such a discovery gives us a further reason for rejecting the idea that knowledge of Confucius might be like scientific one, needing abstract or purely cognitive investigation in order to be revealed and translated.

As well as striking differences between Confucius' and scientific conceptions of language, there is a particular domain of Confucius, the past, where things are not so simple. The advance of Confucius's thought depends on a reflection of its past enterprise, and it can be said that his orientation to the past is one thing that sets Confucius apart from the Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad. For Confucius, the past was profoundly significant and simply could not be separated from the present. In a sense that modern Westerners might find difficult to grasp, the past was still alive for the Chinese (Muesse, 2017). The significance of study of Confucius is not generated by anything ideas existing independently of the language that speaks him, but to go back to the foundations and pristine practice of Chinese tradition, i.e., sense of identity to, and inheritance of Chinese culture. So, the focus of Confucius's language is not an objective comprehension or remaining a spectator but an effort to become an insider.

The philosophically interesting and meaningful Confucian question turns out to be: which of the two modes of inquiry on Confucius we should adopt, the scientific Confucius, with the abstract, already established beliefs and like a museum piece quietly for our research; or the humane Confucius, according to which we see a life right back from forgotten experience. The first mode is “to step outside the flow of experience and ‘experience’ our experience in a special way,” while the other is “to allow things to be present to us in all their embodied particularity, with all their changeability and impermanence and their interconnectedness, as part of a whole which is forever in flux”. (McGilchrist, 2009)

In the light of this distinction, it is plausible to tackle Confucius as allowing Confucian concepts to be more open to what lies beneath and what we experience practically, less modelled on the austere language and methods of the analytic philosophy which is explicitly abstracted, especially lifeless and will silence the past.

Lived Intimations of Confucian Concepts: Why Concepts Matter

How does the result just arrived at bear on the translation concerning Confucian concepts? This question is central to Confucian concepts recorded in Confucian scriptures. They have basically not changed since concepts were finalized. These concepts including Dao(way), ren(goodness), yi(righteousness), li(ritual), junzi(gentleman), zhong(loyalty), xiao(filiality), ti(brotherhood) are the fundamental elements of Confucius’s thought. What they showcase in the minds of Chinese people have been a united and orderly world. Other concepts yin and yang, good and evil, xing(natural tendencies/disposition), etc. in Confucian classics such as *Hong Fan*, *Book of Changes*, *Mencius* and *The Doctrine of the Mean*, are all intended to reconstruct a harmonious world. By the contrast, the self-evident features of some corresponding philosophical technical terms, the Way, nature, Heaven, reasoning, subject, object, substance etc. are ones that have undergone many modifications, supplements and improvements in the process of spreading, forming a relatively complete narrative style. These terms are always established beliefs with a strong logical connection.

When Confucius’s concepts undertake their Western journey, the practical orientation, sometimes called ‘know-how’, under the guidance of the word for word interpretation, seemed to impartial and rational spectator, radically impoverished. Literal translations and the secondary literature on those translations moved Confucius far away from Westerners rather than closer to them. Here is a bold statement in terms of Confucian translation, but it is the reason for our study. We are not to denigrate Confucian scholars and interpreters, but rather to explore why the account of Confucius was based on certain preconceived notions. We firmly believe that Confucius’s concepts deserve a fair hearing. We would like to see the continuation of Confucius’s thinking in both the translating language and translated language and make it available to the audience.

It was generally known that 19th century Continental philology attempted to establish the integrity of classical texts by employing methods that aspired to scientific precision (Groth, 2017). Concepts between tian, Dao, li, xing and Heaven, the Way, principle, nature would be too heterogeneous to form a unitary whole. It is hardly conceivable that these Confucius’s concepts can be juxtaposed with those technical terms of western philosophy. There is one instance of the commitment on the part of the subject is provided for further consideration. li, for Confucius, had been destined for human goodness by great sage King Wen, who was

exemplified through his proper actions. “King Wen was dead, but his patterns [of li] live on here in me, do they not?” (*Analects* 9.5) The experience of li ‘humanizes’ and ‘civilizes’ individuals which, underpin social harmony and order. Observing this practice (ritual propriety), can make seemingly chaotic our society fit into a pattern of order. What is this argument from Confucian experience meant is some kind of practical change, which is taken to be evidence for proper roles (parent, child, ruler, subject, etc.), for example, or the belief in family as the foundation, good governance, education and self-cultivation.

Certainly, such a process of acquaintance with Confucius’s lived experience always implies being deeply receptive to the possibility of its truth. Since the spread of Western learning in China during the Late Ming and Early Qing Dynasties (16th-18th Centuries), there had appeared an increasing decline in Confucian belief, especially in its modern and English expression and the value of Confucianism had become increasingly alienated from modern “human relations and daily use” (Yu, 2004). But what is it that contemporaries were opposing? On the surface it may seem that they were opposing Confucianism that held sway in China for a long time. But what exactly was that the evidence for Confucianism had vanished away in its modern interpretation so that it was losing its appeal for many people. In other words, they seemed to find it hard to accept again.

Confucianism reaches a limit in contemporary translation; and the very evidence for Confucius could never furnish a complete account of the reality, without breaking the scientific stereotypes of Confucius. But it’s also a mistake to think that translating slippery concepts stems from a failure to understand their nature in the adoption of a secular worldview. Rather it is the consequence of the insight that concepts must be transformed if it is to be equal to the task which translator set for Confucius. In either case it seems likely that this will only accelerate the decline of Confucianism. When one thinks about the evidence for Confucianism, at any rate in the Confucian understanding or translation, it becomes clear that the scientific analogy for knowledge of Confucius is unhelpful or even distracting. We find, perhaps not surprisingly, striking divergences.

Exiting Science, Exciting Phenomenology

So much for the fierce headwinds under which lived inquiry about Confucius is struggling to keep afloat in the present translation. We need a new framework of Confucian understanding. But before we rush to phenomenology and its slogan, “back to the things themselves!” (Husserl, 2001/1900), in an attempt to return to examining how things give themselves or appear to our minds, the idea of something’s being obvious to the Confucianism may need further scrutiny.

The core of Confucius’s argument revolves around the pursuit of the unity of man and nature, or the relationship between the individual self and tian (‘heaven’). Benjamin Schwartz properly observed, “The polarity of self-cultivation and the ordering of the society concern the ideals of the superior man—his life aims.” (Schwartz, 1975) Confucianism conciliates both the inner and outer polarities of spiritual cultivation—that is to say self-cultivation and world redemption—in the ideal of “sageliness within and kingliness without”. (Tay, 2010)

However, the habits of thought developed by philosophers predisposed us to pose the questions including Confucian understanding and translation from an objective, abstract and

theoretical perspective, or make a review and analysis of propositions. All this is much effective, and viable; but a proper translation of Confucianism requires us to take account of much more. With the in-depth introduction of scientific inquiry, Confucius in his new scientific guise was in crisis. Rationalism in translation was breaking the “saintly life” of Confucius; human experience was being stripped of its original embodied particularity.

In view of the above, Confucianism has come to associate translation so closely with scientific method that as Heidegger (1959) remarked, our understanding is directed in a decisive manner to see the world as a panorama of beings standing-forth at our disposal, where being itself is conflated into thinghood [res], designating things as independent entities as if they existed in a vacuum. We all certainly should be grateful to the natural light of science for verifying and instructing us. It is certainly true that Confucian adherents represent li, tian, and ren for the cultivation of virtue, as well as toward the life of goodness dedicated to Confucius, but attributing this Confucian moral practice to a philosophy, or science-oriented belief seems a massive over-simplification. A Confucian defender would never come to look upon Confucian way of life as science, or some straightforwardly identified beliefs. For Confucianism and its translation is far from scientific inquires, but point us towards something of resonant narrative and moral practice that we find so often in those key concepts in the *Analects*, this engagement gives us a striking point of convergence with phenomenology understanding. Therefore, we will have recourse to phenomenology to refute the alienated view of science as purely instrumental, and our intention is to recover a world as Confucius experienced it. Through this state of attunement, we can glimpse the light of concept that irradiates Confucius world and transforms our human existence.

The practice of phenomenology, according to Heidegger, is more fundamental than modern scientific inquiry. For him, science is only one way of knowing, that requires the use of certain definitions and methods which are clearly delineated, and systems that are formalized. Scientific inquiry is to watch the world carefully and experiment; we can infer the relationships among flowering plants (angiosperms) using molecular data and morphological traits, but we cannot scientifically assert that a rose is prettier than a daisy. Scientific inquiry cannot make moral or aesthetic decisions. These moral or aesthetic decisions are not part of science. In addition, it is not always a direct ascent toward the truth, like Alfred Wegener’s ideas about continental drift not taken seriously was finally proven. In his first major phenomenological work, *Being and Time*, Heidegger introduces Dasein. Magda King observed, the basic distinction drawn in *Being and Time* is thus between the existence of Dasein and the reality of beings that are not Dasein. “To exist” and “to be real” are the two main ways in which beings can be. A real thing like a stone is in such a way that it is essentially hidden to itself in its being. (King, 2001) This ontological inquiry into the structure of Dasein’s being made by Heidegger opens up a new model of understanding that is precisely the possibility of a new translation of Confucianism.

Confucian language attributes to another power altogether. Confucius once commented, “My Dao links all on a single thread.” Zeng Shen, a disciple of Confucius explained, “The Master’s Dao is simply loyalty and reciprocity.” (*Analects* 4.15) Close by, and hard to grasp, Dao can certainly be inferred by scientific inquiry via facts and texts at hand, nevertheless the truths on which the experience of Dao depends are those revealed to a clearing for thinking. Where there is a Dao there is a hope of personal transformation to grow. Confucius’s Dao must be

treated as “as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath,” (Shakespeare, 2010) or even new religion, a haven from the alienations of contemporary society. Confucian translation requires a conscious reflection on the foundation of its enterprise. Translation, on this view, constitutes both a limit and an opening, or what Heidegger himself understood phenomenologically as the Greek *peras*: “A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something *begins its presencing*” (Heidegger, 1971, italics in original)

As a matter of fact, Confucian translation requires but works against dual ideals of fidelity and felicity that are often at odds. It meets faithful and beautiful criterion that it often frustrates. Heidegger (1996) once observed: The difficulty of translation is never merely something technical but has to do instead with the relationship of man to the nature of words and the dignity of language. For Heidegger, authentic translation is preferable to replacement. The whole business of replacement (Ersatzgeschäft) comes to nothing. It is not enough to exchange the Greek words for the all too well-known words of another language. Instead, we ourselves must allow to be said by the Greek words what they speak of (Groth, 2017). He concluded that mistranslations of Greek into Latin obscured ancient thought.

Following up this dimension, we can have brought phenomenology to the Confucian understanding. The power of Confucian language lies in reopening question that activates Confucius’s way of thinking. This approach has nothing to do with material entities described by science, with its fullest and most detailed description of terms. One can be a genuine and wholehearted admirer of the achievements of science while at the same time resisting the false allure of scientism - the dogma that scientific methods give us everything we need to understand all aspects of reality (Cottingham, 2019). Concepts in the *Analects* relate to lived experience which meets exactly Chinese people’s expectations, but they appear to be utterly mysterious with regard to Westerners’ human concerns. When English terms like Heaven, idea, reason, logic are transferred to the Confucian domain concepts which derives from their use in the harmonious world, the worry is that we would no longer know what they say. For example, *ren* in the *Analects*, which is rendered by James Legge into “virtue”, “perfect virtue”, “benevolence,” (Legge, 1930) is not known in the translation: it is invisible. So far from doing what translations are normally supposed to do, namely ensure cultural appropriateness, it seems if anything to undermine it.

Take another example of the dangers posed by technological revolution in Confucianism. We found ourselves in the much-hailed Fourth Industrial Revolution, for which some emerging technologies including Internet of things, big data, and cloud services are fundamental to take place. The advance of connectivity is being integrated into our lives through vehicle, household appliances, and more. The increasing use of smartphones, streaming media technology and video calling gain a newfound popularity. The importance of virtual communication space is highlighted; the withdrawal of oneself from the immediate encounter is possible. Where users are obsessed with a virtual world in their daily lives, they are unnaturally emerging as human beings not actually “there” but in a web of equipment that facilitate various tasks and activities, in Heideggerian term. The implication is: In this reduction to thinghood, beings are extracted from being and made to stand forth unnaturally. The wholeness of their relation to other beings and the world is removed (Mei, 2009). As Heidegger observed in his *Being and Time*, “The full structure of Da-sein’s being would have

to be reduced and deprived of its uniquely 'existential' features to arrive at what must necessarily be, in order that merely-living-being should be possible," (King, 2001) the grip of technology alienates us from the world.

Thus, only out of respect for the dignity of language can we take on the phenomenology of translating Confucius's concepts. The history of Confucian translation into English is always engaged with the instrumentality of language. The loss of their living roots is the fate of the contemporary translations of Confucian texts. It reflects the transition from speaking out of one's own experience to speaking from hearsay...Language becomes instrumental. Henceforth, Heidegger thinks, philosophy is really in search of language (William, 1967). Heidegger disparaged the literal translation deriving from science. Greek words had been lost in Latin mistranslations, which have had a great impact on the trajectory followed by philosophical thinking of Western culture until today. Roman terms took over the Greek words without, correspondingly, [having] just as original an experience of what they had, namely, without Greek words. The groundlessness of western thinking began with this translation (Heidegger, 2017).

Let us return to the problem at hand. Science in English translation cannot conform to Confucius's concepts; rather a Heideggerian phenomenology connects us with and in a certain manner attain to them. Translating concepts is no projection of science onto Confucius, but rather a humane endowment which allows Confucius to manifest himself.

This gives us access to the very power of concepts in the *Analects*, in one way something suggested in Heidegger's *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, where he explores the power of art to evoke thinking. As well as the kind of technological enframing that alienates us from the world, there might be alternative frameworks that are more benign, and indeed which enable us to perceive what is hidden (Cottingham, 2022). Science lets us see how things show themselves, while phenomenology lets us see how they hide themselves. The power of Confucius's concepts though difficult to transmit captures, in crystalline fashion, the essence of Confucianism in general and Confucius in particular.

Conclusion

Confucianism formed in ancient times is the core part of traditional Chinese culture. Confucius's concepts are full of stories about the fascinating inner struggle of human beings that have laid the foundation of the Confucian culture. The mystery of those inner forces is filled with rich ideas and imagination of ancient Chinese people. For the time being, Confucius's concepts in the *Analects* remain to some extent concealed in their English translations. The scientific Confucius became the foundation for all translation, whereas the humane Confucius was forgotten. Little did translators know that forgetting the latter would lose "home".

With the introduction of phenomenology into the discussion, a thoughtful translating makes the Confucian way of thinking revealed and Confucius regained. The phenomenological model of Confucian understanding we are seeking unfolds against the background of the Western scientific tradition, a state of attunement where we can encounter with Confucius, through the removal of the veil that hid him from us.

What thus emerges, when we finish our discussion of Confucius and his thought in the *Analects*, our focus on reading the classics is not a dismantling of the text in a scientific way, but a process of life infiltration. Phenomenology provides powerful energy for the continuity of Confucianism, and opens up possible space for it to move towards a lived experience, which lifts our feelings and inspires our conduct.

Contemporarily, walking in the country road, the call from ren that filled Confucius with significance rings in our ears now and again. Confucian translation is designated a sacred mission. Stand outside time, in which the deep loneliness and anxiety of the human individual is confronted and overcome, and the human world is suddenly irradiated from a point beyond it (Scruton, 2010). It is at this moment that grounds and validates Confucius's existence, which is not taken up according to any specific determination but is a making present of life experience. Confucius asked, "Who says that ren is far away? No sooner do I wish for it than it is here." (*Analects* 7.30) Whence ren comes, can Confucius be far behind?

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