

Handling Fate: The Ru Discourse on *Ming* 命

By

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Dedicated to
all the sages and thinkers mentioned in this study

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HANDLING FATE: THE RU DISCOURSE ON *MING* 命

Youngsun Back

This is a study of the Ru notion of *ming* 命, conventionally translated into English as *fate*. In my thesis, I argue that the notion of *ming* is tied to a particular way of understanding the world and to the question of whether the world operates according to a moral order or the world is a contingent place. The discourse of *ming*, in other words, is about the way Ru thinkers came to terms with contingency, i.e., how they handled fate.

To that end, the study performs a historical reconstruction of *ming* discourse at several pivotal points in its development. In the first part, I trace the development of *ming* discourse in early China, from Kongzi 孔子, Mozi 墨子, Mengzi 孟子, and to Xunzi 荀子. My goal is to examine how internal and external criticisms of Ru teaching gave rise to two different conceptualizations of *ming*. Briefly, one side, typified by Kongzi, maintained that the world is a contingent place, beyond human control and comprehension. The other side, whose representative figure is Xunzi, maintained that the world necessarily follows a moral order. In the second part, I investigate how these two conflicting conceptualizations of *ming* re-emerged in later Ru history, when Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) in Song China was confronted with Buddhism and Chŏng Yagyong 丁若鏞 (1762-1836) in late Chosŏn Korea faced challenges from Catholicism. Partly as reactions against or in response to these powerful foreign religions, they established new versions of *ming* discourse, significantly different from those of their predecessors.

This historical contextualization and philosophical analysis of the discourse on *ming* explores a set of issues that have not received enough attention: e.g., the role of virtue and the status of external goods in human life, the different formulations of self-cultivation programs and different conceptualizations of a good human life. Furthermore, this study questions the common assumption that the Ru tradition is primarily a single system of ethical philosophy that is unified, consistent, and coherent throughout history. This study illuminates the diverse and multiple trends of thought found within the Ru tradition, and explores how they actively responded to their own problems and dynamically interacted with each other throughout history and across different cultural contexts. One of the significant approaches of this study is to take historically and regionally diverse Ru thinkers as equal participants in a conversation on the same subject, using a similar language. In addition, this study will also put us in a better position to compare the Ru tradition with other traditions, because the subject of fate is shared by other cultures, including modern cultures of our own time. The study of *ming* and fate will serve as a clear starting point for comparison.

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■ INTRODUCTION: THE RU DISCOURSE ON *MING*

Several days after Air France Flight 447 crashed into the Atlantic on 1 June 2009, a number of personal stories connected with that terrible accident started to appear in newspapers. One story concerned an Italian couple, Johanna and Kurt Ganthaler, who missed the doomed plane, only to end up in a car accident in Austria about a week later. Mrs. Ganthaler died; her husband was seriously injured. Their fortunate earlier escape seemed to make the story of this couple even more tragic than other stories about those who lost their lives on Flight 447. Their story provokes a sense of fear and dread rather than mere sympathy; it is not so much tragic as frightening. It is frightening because it gives the impression that there is absolutely nothing they could have done to avoid such a terrible fate.

The story of the Ganthalers highlights and intensifies our sense of the futility of human agency by combining and contrasting the notions of fortune or luck on the one hand and fate or destiny on the other. This couple narrowly missed being passengers aboard Flight 447: they enjoyed remarkable good fortune. But, they escaped only to suffer a different, terrible accident: such was their fate. These accounts of fortune and fate are grounded in two conflicting features of the world: contingency and necessity. Fortune and luck are the names given to contingency, describing that an event may or may not happen by chance. Fate and destiny involve necessity, the notion that what happens must happen. Despite this apparent difference, the accounts of fortune and fate actually point to a shared truth about the world: that certain events are beyond human control. In his footnote, Darrin McMahon rightly notes:

Strictly speaking, luck and fate are opposed, in that one implies randomness and the other preestablished order. When considered from the standpoint of human

happiness, however, the two are closely related, in that each denies the role of human agency in determining the course of human events. Whether the universe is predetermined or unfolds chaotically, what happens to us – our happiness – is out of our hands.¹

This Italian couple definitely did not plan to be late for their flight, nor did they intend to swerve into the path of an oncoming truck. The formidable power of their story comes from a twofold negation of human agency, wrought by fortune and by fate. In one way or the other, we do not have full control of our own lives.

Many parts of human life, particularly moments of dramatic significance, often prove to be beyond human control and comprehension. However, this reversely implies and indeed depends on a sense that most parts of our lives are somehow under our command. In other words, we live in a world that presents us with a constant tension between what can and cannot be controlled through human agency. How much of our life is just given and to what extent are we the authors of our own life? Throughout history, human beings have tried to come up with different ways of coping with this predicament.

At one extreme lies the fatalistic view. For instance, Greek tragedies describe a world in which human life is subject to inexorable *moira*, fate. Oedipus, a legendary tragic figure, was destined to kill his father and marry his mother. Like the contemporary story of the Italian couple, with which we began, Oedipus was unable to avoid his fate, no matter what he did.² To

¹ Darrin McMahon, *Happiness: A History* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2006), 10.

² Most of the events in Homer's *Iliad* also unfold through prophecies and fate. Not only men but also gods abide by them. However, this Homeric epic reveals a different aspect of fate. In addition to showing the dark side of the human condition, fate serves as an active *guiding* force for human actions. For instance, acknowledging that even Heracles was conquered by fate, Achilles decided to accept his own. This is significantly different from Oedipus' story. Instead of resigning himself to fate, Achilles chose to live up to his fate and accept it as a necessity. He fulfilled his fate according to his own free will. Despite the fact that both

give another example, Protestant Reformers, like Luther (1483-1546) and Calvin (1509-1564), denied any human freedom but only allowed for divine freedom. For them, God is only direct cause of everything: every drop of rain is God's will. According to this view, Adam's Fall was predetermined by God. The fate of Oedipus and Adam's Fall illuminate a tragic aspect of human conditions: we do not have control over our lives.

At the other extreme lies libertarianism. Libertarians give primacy to human free will and reject any deterministic view. Unlike Protestant Reformers, St. Augustine believed that God rewards and punishes according to one's actions based on free choice. Catholics also tried to defend human free will. One of the most radical forms of libertarianism is the Buddhist doctrine of *karma*, which teaches that good acts lead to good outcomes and bad acts to bad outcomes. In this *karmic* scheme, one's life is completely determined by one's own actions. So, the Buddha declares, "Thus I say beings are the heirs of their deeds."³ In this extreme libertarian view, we are the authors of our own lives.

Most views, however, fall somewhere between these two poles: many parts of our lives are just given and cannot be avoided; at the same time, for the most part, we are responsible for what we do and who we become. If the problem of human agency is one of the central issues concerning the subjects of fate and fortune, another important issue related to the same subjects is the workings of the universe. These two issues are inseparable; they define each other, because the kind of the world within which humans live determines the scope and effectiveness of human agency, and also, a way to understand human agency closely relates to the conception of how the world operates.

stories assume certain limitations on human agency, they illustrate quite different attitudes toward constraints placed upon human life.

³ *Majjhima Nikāya* 57 and also *Majjhima Nikāya* 135.

For instance, the ancient Stoics believed that the world is governed by the divine *logos*, the rational order. In the universe governed by the rational order, everything is causally connected and there is no room for luck or chance.⁴ Human beings are no exception. Humans receive a fragment of the divine *logos* and living in accordance with this *logos* (i.e., virtuous life) suffices for happiness.⁵ In the Stoic universe, humans appear to have considerable control over life. On the other hand, Aristotle rejected such a deterministic account of the Stoics, and instead, he incorporated the notions of chance, luck, and contingency into his philosophical system. According to Aristotle, *eudaimonia*, happiness, is vulnerable to the vicissitudes of *tuchē*, luck.⁶ Unlike the Stoics, he opposed the view that virtuous life alone can ever guarantee the realization of a good life. Consequently, in the world of Aristotle humans seem to have lesser degree of control over life than in the Stoic world.⁷

So far, I examined the two conceptual issues concerning the notions of fortune and fate.

⁴ According to Marcia Colish, the Stoic world view is mainly deterministic but exceptionally contingent. Colish summarizes that the Stoic physics forces to limit human free will, but the Stoic ethics forces to exalt human free will. See Marcia Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden; New York: E. J. Brill, 1990): 7-35.

⁵ For a comprehensive discussion of the relation between virtue and happiness in ancient Greek philosophy, see Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University, 1993).

⁶ For an extended study of the role of luck in the ethical thought in the classical Greek culture, see Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁷ With the rise of Christianity, the problem of fortune and fate took on new forms. Unlike the ancient Greeks, who conceived of the world in terms of a rational order, the Christian Fathers believed the world is utterly contingent on God's will and intelligence. God is creator of the universe, and nothing eludes God's omniscience. This Christian conception of God collides with the notion of human free will. The conflict between divine freedom and human free will is a perennial issue of Christian theology. Another issue persisted in Christian theological discourse is the controversy over God's two powers, his omnipotence (will) and omniscience (intellect). Voluntarists like Ockham believed that God created the world with absolute freedom and is not bound to conform to the order he created. God can at any time intervene in the world he created. On the other hand, Thomas Aquinas took an intellectualist position. He held that even though God was absolutely free in creating the world, once he created the world, he has to follow the order he created. In other words, to voluntarists, the world is a contingent place; according to intellectualists, the world runs by necessity according to natural laws. As a consequence, depending on which configuration of the world one follows, the conception of human agency will be defined differently. For this intriguing theological issue of God's two powers and the way of thinking about the world, see Margaret Osler, *Divine Will and the Mechanical Philosophy: Gassendi and Descartes on Contingency and Necessity in the Created World* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

First is the problem of human agency: how much of life is within human control. Second is the workings of the universe: how the world operates. These two issues are intimately connected with each other. We cannot fully understand one without the other. Throughout history and across cultures, these twin issues of human agency and the mechanism of the universe have long been discussed under various names such as *moira*, *fortuna*, and *karma*. In the Chinese context, it was the notion of *ming* 命 at the center of this debate. This study, by investigating the discourse on *ming*, will explore how the issues of human agency and the workings of the universe were discussed within the Ru tradition.

▪ *Ming* in the Ru Tradition

King Wen 文王, the ethically good founder of the Zhou 周 dynasty, once was imprisoned at Youli 羑里 by the last wicked king of the Shang 商 dynasty, King Zhou 紂王. Kongzi 孔子 was endangered by Huan Tui 桓魋 when he passed through the state of Song 宋. Luckily, both of them survived these dangerous situations. Actually, there is nothing unusual or mysterious about these events. During the course of life, we are faced with any number of fortunate and unfortunate moments. These seemingly quotidian events of our life, however, sometimes rivet our attention and demand explanation. Ru were not an exception, and the answer that Ru offered was *ming* 命. In the *Lunyu* (論語, the *Analects*), Zixia 子夏, a disciple of Kongzi, says, 死生有命 富貴在天 “Life and death are a matter of *ming*; wealth and honor depend on *tian*.”⁸ Mengzi 孟子, the most important Ru thinker after Kongzi, says, 莫非命也 “Everything is [due to] *ming*.”⁹ According to these early Ru thinkers, King Wen’s and Kongzi’s encounters with adversity as well as their fortunate escapes are all alike due to *ming*. Conversely, had they

⁸ *Lunyu* 12:5.

⁹ *Mengzi* 7A:2.

been unable to get away from the danger and unfortunately ended up dying, it would also have been their *ming*. Accordingly, it appears that nothing in life is determined by our own hand, but by *ming*, an entity or force that we do not have clear knowledge about or control over. The fact that the term *ming* is conventionally rendered in English as “fate,” “destiny,” or “predestination” attests to these fatalistic connotations embedded in the notion of *ming*.

However, Mengzi did not stop here and made a further distinction between “proper *ming*” 正命 and “improper *ming*” 非正命. Ever since, within the commentarial tradition of Ru, there has been much discussion about the criteria that distinguishes “proper *ming*” from “improper *ming*.” Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), the most influential Ru thinker since the Song 宋 dynasty (960-1279), and Chǒng Yagyong 丁若鏞 (1762-1836), the most important Ru thinker in the late Chosŏn 朝鮮 (1392-1897) period, presented different interpretations on this question.

Zhu Xi says:

使文王死於羑里 孔子死於桓魋 卻是[正]命

“If King Wen had died at Youli and Kongzi had been killed by Huan Tui, it would have been [proper] *ming*.”¹⁰

On the other hand, Chǒng Yagyong says:¹¹

若使文王死於羑里 孔子死於桓魋 則比之巖牆桎梏 尤非正命

“If King Wen had died at Youli and Kongzi had been killed by Huan Tui, these would have been cases of ‘dying under a collapsing wall or dying in handcuffs and fetters’; it would not have been proper *ming*.”¹²

¹⁰ *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 1434:6.

¹¹ Chǒng Yagyong is also known by one of his pen names, Tasan 茶山 (Tea Mountain). For convenience, I will use Tasan in referring Chǒng Yagyong from now on.

¹² *Maengja yoŏi* 孟子要義 7A:2.

They held exactly opposite views toward the same hypothetical events: Zhu Xi considered the counterfactual deaths of King Wen and Kongzi as proper *ming*, whereas Tasan considered these hypothetical events as examples of improper *ming*. What were their interpretations of proper *ming* and improper *ming* and why did they make such different claims about *ming*? What is *ming* for Zhu Xi, Tasan, and the rest of the Ru tradition?

This study is about *ming* 命 and its ethical and religious significance in the Ru tradition. *Ming* is an important concept and theme within Ru teaching. The term *ming*, together with the term *tianming* 天命, was pervasive in early Ru discourse. As such, *ming* often became the target of external as well as internal criticisms. For example, Mozi 墨子 vehemently criticized what he regarded as the Ru's fatalistic attitudes reflected in their notion of *ming*, and Xunzi 荀子 also appeared as an internal critic of certain Ru conceptions of *ming*. Nevertheless, *ming* has not drawn concerted attention from contemporary scholars of Ru thought. Even though scholars like Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896-1950)¹³ and Tang Junyi 唐君毅 (1909-1978)¹⁴ have presented historical studies of *ming*, a careful philosophical analysis of the concept of *ming* has yet to be written; within the field of scholarship on the Ru tradition, the study of *ming* is still quite marginal. Therefore, this study on *ming* will explore a set of issues that have not received enough attention.

¹³ Fu Sinian, "Xingming guxun bianzheng" 性命古訓辨證 (Analysis of ancient view of *xing* and *ming*), in *Fu Sinian quanji* 傅斯年全集, vol. 2 (Taipei: National University of Taiwan Press, 1952).

¹⁴ Tang Junyi, "Xian Qin sixiang zhong zhi tianming guan" 先秦思想中之天命觀, *Xinya xuebao* 新亞學報 2, 2 (1957): 1-33; "The T'ien Ming [Heavenly Ordinance] in Pre-Ch'in China," *Philosophy East and West* 11, 4 (1962): 195-218; "The T'ien Ming [Heavenly Ordinance] in Pre-Ch'in China: II," *Philosophy East and West* 12, 1 (1962): 29-49; "Qin Han yihou tianming sixiang zhi fazhan" 秦漢以後天命思想之發展, *Xinya xuebao* 新亞學報 6, 2 (1964): 3-64.

▪ What is *ming*?

Fu Sinian examined the precise meaning of *xing* 性 and *ming* 命 in the ancient classics, and Tang Junyi wrote a brief historical outline of the development of the notion of *ming* in the pre-Qin period. There are quite a number of studies on *ming*, either as a single study or as parts of larger research projects. These studies on *ming*, with some exceptions, share three common characteristics: first, they try to find or understand the exact meaning of the term *ming*; second, their interpretation of *ming* is closely tied to their understanding of *tian*; and third, they focus on two major Ru texts, the *Lunyu* and the *Mengzi*. In the following, I will briefly review the secondary literature on *ming* and discuss its approaches, as well as the complexity and obscurity of the subject of *ming* itself. In doing so, I will set out my argument focusing on these three distinctive features of the previous scholarship on *ming*. At the end, I will propose another way to look at the issue of *ming*.

Chen Ning, in his article, “Confucius’ View of Fate (*ming*),” provides a brief summary of the previous scholarship on Kongzi’s view on *ming*. According to Chen Ning, Kongzi’s interpretation of *ming* should be understood in relation to his view of the supernatural. Based on this assumption, he divides major interpretations on Kongzi’s notion of *ming* into two groups: one-sided interpretations and more complex interpretations.¹⁵ The scholars in the first group assume that Kongzi held a coherent and unitary belief in the transcendent, and they are not prone to accept any inconsistency in the meaning of *ming* or *tian*. On the other hand, the

¹⁵ Chen Ning, “Confucius’ View of Fate (*ming*),” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 24, 3 (1997): 323-359. He categorized Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895-1990), Tang Junyi, Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892-1978), Kanaya Osamu 金谷治, David Hall and Roger Ames, and Miyazaki Ichisada 宮崎市定 (1901-1995) under the first group; Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764-1849), Liu Baonan 劉寶楠 (1791-1855), Robert Eno, Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 (1903-1982), Fu Sinian, Tateno Masami 館野正美, and D. C. Lau under the second group. According to his categorization, Ding Weixiang also belongs to the second group. Ding distinguishes *ming* from *tianming*: *ming* refers to “destiny” and *tianming* refers to “moral imperatives.” See Ding Weixiang, “Destiny and Heavenly Ordinances: Two Perspectives on the Relationship between Heaven and Human Beings in Confucianism,” *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 4, 1 (2009): 13-37.

scholars in the second group provide better interpretations, as Chen Ning puts it, by paying proper attention to Kongzi's ambivalent attitude toward the supernatural.

The scholars in the second group generally acknowledge two different meanings of the term *ming*: "moral imperative" and "fate." For instance, Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764-1849) divided *ming* into "*deming*" 德命 (the imperative to be moral) and "*luming*" 祿命 (the regulation of emoluments).¹⁶ Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 (1903-1982) and D. C. Lau distinguished *ming* 命 from *tianming* 天命: *ming* is used to indicate unfathomable fate, while *tianming* is used to mean moral imperative. Similarly, Fu Sinian and Tateno Masami 館野正美 acknowledged inconsistency in the notion of *ming*. But, differing slightly from the aforementioned scholars, Fu Sinian understood the two different meanings in temporal terms, arguing that before Kongzi's continuous political failure, *ming* was employed as moral imperative, but later, it came to refer to fate. On the other hand, Tateno Masami placed them in conditional terms, which means that in favorable situations, *ming* is usually expressed as a belief in moral determinism, but in unfavorable situations, it turns into fatalism.¹⁷

Some scholars in the first group, who believe in the consistency of Kongzi's attitude toward the transcendent, do not seem to hold a strictly different view from scholars in the second group, in the sense that they also recognize certain contradictions in the usages of the term *ming* in the *Lunyu*. According to Chen Ning's explanation, Feng Youlan in his early work concluded that *tianming* in the *Lunyu* refers to the moral decree or moral mission imparted by *tian*, but in his later work, he changed his opinion and argued that *tianming* and *ming* in the *Lunyu* should be understood as blind fate. Kanaya Osamu 金谷治 discerned two kinds of

¹⁶ Since "*luming*" is considered to be allocated without any reference to human actions, it is more or less similar to fate.

¹⁷ Moral determinism is Chen Ning's term. He defines it as a theory that emphasizes man's moral responsibility for his actions.

meaning of *ming* in early Chinese texts: internal *ming* and external *ming*. Internal *ming* refers to moral imperative, while external *ming* to fortuitous fate. However, Kanaya claimed that in the *Lunyu ming* came to mean external, fortuitous fate, and the internal aspect of *ming* was taken over by another term, *xing* 性 (human nature).¹⁸ Even though both Feng Youlan and Kanaya Osamu narrowed down the meaning of *ming*, they were aware of certain inconsistencies in the notion.

This situation does not seem to have been radically changed in more recent scholarship. In comparing the elite and popular conceptions of allotment, Mark Csikszentmihalyi distinguishes two contradictory notions of *ming* in the *Lunyu*: “arbitrary *ming*” and “providential *tianming*.”¹⁹ He explains that “providential *tianming*” implies that a person’s virtue may guarantee protection from *tian*, while “arbitrary *ming*” relates to the areas of life one cannot control, such as untimely death and misfortune. Robert Eno also discerns two discursive functions of *tian* in the *Lunyu*: prescriptive and descriptive.²⁰ According to Eno, prescriptively, *tian*, as an ethical imperative, provides the ideal path to follow; descriptively, *tian*, as a cause of amoral event, explains why certain events occurred as they did.²¹ Eno further notes that like *tian*,

¹⁸ Against Kanaya’s contention, Chen Ning presents two counterevidences: first, *ming* in some of the passages that Kanaya read as fatalistic is too vague; second, there are other passages that *ming* reveals its moralistic character. Chen Ning, “Confucius’ View of Fate (*ming*),” 328.

¹⁹ Mark Csikszentmihalyi, “Allotment and Death in Early China,” in Amy Olberding and Philip J. Ivanhoe, eds., *Mortality in Traditional Chinese Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011): 177-190. In this article, Csikszentmihalyi successfully sorts out the complicated and abstract notion of *ming* by analyzing two different approaches toward the same event, the death of Yan Yuan 顏淵. From the perspective of Yan Yuan, his death is arbitrary in the sense that his love of learning and virtuous actions do not guarantee the happy ending (e.g., *Lunyu* 6:3, 11:7); from the perspective of Kongzi, Yan Yuan’s death is a kind of sign or omen that *tian* is unfavorable to Kongzi (e.g., *Lunyu* 11:9). Another interesting point of this article is that he contrasts the view of *ming* in the *Lunyu* with the popular view of *ming* centering around an early deity, “Manager of Allotments” (Siming 司命).

²⁰ Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven: Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

²¹ However, Robert Eno argues that the gap between the prescriptive and descriptive dimensions of *tian* is bridged through the notion of a teleological plan of *tian*. According to Eno, *tian* made Kongzi fail in his political mission in order to give him a more important task, that is, spreading his teaching in the world. Furthermore, Eno suggests that Kongzi’s life itself is the bridge over the prescriptive/descriptive gap. He claims that *Lunyu*

ming is also not a purely descriptive term, but also has a prescriptive quality. He concludes that “Although Ruist texts occasionally choose the option of fatalistic rhetoric to explain Ruist political failures, systematic Ruist doctrine was not fatalistic, and the prescriptive dimension of Mengzi’s use of *ming* illustrates this.”²² Ted Slingerland, on the other hand, claims that *ming* can best be characterized as descriptive. But, first he observes that in the *Lunyu* and *Mengzi* reality is bifurcated into two distinct realms: *nei* 内 (internal) and *wai* 外 (external).²³ The internal realm is the realm within the bounds of human control, that is, the realm of self-cultivation. The external realm is the realm beyond human control. His distinction of the internal and external realms looks similar to that of Kanaya Osamu, and like Kanaya, Slingerland argues that *ming* exclusively refers to the external realm in the *Mengzi*. In other words, Slingerland concludes that Mengzi uses *ming* only in the sense of fate.

To summarize, despite differences of the expressions, it seems that *ming* basically has two different meanings: moral imperative/fate; prescriptive/descriptive; internal/external; controllable/uncontrollable; arbitrary/providential. One group of scholars acknowledges the co-existence of these contradictory notions as a part of *ming*. Another group simply chooses one of the two, or tries to reduce one to the other.²⁴

2:4, the passage outlining the spiritual life course of Kongzi, provides evidence of reconciling the prescriptive and descriptive aspects of *tian*. Like Fu Sinian, Eno divides Kongzi’s life in two parts: the first half up to the age forty describes the prescriptive path of Kongzi’s sagehood, and the second half from the age fifty introduces descriptive obstacles that confront Kongzi. Accordingly, his interpretation of the passage, “Kongzi understands *tianming* at fifty,” is that Kongzi heard that the Heavenly decree that his political mission will end up in failure. Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 82-93.

²² Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 125.

²³ Ted Slingerland, “The Conception of *Ming* in Early Confucian Thought,” *Philosophy East and West* 46, 4 (1996): 567-581.

²⁴ There is the third group, a group that does not belong to any of the previous two. David Hall and Roger Ames’ study belongs to the third group, even though Chen Ning categorized it as “one-sided interpretations.” Hall and Ames assume that there was an implicit cosmology shared by Kongzi and his contemporaries, such as Laozi and Zhuangzi. They argue that without understanding this tacit cosmology, a cosmology that was very different from cosmologies of the Western tradition, we cannot properly understand Kongzi’s thought. They present that Kongzi’s cosmology is “aesthetic cosmology” (*ars contextulais* – the art of contextualization in

What should be noted here is that these two seemingly different meanings are not unrelated to each other. Simply put, they are like two sides of the same coin: if *ming* is the coin, its front side is moral imperative and its back side is fate. In other words, both moral imperative and fate adjoin each other by *ming*.²⁵ In this respect, Ted Slingerland's observation of the division of reality (internal and external) in the *Lunyu* and the *Mengzi* is quite telling.²⁶ I think that *ming* is none other than the fine line that divides reality into two realms. Benjamin Schwartz notes:

When Confucius tells us that at the age of fifty he knew the *ming* of Heaven, he may mean that he has a clear understanding of what it is that is not in his control as well as of what is his true sphere of autonomous action.²⁷

According to Schwartz's explanation, the *ming* that Kongzi understood at fifty was neither

which any element in a context is assessed by the contribution it makes to construing the context, and alternatively the contribution made by the context to the constitution of that element), and that *tian* or *tianming*, *de* 德, and *dao* 道 are the principal notions that support Kongzi's aesthetic cosmology. They interpret the relationship between *tian* and *ming* as that of the whole and a part: in their definition, *tian* refers to "the whole phenomenal world as it emerges of its own accord," and *ming* to "the conditions and possibilities of a particular phenomenon." In addition, they interpret *de*, virtue, as the particular excellence of an individual within his or her context, and *dao*, the Way, as a road map emergent from the actions of the accomplished persons. See David Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking through Confucius* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987): 201-215.

²⁵ Robert Eno makes a similar observation when he discusses the prescriptive and descriptive ambiguity of the notion of *ming*. He points out that commands imply one should obey them, but at the same time, commands imply that one can contravene them. In other words, the prescriptive dimension of *ming* itself already embraces the descriptive dimension. Furthermore, he suggests that the descriptive meaning of *ming* also has the prescriptive meaning. For example, descriptively, *ming* represents the circumscribing limits to the power of individual effort. But, according to Eno, this outward limitation simultaneously presents us with the goal to be reached. Even if he does not provide a detailed account of this, to my understanding, he seems to mean that, for instance, the political failure of Kongzi describes the limitation of human effort, but his political failure presents him with another more important moral task. It is still Kongzi's choice what to follow and what not to follow in this unfavorable circumstance. In Tang Junyi's interpretation, the limitations imposed upon us by the circumstances reveals to us our duty. Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 124-129; Tang Junyi, "The T'ien Ming [Heavenly Ordinance] in Pre-Ch'in China: II," 31-37.

²⁶ However, I think that Ted Slingerland makes a mistake by taking only one side of reality, external (外), as *ming*.

²⁷ Benjamin Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), 126.

moral decree nor fate. Rather, it was both: the comprehensive reality, the reality that is composed of the two realms, controllable and uncontrollable, or moral decree and fate.²⁸

Consequently, *ming* is not merely a simple term, which has two distinct meanings. Rather, *ming* is a complex concept relating to the whole of reality, dividing the world into the two realms, within and beyond human control.²⁹ *Ming* concerns “a particular way of understanding the world.”

As discussed in the very beginning, like other subjects of fortune and fate, *ming* directly relates to the issue of how the world operates. The conception of *ming* reveals how Ru thinkers conceived of the world. What should be noted here is that Ru looked at the world with moral eyes. For instance, when Schwartz states that at fifty Kongzi understands “what it is that is not in his control,” his control here does not mean Kongzi’s physical or magical power; it strictly refers to his moral power, the capacity of his moral action. That is to say, the Ru’s conception of human agency is firmly based on morality.³⁰ Accordingly, the part of the world within human control specifically refers to the sphere where man’s moral value in some way exerts influence,

²⁸ Naturally, if Kongzi understands what is controllable, he would naturally understand what is uncontrollable, and the other way around. The two realms of reality are, in fact, defined by each other. Furthermore, I think that what Kongzi realized at fifty was not merely the fact that reality is divided into two realms, but the specific configuration of the two domains of reality. Furthermore, if we divide the reality in this way, we might be able to avoid the problems of Slingerland’s division of *nei* 内 (internal, within human control) and *wai* 外 (external, beyond human control). For instance, one of the problems is that our emotive states, as categorized as “inner” in Slingerland’s dichotomy, are by and large beyond our control. On the other hand, the distinction of “what is controllable” and “what is uncontrollable” can apply to both inner and external realms of human conditions.

²⁹ This means that one can also express the concept of *ming* even without necessarily using the term *ming*.

³⁰ When we study Chinese ethical thought, we should keep in mind the point that Henry Rosemont made in his article, “Notes from a Confucian Perspective: Which Human Acts Are Moral Acts?” In defending Confucian ethics, Rosemont contends, “In all strictness we should not call the Confucian position a theory of moral actions. Therefore, I will refer to it as a moral theory of human action.” What he means by “a moral theory of human action” is that unlike contemporary moral philosopher, who study, analyze, and evaluate a uniquely moral action, for the early Ru, all human actions are moral actions. In other words, in Ru ethical thought, every human action has moral value and is worthy of evaluation, either as good or bad, right or wrong. Even if I believe that in the later Ru history (such as the thought of Tansen) this picture somehow changed, I think Rosemont’s point is illuminating in understanding the overall landscape of the Ru ethical system. Henry Rosemont, Jr., “Notes from a Confucian Perspective: Which Human Acts Are Moral Acts?” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 16, 1 (1976): 49-61.

while the part of the world beyond human control referring to the sphere where such influence has no impact. In other words, the world was perceived differently in moral terms: one domain, morally relevant, and the other, morally irrelevant.³¹ And it was *ming* that distinguishes these two domains.

However, this boundary of *ming* is neither firmly fixed nor clearly visible. This might have been the reason why it took almost fifty years for Kongzi to understand *ming*, and also, why many Ru thinkers, as well as contemporary scholars, have continuously discussed *ming*. Furthermore, various Ru thinkers have drawn the line of *ming* quite differently from one another. For example, some thinkers believed that the moral domain takes up much of the world, and others believed that large part of the world cannot be explained in moral terms. Each thinker has his own configuration of the world: the notion of *ming* reflects his or her particular ways of understanding the world. Therefore, any attempt to discover or describe the precise and coherent meaning of the term *ming* cannot provide an adequate account of this complex concept of *ming*.³²

In light of these remarks, Chen Ning's two other articles, "The Problem of Theodicy in

³¹ What I mean by "morally relevant" or that "moral value exerts a certain influence" is that there is a necessary connection between one's moral actions and non-moral outcomes. (Here, non-moral outcomes refer to wealth, health, honor, and so on. These are also called external goods.) In other words, this is a belief that virtuous actions produce favorable external goods, while morally bad actions produce unfavorable external goods. As Philip Ivanhoe suggests, I will call this belief in the existence of such a connection "moral economy." This will be further discussed later in this chapter.

³² My approach to the discourse on *ming* was inspired by Michael Puett's study of the notion of *qing* 情 in early China. In his study, Puett criticizes the attempt to find the precise meaning of the term *qing* in early Chinese texts. According to Puett, the term *qing* has a broad semantic range, including such meanings as basic tendencies, inclinations, dispositions, and fundamental qualities, and thinkers utilized this term and redefine it for their own purposes. Therefore, instead of seeking a single, unified meaning of the term, he asks why certain thinkers at a certain time chose to utilize the term, and how and why they exploited, enhanced, and shifted the meaning of the term for their own purposes. In other words, his goal is not to find some "basic meaning" of the term, but to reconstruct the debate in which the term *qing* took a prominent position. In his study, he particularly analyzes the excavated "Xing zi ming chu" 性自命出, the *Xunzi* 荀子, the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, and the writings of Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒. Michael Puett, "The Ethics of Responding Properly: The Notion of *Qing* 情 in Early Chinese Thought," in Halvor Eifring ed., *Love and Emotions in Traditional Chinese Literature* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004): 37-68.

Ancient China” and “The Genesis of the Concept of Blind Fate in Ancient China,” draw attention to the second important characteristic of the previous scholarship on *ming*.³³ In these works, Chen Ning traces the formation of the concept of “blind fate” in early China without mentioning the term *ming* at all. In other words, instead of explicating the meaning of the term *ming*, he examines how the concept of *ming* came to exist in early China. He argues that the concept of blind fate did not exist in the Shang and the shift of religious system from the Shang to the Zhou gave rise to the concept of blind fate.

According to Chen Ning’s explanation, during the Shang dynasty, people believed that spirits and deities had tremendous influence on the living world, and they also believed that through divination they could interpret the intentions of the spirits and through ritual offerings they could influence the decisions of the spirits. Chen Ning defines this Shang religion as a polytheistic, reciprocal, and amoral system. By contrast, the religious system of the Zhou was firmly established on morality. As seen in the doctrine of *tianming* (Mandate of Heaven), the Zhou people believed that *tian*, as a supreme deity, oversees human actions and rewards the virtuous and punishes the wicked.³⁴ Chen Ning calls this “moral determinism,” a theory that emphasizes man’s moral responsibility for his or her actions. He continues to argue that because of this moral determinism, the problem of theodicy arose in the Zhou: that is, moral

³³ Chen Ning, “The Problem of Theodicy in Ancient China,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 22 (1994): 51-74; Chen Ning, “The Genesis of the Concept of Blind Fate in Ancient China,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 25 (1997): 141-167.

³⁴ Most scholars consider the emergency of the doctrine of *tianming* to signify a rupture between Shang and Zhou: a shift from religion to philosophy, from amoral religious system to moral one, or from a magical world view to a rational, humanistic one. However, in his *To Become a God*, Michael Puett challenges this common assumption. By investigating the complexities of ritual practices of Shang and Zhou, he argues, “The Zhou conquest simply meant a replacement of the Shang pantheon with the Zhou pantheon, but the general ritual principles were much the same.” This intriguing claim was made to dispute the commonly held view that correlative cosmology is a representative Chinese world view. According to Puett, it was not until the late Warring States period that correlative cosmology emerged in reaction against the sacrificial and divination tradition and the self-divinization claims. During Shang and Zhou the relationship between humans and spirits were highly agonistic and charged with tensions. Michael Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

determinism cannot explain the discrepancy between theory and reality, such as the prosperity of the wicked and suffering of the good. In order to solve this problem of theodicy, he claims, the concept of blind fate was introduced and also adopted by Kongzi. He writes, "It [the doctrine of blind fate] serves as a powerful solution to the problem of theodicy by completely severing any reciprocal relationship between humans and transcendental."³⁵

Even though there are some problems, such as oversimplifying the transition from the religious system of the Shang to that of the Zhou, his observation about the intrinsic problem in the Zhou doctrine of *tianming* is quite accurate.³⁶ However, there is another serious problem in his argument: that is, his attempt to understand the concept of *ming* solely in terms of the agency of *tian*. As I pointed out earlier, this is the second common characteristic of the previous scholarship on *ming*. Many scholars have tried to understand the two different notions of *ming* in relation to two different notions of *tian*: *ming*, as a moral imperative, is related to an anthropomorphic, moral *tian*, while *ming*, as blind fate, is related to a naturalistic, impersonal force.³⁷ Chen Ning's definition of "blind fate" also reflects his emphasis on the question of

³⁵ Chen Ning, "The Problem of Theodicy," 69.

³⁶ Chen Ning believes that unlike the Zhou doctrine of *tianming*, the amoral and technical Shang religious system worked very well and it did not generate any serious ideological crisis. He provides two reasons for this. First, in the Shang religious view, the functions of many deities and spirits overlapped, and thus, one fails to elicit the desired results from one deity, one can easily turn to other deities. Second, there is linguistic ambiguity in Shang divination system, and thus, there is always a way to explain away ritual failures. However, according to David Keightley, unlike *Yijing* style forms of divination, Shang divination charges were not ambiguous, but quite straightforward. Keightley argues that there was no much room for subtle interpretations in Shang divination. Furthermore, Keightley demonstrates that the Shang religious system went through significant changes between the reign of Wu Ding 武丁 (21st, circa 1200-1181 B.C.E.) and the reign of Zu Jia 祖甲 (23rd, Wu Ding's son, circa 1170-1151 B.C.E). According to his explanation, under Zu Jia, the Shang ritual system became regularized and routinized, and the divination process became simplified. In this process, Shang divination was losing its working nature by the end of Shang, and instead, he suggests that the *Yijing* type of divination might have arisen to fill the function of earlier pyromancy. Therefore, Chen Ning's description of the shift in religious system from the Shang to the Zhou is definitely an oversimplification. See David Keightley, "Late Shang Divination: The Magico-Religious Legacy," in Henry Rosemont, Jr., ed., *Explorations in Early Chinese Cosmology* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984): 11-34; "Shang Divination and Metaphysics," *Philosophy East and West* 38, 4 (1988): 367-397; "The Making of the Ancestors: Late Shang Religion and Its Legacy," in John Lagerwey, ed., *Religion and Chinese Society, Volume I: Ancient and Medieval China* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2004): 3-53.

³⁷ Feng Youlan's change of his interpretation of *ming* from a moral decree to a blind fate was also closely tied to

agency. In the very beginning of his article, he notes, "In this essay blind fate refers to one's fixed lot determined by an impersonal, unapproachable power."³⁸ On the other hand, *tian* in the doctrine of *tianming* refers to a supreme deity, a moral judge who rewards and punishes people. Chen Ning's interpretation of *ming* is basically based on this strict distinction between an anthropomorphic *tian* and a naturalistic *tian*.

It is true that these two distinct features of *tian* are easily found in early Ru texts. More strictly speaking, it seems that *tian* has slowly evolved from an anthropomorphic deity to a naturalistic force. Over the long process of naturalization, *tian* combined these two characteristics.³⁹ However, it is debatable that *tian* was perceived as two different entities in the early period.⁴⁰ Furthermore, upon this clear demarcation between anthropomorphic *tian* and

his interpretation of *tian* from a purposeful, moral deity to a naturalistic force. Xu Fuguan and D. C. Lau also associated the co-existence of the two different meanings of *ming* with the existence of two different types of *tian*. See Chen Ning, "Confucius' View of Fate (*ming*)."

³⁸ Chen Ning, "The Genesis of the Concept of Blind Fate," 141.

³⁹ In their discussion of *tian*, David Hall and Roger Ames also challenge the view that characterizes *tian* in terms of an anthropomorphic deity or nonpersonal force. They argue that the debate over whether *tian* is considered to be an anthropomorphic deity or a naturalistic force is wrongheaded. Instead, they claim that the notion of *tian* should be discussed in terms of transcendence and immanence. According to Hall and Ames, the people of the Shang worshiped Shangdi 上帝, an anthropomorphic deity, and the realm of the spirits were conceived as a continuum of the living world. On the other hand, during the Zhou dynasty, *tian* was the religious focus, and *tian*, which also means sky, might have been seen as a nonpersonal force, rather distanced from the human world. However, according to Hall and Ames' speculation, Zhou rulers tried to identify their notion of *tian* with the more personal Shangdi of their forerunners. In this process, *tian*, a natural force, assumed an anthropomorphic dimension as well. Accordingly, they also acknowledge *tian*'s twofold characteristic. But, they point out the fact that neither Shangdi nor *tian* was ever presented as a transcendent deity, who stands apart from men and does not intervene in the world. They strongly contend that Shangdi and *tian* are both immanent, regardless of being an anthropomorphic deity or a nonpersonal force. Even though the *Lunyu* also features *tian* as both anthropomorphic and natural, what matters the most is that *tian* is unquestionably immanent. "Being immanent" means that the world is so of themselves, and there is no origin or birth of the world. Thus, they argue that *tian* is not a creative force or principle; *tian* is a general designation of the whole world. They define *tian* as "the phenomenal world as it emerges of its own accord." In their view, there is no transcendental order or value imbedded in *tian*. On the other hand, in his review of this book, Philip Ivanhoe disagrees with Hall and Ames's description of the immanent cosmos of Kongzi and his role as a creative innovator. According to Ivanhoe, Kongzi was not a flexible innovator but a transmitter of tradition; Kongzi discovered order that had already been laid down by the former sages. Therefore, unlike Hall and Ames, Ivanhoe considers that in Kongzi's cosmos, moral values are already in the world. See David Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking through Confucius*, 201-204; Philip Ivanhoe, "Thinking through Confucius. By David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames," *Philosophy East and West* 41, 2 (1991): 241-254.

⁴⁰ If we divide *tian* into two separate entities, we are unable to read more nuanced and complex relationships between these two aspects of *tian*.

naturalistic *tian*, Chen Ning equates irrationality with the naturalistic *tian* and rationality with the anthropomorphic *tian*. I do not see any reason to believe that the anthropomorphic deity always works rationally in terms of morality, and the naturalistic power always works irrationally in a way that is beyond all human comprehension. Rather, it easily could be the other way around: the anthropomorphic deity could act at his whim, and the naturalistic force might follow a certain order.

Robert Solomon, in his study of fate and fatalism, makes an important observation that some notions of fate in certain cultures do not necessarily invoke any mysterious agency. He writes:

“Fate’s decree” and other such phrases may suggest some sort of personal agency without indicating anything of what (or who) such personal agent might be, but we need not invoke such images in order to believe in fate. Indeed, the personification of fate is but one of many versions of fatalistic thinking and by no means the most prevalent one. In Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain philosophy, for instance, *karma* is not a distinctive agent, although it is firmly connected to one’s own actions (as their “residue”) and the ongoing story of one’s life.⁴¹

Solomon’s point is that the question of external agency, whether it is personal or impersonal, is not necessarily an essential part of the notion of fate. According to this view, Chen Ning’s interpretation of *ming*, based on the division of *tian* into two entities, might not be an appropriate way to approach the issue of *ming* or the notion of *tian*.⁴²

⁴¹ Robert Solomon, “On Fate and Fatalism,” *Philosophy East and West* 53, 4 (2003), 442.

⁴² Mark Csikszentmihalyi also points out, “The distinction between anthropomorphic and naturalistic does not entirely describe the range of possibilities for understanding *tian* in the early Chinese context.” He further notes the importance of the relationship between human beings and *tian*, by quoting Li Jinglin’s 李景林

What should be central in discussing *ming* is not the question of anthropomorphism in regard to *tian*, but the relationship between *tian* and human beings. Examining in what ways *tian* relates to and acts on human beings and what kind of attitude human beings have toward *tian* is much more significant than questioning the anthropomorphic and naturalistic natures of *tian*. In this regard, Tang Junyi's studies on *ming* gives us a significant insight. He writes:

The term '*ming*' represents the interrelationship or mutual relatedness of Heaven and man. ... Now, since *ming* as such is to be perceived in the interrelationship of Heaven and man, we can say that it exists neither externally in Heaven only, nor internally in man only; it exists, rather, in the mutuality of Heaven and man, i.e., in their mutual influence and response, their mutual giving and receiving. Past commentators on the term '*ming*' have always fallen into one or the other of two extremes — regarding it either externally in Heaven only, or internally in man only.⁴³

Tang Junyi teases out one of the most important aspects of *ming*: *ming* relates to both *tian* and human beings. He criticizes traditional commentators for regarding *ming* as belonging either to *tian* or to humans.⁴⁴ As Tang Junyi points out, *ming* is a relational concept between *tian* and human beings. *Ming* is not an independent entity.

comparative study of the *Xunzi* and the *Wuxing* regarding *tian*. See Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue: Ethics and the Body in Early China* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004), 167.

⁴³ Tang Junyi, "The T'ien Ming [Heavenly Ordinance] in Pre-Ch'in China," 195-196. Michael Puett also points out the relational aspect of *ming*, particularly in the sense of "to command" or "mandate." He argues that *ming* does not appear to be used in a deterministic sense, but in a more relational sense. In other words, he writes, "It is not that we are forced to do X, or that we are fated to do X," but rather, "We are mandated by Heaven to do X, and if we do X then the order desired by both Heaven and man will be obtained." See Michael Puett, "Following the Commands of Heaven: The Notion of Ming in Early China," in Christopher Lupke, ed., *The Magnitude of Ming: Command, Allotment, and Fate in Chinese Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 49.

⁴⁴ According to this view, Chen Ning is an example of one who regards *ming* as existing externally in *tian*, and thus, he explains *ming* only in terms of the agency of *tian*. Instead, Tang Junyi proposes that one should investigate the historical development of the doctrine of *ming* in order to understand the true meaning of *ming*. Even though his ultimate goal seems to find the precise meaning of the term, actually what he demonstrated in

This aspect of *ming* has three important implications in understanding the notion of *ming*. First, existing in the mutuality of *tian* and man, *ming* defines the relationship between *tian* and man. Accordingly, the study of *ming* can illuminate how *tian* and human beings relate to each other. It is also true that *ming* can be conceptualized differently depending on what kind of relationship *tian* and man formed. In other words, the way *tian* relates to the living world and what kind of attitude people have toward *tian* defines the notion of *ming*. Consequently, as I just pointed out, instead of solely focusing on investigating the agency of *tian*, the study of *ming* should take into consideration the nature of the relationship between *tian* and human beings. This will naturally lead to the twofold issues of the human agency and the workings of the universe.

Second, *ming*, relating to both *tian* and man, can be perceived differently depending on one's perspective. For instance, if we take the original meaning of the term *ming*, "to command," from the perspective of *tian*, *ming* is "what *tian* commands," while from the perspective of human beings, *ming* is "what is commanded." In the first case *tian* is the subject who commands (*ming*s), while in the second case human beings are the recipients of *tian*'s command, who are commanded (*ming*ed). Grammatically, *ming*, in the former case, is a transitive verb, while *ming*, in the latter case, functions as a passive verb.⁴⁵ This suggests that both activeness and

his study of *ming* was more than that. For example, concerning the notion of *ming* in the *Lunyu*, instead of defining Kongzi's meaning of the term, Tang Junyi turns his attention to Kongzi's attitude toward *ming*, and demonstrates what kind of role *ming* played in the process of Kongzi's self-cultivation. In Tang Junyi's view, *ming*, as adverse circumstances, elevates the sense of moral duty. In this sublimate state of mind, one does not feel that his duty is his own, but from *tian*, and thereby, one is able to unite with *tian*. See Tang Junyi, "The T'ien Ming [Heavenly Ordinance] in Pre-Ch'in China," 209-217.

⁴⁵ According to Ding Weixiang, the word *ming* 命 came from the word *ling* 令 (to command), and they were used interchangeably. Then, Ding asks why people needed another word *ming* since there had already been the word *ling*. Ding answers that it is because these two semantically similar words have different grammatical functions: the word *ling* only refers to the subject who "gave decrees," while the word *ming* only to those who "accepted decrees." Ding further argues that with the transition from Shang to Zhou, the word *ming* gained prominence over *ling*, because people turned their attention from the subject of "giving decrees" towards the new monarchical power, who accepted the new mandate. Regardless of the accuracy of Ding's claim, these two

passiveness are two facets of *ming*. Chen Ning also notices the differences in the grammatical usages of the term *ming*:

On the grammatical level, when employed to express blind Fate as a supernatural force, *shi* 時, *ming* 命, *tianming* 天命 are seldom used as subjects and often, if not always, as predicates. Sentences such as 'so-and-so is the working of Fate' (*ming ye* 命也), and 'so-and-so has been fated' (*you ming* 有命)' are examples in point. In comparison, *tian*, while referring to a purposeful deity, almost always plays the grammatical role of subject, followed by various transitive verbs.⁴⁶

Although Chen Ning acknowledges different usages of the term *ming*, he claims that these grammatical differences reflect the co-existence of the two different entities of *tian*, an anthropomorphic deity and a naturalistic force. He argues that when *ming* is employed to express the notion of impersonal fate, it is often used as a predicate, not as a subject; on the other hand, when sentences carry the notion of an anthropomorphic power, they often are formed with a subject with various transitive verbs, which strongly suggests the personal qualities of the power.⁴⁷

However, I think that the different grammatical usages of the term *ming* are not due to the fact that *tian* is divided into two entities, but due to the nature of the subject of *ming* itself. As I explained, *ming*, as a relational concept, can be viewed from either perspectives, from the side of *tian* or from the side of human beings. From the viewpoint of *tian*, *ming* appears to be an

different grammatical functions of *ling* and *ming* is quite illuminating in understanding the two functions of *ming* as described above. Ding Weixiang, "Destiny and Heavenly Ordinances," 15-18.

⁴⁶ Chen Ning, "The Genesis of the Concept of Blind Fate in Ancient China," 158.

⁴⁷ In order to support his argument, Chen Ning quotes Helmer Ringgren's study of the pre-Islamic Arabs. Ringgren points out that when one expresses the predetermined lot, usually the passive verbal forms are preferred: "Who it is that decrees or determines is never said: the passive form of the verb gives the expression an inauspicious obscurity on that point." See Chen Ning, "Confucius' View of Fate (*ming*)," 341; Helmer Ringgren, "The Problem of Fatalism," in Helmer Ringgren, ed., *Fatalistic Beliefs in Religion, Folklore, and Literature* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1976): 7-18.

active force, but from the viewpoint of human beings, *ming* is felt to be just given. Therefore, activity and passivity reflected in *ming* is not necessarily due to the dual qualities of *tian*, but rather due to the relational feature of *ming*. Consequently, this suggests that from a human perspective, *ming*, whether it is a moral imperative or a fortuitous fate, is felt to be given and unavoidable.

The fact that *ming* is a relational concept leads to the third important aspect of *ming* on the individual level. In the above, I argued that the seeming contradiction between the two meanings of *ming*, moral imperative and fate, reflects the two sides of *ming*; *ming* is the fine line that distinguishes the two realms, morally relevant and morally irrelevant. Hall and Ames' study suggests that this fine line of *ming* could be drawn differently depending on the moral capacity of each individual. The more one cultivates one's virtue, the smaller the realm of fate becomes; the less one cultivates one's virtue, the larger the realm of fate becomes. Hall and Ames insightfully point out:

The individual who has attained a high degree of integration of the sort associated with the exemplary person 君子 or the sage 聖人 has established a peculiarly immanent relationship with *tian* which permits him access to the *ming* of *tian* both in terms of understanding and of influence. The less intensely focused an individual is, the greater is his sense of *ming* as determining conditions over which he seems to exercise no control; the more intensely focused he is, the greater is his awareness of the role he can play in determining those conditions.⁴⁸

Simply put, the same reality is felt differently by each individual. To the petty person, a larger part of reality is felt as inexorable fate. On the other hand, the gentleman expands the sphere of

⁴⁸ David Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking through Confucius*, 215.

his autonomous action to the greatest by committing to moral cultivation. As people engage in moral cultivation, their relationship with *tian* changes, and accordingly, so does their *ming*. This is all because *ming* is a relational concept between *tian* and human beings. Depending on the way each individual is engaged with *tian*, the *ming* of each individual divides reality differently; that is, individuals have their own configuration of the world.

In the first section, I argued that *ming* is more than a simple term; *ming* is a complex concept, relating to the whole of reality. *Ming* concerns a particular way of understanding the world. In the second section, I pointed out that *ming* is a relational concept between *tian* and human beings. This aspect of *ming* has three significant implications for understanding *ming*: first, *ming* can be defined differently according to the way *tian* and human beings are related; second, *ming* can be perceived differently depending on the perspective from which it is seen, either from the perspective of *tian* or human beings; and third, *ming* can be felt differently by each individual depending on his or her moral development.

Ming is certainly a complex and multifaceted concept. Therefore, I think that the attempts to explicate the precise meaning of *ming* cannot adequately capture the complexity and multifariousness of *ming*. In the following section, I will further argue that *ming* is also a historically evolving concept. *Ming* is not a static notion, but a dynamic one, that has developed and changed throughout the history of the Ru. In response to internal problems as well as external criticisms, Ru thinkers have actively engaged in the discussion of *ming*, making different claims about *ming* and reconfiguring *ming* in their own ways.

In this regard, the third common characteristic of the secondary literature on *ming* needs to be examined. Studies on *ming* disproportionately focus on the early Ru tradition, almost exclusively centering on two major Ru texts, the *Lunyu* and the *Mengzi*. There seems to be no

single major study on *ming* in other periods, as if *ming* lost its significance in later history. In addition, some scholars not only concentrate their efforts on examining the notion of *ming* in the writings attributed to Kongzi and Mengzi, but also regard the views of Kongzi and Mengzi more as a homogenous continuum rather than two related but separate systems of thought. For example, Hall and Ames assume that there was a fundamental cosmology that Kongzi shared with his contemporaries, such as Laozi, Zhuangzi, as well as Mengzi, and thus, they believe that the notion of *tian* and *ming* in the *Lunyu* and the *Mengzi* are not that different from each other.⁴⁹ Therefore, they do not distinguish Kongzi's view and Mengzi's view on *ming*. Furthermore, Hall and Ames's study heavily relies on descriptions of *ming* found in passages from the *Mengzi*, because statements concerning *ming* in the *Lunyu* are very few and often abstruse.

Ted Slingerland's study of *ming* also does not distinguish the views of Kongzi and Mengzi. His view is that Mengzi simply made explicit what was already present in the *Lunyu*.⁵⁰ Michael Puett holds a similar position. He argues that in the *Lunyu* and the *Mengzi* *ming* consistently refers to the mandates sent down by *tian*, and the tensions between *tian* and human beings present in the *Lunyu* just became more deepened in the *Mengzi*.⁵¹

⁴⁹ David Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking through Confucius*, 201-215.

⁵⁰ For instance, Ted Slingerland argues that the dichotomy of reality between internal and external was already present in the *Lunyu*, and Mengzi made this dichotomy much clearer by introducing the theory of innate human goodness. See Ted Slingerland, "The Conception of *Ming* in Early Confucian Thought," 567-581.

⁵¹ Michael Puett's study of *ming* takes a different approach from the previous scholarship. Inspired by Tang Junyi's point that *ming* is a relational concept, Puett turns his attention from explicating the meanings of the term *ming* to examining the relationship between *tian* and human beings. In this process, he also challenges a common assumption of the unity between *tian* and man. Instead, he argues that pre-Han Confucian texts presented a strong tension between *tian* and man, and that the abstruse usages of *ming* in these texts are due to this tension. Furthermore, he claims that the conflict between *tian* and man becomes much more intense in the *Mengzi*. According to his interpretation, in the *Mengzi* *tian* not only frustrates human being's completion of the moral mission imparted by *tian*, but also *tian* actively prevents it. I think that his approach of considering the relationship between *tian* and human beings is very insightful. However, it seems to me that what Puett considers as tension between *tian* and human beings is more a tension within the notion of *tian*. Since Puett assumes that *tian* is a moral entity, it appears to him that *tian* often acts against its norm. However, if we do not regard *tian* as a moral entity, but instead, as having different dimensions, we do not see the strong conflict within the notion of *tian* as Puett does. In other words, in the *Mengzi*, *tian* simply has both an anthropomorphic, moral dimension and a naturalistic, amoral dimension. My point is that the moral aspects and naturalistic

On the other hand, Robert Eno, in his *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, not only examines the thought of Kongzi and Mengzi separately in different chapters, but also distinguishes different strata within the *Lunyu* and the *Mengzi*.⁵² Regardless of the validity of Eno's division of each text, his underlying assumption is noteworthy. Unlike Hall and Ames, who believe that there is a tacit cosmological view shared by all early Chinese thinkers, Eno argues that each text or statement has different purposes. He goes on to argue that without taking into consideration the context in which each statement was made, we cannot properly understand its true meaning and significance. Concerning the *Mengzi*, Eno points out, we should keep in mind the fact that unlike the *Lunyu*, the main purpose of which was instructing Kongzi's disciples, Mengzi's arguments aimed at persuading outside critics like Moists and Daoists. In other words, Eno reminds us that these two major Ru texts were written with significantly different purposes.

Mark Csikszentmihalyi takes a similar position in his study of the theory of material virtue in the excavated *Wuxing* 五行 and the *Mengzi*. He places the development of this unique theory of material virtue in a broader context of dynamic interplay between philosophical problems, external criticisms, and technical disciplines outside Ru virtue discourse. Particularly, from a historical perspective, he argues, Mengzi's moral psychology was a response to a set of

aspects of *tian* do not necessarily conflict with each other, and thus the relationship between *tian* and human beings is not so tragic as Puett claims. It seems that in order to prove that the harmonious relationship between *tian* and human beings was the later construction by Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒, Puett overemphasizes the discordance between *tian* and human beings in earlier periods. In other words, he seems to have read these early texts with his own agenda. See Michael Puett, "Following the Commands of Heaven: The Notion of Ming in Early China," 49-69.

⁵² Robert Eno distinguishes two strata in the *Lunyu*: the records of the word of Kongzi, and the representation of a rough consensus of the early Ru community. Accordingly, he claims that the notions of *tian* reflected in these two strata are not the same. On the other hand, Eno points out that unlike the *Lunyu*, the *Mengzi* is a relatively consistent text, attributable to Mengzi. Nevertheless, he divides the *Mengzi* into two parts, according to stylistic difference: Books 1 through 3 deal with Mengzi's political mission, and books 4 through 8 deal with Mengzi's philosophical teachings. He also argues that the roles of *tian* played in these two sections are different. According to Eno, *tian* does not play a significant role in Mengzi's political statements, while it played the prescriptive and descriptive functions in Mengzi's philosophical statement. See Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 79-130.

external criticisms, found in the *Mozi*, the *Zhuangzi*, and the *Han Feizi*.⁵³

The first group of scholars, Hall and Ames, Slingerland, and Puett, regard Mengzi as the one who articulated and elaborated Kongzi's teaching. On the other hand, Eno and Csikszentmihalyi, even though they do not consider Mengzi's thought as a significant deviation from Kongzi, turn their attention to the differences or uniqueness that Mengzi brought about as a response to the problems and criticisms at his time.⁵⁴ Still, my intention is not to discredit the former approach. I think that Mengzi was indeed an ardent successor of Kongzi's thought, as well as an innovator within the Ru tradition. However, my point is this: if we assume that Mengzi was simply continuing or developing Kongzi's theory of *ming*, it might be harder for us to see the significant contributions that Mengzi made to Ru teaching.

Therefore, in this study, I will pay close attention to differences within the Ru tradition: particularly, different claims made by Ru thinkers about *ming*. I will analyze and interpret certain claims about *ming*, and explore why such claims were made at a certain time. For example, given the fact that Mozi vehemently criticized the Ru's fatalistic attitude toward *ming*, it is necessary to interpret Mengzi's view of *ming* as a response to this criticism, in one way or another. Therefore, if we place Mengzi's view of *ming* in a dialectic relation between Kongzi's earlier view of *ming* and Mozi's attack on *ming*, we will have a better understanding of Mengzi's view on *ming* as well as the notion of *ming* in general. This historical contextualization may help us to answer why Xunzi, another major Ru thinker of the early period, all of a sudden, became reticent about *ming* and *tianming*. Furthermore, it will also deepen our understanding of the development of Ru thought in general. One of my goals of this study is to trace the

⁵³ Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*, 32-58.

⁵⁴ For a detailed discussion on this complex relationship between the *Lunyu* and the *Mengzi*, see Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*, 104-107.

development of the notion of *ming* in the Ru tradition. *Ming* is not a static concept, but an evolving one.

In this section, I examined the secondary literature on the subject of *ming*, and characterized the three common trends of the scholarship. I also discussed the problems of its approaches and the nature of the subject itself. First, *ming* is a complex concept; it concerns a particular way of thinking about the world. Second, *ming* is a relational concept; it concerns a way that *tian* and human beings relate to each other. Third, *ming* is an evolving concept: even within the Ru tradition, thinkers made different claims about *ming* in response to internal problems as well as external criticisms. In sum, *ming* is a complex, multifaceted, and dynamic concept.

▪ **The Approach to the Study of *ming***

I argued that *ming* is a complex, multifaceted, and dynamic concept. Then, how should we approach such a complicated subject? I think that various English translations of the term *ming* can offer us an insight into this matter. The term *ming* is conventionally rendered in English as “fate,” “destiny,” “fortune,” “allotment,” or “predestination,” and it is closely connected with the notion of “fatalism.” At first glance, these English translations seem to add more confusion to *ming* than to clarify it. This is because all these English terms appear to be similar, but they are, to a certain degree, different from one another. In the following, I will examine several English counterparts of *ming* and come up with another way to approach the issue of *ming*.

The first set of the terms that often are confused is “fate” and “fatalism.” The term “fate” refers to a predetermined course of life; it can also refer to the power or agency that

predetermines and orders the course of events.⁵⁵ On the other hand, fatalism is the belief that events are fixed in advance and unchangeable by human agency.⁵⁶ As Robert Solomon puts it, "Fate is the explanation; fatalism is a doctrine."⁵⁷ Fate describes a set pattern of the events and its emphasis is often on the formidable power of external agency, while fatalism describes people's certain attitude toward the same type of events and its emphasis is on the futility of human agency. These two terms are concerned with exactly the same kind of events, but they take different perspectives: objective and subjective views.⁵⁸

A second common confusion is made between "fatalism" and "determinism." Lisa Raphals points out, "[Fatalism] The idea that human action has no influence on events is readily confused with determinism, the doctrine that every event has a cause, either an earlier event or a natural law."⁵⁹ Determinism is the belief that every event results from a prior cause. On this view, even human deliberations and decisions are not made freely by human will; they are

⁵⁵ The terms "fate" and "destiny" are often used interchangeably, both referring to a predetermined course of events. However, fate seems to put more emphasis on the immutableness of this set pattern of events, while destiny seems to highlight the fact that humans, either as an active or a passive agent, are a part of this set pattern of events, as seen in the expression like "We are masters of our own destiny" or "I am a destiny."

⁵⁶ Lisa Raphals, "Fate, Fortune, Chance, and Luck in Chinese and Greek: A Comparative Semantic History," *Philosophy East and West* 53, 4 (2003): 537-574.

⁵⁷ Robert Solomon, "On Fate and Fatalism," 435-443. Solomon, however, does not clearly distinguish the difference between fate and fatalism. According to him, unlike fatalism, which does not imply some particular agency, fate is a more ancient and it is often personalized. However, he points out, like the doctrine of *karma*, a certain notion of fate does not invoke any mysterious agency. He argues that the concept of an outside agency is not an essential feature to understand fate and fatalism. In his view, fate is just a more narrow and contentious version of fatalism. In other words, fatalism is a broader concept embracing the notion of fate: he notes "Fate is not the same as fatalism, although most conceptions of the former imply the latter." However, as I argued above, I think that the relationship between fate and fatalism is more of a matter of perspective than a matter of scope.

⁵⁸ Unlike Solomon, Raphals makes clear the difference between fate and fatalism. This distinction enables her to discern similarities and dissimilarities between the ancient Greek and the early China concerning the notion of fate. In her comparative study of the semantic fields of fate in two classical cultures, she finds out that Chinese *ming* and Greek *moira* share several metaphors: divine commands, endowment, regularity and randomness of natural cycle, and so on. According to Raphals, these shared metaphors suggest some common notions of fate between Chinese *ming* and Greek *moira*. However, she claims that they had very different attitudes toward fatalism: Chinese accounts allow more room for human agency in dealing with fate, while Greek accounts contain a significant fatalistic element. In other words, the Chinese and the Greek shared the similar view on fate, but their attitudes toward fate were different. She thinks that the Chinese was less fatalistic than the Greek. See Lisa Raphals, "Fate, Fortune, Chance, and Luck in Chinese and Greek."

⁵⁹ Lisa Raphals, "Fate, Fortune, Chance, and Luck in Chinese and Greek," 538.

merely parts in an unbroken chain of causal connections. To give an extreme example, Thomas Hobbes (1599-1679) reduced all human cognition, intellection, and volition to mechanical motion. In his deterministic psychology, all mental events are determined by external causes. In such a strict sense of determinism (hard determinism), the concept of human free will is absolutely denied; human beings are not free agents.⁶⁰ In this respect, “fatalism” and “determinism,” seem, at least, to agree on the powerlessness of human agency.

However, according to Solomon, the distinction between fatalism and determinism is easily discernable. Solomon writes:

Fatalism is the thesis that some event must happen, and no further explanation, notably no causal explanation, is called for. Determinism, by contrast, is the reasonably science-minded thesis that whatever happens can be explained in terms of prior causes and standing conditions (facts, events, states of affairs, internal structures, and dispositions, plus the laws of nature).⁶¹

The difference between fatalism and determinism is a matter of perspective or focus: fatalism is

⁶⁰ John Sutton notes, “Determinism is a blanket description used to cover many particular views.” According to him, determinism is sub-divided into two categories: hard determinism (incompatibilism) and soft determinism (compatibilism). “Incompatibilism” refers to the view that determinism is in fact true and humans are not free agents. Pomponazzi (1462-1525, naturalistic determinism), Thomas Hobbes (naturalistic and materialistic determinism), and the Protestant Reformers, Luther (1483-1546, divine determinism) and Calvin (1509-1564), belong to this group. On the other hand, “compatibilism” refers to the view that determinism do not rule out human freedom, trying to reconcile free will and determinism. Justus Lipsius (1547-1606, neo-Stoic determinism) was a compatibilist. In opposition to determinism, there is libertarianism, the view that determinism is indeed false. Mersenne (1588-1648) and Cudworth (1617-1688) were libertarians, who gave primacy to human freedom. Sutton also notes that even though so many figures advocated different versions of determinism, in the view of their libertarian critics, they were all similar in that determinism leads to the demotion of human dignity by denying human free will, to atheism or blasphemy by eliminating or limiting absolute divine power, and to moral decay by refusing moral responsibility. Sutton’s article focuses on the determinism in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Antonio Poppi’s article is more comprehensive than Sutton’s, starting from ancient Greek. See John Sutton, “Religion and the Failures of Determinism,” in Stephen Gaukroger, ed., *The Uses of Antiquity: The Scientific Revolution and the Classical Tradition* (Dordrecht; Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991): 25-51; Antonio Poppi, “Fate, Fortune, Providence, and Human Freedom,” in Charles B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner, and Eckhard Kessler, eds., *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988): 641-667.

⁶¹ Robert Solomon, “On Fate and Fatalism,” 443.

only interested in the significance of outcomes, while determinism pays attention to the causal relations in processes. According to Solomon, "Fatalism is the idea that what happens (or has happened) in some sense has to (or had to) happen."⁶² This implies that whatever course we took in the past, the outcome would turn out the same. In other words, as seen in Oedipus' case, even if Oedipus or anybody else in the story acted differently, he would end up in the exact same tragic situation: "He was fated to kill his father and marry his mother no matter what."⁶³ By contrast, determinism is interested in giving causal accounts of events. Accordingly, in terms of determinism, it will naturally follow that if Oedipus or anybody else acted differently, his story might have a different ending.⁶⁴

The reason why fatalism and determinism are often confused and conflated is, as Solomon suggests, because fatalism can be causal as well as teleological. In other words, fatalism is not to say that we cannot give a causal account to Oedipus story. As a matter of fact, every single event in that story, such as receiving a bad omen and abandoning a child, is casually connected to each other. Solomon points out that in fatalism, "The two realms of dramatic narrative and casual explanation are both distinctive and thoroughly intertwined."⁶⁵ Determinism and fatalism are often confused, because fatalism does not completely exclude a deterministic view; they are just different in the optics, "the lens through which they view these facts."⁶⁶

Another term that should be taken into consideration is "predestination." This was Max

⁶² Robert Solomon, "On Fate and Fatalism," 435.

⁶³ Robert Solomon, "On Fate and Fatalism," 435. Solomon calls fatalism "narrative necessity." What he means by this is that certain actions or events or outcomes should happen, regardless of cause or agency, and they are necessary in terms of the overall plot or purpose. Solomon also notes that given that certain outcomes are necessary and significant for some larger sense of purpose, fatalism is teleological. On the other hand, he calls determinism "logical necessity," "scientific necessity," or "causal necessity."

⁶⁴ Of course, this is not the purpose of Oedipus story. The story of Oedipus purports to tell the enormously tragic events of killing one's own father and marrying his own mother.

⁶⁵ Robert Solomon, "On Fate and Fatalism," 441.

⁶⁶ Robert Solomon, "On Fate and Fatalism," 452.

Weber's translation for the Chinese term *ming*.⁶⁷ Predestination is a sub-type of determinism: John Sutton calls it "divine determinism" and Solomon calls it "theological necessity." In the view of predestination, all causal connections are determined by God: everything is God's will. The most radical form of divine determinism was advocated by the two Protestant Reformers, Luther and Calvin.⁶⁸ For them, God is the only direct cause of everything. The salvation or damnation of each individual has already been determined by God even before creation. This implies that one's life is solely decided by a wholly external force.⁶⁹

In sum, "fate," "fatalism," "determinism," and "predestination" are all slightly different from one another, but they are significantly similar in agreeing that human agency is somehow limited. They are all based on the view that certain events of human life are beyond human comprehension and beyond human control. In this respect, another term, "luck," also joins this

⁶⁷ Max Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, Hans H. Gerth, trans. and ed. (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1951), 207-208. However, Weber distinguished that the Confucian belief in predestination is different from the Puritan belief in predestination. The Puritan firmly believed in a personal god and his omnipotence, and "he looked out for himself in the beyond." But the Confucians were not "bothered about the beyond."

⁶⁸ Divine determinism is one type of hard determinism, and there is another subcategory of hard determinism: that is, naturalistic determinism. Like Luther and Calvin, Pomponazzi (1462-1525) was also an incompatibilist, but he advocated naturalistic determinism. For Pomponazzi, the world is governed by necessary laws, and he removed chance and fortune from the world. He denied any human freedom by arguing that the intuition of human free will is an illusory resulting from human ignorance of true causes. In this view, human freedom is completely integrated into natural causality, losing its ontological status. On the other hand, Luther's determinism was different from Pomponazzi's. Luther opposed to Stoic determinism, which Pomponazzi greatly favored. Luther criticized the view that the universe runs by the *logos*, divine reason. For him, God is the only direct cause of everything: the world is completely contingent upon God's will. Consequently, although Pomponazzi and Luther were both categorized as incompatibilists, their understanding of the world is very different, almost contradicting to each other. In the case of Pomponazzi, the world runs by necessity; in the case of Luther, the world is utterly contingent. Nonetheless, they are in the same party, denying human freedom. In other words, Pomponazzi's world view of absolute necessity and Luther's world view of absolute contingency ('absolute' in the sense that it does not allow any human free will) are not the antithesis, but two sides of the same coin: removal of all human freedom. This explains why many thinker and theologians were confused between the orderly, causal necessity and a blind, irrational power. These two notions look completely different, but at the same time, they point to the same thing: denying human freedom and the possibility of human control.

⁶⁹ Given that Luther and Calvin admitted only divine freedom and negated human freedom, they are categorized as hard determinists. Accordingly, in the strict sense, "predestination" is not a proper translation for the Ru notion of *ming*. First of all, *tian* in the Ru tradition does not function like the Christian God. Secondly, both of the terms, *ming* and predestination, agree on the view that human agency has limitations, but overall, *ming* seems to allow more room for human agency than predestination.

group.⁷⁰ In her influential study of luck in the ethical thought of the classical Greek culture, Martha Nussbaum defines luck as: “What happens to a person by luck will be just what does not happen through his or her own agency, what just happens to him or her, as opposed to what he or she does or makes.”⁷¹ She uses the term luck as referring to the events that happens without any involvement with human agency. The Ru term *ming* is also not different from Nussbaum’s description of luck. Mengzi says, 莫之致而至者 命也 “Those things that occur without anything incurring them are *ming*.”⁷² This line highlights the absence of agency: certain events just happen without anything causing it to happen. Consequently, all these terms, fate, fatalism, determinism, predestination, luck, and *ming* are the various expressions given to the futility of human agency.

In addition, these terms, including *ming*, are not merely an abstract concept, but they directly concern a particular type of events in human life, those events that are beyond human understanding and control. Furthermore, there is another important dimension to this particular type of events: that is, we do not appeal to fate or fatalism to any situation or any event in our lives. Solomon observes, “Particularly subject to fate are those definitive moments

⁷⁰ Solomon notes that the concept of fate and fatalism has been largely dismissed as mysterious and superstitious in modern philosophical discourse as well as in discourses of our daily life. Lisa Raphals also makes a similar point by quoting Anthony Giddens. In his *Consequences of Modernity*, Giddens suggests that “pre-modern” notions of fate, *fortuna*, and fatalism were supplanted by “modern” notions of chance, randomness, risk. In other words, a more rationalistic and scientific charged term, risk or luck, replaced a more mysterious and enigmatic notion, fate. According to Solomon, there are three reasons for the decline of fate and fatalism in the modern world. First, modern culture’s generally scientific and naturalistic outlook tends to regard fate/fatalism to be mysterious and superstitious. Second, despite the close affinity between Christian “predestination” and fatalism, Christian theism considers fate/fatalism as godless and pagan. Third, Christian theism also rejects fate/fatalism on the basis that it contradicts the notion of the God-given “free will.”

However, Solomon claims that fate/fatalism is not incompatible with any of these scientific and theological explanations. All of these terms, whether pre-modern notions of fate and fatalism or modern notion of risk and luck, take different approaches to the more or less same universal attribute of human conditions. Solomon contends that a proper understanding of fate/fatalism sheds light on the fact that fate/fatalism would still have significant implications for our lives and modern philosophical discourse. See Lisa Raphals, “Fate, Fortune, Chance, and Luck in Chinese and Greek,” 435; Robert Solomon, “On Fate and Fatalism.”

⁷¹ Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, 3.

⁷² Mengzi 5A:6.

in life: birth, marriage, children, going broke, finding oneself at war, or being caught up in a natural calamity and, of course, death.”⁷³ In other words, fate, destiny, fatalism, predestination, and *ming* are associated with those events that have momentous consequences in our lives.⁷⁴ Therefore, Kongzi cried out for *ming* when Yan Yuan 顏淵 died young and Bo Niu 伯牛 was seriously ill, but he did not subscribe to *ming* for other daily events. To summarize, *ming* directly relates to concrete events of our life, the events that are beyond human comprehension and control, and also having dramatic significance. I call this particular type of event a “*ming*-type” event in order to emphasize the concreteness of *ming*.

This leads me to approach the subject of *ming* in a different way; in addition to seeking to discover or describe the usages of the term *ming* in particular texts, I will examine how different thinkers have dealt with a certain type of human event, i.e., *ming*-type events, for what kind of events they appealed to *ming*, how they understood and explained those events, how they incorporated their conceptions of such events into their ethical system, and also why they incorporated them in the particular way they did.⁷⁵ If we turn our attention from the meaning or abstract concept of *ming* to more concrete instances of life events, we will have better access to this complex, multifaceted, dynamic concept of *ming*. In what follows, I will give two examples of how this approach to *ming* can bring to the forefront a set of important issues that will deepen our understanding of the Ru tradition.

First, by examining in what contexts people appealed to *ming*, we are able to see what

⁷³ Robert Solomon, “On Fate and Fatalism,” 436.

⁷⁴ In the case of hard determinism, it shares the view of the futility of human agency, but its focus is on every moments of human life, not necessarily on the moments of dramatic significance. On the other hand, predestination is a type of hard determinism, but its emphasis is clearly on salvation, the single most significant moment of Christian lives. In addition, luck is also used in a broader scope than fate and destiny. For example, we say, “I am a lucky man to marry you,” but also we say, “I am lucky,” when we obtain high-demand concert tickets.

⁷⁵ Even though I argued that looking for the precise meaning of *ming* either in general or in particular texts is not productive, it does not mean that we should completely disregard such approach, because we cannot examine the discourse of *ming* without discussing the usages of the term in the discourse.

kind of values they advocated and what type of life they pursued. As seen above, in the *Lunyu*, Kongzi ascribed specific cases to *ming*. It is noteworthy that Kongzi appealed to *ming* neither for natural calamities as Zhu Xi did, nor for marriages or meeting with a romantic lover as modern people often do. Kongzi appealed to *ming* only for the untimely death and fatal illness of his favorite disciples and his own political failure. Of course, everyone cherishes life and fears death, and wants success more than failure. But a close examination of Kongzi's attitude reveals that death and political failure have a more profound meaning than simple aversion.

Kongzi appealed to *ming* only for a certain type of death: as Mark Csikszentmihalyi puts it, an "unusual" death – accidental, earlier than usual, or particularly prolonged or painful.⁷⁶ Furthermore, Philip Ivanhoe points out that it has to be an unusual death of "good people."⁷⁷ In other words, an unusual death of bad people is nothing to be surprised or sad about. Ivanhoe notes, "In one passage (*Lunyu* 14:46), Confucius even implies that someone who does not engage in self-cultivation would be better off dead."⁷⁸ On the contrary, a usual death of good people is also nothing to worry about.⁷⁹ According to Ivanhoe, Kongzi's different attitude toward the different types of death is predicated on a conception of how Kongzi conceive of a good human life. For Kongzi, a life that is worth living is a life in accordance with the Way (*dao* 道), a life committed to moral self-cultivation. The reason that Kongzi showed the excessive grief and appealed to *ming* for the death of Yan Hui is because "That person is denied the

⁷⁶ Mark Csikszentmihalyi, "Allotment and Death in Early China," 231.

⁷⁷ Philip Ivanhoe, "Death and Dying in the *Analects*," in Tu Wei-ming and Mary Evelyn Tucker, eds., *Confucian Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 2002): 220-232.

⁷⁸ Philip Ivanhoe, "Death and Dying in the *Analects*," 223. *Lunyu* 14:46 is as follows: 原壤夷俟 子曰 幼而不孫弟 長而無述焉 老而不死 是爲賊 以杖叩其脛 Yuan Rang sat waiting with his leg spread wide. Kongzi said, "To be neither modest nor deferential when young, to have passed on nothing worthwhile when grown up, and to refuse to die when old, that is what I call a pest." So saying, Kongzi tapped him on the shin with his stick.

⁷⁹ According to Ivanhoe, Kongzi advocates a calm and determined acceptance of a usual death, particularly when a good person dies at old age, whereas he allows for excessive displays of grief for such deaths as Yan Hui. See Philip Ivanhoe, "Death and Dying in the *Analects*," 222.

chance to fulfill his or her true destiny as a human being.”⁸⁰ Ivanhoe adds, “For to follow the Way is to live out a full human life and fulfill the various role-specific duties that life presents at its different stages.”⁸¹ In other words, for Kongzi, life is cherished not because it is simply precious; life is cherished because it is the arena where we can become a better person. But, unfortunately, Yan Hui and Bo Niu lost their opportunities.⁸²

Second, the examination of what kind of necessity *ming* involves will lead us to understand how Ru conceived of the world. For instance, upon the illness of Bo Niu, Kongzi deplores, 亡之 命矣夫 斯人也而有斯疾也 斯人也而有斯疾也 “It is all over! It is a matter of *ming*. How could such a man have such an illness! How could such a man have such an illness!”⁸³ This lament implies that such a good person like Bo Niu is not supposed to fall ill. Kongzi’s underlying assumption, then, is: one’s virtue and physical condition are causally connected.⁸⁴ This is what I call “moral necessity” or “moral order,” a necessary connection between moral action and its non-moral outcomes.⁸⁵ This might sound awkward to modern physicians. If physicians had a chance to look into Bo Niu’s illness, they would have asked what his family history is and whether or not he was exposed to any fatal diseases. For them, there is no connection between Bo Niu’s virtue and his physical condition. But, the world conceived by Kongzi was configured differently from those modern physicians: for Kongzi, it is expected that a good person is supposed to live a healthy and long life.

As I discussed earlier, *ming* concerns a particular perspective of thinking about the

⁸⁰ Philip Ivanhoe, “Death and Dying in the *Analects*,” 224.

⁸¹ Philip Ivanhoe, “Death and Dying in the *Analects*,” 224.

⁸² Kongzi’s political failure also can be interpreted pretty much the same way.

⁸³ *Lunyu* 6:10.

⁸⁴ The subject of physicality of virtue in the early Ru virtue discourse is thoroughly discussed in Mark Csikszentmihalyi’s book, *Material Virtue: Ethics and the Body in Early China*.

⁸⁵ The terms like “moral economy,” “moral necessity,” and “moral order” will be discussed in the following section.

world, and Ru thinkers' perspective was defined in moral terms. In the Ru tradition, *ming* serves as a fine line that divides the world into two realms: morally relevant and morally irrelevant. Bo Niu's illness, a *ming*-type event, simultaneously demonstrates this conceptualization of the world. One part of the world runs through moral necessity: one's virtue guarantees a long and healthy life. But in the other part of the world, this necessary connection between virtue and its non-moral outcomes is somehow broken.

The aforementioned two examples show that if we expand the scope of the study of *ming* from a particular definition of the term to an analysis of concrete examples, we can account for many more issues, such as for what kind of events people appealed to *ming*, what kind of necessity people expect in regard to *ming*, what kind of value people attach to *ming*, and also, what kind of strategy they employ in predicting and navigating *ming*. This study is not about the term *ming per se*, but about the discourse on *ming*. I will explore what is said and written about *ming*, the way that different Ru thinkers have dealt with this particular *ming*-type events in human life, how they incorporated it in their ethical system, and why they incorporated in such a way. Through investigating these questions, we will find out the way Ru thinkers perceived the world and constructed their ethical system. This study of *ming* discourse will open other doors into the Ru tradition that have as yet remained closed.

▪ Moral Economy and Moral Order

In this section, I will introduce two new terms, which I will constantly rely on throughout this study: "moral economy" and "moral order (or moral necessity)."⁸⁶ I define

⁸⁶ I am indebted to Philip Ivanhoe for guiding me to the term 'moral economy' and suggesting the broad spectrum of this notion.

moral economy as “a general belief that good people prosper and bad people suffer in this world.” In other words, moral economy is a term to designate the belief in a certain connection between one’s moral worth and well-being. This simple belief in moral economy was prevalent in, culturally and religiously various, traditional human societies. Particularly, in early China, Ru thinkers believed that one’s virtuous living will ensure certain non-moral goods, such as wealth, health, power, and honor.⁸⁷ Of course, as society developed and became complicated, the types and attributes of non-moral goods that were once believed to be secured through one’s virtue either changed or disappeared over time. Nevertheless, I think, the belief in moral economy was never completely extinguished from human society, even in the most scientific and rationalistic mind of modern people.

More importantly, moral economy is also a comprehensive term, having a broad spectrum of meanings: at one end of the spectrum, the connection between one’s moral worth and well-being is so tight, systematic, and straightforward that there is an almost automatic response between moral actions and non-moral rewards; at the other end, this connection is so loose and opaque that it tends toward being beyond human comprehension and almost non-existent. For example, even though Mozi and Kongzi were the advocates of moral economy,

⁸⁷ The belief in moral economy is, in other words, a belief in a necessary connection between one’s moral worth and non-moral rewards. Non-moral rewards refer to external goods, such as wealth, health, power, and fame. In his discussion of the nature of the virtues, Alasdair MacIntyre distinguishes two kinds of goods to be gained through the practice of virtue, internal goods and external goods. The former is internal to the practice and cannot be gained otherwise, but the latter is external to the practice and there are alternative ways for achieving such goods. Furthermore, he points out that external goods are objects of competition, while internal goods are good for the whole community. He also provides a tentative definition of a virtue: “A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any goods.” In the Ru tradition, the term *de* 德 is translated as virtue. Philip Ivanhoe points out that the concept of virtue played a central role in the development of Chinese ethical tradition. According to his explanation, in early China, people believed that a kindness received has the power to induce the recipient to respond in kind. Based on this mutual dynamic of virtue and response, he interpretes *de* as moral charisma or moral power, accrued through good acts. The essential character traits that need to be cultivated in terms of moral power are benevolence (*ren* 仁), righteousness (*yi* 義), ritual propriety (*li* 禮), and wisdom (*zhi* 智). Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 181-203; Philip Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000), ix-xiv.

they are located far from each other in the spectrum: Mozi believed in a mechanical connection between moral actions and non-moral goods, whereas Kongzi believed in a less evident and less straightforward connection. To put it another way, Mozi's version of moral economy is much stricter than Kongzi's version. Accordingly, we should keep in mind that under this umbrella notion of moral economy, there are various versions of it.

In order to avoid this confusion involved in the term moral economy, I will also use the terms, "moral necessity" and "moral order," in a narrower sense. These terms specifically refer to a tight linkage between moral and non-moral value. Therefore, both "moral economy" and "moral order" concern the same kind of moral phenomena, but they have different usages and implications. Moral economy designates a general belief in a certain linkage between one's virtue and prosperity, but the terms moral order and moral necessity specifically refer to the necessity or tightness involved in such linkage.⁸⁸ To give an example, in the ethical system of Mozi, moral order is the most prominent and important principle. He believed that morally virtuous action certainly brings favorable and identifiable non-moral rewards. His version of the universe necessarily runs according to a knowable moral order. On the other hand, Kongzi did not believe that virtue always guarantees favorable external outcomes: there must be a moral order at work, but sometimes it fails or appears to fail. Kongzi's version of the universe, therefore, does not necessarily operate following a moral order. Unlike Mozi, in Kongzi's view, the world is a contingent place.

As the title of this study, *Handling Fate*, suggests, most Ru discussions of *ming* center around how to cope with the notion of contingency in the world of moral economy.⁸⁹ Many Ru

⁸⁸ In order to distinguish different versions of moral economy, I will sometimes add the adjective, "strict," to moral economy, or I will use the term, "moral order."

⁸⁹ In this study, I will use the term "contingency" rather than "fate" and "fortune." As we discussed, even though fate and fortune involve with the two conflicting features of the world, necessity and contingency, they

thinkers tried to come up with their own solutions to this problem of contingency, by managing, arranging, and incorporating contingency into their ethical system. This study of *ming* discourse will lead us to understand each Ru thinker's distinctive ways of thinking about the world, and this will also enable us to probe into a set of interrelated issues, such as the nature and source of moral economy, the role of virtue, and the status of external goods in human life. Ultimately, all these issues are questioning "What is a good human life?" for these Ru thinkers.

▪ General Plan

In this study, I will investigate the thought of Zhu Xi and Tasan. I have chosen to focus on these two figures for a number of related reasons. Both Ru thinkers had a profound influence on their contemporaries as well as upon the subsequent development of the Ru teaching throughout East Asia. In addition, although Zhu Xi and Tasan were not contemporaries, they both were involved in confronting powerful foreign religions: Zhu Xi with Buddhism and Tasan with Catholicism. Partly as reactions against or in response to these strong foreign influences, they established two significantly different versions of *ming* discourse. I will explore in detail and attempt to explain and compare the ways in which Zhu Xi's and Tasan's versions of *ming* discourse differed from each other, discuss how their views were influenced by the external traditions they engaged, and investigate how their different views on *ming* are associated with their formulations of self-cultivation program and their conceptions of a good human life.

I will argue that Zhu Xi and Tasan formulated two different understandings of *ming*. In

actually refer to what is beyond human comprehension and control. So, I will use "contingency" as opposed to "moral necessity," referring to something beyond our expectation in moral economy.

other words, they had two different ways of understanding the world. Zhu Xi believed that the world necessarily runs according to a moral order. Given this belief, he had to eliminate or confine contingent aspects of human experience. On the other hand, Tasañ believed that the world is essentially a contingent place, beyond human understanding and control, and thus, the world does not necessarily conform to a moral order. Their discourses on *ming* are, at the same time, discourses on moral necessity: a belief that morally good actions will, in one way or another, bring favorable outcomes, and bad actions, unfavorable outcomes. Zhu Xi tried to secure the necessary workings of this moral order, whereas Tasañ, by acknowledging contingent aspects of the world as a necessary part of human life, did not claim that the world strictly follows a moral order.

These two different attitudes toward *ming* and moral necessity can be found throughout the history of the Ru tradition. Strictly speaking, less sophisticated versions of the two conflicting conceptualizations of *ming* emerged in the early Ru tradition. In Part One, I will examine the background of these two different versions of *ming* discourse in early China. I will trace the development of the *ming* discourse, starting from the doctrine of *tianming* ending with the *Xunzi*. I will explore how the inherent problem of the doctrine of *tianming* in the *Book of Documents* and *Book of Poetry* (Ch.1) entailed a contingent world view centering around the notion of *ming* in the *Lunyu* (Ch.2), and how Mozi's critique of Kongzi's version of *ming* (Ch.3) led to a gradual rationalization of *ming* in Mengzi's thought (Ch.4), and yielded a unique system of moral economy in the *Xunzi* (Ch.5), where we find the complete elimination of all contingent aspects from the human ethical realm. In the last chapter of Part One, I will take a specific example of Shun's ascension to the throne and compare different accounts of Kongzi, Mengzi,

and Xunzi on this event (Ch.6).⁹⁰

In Part Two, I will move to later Ru thinkers and explore how Zhu Xi and Tasan formulated two new versions of *ming* discourse. First, I will outline Zhu Xi's ethical system based on *li* 理-*qi* 氣 metaphysics and investigate his version of moral economy and his treatment of contingency (Ch.7). Then, I will examine how Tasan deconstructed Zhu Xi's metaphysical system and constructed his own ethical system based on the belief in Sangje 上帝, an ancient moral deity, and how he turned the world into an utterly contingent place (Ch.8). In the final chapter, I will compare Zhu Xi and Tasan focusing on their conceptions of *tianming* 天命, *liming* 立命, and *zhengming* 正命, which appear originally in the *Mengzi*. This comparison will help us to see clearly their different ways of understanding the world, formulating self-cultivation program, and envisioning a good human life (Ch.9).

⁹⁰ In this historical reconstruction of early discourse on *ming*, I focus on the voice of each text, rather than historical figures, i.e., the presumed authors of these texts. I treat each text as having a relatively coherent voice, which means I consider seeming incoherence or contradictions within the text to illustrate paradox of its own ethical thought. What is particularly important for this approach is the *Lunyu* because this text is the compilation of dialogues between Kongzi and his disciples. According to Mark Csikszentmihalyi, many parts of the *Lunyu* seem to have been culled out from isolated stories and sets of stories circulated since the time of Kongzi, and the current version of the *Lunyu* was fixed as a text only during the Han dynasty. Furthermore, it is not only the *Lunyu* where we can trace the teachings of Kongzi; there are many other texts associated with him. Therefore, the complexity of the *Lunyu* as well as the ethical teachings of Kongzi as a historical figure needs a separate research. But, in this study, I pay attention to the fact that the received *Lunyu* was revered as reflecting Kongzi's teachings by Ru scholars in the commentarial tradition. For his discussion of the social context of the formation of the *Lunyu*, see Mark Csikszentmihalyi, "Confucius and the *Analects* in the Han," in Bryan W. Van Norden, ed., *Confucius and the Analects* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002): 134-162.

■ PART ONE: BACKGROUND OF THE RU DISCOURSE ON *MING*

One of the most significant questions that early Ru thinkers struggled with was: do human moral actions always and only produce the right corresponding outcomes, or do they not necessarily do so? To put it differently, the question was about whether or not good people prosper and bad people suffer in this world. This classic puzzle about moral economy was central to early Ru discussions of *ming* 命.

As I explained in the introduction, *ming* directly involves a particular way of understanding the world, and in the Ru tradition, *ming* serves as a fine line that demarcates the world into two realms, morally relevant and morally irrelevant. In other words, for most Ru thinkers, moral order is at work in some parts of the world, but not in others. What should be noted here is that while they share this common assumption, different Ru thinkers arrange the two realms differently. Some Ru believed that the moral domain occupies much of the world, which means large part of life is manageable by human moral actions. On the other hand, others believed that the moral domain takes up just a small portion of it, or none at all. In the latter case, even though moral cultivation is meaningful as it is for those who pursue it, it does not exert direct influence on their actual life.

In part one, I will explore the way that two different conceptualizations of the world were formulated in the early Ru tradition. Briefly, one side, typified by Kongzi, maintained that the world is a contingent place, beyond human control and comprehension: one's moral actions do not guarantee one's flourishing in non-moral areas.¹ The other side, the main figure of which

¹ Two aspects of human flourishing in non-moral areas, particularly in the early Ru tradition, are: kingship and longevity. (In a broader sense, kingship includes political positions, which are often accompanied with wealth and honor.) Kingship and longevity, embrace the life in both qualitative and quantitative terms. However, as

is Xunzi, maintained that the world necessarily follows moral order: one's moral actions ensure favorable outcomes in other aspects of life. This part traces the historical development of these two different ways of thinking about the world.²

First, I will locate the roots of these two different views of the world in the doctrine of *tianming* 天命, which appears originally in the *Book of Documents* 書經 and *Book of Poetry* 詩經. I will argue that the doctrine of *tianming* connotes two paradoxical modes of moral thinking – an ethics of confidence and an ethics of uncertainty – and faces its own challenges when dealing with the severity of reality. Then, I will explain the way Kongzi tried to come up with his own solutions for this puzzling legacy of *tianming*. However, Kongzi's answer was soon confronted with another obstacle when Mozi vehemently criticized the Ru's fatalistic conception of *ming*. The discussions on *ming* became much more acute during the time of criticism and defense between Mozi and Mengzi. I will examine what were the main attacks of Mozi concerning the

Philip Ivanhoe aptly points out, these are not sufficient for a happy life, but following the Way is. He notes, "Wealth and honor and material comforts of various kinds are good, but only when they come from a life lived in accord with the Way. Following the Dao is the necessary condition for enjoying these other goods and to a certain extent, though not completely, it is sufficient for a happy life." In other words, these two aspects of human flourishing, kingship and longevity, are not meaningful by themselves. Only those who live a virtuous life can fully enjoy them, and even further, those who live a virtuous life are already sufficiently happy without them. I agree with the priority of virtue and the secondary position of material wealth and honor in human flourishing. However, I think that kingship and longevity has much more significance than a simple object of enjoyment. They may play a significant role by providing those virtuous individuals with an opportunity to expand the Way to other people and to realize the Way in society. Through kingship or political position, one can contribute to the achievement of social harmony. Through the lengthened period of lifespan, one can have enough time to implement the Way as well as to attain virtue. As John Cooper points out in his study of the Aristotelian ethics of *eudaimonia*, external goods have an instrumental function. External goods enable the virtuous person to live a fully virtuous life. Furthermore, in the Ru tradition, like in many other traditions, human flourishing does not merely refer to a life lived well by and for oneself, but a life lived well for others as well. Therefore, the best kind of human life is a virtuous life, which is also bestowed with opportunities to expand it to other people and society, and the second best life is probably a virtuous life of one's own, with such opportunities denied. John M. Cooper, "Aristotle on the Goods of Fortune," *The Philosophical Review* 94, 2 (1985): 173-196. For the conceptions of happiness in early Confucianism and Daoism, see Philip Ivanhoe, "Happiness in Early Chinese Thought," in Susan David, Ilona Boniwell, and Amanda Conley Ayers, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): 263-278.

² There is another implicit dimension in relation to the way of conceptualizing the world: whether or not the moral order is comprehensible to humans. For Kongzi, moral order is beyond human comprehension, resulting in a contingent world view. On the contrary, for Mengzi, moral order is something within human comprehension. This difference in terms of the comprehensibility of moral order will become more significant when we discuss Zhu Xi and Tasan in part two.

Ru's notion of *ming*, and what kind of responses Mengzi presented to this tenacious external critic. Finally, this dialectic yielded an opposing conclusion in Xunzi's thought. I will conclude that Xunzi, unlike his Ru predecessors, tried to maximize the extent of the world ruled by moral order and eliminate contingent aspects from the human ethical realm.

Along with this historical reconstruction of the debate concerning *ming*, I will focus on the specific event of Shun's 舜 ascension to the throne. This anecdote is one of the two most momentous narratives of Ru political theory.³ It describes a case where moral perfection was the sole standard for political legitimation. In other words, the event of Shun's succession can be considered as a paradigmatic example of moral economy: Shun's moral excellence led him to become a king. Therefore, I will explore and analyze the ways Kongzi, Mengzi, and Xunzi understood and explained Shun's ascension; whether or not they appealed to *ming* for this event; and what were the ethical implications of their understandings of this event. Their accounts of this event will render their distinct conceptualizations of the world much more apparent.

³ The other anecdote is King Wu's conquest of Shang. For a discussion of the political implications of these two types of narratives of imperial succession, see Mark Csikszentmihalyi, "Confucianism," in Jacob Neusner, ed., *God's Rule: The Politics of World Religion* (Washington D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 2003): 213-232.

1. The Doctrine of *Tianming* 天命 (the Mandate of Heaven)

The doctrine of *tianming* is a simple belief that *tian* sanctions a virtuous person to rule the world.¹ To put it another way, whenever a tyrant is on the throne, *tian* interrupts the human world and changes the ruler to a virtuous one. This idea of *tianming* was most explicitly stated in the *Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書 or *Shujing* 書經), one of the cardinal Ru classics which collects the sayings of the sage kings of antiquity. The *Documents* covers a huge span of ancient Chinese history: from the reigns of pre-dynastic rulers of Yao 堯 and Shun 舜 to the reign of Duke Mu of Qin 秦穆公 (r. 659-621 B.C.E.) in the Eastern Zhou. But, the doctrine of *tianming* has been generally considered a Zhou invention, particularly that of the Duke of Zhou 周公.

According to Herrlee Creel, the Duke of Zhou devised the discourse of *tianming* in order to legitimate the Zhou's conquest of Shang and to win over the remnants of the Shang people. The Duke of Zhou ceaselessly venerated the virtue of the Zhou founder, King Wen 文王, his father, while accusing the last Shang king, King Zhou 紂王, of self-indulgence and depravity.

According to this discourse, it was the Shang's own corruption that caused them to lose *tian's* favor to Zhou. Creel notes:

It is not in the least remarkable that the Zhou should have promulgated such a theory, which absolved their conquest of any suspicion of being a predatory

¹ What I mean by a "simple belief" is that the doctrine of *tianming* is not a well-developed and sophisticated theory of political authority. So, from the doctrine of *tianming* itself, it is not clear whether one's moral excellence is the necessary and sufficient condition for being a ruler or it is just a necessary prerequisite, which has to meet other requirements to become a ruler. In the case of Shun and Yu, the former seems to be right, but in the case of Kongzi, the latter seems to be more relevant. And yet, one of the perennial questions in the Ru tradition - "Why was Kongzi unable to rule the world as a king?" - ironically attests to a strong belief in the connection between moral perfection and kingship. To most Ru thinkers, Kongzi's failure in politics was seen as an abnormal rather than a usual and ordinary event. Therefore, even though we are not certain about the exact operation of *tianming* in relation to one's virtue, it is apparent that at least those who advocated the doctrine of *tianming* believed in a firm relationship between virtue and kingship.

action, and represented it rather as a benevolent undertaking designed to rescue a suffering people from the oppression of a wicked ruler – an action, moreover, enjoined upon the Zhou by the insistent command of the highest deity.²

This powerful doctrine of *tianming* turns the Zhou's brutal usurpation of the Shang into the divine mission of saving the world from the immoral Shang king.

The doctrine of *tianming*, which directly relates to this specific historical event of the Zhou, became the cornerstone of all subsequent dynastic changes in China and the centerpiece of Ru political theory. As such, most scholars approach the doctrine from the political perspective. Many have approached it as, in a nutshell, nothing but political propaganda. For example, C. K. Yang even notes; "The awe and respect for the supernatural was a vital factor in putting the coat of morality and honor on a dynastic founder, who was basically a master at the manipulation of force and violence."³ Yang suggests that the Zhou founders were not necessarily virtuous, and were more likely to be dexterous politicians in disguise. Creel also mentions that the last Shang King might not have been as brutal as the Zhou depicted.⁴ The doctrine of *tianming* was propagated by the Zhou court, which may well have been no less vicious than the Shang, in order to give a political and religious justification for their conquest of Shang.⁵

Poo Mu-chou, on the other hand, acknowledges the ethical implication of the doctrine of

² Herrlee Creel, *The Origins of Statecraft in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 85.

³ C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors* (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1970), 132.

⁴ Herrlee Creel, *The Origins of Statecraft in China*, 86.

⁵ As a matter of fact, in her study of debates concerning regicide in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋), Carine Defoort points out that at least in the 4th century there existed the charge against King Tang and King Wu for regicide. She further notes, "However important Heaven may have been as the ancestor and legitimation of the dynasty founded by King Wu, its authority also depended on the dynasty's political success: it is with the Zhou dynasty that Heaven was invested with the higher power." Carine Defoort, "Can Words Produce Order? Regicide in the Confucian Tradition," *Cultural Dynamics* 12, 1 (2000): 85-109.

tianming: the doctrine highlights man's own moral efforts. But he also points out that if we have a close look at the texts where the term *tianming* was employed, they were basically written with the end of political persuasion in mind. He remarks:

The ethics that affected the mandate of Heaven were in fact political ethics, and the so-called humanistic spirit that the documents revealed was in principle political self-consciousness. One might even suspect that, with such rational attitude, the religion of the Zhou court was more akin to a type of political philosophy.⁶

In other words, the emphasis on moral virtues in the *tianming* doctrine is only meaningful in the domain of politics. Virtue is employed as the primary standard to political authority, rather than as having its own value. According to Mark Csikszentmihalyi, it was not until the *Lunyu* that the scope of ethical systems went beyond the contexts of rulership to everyday life.⁷

Here, I do not intend to discredit the historical and political significance of the doctrine of *tianming*. I simply argue that the ethical implications of the doctrine should not be overlooked or downplayed. Csikszentmihalyi properly points out that "The very definition of separate spheres of religion and politics is problematic in pre-modern China. ... The strands of Confucianism may best be seen as a binary entity that is inherently both political and religious."⁸ The same could be said of ethics and politics. It is the conception of *tianming* that bridges the realms of ethics and politics as well as religion. My point is that this mediating conception of *tianming* not only became the main source of Ru political theory, but also became

⁶ Poo Mu-chou, *In Search of Personal Welfare: A View of Ancient Chinese Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 30.

⁷ Mark Csikszentmihalyi, "Confucianism," 216. D. C. Lau and Ted Slingerland also expressed the same view. See D. C. Lau's introduction in *The Analects (Lun yü): Confucius* (Harmondsworth; New York: Penguin Books, 1979), 28; Ted Slingerland, "The Conception of *Ming* in Early Confucian Thought," 567.

⁸ Mark Csikszentmihalyi, "Confucianism," 231.

the root of Ru ethical philosophy. In his comparison between the nature of the *Documents* and the *Lunyu*, Csikszentmihalyi summarizes the concerns of each text: the *Documents* is seen as an actual guide for exemplary behavior and governance, whereas the *Lunyu* is more concerned with self-cultivation. Then, he remarks, “[The *Lunyu*’s] application to politics is for the most part implicit, but is no less influential than the *Documents* because of the perceived connection between the governance of the self and the state.”⁹ If we apply his statement to the doctrine of *tianming*, it yields something like the following: “[The doctrine of *tianming*’s] application to ethics is for the most part implicit, but it is no less influential than its application to politics because of the perceived connection between the governance of the self and the state.”

In what follows, I will investigate the ethical implications surrounding the doctrine of *tianming*. I will argue that there are two different styles of moral thinking involved in *tianming*: one is “moral economy” (an ethics of confidence) and the other is “the virtue of humility” (an ethics of uncertainty). The tension and interplay between these dual modes of moral thinking became a chief concern of Ru discussions on *ming*, and the discussions on *ming* enriched and enhanced the Ru ethical system in general.

1.1 The doctrine of *tianming* in the *Book of Documents*

The most apparent assumption underlying the doctrine of *tianming* is moral economy. Moral economy is a belief that there is a connection between moral actions and non-moral goods. I call the necessary connection between moral and non-moral value as “moral necessity” or “moral order.”¹⁰ According to this view, good people prosper and bad people suffer. The

⁹ Mark Csikszentmihalyi, “Confucianism,” 215.

¹⁰ Chen Ning employs the term “moral determinism” to describe this belief. But his emphasis seems to be on

doctrine of *tianming* apparently follows this principle: a morally worthy person flourishes to become a ruler, whereas a tyrant comes to a tragic end, losing his power. However, moral economy was not just a unique phenomenon limited to the doctrine of *tianming*. The notion of moral economy was prevalent in all sections of the *Documents*.¹¹ To put it the other way around, it must have been the pervasiveness of the idea of moral economy that enabled the Duke of Zhou to devise the doctrine of *tianming*, if he really was its inventor. Also, for much the same reason, the doctrine of *tianming* would not have been so successful and persuasive had people

man's moral responsibility for his actions rather than on a simple description of a connection between moral and non-moral value. See Chen Ning, "The Genesis of the Concept of Blind Fate in Ancient China." The reason I choose the term "moral economy" instead of "moral determinism" is that moral order between moral value and non-moral value is different from scientific or physical causation. In physical causations, the connection between action and its outcome is clearly visible: e.g., if one turns on the switch, the lights come on. Therefore, we can say, "in order to light the room, we must turn on the switch." The physical causation can be both retrospective and prospective. However, in the case of moral order, the connection between one's moral action and its outcome is not clearly visible. We do not know exactly when and what kind of result one's virtuous action will bring about. So, unlike physical causation, it is impossible to do a certain moral action in order to bring about an expected outcome. Moral order is, at best, retrospective, but not prospective. For instance, the doctrine of *karma* is one of the best examples of moral economy. It teaches that a good act will lead to pleasant results for the doer and a bad act to unpleasant results. Although it appears to be extremely simple, the workings of *karma* are actually so opaque and even unfathomable that it is said that only the Buddha can understand it. However, there is a clue to understanding *karmic* process. The *Nikāyas* often use the analogy of seed and fruit: *karma* (action) is a seed, *karmic* result is its fruit, and *karmic* process is its fruition. Once we plant a seed, we have to wait until it bears fruit. In the meantime, however, many factors such as soil, wind, rain, and temperature affect the ripening of fruit. Accordingly, the exact same action (the same seed) could have different outcomes. Furthermore, since there are so many variables in the process of fruition, it is hard to expect when and how and why certain *karmic* results come about. More importantly, what is at stake in the doctrine of *karma* is not the comprehension of mysterious *karmic* operation, but the belief in inevitability of *karmic* consequences: the belief that the good will prosper and the bad will suffer, no matter what the exact *karmic* process is. The doctrine of *tianming* also focuses its attention on this necessary connection between moral actions and non-moral outcomes. Similarly, the doctrine of *tianming* does not clarify whether one's moral perfection is the necessary and sufficient condition or just a prerequisite condition for being a ruler. Therefore, unlike a scientific causation, we do not guarantee that Kongzi's moral excellence will bring him an illustrious position of king. Rather, as seen in the Zhou case, the discourse of *tianming* retrospectively reconstructs the moral necessity between King Wen's virtue and the ascendancy of the Zhou over the Shang. In this sense, it is obvious that moral order does not work in a way that scientific and physical causality works. Accordingly, terms like moral determinism and moral causation would be misleading in understanding early Chinese ethical thought. As Philip Ivanhoe suggests, I think the term "moral economy" is definitely a better term in dealing with this nuanced picture of early Chinese thought.

¹¹ Needless to say, a connection between moral actions and success in life is not a novel idea. People in most cultures do share a similar view. The doctrine of *tianming* is a reflection of such a general belief in moral economy, but at the same time, the doctrine of *tianming* is a particularization and concretization of such a general belief in the political domain. Through its specificity, the *tianming* doctrine reinforces the belief in the existence of moral order. Therefore, I think that the doctrine of *tianming* implies more than a general belief in a loose and vague connection between moral actions and favorable external goods.

not shared the idea that there is a necessary connection between man's moral actions and non-moral goods.¹²

In order to more fully understand the ethical implications of *tianming*, I will explore it in the broader context of the *Documents*. In the *Documents*, there are three explicit utterances that reveal a belief in moral economy. First, the inevitable relationship between moral action and its outcome was pointed out by Yu 禹, the legendary founder of the Xia 夏 dynasty. Yu says, 惠迪吉 從逆凶 惟影響 “Accordance with the right is auspicious; following what is opposed to it is inauspicious: just as a shadow [follows form] and an echo [follows sound].”¹³ The relationship between good action and good fortune, bad action and bad fortune, is like the relationship between an object and its shadow, between a sound and its echo. Like an object and its shadow, one's moral action and its outcome are so closely bound up each other that it is impossible to see them as unrelated. Like a sound and its echo, the relationship between one's action and its outcome is self-evident. Secondly, King Tang 湯王, the founder of the Shang 商 dynasty, ascribes the relationship between one's action and its outcome to the Way of *tian* 天道. He says, 天道福善禍淫 “The Way of *tian* is to bring good fortune to the good and disaster to the dissolute.”¹⁴ In this remark, the self-evident relationship of shadow and echo works under the name of the Way of *tian*, which is to send down blessings and disasters. Thirdly, Yi Yin 伊尹, the minister of King Tang, on the other hand, attributes the relationship between one's action and its outcomes to Shangdi 上帝 (the Lord on High). In his instruction to the heir-king, Yi Yin

¹² According to Herrlee Creel's speculation, it must have been mass transportation of the Shang people that made the doctrine of *tianming* so successful. C. K. Yang gives another speculation that a shared belief in fate has been the strong factor in its success. See Herrlee Creel, *The Origins of Statecraft in China*, 85-93; C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society*, 134-136.

¹³ “The Counsels of the Great Yu” 大禹謨. As for the translation of the *Documents*, I generally follow James Legge's translation, but with modification when necessary. James Legge, *The Chinese Classics: with a translation, critical and exegetical notes, prolegomena, and copious indexes*, vol. 3 (Taipei shi: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1972).

¹⁴ “The Announcement of Tang” 湯誥.

says, 惟上帝不常 作善降之百祥作 不善降之百殃 “Shangdi alone follows no fixed and unchanging path.¹⁵ Upon the good-doer he sends down all blessings, and upon the evil-doer he sends down all miseries.”¹⁶ Shangdi, as a moral judge, distributes rewards and punishments according to the moral qualities of one’s behavior; one can lose or gain favor with Shangdi and one can gain favor through cultivating one’s virtue. In Yi Yin’s instruction, an anthropomorphic deity, Shangdi, took the place of an abstract notion of *tian*. Despite their different interpretations of the agency behind moral economy, the Great Yu, King Tang, and Yi Yin all share the same belief that the good prosper and the bad suffer.¹⁷

The legendary king Shun 舜 is the most conspicuous example of this moral belief. Shun was a man of utmost virtue. He never harbored hatred or held any grudge against his wicked stepmother and stepbrother, despite their several attempts to kill him. His unfaltering kindness and sincere respect finally moved them to repent their evil doings. Solely relying on his virtuous deeds, Shun was recognized by Yao 堯 and was appointed to the throne from a humble position. The story of King Wen 文王, the founder of Zhou, is another paradigmatic example of moral economy. King Wen’s outstanding merits led Zhou, a small vassal state, to rule the whole world in place of Shang. And, his descendents became the kings of the longest lasting dynasty in Chinese history.¹⁸

In addition to kingship, longevity is another form of reward bestowed on good-doers.

¹⁵ The phrase, “Shangdi is not constant” 上帝不常, means that Shangdi is not remaining the same over a period of time. For instance, even if Shangdi gave favor to the virtuous Shun, if Shun changed his way to become wicked, Shangdi would withdraw his favor from him. In this respect, Shangdi was not constant and Shangdi’s favor was conditional. However, in the sense that Shangdi follows a moral order, paradoxically Shangdi could be said to be constant.

¹⁶ “The Instructions of Yi” 伊訓.

¹⁷ The relationship between *tian*, Shangdi, and self-evident principle will be discussed in detail in the section of Mengzi and more on the sections of Zhu Xi and Tansen in part two.

¹⁸ It is true that King Wen did not have a chance to rule the world, but his descendents, King Wu and King Cheng, did. What is at stake here is that King Wen’s virtue was indeed rewarded with good fortunes.

The Duke of Zhou 周公 addressed his brother, Duke Shao 召公, and said: 君奭 天壽平格 “Lord Shi, *tian* gives long life to the just and the supremely good.”¹⁹ He further elaborates the relationship between ruler’s virtue and his reigning period in his admonition to his young nephew, King Cheng 成王.

周公曰 嗚呼 我聞曰 昔在殷王中宗 嚴恭寅畏 天命自度 治民祗懼 不敢荒寧
肆中宗之享國七十有五年 其在高宗時 舊勞于外 爰暨小人 作其卽位 乃或亮陰
三年不言 其惟不言 言乃雍 不敢荒寧 嘉靖殷邦 至于小大 無時或怨
肆高宗之享國五十有九年 其在祖甲 不義惟王 舊爲小人 作其卽位 爰知小人之依
能保惠于庶民 不敢侮鰥寡 肆祖甲之享國三十有三年 自時厥後立王 生則逸 生則逸
不知稼穡之艱難 不聞小人之勞 惟耽樂之從 自時厥後 亦罔或克壽 或十年 或七八年
或五六年 或四三年

The Duke of Zhou said, “Oh! I have heard that aforetime Emperor Zhong of Yin was grave, humble, reverential, and fearful. He measured himself with reference to the mandate of *tian*, and cherished a reverent apprehension in governing the people, not daring to indulge in useless ease. It was thus that Emperor Zhong enjoyed the throne for seventy and five years. When it comes to the time of Emperor Gao, he toiled at first away from the court and was among the inferior people. When he came to the throne, it may be said that, while he was in the mourning shed, for three years he did not speak. [Afterwards] he was [still inclined] not to speak; but when he did speak, his words were full of harmony. He did not dare to indulge in useless and easy ways, but admirably and tranquilly presided over the empire of Yin, till in all its states, great and small, there was not a single murmur. It was thus that Emperor Gao enjoyed the throne for fifty and nine years. In the case of Zujia, he refused to become an emperor

¹⁹ “Lord Shi” 君奭. 平格 *pingge* means to be just and supremely good (公正至善). According to James Legge, *ping* 平 means to be free of all selfishness and *ge* 格 means intelligent, all-reaching and embracing. He also adds the word *shou* 壽 means not only longevity, but also prosperity. However, Shinshaku Kanbun takei edition (新釈漢文大系) of *Documents* gives a very different interpretation. According to this edition, the term *tianshou* 天壽 is another designation for *tiandi* 天帝 (Lord of *tian*), such as the terms like *tiandi* 天迪 and *tianruo* 天若 in the “The Announcement of Duke Shao” 召誥 chapter. The character *ping* 平 should be *pi* 丕, meaning “great”; the character *ge* 格 can be read as *gu* 嘏, meaning “great” or “to give fortune.” Consequently, Shinshaku edition reads this phrase as follows: “*tian* bestowed abundant fortune [to Shang].” See *Shinshaku Kanbun Taikei*, vol. 25 (Tokyo: Meiji shoin, 2007), 279.

unrighteously, and was at first one of the inferior people. When he came to the throne, he understood the law of the support of the inferior people, and was able to exercise a protecting kindness towards their masses, and did not dare to treat with contempt widowers and widows. Thus it was that Zujia enjoyed the throne for thirty and three years. The emperors who arose after this enjoyed ease from their birth. Enjoying ease from their birth, they did not understand the painful toil of sowing and reaping, nor hear of the hard labors of the inferior people. They only sought after excessive pleasures and not one of them enjoyed the throne for a long period. They continued for ten years, for seven or eight, for five or six, or perhaps only for three or four.”²⁰

The Duke of Zhou explains that the virtuous kings of Shang enjoyed the throne for a long period, but the later kings, who indulged in ease and pleasure, could not stay on the throne even for 10 years. That is to say, the more virtuous the ruler was, the longer he ruled the state. Given the fact that ancient kings usually rule until they die, the long period of reigning suggests that the king more or less lived a long life. Consequently, the Duke of Zhou appears to have a belief that there is a certain connection between one’s moral action and one’s life span. In the early Ru tradition, kingship and longevity are the two most prominent examples of the non-moral goods that are given to morally excellent people.

Another important point to note concerning moral economy is that this belief was not a casual one. The *Documents* does not hint at all that moral order would work in some cases and not in other. In other words, moral economy in the *Documents* is a more strict type of moral economy.²¹ Yi Yin says, 吉凶不僭 “Good fortune and bad fortune are not violated.”²² King Tang also says, 天命弗僭 賁若草木 “*Tianming* is unerring; its brilliance is like the blossoming of plants

²⁰ “Take No Ease” 無逸.

²¹ In the beginning of this chapter, I explained that moral economy is a comprehensive term with a broad range of meanings: a strict moral economy (a tight and systematic connection between virtue and external goods) on the one hand, and a loose moral economy on the other.

²² “Both possessed Pure Virtue” 咸有一德.

and trees.”²³ Both of these statements suggest that good people always receive good fortune and bad people always end up with bad fortune. This strong and powerful conviction regarding moral economy is the hallmark of the *Documents*; it also permeates the doctrine of *tianming*.²⁴

However, the *Documents* presents another important moral principle: namely, the virtue of humility. The *Documents* warns against our tendency toward hubris and arrogance and urges us to cultivate the attitude of humility. According to Yi 益, one of the ministers of Shun, *tian* works in the way that 滿招損 謙受益 “Hubris brings loss and humility receives increase.” He provides an example of this: again, it is Shun.

帝初于歷山 往于田 日號泣于昊天 于父母 負罪引慝 祇載見瞽瞍 夔夔齋慄 瞽亦允若
 “In early time of the emperor (Shun), when he was living by Mount Li, he went into the fields, and daily cried with tears to August *tian* and to his parents, taking to himself all guilt, and charging himself with their wickedness. At the same time, with respectful service he appeared before Gusao, looking grave and awe-struck, till Gu also became transformed by his example.”²⁵

Shun never resented his parents or *tian*; rather, he found faults in himself. This is an act of humility, a virtue that finally transformed his wicked parents as well as other people. But, suppose Shun thought that his parents were vicious people (actually they were), and he believed that he should do the right thing despite their wickedness. Of course, this would not make him a bad person, and he would rather still be considered good. But, this scenario contains a seed of danger; he could be caught in a trap of arrogance. On this scenario, first, he is

²³ “The Announcement of Tang” 湯誥.

²⁴ Poo Mu-chou observes that *tian*’s justice was never questioned in the *Documents* or in the more formal writings of bronze inscriptions. See Poo Mu-chou, *In Search of Personal Welfare*, 38.

²⁵ “The Counsels of the Great Yu” 大禹謨. Yi 益 also helped Yu 禹. Interestingly, we find a similar theme in the *Laozi*: 是以聖人為而不恃 功成而不處 其不欲見賢 “Therefore, the sage acts without claiming the results as his; he achieves his merit and does not rest in it. It would be that he does not wish to be considered as a worthy person!” *Laozi* 77

likely to think that he is morally superior to others, and second, he might be easily content with his own conduct and not exert himself to the full. Shun's virtue of humility was the best restraint on hubris and conceit, and at the same time, it was the driving force for his moral pursuit.²⁶

The theme of humility and hubris recurs several times in the *Documents*. When Yue 說 gave advice to Emperor Gao of Shang 高宗, he said, 有其善 喪厥善 矜其能 喪厥功 "Laying claim to goodness is the way to lose that goodness; boasting of ability is the way to lose the merit it might produce."²⁷ Self-consciousness of the goodness of one's action renders the action less genuinely good, for the reasons just explained. The self-awareness that I am practicing good easily leads to complacency and arrogance.²⁸ King Wu 武王 made a similar speech to his troops on the verge of their conquest of Shang. He said, 我聞 吉人爲善惟日不足 凶人爲不善亦惟日不足 "I have heard that the good man, doing good, finds the day insufficient, and that the evil man,

²⁶ In a part comparing thick/thin distinction, Bryan Van Norden touches on the topic of humility as an example. He writes, "My sense is that at least some Ruists thought that genuine humility requires a sort of false consciousness in which one underestimates one's own worth." And then, he quotes Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming: Zhu Xi says of Kongzi, "Sages are born understanding and acting at peace ... However, their hearts never say of themselves that they have arrived at this point ... it is not that in their heart they genuinely regard themselves as sages, and temporarily for this purpose politely decline [the honor]"; similarly, Wang Yangming praises Sage King Shun, saying "Shun always viewed himself as most unfilial and therefore was able to be filial." The virtue of humility, underrating one's own value, serves as the main impetus for overcoming one's inadequacy in the Ru tradition. Bryan W. Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism in Early Chinese Philosophy* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 19.

²⁷ "The Charge to Yue, Part 2" 說命中.

²⁸ According to Philip Ivanhoe, there is another serious problem in the excessive self-consciousness of one's goodness and good action. He argues that the excessive self-consciousness often misdirects our attention and energy away from the proper object or action. For instance, in order to become a truly compassionate person, one has to focus one's attention and energy on helping people in need, not on improving one's own virtue. Too much concern about the self deprives us of the sight of our true task. Accordingly, many traditional Chinese thinkers, including the Confucian school, encouraged a lack of self-consciousness about one's ethical achievements and moral worth. For the theme of unselfconsciousness in early Chinese thought, see Philip Ivanhoe, "The Theme of Unselfconsciousness in the *Liezi*," in Ronnie Littlejohn and Jeffrey Dippmann, eds., *Riding the Wind with Liezi: New Essays on the Daoist Classic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008): 129-152. Also, for the related theme of spontaneity, see Philip Ivanhoe, "The Paradox of *Wuwei*?" *The Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 34, 2 (2007): 277-287; "The Values of Spontaneity," in Yu Kam-por, Julia Tao, and Philip Ivanhoe, eds., *Taking Confucian Ethics Seriously: Contemporary Theories and Applications* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010): 183-207.

doing evil, likewise finds the day insufficient.”²⁹ King Wu admonished his troops not to slacken in their pursuits of goodness. The good person is never content with his or her goodness or the practice of good deeds.

This admonition applies not just to his troops, but also to King Wu himself. King Wu took personal heed of this warning. Before the march against Shang, he made a claim: 予克受非予武 惟朕文考無罪 受克予 非朕文考有罪 惟予小子無良 “If I defeat King Zhou 紂王, it will be not because of my military prowess, but because of the illustrious virtues of my father; if I am defeated by King Zhou, it will also not be because of any fault of my father, but because I am not good enough.”³⁰ Like Shun, he would not blame other people for his failure, and also would not attribute his success to himself.

Furthermore, his attitude of humility pervades the whole mission of overthrowing the Shang. He made clear that his mission did not arise from his personal desire to become the ruler of the world.³¹ It was mandated by *tian*, and he was merely fulfilling the mission on behalf of *tian*.³² He did not claim to be the ultimate or sovereign subject of his own actions. His actions were completely desubjectivized and carried out in the name of *tian*. This concession made by King Wu enabled him to shrewdly avoid the danger of hubris. If he had believed that he is trying to save the world from the depraved king of Shang, he could easily have crossed a thin

²⁹ “The Great Oath, Part 2” 泰誓中.

³⁰ “The Great Oath, Part 3” 泰誓下.

³¹ 肆爾多士 非我小國敢弋殷命 惟天不畀允罔固亂 弼我 我其敢求位 Now, you many officers! It was not our small state that dared to aim at the *ming* belonging to Yin (Shang). But *tian* was not with Yin because it indeed does not remove its chaos. Therefore, *tian* helped us. Did we dare to seek the throne for ourselves? “Many Officers” 多士.

³² This is observed by many scholars. For example, Robert Eno notes, “Whereas the Shang king had been merely chief priest to the high gods, the Mandate of Heaven theory made the Zhou king Tian’s executor on earth”; Michael Puett also points out, “Heaven (or Di) is the director, and the Zhou follow his divine plan.” Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 23; Michael Puett, *To Become a God*, 60.

line between healthy confidence and unhealthy pride.³³ Instead, he claimed, 今予發惟恭行天之罰 “Now, I, Fa, *humbly* execute the punishment appointed by *tian*.”³⁴ As in the case of Shun, his humility prevents him from falling into the swamp of arrogance.

On the other hand, King Zhou, the last ruler of Shang, who was defeated by King Wu, presents a clear contrast. King Zhou’s depravity and debauchery is well known in Chinese history. Just as an example, his excessive behavior gave rise to the Chinese idiom “Lakes of Wine and Forests of Meat” 酒池肉林, representing the epitome of lavishness and decadence. There are several appalling stories about him and his even more wicked wife, Daji 妲己. King Wu gives a depiction of the despot King Zhou:

今商王受弗敬上天 降災下民 沈湎冒色 敢行暴虐 罪人以族 官人以世
惟宮室臺榭陂池侈服 以殘害于爾萬姓 焚炙忠良 剝剔孕婦 皇天震怒
“Now, Shou (King Zhou), the king of Shang, does not revere *tian* above, and inflicts calamities on the people below. Abandoned to drunkenness and reckless in lust, he has dared to exercise cruel oppression. He has extended the punishment of offenders to all their relatives. He has put men into offices on the hereditary principle. He has made it his pursuit to have palaces, towers, pavilions, embankments, ponds, and all other extravagances, to the most painful injury of you, the myriads of the people. He has burned and roasted the loyal and good. He has ripped up pregnant women. August *tian* was enraged.”³⁵

But, more significant than all the gruesome portrayals of King Zhou given by other people is a testimony given by the king himself. Upon listening to the warnings of his councilor, Zu Yi 祖伊,

³³ This expression is borrowed from Murakami Haruki’s 村上春樹 essay. Murakami Haruki, *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running: A Memoir*, Peter Gabriel, trans. (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 54.

³⁴ “Oath at Mu” 牧誓.

³⁵ “The Great Oath, Part 1” 泰誓上.

the king replied, 嗚呼 我生不有命在天 “Oh! Is not my life secured by the mandate of *tian*?”³⁶ By this statement, Zu Yi expected that Shang would perish soon.³⁷ This short phrase is the ultimate expression of the king’s arrogance. He never doubted that he would continue to enjoy *tian*’s favor, and thus, he did not reflect upon himself. His arrogance is indeed in stark contrast to King Wu, who maintained the attitude of reverence and humility and went on to replace the Shang.

The *Documents* revolves around these two different modes of moral thinking: moral economy and the virtue of humility. These two modes of moral thinking are also intertwined in the doctrine of *tianming*. Moral economy is apparent in the doctrine: virtuous persons rise to power and tyrants lose their power. What is hidden, or unrecognized behind this, is how one becomes virtuous: the process of accumulating virtue. That is where the virtue of humility plays a central and critical role.³⁸ In brief, moral economy explains how the world operates in moral terms, and the virtue of humility teaches how people should behave in such a world. If moral economy is a certain stance toward the world, the virtue of humility is a certain stance toward the self. The doctrine of *tianming* is concerned with both these extroverted and introverted gazes at the world and human beings.

³⁶ “The Chief of the West’s Conquest of Li” 西伯戡黎.

³⁷ 祖伊反曰 嗚呼 乃罪多 參在上 乃能責命於天 殷之即喪 指乃功 不無戮於爾邦 Zu Yi returned [to his own city] and said, “Alas! Your crimes, which are many, are registered above, and can you still appeal to the decree of *tian* in your favor? Yin will perish very shortly. As to all your deeds, can they but bring ruin on your country?” “The Chief of the West’s Conquest of Li” 西伯戡黎.

³⁸ As mentioned earlier, moral economy is quite apparent in the *tianming* doctrine itself. Furthermore, since the doctrine of *tianming* is generally interpreted as political propaganda, specifically devised by the Zhou court in order to legitimate its usurpation of the Shang, the scholarly attention has largely been focused on its explanatory aspect. As a political persuasion, *tianming* provides a moralistic account to a given event that has already happened. Why did the Zhou replace the Shang? It was because the Zhou founders possessed virtue, while the last Shang king lost it. While moral economy has been highlighted by political discourses, the other aspect of *tianming*, the virtue of humility, has not been well appreciated. Interestingly, despite the prominence of *tianming* doctrine as political discourse, which celebrates the acquisition of *tianming*, it is difficulties and worries on maintaining and transmitting *tianming* that prevail in the utterances given by the Duke of Zhou once the Zhou rule was settled. This suggests that once the Zhou came to the power, it was not moral economy, but the virtue of humility in *tianming* that was much in demand to the Zhou.

In the *Documents*, these two dimensions of the doctrine of *tianming* are expressed as “felicity” and “difficulty.” The Duke of Zhou said to Duke Shao; 嗚呼 君 肆其監于茲 我受命無疆惟休 亦大惟艱 “Oh, Lord! Consider well these things. We have received the *ming* from *tian*, which is boundless felicity. But it also presents great difficulties.”³⁹ The Duke of Zhou says that it is a great fortune to receive *tianming* as a reward for virtues of the former kings. This is so from the perspective of moral economy. On the other hand, he points out that it is also a great burden, because it is extremely difficult to maintain *tianming*. This is so from the perspective of the process of accumulating virtue. Obtaining *tianming* is a great felicity because the world operates according to a moral order, but at the same time, it invokes great anxiety and fear in those who aspire to continue to flourish in such a world.

In his admonition to King Cheng, the Duke of Zhou also made explicit these two different aspects of *tianming*.⁴⁰ He divides *ming* into two categories: “founding *ming*” (*jiming* 基命) and “securing *ming*” (*dingming* 定命). Founding *ming* refers to how *tianming* was bestowed upon them due to virtues of their founding fathers. Securing *ming*, on the other hand, refers to how they must maintain and bequeath *ming* to their descendents. Furthermore, these two dimensions of *tianming* are also clearly visible in the characteristics of the Duke of Zhou’s

³⁹ “Lord Shi” 君奭. The Duke Shao also made a similar speech. He says, 嗚呼 皇天上帝改厥元子茲大國殷之命 惟王受命 無疆惟休 亦無疆惟恤 嗚呼 曷其柰何弗敬 “Oh, Shangdi dwelling in August *tian* has changed his mandate of the original heir, the great dynasty of Yin. Our king has received that *ming*. It is boundless felicity. But it is also boundless anxiety. Oh! How can he be other than reverent?” “The Announcement of Duke Shao” 召誥. Tang Junyi also points out the important aspect of *tianming* as a boundless anxiety: “The ‘acceptance of the Heavenly *ming*,’ in its true meaning, is therefore the starting point of something to be done, rather than a terminal point of something already accomplished.” And also there is a circulatory relationship between the two aspects of *ming*, as implied by the continuity and unceasing nature of *ming*. Tang says, “Because the mandate of Heaven following men’s cultivation of virtue, men must be mindful of the Heavenly *ming* and continue to cultivate their virtue even after they have received *ming*; the more fully men cultivate their virtue, the more fully will Heaven confer its mandate on them.” See his, “The *T’ien Ming* [Heavenly Ordinance] in Pre-Ch’in China,” *Philosophy of East and West* 11, 4 (1962), 201-202.

⁴⁰ 周公拜手稽首曰 朕復子明辟 王如弗敢及天基命定命 The Duke of Zhou did obeisance with his hands to his head and his head to the ground and said, “Herewith I report to you, the intelligent ruler. The king appeared as if he would not understand *tian*’s founding *ming* and fixing *ming*.” “The Announcement at Luo” 洛誥.

speech. For instance, his *tianming* speeches as political propaganda were exclusively addressed to outsiders, the Shang remnants, and focused on the fact that the world operates by moral order. On the other hand, his instructions to the Zhou people, particularly the Zhou royal family, disproportionately emphasized the difficulties and anxieties involved in preserving *tianming*. In his discourse to insiders, *tianming* is not merely a political justification: it is a humble and divine mission to be continued.

To summarize, the doctrine of *tianming* concerns *why* one receives *tianming* and *how* one receives and maintains *tianming*. According to the doctrine, the world operates by moral order, and in order to live a successful life in such a world, one should accumulate virtue by turning away from hubris and habituating oneself to humility. The doctrine of *tianming* promulgates, on the one hand, a certain way of thinking about the world (moral economy), and on the other hand, a certain attitude toward the self (the virtue of humility).

Then, why did I begin by mentioning that these two modes of moral thinking are paradoxical? They do not seem to contradict or create discord with each other. Rather, they seem to be in perfect harmony. Shun, King Wen, and King Wu, by perfecting their virtue, particularly the virtue of humility, became rulers of the world. The successful process of moral development is naturally followed by the corresponding reward from *tian*. In this respect, there is nothing odd about the way the “*why*” and “*how*” questions work out with each other.

Nevertheless, they do indeed create a certain tension in moral agents by evoking opposing sentiments: “confidence” and “uncertainty.” The doctrine of *tianming* is a reflection of the moral belief that the good prosper and the bad suffer, and simultaneously, it is a teaching that reinforces such a belief. It entails the strong and firm conviction that the world operates according to moral order. Simply put, in the *Documents* and the *tianming* doctrine, a belief in a

strict moral economy promotes an ethics of confidence and certainty. On the other hand, cultivating an attitude of humility requires the exactly opposite state of mind. Humbling oneself, directly and indirectly, relates to mental qualities like uncertainty, doubt, unassertiveness, reverence, anxiety, and fear.⁴¹ Unlike moral economy requiring confidence and certainty, the virtue of humility is based on an ethics of anxiety and uncertainty. The awareness that my actions are good and the satisfaction that naturally arises from such self-awareness are prone to turn into conceit and arrogance. In order to restrain our tendency toward hubris, we must keep unceasing vigilance over our own conduct and never take full satisfaction in our moral goodness. The uncertainty toward the self and the apprehension often accompanying such an attitude becomes an impetus to move people toward a better end and a protection against hubris and decline.

This is why the attitude of uncertainty, along with anxiety and fear, prevail in the sage kings of antiquity. Mark Csikszentmihalyi observes that the *Documents* puts great emphasis on the inculcation of an attitude of reverential attention (*jing* 敬) in the ruler. He writes, “The attitude of uncertainty in light of the possibility of the withdrawal of the Mandate of Heaven (*tianming*) outlined in the piece motivates the ruler to remain attentive to his own moral development and maintain judicial fairness.”⁴² Therefore, King Wu was always reverent and filled with apprehensions.⁴³ In working to harmonize the state, King Tang says, 慄慄危懼

⁴¹ It is interesting to note a six-stage process of developing ritual propriety (*li* 禮) in the excavated *Wuxing*. In his study of the *Wuxing*, Mark Csikszentmihalyi notes that an attitude of “distance” (*yuan* 遠) during ritual performance develops into ritual propriety through the feelings of reverence (*jing* 敬), awe (*yan* 嚴), respect (*zun* 尊), and humility (*gong* 恭). The connection between humility and anxiety and fear seems to be obvious also in early Ru tradition. Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*, 295; and his “The Social and Religious Context of Early Confucian Practice,” in Jeffrey L. Richey, ed., *Teaching Confucianism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008): 27-38. For the issue of anxiety in the excavated *Wuxing* and the *Book of Poetry*, see Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*, 71-73.

⁴² Mark Csikszentmihalyi, “Confucianism,” 216.

⁴³ 予小子夙夜祗懼 “I, a little child, early and late, am reverent and filled with apprehensions.” “The Great Oath, Part 1” 泰誓上.

若將隕于深淵 “I am fearful and trembling, as if I was falling into a deep abyss.”⁴⁴ In inheriting the good government of the former kings, King Mu 穆王 also says, 心之憂危 若蹈虎尾 涉于春冰 “The trembling anxiety of my mind makes me feel as if I were treading on a tiger’s tail or walking upon thin ice.”⁴⁵

As a result, these kings of antiquity had to maintain a balance between an ethics of confidence and an ethics of uncertainty. The ideal, as shown above, is to be neither completely certain about nor fully satisfied with one’s pursuit of goodness, but at the same time, they also believed that good people certainly do flourish, in the long run. Maintaining an equilibrium between these two modes of moral thinking or moral sentiment, however, might not be as simple and easy as it seems.⁴⁶ Too strong a conviction that the world operates by moral order easily runs counter to the call for authentic moral actions. The strong belief in moral economy, without the virtue of humility, is likely to lead to a state in which the motivation for moral conduct arises from an expectation of reward.⁴⁷ Good people are rewarded; therefore, we should act well. And, such self-conscious moral action not only renders it less genuinely good, but also drives it in the direction of arrogance and conceit. Likewise, an exclusive cultivation of humility, without an accompanying belief in a moral universe, easily leads one to turn one’s back on the task of social harmony and improvement, which is the ultimate goal of Ru teachings. In a world where meaningful connection between one’s action and its outcome is cut off, individual virtues slide into an obsessive concern with individual perfection and purity.

⁴⁴ “The Announcement of Tang” 湯誥.

⁴⁵ King Mu of Zhou is the fifth king of the Zhou dynasty. “Junya” 君牙.

⁴⁶ The confidence in the moral operation of the external world and the uncertainty toward one’s own moral cultivation do not seem to conflict with each other because the certainty involves with the extrovert gaze while the uncertainty with the introvert gaze. However, given the fact that these two sentiments are convoked within the mind of each individual, it probably creates a tension.

⁴⁷ According to Philip Ivanhoe, the truly virtuous person acts in a certain way because it is the right way to be. Rewards or fruits that are often associated with moral actions are not the proper objects of concern. See Philip J. Ivanhoe, “The Theme of Unselfconsciousness in the *Liezi*,” 141.

Without the promise of some sorts of reward or improvement, one's moral effort does not have any significant meaning in a broader context. Therefore, an ethics of confidence and an ethics of uncertainty require and complement each other. One should keep a healthy balance between these two modes of moral thinking.

This paradoxical combination of conviction and uncertainty and the creative tension between moral economy and the virtue of humility represented in the doctrine of *tianming* became the legacy that Kongzi as well as other Ru thinkers had to cope with and respond to. But, even before this moral puzzle of confidence and uncertainty begged the question to early Ru thinkers, moral economy itself began to be questioned.

1.2 The doctrine of *Tianming* in the *Book of Poetry*

The *tianming* discourse and its ethical implications we have examined so far pretty much overlap what we find in the *Book of Poetry*. Most poems in the Zhou Hymn section (周頌), which is believed to be the oldest layer of the classic, celebrate and commemorate the establishment of the Zhou dynasty as in the *tianming* discourse. Particularly, the poem "King Wen" 文王 of the Major Odes (大雅)⁴⁸ provides a summation of the points made in the *Documents*: 1) *tianming* follows no fixed and unchanging path (天命靡常); 2) maintaining *tianming* is extremely hard (駿命不易). That *tianming* follows no fixed and unchanging path (天命靡常) refers to the fact that *tianming* can change: *tian* works according to the moral qualities of one's action and thus there is always a possibility of change in the will of *tian*.⁴⁹ Therefore, owing to the illustrious virtues of

⁴⁸ Mao 235.

⁴⁹ As mentioned earlier, the inconstancy or changeability of *tianming* refers to the fact *tian* changes its will according to how one behaves in ethical terms. In this respect, *tian* faithfully follows the principle of moral

King Wen, *tianming* transferred to the Zhou from the Shang. This changeability of *tianming* makes preserving and transmitting *tianming* a difficult task. In order to keep *tianming*, rulers must maintain the attitude of reverence, always being attentive to their own moral conduct: they can accomplish this by way of the virtue of humility.⁵⁰

However, as Poo Mu-chou keenly observes, some poems in the *Book of Poetry* express an ambivalent attitude toward *tian*: “What is interesting is that while on the one hand the poems reveal a strong need for the protection of Heaven, on the other hand they show a sense of skepticism about the justice of Heaven.”⁵¹ In other words, the authors of some poems started to question the operation of the moral universe: *tian* might not follow moral order, and in the actual world, good people do not always live a flourishing life and bad people often get by or even succeed. According to Poo, this is quite a distinctive phenomenon since in the official and formal writings found in the *Documents* or in bronze inscriptions the justice of *tian* was never doubted.⁵²

order. Moral economy is also clearly enunciated in the poems like the “Xiao Ming” 小明 (Mao 207). 嗟爾君子無恒安處 靖共爾位 正直是與 神之聽之 式穀以女 “Ah! You gentlemen! Do not reckon on your rest being permanent./ Quietly fulfill the duties of your offices,/ Associating with the correct and upright./ So shall the spirits hearken to you,/ And give you good.” The next stanza also has the similar lines. For the translation of the *Book of Poetry*, I follow James Legge’s translation, and with modification when necessary. James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 4.

⁵⁰ The themes of uncertainty, reverence, and anxiety also prevail the *Book of Poetry*. Particularly, the poem “Xiao Wan” 小宛 (Mao 196) expresses the worry involving in moral pursuit in a similar fashion as we have seen in the *Documents*. 溫溫恭人 如集于木 惴惴小心 如臨于谷 戰戰兢兢 如履薄冰 “We must be mild and humble,/ As if we were perched on trees./ We must be anxious and careful,/ As if we were on the brink of a valley./ We must be apprehensive and cautious,/ As if we were treading upon thin ice.”

⁵¹ Poo Mu-chou, *In Search of Personal Welfare*, 38. Ding Weixiang also makes a similar observation. According to Ding, by the end of the Western Zhou, social and political instability invoked resentment and curses towards Heaven as seen in the *Book of Poetry*. Ding further argues that due to this resentment and suspicion toward Heaven, the notion of *ming* came to refer to the destiny of individuals. Ding Weixiang, “Destiny and Heavenly Ordinances,” 19-21.

⁵² In Poo Mu-chou’s view, it is distinctive in the sense that the *Book of Poetry* reflects the religious mentality of commoners. It is true, as he claims, unlike the *Book of Poetry*, the notion of *tian* as a moral judge was not seriously challenged in the *Documents* and bronze inscriptions, and it might have been the case that the idea of a moral universe was produced by the ruling class like the Duke of Zhou as a part of political propaganda. However, I do not think that this clear demarcation of the popular and elite religion would provide an accurate depiction of religiosity in early China. Rather, I do think that the skepticism toward the justice of *tian* were

In the *Book of Poetry*, moral economy is called into question in two ways: by asking “why us” and “why me.” The “why us” question follows from the logic of the *tianming* discourse. According to the *tianming* scheme, people under the rule of despots like King Jie 桀王 and King Zhou 紂王 suffered through no faults of their own. The poem “Jie Nan shan” 節南山 depicts such a situation, in which people experience hardships due to an unworthy official.

昊天不傭 降此鞠誼
 昊天不惠 降此大戾
 君子如屆 俾民心闕
 君子如夷 惡怒是遑
 August *tian*, unjust,
 Is sending down these exhausting disorders.
 August *tian*, unkind,
 Is sending down these great miseries.
 Let superior men come [into office],
 And that would bring rest to the people's hearts.
 Let superior men do justly,
 And the animosities and angers would disappear.⁵³

The poet deplores injustice and indifference of *tian*. Nonetheless, moral economy does not seem to be seriously challenged in this poem. This poem criticizes the Grand Master Yin 尹氏大師. He was an unworthy official, neglecting his job to assist the king. It is his lack of virtue that brought ruin to the world. And, the second half of the above stanza says that once worthy men retake their positions, all the misfortunes and hardships that befall people will disappear. Therefore, in this poem moral order functions well in both ways: unworthy officials induce disorder and

largely shared by both classes (Poo also acknowledges this aspect and says that the notion of moral *tian* created a schism within the religion of the ruling class), if there were such a class distinction, and so was the belief in moral *tian*.

⁵³ Mao 191. This stanza is the fifth of the ten. The word *yong* 傭 is glossed as *jun* 均, to be equal, even, and fair.

worthy ones bring order to the world. On the other hand, moral economy does not apply to people, given that there is nothing they can do about their miseries. It is not their immoral or mischievous behaviors that bring ruin down upon them. Likewise, their virtuous and meritorious conduct does not exert much influence on their adversities. It appears that the order or disorder of the society is solely in the hands of those in power. The poet's lamentation, "*tian* is unjust" and "*tian* is unkind," expresses the severity of their hardships on the one hand and the futility of their struggles on the other.

Another poem, "Sang Rou" 桑柔, also describes a state teetering on the brink of collapse. However, "Sang Rou," rather than blaming *tian* for its unfairness and ruthlessness, put the blame on people. The fourth and seventh stanzas sing:

憂心愨愨 念我土宇
 我生不辰 逢天憚怒
 自西徂東 靡所定處
 多我覯瘡 孔棘我圉
 The grief of my heart is extreme,
 And I dwell on [the condition of] our territory.
 I was born at an unlucky time,
 To meet with the severe anger of *tian*.
 From the west to the east,
 There is no quiet place of abiding.
 Many are the distresses I meet with;
 Very urgent is the trouble on our borders.

天降喪亂 滅我立王
 降此蠹賊 稼穡卒瘁
 哀恫中國 具贅卒荒
 靡有旅力 以念穹蒼

Tian is sending down death and disorder,
 And has put an end to our king.
 It is sending down those devourers of the grain,
 So that the crops have been all ruined.
 All is in peril and going to ruin;
 I have no strength [to do anything],
 And think of [the Power in] the azure vault.⁵⁴

The poem laments for a life in dire straits. The anger of *tian* must have been incurred by a depraved ruler, but it was me who was born in an inopportune time. In this dark period, no one can find a safe place to live. Moreover, in the last line the poet clearly declares the futility of man's power: "I have no strength." In front of *tian*, men are powerless and insignificant beings. Furthermore, people not only suffered misfortunes under the rule of despots, but also suffered ill fate even when the *tianming* transfers to a virtuous ruler. The poet of "Zheng Yue" 正月 deplores that when the state falls down 民之無辜 并其臣僕 "The innocent people,/ Will all be reduced to servitude with me!"⁵⁵

If we have a close look at these poems, it appears that people, under the *tianming* scheme, turn out to be victims of moral order, not beneficiaries. Moral economy seems to work only at a state level, but not in the lives of individuals. Therefore, it makes sense when Chen Ning remarks, "Essentially as a political theory, the Mandate of Heaven was applied to the ruling family and the whole officialdom."⁵⁶ In his view, the ethical implications of this basically political theory of *tianming* must have been *extended* to apply to the common people afterward.

⁵⁴ Mao 257. This poem consists of 16 stanzas. The "azure vault" 穹蒼 in the last line refers to *tian*.

⁵⁵ Mao 192.

⁵⁶ Chen Ning, "The Problem of Theodicy in Ancient China," 52. Ding Weixiang also makes a similar claim to Chen's. According to Ding, *tianming* originally concerns a monarchical power, but "by the time of Kings Li and You of the Zhou Dynasty, because of the pessimism in politics, voices of 'resentment and curses' against Heaven began appearing in *Shijing* (Book of Poetry), and '*tianming*' began to become individualized and relevant to the lives of individuals." See Ding Weixiang, "Destiny and Heavenly Ordinance," 18-19.

However, as I claimed before, it is very likely that the doctrine of *tianming* is also a reflection of people's belief in moral *tian*. Without such a belief in the moral universe, the doctrine would not have been so persuasive and successful. Whichever may have been the case, what I want to point out here is that moral economy, whether at a political level or individual level, has certain limitations in coming to terms with reality. It may explain a certain part of the world, but not the whole world. This gives rise to skepticism about the moral universe, which appears as “why us” questions in the *Book of Poetry*.

This “why us” question is connected to “why me” question in the poem, “Zheng Yue” 正月. The last stanza sings:

侃侃彼有屋 藪藪方有穀
 民今之無祿 天天是椽
 嗇矣富人 哀此惇獨
 Mean-like, those have their houses;
 Abject, they will have their emoluments.
 But the people now have no maintenance.
 For *tian* is pounding them with its calamities,
 The rich may get through,
 But alas for the helpless and solitary!⁵⁷

This stanza draws attention to the fact that during the same period of collapse and disaster, each individual may experience hardships to different degrees. The affluent may not be badly inflicted as much as the helpless and solitary even under the same brutal tyranny.⁵⁸ This kind of

⁵⁷ “Zheng Yue” 正月 (Mao 192) consists of thirteen stanzas.

⁵⁸ The helpless and solitary may refer to those to whom Mengzi draws a special attention for the special need of care: widowers, widows, orphans, and the aged without children (鰥寡孤獨).

inequality in suffering among people is developed as the “why me” question as in the poem “Xiao Bian” 小弁. It starts with:

弁彼鷩斯 歸飛提提
 民莫不穀 我獨于罹
 何辜于天 我罪伊何
 心之憂矣 云如之何
 With flapping wings the crows,
 Come back, flying all in a flock.
 Other people all are happy,
 And I only am full of misery.
 What is my offence against *tian*?
 What is my crime?
 My heart is sad;
 What is to be done?⁵⁹

The poet recounts that everyone surrounding me looks happy and I feel like I am the only one in despair. The arguably ironic questions in the third line, “what is my offense against *tian*?” and “what is my crime?”, accentuate that I have not done any crime to bring out such a misery (and also probably that other people do not deserve their happiness more than I). Since the author does not comprehend the reason why he is in such a situation, he does not know what should have been done to avoid such a fate or what should be done to alleviate the situation he is facing.

This break of a necessary connection between one’s action and its outcome is, in other words, a failure of the workings of moral order. If the *Documents* highlights a strong belief in moral economy, some poems in the *Book of Poetry* give rise to an ambivalent attitude toward the

⁵⁹ Mao 197.

moral universe. The “why us” and “why me” questions deplore that moral order does not always work. Good people are not always rewarded and the bad do not always get the punishments they deserve. This partial failure of moral economy became the most urgent matter that Kongzi had to solve. This will be the topic we will explore in the next chapter.

2. *Tianming* and *ming* in the *Lunyu*

Despite the apparent limitations of the operation of moral order, Kongzi continued to advocate moral economy. Just as the Duke of Zhou related the virtue of rulers with their life span, Kongzi believed that benevolent people tend to live a long life.¹ But, as many poems in the *Book of Poetry* deplore, reality does not always conform to the principle of moral order. The Viscount of Wei 微子, the Viscount of Ji 箕子, and Bigan 比干, those whom Kongzi considered benevolent during the last period of Shang, far from enjoying a happy life, all ended up in miserable situations under the rule of the despot King Zhou.² Apart from these virtuous people who confronted misfortunes, Kongzi encountered several good but unfortunate people during his own lifetime: his favorite disciple, Yan Hui 顏回, died young even before Kongzi did, and another disciple, Boniu 伯牛, suffered a fatal illness. What is more, Kongzi himself did not succeed in his political mission. Moreover, the failure of moral order applied not only to these virtuous men, but also to some who are not worthy, yet were able to prosper. Both cases (good actions → unfavorable outcomes; bad actions → favorable outcomes) evidence that moral order does not always apply to human events.³

¹ 子曰 知者樂水 仁者樂山 知者動 仁者靜 知者樂 仁者壽 Kongzi says, "The wise take pleasure in water; the benevolent take pleasure in mountains. The wise are active; the benevolent are tranquil. The wise are joyful; the benevolent are long-lived." *Lunyu* 6:23. In Kongzi's view, there seems to be a close connection between tranquility and being healthy. For the translation of the *Lunyu*, I generally follow D. C. Lau's translation and modify when necessary. D. C. Lau, *The Analects (Lun yü): Confucius; translated with an introduction by D. C. Lau* (Harmondsworth; New York: Penguin Books, 1979).

² 微子去之 箕子爲之奴 比干諫而死 孔子曰 殷有三仁焉 The Viscount of Wei left him (King Zhou), the Viscount of Ji became a slave of him, and Bigan lost his life for remonstrating with him. Kongzi says, "There were three benevolent men in the Yin." *Lunyu* 18:1.

³ According to Chen Ning, moral determinism implicit in the doctrine of *tianming* caused the problem of theodicy. As seen, moral determinism cannot adequately come to terms with reality. Chen Ning argues that this problem of theodicy led Kongzi to adopt the concept of blind fate. I do not wholly agree with his opinion because in order to introduce the concept of blind fate, Chen Ning divides *tian* into two separate entities: a moral, anthropomorphic deity, and amoral and irrational force. I do agree that there are two different characteristics in the notion of *tian*, but I think the twofold attribute of *tian* is much more complex and nuanced.

Kongzi, however, provides an explanation for this partial failure of the moral universe by employing an analogy of sprout, flower, and fruit.⁴ Kongzi says, 苗而不秀者 有矣夫 秀而不實者 有矣夫 “There are instances that sprouts fail to produce blossoms; there are instances that blossoms fail to produce fruits.”⁵ For a variety of reasons, sprouts often wither without putting forth blossoms and flowers often fade without bearing fruits. In a similar manner, the seeds of a good deed sometimes fail to produce the corresponding fruit. Just as it appears natural that sprouts sometimes fail to bloom, Kongzi claims that the occasional failure of moral order is not a serious threat. They are merely exceptions. Of great significance is the underlying assumption behind Kongzi’s analogy: sprouts are supposed to bloom and flowers are supposed to bear fruits. Likewise, good deeds are expected to bring favorable outcomes and bad deeds are expected to incur unfavorable consequences. However often exceptions may occur and however they may form the majority of human events, they are just deviations from the standard principle of moral order.

Accordingly, on the one hand, Boniu’s terminal illness attests to the fact that the linkage between his virtue and a good outcome was somehow broken. On the other hand, Kongzi’s lamentation on his illness, 斯人也而有斯疾也 斯人也而有斯疾也 “How could such a man have such an illness! How could such a man have such an illness!” reveals his belief that this kind of virtuous person is not supposed to fall seriously ill.⁶ Bo Niu should have lived a long healthy life. For Kongzi, the longevity and healthy state of the virtuous is the norm (good actions → favorable outcomes). In the same vein, the untimely death of bad people is also nothing to be

Nevertheless, given the concept of contingency introduced in the *Lunyu* is not completely at odds with the notion of blind fate, I think that Chen Ning rightly points out the problem inherent in the doctrine of *tianming*. Chen Ning, “The Problem of Theodicy in Ancient China.”

⁴ Interestingly, Kongzi’s analogy is very similar to that of *karmic* process.

⁵ *Lunyu* 9:22.

⁶ *Lunyu* 6:10.

surprised about (bad actions → unfavorable outcomes).⁷

In opposition to the normative patterns, Kongzi expresses that Yan Hui's death is *buxing* 不幸 (unfortunate)⁸ and the survival of the deceiver is *xing* 幸 (fortunate).⁹ The words "*xing* 幸" and "*buxing* 不幸" all indicate unexpected outcomes that fail to follow moral order. They connote the exceptions to the normative rule. By admitting exceptions to moral economy, Kongzi somehow dismisses the widespread discontent toward the injustice of *tian*. By introducing the notion of contingency, he prevents the workings of the moral universe from falling apart.¹⁰ In Kongzi's view, the universe still revolves around the principle of moral order, but with minor defects.

Moral Universe	
Norms	Exceptions
good actions → good results	good actions → bad results (unfortunate - 不幸)
bad actions → bad results	bad actions → good results (fortunate - 幸)

⁷ As Philip Ivanhoe points out, in Kongzi's view, those who do not follow the Way are better dead off. See Philip Ivanhoe, "Death and Dying in the *Analects*," 223.

⁸ 季康子問 弟子孰爲好學 孔子對曰 有顏回者好學 不幸短命死矣 今也則亡 Ji Kangzi asked which of his disciples were eager to learn. Kongzi answered, "There was Yan Hui who was eager to learn, but unfortunately, his allotted span was short and he died. Now there is no one." *Lunyu* 6:3. Also, a similar passage appears in *Lunyu* 11:7.

⁹ 子曰 人之生也直 罔之生也幸而免 Kongzi says, "That a man lives is because he is straight. That a man who dupes others survives is because he has been fortunate enough to be spared." *Lunyu* 6:19.

¹⁰ Furthermore, as Mark Csikszentmihalyi argues, the notion of contingency also has a therapeutic effect on people as well. In the world of contingency, even if a person tries his best, he can receive unexpected bad outcome, but this would not be necessarily his fault. Therefore, the unusual death of Yan Hui could not be a punishment for his wrongdoing. The political failure of Kongzi also may not be a reflection of the lack of his virtue. By introducing the notion of contingency, Kongzi could relieve frustration and anxiety involved in the process of moral cultivation. On the other hand, the notion of contingency has a morally salutary effect as well. Since in the world of contingency, my high status or my wealth does not always reflect my own doing, and this can evoke the sense of humility in moral agent. See Mark Csikszentmihalyi, "Allotment and Death in Early China," 177-190.

What is of great importance is that, despite the fact that Kongzi allowed these exceptions to the rule, it was his own determination to adhere to the norms of the moral universe but to disregard or even abandon the exceptional cases (particularly, fortunate cases of bad actions). Kongzi declares, 不義而富且貴 於我如浮雲 “Wealth and honor attained through immoral means have as much to do with me as passing clouds.”¹¹ Even if a certain action brings us favorable external goods, if that action is not ethically proper, those favorable goods derived from it are not the proper objects of enjoyment. They are insubstantial and unreliable like passing clouds. Accordingly, Kongzi voluntarily abandoned the cases where good results come from bad actions. For Kongzi, only favorable external goods coming from moral living are worthy of possession and enjoyment. Furthermore, given the fact that bad actions normally incur bad consequences, from the outset there is no reason for him to commit bad actions, either.¹² In either cases of bad actions, whether the fortunate escape from bad outcomes or the suffering of the natural consequences of bad actions, in Kongzi’s view, it is absurd to motivate to do bad actions. Instead, he chooses to live following the Way, which is good in itself and also normally produces favorable outcomes. For him, to live virtuously is the only proper way to live.¹³

But, however rarely unfortunate miseries occur to good people, they loom large to those who have to suffer them. Then, what did Kongzi teach to those confronting such unfortunate incidents? As for the cases of fortunate escape from the consequences of bad actions, Kongzi

¹¹ *Lunyu* 7:16.

¹² Of course, it is not that Kongzi commits to an ethical life because bad actions normally produce bad results. He abstains from immoral conducts because they are bad in themselves. However, from the perspective of moral economy, it is logical to conclude that one is better off not acting immorally.

¹³ Definitely, the reason Kongzi adheres to an ethical life is not because good actions are likely to produce better outcomes. If his focus were on good outcomes, there would be no reason for him to deny fortunate outcomes of bad actions. The reason he pursues a virtuous life is because it is an ideal form of living. However, from the perspective of moral economy, this morally proper way of life is likely to lead to favorable external goods, such as longevity, kingship, wealth and honor; but unfortunately it often fails, too.

teaches us to disregard or abandon wealth and honor as worthless.¹⁴ But when one lives in destitution in spite of one's diligence and sincerity, one does not have much choice but to suffer because one does not have much to give up. Instead of abandoning one's poverty, Kongzi admonishes such people to be content with poverty and to take pleasure in their goodness. He praises Yan Hui on this respect, saying: 賢哉 回也 一簞食 一瓢飲 在陋巷 人不堪其憂 回也不改其樂 賢哉 回也 "How admirable Hui is! Living in a mean dwelling on a single bowl of rice and a ladle of water is a hardship most men would find it intolerable, but Hui does not allow this to affect his joy. How admirable Hui is!"¹⁵ Unlike most people who could not endure hardship, Yan Hui did not find it either objectionable or miserable. His earnest pursuit of virtue enabled him to be satisfied with his own situation.

However, being satisfied amid poverty seems more demanding than discarding undeserving luxuries. Or, it could be the other way around: it could be much harder for the rich to give up their unjust wealth that they have tasted.¹⁶ Whichever may have been the case, both of these two options in coping with the failures of moral economy are indeed difficult. Accordingly, Kongzi proposed another way to compensate the failure of moral economy: refocusing one's attention to the nature of actions from outcomes.¹⁷ One should concentrate

¹⁴ Needless to say, Kongzi did not teach people to abandon wealth and power obtained through immoral means. His point is that since they are valueless and unsustainable, from the outset one should not involve in immoral actions. On the contrary, Kongzi would have said that the rich, who amass wealth by proper means, don't need to abandon their wealth. Furthermore, those rich are likely to use their wealth in a proper and meaningful way.

¹⁵ *Lunyu* 6:11.

¹⁶ According to G. A. Cohen, of the two choices, the second one, discarding luxuries, is harder than the first one, being content with poverty. Surely, it is hard for the rich to be poor. Cohen points out, "Unstarving, decently sheltered poor peasants are often better placed to enjoy a fulfilling life than self-expropriated wealthy people are." See G. A. Cohen, *If You're an Egalitarian, How Come You Are So Rich?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 176.

¹⁷ However, refocusing one's attention to virtuous living, disregarding undeserving wealth and honor, and being content with mean dwelling are not separate ways of dealing with the problems of moral economy. They are interrelated in the sense that they just highlight the different aspects of virtue: virtue is within human control; virtue is a necessary condition for enjoying happiness; and virtue is sufficient for happiness.

one's focus and energy solely on "what one should do" rather than "what one should get as a result of one's action." In other words, what matters is virtuous living, not external goods.

子曰 富而可求也 雖執鞭之士 吾亦爲之 如不可求 從吾所好

Kongzi says, "If wealth were a permissible pursuit, I would be willing even to act as a guard holding a whip outside the market place. If it is not, I shall follow my own preferences."¹⁸

子曰 君子謀道不謀食 耕也 餒在其中矣 學也 祿在其中矣 君子憂道不憂貧

Kongzi says, "The gentleman devotes his mind to attaining the Way and not to securing food. When you farm, you could end up being hungry; when you study, you could end up with the salary of an official. The gentleman worries about the Way, not about poverty."¹⁹

Since good results such as wealth, honor, and longevity are not guaranteed through human agency, Kongzi opts for doing what he likes: that is, following the Way, cultivating virtues. He turns his attention and energy to what he can control (action: self-cultivation) from what he cannot control (outcomes: wealth, honor, and longevity). By highlighting the part that one can control, Kongzi somehow eases or dampens people's expectations of their deserved outcomes, which is naturally assumed in the view of moral economy. Ted Slingerland, in his study of the conception of *ming* in early period, makes a similar observation:

The motivation informing these texts is the desire to change people's views of what is and what is not important, to redirect people's energy and efforts from

¹⁸ *Lunyu* 7:12.

¹⁹ *Lunyu* 15:32. This passage means that even when you want to secure food and thus to farm, you could fail to secure food, and also even when you do not care for food and concentrate on your self-cultivation, you could have a chance to take a position that will provide you with food. Since securing food is beyond human control, Kongzi decided to focus his energy and effort on following the Way.

the external realm (position, wealth, physical concerns) to the internal realm of self-cultivation. The conception of *ming* is employed in order to mark off, in effect, the outer boundaries of one's proper realm of action.²⁰

Kongzi's attempt to redirect people's attention to the realm of proper action appears repeatedly in the *Lunyu*. He says, 不患無位 患所以立 不患莫己知 求為可知也 "Don't worry because you have no official position and worry about your qualifications. Don't worry because no one appreciates your ability and seek to be worthy of appreciation."²¹ One should worry about his lack of virtue and ability.²² Cultivating virtue and ability is a prerequisite for enjoying good consequences. Without possessing such abilities and moral worth, even if one is fortunate enough to take a high position, it is like passing clouds so unreliable and unstable that one could lose it at any moment.

According to Philip Ivanhoe, in his attempt to refocus people's attention and effort, Kongzi not only moderates people's expectations regarding their deserved outcomes, but actively discourages their expectations that there is a tight linkage between one's action and its outcome. It is because, as Ivanhoe argues:

²⁰ Ted Slingerland, "The Conception of *Ming* in Early Confucian Thought," 576. Even though I totally agree with Slingerland's main point, I am not fully satisfied with his usage of the demarcation of inner-outer realms. I think that his inner-outer dichotomy as a conceptual tool provides, at least, a partial understanding of early Ru thought, but, by and large, it is misleading and insufficient to illustrate the complex and multifaceted thought of the early Ru. For instance, if we follow Slingerland's division of the inner realm of self-cultivation, it seems to indicate that self-cultivation mainly takes place in the inner realm of human mind. Then, early Ru project of self-cultivation becomes more like a meditational practice, which is contrary to the significance of ritual program Kongzi and Mengzi devised. Furthermore, the Ru project of self-cultivation is impossible without being involved with others and being oriented in society. Therefore, Slingerland's inner-outer dichotomy does not seem to fit in illustrating early Ru thought. As seen above, unlike Slingerland, I put them in a causal and sequential relation of action and result: action is the part we can control and result is the part we cannot control.

²¹ *Lunyu* 4:14.

²² 子曰 君子病無能焉 不病人之不知也 Kongzi says, "The gentleman is troubled by his own lack of ability, not by failure of others to appreciate him." *Lunyu* 15:19. The same theme repeats in *Lunyu* 1:1 and 15:21.

Even though virtue is a necessary constituent of certain highly desirable ends, one cannot intentionally *use* virtue in order to achieve such goals. To do so is to aim at and focus attention upon the wrong ends, which will undermine both the practice and cultivation of virtue. One must pursue virtue as an expression of one's ideal of the good life and remain committed to it even in cases when the normal, non-moral good benefits of virtue are not forthcoming.²³

As Ivanhoe points out, Kongzi actually teaches that even if one knows for sure that one's virtue will not bring favorable outcomes, one should continue to pursue virtue. This is the exact reason that the gatekeeper evaluates Kongzi to be 是知其不可而為之者與 "One who keeps working towards a goal that realization of which he knows to be hopeless."²⁴ The point of being a gentleman does not lie in obtaining wealth, power, and longevity (results), but solely in the process of accumulating virtues (actions).

However, the realization that his goal will not be achieved does not make Kongzi a sullen pessimist or a sulky fatalist. Even though his political mission may have turned out to be a failure, his project of self-cultivation succeeded in himself. According to Kongzi, the process of self-cultivation is similar to this: 譬如為山 未成一簣 止 吾止也 譬如平地 雖覆一簣 進 吾往也 "As in the case of making a mountain, if, before the very last basketful, I stop, then I shall have stopped. As in the case of leveling the ground, if, though tipping only one basketful, I am going

²³ Philip Ivanhoe, "Heaven as a Source for Ethical Warrant in Early Confucianism," *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 6, 3 (2007), 215. According to Ivanhoe, if we practice virtue in order to ensure certain rewards, we will easily give up when we confront with unfavorable circumstances and ultimately fail to cultivate virtue. Kongzi, however, strives for the pursuit of virtue even in the most hostile situation, because he takes virtue not as a means to end, but as an end in itself. The virtuous life itself is the most satisfying, the best kind of life. In another article, interpreting early Confucian ethics as "character consequentialism," Ivanhoe examines a similar theme. See Philip Ivanhoe, "Character Consequentialism: An Early Confucian Contribution to Contemporary Ethical Theory," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 19, 1 (1991): 55-70.

²⁴ 子路宿於石門 晨門曰 奚自 子路曰 自孔氏 曰 是知其不可而為之者與 Zilu put up for the night at the Stone gate. The gatekeeper said, "Where have you come from?" Zilu said, "From the Kong family." "Is that the Kong who keeps working towards a goal the realization of which he knows to be hopeless?" *Lunyu* 14:38.

forward, then I shall be making progress.”²⁵ Regardless of success or failure, what one has practiced in the process remains in oneself. That virtue one has accumulated in oneself is intact and self-rewarding. Just as flowers are always fragrant whether there be a person who can smell it or not, one’s virtues are always beautiful and worth pursuing.²⁶ Therefore, a gentleman cultivates himself in any circumstances. Virtues are ends in themselves. Virtues are self-sufficient.

This theory of self-sufficient virtue gave Kongzi’s ethical project a wholly different outlook from that of the *Documents*. The *Documents* depicts the sage kings as being ceaselessly attentive to and extremely cautious in their pursuits of virtue. The sage kings felt as if they were treading on a tiger’s tail or walking on thin ice. They were always worried that their conduct was not virtuous enough. They were never fully content with their goodness and their practices of goodness. They took heed of the attitude of humility, which I call an ethics of uncertainty. By contrast, Kongzi’s attitude is completely the opposite. In the *Lunyu*, instead of fearful and anxious images of the ancient kings, we encounter the joyful portrayal of Kongzi.²⁷ He was described as a person at ease: 子溫而厲 威而不猛 恭而安 “Kongzi is cordial yet stern, awe-inspiring yet not fierce, and respectful yet at ease.”²⁸ Also, in his own word, 仁者不憂 “The

²⁵ *Lunyu* 9:19.

²⁶ This simile of flower is borrowed from the excavated text “Qiong da yi shi” 窮達以時 (Failure and Success Depend on Times) from Guodian 郭店. This text, in a similar way to Kongzi, introduces the notion of contingency into the doctrine of *tianming*. It claims that man’s moral action cannot ensure its corresponding outcomes, and that man cannot understand mysterious operations of the universe. Furthermore, like Kongzi, it also introduces the self-sufficient theory of virtue: regardless of whether one is recognized by *tian* or by other worthies, one’s virtue and merits are intact. Both Kongzi and the author of “Qiong da yi shi” present a quite similar solution to the inadequacy of moral economy. I will discuss this excavated text in the last chapter of this part one.

²⁷ Of course, the extremely cautious and anxious image of the virtuous did not abruptly vanish in the *Lunyu*. For instance, Kongzi’s disciple, Zengzi 曾子, who is renown for his filial piety, still continues the image of former kings. 曾子有疾 召門弟子曰 啓予足 啓予手 詩云 戰戰兢兢 如臨深淵 如履薄冰 而今而後 吾知免夫 小子 When he was seriously ill, Zengzi summoned his disciples and said, “Take a look at my hands. Take a look at my feet. The *Book of Poetry* says, ‘In fear and trembling, as if approaching a deep abyss, as if walking on thin ice.’ Only now am I sure of being spared, my young friends.” *Lunyu* 8:3.

²⁸ *Lunyu* 7:38.

benevolent never worry,”²⁹ and 君子坦蕩蕩 小人長戚戚 “The gentleman is calm and easy of mind, while the petty man is always full of anxiety.”³⁰

Then, how was Kongzi able to divest of the transmitted images of the sage kings, whom he held in high esteem? As I mentioned, Kongzi’s belief in the self-sufficiency of virtue brought significant changes in the image of virtuous people. Unlike the former sage kings, who always worried that their virtue may not be sufficient to bring out good results or to be recognized by *tian*, Kongzi believed that even a small amount of virtue is worthwhile. As he put it, even if we fail to make a huge mountain, in the process we advance, however small that might be. To put it another way, it is a question of half a cup of virtue.³¹ The former sage kings see it as half empty, while Kongzi sees it as half full. As a consequence, in the former, the uncertain or even pessimistic attitude toward the self becomes the motivation for further development of virtue; in the latter, Kongzi’s positive and optimistic attitude eases the pressure and anxiety involved in moral cultivation. Instead of worry and anxiety, usually developed in the former case, Kongzi’s version of self-cultivation generates confidence and certainty in moral agents that “We are making progress.”

This complete change in the portrayal of the cultivation process is not unrelated to Kongzi’s answer to the inadequacy of moral economy. In the *Documents*, the sage kings firmly believed that the world operates by moral order. Their strong conviction in the moral universe paradoxically led them to adopt a less confident and more modest attitude toward the self in their pursuits of goodness. The thought that even the slightest misdemeanor could bring them into a disastrous situation would not let them be at ease. By contrast, the contingent aspect that

²⁹ *Lunyu* 9:29 and 14:28.

³⁰ *Lunyu* 7:37.

³¹ Half a cup of virtue does not mean that the virtues of the former sages kings as well as Kongzi were half fulfilled. This simile just demonstrates the way they see the process of moral cultivation.

Kongzi incorporated into the moral universe led him away from the firm conviction that the sage kings had shown toward the world. Despite his several attempts to remedy and complement the partial failure of moral economy and his voluntary resolution to adhere to the moral universe, the world no longer operates solely according to moral order. The universe turns into a contingent place. This uncertainty toward the world, however, led Kongzi to take a confident stance toward the self, virtue accumulated in the self. Virtue, even if it fails to bloom and fails to produce fruits, is valuable in itself. Virtue is the very evidence that one is living a good and worthy life.

To conclude, in the *Documents*, the sage kings take an ethics of confidence toward the world and an ethics of uncertainty toward the self. In Kongzi's ethical system, however, these positions completely change: he employs an ethics of uncertainty toward the world and an ethics of confidence toward the self.

	The Documents	The Lunyu
The Universe	The ethics of confidence (strict moral economy)	The ethics of uncertainty (partial failure of moral economy)
The Self	The ethics of uncertainty (the virtue of humility)	The ethics of confidence (the self-sufficiency of virtue)

Therefore, in the *Lunyu*, the gentleman is no longer depicted as a trembling figure, but is defined as a person who is free from worries and fears and takes joy in his own virtue.³²

³² 司馬牛問君子 子曰 君子不憂不懼 曰 不憂不懼 斯謂之君子已乎 子曰 內省不疚 夫何憂何懼 Sima Niu asked about the gentleman. Kongzi said, "The gentleman is free from worries and fears." "In that case, can a man be said to be a gentleman simply because he is free from worries and fears?" The Kongzi said, "If on examining himself, a man finds nothing to reproach himself for, what worries and fears can he have?" *Lunyu* 12:4. In this passage, Kongzi provides the reason why the gentleman is free from worries and fears: because the gentleman

This strong confidence in the value of virtue probably made Kongzi fearless even in the face of death. The *Lunyu* records two instances of this.

子曰 天生德於予 桓魋其如予何

[When Huan Tui tried to kill Kongzi,] Kongzi says, “*Tian* has given me this virtue. What can Huan Tui do to me!”³³

子畏於匡 曰 文王既沒 文不在茲乎 天之將喪斯文也 後死者不得與於斯文也 天之未喪斯文也 匡人其如予何

When Kongzi was under siege in Kuang, he declares, “With King Wen dead, does not culture still exist here? If *tian* intends culture to be destroyed, those who came after King Wen would not have taken part in it. If *tian* does not intend this culture to perish, then what can the men of Kuang do to me!”³⁴

As a matter of fact, we are not sure about the exact implication of these two passages.³⁵ One possible interpretation, provided by most traditional commentators, is since *tian* has given virtue to Kongzi and *tian* does not intend to destroy culture, Huan Tui or the people of Kuang cannot do any harm to Kongzi.³⁶ As it actually turned out, Kongzi, invulnerable to any harm

is confident in his way of virtuous living. However, in another passage, Kongzi also says that there are three things that the gentlemen hold in awe. 孔子曰 君子有三畏 畏天命 畏大人 畏聖人之言 小人不知天命而不畏也 狎大人 侮聖人之言 Kongzi says, “The gentleman stands in awe of three things. He is in awe of *tianming*. He is in awe of great man. He is in awe of the words of the sages. The petty man, being ignorant of *tianming*, does not stand in awe of it. He treats great men with insolence and the words of the sages with derision.” *Lunyu* 16:8. In my opinion, these three things, *tianming*, great man, and the words of the sages, are external things. As a matter of fact, they directly relate to the gentleman’s moral development, as they set the standard, present the goal, and provide exemplary cases. In other words, the gentlemen can take joy in their own moral development, while respecting external guidance.

³³ *Lunyu* 7:23.

³⁴ *Lunyu* 9:5. In Kuang, Kongzi was mistaken to be Yang Hu 陽虎, who the people of Kuang held a grudge against. For the detailed story and interpretations of the above two incidents, see Annping Chin, *Confucius: A Life of Thought and Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007): 100-104.

³⁵ Most commentators agree that these two passages tell the same thing: the resolute attitude of Kongzi in adversity.

³⁶ For instance, Bao Xian 包咸, Ma Rong 馬融, Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), and Liu Baonan 劉寶楠 (1791-1855), all agree on this interpretation.

and damage, was able to escape from the malicious attempts of Huan Tui and the people of Kuang. Yet, there is another possible interpretation. In my understanding, Kongzi expressed his firm conviction that any circumstance, even one that is life-threatening, can neither change the way he is nor his ardent pursuit of virtue. In this case, even if Huan Tui and the people of Kuang were not able to harm him, it was not because Kongzi's virtue or *tian* protected him. It was by sheer luck. In other words, Kongzi, unfortunately, could have been harmed or killed in those situations. The truth is that whatever might have happened to Kongzi, he did not give up his pursuit of virtue.

The difference between the above two interpretations is where to locate the source of Kongzi's unperturbed attitude. The traditional commentators located it in Kongzi's belief in a moral *tian*: *tian* intends to continue the flourishing culture from antiquity. On the other hand, my interpretation locates it in Kongzi's belief in virtue: virtue, which is given by *tian*, is perfect and complete. These two interpretations are not at odd with Kongzi's overall thought: Kongzi tried to conform to the workings of moral economy and he also promoted the self-sufficiency theory of virtue. However, to take into consideration Kongzi's view that the universe is a contingent place, these passages are more likely to demonstrate his firm adherence to virtue rather than mysterious and marvelous effects of virtue and protection of *tian*.³⁷

³⁷ In Kongzi's ethical system, this ethics of confidence in the self and the virtue further developed into an ethics of joy. Philip Ivanhoe argues that in early Confucianism, happiness lies in the following the Way, which is something grander than our conventional, self-centered self. Accordingly, living a virtuous life in accordance with the Way enables people to escape from mundane concerns, fears, and anxieties. Instead, it provides us with a new source of satisfaction and joy. According to him, a single character 樂 (*le*, "joy") captures the essential conception of happiness in the *Lunyu*. Kongzi was the very one who was able to reach this state of joy. For instance, Kongzi defined himself as following: 其爲人也 發憤忘食 樂以忘憂 不知老之將至云爾 "I am the kind of man who forgets to eat when he tries to solve a problem that has been driving him to distraction, who is so fully of joy that he forgets his worries, and who does not notice the onset of old age," and 七十而從心所欲 不踰矩 "At the age of seventy, he followed his heart's desire without overstepping the line." *Lunyu* 7:19 and 2:4, respectively. I think that an ethics of confidence in the self became the foundation for his further development of an ethics of joy. An ethics of joy is the most advanced form of the ethics of confidence. See Philip Ivanhoe, "Happiness in Early Chinese Thought."

Nevertheless, Kongzi's theory of the self-sufficiency of virtue is not without problems, particularly in regard to the characteristics of Ru ethical thought. Most Ru virtues are basically relational and social, which means that they require external conditions. For instance, at a theoretical level, it is impossible for an orphan to cultivate filial piety (*xiao* 孝) simply because he or she does not have a proper object of that particular virtue.³⁸ This might be one of the reasons that Sima Niu 司馬牛 bemoaned the fact that he did not have a brother; he lacked the context of practicing and enjoying brotherhood (*ti* 悌). Upon hearing Sima's lamentation, Zixia admonishes him:

商聞之矣 死生有命 富貴在天 君子敬而無失 與人恭而有禮 四海之內 皆兄弟也
君子何患乎無兄弟也

"I have heard that life and death are a matter of *ming*; wealth and honor depend on *tian*. The gentleman is reverent and faultless, respectful to others and has ritual propriety. For him, everyone in the world is his brother. Why would the gentleman worry about not having brothers?"³⁹

In her study of ancient Greek thought about luck, Martha Nussbaum points out that any strict view of the self-sufficiency of virtue "requires a quite radical rethinking of the elements of a life that make for flourishing."⁴⁰ Likewise, Zixia redefined the usual concept of brotherhood based

³⁸ Surely, an orphan can develop filial piety toward his or her adoptive parents. Furthermore, having parents and siblings are not just regarded as providing the context for the exercise of the virtues. Having family is intrinsic to human happiness.

³⁹ *Lunyu* 12:5. According to commentaries, Sima Niu actually had a brother, Huan Tui, who tried to kill Kongzi as seen in *Lunyu* 7:23.

⁴⁰ According to Martha Nussbaum, like Kongzi, Socrates advocated a view that virtue is self-sufficient. But, she argues that such a view is profoundly controversial. This view, on the one hand, narrows down the scope of human flourishing into a virtuous state of character, which is least dependent on external conditions; on the other hand, it excludes many important aspects of a human life, which are often dependent on external conditions, as unrelated to human flourishing. By quoting Aristotle, she points out that this kind of life is so impoverished as to be not worth the living. Despite their similar view on virtue, Kongzi, instead of omitting significant aspects of human life, tries to redefine and reincorporate them to make our life much richer and fuller. Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, xiii-xiv.

on biological relationship into a totally new concept with a moral basis.⁴¹ Zixia claims that one's virtue is not merely self-sufficient, but also it can reconstruct and reorganize one's life in a much more meaningful way. The virtuous way of life can turn even the most miserable human event into a happy one. Kongzi also employed the exact same strategy in order to account for his political failure.

或謂孔子曰 子奚不為政 子曰 書云 孝乎惟孝 友于兄弟 施於有政 是亦為政
奚其為為政

Someone said to Kongzi, "Why do you not take part in government?" Kongzi said, "The *Documents* says, 'Oh, Simply by being a good son and friendly to his brothers a man can exert an influence upon government.' In so doing a man is, in fact, taking part in government. How can there be any question of his having actively to take part in government."⁴²

By imparting political significance to ethical conduct in the domestic realm, Kongzi explains away his own failure in politics. In his radical redefinition of politics, even a small action within the family is interpreted as an active participation in political activity. Accordingly, his success in the familial domain can have significant political implication.

However morally desirable and ethically superior these radical solutions might be, they do not amount to practical solutions to the problem. They just elegantly bypass the problem. They do not change the fact that Sima Niu did not have a brother and Kongzi indeed failed in his political career. Furthermore, most important of all, Kongzi himself did not just remain

⁴¹ However, Zhu Xi's comment shows a certain reservation on Zixia's redefinition of brotherhood. Zhu Xi says, 蓋子夏欲以寬牛之憂 而為是不得已之辭 讀者不以辭害意 可也 "Probably, Zixia wanted to relieve Sima Niu's worry and so he cannot but say this. [Therefore] those who read this passage should not misunderstand the [original] intention [of Zixia] due to his words." *Lunyu jizhu* 論語集注 12:5. Similarly, Tansen also comments, 子夏作廣闊之言慰之 非仁人之言 "Zixia made up a word of broad scope and comforted him. [However] this is not the word of a benevolent person." *Non □ kog □ mju* 論語古今註 12:5.

⁴² *Lunyu* 2:21.

satisfied with his own moral perfection. Flowers are fragrant wherever they are situated, but Kongzi preferred to be a flower on the sidewalk rather than a flower in a deep valley. He wanted to be recognized, appreciated, and thus employed by rulers to implement his Way in society.⁴³ In addition, he must have wanted to live a long, healthy life among his family and friends and fulfill the diverse roles that would enable him to acquire various moral qualities. In other words, even though Kongzi advocates the view that virtues are ends in themselves, he certainly wishes for the spread of his virtue into the world. Therefore, when Yan Yuan died, he deplored, 噫 天喪予 天喪予 “Alas! *Tian* has left me bereft! *Tian* has left me bereft!”⁴⁴ As the phoenix and the River Map (Hetu 河圖) never appeared, he also wailed, 吾已矣夫 “I am done for!”⁴⁵ He considered Yan Yuan’s death and the absence of good omen as a sign that he would not be able to implement his Way in the world as the sage kings had done. His disappointment and frustration reveals how passionate he was in search of a successful political career.⁴⁶

⁴³ 子曰 君子疾沒世而名不稱焉 Kongzi says, “The gentleman hates not leaving behind a name when he is gone.” *Lunyu* 15:20.

⁴⁴ *Lunyu* 11:9. According to Mark Csikszentmihalyi, the most popular interpretation during the Han dynasty is that Yan Yuan’s death was considered as a sign from *tian* that Kongzi would not succeed to the sage king. This reading was also adopted in *Lunyu zhengyi* 論語正義 by Liu Baonan 劉寶楠 (1791-1855). For the detailed discussion of this passage, see Mark Csikszentmihalyi, “Allotment and Death in Early China.”

⁴⁵ *Lunyu* 9:9.

⁴⁶ It is important to note, however, that it was actually Kongzi himself who denied the opportunities he longed for. The *Lunyu* records several instances indicating Kongzi himself turned down the offers given to him (e.g., *Lunyu* 5:22, 17:1, 18:3, and 18:4). His position is well summed up in the following passage:

子貢曰 有美玉於斯 韞匱而藏諸 求善賈而沽諸 子曰 沽之哉 沽之哉! 我待賈者也
Zigong said, “If you had a piece of beautiful jade here, would you put it away safely in a box or would you try to sell it for a good price?” Kongzi said, “Of course I would sell it. Of course I would sell it. All I am waiting for is the right offer.” *Lunyu* 9:13

Kongzi told Zigong that he is waiting for the right price. This means that there may have been offers but he did not get the offer he wanted. He regards his jade so precious that he cannot sell it at a low price. This position is also consistent with another major theme in the *Lunyu* and the *Mengzi* as well: 天下有道則見 無道則隱 “When the Way prevails in the world, one should take a position; when the Way disappears, one should hide from the world.” Like he cannot sell his jade at any price, he cannot take an office whenever there is a chance. He is waiting for a right opportunity. But then, how can he change the world in disorder if he hides from it and why should he take a position when the world is already harmonious? I think that this is the so-called problem of “dirty hands.” According to Philip Ivanhoe, “As in other traditions of virtue, there is always the possibility that an overcautious attention to one’s own character can lead to a version of the problem of ‘dirty hands;’ i.e., an

Consequently, we find two different images of Kongzi in the *Lunyu*. One is of him as the kind of person who keeps on trying despite knowing that it is no avail. Another is that like other ordinary human beings, he strives for success, but when he fails, he is deeply troubled. These two images are not necessarily contradictory *per se*. The second image perhaps simply highlights the humane aspect of a sage Kongzi. He was an utterly optimistic, fearless figure, but as a human being, he sometimes revealed his true feelings.

However, I do not think that these two different images are merely illustrating Kongzi's extraordinary but yet ordinary humane characteristics. Rather, I think that they are the reflections of inherent tension in Kongzi's ethical thought. Philip Ivanhoe correctly points out a deep tension in early Ru ethics:

On the one hand we are told that the Way is the only means to a good society and that following the Way is the most satisfying of lives, and yet we are told that these should not be our only or even our primary motivation for pursuing the Way. We are to pursue the Way because it is the Way, not just for the good consequences associated with it.⁴⁷

On the one hand, as seen in the view of moral economy, virtues are the best means to a good life and a good society.⁴⁸ On the other hand, virtues are, not means, but ends in themselves. These two views on virtue create an irresolvable tension. Even if virtues promise the best kind of life,

unwillingness to take any action that involves even the slightest taint to one's character." Even though Ivanhoe notes that this problem is not prominent in the Ru tradition, I think it is as conspicuous as the above cases. Accordingly, in a sense, it was not Kongzi's unfortunate fate, but rather his own moral excellence that actually prevented him from a successful political career. See Philip Ivanhoe, "Character Consequentialism," 68.

⁴⁷ Philip Ivanhoe, "Character Consequentialism," 58.

⁴⁸ Here, what I mean by a good life and a good society is not just in ethical terms. A good life and a good society are morally correct, but at the same time, supplied with non-moral goods. In addition, what I mean by the best means is that moral living is the most proper means to a good life. For instance, one can achieve wealth from various means. But it is only virtuous person who is worthy of possessing and enjoying wealth, and it is only virtuous person who can use wealth properly to make his virtuous life fuller.

at the moment when we use them as a means to pursue certain consequences, they lose their authenticity and can no longer be called genuine virtues.⁴⁹ To the contrary, virtues are self-sufficient and self-rewarding, and thus, Yan Hui was able to be content with a single bowl of rice and a ladle of water.

But if Yan Hui's virtuous life is completely self-sufficient and self-rewarding, why did Kongzi deplore for his untimely death and why did Kongzi say his short allotment is unfortunate?⁵⁰ And if a virtuous life only promises one to have a life of Yan Hui, who would prefer to live such a life? In other words, Kongzi's conception of a good human life consists of not only virtue, but also of other external goods, such as health, longevity, family, wealth, and political position. Accordingly, the overemphasis on the self-sufficiency of virtue tends to disregard another essential trait of virtue, virtue as a means to favorable external goods. One of the most difficult tasks in Kongzi's ethical system is to maintain a fine balance between these two opposing views: virtue as a means and virtue as an end in itself.

In sum, Kongzi's response to the doctrine of *tianming* is boiled down to two points: the notion of contingency and the theory of the self-sufficiency of virtue. On the one hand, in order to solve the problem of moral economy in coping with the severity of reality, Kongzi introduces the notion of contingency into the moral universe: moral order sometimes can fail. From time to time, good people fall into unfortunate hardship and bad people fortunately escape from the punishments they deserve. In Kongzi's ethical system, the strict moral universe of the former sages turned into a contingent place. On the other hand, in order to manage the uncertainty newly introduced in the world, Kongzi encourages people to have confidence in virtue. Even in

⁴⁹ F. H. Bradley writes, "To do good for its own sake is virtue, to do it for some ulterior end or object, not itself good, is never virtue; and never to act but for the sake of an end, other than doing well and right, is the mark of vice." F. H. Bradley, *Ethical Studies* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1927), 56.

⁵⁰ For different commentarial interpretations on Kongzi's reaction to the death of Yan Hui (particularly, *Lunyu* 11:9 and 11:10), see Mark Csikszentmihalyi, "Allotment and Death in Early China."

cases when virtuous actions fail to bring about favorable outcomes, virtues are in themselves intact, complete, and pleasurable in itself. We should cultivate virtues because they are ends in themselves and a necessary part of a good life.

As a consequence, Kongzi completely turns the ethical modes of the *Documents* inside out. Kongzi takes a confident stance toward the self and virtue, while he takes an uncertain stance toward the world. However, the actual picture is not as simple as this. As noted earlier, even though Kongzi turned the world into a contingent place, he voluntarily adhered to the world operated by moral order. He acknowledged that the world at times fails to follow the principle of moral order, but he marginalized occasional failures as a deviation from the standard, and thereby he tried to continue the belief in moral economy present in the *Documents* and the doctrine of *tianming*. Accordingly, on the one hand, he advocates that virtues are ends in themselves, but at the same time, he still believes that virtues are the best means to the most flourishing human life.

However, despite his earnest attempts to defend moral economy, it appeared to Mozi that Kongzi's introduction of contingency is a serious deviation from the original doctrine of *tianming* and the teachings of sage kings. Mozi, who also claimed to be a faithful successor of the early tradition, tried to recover and reconstruct the way of former sages, which he thought had been substantially distorted and degenerated by Kongzi. In the next chapter, I will investigate what were Mozi's main attacks regarding early Ru teaching, why they became the targets of his criticism, and in what way Mozi restored the teachings of ancient sages.

3. Mozi's Reconstruction of Moral Economy

In this chapter, I will examine one of Mozi's criticisms on Ru ethical teaching: what was his main attack on the Ru notion of *ming* 命 and why it became the target of his attack. But, in order to answer these questions, I will begin by investigating Mozi's ethical system in its own right. Broadly speaking, Mozi's teaching consists of two main parts: moral economy and impartial care. In the first section, I will look into Mozi's reconstruction of moral economy, and this will clarify his response to Kongzi's introduction of contingency and his different orientation of virtue. In the second section, I will offer a new interpretation of Mozi's doctrine of impartial care 兼愛, and this will illuminate his own response to the intrinsic problems of moral economy.

Kongzi was renowned for his position as a transmitter of an earlier tradition, but Mozi 墨子 was not that different from Kongzi in this respect. Mozi established the validity of his ethical project at least partly on claims about the practices of sage kings, and ultimately he tried to restore the teachings of former sages, albeit in his own way. His views in regard to the doctrine of *tianming* were no exception. Like the Duke of Zhou, Mozi firmly believed that *tian* intervenes in human affairs, punishing tyrants and rewarding the virtuous by allowing them to rule instead. Accordingly, despite his strong anti-war position, he justified wars like the Shang's conquest of the Xia and the Zhou's conquest of the Shang as "punitive wars" (*zhu* 誅), as opposed to "aggressive wars" (*gong* 攻), which are waged solely to benefit the ruler's interests.¹ Taken as a whole, Mozi's philosophy can be understood as an effort to restore the system of moral economy found in the *tianming* doctrine, as it was advocated by the sage kings.

¹ Mozi, "Against Offensive Warfare III" 非攻下 (19.4).

According to Mozi, the reason that the world is in disorder is due to the absence of a proper moral economy, and it is due to the absence of a unified moral standard that the proper moral economy fails to operate. In the chapters, “Exalting Unity” 尚同, Mozi contends that the most crucial task to bring order to the world is the unification of moral standards. Mozi surmises:

古者民始生 未有刑政之時 蓋其語人異義 是以一人則一義 二人則二義 十人則十義 其人茲衆 其所謂義者亦茲衆 是以人是其義 以非人之義 故交相非也. ... 天下之亂 若禽獸然

“In ancient times, when people first came into being, and there were as yet no laws or government, so it was that in their speech different people had different moral principles. This means that, if there was one person, there was one principle; if there were two people, there were two principles; and if there were ten people, there were ten principles. The more people there were, the more things there were that were spoken of as principles. This was a case of people affirming their own principles and condemning those of other people. The consequence of this was mutual condemnation. ... So the world was in a state of disorder comparable to that amongst birds and beasts.”²

Mozi thinks that in the state of nature, the world was in utmost chaos, because each person had his or her own opinion and explanation about what is right and what is wrong. Since people regarded their own views as absolutely right, they condemned others’ views as incorrect and thus ended up contending with one another. Mozi believes that the ultimate source of the conflict between these diverse views is the absence of a leader, who could achieve a consensus

² “Exalting Unity I” 尚同上 (11.1). The description of a state of nature appears all the three chapters of “Exalting Unity.” As for the translation of the *Mozi*, I generally follow Ian Johnston’s translation, but with modification when necessary. For the chapter and section numbers, I follow Ian Johnston’s and put them in parenthesis. Ian Johnston, *The Mozi: A Complete Translation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). Mozi’s description of the state of nature is often compared to Thomas Hobbes’ version. For a detailed comparison between Mozi and Hobbes on this subject, see Bryan W. Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism*, 162-166.

about moral standards. Accordingly, he claims that the key to putting the world in order is to select the most benevolent, worthy, sagacious, and judicious person as a leader, i.e., the Son of *tian* 天子, and let him make a clear distinction between right and wrong, and between benefit and harm.³

Once this task has been completed, the Son of *tian* would then issue a proclamation:

上之所是 必皆是之 所非 必皆非之 “What the superior takes to be right, all must take to be right. What the superior takes to be wrong, all must take to be wrong.”⁴ People, abandoning whatever they originally held to be right or wrong, must follow the standard laid down by the Son of *tian*. They do not need to contemplate the question why certain things are right to do and why others are not.⁵ They simply follow the moral standard of the Son of *tian*, because it is set by the most virtuous and the most worthy man of the world.

However, since people do not truly comprehend the intrinsic value of moral conduct, they do not have an internal motive for moral actions. Therefore, the Son of *tian* needs an

³ In “Exalting Unity I (11.2),” Mozi says, 是故選天下之賢可者 立以爲天子 天子立 “Therefore it is best to select the most worthy and able in the world and establishes him as the Son of *tian*.” In “Exalting Unity II (12.2),” Mozi says, 是故選擇天下賢良聖知辯慧之人 立以爲天子 使從事乎一同天下之義 “Therefore the man who is selected is the most worthy, sagacious, skilled in discussion in the world and he is established as the Son of *tian*, and gives him the task of bringing unity to the principles of the world.” Also, “Exalting Unity II (12.6)” says, 天子者 固天下之仁人也 “The Son of *tian* must certainly be the world’s most benevolent man.” In the first two passages, the unspecified subject who selects the Son of *tian* must be *tian*. This aspect leads some contemporary scholars to consider Mozi’s ethical theory as a divine command theory: a divine *tian* selects the ruler. However, there is a controversy concerning reading Mozi’s thought as a divine command theory. The key point of this controversy is well summarized by Bryan Van Norden: “Do the Mohists follow the will of Heaven because it is impartial, or are the Mohists impartial because it is the will of Heaven?” In other words, the question is what is the fundamental source of rightness in Mozi’s thought. Van Norden seems to put ethics over the will of Heaven, by concluding “Heaven favors what is righteous because it is righteous.” For the discussion between the utilitarian and divine command interpretations of Mozi’s thought, see Dennis M. Ahern, “Is Mo Tzu a Utilitarian?” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 3, 2 (1976): 185-193; Dirck Vorenkamp, “Another Look at Utilitarianism in Mo-Tzu’s Thought,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 19, 4 (1992): 423-443; David E. Sole, “Mo Tzu and the Foundations of Morality,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 26, 1 (1999): 37-48; Kristopher Duda, “Reconsidering Mo Tzu on the Foundations of Morality,” *Asian Philosophy* 11, 1 (2001): 23-31; and Bryan W. Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism*, 145-149.

⁴ “Exalting Unity I” 尚同上 (11.2).

⁵ However, in persuading people to follow the moral standard, Mozi also rely on the power of rational argument. This will be discussed soon.

instrument to encourage good actions and prevent bad actions. One way to motivate people is a system of rewards and punishments: 富貴以道其前 明罰以率其后 “With wealth and honor, one must lead people from the front; with clear punishment, one must push them from behind.”⁶ Since people want rewards and fear punishments, by connecting these natural feelings of like and dislike to moral values, the Son of *tian* guides people in the right direction.⁷ And this system of rewards and punishments is nothing but an imposition of moral economy on human society.

Through a complete implementation of a system of moral economy based on the uniform standard of moral values and the system of rewards and punishments, the Son of *tian* can build a flourishing and orderly society.⁸ In such a society, the good and the bad are always rewarded and punished appropriately; there is neither mistaken killing of the innocent nor

⁶ “Exalting Unity III” 尚同下 (13.11). Mozi also adds that the sage kings of antiquity also employed the same method in order to regulate the ordinary people who do not respect the standard of the superiors. 是故子墨子言 古者聖王爲五刑 請以治其民 譬若絲縷之有紀 罔罟之有綱 所連收天下之百姓 不尙同其上者也 This is the reason Mozi said, “The ancient kings made the five punishments, which were truly how they governed the people. The five punishments were, like the main thread in a skein of silk or the controlling rope of a fishing net, the means used to bring into line the ordinary people of the world who did not respect to be like those above.” “Exalting Unity I” 尚同上 (11.5).

⁷ According to Philip Ivanhoe, the system of rewards and punishments is only one of the techniques that Mozi resorts to as a way to influence people’s behavior. Ivanhoe specifies three additional techniques: people’s tendency toward reciprocity (people tend to respond in kind to the treatment they receive), people’s tendency toward superior’s approval (people tend to act as their ruler wishes), and lastly, the power of rational argument (people tend to act according to what is right). For instance, when the Son of *tian* unified the moral standard, he would not have resorted to rewards and punishments, reciprocity, or currying superiors’ favor (However, this last one might be possible. The Son of *tian* might try to curry favor of *tian*). It must be through the rational argument that this most virtuous and wise man of the world distinguished between good and bad and between right and wrong, and acted accordingly. However, as Ivanhoe suggests, even if rational arguments provide strong motivation to act, they might apply only to a limited number of people. In regard to the majority of people, the other three methods would be better and easier ways to guide people’s behavior. Chris Fraser, in his study of the Mohist view of motivation, also identifies a variety of sources of moral motivation. However, he seems to put much more weight to the power of rational argument, by saying that “Since *shi* 是 and *fei* 非 attitudes have motivational force, a convincing argument or explanation that some practice is *shi* or *fei* will generally sufficient to move agents to perform or avoid it.” See Philip Ivanhoe, “Mohist Philosophy,” in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* vol. 6 (London; New York: Routledge Press, 1999), 453; Chris Fraser, “Mohism and Motivation,” in Chris Fraser, Dan Robins, and Timothy O’Leary, eds., *Ethics in Early China: An Anthology* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011): 83-104.

⁸ I think that the emphasis on the hierarchy in the chapters of “Exalting Unity” should be understood as a tool for perfect realization of moral economy in society.

fortunate escape of the guilty.⁹ This is how Mozi conceives of a well-ordered society.

Unfortunately, however, the society where Mozi lived was not far from the state of nature. It still lacked the right unified moral standard: those who govern have their own standard of values, whereas those who are governed have another. Mozi says:

今王公大人之爲刑政則反此 政以爲便譬 宗于父兄故舊 以爲左右 置以爲正長
民知上置正長之非正以治民也 是以皆比周隱匿 而莫肯尙同其上 是故上下不同義
若苟上下不同義 賞譽不足以勸善 而刑罰不足以沮暴

“Nowadays, the punishments and governance of princes and high officers is the opposite of this. They surround themselves with flatters and use kindred, fathers and elder brothers, old friends and acquaintances, making them their assistants and establishing them as government leaders. The people know that those above, in establishing government leaders, are not doing so for the purpose of bringing order to the people, which is why they all form cliques and deceive one another and are not willing to value unity with their superiors. This is why both above and below there is no unity of principles. If those above and below do not have unity of principles, then rewards and praise are not enough to encourage goodness and punishments and penalties are not enough to put a stop to evil.”¹⁰

Those who governed during the time of Mozi valued nobility, kinship, close association, and fine appearance, instead of virtue and ability. Their standards lead to factionalism and favoritism, which are not the expectations of the common people. When the standards of those above and those below are not unified, Mozi argues, the system of moral economy cannot work properly. For example, suppose that a king ennobles and enriches a good-looking man (assuming that this man does not possess any quality other than his handsome face) because the

⁹ 是以賞當賢罰當暴 不殺不辜 不失有罪 則此尙同之功也 This is why rewards were appropriately given to the worthy and punishments appropriately inflicted on the bad. There was no killing of innocent nor was there letting off the guilty. This, then, was the good outcome of exalting unity. “Exalting Unity II” 尚同中 (12.12).

¹⁰ “Exalting Unity II” 尚同中 (12.10).

king values fine appearance. Even if this man is rewarded by the king, he cannot avoid the condemnation of people. People think the fine appearance of this man does not deserve being rewarded with wealth and honor. Thus, the king's rewards will not work to motivate people to do good. Suppose a king punishes a virtuous man. Even if this man was severely punished by the king, he is exalted by people because people recognize this man's virtues are worthy of respect. Thus, the king's punishments cannot exert any influence on people. This failure of moral economy, which Mozi thinks is the fundamental cause of the world's disorder, comes from the absence of the proper unified moral standard.

A description of a proper moral economy is one of the core teachings of Mozi's philosophy.¹¹ Almost half of the primary chapters of the *Mozi* are devoted to explaining, defending, and constructing the system of moral economy.¹² For instance, if the aforementioned chapters, entitled "Exalting Unity," are the general outline of Mozi's diagnosis and prescription of the world's disorder, the three chapters entitled "Exalting Worthies" 尚賢 are the specific applications of moral order in the political domain. According to Mozi, in employing officials, rulers also must follow the principle of moral economy. The logic is simple. If a king employs the virtuous, enriching them, ennobling them, respecting and praising them, all the people in his state will strive to become morally worthy. Then, his state will overflow with virtuous

¹¹ Generally, many scholars agree that the doctrine of "impartial care" (*jian'ai* 兼愛) is the signature doctrine of Mozi. In the next, I will argue that the doctrine of moral economy, which has not been given due attention, is one of the two wings of Mozi's ethical theory.

¹² The present version of the *Mozi* consists of 71 chapters (18 of which are missing). The core chapters of the *Mozi* are the chapters 8 to 39 (7 of which are missing). The core chapters are considered to present a coherent and complete picture of Mozi's philosophy. Thematically, the core chapters can be divided into three: essays on "impartial care," "moral economy," and "moderation." The chapters, "Against Offensive War" 非攻, "Moderation in Use" 節用, "Moderation in Funerals" 節葬, and "Against Music" 非樂, all treat the subject of moderation, which directly relates to physical and material benefits of the world. The chapters, "Impartial Care" 兼愛 and "Intention of *Tian*" 天志, concern the doctrine of impartial care. And all the remaining chapters and the "Intention of *Tian*" directly relate to the issue of moral economy. In other words, the three chapters on "Intention of *Tian*" bridge the two central doctrines of Mozi, impartial care and moral economy. The last chapter, "Against Ru" 非儒, concerns all the three subjects.

people, and naturally the state will regain order. This is the basic reason that the sage king Yao raised Shun from a humble position and enthroned him as his successor and that King Tang took Yi Yin, who once was a cook, as his minister.¹³ The sage kings made virtue the absolute standard of employment.

The famous chapter “Explaining Ghosts” 明鬼 also supports the system of moral economy.¹⁴ This chapter on supernatural beings has attracted considerable attention from scholars, who place special emphasis on the religious outlook implicit in Mozi’s thought.¹⁵ Along with the notion of *tian* as the ultimate authority of political and moral order, these mysterious and super-mundane beings indeed add a strong spiritual overtone to Mozi’s ethical system. For instance, ritual sacrifices, in which *tian*, spirits, and ancestors are venerated and commemorated, continued to play an important role in Mozi’s program. According to Mozi, in

¹³ It is said that Shun once farmed, made pottery, and also fished. A detailed story of Shun, Yi Yin, and others appear in “Exalting Worthies II, III” 尚賢中, 下.

¹⁴ There were originally three chapters, but the first two chapters are now lost. Only the last chapter, “Explaining Ghosts III” 明鬼下, survives today. As for the title of this chapter, Ian Johnston translates it as “Percipient Ghosts.” He interprets the first word “*ming* 明” as an adjective, meaning “clear-seeing” or “all-seeing.” He is right in pointing out that in the content of this chapter, “*ming* 明” used as a reference to the most salient attribute of ghosts and spirits as observers of human affairs. Accordingly, he concludes that the word “*ming*” in the title has double meaning: “Mo Zi is ‘explaining’ ghosts (and spirits) and these ghosts (and spirits) are themselves ‘all-seeing.’” I totally agree with his opinion. However, given that most of the titles are composed of verb and object, such as “Exalting Worthies”, I will stick to the same grammatical structure, translating as “Explaining Ghosts.” See Ian Johnston, *The Mozi*, lvii-lviii.

¹⁵ Mozi’s view on ghosts and spirits are often compared with Kongzi’s agnostic position. In the *Lunyu*, Kongzi was rather reticent about the spirit world. He only provides us with a short exhortation, 敬鬼神而遠之 “Revere ghosts and spirits but keep them at a distance.” *Lunyu* 6:22. By contrast, Mozi made a considerable effort to prove their existence. Despite these seemingly apparent differences, Mark Csikszentmihalyi interestingly points out that Kongzi’s agnostic attitude is characteristic of the Song Neo-Confucian reading of Kongzi, which was also inherited by contemporary scholars. According to his observation, unlike Song Neo-Confucians, early commentators of Han and Six Dynasties did not portray Kongzi as being ambivalent about the spirit world. In addition, by examining the word “*yuan*” 遠 in the excavated *Wuxing* 五行, Csikszentmihalyi suggests that there is an alternative reading of the above sentence, *Lunyu* 6: 22, which would not necessarily render agnostic interpretation. He writes, “While *yuan* is usually read in this context (*Lunyu* 6:22) to mean that Kongzi is ‘agnostic’ to the demons and spirits, this usage (不遠不敬 in the excavated *Wuxing* from Guodian) suggests distancing is simply a part of treating them in a ritually correct manner. ... *yuan* means keeping a suitable distance.” See note # 40 in his *Material Virtue*, 84 and 295. For a study of historical changes of the interpretation of Kongzi’s attitude toward spiritual beings, see Mark Csikszentmihalyi, “Confucius and the *Analec*tis in the Han,” 134-162.

the early period, people offered sacrifices to various spirits in order to prolong their life span.¹⁶ Mozi also warns that those who are not reverent and careful in sacrifices will be punished by ghosts and spirits.¹⁷

More importantly, in Mozi's system, spiritual beings are directly involved in rewarding and punishing human beings, and thereby ensuring the proper workings of moral economy, as rulers do in human governance. For example, in the *Mozi*, spiritual beings are portrayed as helping rulers in maintaining judicial fairness. As Mozi claims, the Son of *tian*, as the most virtuous and worthy man, must unify diverse moral standards and judge people and events according to that standard. But sometimes, kings, the most important and influential decision-maker, experience difficulties in making a correct decision, as in the following case:

昔者齊莊君之臣 有所謂王里國 中里微者 此二子者 訟三年而獄不斷 齊君由謙殺之 恐不辜 猶謙釋之 恐失有罪 乃使之人共一羊 盟齊之神社 二子許諾 于是泔血[]羊而灑其血 讀王里國之辭既已終矣 讀中里微之辭未半也 羊起而觸之 折其脚 祧神之而橐之 殪之盟所 當是時 齊人從者莫不見 遠者莫不聞 著在齊之春秋 諸侯傳而語之曰 請品先不以其請者 鬼神之誅至 若此其慳慳也

"Formerly, among the officials of Lord Zhuang of Qi, there was one called Wang Ligu and another called Zhongli Jiao. These two men had been engaged in a lawsuit for three years without any judgment being reached. The Lord of Qi considered putting both men to death but feared that one was innocent. He considered releasing both men but feared that one was guilty. Then he made the two men together bring a ram and take an oath on the Qi altars of soil and grain.

¹⁶ 于古曰 吉日丁卯 周代祝社方 歲於社者考 以延年壽 若無鬼神 彼豈有所延年壽哉 "In an ancient [writing] it is said, 'On the propitious day *ding-mao*, the official conducting the sacrifice and representing [the ruler] the prayers all around - to the spirits of the earth, to the spirits of the four directions, to the spirits of the year and to the spirits of ancestors - praying for the life [for the ruler].' If there were no ghosts and spirits, what could there have been to prolong life?" "Explaining Ghosts III" 明鬼下 (31.15). Ian Johnston notes that he was unable to locate the source of this quotation. He also notes that the meaning of this sentence is quite uncertain. However, it is obvious that ritual sacrifices were performed in order to extend men's life.

¹⁷ 諸侯傳而語之曰 諸不敬慎祭祀者 鬼神之誅 至若此其慳慳也 The feudal lords transmitted and spoke of it, saying: 'All those who are not reverential and careful in the sacrifices will suffer the punishment of the ghosts and spirits which will be very swift like this.'" "Explaining Ghosts III" 明鬼下 (31.7).

The two men agreed. Thereupon, [before the altar] a hole was dug, the ram's throat was cut and its blood was scattered. Wang Liguó then read his statement right through to the end. But when Zhongli Jiao was not yet halfway through reading his statement, the [dead] ram rose up and butted him, breaking his leg. As he stumbled and fell, he struck the altar and was killed at the place of the oath. At that time, there was not one of the Qi people in attendance who did not see it, and not one of those far away who did not hear of it. It was recorded in the *Spring and Autumn Annals of Qi*. The feudal lords transmitted it and spoke of it, saying, 'All those who swear oaths together but are untruthful will suffer the punishment of the ghosts and spirits which will be very swift like this.'¹⁸

The Lord Zhuang spent three years handling the lawsuit between his two officials, but he was unable to decide the case. He was afraid of letting go of the guilty and also afraid of killing the innocent. It was the sacrificial ritual that ultimately and rightly determined who was guilty. Zhongli Jiao, found guilty, was punished on the spot by spirit. In this case, the spirit world complements the inability of the human king, perfecting the workings of moral economy. As a result, the ancestral temple and the altar, where sacrifices are offered, become the symbol of judicial fairness. Mozi says:

故聖王其賞也必于祖 其僇也必于社 賞于祖者何也 告分之均也 僇于社者何也
告聽之中也

"Thus, when the sage kings bestowed their rewards, they invariably did so in the ancestral temple, and when they meted out punishment, they invariably did so at the altar of soil. Why did they bestow rewards in the ancestral temple? To announce that the distribution was just. Why did they mete out punishment at the altar of soil? To announce that the judgment was fair."¹⁹

¹⁸ "Explaining Ghosts III" 明鬼下 (31.8).

¹⁹ "Explaining Ghosts III" 明鬼下 (31.10). Ian Johnston seems to regard the addressee of this announcement to be the ghosts and spirits. But, I think it is possible that this announcement was directed to both the spirit world and people.

The sage kings distributed rewards in the ancestral temple and meted out punishment at the altar because they believed that ghosts and spirits definitely rewarded the worthy and punish the wicked.²⁰

And, I think it is this ability of ghosts and spirits to reward and punish, not merely their existence, that Mozi purports to demonstrate in the chapter, "Explaining Ghosts." In the beginning of this chapter, Mozi seems to identify two kinds of reason for disorder: 1) a doubt about the existence of ghosts and spirits, and 2) a doubt about their ability to reward and punish.²¹ Benjamin Wong and Hui-Chieh Loy make a similar observation. They argue that there are two kinds of 'unbelievers' in Mozi's view: "Those who do not believe that ghosts exist, and those who believe that they exist but not that they have the power to reward the good and punished the wicked."²² However, given that those who do not believe in the existence of ghosts and spirits naturally cannot have a belief in their power for retribution, they also fall into the second category. In other words, strictly speaking, there are not two types of unbelievers from the outset, but only one kind of unbeliever, the unbelievers of the retributive power of spiritual beings.²³

²⁰ 故古聖王必以鬼神也為賞賢而罰暴 是故賞必于祖 而僂必于社 "Therefore, the ancient sage kings undoubtedly thought that the ghosts and spirits, rewarded the worthy and punished wicked. This is the reason why rewards necessarily occurred in the ancestral temple and punishments at the altar of soil." "Explaining Ghosts III" 明鬼 (31.15).

²¹ 是以天下亂 此其故何以然也 則皆以疑惑鬼神之有與無之別 不明乎鬼神之能賞賢而罰暴也 "And so the world falls into disorder. What is the reason for such disorder? It is all because people doubt about whether ghosts and spirits exist or not, and because people are not clear about that ghosts and spirits are able to reward the worthy and punish the brutal." "Explaining Ghosts III" 明鬼下 (31.1).

²² They go on to claim that of the two types of unbelievers, it is likely that Mozi addresses the former, a more radical type of unbelievers. However, I do not agree with their opinion for the reason explained above. Mozi addresses those who do not believe in the ability of ghosts and spirits to reward and punish, and this group of people naturally includes those who do not believe in their existence. See Benjamin Wong and Hui-Chieh Loy, "War and Ghosts in Mozi's Political Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West* 54, 3 (2004): 343-363.

²³ This second group includes those who do not believe in the existence of spiritual beings as well as those who believe in their existence but not their retributive power. In total, there are three groups of people: those who do not believe in the existence of spiritual beings, and those who believe in the existence of spiritual beings, but this group is subdivided into the believers and the unbelievers of their retributive power.

In a similar manner, there are not two causes for the world's disorder, but only one: that is, a loss of belief in the power of spiritual beings to reward and punish. Mozi clarifies this point in the following statement: 今若使天下之人 偕若信鬼神之能賞賢而罰暴也 則夫天下豈亂哉 “Now if all the people of the world could be brought to believe that ghosts and spirits are able to reward the worthy and punish the wicked, then how could the world be in disorder?”²⁴ His emphasis is certainly on the supernatural assistance of moral economy, not on the mere existence of mysterious beings. Consequently, Mozi does not urge people to have a general belief in the existence of ghosts and spirits, but to have a particular belief in their retributive power.

This point is also made clear in the ways Mozi tries to prove the existence of ghosts and spirits. In order to do so, he employs three types of test: an appeal to common sense, an appeal to the practices of sage kings, and an appeal to utility.²⁵ As for the first test, Mozi provides five accounts of ghosts being witnessed by many people. Of the five stories, four stories are about a wicked man being punished by spirits.²⁶ In one remaining story, the virtuous Duke Mu of Zheng 鄭穆公 was granted additional nineteen years of life by the spirit called Gou Mang 句芒. None of the stories is a mere account of the extraordinary appearance of spirits. All these stories teach people the moral lesson that the good flourish and the bad suffer.²⁷

²⁴ “Explaining Ghosts III” 明鬼下 (31.1).

²⁵ Philip Ivanhoe, “Mohist Philosophy,” 453.

²⁶ The four stories are the story of Du Bo 杜伯, who was killed unjustly by King Xuan of Zhou 周宣王; the story of Zhuang Ziyi 莊子儀, who was also killed unjustly by Duke Jian of Yan 燕簡公; the story of Guan Gu 觀辜, who was remiss in his sacrificial duty and killed by spirits; and the story of Wang Ligu and Zhongli Jiao, which was already mentioned.

²⁷ With respect to these stories, Philip Ivanhoe makes an interesting observation in personal communication. The figures who are rewarded and punished in these stories are either kings or governmental officials: that is, they are men in power. In other words, they are somehow beyond the human system of rewards and punishments and can manipulate the systems of human governance. Consequently, Mozi's emphasis of the retributive power of spiritual beings could be a bulwark against a loophole in human system of rewards and punishments. In one way or another, Mozi tries to make the system of moral economy airtight: no fish, either little or great, slips through nets of the moral economy.

With respect to the second test, Mozi particularly emphasizes the religious practices of the sage kings. When the sage kings first established the state, they always built the ancestral temple and the altar. In performing ritual sacrifices, they paid great attention to every detail of its process.²⁸ For Mozi, these all showed that the sage kings believed that ghosts and spirits do exist.²⁹ In addition, the fact that rewards and punishments were all carried out in the ancestral temple and the altar shows that the sage kings also believed in the retributive power of ghosts and spirits.

From a comparative perspective, most interesting is the third test, Mozi's appeal to utility.³⁰ According to Mozi, regardless of the actual existence of ghosts and spirits, the belief in their existence and ritual practices based on that belief are beneficial in many ways. If ghosts and spirits really do exist, Mozi explains:

今絜爲酒醴粢盛 以敬慎祭祀 若使鬼神請有 是得其父母姒兄 而飲食之也
豈非厚利哉

"Now we make pure the wine and millet in order to carry out the sacrifices with reverence and circumspection, and if ghosts and spirits really exist, this provides

²⁸ 且惟昔者虞夏商周 三代之聖王 其始建國營都 日必擇國之正壇 置以爲宗廟 必擇木之修茂者 立以爲菽位 必擇國之父兄慈孝貞良者 以爲祝宗 必擇六畜之勝膂肥倅 毛以爲犧牲 圭璧琮璜 稱財爲度 必擇五穀之芳黃 以爲酒醴粢盛故酒醴粢盛與歲上下也 故古聖王治天下也 故必先鬼神而后人者 "There is also the case of the sage kings of the Three dynasties of former times - Yu Xia, Shang and Zhou - who, in the days when they first established the state and build the capital, certainly selected [the place for] the state's sacrificial altar and established it as being the ancestral temple. They certainly selected a place where the woodland was dense and luxuriant, establishing it as the altar of soil. They certainly selected the most compassionate, filial, upright and good of the fathers and older brothers and took them to be the leaders of the sacrifice. They certainly selected the most plump and pure-colored of the six domestic animals and took them as sacrificial victims. The several jade emblems were of an appropriate nature and size. They certainly selected the most fragrant and ripe of the five grains to use for the wine and millet so the wine and millet were a reflection of whether the year was good or bad. Thus, the ancient sage kings, in bringing order to the world, certainly put the ghosts and spirits first and the people second, as this shows." "Explaining Ghosts III" 明鬼下 (31.10).

²⁹ And given the fact that the belief of the existence of ghosts and spirits is a prerequisite for the belief in their retributive power, there is nothing odd about Mozi's attempt to prove their existence.

³⁰ This is why Mozi is often considered as a consequentialist. Consequentialism is an ethical theory that the consequence of one's action is the ultimate standard of the rightness of the action. So, in Mozi's view, the action that benefits people and society is the good action.

[deceased] father and mother, older sisters and older brothers with drink and food, so how is it not a substantial benefit?"³¹

One type of spirits to whom people offer sacrifices is dead ancestors.³² Thus, if spirits do exist, ritual sacrifice provides for dead parents and family members. Accordingly, ancestral sacrifices fulfill the obligations of filiality. On the other hand, even if ghosts and spirits do not exist, Mozi argues:

若使鬼神請亡 是乃費其所爲酒醴粢盛之財耳 自夫費之 非特注之污壑而棄之也
內者宗族 外者鄉里 皆得如具飲食之 雖使鬼神請亡 此猶可以合驩聚衆 取親于鄉里
“If, however, ghosts and spirits do not really exist, this might seem like a waste of the materials used for the wine and millet. But, on the matter of waste, it is not that we pour these materials into ditches and drains and throw them away. Within, the family members, and without, [the people] of the district and village, all get what is provided and drink and eat it, so, although ghosts and spirits may not truly exist, this still means that large numbers can meet together for enjoyment and this fosters a closeness [among the people] of district and village.”³³

In this passage, Mozi makes a Durkheimian claim that social solidarity is created through rituals. For Mozi, even if spirits do not exist, ritual practices generate a considerable social benefit, the unity among family members and community. In this sense, what should count is the belief in the people’s mind rather than the actual existence of spiritual beings.

³¹ “Explaining Ghosts III” 明鬼下 (31.19).

³² According to Mozi, there are three types of spirits: the ghosts of *tian* (天鬼), the ghosts and spirits of the mountains and rivers (山水鬼神), and the ghosts of people who have died (人死而爲鬼).

³³ “Explaining Ghosts III” 明鬼下 (31.19). Another good example of utility argument is found in the chapter “Gongmeng” 公孟 (48.16). In this story, Mozi entices a disciple to study by making him falsely believe that he can obtain an official post as a result of his study. This seems to indicate that what matters most for Mozi is also the belief of people in moral economy than the actual workings of moral order.

In addition, people's belief in the retributive power of ghosts and spirits generates a greater benefit to people and society: it brings order to the world. Ghosts and spirits, as divine agents, ensure the perfect operation of moral economy, and people who believe in a strict moral economy will strive to be morally good. I think, what matters most for Mozi is the belief of people rather than the actual power of ghosts and spirits.³⁴ Therefore, the ultimate purpose of this chapter is, by demonstrating the existence of ghosts and spirits and their retributive power through various means, to inculcate in people a belief that good people are always rewarded and bad people are always punished. And this belief will influence people to be ethical and thereby the world will be ordered.

³⁴ Philip Ivanhoe warns against a possible mistake that can result from an argument based on utility. He writes, "It is tempting to claim that Mozi is merely relying on a 'useful fiction' in order to achieve a greater good, but such an interpretation must ignore or explain away considerable textual evidence supporting his belief in ghosts and spirits, in particular the entire eight group of synoptic chapters. Such a view must also ignore or explain away Mozi's belief that Heaven guarantees that there is absolute justice in the world. Finally, such an interpretation must ignore the fact that Mozi did not support this claim with an appeal to its utility alone. In fact, he employed three basic tests for any doctrine." I totally agree that this utility argument should not underestimate Mozi's earnest efforts to prove the existence of ghosts and spirits and also his belief in *tian* as the absolute authority of the moral and political order. I also do not think that for Mozi, the actual existence of ghosts and spirits does not matter at all. I am not claiming that Mozi did not believe in their existence. Instead, as Ivanhoe points out, through various methods, Mozi tries to prove their existence and their power to reward and punish. Moreover, this utility argument about spiritual beings is not the fundamental part of this chapter, but rather an addendum for those who are still unpersuaded by Mozi's arguments in the main body. Therefore, the implications of this utility argument should not be overemphasized or exaggerated. However, what I want to emphasize is that all of his efforts are ultimately devoted to implanting a strong trust in people's mind. For instance, in this chapter Mozi demonstrates omniscience (明) as the distinctive attribute of ghosts and spirits. Mozi says, 鬼神之明不可為幽間廣澤山林深谷 鬼神之明必知之 "The omniscience of ghosts and spirits is such that it is not possible to do something in the darkest place, whether in wide marshes, in mountains and forests, or in deep ravines. The omniscience of ghosts and spirits will certainly know it." "Explaining Ghosts III" 明鬼下 (31.17). This remarkable capacity of ghosts and spirits as observers of human affairs seems to enable them to have a complete control of rewards and punishments: 鬼神之所賞無小必賞之 鬼神之所罰無大必罰之 "No matter how lowly, ghosts and spirits certainly reward him; no matter how noble, ghosts and spirits certainly punish him." "Explaining Ghosts III" 明鬼下 (31.18). What is intriguing about this is that, if, as Mozi tries to prove, ghosts and spirits do exist and they do have the power to reward and punish and nobody can escape from divine observance, then how can Mozi explain the disorder of the world, or the seeming injustice of the world? I think in this case Mozi is caught in a double bind between the divine power of retribution and the reality of an imperfect world. It seems that a way to be out of this dilemma is to put the burden on people, as Mozi did. The disorder of the world is due to people's disbelief in divine retribution; order will be restored when people regain the belief in divine retribution. Furthermore, as explained in the chapters "Exalting Unity" and "Exalting Worthies," rulers of the human world try to ensure the moral economy by implementing a system of rewards and punishments. I think that Mozi believes that the perfect working of moral economy is only guaranteed by the mutual operation of human governance and spiritual beings. See Philip Ivanhoe, "Mohist Philosophy," 454.

To summarize, Mozi identifies three causes of the world's disorder: the absence of the unified standard of moral values ("Exalting Unity"); the failure of exalting worthies ("Exalting Worthies"); and the loss of belief in the retributive power of ghosts and spirits ("Explaining Ghosts"). All of these causes result in the failure of moral economy. For Mozi, recovering a tight linkage between one's moral action and rewards is the best way to put the world in perfect order. The ultimate purpose of his project is, in other words, the complete establishment of moral economy: on the one hand, by rulers in the human world, and on the other hand, by ghosts and spirits from the spirit world.

There is another important cause to contribute to the failure of moral economy: that is, the belief in fate (*ming* 命).³⁵ The belief in fate is the direct antithesis of the belief in moral economy. Moral economy puts all the responsibilities on people's shoulders: what they do determines what they will get and what they will become. However, fate takes all the burdens out of people's hands: what they do has no relevance to what they will get and in what situation they will be in. This belief in fate completely cuts off the necessary connection between one's action and its outcomes. Instead, it promotes complete contingency.

In the three chapters entitled "Against Fate" 非命, Mozi tries to prove that there is no such a thing as *ming* 命, fate. To do so, he also employs the three basic tests: an appeal to common sense, an appeal to the practices of sage kings, and an appeal to utility.³⁶ First, he

³⁵ 子墨子言曰 古者王公大人 爲政國家者 皆欲國家之富 人民之衆 刑政之治 然而不得富而得貧 不得衆而得寡 不得治而得亂 則是本失其所欲 得其所惡 是故何也 子墨子言曰 執有命者 以禱于民間者衆 Mozi says, "In ancient times, kings, dukes and great officers, in governing a state, all wished that state to be rich, its people numerous, and its administration well-ordered. However, when they did not get prosperity but poverty instead, when they did not get many people but few instead, when they did not get order but disorder instead, this was fundamentally to lose what it was they desired and get what it was they abhorred. What was the cause of this?" Mozi says, "[It is because] Those who believe in *ming* are mixed in with the population in large numbers." "Against Fate I" 非命上 (31.1; 31.2). In these chapters, the word *ming* exclusively refer to contingency or fate, the realm where moral order does not function.

³⁶ However, in this part, the three strategies are somehow intertwined and do not constitute three separate tests.

asserts that nobody has seen or heard of fate.³⁷ Second, he argues that no sage kings of antiquity have ever taught the doctrine of fate. Instead, they encouraged good actions and discouraged bad actions by the system of rewards and punishments. According to Mozi, it was tyrants like King Jie and King Zhou who created the belief in fate to avoid their responsibilities for the fall of their states. And this belief was spread and perpetuated by people who are lazy and poor.³⁸ Mozi says, 其言不曰吾罷不肖 吾從事不强 又曰吾命固將窮 “These people [who are lazy and poor] do not say, ‘We are indolent and unworthy. We have not been diligent in our task.’ Instead, they say, ‘It is our fate to be poor.’”³⁹ Accordingly, when sage kings ruled by the system of rewards and punishments, people were diligent in their duties and thus the state was well-governed. But as the belief in fate spread, people became remiss in their duties and the state fell back into chaos. Obviously, Mozi argues, one should abandon the belief in fate and follow the principle of moral economy.

These chapters entitled “Against Fate” are the implicit, but quite obvious, criticism of the early Ru.⁴⁰ However, some scholars argue that Mozi’s criticism on Ru’s notion of *ming* is invalid or unjust, because Mozi’s representations of Ru notion of *ming* is significantly mistaken.⁴¹ For instance, Hsiao Kung-chuan suggests that Mozi’s criticisms on fate are targeted

³⁷ 自古以及今 生民以來者 亦嘗見命之物 聞命之聲者乎 則未嘗有也 “From ancient times to the present, since people first came to exist, has anyone seen such a thing as *ming*, or heard the sounds of *ming*? There has never been anyone.” “Against Fate II” 非命中 (36.2)

³⁸ 命者 暴王所作 窮人所術 非仁者之言也 “*Ming* was a creation of the evil kings and was perpetuated by the poor people. It was not something that the benevolent spoke of.” “Against Fate III” 非命下 (37.10).

³⁹ “Against Fate III” 非命下 (37.4).

⁴⁰ It is implicit because there is no direct mention of Ru or Kongzi in these chapters. Mozi claims that the doctrine of fate was created by tyrant kings and it was spread to the poor. But, one of the criticisms in the chapter “Against Ru” 非儒 clarifies that Mozi’s criticism on fate is targeted toward the early Ru. Furthermore, according to Franklin Perkins, given that there are relevant passages on *ming* between the Mozi and the Lunyu, Mozi, to a certain extent, fairly represents the view that some early Ru actually held. See Franklin Perkins, “The Moist Criticism of the Confucian Use of Fate,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 35, 3 (2008): 421-436.

⁴¹ Bryan Van Norden also holds such a view: “The view we find in the *Analects* is that accepting fate does not relieve one of the obligation to strive to be a better person and to improve the world; rather, to accept fate is to have the equanimity and patience born of the confidence that, whether one succeeds in the short term or not,

on the practices of the vulgar Ru (*suru* 俗儒), not the original teachings of Kongzi. Therefore, he argues, “Thus, in relation to the thought of Confucius, Mencius, and Hsün Tzu, it would appear that to attack the Confucians using Mo Tzu’s anti-fatalism is virtually to fire without a target.”⁴² In a sense, these claims are legitimate because Kongzi did not advocate a strong fatalistic position as depicted in “Against Fate” by Mozi.⁴³ In addition, as we have examined, Kongzi did not abandon a belief in moral economy. Rather, he continued a firm belief in the moral universe, as the sage kings had also shown. Kongzi believed that good action will bring favorable external goods and bad action will bring undesirable goods.

The problem lies in the fact that Kongzi did introduce the notion of contingency to this perfect moral universe. He allowed exceptions, however trivial they might be, to the normative principle of moral order. By doing this, he provided a perspective on the problem of theodicy: the good sometimes fail and the bad sometimes flourish. And he also addressed the frustration involved in the process of self-cultivation. The unfortunate death of good people or a personal failure does not signify that their virtue was somehow lacking. Furthermore, the introduction of contingency may liberate one from common human concerns. It enables one to redirect one’s

Heaven has an ethical purpose that will prevail in the long run.” See Bryan W. Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism*, 152.

⁴² Hsiao Kung-chuan, *A History of Chinese Philosophical Thought*, vol.1, trans. F. W. Mote (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 250.

⁴³ Most scholars agree that Kongzi and the early Ru were not fatalists. According to Mark Csikszentmihalyi, the *Lunyu* and other Ru texts, instead, advocate a limited notion of fate (*ming*): some parts of our life are pre-determined (i.e., wealth and lifespan), but other parts are still under our control (i.e., personal thoughts, associations and actions). He suggests that it must be due to the logical contradiction of this limited notion of *ming* that Mozi vehemently attacked Ru teaching. For Mozi, it is like on the one hand, the Ru teach one can improve oneself through study, but on the other hand, they tell parts of one’s life is beyond control. I agree that Kongzi was not a fatalist and he advocated a limited notion of fate, as I put it, the introduction of contingency in the world of moral economy. But, I think it is impossible to draw a clear line of which parts of our life are predetermined and which parts of our life are not. As Csikszentmihalyi notes, there is a passage saying that “Life and death are a matter of *ming*; wealth and honor depend on *tian*.” However, as we have examined, the belief in moral economy asserts that wealth, honor, and longevity are the external goods that are guaranteed through human’s moral actions. Accordingly, I think that a more proper way to understand the Ru’s limited notion of *ming* is that moral economy is at work but sometimes it fails. See Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*, 39-41.

focus from external goods, which are usually expected in moral economy, to one's own moral development. In Kongzi's ethical system, virtues are not just a means, but also ends in themselves. Virtues are self-rewarding and self-sufficient.

However, Mozi advocates a perfect, complete system of moral economy. In that context, the introduction of contingency does not amend the inadequacy of a system of moral economy, but significantly damages it, and in the end, would destroy the whole system. To Mozi, Kongzi's contingent view would be like a small hole in the dam, which would grow bigger and bigger, eventually leading to a complete rupture and flood. As Franklin Perkins points out, Mozi did not directly attack Kongzi or the early Ru for being fatalists, but he was extremely worried about the danger that Kongzi's contingent view was likely to bring about. Kongzi's attitude, concentrating his attention solely on the process of self-cultivation rather than external consequences, would be meaningful for him as an individual moral agent. But it might not be desirable from the perspective of social improvement.⁴⁴ The thought that favorable outcomes might not be produced through my own efforts may lead people to easily take satisfaction in their own virtues and not to actively seek out for the opportunities to make changes in their own life and society. Perkins notes that this is Mozi's basic concern: "The Ru are not activist enough, not willing to seek out opportunities and too willing to accept failure."⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Philip Ivanhoe points out that Mozi always is thinking from the perspective of the good of the state. Therefore, it is natural that Mozi is much more interested in the construction of a perfect moral economy than the accumulation of virtue in each individual. Mozi's program is more focused on shaping the behaviors of people than cultivating emotions and attitudes. On the other hand, Kongzi's program starts from what is good for individual and extends to family, state, and to the whole world. In addition to this difference in their perspectives, Franklin Perkins suggests that there might be a class difference, too. He writes, "While it may be admirable to teach a small class of 'gentleman' that material things are outside of our control and worthless to pursue, it is a dangerous doctrine to teach to farmers." Franklin Perkins, "The Moist Criticism of the Confucian Use of Fate," 428-429.

⁴⁵ Franklin Perkins, "The Moist Criticism of the Confucian Use of Fate," 427. In Mozi's own words, 立命緩貧而高浩居 倍本棄事而安怠傲 貪于飲食 惰于作務 陷于飢寒 危于凍餒 無以違之 "They (Ru) believed in fate and accept poverty, yet they are arrogant and self-important. They turn their backs on what is fundamental and abandon their duties, finding contentment in idleness and pride. They are greedy for drink

According to Perkins, this passive attitude of Ru is also revealed in their analogy between the gentleman and a bell. In his conversation with Mozi, Gongmeng Zi 公孟子 explains the Ru notion of gentleman:

君子共已以待 問焉則言 不問焉則止 譬若鍾然 扣則鳴 不扣則不鳴

"A gentleman folds his hands and waits. If he is questioned, then he speaks; if he is not questioned, then he stops. He is like a bell. If it is struck, then it rings; if not struck, then it does not ring."⁴⁶

According to Gongmeng Zi, Ru are just waiting for an opportunity to arise; they are not actively searching for advancement. Mozi replies that there are cases in which even if he is not struck, he must ring.⁴⁷ However, I think this is not merely the problem of passivity and activity. As examined before, for Kongzi, the most important part of his ethical system is virtue accumulated in the self. Thus, he would not sacrifice his virtue on behalf of anything else. This is a version of the so-called problem of "dirty hands."⁴⁸ By contrast, Mozi aims to foster actual changes in people's behavior and society as the primary task of his ethical project. As Philip Ivanhoe points out, Mozi was not interested in cultivating emotions or attitudes; he was completely reticent about moral psychology or human nature; he did not see virtue as its own reward.⁴⁹ Accordingly, when there is a complete system of moral economy, for Mozi, virtue becomes the best means to individual success as well as social order. On the other hand, Kongzi

and food. They are indolent in carrying out their responsibilities and fall into hunger and cold, but when endangered by starvation and freezing, they have no way of avoiding these things." "Against Ru II" 非儒 (39.4) The first chapter of "Against Ru" is lost.

⁴⁶ "Gongmeng" 公孟 (48.1).

⁴⁷ 若此者 雖不扣必鳴者也 "In this case, even if he is not struck, he must sound." "Gongmeng" 公孟 (48.1)

⁴⁸ The bell analogy reminds me of one of the main themes in Ru thought: 天下有道則見 無道則隱 "When the Way prevails in the world, one should take a position; when the Way disappears, one should hide from the world." Like the bell, which cannot ring by itself, one cannot take an office any time one wants: one has to meet the right external conditions. See note # 105.

⁴⁹ Philip Ivanhoe, "Mohist Philosophy," 451-458.

worries that a strict moral economy might distort the true value of virtue: virtues are the best means, but, at the same time, they are also the best ends. Therefore, the difference between Mozi and Kongzi is not simply that of activity and passivity. Their difference lies at a more fundamental level: their different orientations toward virtue and the ethical systems needed to promote it.⁵⁰

Let's return to the problem of moral economy. Kongzi, by introducing the notion of contingency, was able to come to terms with the severity of reality. Then, how does Mozi's strict moral economy address the same problem? The first obvious answer is that if a good person suffers, then this person is not good enough. This is how Mozi answers his disciple, who asks 今吾事先生久矣 ... 我何故不得福也 "Why have I not had any good fortune even though I have followed your teaching for long?" Mozi answers, 今子所匿者 若此汙多 將有厚罪者也 何福之求 "Since you still have many faults, you should be worrying about getting punishments. How could you even seek for good fortune?"⁵¹ For Mozi, flourishing and suffering are the unerring barometers of one's goodness.

⁵⁰ As pointed out earlier, Mozi is more concerned with making social changes than cultivating virtues, while Kongzi's priority lies explicitly in self-cultivation. Their difference can be also summarized as that between "consequentialist" and "virtue Ethicist." In addition, Franklin Perkins makes an interesting suggestion. He speculates that the difference between Kongzi and Mozi might be understood in terms of the characteristics of audience they were addressing and the role of their teachings. According to him, Kongzi might have taught his disciples person to person, but Mozi might have targeted a large public as the writing system developed. Perkins does not provide evidences for his thesis, but I find it quiet interesting. If Kongzi were more of a personal instructor and Mozi were a social activist, their different orientations would be more comprehensible. Furthermore, Ding Weixiang also presents another interesting suggestion. Ding finds the differences between Mozi and Mengzi from Mozi's background as a craftsman. Mozi's background led him to be a tool-oriented, instrumentalist mind-set. Thus, in the ethical system of Mozi, people are reified and objectified. On the other hand, Ru teaching essentially comes from a kind of humanism. The Ru starts from the recognition of the I-ness of a person and ends in a full realization of the highest human qualities. See Franklin Perkins, "The Moist Criticism of the Confucian Use of Fate," 433-434; Ding Weixiang, "Mengzi's Inheritance, Criticism, and Overcoming of Moist Thought," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 35, 3 (2008): 403-419.

⁵¹ The complete conversation between Mozi and his disciple is as follows: 有游于子墨子之門者 謂子墨子曰 先生以鬼神為明知 能為禍人哉福 為善者富之 為暴者禍之 今吾事先生久矣 而福不至 意者先生之言 有不善乎 鬼神不明乎 我何故不得福也 子墨子曰 雖子不得福 吾言何遽不善 而鬼神何遽不明 ... 今子所匿者 若此汙多 將有厚罪者也 何福之求 There was a man who travelled to Mozi's school and spoke to Mozi, saying, "You, Sir, consider ghosts and spirits to be all-seeing and knowing, and to be able to bring about bad fortune and good

The second answer, however, is more interesting. When Mozi was sick, one of Mozi's disciples asks, 今先生聖人也 何故有疾 "You are a sage, so how come are you sick?" Mozi replies:

雖使我有病 [吾言何遽不善而鬼神]何遽不明 人之所得于病者多方 有得之寒暑
有得之勞苦 百門而閉一門焉 則盜何遽無從入

"Though I have been made sick, how does it follow that my words are all of a sudden not good or that ghosts and spirits are all of a sudden not all-seeing?

There are many ways in which people can become sick. They can suffer from cold or heat. They can suffer from strain or fatigue. If there are a hundred gates and only one is shut, then, how could a robber fail to enter?"⁵²

According to Mozi, there are many ways that people fall ill, such as cold and fatigue. Therefore, his illness is not necessarily a mark of the inadequacy of his goodness, nor a sign of the inadequacy of the retributive power of spiritual beings. Practicing good may be one factor among numerous causes. In other words, the world not only runs by moral order, but there are other causal factors. Therefore, virtuous people can encounter unfavorable conditions. Franklin Perkins also makes this point clear: "The problem with weakening the Moist position on human efficacy is that their position ends up quite close to the most likely position of the Ru."⁵³

fortune. If someone is good, they bring him good fortune; if someone is bad, they bring him bad fortune. Now I have served you for a long time yet good fortune has not come. Does this mean that your words are not right, that ghost and spirits are not all-seeing? Why is it that I have not obtained good?" Mozi said, "Although you have not obtained good fortune, how does that make my words not right, or ghosts and spirits not all-seeing? ... To conceal one person is still a fault. Now what you conceal is much more than this so there will be a much greater fault. How is it you seek good fortune?" "Gongmeng" 公孟 (48.18; 49.19).

⁵² "Gongmeng" 公孟 (48.20).

⁵³ Franklin Perkins also points out that all the passages questioning Mozi's strict moral economy are not found in the core chapters of the *Mozi*. Therefore, the significance of these passages may be limited. However, he adds that there is a stronger reason to believe that Mozi did not advocate a complete moral economy. He writes, "One of the most central principles of Moist political thought is the need for human beings to establish and accurately administer rewards and punishments. The urgency of establishing a system of justice only follows if it is the case that without an effective government, bad people will at least sometimes (perhaps often) escape justice." In other words, it is the human governance that perfects the operation of moral economy. In a similar vein, it was also the sage kings who punished the evil kings in the name of *tian*. In this respect, I think Mozi is more closely following the teachings of sage kings as in the *Documents*. Furthermore, as I pointed out earlier,

It is true that Mozi had to somehow manage the inadequacy of human agency. But, I think, the way he copes with it is clearly different from Kongzi's.⁵⁴ As seen in Bo Niu's illness, Kongzi's lamentation reveals that the normative moral order can fail. Bo Niu was not supposed to fall ill; but his virtue did not guarantee his good health. On the contrary, Mozi's illness does not hint at all that the moral order fails. Instead, Mozi secures a strict moral economy by separating various variables from the moral domain. Moral order is always at work, but other factors are also in operation. In other words, morally good actions always produce favorable external outcomes, but there are other causal factors that can produce similar results.

To recapitulate, in the case of Kongzi, virtue does 'not necessarily' guarantee favorable external goods; in the case of Mozi, it is 'not only' virtue that guarantees favorable external goods. Even if their overall pictures of the world might be close to each other (for in both cases certain outcomes are produced without relevance to one's moral worth), their specific configurations of the world are different from each other. Kongzi's universe is largely moral, but significantly contingent, whereas Mozi's universe is strictly moral but there exist other kinds of causal chains in operation. More importantly, their different configurations of the world, however similar they are to each other, lead to drastically different attitudes toward the world when their action fails to produce expected outcomes: for Kongzi, an attitude of heartfelt lamentation, and for Mozi, one of complete composure.

Even though Mozi was successful in creating moral economy by separating other contingent factors from it, a strict moral economy has its own problems. For instance, in the

spirits and ghosts also play a central and indispensable role in ensuring the workings of moral economy. Consequently, for Mozi, both the divine realm and the human realm together produce the perfect moral economy. See Franklin Perkins, "The Moist Criticism of the Confucian Use of Fate," 431-432.

⁵⁴ Franklin Perkins distinguishes the ways that Mozi and Kongzi explained limits of human efficacy. According to him, Kongzi remains passive, while Mozi actively tries to identify some possible causes. However, I think, the difference between Mozi and Kongzi is more than that of activeness and passiveness. Their difference results from their different attitude toward moral economy. See Franklin Perkins, "The Moist Criticism of the Confucian Use of Fate," 432.

Documents, the sage kings worried about some of the drawbacks of excessively strong confidence in moral economy: it could lead moral agents to fall into the swamp of hubris and conceit and also it could distort the genuine nature of virtue by turning it into a mere means to an end. As a way to guarding against these intrinsic problems of moral economy, the sage kings advocated the virtue of humility. They tried to maintain a fine balance between an ethics of confidence (moral economy) and an ethics of uncertainty (humility). If the sage kings arrived at the problem of moral economy from the perspective of an individual moral agent, Mozi comes to it from a broader perspective. Mozi thinks that in the world operating according to a strict moral order, it is easily taken for granted that the poor deserve to be poor and the lowly deserve to be lowly. Their miserable situations are their own responsibility: the harsh circumstances they must endure are somehow justified. In brief, the sage kings were concerned that in a strict moral universe, people tend to think, "I deserve to be rich," whereas Mozi was concerned that people tend to think, "They deserve to be poor," and thus they tend to treat the poor cruelly and treat the lowly arrogantly. The world of strict moral economy, ironically, turns into an ethically unpleasant place. And Mozi's other key doctrine, the doctrine of impartial care, can offer a solution to amend this harsh picture of moral economy.

In the chapters bearing the title, "Impartial Care" 兼愛, Mozi identifies another source of disorder: chaos in the world comes from people not loving each other.⁵⁵ Here, *ai* 愛 (usually translated as 'to love') does not mean emotional or romantic love; its meaning is closer to care for, to take care of, and thus to benefit. According to Mozi, people tend to just take care of themselves, but not others, and thus the world is full of harmful things. Mozi argues that if people take care of others as they take care of themselves, no harmful things will be done to

⁵⁵ 聖人以治天下爲事者也 不可不察亂之所自起 當察亂何自起 起不相愛 "A sage, in taking governing the world to be his task, must examine what disorder arises from? In his attempts, what does he discover disorder to arise from? It arises from lack of mutual love." "Impartial Care I" 兼愛上 (14.2).

each other, and thus the world will regain order. For Mozi, to love is nothing but *to treat others as one treats oneself*.⁵⁶

However, this simple and amiable doctrine of Mozi's impartial care became a target of Mengzi's fierce attack. Mengzi made a clear distinction between Ru's *ren* 仁 (benevolence or humaneness) and Mozi's *jian'ai* 兼愛 (impartial care). For Mengzi, *ren* 仁 starts from the natural affection toward one's parents and one should extend this love to other people. On the other hand, Mengzi interpreted Mozi's *jian'ai* 兼愛 as loving others equally, meaning that one should love a stranger as much as one loves one's own parents. Therefore, Mengzi denounces the Mohist view: 墨氏兼愛 是無父也 無父無君 是禽獸也 "Mozi advocates impartial care, which amounts to a denial of one's father. To ignore one's father and ignore one's lord is to act the same way as beasts."⁵⁷ This line of argument has a tremendous influence on many pre-modern and modern scholars.

Generally, Ru's *ren* is translated as "graded love" or "love with distinction," while Mozi's *jian'ai* as "universal love" or "impartial care." Most studies of Mozi's thought have been carried out based on this strict contrast between the two versions of love. For instance, in his study of this ancient Chinese debate's relevance for contemporary Western ethics, David Wong

⁵⁶ 愛人若愛其身 "To love others is like to love oneself." "Impartial Care I" (14.3). 視人之國若視其國 視人之家若視其家 視人之身若視其身 "People would view others' state as they view their own state. People would view others' family as they view their own family. People would view other people as they view themselves." "Impartial Care II" (15.3). Mozi seems to assume that people naturally take care of themselves and concern only with their own interests. Chris Fraser names this as the "Self-Interest Thesis." In his article, "Moism and Self-Interest," he disputes the Self-Interest Thesis, by arguing that self-interest is only one among people's basic motives. According to him, people may be motivated by moral standards, an inclination to identify with leaders, and an inclination toward reciprocity. See Chris Fraser, "Moism and Self-Interest," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 35, 3 (2008): 437-454. Nevertheless, Mozi's notion of self-interested, self-centered beings seems to be the starting point of his philosophy. Based on this notion, on the one hand, he facilitates his system of rewards and punishments, and on the other hand, he advocates the doctrine of impartial care, admonishing people to divest of this narrow and conventional self-centeredness and to acquire a more enlarged version of self-interest, the notion that it will not just benefit me, but also others and the whole society.

⁵⁷ Mengzi 3B:9

defends Ruist *ren* as superior to Mohist *jian'ai*.⁵⁸ He argues that *ren* is much more realizable than *jian'ai*, because *ren* is rooted in the concerns of actual human beings, such as family and human nature, whereas Mozi's single-minded emphasis on love for all is too abstract and risks complete irrelevance to actual life.⁵⁹ Wong does give some credit to Mozi, noting that Mozi rightly points out an inherent problem with Ru's *ren*: that it has a strong tendency to encourage partiality. Ding Weixiang also makes the same claim:

It is not all meant to say that benevolence stops with cherishing family and honoring those who are honorable. Yet it is precisely from the starting point of benevolence in cherishing family, that Mozi sees those who are not yet cherished, those who are not yet honored. ... For this reason, their doctrine of impartial care, which opposed and fundamentally revised the Ruist benevolence of cherishing family, necessarily became the fundamental core of Moism.⁶⁰

What should be noted here is that both the claims for the superiority of Ru's graded love and the acknowledgement of the legitimacy of Mozi's criticism, are based on a clear distinction between their two different versions of love.

However, there is another strand of interpretation. In his essay, "On Reading the *Mozi*" 讀墨子, Han Yu (韓愈, 768-824) questioned: 孔子泛愛親仁 以博施濟眾為聖 不兼愛哉 "Kongzi considered caring extensively and being close to the benevolent and implementing these

⁵⁸ In the whole essay, David Wong seems to value Ru's graded love over Mozi's impartial care. But, in the end, he moderates his position by saying, "The doctrines of each school have a place in a total philosophy." David Wong, "Universalism Versus Love with Distinctions: An Ancient Debate Revived," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 16 (1989): 251-272.

⁵⁹ David Wong specifies three reasons for why Ru give moral priority to the family. First, caring for others must begin in the family. Otherwise, it will not begin at all. Second, because parents have taken care of us, we should repay them. Third, our human nature is to care for the welfare of one's parents. David Wong, "Universalism Versus Love with Distinctions: An Ancient Debate Revived," 254-262.

⁶⁰ Ding Weixiang, "Mengzi's Inheritance, Criticism, and Overcoming of Moist Thought," 405-406.

broadly to save the multitude as becoming a sage. Isn't this [Mozi's] impartial care?"⁶¹ In the same vein, Hsiao Kung-chuan also argues that Ruist *ren* and Mohist *jian'ai* are not significantly different. He writes, "Mo Tzu's 'love' [*ai*] was formulated in the wake of Confucius' benevolence with only minor changes." He provides four specific types of evidence for this. First, the two terms, *ren* 仁 and *ai* 愛, have the same semantic denotation. Second, the ultimate purpose of *ren* 仁 (*fan'ai* 泛愛 overflowing love) and *ai* 愛 (*jian'ai* 兼愛 impartial care) is basically the same: loving all the people. Third, in the *Mozi*, there is no direct attack on Ruist notions of *ren*. Fourth, among many Ru, it is only Mengzi who fiercely criticized Mozi. Mengzi seems to have a specific agenda to distinguish Ru teaching from Mozi's ethical project.⁶² In other words, it is Mengzi who made the two basically same or similar doctrines of *ren* and *jian'ai* diverge from each other.⁶³

Dan Robins, in his "The Moists and the Gentlemen of the World," develops the third point of Hsiao's case. As Hsiao and Robins point out, it is surprising that there is no direct mention of Ru or Ruist notions of *ren* in the three chapters of "Impartial Care." Furthermore, even the chapters, where Mozi explicitly attacks the Ru, such as "Against Ru" and "Gongmeng," do not bring up the issue of Ru notion of *ren*.⁶⁴ On the contrary, Robins points out, Mozi takes for granted the value of filiality, as well as other Ru values of brotherhood and loyalty.⁶⁵

⁶¹ A complete translation of this essay is provided by Bryan W. Van Norden. See <http://faculty.vassar.edu/brvannor/Phil210/HanYu/On%20Reading%20Mozi.pdf>.

⁶² Hsiao Kung-chuan, *A History of Chinese Philosophical Thought*, 230-231.

⁶³ Even though Han Yu did not specify that it was Mengzi who created a schism between the Ru-Mo, he agreed that the debate between the Ru-Mo opposition began by later students who tried to advance the teachings of their teacher.

⁶⁴ The major issues of Mozi's attacks on the Ru in these chapters are: fatalistic attitude, emphasis on funeral and music, agnostic attitude toward spiritual beings, obsession with old traditions, empty formality and hypocrisy, and so on, but the Ru notion of *ren* is not among them.

⁶⁵ One says, 夫仁人事上竭忠 事親得孝 務善則美 有過則諫 此為人臣之道也 "The benevolent man, in serving his superior, exhausts his loyalty, and in serving his parents, devotes himself to being filial. If there is goodness, he praises; if there are faults, he remonstrates. This is the way of being a minister." Who would have said such words? The Ru or the Moists? Probably, most people would answer that Ru must have said such words. However, this passage is coming out from the mouth of Mozi. "Against Ru" 39.5. Furthermore, in the chapter

Furthermore, in the chapter “Impartial Care III” Mozi frames impartial care as a way to promote filial piety.⁶⁶ To sum up these points, Mozi’s impartial care is perfectly compatible with graded love of Ru. In addition, Robins claims that it is not Ru thinkers that Mozi accuses of being partial, but it is his contemporaries, particularly ruling elites. Robins’s conclusion is that Mozi argues against the ills of his time, not the Ru doctrine of *ren*.⁶⁷ I agree with Robins’ opinion that Mozi’s doctrine of impartial care is not devised as an alternative to the Ru notion of graded love, because we cannot find specific evidence to support such a view in the *Mozi*. Mozi’s doctrine of impartial care is most likely a prescription for the social ills of his time.⁶⁸

What, then, specifically does Mozi consider as the most pressing social problems of his time? As seen above, it is that people do not benefit each other, only taking care of themselves

“Against Ru,” Mozi criticizes Ru for not being sufficiently filial by putting their wives on the same scale as their parents in terms of mourning period. Dan Robins argues, “This presupposes rather than denies the value of partiality within the family: the Moists are saying that the *ru* are partial in the wrong way, not that they are wrong to be partial” See Dan Robins, “The Moists and the Gentlemen of the World,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 35, 3 (2008), 388.

⁶⁶ In the chapter, “Impartial Care III,” Mozi claims, 卽必吾先從事乎愛利人之親 然后人報我以愛利吾親也 然卽之交孝子者 果不得已乎 毋先從事愛利人之親者與 “Obviously, I must first love and benefit other’s parents, so that they in return will love and benefit my parents. Then, if all of us are to be filial sons, is there, in fact, any alternative to first love and benefit other’s parents?” “Impartial Care III” (16.13). What Mozi argues here is that a true filiality is not just for me to serving my parents well, but also for my parents to be served well by others as well. Therefore, in order to become a truly filial son, I should also respect parents of others, too. I think Mozi’s version of filiality is a more enlarged and advanced form than a common sense filiality and filiality in Ru teaching.

⁶⁷ Dan Robins, “The Moists and the Gentlemen of the World”: 385-402.

⁶⁸ It seems to me that there is a certain tendency among scholars to treat Mozi as a crippled thinker, meaning that Mozi cannot construct his philosophical system on his own, but only by leaning against Ru. Of course, Mozi fiercely attacked the Ru, but I think his attacks on the Ru are just part of his philosophy, not the whole. In this regard, my position is slightly different from Robins’s. Robins contends that Mozi’s philosophy, as part of an social movement, was developed to challenge existing customs and behaviors of his contemporaries, particularly the ruling elite, and if there are responses to Ru’s philosophical discourse, they are only secondary and added later to extend and strengthen the arguments. Accordingly, Robins contends that we should read the *Mozi* as a program for social movement rather than as a philosophical discourse. I agree that we should take into account the fact that Mozi was actively responding to the existing customs and social ills of his day. However, I do not think that his program as a social movement and his program as philosophical discourse are mutually exclusive. He was responding to the social ills of his day, and at the same time, he was reacting against Ru’s several philosophical teachings, such as the Ruist notion of *ming* and their emphasis on funerals and music. But, with respect to the doctrine of impartial care, I think, it is exclusively targeting the social problems of his day. As I will explain later, the reason that I do not think that the doctrine of impartial care was devised as an antithesis to Ru’s graded love is that Mozi’s impartial care is inclusive of the Ru’s graded love and that in Mozi’s view, the Ru’s graded love cannot even begin without practicing impartial care.

and thus easily harming others. One of the problems of not loving each other results in the failure of filiality, brotherhood, and loyalty, the values that are promoted by both Ru and Mozi. Mozi diagnoses the problem in this way:

子自愛不愛父 故虧父而自利 弟自愛不愛兄 故虧兄而自利 臣自愛不愛君
故虧君而自利 此所謂亂也 雖父之不慈子 兄之不慈君 弟 君之不慈臣 此亦天下之所
謂亂也

“If a son loves himself and does not love his father, then he disadvantages the father and benefits himself. If a younger brother loves himself and does not love his older brother, then he disadvantages the older brother and benefits himself. If a minister loves himself and does not love his prince, then he disadvantages the prince and benefits himself. This is what is spoken of as disorder. Even if a father does not feel affection for his son, or an older brother does not feel affection for his younger brother, or a prince does not feel affection for his minister, this is also what is spoken of as disorder in the world.”⁶⁹

Mozi examines the reason why filiality, brotherhood, and loyalty are not practiced in society: it is because people only love themselves but do not love others. The term introduced by Mozi to describe this is the verb “*bie*” 別, to make distinction and be partial. A son, who is partial to himself, does not practice filiality. By contrast, if he is not partial to himself (the verb used for this is “*jian*” 兼), treating his father as he treats himself, he will naturally practice filiality.⁷⁰ In

⁶⁹ “Impartial Care I” 兼愛上 (14.2).

⁷⁰ To put it differently, the term *bie* 別 refers to selfishness and self-centeredness, putting oneself over others; while the term *jian* 兼 refers to the opposite of this, freeing oneself from self-centeredness and putting oneself and others side by side. However, I think that *jian*, treating others as one treats oneself, does not mean the value of the self and the value of others are equal. As it is said that treating others “*as*” one treats oneself, *jian* refers to, at most, the state of not being selfish. However, there seems to be an exception when one should put others in front of oneself: that is, in the case of ruler. According to Mozi, the impartial ruler would say, 吾聞為明君于天下者 必先萬民之身 后為其身 然后可以為明君于天下 “I have heard that one who aspires to be an enlightened ruler in the world must give priority to the persons of the ten thousand people and put his own person second. Then, he can be considered to be an enlightened ruler in the world.” Mozi continues to say, 是故退睹其萬民 飢即食之 寒即衣之 疾病侍養之 死喪葬埋之 兼君之言若此行若此 “Therefore, if he were to turn his attention to his ten thousand people, should he find them hungry, he would feed them; should he find

other words, Mozi's doctrine of impartial care does not oppose Ru's graded love of *ren*.⁷¹

Rather, Mozi diagnoses why *ren* is not practiced (due to partiality, 別) and he prescribes how it can be carried out (through impartiality, 兼). Mozi's doctrine of impartial care is indeed the very foundation for Ru's *ren*.⁷²

In addition to the failures of filiality, brotherhood, and loyalty, Mozi portrays another aspect of the ills of his day. According to Mozi:

天下之人皆不相愛 強必執弱 富必侮貧 貴必敖賤 詐必欺 愚凡天下禍篡怨恨
其所以起者以不相愛生也

"When the people of the world do not love each other, then the strong inevitably dominate the weak, the rich inevitably despise the poor, the noble inevitably

them cold, he would clothe them; should he find them sick, he would tend to them; and if they died, he would bury them. The impartial ruler's words and actions are like this." "Impartial Care III" 兼愛下 (16.7).

⁷¹ In this respect, I think, Mozi's impartial care and Ru's graded love are not incompatible. They are simply two different ways to approach the same issue. For instance, Mozi starts from the question why filiality is not practiced, while the Ru position starts from the possibility how filiality can be practiced and extended. According to Mozi, as long as one favors those to whom one is partial, there can be no proper interpersonal relationships of any kind, whether close or remote. On the other hand, according to the Ru, without acknowledging the natural affection toward one's own family, any meaningful interpersonal relationship will not begin at all. Furthermore, I think that one of the issues involved in Mozi's impartial care and Ru's grade love is the question on the source of our moral feelings: moral feelings are natural to human beings or not. In other words, this seems to be the precursor of the debate on human nature between Mengzi and Xunzi.

⁷² Mozi clarifies this point at the end of the chapter "Impartial Care III." Mozi says, 故兼者聖王之道也 ... 故君子莫若審兼而務行之 為人君必惠 為人臣必忠 為人父必慈 為人子必孝 為人兄必友 為人弟必悌 故君子莫若欲為惠君忠臣慈父孝子友兄悌弟 當若兼之不可不行也 此聖王之道 而萬民之大利也 "Impartiality is the way of the sage kings. ... Therefore, the gentleman carefully examines impartiality and assiduously practices it. Then, as a ruler, he is kind; as a minister, he is loyal; as a father, he is affectionate; as a son, he is filial; as an elder brother, he is friendly; and as a younger brother, he is respectful. Therefore, if one wants to be a kind ruler, a loyal minister, an affectionate father, a filial son, a friendly elder brother, or a respectful younger brother, there is nothing more important than being impartial. This is the Way of the sage kings and is of real benefit to the myriad people." "Impartial Care III" (16.15). However, what should be pointed out here is that there is another fundamental difference between Ru's notion of *ren* and Mozi's doctrine of *jian'ai*: what they mean by *ren* and *jian'ai* are, after all, different. For instance, filiality is promoted by both Ru and Mozi. However, in the case of Ru teaching, filiality is the extension of natural affection toward parents. Filiality should be out of this love for parents: otherwise, it is just a semblance or a counterfeit, not authentic filial virtue. (This point is made clear by Kongzi in *Lunyu* 2:7.) On the other hand, for Mozi, the most important point is that filial commitment, the actual caring of parents, should be carried out in practice. Whether or not it comes out of love for parents is irrelevant, or at least, secondary. Accordingly, even though Ru and Moists employ the same terms like filiality 孝, brotherhood 悌, and loyalty 忠 and they advocate these values, the exact implications of these values are slightly, but significantly, different from each other.

scorn the lowly, and the cunning inevitably deceive the foolish. Within the world, in all cases, the reason why calamity, usurpation, resentment and hatred arise is because people do not love each other.”⁷³

This portrayal is a recurring theme throughout the *Mozi*. In the world, there always exist all kinds of disparities, between power, wealth, social class, intelligence, and so on. Mozi does not negate their existence or try to make a uniform society. What he takes issue with is people’s attitude in dealing with this variety of disparities. As he depicts things, the powerful, the rich, the noble, and the wise often take advantages of those who are inferior to them. People not only take differences as different, but they discriminate on the basis of differences, and use them to their own advantage. Mozi holds that even if there are discrepancies among people, we should not take a partial or judgmental attitude (別) to those inferior to us, but instead, treat them as we treat ourselves (兼). This is another important aspect of impartial care that Mozi distinctively strives to inculcate in people.

Consequently, his doctrine of impartial care has two specific purposes: on the one hand, he tries to put into practice values, such as filiality and brotherhood, predicated on close personal relationships, and, on the other hand, he tries to promote a more general, socially wholesome behaviors of people in their encounter with distant others.⁷⁴ It is noteworthy that

⁷³ “Impartial Care II” 兼愛中 (15.2).

⁷⁴ In her interesting study of Mozi’s doctrine of impartial care, Carine Defoort makes a similar observation, but reached a different conclusion from mine. According to Defoort, the three chapters, entitled “Impartial Care,” are not equal in philosophical contents, as most scholars assume due to the identical chapter title. Rather, she argues that these three chapters make different, but consecutive claims with one line of thought. Accordingly, she provides a different title for each chapters on the basis of her interpretation: “Xiang’ai” 相愛 (Caring for Each Other, Ch.14), “Jianxiang ai, jiaoxiang li” 兼相愛 交相利 (Inclusively Caring for Each Other, Mutually Benefiting Each Other, Ch.15), and ‘Quan jian” 勸兼 (Encouragement to be Inclusive, Ch.16). These chapters reflect the evolution of Mozi’s doctrine of impartial care, starting from reciprocal love within traditional and hierarchical relations, such as father and son, elder brother and younger brother, and subject and ruler, and moving toward unidirectional concern of the rich and strong towards the poor and weak. Her conclusion is that the discussion of these chapters centers on the broadening scope of caring and the changing nature and value of reciprocity. Even though I agree with most of her arguments, the evolutionary framework she

unlike many scholar's claim, Mozi's impartial care does not assume "equal ethical pull," meaning that all beings have the same ethical duties on all other beings.⁷⁵ I do not think that Mozi hold a view that one should love a stranger as much as one loves one's own parents, as Mengzi claims he does. Mozi's impartial care is not about I versus all others (I in relation to family=friends=strangers. In this case, I assume equal ethical commitments to my family, friends, and strangers). Rather, Mozi's impartial care concerns each particular relationship that I engage with them (I in relation to a family, I in relation to a friend, I in relation to a stranger. In this case, I may assume different ethical commitments to each party). Accordingly, I should be impartial in each particular relationship, between me and my father, between me and a stranger. I should treat my father as I treat myself; I should treat a stranger as I treat myself. It is not that I should be impartial between my father and a stranger, treating my father and a stranger in the same way.⁷⁶

employs leads her to reach a different conclusion from mine. She notes, "Since the traditional type of reciprocity (of Ch.14) is a burden for the new focus on *jian*, it is gradually replaced by a reciprocity among non-kin (in Ch.15 and Ch.16) and ultimately with Heaven." This indicates that she considers the traditional type of caring within family members as something contradictory to the unconditional caring for non-kin and so something to be replaced or abandoned. I agree with her that impartial care in the latter sense is what makes Mozi distinctive from other thinkers, it does not necessarily mean that these two scope of caring are contradictory or discordant to each other. I think that it is more appropriate to situate these three chapters in developmental framework than evolutionary one. Carine Defoort, "The Growing Scope of *Jian* 兼: Differences Between Chapters 14, 15 and 16 of the Mozi," *Oriens Extremus* 45 (2005/2006): 119-140.

⁷⁵ In his article, David Wong introduces Christina Hoff Sommers's distinction between impersonal universalism and particularism. Impersonal universalism assumes "equal ethical pull," while particularism assumes "different ethical pull." In this sense, Ru version of graded love may fall under particularism and Mohist version of impartial care under universalism. (However, Wong points out that even if the Ru version of graded love may fall under the particularist rubric, it is not purely particularistic. Ru's graded love has universalistic tendencies, too, since its ultimate end is the extension of love to all.) In a similar way, Bryan Van Norden distinguishes between the Ru's graded love and Mozi's impartial care as "agent-relative" and "agent-neutral." See David Wong, "Universalism Versus Love with Distinctions: An Ancient Debate Revived," 252-253; Bryan W. Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism*, 179.

⁷⁶ To give an example, suppose I am on a lifeboat and my father and a stranger are still on a sinking ship, but there is room for only one person in the lifeboat. Who should I save, my father or a stranger? If Mozi's impartial care assumes equal ethical obligation toward all human beings, there is no definite answer for this question, since I have exactly the same duty to my father and to a stranger. However, if Mozi's impartial care does not assume equal ethical obligation, the answer becomes rather obvious. I should save my father. I have filial commitment to my father, and also I have another particular commitment to someone I do not know. In a normal situation, I should be impartial in each relationship to fulfill my commitments to them. But the question here is about which commitment I should prioritize: filiality or general humanity: there is a conflict between

Furthermore, given that my ethical commitments are defined differently according to which relationships I engage in (e.g., filiality to my parents, brotherhood to my siblings, generosity to the poor, and modesty to the lowly), impartial care does not oppose having “different ethical pull,” but rather promotes it. As I have argued, Mozi’s impartial care is possibly the foundation of Ru’s graded love, and thus, it is inclusive of Ru’s graded love. In addition to the particular relationships emphasized in Ru teaching, such as family members and friends, Mozi draws attention to another important particular relationship that we often engage with weaker members of society: the poor, the lowly, and the weak. The fundamental question

two commitments. Generally, if we admit that filiality is stronger than general humanity, I would save my father. Furthermore, from the perspective of a stranger, if he is an impartial person, he would treat me as he treats himself. In other words, he will not expect me to sacrifice my own father and instead save him, because he would know what is expected between two people who do not know each other and between son and father. Therefore, if all people in this story are impartial, no body would complain if I save my father, regrettable though the loss of the stranger may be. To give another example, in what Bryan Van Norden calls “caretaker argument,” Mozi provides a thought experiment: to whom would you entrust your own family, the impartial person or the partial person? Mozi’s definite answer is that nobody wants to entrust his or her family to an impartial person. In his attempt to explicate Mozi’s argument, Van Norden makes several interesting points. He argues that if the caretaker is really an impartialist, he will have no reason to protect your family over anyone else. Therefore, it would not be a smart choice to entrust your family to an impartialist caretaker. In contrast, if the partialist caretaker is indeed a close friend of yours, he will take more care of your family than strangers. Thus, unlike Mozi’s claim, Van Norden concludes that the partialist caretaker would be a better choice than the impartial caretaker. Of course, if we follow Van Norden’s definition of impartial care, which is agent-neutral and universalistic, his analysis would make sense. However, if my argument is right, it is not what Mozi means by impartial care. In my understanding, according to Mozi, the partialist caretaker is the one who only takes care of his family, and thus he will not take care of your family (like the son, who only takes care of himself and thus does not serve his father). On the other hand, the impartialist caretaker has a special commitment to his own family, but also he acknowledges a particular ethical commitment to his friend’s family (In the first case, impartiality is between I and my family, while in the second case, impartiality is between my family – the extended version of I – and friend’s family). So, for instance, when he is in a good situation, the impartialist caretaker will take good care of his own family as well as your family. However, when his situation deteriorates (for instance, like a lifeboat case), he has to adjust himself between his special duty to his own family and his another duty to his friend’s family. Even if he prioritizes his own family in such a dire situation, his choice would not be taken as the same as that of the partialist caretaker, who only takes care of his own family in any situation. Therefore, my conclusion is that if we interpret Mozi’s impartial care as eliminating self-centeredness rather than as an impartial duty to all human beings, most of Mozi’s arguments become easier to understand. However, one more thing I want to point out is that, as I argued before, there is a case in which Mozi strongly advocates “equal ethical pull”: that is, when rulers govern the state. In the *Mozi*, it is said, 古者文武爲正 均分 貴賢罰暴 勿有親戚弟兄之所阿 卽此文武兼也 “In ancient times, when King Wen and King Wu conducted government, with just division they rewarded the worthy and punished the wicked, showing no partiality to relatives and brothers. This was the impartiality of King Wen and Wu” “Impartial care III” 兼愛下 (16.12). So, in this case, the particular commitment of rulers in their governance is none other than “impartiality,” having equal ethical duties to all other human beings. For the detailed account of Van Norden’s caretaker argument, see Bryan W. Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism*, 180-189.

that Mozi raises behind all these is that without eliminating self-centeredness, any meaningful and satisfying relationships between people, whether close or remote, will never happen at all. What he strenuously argues for is that impartial care should be the basis for all human relationships.

This doctrine of impartial care is also essential for Mozi's doctrine of strict moral economy. It is true that regardless of the success or failure of the moral economy, a variety of discrepancies will always exist in society, and so will various forms of discrimination.⁷⁷ But, the problem of discrimination can be exacerbated in a society of strict moral economy. In such society, the poor, the lowly, and the weak, are regarded to deserve the miserable situation they are in. It is their fault, and thus they are responsible. Accordingly, people tend to treat them harshly. Indifferent treatment and a judgmental attitude are readily justified. This strict moral universe is ironically an unfriendly and heartless place. However, by his doctrine of impartial care, we can soften or even remove the harshness of moral economy. Mozi admonishes, 天下之人皆相愛 強不執弱 衆不劫寡 富不侮貧 貴不敖賤 詐不欺愚 "If the people of the world all love each other, the strong would not dominate the weak, the many would not plunder the few, the rich would not despise the poor, the noble would not scorn the lowly, and the cunning would not deceive the foolish."⁷⁸ Through the right system of moral economy, the good are fairly rewarded and the wicked are justly punished; but by practicing impartial care, people would be more lenient and hospitable to the poor and the lowly. Therefore, the ideal society envisioned by Mozi is just but not too harsh, strict but also generous.

It is the chapters entitled the "Intention of *Tian*" 天志 that these two doctrines of moral economy and impartial care are intertwined to make a complete whole. According to Mozi, *tian*

⁷⁷ However, Zhungzi rejected discrepancies and distinctions in society as the very source of social harms.

⁷⁸ "Impartial Care II" 兼愛中 (15.3)

is the ultimate source of rightness and also the ultimate authority of reward and punishment.

And, the way one receives reward from *tian* is none other than practicing “impartial care.” Mozi says:

今天下之士君子 欲爲義者 則不可不順天之意矣 曰 順天之意者兼也
反天之意者別也 兼之爲道也義正 別之爲道也力正

“Nowadays, if the gentlemen of the world wish to be righteous, then they must comply with the intention of *tian*. I say that to comply with the intention of *tian* is to be impartial. To oppose the intention of *tian* is to be partial. To follow the way of impartiality is to govern by righteousness. To follow the way of partiality is to govern by force.”⁷⁹

Tian values those who treat others as they treat themselves, and thus those people will be reward with fortune and bounty from *tian*. Thus, impartial care is incorporated into the system of moral economy, and also it complements and prevents one possible systematic fault of moral economy: harshness.⁸⁰

This unique and powerful ethical program of Mozi must have been considered as a dire threat to early Ru thinkers. On the one hand, Mozi reconstructed a complete system of moral economy, through human governance as well as the assistance from the spirit world and through separating any contingent aspect from the workings of moral order. On the other hand, his doctrine of impartial care offered a solution to an important systematic drawback of strict moral economy, which had not been recognized even by the sage kings of antiquity. It was Mengzi who confronted Mozi’s criticism and paved the way for restoring the firm belief in

⁷⁹ “Intention of *Tian*” (28.4; 28.5).

⁸⁰ In relation to this, Carine Defoort makes an important observation. She argues that on the one hand, the promise of *tian* to reward and punish motivates people to practice “impartial care,” but at the same time, the limitless bounty of *tian*, the impossible amount for humans to repay, makes “impartial care” a duty toward *tian*. Carine Defoort, “The Growing Scope of *Jian* 兼,” 140.

moral economy that had weaken in Kongzi's voluntarist moral economy. In the following chapter, I will examine how Mengzi, a remarkably shrewd and clever Ru thinker, implicitly incorporated the greatest challenge of his opponent into his own ethical system, while still distinguishing his own system from his rival's.

4. Mengzi's Rationalization of Moral Economy

Like his predecessors, Mengzi continued to believe in moral economy,¹ and also continued to advocate the doctrine of *tianming*.² Yet, he made a significant change in the mode of moral economy: the proper moral economy was no longer an object of belief, but became a self-evident truth. In other words, Mengzi *rationalized* the notion of moral economy: that is, he provided a logical and plausible account for its origin and structure. In this chapter, I will outline Mengzi's rationalization of the moral economy, his treatment of contingency, his conception of virtue, and the way he rearranges the relationship between virtue and external goods, contrasting his ethical program with those of Kongzi and Mozi. I will examine why he made the claims he made about moral economy and virtue, and describe some of the implications of his ethical claims.

The notion of moral economy held by Mengzi's predecessors, e.g., the sage kings, Kongzi, and Mozi, was basically founded on the belief in a moral *tian* 天. The good prosper and the bad suffer because *tian* values good and disapproves of bad. Without the belief in *tian* as a moral judge, their moral economy could not successfully sustain itself. In contrast to these views, Mengzi turns the focus of moral economy away from *tian*. At its extreme, Mengzi's moral economy appears to operate well even without the existence of *tian*.³ Mengzi's famous phrase sums up this aspect of his view, 仁者無敵 "The benevolent have no enemy." For Mengzi,

¹ 孟子曰 仁則榮 不仁則辱 Mengzi says, "Benevolence brings honor; cruelty brings disgrace." *Mengzi* 2A:4. . For the translation of the *Mengzi*, I generally follow D. C. Lau's translation and refer to Irene Bloom's translation and modify when necessary. D. C. Lau, *The Mencius; translated with an introduction by D. C. Lau* (Harmondsworth and New York: Penguin Books, 1970); Irene Bloom, *Mencius* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

² 孟子曰 三代之得天下也以仁 其失天下也以不仁 Mengzi says, "The Three Dynasties (Xia, Shang, Zhou) won the world through benevolence and lost it through cruelty." *Mengzi* 4A:3.

³ However, this does not mean that Mengzi negates the belief in a moral *tian*.

the virtuous person is not merely protected and rewarded by *tian*; even before *tian* acts on his behalf, his virtue protects and benefits him, moving other people not to be hostile to him but instead to treat him cordially and favorably.⁴ Mengzi explains:

國君好仁 天下無敵焉 南面而征 北狄怨 東面而征 西夷怨 曰 奚爲後我 武王之伐殷也 革車三百兩 虎賁三千人 王曰 無畏 寧爾也 非敵百姓也 若崩厥角稽首 征之爲言正也 各欲正己也 焉用戰

“If the ruler of a state likes benevolence, he will have no enemy in the state. When he [King Tang] marched on the south, the northern barbarians complained; when he marched on the east, the western barbarians complained. They all said, ‘Why does he not come to us first?’ When King Wu marched on Yin, he had three hundred war chariots and three thousand brave warriors. He said, ‘Do not be afraid. I come to bring you peace, not to wage war on the people.’ And the sound of the people knocking their heads on the ground was like the toppling of a mountain. To wage a punitive war is to rectify. There is no one who does not wish himself rectified. What need is there for war?”⁵

This story actually comes from the *Documents*, and thus, these conventional accounts of the sage kings seem to be nothing out of ordinary.⁶ However, there is a difference between the

⁴ Here, the fact that virtue protects and benefits does not mean the self-sufficiency of virtue. It highlights the point that virtue actually protects and benefits its agents.

⁵ *Mengzi* 7B:4.

⁶ The story of King Tang appears in “The Announcement of Zhong Hui” 仲虺之誥: 仲虺乃作誥 曰 嗚呼 惟天生民有欲 無主乃亂 惟天生聰明時乂 有夏昏德 民墜塗炭 天乃錫王勇智 表正萬邦 纘禹舊服 茲率厥典 奉若天命 ... 惟王不邇聲色 不殖貨利 德懋懋官 功懋懋賞 用人惟己 改過不吝 克寬克仁 彰信兆民 乃葛伯仇餉 初征自葛 東征西夷怨 南征北狄怨 曰 奚獨後予 攸徂之民 室家相慶 曰 奚予后 后来其蘇 民之戴商 厥惟舊哉 Accordingly, Zhonghui made the following announcement: “Oh, *tian* gives birth to the people with desires. Without a ruler, they must fall into disorder, and thus, *tian* gives birth to the man of intelligence to regulate them. The ruler of Xia had his virtue all-obscured and the people were as if they had fallen amid mire and burning charcoal. *Tian* hereupon bestowed our king with valor and prudence to serve as a sign and director to the myriad regions, and to continue the way of Yu. You are now following the proper course, honoring and obeying the *ming* of *tian*. ... Our king did not indulge in dissolute music and women; he did not seek to accumulate property and wealth. To great virtue, he gave great offices; to great merit, he gave great rewards. He employed others as if they are his own; he was not slow to correct his errors. He was so rightly indulgent and rightly benevolent to be trusted by the people. When the earl of Ge showed his enmity to the provision, our king started to conquer Ge. When he marched on the east, the tribes of the west complained. When he marched on the south, those of the north complained, saying ‘Why does he not come to us first?’ Wherever he went, people congratulate one

Documents and the *Mengzi* in the way these accounts were incorporated into their respective grand schemes. In the *Documents*, these stories are part of a larger plan that *tian* selects a virtuous person to replace tyrants. In contrast, *Mengzi* brings these stories to the forefront, highlighting the point that it is their virtuous actions that bring them success. The *Documents* puts more emphasis on *tian* as the agent behind moral economy, the force ensuring moral accounts will balance, whereas *Mengzi* seems to be more interested in the efficacy of moral economy itself.⁷

The distinctiveness of *Mengzi*'s use of these accounts looms large when we compare it with *Mozi*'s views. *Mozi*'s description of the punitive wars of sage kings was full of supernatural omens and spiritual assistance.⁸ This signifies that, for *Mozi*, it is not only the virtues of the sage kings that brought them success, but also their success was foreseen and supported by *tian* and spirits. Unlike *Mozi*, however, *Mengzi* appears to believe that the successful conquests of King Tang and King Wu were the result of their own virtue. It was the power of their virtue that won over people from the opposing states, who wished for peace and to be delivered from the yoke of tyranny. He turns his attention to the point that the good

another, saying 'We have waited for our king; he does come and we will revive.' It has been long since the people honor Shang." And, the story of King Wu appears in "The Great Oath, Part 2" 泰誓中, but it is very different from the above passage in the *Mengzi*. The original story in "The Great Oath" is King Wu's speech to his troops, not to the people of Shang. His message is that since their military mission was carried on to execute a tyrant, King Zhou, on behalf of *tian*, the troops should not be afraid: 勗哉夫子 罔或無畏 寧執非敵 百姓懍懍 若崩厥角 嗚呼 乃一德一心 立定厥功 惟克永世 "Rouse, my troops! Do not think that he (King Zhou) is not to be feared! You'd better think that he is no match for us. The people [of Shang] are so trembling that they will knock their head on the ground like the toppling of a mountain. Oh, keep your virtue and mind constant to accomplish our merit to last for all ages!"

⁷ Nevertheless, their difference is not mutually exclusive. Their difference is principally a matter of emphasis. For instance, the *Documents* does not negate the fact that virtue has natural effects on people, and also *Mengzi* does not negate the belief in the justice of *tian*. In addition, as seen in the analogy between object and its shadow, between sound and its echo, the *Documents* also describes the self-sufficient workings of moral economy without necessarily resorting on *tian*. Despite all these points, there is a profound difference between the *Documents* and *Mengzi* in their approach to moral economy. The *Documents* does not show any serious attempt to explain the self-evident relationship between one's moral action and its outcomes. It is just believed to be so.

⁸ *Mozi*'s description of the punitive wars of King Yu 禹, King Tang, and King Wu appears in "Against Offensive Warfare III" 非攻下. For the study of the relationship between the punitive war and its religious justification, see Benjamin Wong and Hui-Chieh Loy, "War and Ghosts in *Mozi*'s Political Philosophy."

prosper and the bad suffer, without relying on the intervention of *tian* or the assistance of spiritual beings. He is definitely less interested in finding an agent behind the phenomena of moral economy and more interested in describing its actual workings.⁹

Instead, he provides a more naturalized account for the workings of moral economy. When King Hui of Liang 梁惠王 asks what kind of person can unite the world, Mengzi answers that a person who does not like killing people can unite the world. In his explanation:

王知夫苗乎 七八月之間旱 則苗槁矣 天油然作雲 沛然下雨 則苗浡然興之矣 其如是 孰能禦之 今夫天下之人牧 未有不嗜殺人也 如有不嗜殺人者 則天下之民皆引領而望之矣 誠如是也 民歸之 由水之就下 沛然孰能禦之
 “Does your Majesty not know about young rice plants? Should there be a drought in the seventh or eighth month, these plants will wilt. If clouds begin to gather in the sky and rain comes pouring down, then the plants will spring up again. This being the case, who can stop it? Now in the state amongst the leaders of men there is not one who does not like killing people. If there is one who is not, then the people in the state will crane their necks toward for his coming. This being truly the case, the people will turn to him like water flowing downwards with a tremendous force. Who can stop it?”¹⁰

When the world is filled with cruel and brutal rulers, people naturally long for a benevolent leader as if they were plants waiting for rain in drought. When a virtuous person appears,

⁹ From a slightly different angle, I think Philip Ivanhoe’s study can offer another insight to this change of interest from the agency of *tian* to the workings of moral economy. In his study of the comparison between the notions of *tian* in the *Lunyu* and *Mengzi*, he argues that even if both texts appeal to the authority of *tian* for their ethical claims, they locate the sources of their faith in *tian* differently: the classical culture for Kongzi, but human nature for Mengzi. I think Mengzi’s doctrine of the innate goodness of human nature has a close connection to the retreat of the agency of *tian*. Even if *tian* is the source of human goodness, it is humans who should strive for the cultivation of good. Ivanhoe notes, “Rather than relying primarily on the power of moral charisma and a faith in Heaven’s commitment to the good, Mengzi argued that people *themselves* were designed and inclined to follow the Way.” It is not that *tian* completely lost its ethical authority, but that the status of *tian* certainly was undergoing a significant change in Mengzi’s ethical program. Philip Ivanhoe, “Heaven as a Source for Ethical Warrant in Early Confucianism,” 211-220.

¹⁰ *Mengzi* 1A:6.

people are drawn to him like water flowing downwards. This is a self-evident truth because people like and are attracted to those who care for them and hate and seek to avoid those who harm them; particularly in times of tyranny, their yearning for a virtuous leader intensifies. This seemingly apparent correlation between virtue and its natural consequences, however, had not caught the eyes of Mengzi's predecessors, or at least, it was articulated neither in the *Documents* nor in the *Lunyu* and *Mozi*.¹¹ It was Mengzi who turns his attention from the agent behind moral economy to the workings of moral economy itself and backs up his picture of how things work with logical and plausible accounts.¹² Mengzi's moral economy is natural, so of itself.¹³

Despite the strong support of rational justification, the world of Mengzi's moral economy also encounters frequent obstacles. Just as Kongzi introduced the notion of contingency in order to explain occasional failures of moral economy, Mengzi permits contingency in his moral universe.¹⁴ However, Mengzi's notion of contingency has significantly different ethical implications from that of Kongzi. In Kongzi's view, contingency, however trivial it might be, connotes the failure of the normative principle of moral order.¹⁵ In contrast,

¹¹ It is not that Mengzi's predecessors negated this apparent relationship between virtue and its outcomes. Rather, they were simply more interested in *tian*. Mengzi's articulation of the workings of moral order, seems to have a significant connection with the changing status of *tian* in Mengzi's thought.

¹² I think that one of the problems of studies on the early Ru tradition is the overemphasis on *tian* as a moral agent: i.e., the anthropomorphism of *tian*. It is apparent that in early texts like the *Documents* and the *Book of Poetry*, *tian* was often portrayed as an anthropomorphic deity. However, I think that this vision of *tian* as a moral deity is not always applicable in the *Mengzi*. Accordingly, Michael Puett aptly points out, "If we assume that Heaven is a moral deity, and if we assume this moral deity would, in the *Lunyu* and the *Mencius*, be providing moral mandates that humans would then be asked to put into practice, then we have a great deal of difficulty in accounting for most of the passages in these two texts." In other words, if we do not assume the strong anthropomorphism of *tian*, most of the problems would disappear. However, Puett, instead of abandoning this problematic assumption, bases his study on this assumption. According to him, *tian* is a moral deity, but this moral entity often acts against its norm, and this becomes the source of a strong tension between *tian* and man in the *Mengzi*. See Michael Puett, "Following the Commands of Heaven," 50.

¹³ Unlike Michael Puett's claim, I think that *tian* is not like an anthropomorphic deity, who can act against its norm, but *tian* can be defined as "being so of itself," as in the Daoistic sense of *ziran* 自然. Instead, Mengzi's notion of "being so of itself" definitely has strong moralistic connotations.

¹⁴ Like Kongzi, Mengzi uses the same word, *xing* 幸 (fortunate), for the unexpected favorable outcomes of bad action: for instance, the case that a wicked ruler does not lose his state. See *Mengzi* 4A:1.

¹⁵ However, according to Robert Eno's argument, Kongzi's notion of contingency could not mean the failure of moral economy. At one point, moral economy appears to have failed, but *tian* may have a teleological plan and

Mengzi's contingency does not hint at all that the moral order can fail. The moral order is always at work, but there are other, external conditions, that contribute to shaping and timing of final outcomes.

Mengzi's disciple, Gongsun Chou 公孫丑, once asked why the illustrious virtue of King Wen 文王 did not enable him to become a king, replacing the tyrant King Zhou.¹⁶ As a matter of fact, it was King Wen's son, King Wu 武王, with the assistance of his other son, the Duke of Zhou 周公, who finally defeated King Zhou. Gongsun Chou's question betrays doubt, or at least, ambivalence toward the notion of moral economy: the eminent virtue of King Wen did not guarantee him favorable and expected outcomes.¹⁷ Without hesitation, Mengzi offers three specific reasons for this seeming deviation from moral order: 1) the long tradition of the Shang, founded by the sage King Tang and inherited by several virtuous rulers; 2) the assistance of worthy officials around King Zhou; and 3) the inferiority of King Wen's power in terms of land and population, compared to that of King Zhou. According to Mengzi, all these external conditions, together with King Wen's virtue, contributed to the final outcomes: he was not able to complete his mission, but it was brought to fruition by his sons.

Not only does he articulate the existence and role of external conditions, he also puts great emphasis on their significance. He quotes from the old sayings of the people of Qi,

it may succeed in the long term. In other words, it might be just due to the limitation of human scope and comprehension that moral economy appears to fail. However, I think the very fact that it is beyond human comprehension actually denies the efficacy of human moral agency assumed in moral economy. Therefore, it would be not too astray to say that contingency connotes the failure of moral economy in Kongzi's ethical program. See Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 120-122.

¹⁶ This question was prompted when Mengzi told Gongsun Chou, 以齊王 由反手也 "To rule the state of Qi is as easy as turning over one's hand." *Mengzi* 2A:1. Gongsun Chou was perplexed because if ruling the state is so easy, how could it be possible that the virtuous ruler like King Wen was unable to complete his mission during his lifetime (King Wen was believed to live more than 100 years): here, his mission is to become the king of the world in place of the tyrant king and to harmonize the world by moral transformation of the people. Of course, Gongsun Chou did not explicitly ask why King Wen was unable to defeat King Zhou. But I think it is implicit in his question that even the illustrious virtue of King Wen did not bring him the most favorable external outcomes and failed to bring order to the world in his lifetime.

¹⁷ Here, favorable external outcome refers to kingship, which has intrinsic as well as instrumental values.

雖有智慧 不如乘勢 雖有鎡基 不如待時 “You may be wise, but it is better to make use of circumstances; You may have a hoe, but it is better to wait for the right season.”¹⁸ You must be wise and virtuous, but you also have to meet right *shi* 勢 (circumstances) and proper *shi* 時 (time).¹⁹ *Shi* 勢 and *shi* 時 are external conditions (spatial and temporal, respectively), and they are external in that they are beyond human control.²⁰ These external conditions are as important as, or even more important than one’s moral actions, what one can control. More often than not, external conditions play the decisive role in determining final outcomes.²¹ However virtuous King Wen was, all the obstacles surrounding him made it difficult for him to achieve his mission during his lifetime and left success to his sons.

¹⁸ *Mengzi* 2A:1.

¹⁹ According to Robert Eno, these two terms, *shi* 勢 and 時 (with different tonal intonation), are not etymologically related, but have a close conceptual relation. They are spatial and temporal dimensions of a single concept: “the shifting circumstances of the experienced world which for the actual field for all applied learning.” See <http://www.iub.edu/~p374/Glossary.html>. In addition to *shi* 勢 and *shi* 時, *Mengzi* also uses another set of terms, *tian* 天 and *ming* 命 to refer to external conditions: 莫之爲而爲者天也 莫之致而至者命也 “Those things that are done without anything doing it are *tian*; those things that occur without anything incurring them are *ming*.” *Mengzi* 5A:6. *Mengzi* says, these two cases refer to what human cannot do (非人之所能爲也). Zhu Xi also commented on this passage, saying that these two cases essentially refer to the same thing, what is beyond human agency: 蓋以理言之謂之天 自人言之謂之命 其實則一而已 “From the perspective of principle it is called *tian* and from the perspective of humans it is called *ming*. They are actually the same thing.” *Mengzi jizhu* 孟子集注 5A:6.

²⁰ For example, the three reasons that *Mengzi* provided to answer Gongsun Chou’s question were all beyond King Wen’s control. Obviously, the long tradition of the Shang and the worthy officials of King Zhou were not what King Wen can make or change. The third reason, the size of King Wen’s land and people, however, appears to be a little bit dubious because he might expand his land and population. And yet, from the perspective that they were initially a given condition, inherited by his father, they are still beyond his control, even though he might change that situation in the future by his effort. Therefore, when I use the word, “external condition,” it does not refer to all outer conditions of humans, but specifically refers to the situation that is given, the externality of conditions: “being beyond human control.” Accordingly, such as human emotional conditions, anger and passion, when they go beyond one’s control, could be considered as external condition. In her study of the role of luck in the ancient Greek culture, Martha Nussbaum aptly points out that luck associates not only with external contingency, but also with internal contingency. What she means by this is that when we usually think about luck, what is beyond our control comes from without. However, she points out that what is beyond our control is not only from without, but also from within, the ungovernable parts of the human being’s internal makeup, such as appetites, feelings, and emotions. Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, 7.

²¹ This point is clearly shown in the following analogy. *Mengzi* says, 智譬則巧也 聖譬則力也 由射於百步之外也 其至爾力也 其中非爾力也 “Wisdom is like skill, while sageness is like strength. When you shoot from beyond a hundred paces, it is due to your strength that the arrow reaches the target, but it is not due to your strength that it hits the mark.” *Mengzi* 5B:1. Here, your strength could mean your moral excellence. You cultivate your virtue to arrive at the final outcomes, but whether or not it actually brings you favorable outcomes depends not on your moral excellence but on external conditions, like arrow hitting the mark.

In this respect, Mengzi's notion of contingency and that of Kongzi do not seem too far from each other. Both agree that one's virtue does not always guarantee favorable outcomes: flowers are supposed to bloom, but sometimes fail to do so due to various reasons. But, there is an apparent difference between Kongzi and Mengzi in the way they deal with the failure of moral economy. On the one hand, Kongzi's emphasis is on the point that flowers can fail to bloom. He pays much more attention to the fact that the moral order can be broken. On the other hand, Mengzi is more interested in why flowers sometimes fail to bloom and he identifies various reasons that affect the whole process. As he rationalizes the moral economy, he does exactly the same thing for contingency. In brief, he completely rationalizes in and out of moral economy.

Although this difference is primarily a matter of focus or perspectives, it renders their ethical systems significantly different from each other. In the case of Kongzi, the moral order can be broken and since he does not comprehend (or he is not interested in) the reason why it is broken, he can be deeply troubled and frustrated when it fails. On the contrary, in Mengzi's view, moral order does not fail. His rationalization of the moral order makes it a self-evident truth: virtuous actions naturally induce favorable consequences. Nevertheless, the reason that moral economy appears to fail from time to time is because there exist other contingent factors that influence the process of moral order. In other words, one's virtue may not bring favorable outcomes, but this does not necessarily mean that the moral order is defective or inoperative. By separating contingent aspects from the mechanism of moral order, Mengzi preserves the plausibility of the notion of moral order. Consequently, his strong belief in moral order as well as his comprehension of external conditions enables him not to show much regret or grief when one's virtue does not bring favorable outcomes. To give an example:

孟子去齊 充虞路問曰 夫子若有不豫色然 前日虞聞諸夫子曰 君子不怨天 不尤人 彼一時 此一時也 五百年必有王者興 其間必有名世者 由周而來 七百有餘世矣 以其數則過矣 以其時考之則可矣 夫天未欲平治天下也 如欲平治天下 當今之世 舍我其誰也 吾何爲不豫哉

When Mengzi left Qi, Chong Yu asked him on the way, saying, "Master, you look somewhat unhappy. I heard from you the other day [quoting Kongzi], 'A gentleman does not reproach *tian* and does not blame other people.'"

[Mengzi replied,] "That time and this time are one and the same. Every five hundred years a true king should arise, and in the meantime, there should be men renowned in their generation. From Zhou to the present, it is over seven hundred years. Judging the numbers, five hundred years have passed.

Examining the time, it must be possible [that such individuals rise]. It must be that *tian* does not yet wish to bring peace to the world. If *tian* wishes to bring peace to the world, who is there in the present time other than myself? How come should I be unhappy?"²²

²² Mengzi 2B:13. This passage, however, has invoked a certain controversy among the commentators, pre-modern and modern. It is because Mengzi's remark, 彼一時 此一時也 (often translated as "That was one age and this was another age"), seems to be inconsistent with his own situation. Chong Yu was confused because Mengzi appeared to be unhappy despite his own teaching not to reproach *tian* and not to blame other people. Mengzi answered him that he is indeed not unhappy as he taught him the other day. Therefore, the translation, "that was one time and this was another time," does not really fit with the picture. Philip Ivanhoe, by examining and comparing the important interpretations of traditional and modern scholars, presents his own interpretation, taking his remark to say, "That time and this time are one and the same." Mark Csikszentmihalyi also makes a similar suggestion that in order to reconcile Mengzi's earlier teaching (his quotation of Kongzi) and his present situation, the line should be interpreted as "the more things change, the more they stay the same." I also agree with them, but I am not sure about Philip Ivanhoe's interpretation that "that time" refers to the time of Kongzi, while "this time" refers to the present time of Mengzi. His point is that by this remark, Mengzi is likening his situation to that of Kongzi. Mark Csikszentmihalyi seems to present a similar opinion in his study of Mengzi's dispensational theory of the five hundred year appearance of sage. By comparing 2B:13 and 7B:38, Csikszentmihalyi suggests that the quotation, "夫子曰 君子不怨天 不尤人" might have originally been an anecdote about Kongzi. If my understanding is right, both of them translate 夫子曰 of the above quotation as "Kongzi said." However, I think there is a problem in this interpretation because of 諸 (in front of 夫子曰, which means "from") and another 夫子 (in the beginning of Chong Yu's remark, which definitely refers to "Mengzi"). In my opinion, the above quotation should be interpreted as "I heard from you, Mengzi, the other day," even if Mengzi's statement could be a quotation from Kongzi. Therefore, I think that "that time" simply refers to an earlier time when Mengzi taught Chong Yu by quoting the lines from the *Lunyu*. According to Philip Ivanhoe, he has a new reading on this passage: Mengzi differentiates his own situation with that of Kongzi. So, his translation goes back to "That age was one time; this is another." Unlike Kongzi's time, the coming of a sage was far past due in Mengzi's time. For this interpretation, see the note # 25 of 2B:13 of Irene Bloom, trans., *Mencius*, 47; Philip Ivanhoe, "A Question of Faith-A New Interpretation of Mencius 2B:13," *Early China* 13 (1988): 133-165; Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*, 194-197.

When Mengzi realized that he might not have a chance to assist a king, he did not show much frustration or regret, but remained confident. He might be saying, "I have already reached a certain level of moral excellence, why should I be unhappy? It is not my fault that I do not meet with the opportunity." This is in stark contrast to Kongzi's. When Kongzi realized that his political mission might not succeed, he lamented, 噫 天喪予 天喪予 "Alas! *Tian* has left me bereft! *Tian* has left me bereft!"; or 吾已矣夫 "I am done for!" Even if Kongzi had tried to perfect his virtues and succeeded to do so, he was still regretful for his political failure. Philip Ivanhoe also notes, "An admission of struggle and doubt would be more characteristic of Confucius than Mencius. Mencius never seems to experience, or at least reveal, the personal struggle and doubt we find in the record of Confucius's teachings."²³ In the *Mengzi*, we do not find any lamentation as heartfelt as that of Kongzi, but instead, a sublime moral confidence.²⁴

Surprisingly, Mengzi's attitude is much closer to Mozi's than Kongzi's. As we have seen, Mozi remained unperturbed when his disciple was suspicious of his doctrine of moral economy.²⁵ The similarity between Mengzi and Mozi comes from their strong beliefs in moral

²³ This observation relates to Mengzi's teaching of "unmoved mind" 不動心. Philip Ivanhoe, "A Question of Faith-A New Interpretation of Mencius 2B:13," 158-159.

²⁴ Irene Bloom seems to agree with this general portrayal of Mengzi, the sublime moral confidence of Mengzi. But, she points out that his confidence appears to have faded in the closing passage of *Mengzi* 7B:38: 由孔子而來至於今 百有餘歲 去聖人之世 若此其未遠也 近聖人之居 若此其甚也 然而無有乎爾 則亦無有乎爾 "From Kongzi to the present time has been more than a hundred years. For us to not be distant from the age of the sage, and so close to the dwelling of the sage, yet nevertheless, is there no one? Is there truly no one?" And she goes on to argue that in the *Mengzi*, we find the interplay of confidence and doubt, optimism and pessimism, moral idealism and sober realism, which became the core of the Ru tradition. In general, I do not disagree with her opinion. I have already shown how an ethics of confidence and an ethics of uncertainty played out in the *Documents* and *Lunyu*. However, as she points out, "The optimism of the opening dialogues is more typical of the text as a whole; the final monologues is, in fact, rather unusual in the *Mencius*," I think the defining characteristic of the *Mengzi*, particularly in comparison with the *Lunyu*, is more of confidence than doubt. See Irene Bloom, "Practicality and Spirituality in the *Mencius*," in Tu Wei-ming and Mary Evelyn Tucker, eds., *Confucian Spirituality* (New York: Crossroads, 2002): 233-251.

²⁵ Mozi's disciple asked, "You are a sage, so how come are you sick?" This question can be interpreted in two ways: first, you have taught us the doctrine of moral economy and you must not be as sagacious as we think; second, since such a sage as you have fallen ill, your doctrine must be wrong. The second one might be the case, but we cannot be sure. What is to be certain is which one Mozi took it as his disciple's intention: that is, the second. Mozi answers, "Although I am caused to be sick, how does this mean that my words are all of a sudden not good or that ghosts and spirits are all of a sudden not all-seeing?" In his answer, he does not show

order. Such belief, in turn, is made possible by separating contingent factors from the workings of moral order. For Mozi, morally bad behaviors definitely incur unfavorable outcomes, such as terminal illness or untimely death.²⁶ But, there are other kinds of causal chains that bring about similar results: for instance, coldness, fatigue, and famine. A strict moral economy is never questioned by Mozi; he ascribes the seeming inadequacy of moral economy to other non-moral domains.

In the case of Mengzi, morally worthy actions bring favorable external goods, such as kingship and longevity. This is plausible and apparent because people are naturally drawn to a person who respects, cherishes, and protects them. But, the self-evident working of moral economy can be influenced by other external conditions, which can either facilitate or obstruct it. Therefore, morally worthy actions can end up with an unhappy ending. Nonetheless, this does not mean that moral order fails to operate: failure to see the expected result is just due to external conditions. As Mozi distinguishes moral order and other types of non-moral orders, Mengzi separates contingencies of external conditions from the workings of moral order. As Mozi attributes the seeming failure of moral economy to non-moral domains, Mengzi attributes it to external conditions. Consequently, both of them were able to safeguard the workings of moral order.

Despite these affinities between Mengzi and Mozi, Mengzi's configuration of the world is still much closer to Kongzi's contingent world view. As examined earlier, Mozi completely severs the moral order and other non-moral causal chains; this makes it possible for him to say, "One's virtue *always* brings favorable external goods." On the other hand, even if Mengzi sorts

any hint of doubt on his own moral development, which is very unlikely of the sage kings of antiquity and Kongzi but very likely of Mengzi.

²⁶ One's immoral behaviors can be punished either by spirits (or directly by *tian*) or by the system of human governance.

out external conditions from the moral order, external conditions have direct influences upon the moral order; therefore, despite his strong conviction in moral order, it is impossible for him to say that one's virtue *always* bring favorable good results. Instead, Mengzi agrees with Kongzi that "One's virtue does *not always* guarantee them."

This notion of contingency, as it became the direct target of Mozi's criticism, is the biggest potential risk for belief in moral economy: it may produce moral laxity if people come to feel that they do not need to strive for goodness or moral decay if they come to believe they are not responsible for things that happened to them. Kongzi was well aware of such defects of contingency. In order to address this problem, he exhorts us to adhere to moral order in a contingent world and realize the true value of virtue inside us: "Wealth and honor attained through immoral means have as much to do with me as passing clouds,"²⁷ and "What can the men of Kuang do to me?"²⁸ It is an individual's *voluntary* decision to live up to moral order. Even if the world does not follow moral order, I will organize my own world meaningfully around moral order and appreciate the development of my own virtue day by day.²⁹

Mengzi also advocates the ultimacy of moral order within a world of contingency.

²⁷ *Lunyu* 7:16.

²⁸ *Lunyu* 9:5.

²⁹ David Hall and Roger Ames's study gives a significant insight to this voluntary aspect of Kongzi's ethical system. According to Hall and Ames, unlike western cosmology, which has its basis on a strong cosmogonic tradition, Kongzi's cosmology is immanent, meaning that there is no origin or birth of the world and there is no preexisting value man should follow. Without the concept of a transcendent deity who created the world, it is man who interprets the world and gives meaning to the world. In this immanent cosmology, they claim, man is the author of the world, and importantly, the authoring power of an individual depends on the level of his or her moral perfection. In their definition, *tian* is not a creative force or principle, but a general designation of the whole world: "the phenomenal world as it emerges of its own accord." Accordingly, Kongzi's voluntary decision to live up to moral order can be interpreted as his own way of giving meaning to the world. In a sense, I agree with Hall and Ames's claim. But, I do not think that the meaning of the world is entirely up to the hands of man. Kongzi definitely believed in moral economy as the preexisting value. This indicates that he did not create meaning out of nothing. I agree that at least in the *Mengzi*, the conception of *tian* is closer to the definition of Hall and Ames, the whole world, so of itself. However, I think whether or not *tian* in the Ru tradition is completely value-free is another question. Therefore, I might take an intermediary position: there is a certain value embedded in the world, but it is humans who give the full meaning to it. See David Hall and Roger Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987): 201-215.

However, for him, it is more of a natural and logical conclusion than an individual's voluntary choice to live up to moral order. As King Wen's mission was finally completed by his sons, Mengzi believes that one's moral perfection will bring favorable external goods in the end, albeit not in the near future. Therefore, Mengzi advised Duke Wen of Teng 滕文公: 苟爲善後世子孫 必有王者矣 "If you do good deeds, then amongst your descendants in future generation there will rise one who will become a true king."³⁰ It is not a mysterious prophesy, but a strong conviction based on his rational understanding of moral economy that virtuous deed will certainly bring favorable goods, however long it takes.

Accordingly, Mengzi's strong confidence in moral order is not so much in need of the theory of the self-sufficiency of virtue as in Kongzi's voluntarist moral economy. In Kongzi's view, even if one's virtuous action fails to bring favorable outcomes, virtues accumulated inside oneself are self-rewarding. In other words, virtues are not merely means but ends in themselves. However, for Mengzi, virtues are still the most powerful means to the best external goods. He believes that moral excellence will eventually overcome adversities of external conditions and finally bring favorable consequences.

Then, how does Mengzi cope with the latent problem of the aspect of virtue as a means? One of Kongzi's worries was that it easily distorts the genuine value of virtue (doing good for its own sake) and turns it into a mere means: people could practice good in order to get good rewards. This problem was not just perceived by Kongzi. Mark Csikszentmihalyi points out that this was also vehemently criticized by external critiques as moral hypocrisy: "The real motive for Ru moral behavior is personal gain of wealth and power."³¹ Interestingly, Kongzi's

³⁰ *Mengzi* 1B:14.

³¹ According to Mark Csikszentmihalyi, this is one of the three major external criticisms of the Ru virtue discourse in the late Warring States period. The first is moral hypocrisy and superficiality of Ru's ritual; the second is the inefficacy of Ru self-cultivation program due to the belief in *ming*; and the third is the

introduction of contingency somehow loosens the tight connection between one's action and its external outcomes and this results in turning one's concern away from external goods and toward one's own moral development.³² Mengzi's solution was, however, much more radical than Kongzi's theory of contingency and self-sufficiency of virtue. He pursues the complete moralization of our life: he significantly depreciates the value of non-moral goods and replaces it with moral virtues. Where external goods lose their values, from the outset there is not much possibility that virtue degenerates into a mere means to achieve those valueless goods.

To explain in detail, in Kongzi's view, external goods, such as kingship and longevity, have two distinct values: intrinsic and instrumental. Kongzi negates neither of these two types of values. A long life and a high political position are necessary for practicing virtue more completely and more broadly. Furthermore, Kongzi seems to believe that external goods obtained through proper means are the proper objects of enjoyment. However, Mengzi depreciates or even denies both types of values of external goods. First, he depreciates the intrinsic value of external goods. Explaining the tips for persuading men in power, Mengzi says:

堂高數仞 榱題數尺 我得志 弗爲也 食前方丈 侍妾數百人 我得志 弗爲也 般樂飲酒
驅騁田獵 後車千乘 我得志 弗爲也

"Halls several feet high and rafters several feet broad: even if my wishes were to be realized, I would not do such things. Food spread before me several feet square and female attendants counted in hundreds: even if my wishes were to be realized, I would not do such things. Playing, drinking, driving and hunting

counterproductiveness of Ru's individual self-cultivation on a social scale. He argues that this indictment of Ru moral motivation became the background for a theory of material virtue in the excavated *Wuxing* and *Mengzi*, a theory that virtues manifest themselves as observable physiological changes in the body. See Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*, 32-58.

³² I explained before that Kongzi introduced the notion of contingency in order to explain away the inadequacy of moral economy. It is interesting because his notion of contingency becomes the powerful remedy for the innate problems of strict moral economy.

with a retinue of a thousand chariots: even if my wishes were to be realized, I would not do such things.”³³

In this passage, Mengzi asserts that even though various luxuries of life were obtained through proper means, he would not take pleasure in them. Instead of these non-moral goods, he puts moral excellence as the true object of enjoyments. For instance, Mengzi mentions that despite all the comforts, wealth and honor, Shun was never relieved of anxiety unless his actions satisfied his parents.³⁴ This implies that even though moral economy assures that good actions will bring favorable goods, the practice of virtue does not fall back to a mere means because moral agents do not cherish external goods. For Mengzi, virtues are the true ends.³⁵

Furthermore, Mengzi at times seems to even negate the intrinsic value of external goods. The reason for his negation is found in the following passage: 人之有德慧術知者 恒存乎疾疾 獨孤臣孽子 其操心也危 其慮患也深 故達 “Those people who acquire virtue, wisdom, skill and cleverness are always found in adversity. The estranged subject and the son of a concubine conduct themselves with caution and watch out for troubles with prudence, and therefore succeed.”³⁶ To put it another way, people in ease and comfort hardly achieve moral excellence.³⁷

³³ *Mengzi* 7B:34.

³⁴ 天下之士悅之 人之所欲也 而不足以解憂 好色 人之所欲 妻帝之二女 而不足以解憂 富 人之所欲 富爲天下 而不足以解憂 貴 人之所欲 貴爲天子 而不足以解憂 人悅之好色富貴 無足以解憂者 惟順於父母可以解憂 “To be liked by all the scholars of the world is what men desire, but it was not sufficient to remove the worry of Shun. To like beauty is what men desire, and Shun had the two daughters [of Yao] as his wives, but this was not sufficient to remove his worry. To be rich is what men desire, and Shun was rich enough to possess the world, but this was not sufficient to remove his worry. To be noble is what men desire, and Shun was noble enough to become the Son of *tian*, but this was not sufficient to remove his worry. The reason that to be liked by people, to possess beauty, to be rich, and to be noble were not sufficient to remove his worry was because his worry could be removed only by being harmonious with his parents.” *Mengzi* 5A:1.

³⁵ Kongzi and Mengzi agree on that virtues are the true ends. Their difference lies not on their views on virtue, but on their views on external goods. Whereas Kongzi acknowledges the values of external goods, Mengzi does much less so. To summarize, Mengzi firmly believes in the workings of moral order but devalues external goods. On the contrary, Kongzi tries to follow the workings of moral order and to disregard its exceptions, and thus, he only devalues certain cases of external goods.

³⁶ *Mengzi* 7A: 18. The similar issue appears in *Mengzi* 6B:15.

Those external goods favored by people, such as wealth, power, and honor, could do more harm than good in the pursuit of goodness.³⁸ This suggests that Mengzi points out another significant aspect of external goods: in addition to being the outcomes of one's actions and the objects of enjoyments, external goods become the conditions for further actions and favorable external goods can be an obstacle in moral cultivation.³⁹ Consequently, not only does Mengzi replace external goods with moral virtues as the true objects of pursuit, but also he warns against the possible danger of external goods that it could get people estranged from their moral pursuits.

Then, what about the instrumental values of external goods? Does Mengzi also negate

³⁷ As we have seen, the Duke of Zhou also made a similar point when he explained the relationship between virtue and life span. He said that unlike the founders of the state, later kings were so indulged in ease and pleasure that they stayed on the throne for a relatively short period of time.

³⁸ Humans are thus often caught in a double bind: on the one hand, people want to have a happy life (in a conventional sense, physically and emotionally satisfactory life), but the very state they try to reach has the seeds of decline and fall. It is only the truly virtuous person (or the extremely cautious person) who can liberate from this dilemma or maintain the delicate balance between the two poles.

³⁹ On the one hand, external goods are the outcomes of previous action, and on the other hand, they are the conditions for further action. In the latter sense, they become external conditions. Tang Junyi and Robert Eno make an insightful point concerning the implications of external conditions. According to Tang Junyi, Kongzi, Mengzi and Mozi used the term *ming* 命 more or less referring to external circumstances. But, for Kongzi and Mengzi, he argues, *ming* does not simply refer to external circumstances, but it reveals to us "our duty," what we ought to do and what we ought not to. It is up to us to handle the circumstances. In a likely manner, Robert Eno divides the meaning of *ming* into two: prescriptive and descriptive. *Ming*, on the one hand, represents the circumscribing limits to the power of individual effort, but on the other hand, this outward limitation simultaneously presents us with the goal to be reached. He notes, "Ming possesses a descriptive meaning here, representing the plenitude of society and history faced from the perspective of the individual. Because it appears in this way as a limit, it could be translated as 'fate' or 'inevitability,' in that it acknowledges the inability of an individual to exercise complete control over the world he faces. But the same notion also supplies an imperative because, by being the outward bound of *hsing* 性, it presents the goal to be reached. It is the duty of the individual to reach it, to exhaust himself and encounter the inevitable limit that is entailed with existence as determined entity." From a slightly different perspective, Lee Yearley points out the two different dimensions of external circumstances: as occasion for action and occasion for reflection. (I think that external goods in terms of outcomes are closer to occasion for reflection, while external goods in terms of conditions are closer to occasion for action.) He argues that for Mengzi, perplexing external circumstances are viewed as occasion for action rather than occasion for reflection. Accordingly, he writes, "The problem of theodicy, then, is left unprobed because the aim of religious thought is the formation of attitude, character, and action, rather than the solving of abstract question. Enough guidance exists to solve the crucial practical problems men face, and only that guidance is necessary." However, I do not completely agree with Yearley's opinion. As I have argued so far, the problem of theodicy was at the center of the belief in moral economy and the notion of contingency in early Ru discourse of *ming*. See Tang Junyi, "The T'ien Ming [Heavenly Ordinance] in Pre-Ch' in China: II," 31-37; Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 124-129; Lee Yearley, "Toward a Typology of Religious Thought: A Chinese Example," *The Journal of Religion*, 55, 4 (Oct., 1975): 426-443.

their values as tools for accomplishing virtues in a broader context? Mengzi does not completely deny the instrumental values of external goods, but he reduces their significance. He assures that kingship is not among the three delights of the gentleman.⁴⁰ He also says, 廣土衆民 君子欲之 所樂不存焉 中天下而立 定四海之民 君子樂之 所性不存焉 “An extensive territory and a vast population are things a gentleman desires, but what he delights in lies elsewhere. To stand in the center of the state and bring peace to the people within the four seas is what a gentleman delights in, but what he follows as his nature lies elsewhere.”⁴¹ Like Kongzi, Mengzi acknowledges the instrumental value of kingship to bring the world in peace, but he adds that there is something more important: that is, virtue itself.

This, however, is slightly different from Kongzi’s assumption that in order to implement one’s virtue in society, one has to obtain an important political position. Unlike Kongzi, Mengzi appears to believe that without necessarily relying on kingship, one can bring peace to the world; without necessarily living a full life span, one can bring harmony to the people. Virtuous actions do not always necessitate instrumental means or resources. Therefore, even though Mengzi indeed met with various rulers of his time, he does not appear to have been as active as Kongzi in his pursuit of political career, and when it failed, he did not show much regret or frustration as Kongzi.⁴²

What made this possible? It is due to Mengzi’s belief that virtue has a natural

⁴⁰ 君子有三樂 而王天下不與存焉 父母俱存 兄弟無故 一樂也 仰不愧於天 俯不忤於人 二樂也 得天下英才而教育之 三樂也 君子有三樂 而王天下不與存焉 “A gentleman delights in three things, but being a ruler over the world is not among them. His parents are alive and his brothers are well. This is the first delight. Above, he is not ashamed of *tian*; below, he is not ashamed of others. This is the second delight. He has the good fortune of having the most talented pupils in the world. This is the third delight. A gentleman delights in these three things but being a ruler over the world is not among them.” *Mengzi* 7A:20.

⁴¹ *Mengzi* 7A:21. What a gentleman follows as his nature is to develop the virtuous minds of benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom to the fullest.

⁴² I argued that Mengzi’s reaction on his political failure was not as heartfelt as Kongzi’s because of his strong confidence in moral order. And I think that his confidence is also reinforced by his belief in the transformative power of virtue, which I will explore in the following.

transformative power. Mengzi says, 有大人者 正己而物正者也 “Great men rectifies themselves and others are rectified”⁴³; 君子之守 修其身而天下平 “What the gentleman holds on to is to cultivate his own person, and thereby the world becomes peaceful.”⁴⁴ Without intending to rectify others and pacify the world, one’s moral excellence has a natural and effortless influence on people. For example, Mengzi notes that even those who has heard of the virtuous deeds of sages like Bo Yi 伯夷 and Liu Xiahui 柳下惠 will be morally improved.⁴⁵ In his study of the moral theory of the *Mengzi* through its connection to the excavated *Wuxing* 五行, Mark Csikszentmihalyi examines the quasi-magical influence of the sage on others through the process of resonance.⁴⁶ He concludes, “The culmination of self-cultivation is an external influence that *manifests itself* through internal changes.”⁴⁷ Therefore, even if one is not employed in political position, one’s moral perfection becomes the powerful and efficient tool to transform the world in a better place. In Mengzi’s ethical system, virtue excels itself as a means to the best external goods; virtue achieves much more than external goods. Accordingly, Mengzi’s notion of virtue is not merely self-rewarding and self-sufficient as Kongzi conceived of; it becomes the best means to the best ends: transforming the whole society as well as its agent.

In the ethical system of Mengzi, virtue becomes the true object of enjoyment and the ultimate pursuit, replacing the intrinsic value of external goods; on the other hand, virtue

⁴³ *Mengzi* 7A:19.

⁴⁴ *Mengzi* 7B:32.

⁴⁵ 聖人百世之師也 伯夷柳下惠是也 故聞伯夷之風者 頑夫廉 懦夫有立志 聞柳下惠之風者 薄夫敦 鄙夫寬 奮乎百世之上 百世之下 聞者莫不與起也 非聖人而能若是乎 而況於親炙之者乎 “The sage is a teacher of a hundred generations. Such were Bo Yi and Liu Xiahui. Hence hearing of the way of Bo Yi, a covetous man will be purged of his covetousness and a weak man will become resolute. Hearing of the way of Liu Xiahui, a mean man will become generous and a narrow-minded man will become tolerant. They exerted themselves a hundred generations ago, and a hundred generations later all those who heard about them are inspired. Had they not been sages, could they have exerted such an influence? And how much more inspiring they must have been to those who learned from them personally!” *Mengzi* 7B:15.

⁴⁶ He presents a detailed and intriguing study of the transformative influence of the sage and the cosmological and political implications of moral perfection in the *Wuxing* and *Mengzi*. And also, he presents an interesting theory of the relation between seeing and hearing. See Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*, 161-200.

⁴⁷ Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*, 191.

becomes the most effective tool for transforming people and society, complementing the instrumental value of external goods. Consequently, Mengzi accords such virtue the highest position: the most honorable position bestowed by *tian* (天爵 *tianjue*), compared to the position bestowed by man (人爵 *renjue*), such as political position.⁴⁸ He further says, 天下有達尊三 爵一 齒一 德一 朝廷莫如爵 鄉黨莫如齒 輔世長民莫如德 “In the world there are three things acknowledged to be the most honorable: political rank, age, and virtue. In courts, political rank holds the first place; in villages, age; but in assisting the world and nurturing the people, virtue holds the first place.”⁴⁹ For Mengzi, virtues are second to none in its scope and range of influence.

Furthermore, the instrumental value of virtue is not limited to the moral transformation of individual and society. Virtue plays an central role in protecting people from contingencies of the world. First of all, virtue itself is invulnerable to contingency. As Kongzi claims, virtue accumulated inside me is complete and intact. Mengzi also writes, 求則得之 舍則失之 是求有益於得也 求在我者也 “Seek and you will get it; let go and you will lose it. If this is the case, then seeking is of use to getting because what is sought for is within yourself.” What is within ourselves is none other than virtue. On the contrary, as for external goods, he says, 求之有道 得之有命 是求無益於得也 求在外者也 “If there is a proper way to seek it and whether you get it or not depends on *ming*, then seeking is of no use to getting because what is sought for lies outside yourself.”⁵⁰ These external goods are not up to us, but up to others: that is, *ming*, what is beyond our control. Therefore, Mengzi says, 人之所貴者 非良貴也 趙孟之所貴

⁴⁸ Mengzi says, 有天爵者 有人爵者 仁義忠信 樂善不倦 此天爵也 公卿大夫 此人爵也 “There are honors bestowed by *tian* and there are honors bestowed by man. Benevolence, righteousness, loyalty and trustworthiness, unremitting delight in goodness are honors bestowed by *tian*. The position of high ministers and senior officials are honors bestowed by man.” *Mengzi* 6A:16. He also says, 夫仁 天之尊爵也 “Benevolence is the honorable position bestowed by *tian*.” *Mengzi* 2A:7.

⁴⁹ *Mengzi* 2B:2.

⁵⁰ *Mengzi* 7A:3.

趙孟能賤之 “The honor which other men confer is not good honor. [Because] Zhao Meng can humble those he ennobles.”⁵¹ Unlike external goods, that are vulnerable to contingency, virtue is not susceptible to external conditions. Virtue is entirely in our own hands.

More importantly, this impregnable virtue makes its possessor invulnerable to contingency as well. Most people are influenced by external conditions: for instance, a harsh environment is likely to make people stingy and selfish, while an affluent environment is likely to make people lavish and arrogant. However, Mengzi asserts that there is an exception: the man of virtue. Mengzi says, 無恒產而有恒心者 惟士為能 “It is only a gentleman who can have a constant mind in spite of lack of constant means of support.”⁵² He further says, 周于利者凶年不能殺 周于德者邪世不能亂 “He who never misses a chance for profit cannot be killed by a bad year; he who is equipped with every virtue cannot be led astray by a wicked world.”⁵³ Of course, Mengzi does not mean that virtuous person is not killed in the time of turmoil and not starved during the severe drought. What he means is that virtuous person maintains who he is, who he tries to be, regardless of the vicissitude of external conditions. Accordingly, he says, 君子不患矣 “A gentleman does not worry [about external conditions].”⁵⁴ Virtue is not only invulnerable to contingency, but also it protects its possessor from contingencies of the world. Therefore, Mengzi believes that people can live virtuously even in a world of utter contingency.

In addition, there is another important function of virtue, which is more practical: virtue

⁵¹ *Mengzi* 6A:17.

⁵² *Mengzi* 1A:7.

⁵³ *Mengzi* 7B:10.

⁵⁴ *Mengzi* 4B:28. In this passage, Mengzi distinguishes the gentleman’s worry into two kinds: a life-long anxiety (終身之憂) and one-morning worry (一朝之患). The first worry concerns with self-cultivation, and the latter with external conditions. Ted Slingerland argues that Mengzi’s distinctive usage of the terms, *you* 憂 and *huan* 患, is the evidence of his clear demarcation of the internal (*nei* 內) and external (*wai* 外) realms. Ted Slingerland, “The Concept of *Ming* in Early Confucian Thought,” 569-572.

can limit the scope of contingency. For instance, Mengzi says, 不仁而得國者 有之矣 不仁而得天下 未之有也 “There are cases of a ruthless man gaining possession of a state, but it has never been the case that such a man gained possession of the whole world.”⁵⁵ What he means by this is that a wicked man can be successful to a certain degree, but not to the maximal point that a truly virtuous person can reach. Conversely, this would also mean that a virtuous man can be miserable to a certain degree, but not to the bottom that a truly wicked man can fall. In other words, moral conducts can be a bulwark against the worst, and immoral behaviors can be an obstruction to the best.⁵⁶ As Mengzi acknowledges the decisive role played by external conditions, he also acknowledges this basic but consequential role played by moral cultivation.⁵⁷ Therefore, cultivating virtue is, on any measure, the best preparation for the contingencies of the world. For him, virtue is the best means to live successfully and meaningfully.

So far, we have examined the various roles and power of virtue in Mengzi’s ethical system. First, virtues are the best means to the best external goods. Second, virtues are the true objects of enjoyment, superior to external goods. Third, virtues are the powerful tools for the moral improvement of people and society. Fourth, virtues are not only invulnerable to contingency, but also the best preparation for living in the world of contingency. In addition to these, Mengzi points out another significant implication of virtue: virtues are the only way to fully enjoy external goods. Kongzi claims that external goods that are obtained through

⁵⁵ *Mengzi* 7B:13.

⁵⁶ However, it might not be always the case that one’s moral actions function as a bulwark against the worst. Virtues, ironically, often make people vulnerable to the contingencies. In exploring the roles of luck in Aristotle’s philosophy, Nussbaum notes, “Certain valued excellence diminishes self-sufficiency and increase vulnerability,” and also says, “virtue contains the seeds of its own disaster.” For example, she mentions, the trusting person is more easily betrayed than the self-enclosed person. In other words, virtuous people can find themselves in tragic conflict much more often than bad people. Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, 339.

⁵⁷ With regard to the interactions between one’s moral cultivation and external conditions, Mengzi does not lose sight of the significance of both sides.

immoral means are not worthy of enjoyment: they are like floating clouds. This conversely means that external goods that are obtained through moral means are proper objects of enjoyments. And yet, Mengzi goes a step further and argues that not only the way to obtain them but also the way to enjoy them should be morally worthy.⁵⁸ When King Hui of Liang 梁惠王 asked Mengzi whether a worthy man can enjoy luxuries, Mengzi replied to him:

賢者而後樂此 不賢者雖有此 不樂也 詩云 經始靈臺 經之營之 庶民攻之 不日成之 經始勿亟 庶民子來 王在靈囿 麇鹿攸伏 麇鹿濯濯 白鳥鶴鶴 王在靈沼 於物魚躍 文王以民力爲臺爲沼 而民歡樂之 謂其臺曰靈臺 謂其沼曰靈沼 樂其有麋鹿魚鼈 古之人與民偕樂 故能樂也 湯誓曰 時日害喪 予及女偕亡 民欲與之偕亡 雖有臺池鳥獸 豈能獨樂哉

“Only those who are worthy can [truly] enjoy them. Even if an unworthy man had them, he does not [truly] take pleasure in them. The *Book of Poetry* says, ‘He (King Wen) surveyed and began the Sacred Terrace. He surveyed it and planned it. The people worked at it, and in less than no time they completed it. He surveyed and began without haste and the people came as if they were his children. The King was in the Sacred Park. The does lay down. The does were sleek and fat. The white birds glistened. The King was at the Sacred Pond. Oh! How full it was of leaping fish!’ It was with the labor of the people that King Wen built his terrace and pond, yet they were so pleased and delighted that they named his terrace the Spirit Terrace and his pond the Sprit Pond, and rejoiced in his possession of deer, fish and turtles. It was by sharing their enjoyments with the people that men of antiquity were able to enjoy themselves. “The Oath of Tang” says, ‘Oh Sun, when wilt thou perish? We care not if we have to die with thee.’ When the people were prepared to die along with him, even if the tyrant had a terrace and pond, birds and beasts, could he have enjoyed them all by himself?”⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Kongzi might assume that the person who obtains external goods through moral means will naturally enjoy them in a morally worthy way. Therefore, there must not be much difference between Kongzi and Mengzi. Nonetheless, Mengzi clarifies this point, which was tacitly assumed in Kongzi’s vision.

⁵⁹ *Mengzi* 1A:2.

Mengzi asserts that only the virtuous person can truly appreciate external goods. In other words, external goods, however they may be obtained, are meaningless if they become the mere object of exclusive personal enjoyment. Another famous slogan of Mengzi's, 與民同樂 "Sharing enjoyment with the people,"⁶⁰ pinpoints this essential import of virtue. Without virtue, nothing is truly delightful and enjoyable.⁶¹

As a result, Mengzi makes the whole of human life morally significant. Virtues are not only the best means to the best external goods, but also they are the only way to true enjoyment of them. Furthermore, virtues themselves are the most important objects of enjoyment and they are also the most powerful means to live successfully and meaningfully in a world of contingency. This complete moralization of human life might not be as innovative as it appears, but rather an articulation or development of what was already implicit in Kongzi's ethical thought. Nevertheless, this important step that Mengzi took made his ethical system quite distinct from Kongzi's.

To compare, in the case of Kongzi, I will follow the moral order even if it frequently fails and I will focus my effort on the development of my virtue because it is complete and intact. In the case of Mengzi, I will follow the moral order because it is always in operation (albeit at times rising above and at times sinking under the water), and because it is the best possible way

⁶⁰ 與民同樂 appears in *Mengzi* 1B:1, 1B:2, 1B:4 but in the above passage, 與民偕樂 is used instead.

⁶¹ "Sharing enjoyment with the people" can be interpreted as the second implication of virtue mentioned above: virtues are the true object of enjoyment. However, what Mengzi tries to make out of this phrase is not merely the point that virtues are the true object of enjoyment. His point is not on "sharing" but "sharing enjoyment." For example, in the second point of virtue as the true object of enjoyment, virtue is compared to external goods and virtue takes a superior position to them, as in Shun's example. However, in the above passage, virtue is not compared with other external goods, but becomes the basis for enjoyment of external goods. In this respect, Mengzi does not negate or depreciate external goods, but suggests the proper way to enjoy external goods. Furthermore, I think his teaching of "Sharing enjoyment with others" can provide a meaningful solution to the problem of inequality of modern society, the growing gap between the rich and the poor. In general, we have tried to narrow this gap with various means such as taxing and welfare system. But, on the other hand, as Mengzi teaches, we should try to reorganize the way we think about each other, realizing that the bigger the gap between the rich and the poor becomes, the harder any of both sides could be truly happy.

of living a flourishing human life: therefore, I will not stop striving for moral perfection. Since Mengzi firmly believes in the workings of moral order, he puts greater emphasis on the aspect of virtue as the best means to the best ends, unlike Kongzi's theory of self-sufficiency of virtue. Of course, Mengzi does not negate the intrinsic value of virtue, but he appears to claim that virtues are worthy of virtues because they are ends in themselves and also the best means to the best ends. To put it differently, a flower can be either in a deep valley or by the side of a crowded road through no choice of its own. For Kongzi, he would be satisfied, albeit regret, being a flower in a deep valley as long as it is fragrant. But, Mengzi would not be satisfied to be a lonely flower in a deep valley: he would not lose the hope that one day its fragrance grows strong enough to attract people from afar. Even if its fragrance does not reach people, a flower cannot cease trying to attract people and being enjoyed by people: that is what flowers are meant for and that is what Mengzi tries to emphasize as the essential attribute of virtue. In short, both flowers are in the same situation, being in a deep valley, but their attitudes toward the same situation are quite different from each other: emphasis on virtue as an end or virtue as a means.⁶²

Their different attitudes are also discernable in the half-cup analogy. As we have seen, the former sage kings and Kongzi take different attitudes toward the process of moral cultivation. The sage kings' ethical program urges moral agents to practice good by creating anxiety that "we might fall behind," while Kongzi's program seeks to inculcate moral agents with confidence that "we are making progress." In other words, sage kings see the process of

⁶² This analogy must be too simple to describe the complexity of ethical thought of Kongzi and Mengzi. However, I think, at least, it clearly shows in what point Mengzi distinguishes himself from Kongzi: reemphasizing the aspect of virtue as the means. As we have examined, Kongzi tries to maintain a balance between two different aspects of virtue: virtue as a means and virtue as an ends. Kongzi worries that too much focus on virtue as a means – easily assumed in moral economy – can distort the true value of virtue. Instead, he underlines the self-sufficiency of virtue: virtues are the ends in themselves. Mengzi does not negate the intrinsic values of virtue, but he feels the need to rebalance an equilibrium by refocusing the aspect of virtue as a means to the ends.

moral pursuit as a glass half-empty, while Kongzi sees it as a glass half-full. Mengzi, however, is different from both sides: he sees it to be a cup that *must* be filled. Mengzi says:

有爲者辟若掘井 掘井九軋而不及泉 猶爲棄井也

“To try to achieve anything is like digging a well. You dig a hole nine fathoms deep, but if you fail to reach the source of water, it is just the same as abandoning the well.”⁶³

五穀者 種之美者也 苟爲不熟 不如蕘稗 夫仁 亦在乎熟之而已矣

“The five types of grain are the best of plants, yet if they are not ripe they are worse than the wild varieties. The value of benevolence, too, lies in its being ripe.”⁶⁴

These two passages offer a stark contrast to Kongzi’s teaching: “As in the case of leveling the ground, if, though tipping only one basketful, I am going forward, then I shall be making progress.”⁶⁵ Kongzi encourages people by saying that even if you do not reach the destination, you are improved as much as you go, while Mengzi exhorts people by saying that you should reach the destination and therefore you should try your best. It must not be that Mengzi denies the value of gradual moral progress. Rather, it is his own way of teaching people to more actively engage in moral cultivation. As Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032-1085), a Song Neo-Confucian, described, if Kongzi’s program is warm and encouraging like spring breeze, Mengzi’s program is more strict and demanding like chill of late autumn.⁶⁶

⁶³ *Mengzi* 7A:29.

⁶⁴ *Mengzi* 6A:19.

⁶⁵ *Lunyu* 9:19.

⁶⁶ This is a paraphrase of Cheng Hao’s description: spring breeze is actually used for describing Yan Hui. In the comparison of Kongzi, Yan Hui, and Mengzi, he says: 仲尼 元氣也 顏子 春生也 孟子 並秋殺盡見 ... 仲尼 天地也 顏子 和風慶雲也 孟子 泰山巖巖之氣象也 “Kongzi is like the prime force of origination, Yan Hui is like the lively

In what to follow, I will recapitulate this same story from the historical point of view: why Mengzi made slightly but significantly different claims about moral economy and virtue from Kongzi, and what were the ethical implications of such claims. To give a direct answer to these questions, the answer to the first question is that Mengzi's different views were largely a response to Mozi's attacks on the Ru notion of *ming*; the answer to the second is that Mengzi placed unprecedented emphasis on the moral responsibility of individuals.⁶⁷

In the previous chapter, I explained that one of Mozi's main attacks on the Ru's ethical program was the issue of contingency. According to many scholars, in Mozi's view, the problem of contingency (the notion of *ming* 命, fate) is not exactly that it promotes absolute fatalism, but that it cuts off the necessary connection between one's moral action and its non-moral outcomes. Where the tight linkage between one's action and its outcomes is broken, Mozi warns: in better but rare cases, people do not actively seek out opportunities to improve their lives and societies and instead easily take satisfaction in their own virtues, and in worse and most cases, people shirk their responsibilities and neglect their duties, ending up in miserable and disastrous situations.⁶⁸

spirit of the spring, and Mengzi is like the cold spirit of the autumn. ... Kongzi is like *tian* and earth, Yan Hui is like gentle wind and felicitous clouds, and Mengzi is like the high cliffs of Mount Tai." *Jinsilu* 近思錄 14.2. For the translation of the *Jinsilu*, Chan Wing-tsit, trans., *Reflections on Things at Hand* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 290-291. Furthermore, as I discussed before, in Ru teaching there is a certain tension between one's own moral character and social improvement. When there is a conflict between them, early Ru seem to have opted for the former instead of the latter. And this problem of dirty hands becomes much more explicit in the strict ethical program of Mengzi. Mengzi says, 吾未聞枉己而正人者也 ... 歸潔其身而已矣 "I have never heard of anyone who can correct others by bending himself. ... It all comes to keeping one's integrity intact." *Mengzi* 5A:7. A similar theme appears in *Mengzi* 3B:1.

⁶⁷ It might not be correct to use the word, "unprecedented," because in the strict moral economy of early sage kings, one is definitely responsible for his or her own actions. However, the sage kings do not allow contingent aspects as in Mengzi's system, it would be proper to use the word, "unprecedented" for Mengzi. As compared to Kongzi, who shared the similar contingent world view, Mengzi indeed puts a great deal of emphasis on individual moral responsibility.

⁶⁸ Mozi argues that it were the tyrant kings who created the doctrine of fate in order to avoid their responsibilities and it were the poor and lazy who spread it. For Mozi, the doctrine of fate is a circular chain of destruction: it was created in order to shirk responsibility, but it eventually brings down people to despair.

Mengzi, who is famous for his pioneering role in the Ru-Mo opposition, however, seems to be greatly influenced by Mozi's attack on the notion of contingency. More strictly speaking, he seems to sympathize with Mozi's criticism so deeply that he could not help revising and remodeling the Ru program. One of the main reasons that I believe Mengzi was enormously influenced by Mozi's attack on the Ru notion of *ming* is his strange reticence on that issue. It was obviously the Ru notion of *ming* that Mozi was the most disturbed about, and so he tried to reconstruct a strict moral economy of the former sages. However, instead of directly responding to Mozi's criticism on *ming*, Mengzi appears to implicitly incorporate Mozi's restoration of moral economy into his ethical system. At the same time, Mengzi explicitly differentiates his thought from Mozi's by making a clear distinction between the Ru notion of *ren* 仁 and Mozi's doctrine of *jian'ai* 兼愛, which I think are the least contradictory part of their thoughts. As I have argued, there is no clear evidence that Mozi did target his criticism on the Ru notion of *ren*. This might indicate that Mengzi considered Mozi's attack on the Ru notion of contingency as the gravest crisis for Ru teaching, and thereby turning people's attention away from this most vulnerable part of Ru ethical thinking and directing it to Mozi's doctrine of impartial care. And, by differentiating it from Ru's notion of *ren*, Mengzi made Mozi's doctrine of impartial care the most vulnerable in the subsequent history.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ This shrewd attitude of Mengzi's reaction against his critiques also appears in other issue. For example, it is interesting to note Mengzi's response to Mozi's criticism on the extravagance of the Ru practice of ritual. According to Eno, Mengzi was also strangely silent about the role of ritual, which is the core part of Ru ethical teaching. This means that Mengzi did not respond actively and overtly to this issue, as he did not in Mozi's attack on the Ru notion of *ming*. Rather than making a direct response to Mozi's criticism, Mengzi presented another concept in the place of ritual. Eno argues that instead of the concrete and culturally bounded concept of ritual (*li* 禮), Mengzi brought to the front a more abstract and universal concept of righteousness (*yi* 義), claiming that ritual conducts are the reflections of human mind. And yet, Eno adds that Mengzi's reticence on ritual does not represent any significant deviation from Ru teaching, but only a rhetorical change. However, Bryan Van Norden presents a different interpretation on this. According to Van Norden, Mengzi's rare comments on ritual reflect his different orientation of self-cultivation program from Kongzi's. He argues, "For Mengzi, human nature is like sprouts that just need to be cultivated; for Kongzi, human nature is like raw jade that must be ground, carved, and polished. Consequently, in self-cultivation, Mengzi emphasizes concentration and developing the resources already present in one's mind, whereas the *Analects* emphasizes learning from

At any rate, Mengzi's restoration of moral economy bears a great resemblance to Mozi's reconstruction of moral economy. However, the way they restored confidence in moral economy is quite different from each other: for Mozi, through the authority of *tian* and spiritual assistance as well as human governance, but for Mengzi, through rationalization of moral economy. This leads him to successfully recover a strong faith in moral economy, which had been, to a certain extent, diminished in Kongzi's voluntarist moral economy. This also enables him to place an unprecedented emphasis on individual's moral responsibility. Throughout the *Mengzi*, he endlessly admonishes that everything is up to individual: 出乎爾者 反乎爾者也 "What proceeds from you will return to you again,"⁷⁰ and 禍福無不自己求之者 "There is neither good nor bad fortune which man does not bring upon himself."⁷¹ Through restoring the belief that good actions will certainly bring favorable outcomes, he was able to present an adequate response to Mozi's accusation that Ru appeals to *ming* to account for their failures. Mengzi's answers to Mozi is summed up in the following phrase: 反求諸己 "Look into yourself!"

What is distinctive about Mengzi is that despite such changes, he did not abandon Kongzi's contingent world view. Like Kongzi, he still lived in a contingent world: virtues sometimes do fail to produce expected favorable outcomes. However, it does not mean that moral order sometimes fail, but it means that there exist external conditions that affect moral order. By separating out contingent factors from moral order, he made clear the proper sphere

classic texts and ritual practice." In addition, Yuri Pines also makes a similar observation to Robert Eno concerning the relationship between the notions of *li* 禮 and *yi* 義. According to Pines, the near absence of the term *li* in the *Mozi* reflects Mozi's dissatisfaction with the concrete *li* of the older Zhou system, which endorsed the principle of hereditary hierarchy. But, since Mozi did not necessarily oppose the abstract principle of social order inherent in the notion of *li*, he adopted another semantically related term in order to avoid the possible confusion of the two dimensions of *li*: that is, *yi*, referring to the rules of social intercourse and of personal behavioral norms. See Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 106-114; Bryan W. Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism*, 312-313; Yuri Pines, "Disputers of the *Li*: Breakthroughs in the Concept of Ritual in Preimperial China," *Asia Major Third Series*, 13, 1 (2000): 1-41.

⁷⁰ *Mengzi* 1B:12 This is a quotation from Zengzi 曾子.

⁷¹ *Mengzi* 2A:4. A similar theme is also found in *Mengzi* 4A:8.

of human endeavor. Mengzi says, 仁者如射 射者正己而後發 發而不中 不怨勝己者 反求諸己而已矣 “Benevolence is like archery: an archer makes sure his stance is correct and then shoots. If he misses, he does not hold it against those who surpass him. He simply seeks the cause of his failure in himself.”⁷² External conditions are not our interests, but moral actions are our concern. He also quotes from “Taijia” 太甲: 天作孽 猶可違 自作孽 不可活 “When *tian* sends down calamities, there is hope of weathering them; when man brings them upon himself, there is no hope of escape.”⁷³ The restoration of strict moral order and the distinction of contingent factors from moral order enable him to place unparalleled responsibility upon the shoulders of each individual. Even if Mengzi acknowledges the contingency of the world, his ethical system does not tolerate people who shirk their responsibility, as Mozi has fiercely criticized.

To conclude, Mengzi successfully combined Kongzi’s contingent world view and Mozi’s strict moral economy: Mengzi’s world is still contingent, but it remained strongly moral. His rationalized version of moral economy successfully recovered the strong confidence that the sage kings had shown toward the moral universe. Unlike Kongzi, Mengzi had no doubt that moral order is always in operation. On the other hand, his ethical program did not involve with

⁷² Mengzi 2A:7. In her study, *The Morality of Happiness*, Julia Annas quotes a similar archer example from Cicero: “The archer exercises his skill of archery in order to hit the target, but his real or proper aim is the exercise of his skill, not hitting the target.” This is quite intriguing because her description of the Stoic philosophy bears a great resemblance to Mengzi’s ethical theory. Particularly, Chapter 4 of her book outlines the debate between Stoics and Aristotelians about happiness, the debate about the place of morality in a happy life and its relation to external goods. In brief, she argues that Aristotle revised the ordinary understanding of happiness (a healthy and wealthy life is satisfactory) and insisted that virtue is a necessary part of happiness. However, Aristotle also held that a happy life necessitates external goods as well. For him, it might be absurd to say that the virtuous person in great misfortune would be having a happy life. The Stoics challenged this view, claiming that virtue is self-sufficient for happiness, and therefore the virtuous person on a miserable situation is actually happy. For them, it is only virtues that contribute to happiness; external goods do not add any value to happiness. The Stoics clearly demarcated virtues from non-moral goods and made virtues incommensurable with any other external goods. I cannot compare the Stoics and Mengzi’s ethical theory here, but I find it quiet interesting to see a clear affinity between Stoics view of virtue as a skill that is indifferent to results and Mengzi’s ethical system. Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, 329-435. For a brief outline of historical development of Greek conception of happiness see Darrin McMahon, *Happiness: A History*, 19-65.

⁷³ Mengzi 2A:4 and 4A:8. This quotation is from “Taijia, Part 2” 太甲中 of the *Documents*.

any hint of anxiety or doubt, prevalent in the process of sage king's moral development.

Mengzi's ethical system is exclusively based on an ethics of confidence; it does not seem to need the balance with an ethics of uncertainty.

However, for Xunzi, Mengzi's restoration of belief in moral economy is still not enough to bring a flourishing, orderly human society. Like Mozi, Xunzi tried to construct a perfect system of moral economy through human governance, but unlike Mozi, he did not accept any support from *tian* or spiritual beings in his ethical system. Xunzi's version of moral economy is the most distinctive among those of early thinkers we have discussed so far. He considers moral economy as exclusively a human artifact: it is the task of human beings to perfect the system of moral economy through *li* 禮, rituals invented by the sages. In the next chapter, I will explore how the discourse on *ming* between Mozi and Mengzi yielded this new way of thinking about moral economy in the writings of Xunzi.

5. Xunzi's Moral Economy of *Li* 禮

The last thinker that we are going to examine in Part One is Xunzi 荀子. Xunzi lived during one of the most productive periods of intellectual ideas and disputes in Chinese history, called the period of the Hundred Schools of Thought (諸子百家), and he played a paramount role in the formation and development of intellectual and political culture of imperial China. He is definitely one of the most intriguing and idiosyncratic thinkers in Ru history as well as in the history of Chinese thought.¹ His provocative claim that human nature is bad (性惡) seems to have been considered as either a complete error or too dire a doctrine to readily accept. Accordingly, Xunzi has not enjoyed as much prominence as Mengzi, who conversely claimed the goodness of human nature (性善) – even though Mengzi's fame has fluctuated over times.² Compared to the large body of commentaries that has been written on the *Mengzi* beginning in the second century, the *Xunzi* lacked a formal commentary until almost a thousand years after his death.³ This trend continued until quite recently, but the landscape is changing. Scholars have

¹ In the last chapter of his study on Xunzi, Lee Janghee explores the reason why Xunzi has been neglected in the history of Chinese philosophy. According to Lee, the major reason is that Xunzi is uniquely different from mainstream Chinese philosophy. Unlike those who took for granted continuity between humans and nature, Xunzi insisted on a distinction between the two. Xunzi's claim was that because of this clear distinction, the harmonious relationship between the two can be achieved only through human construction. Lee Janghee, *Xunzi and Early Chinese Naturalism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 97-102.

² Of course, Xunzi was respected as one of the greatest thinkers of his day, and particularly his thought greatly influenced on the philosophical and political trends in subsequent ages. What is interesting is that Xunzi's dim view of human nature might not be the only reason for his low popularity. According to Lee Janghee's description, Xunzi seems less attractive stylistically than any other major thinkers of Chinese history. Lee writes, "He (Xunzi) lacks Zhuangzi's brilliant, literary imagination and falls short of Mencius's rhetorical skill in providing heart-felt illustrations. It also seems that Xunzi lacks Confucius's vibrant character. His writing style is dry and repetitive, and its tone is sometimes fairly conservative. While Xunzi can be said to be very perspicacious in making his points, he does not leave much room for interpretation. In short, Xunzi neither inspires cosmic imagination, nor touches the human heart deeply." Despite his rather harsh appraisal of Xunzi, Lee's own study of Xunzi seems to provide a strong case for a very positive appraisal. See Lee Janghee, *Xunzi and Early Chinese Naturalism*, 1.

³ Yang Liang's 楊倞 (9th cen.) commentary is the earliest surviving commentary on the *Xunzi*.

begun to savor the intricacies of Xunzi's thought in its own right.⁴

The uniqueness of Xunzi's thought is also reflected in his version of moral economy. Unlike his predecessors, for Xunzi, moral economy was exclusively a matter of the human realm. Moreover, the moral economy of the human realm was not just naturally given; but, it was constructed by the sage kings and had to be perfected by people who live in such societies. In this chapter, I will examine Xunzi's distinctive form of moral economy: the way he separates the human ethical realm from the natural realm; the way he comes to terms with contingency; the way he brings up the issue of internal contingency in his program of self-cultivation; and the way he approaches external goods. I will situate Xunzi between Mozi and Mengzi and conclude that in response to Mozi's strict moral economy and the intrinsic problems of the Ru's contingent world view, Xunzi reconfigured the account of the world he inherited from his Ru predecessors.

In the previous chapter, I argued that Mengzi made a significant change in earlier modes of moral economy. Unlike Kongzi and Mozi, who held a strong belief in a moral *tian*, Mengzi turned his attention from the agency behind moral economy to the workings of moral economy itself; he provided a rational and plausible account for its workings. For him, moral economy was not merely an object of belief, but a self-evident truth. Despite his crucial modification of the mode of moral economy, Mengzi still shared with his predecessors a belief in the moral universe: that is, the universe is a domain that operates by moral order. However, Xunzi broke with this tradition and made a revolutionary claim that the universe is an *amoral* place. In line with this, he seems to have abandoned the doctrine of *tianming* 天命, which had been the

⁴ The recent reappraisal of Xunzi has been made by Chinese Marxist scholars, who found Xunzi's thought "scientific," and "materialist." However, their high evaluation does not do justice to Xunzi, as Paul Goldin remarks: "The irony is that such modern encomia are often as unsophisticated and unilluminating as the unjust criticisms of earlier times." See Paul Goldin, *Rituals of the Way: The Philosophy of Xunzi* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999), xii-xiii.

centerpiece of Ru political and ethical theory.⁵

Even though Xunzi does not believe in a moral *tian* or a moral universe, this does not mean that he thinks of the universe as a completely arbitrary place or that he denies the existence of moral economy. For instance, in the chapter “Honor and Disgrace” 榮辱, Xunzi says: those who value righteousness are honorable, and will eventually be able to control others, while those who value profit are disgraceful, and will eventually be controlled by others; those who are talented and honest are always in secure and favorable situations, eventually living a long life, while those who are dissolute and brutal are always in dangerous and harmful situations, eventually ending with an untimely death.⁶ This passage suggests that Xunzi acknowledges a linkage between the moral quality of one’s action and external goods, such as political position and life span.

In addition, Xunzi’s understanding of moral economy is quite similar to Mengzi’s rationalized version: it is virtue itself that brings favorable outcomes, and its process is logical, natural, and self-evident. Xunzi explains:

⁵ I will discuss this point further in the next chapter by comparing different interpretations given to the Shun’s ascension to the throne.

⁶ 先義而後利者榮 先利而後義者辱 榮者常通 辱者常窮 通者常制人 窮者常制於人 是榮辱之大分也 材慤者常安利 蕩悍者常危害 安利者常樂易 危害者常憂險 樂易者常壽長 憂險者常夭折 是安危利害之常體也 “Those who put righteousness before benefit are honorable; those who put benefit before righteousness are shameful. Those who are honorable are always successful; those who are shameful are always in hardship. The successful always control others; those who are in hardship are always controlled by others. Such is the great distinction between honor and disgrace. Those who are talented and sincere always obtain security and benefit; those who are profligate and cruel always obtain danger and harm. Those who have gained security and benefits are always happy and relaxed. Those who feel endangered and threatened with harm are always grieved and distressed. Those who are happy and relaxed always live to a great age; those who are grieved and distressed always are cut down while youths. Such are the invariable conditions, respectively of security and benefit and of danger and harm.” *Xunzi* 4.7. In translation, I generally follow John Knoblock and sometimes adopt Burton Watson, but with modification when necessary. For the chapter and section numbers, I follow John Knoblock. John Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, vol. 1 and 2 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); Burton Watson, *Basic Writings of Mo Tzu, Hsün Tzu, and Han Fei Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967).

榮辱之來 必象其德 肉腐生蟲 魚枯生蠹 怠慢忘身 禍災乃作 強自取柱 柔自取束
 邪穢在身 怨之所構 施薪若一 火就燥也 平地若一 水就溼也 草木疇生 禽獸羣居
 物各從其類也 是故質的張而弓矢至焉 林木茂而斧斤至焉 樹成蔭而衆鳥息焉
 醯酸而螞聚焉 故言有召禍也 行有招辱也 君子慎其所立乎

“The coming of honor or disgrace must be a reflection of one’s virtue. From rotting meat come maggots; decaying wood produces woodworms. Being idle and dissolute and neglecting one’s own person creates calamity and misfortune. The strong cause themselves to take lead; the pliable cause themselves to be restrained. Those whose character is mean and vicious will rouse others to animosity against them. When firewood is spread out evenly, fire will seek out the driest sticks. When the ground has been leveled out evenly, water will seek the dampest places. Grasses and trees grow together with their own type; birds and beasts live together in their own groups; each thing follows after its own kind. Accordingly, when a target is set out on the archery range, bows and arrows will arrive. Where the trees in the forest flourish, axes and halberds will come. Where things have turned sour, gnats will collect. Truly, words have the potential to summon disaster, and actions the potential to invite disgrace, so the gentleman is cautious about where he takes his position.”⁷

Xunzi makes it clear that it is one’s own virtue that brings honor and disgrace. A variety of analogies employed in the above passage illustrate the tight connection between one’s virtue and its corresponding outcomes.⁸

However, there is a significant difference between Mengzi and Xunzi. Mengzi considers the moral economy as the way the universe — the natural world as well as the human world — works, whereas Xunzi considers it as the way human society works.⁹ To put it differently, for

⁷ Xunzi 1.5. Philip Ivanhoe has suggested, in personal communication, that moral economy in the Chinese tradition should be understood as more of a resonance than a relation of cause and effect. This passage supports his point: 物各從其類也 “Each thing follows its own kind.”

⁸ Xunzi’s analogies remind us of one in the *Documents*: 惠迪吉 從逆凶 惟影響 “Accordance with the right brings good fortune; following what is opposed to it brings bad fortune: just as a shadow [follows form] and an echo [follows sound].” “The Counsels of the Great Yu” 大禹謨.

⁹ Or it could be a more proper way to say that in Mengzi’s case, there is no clear division between the natural world and the human world, whereas Xunzi draws a clear line between the two.

Mengzi, moral economy is *natural*, so-of-itself, but for Xunzi, moral economy is peculiar to *human beings*. Lee Janghee categorizes the Mengzian view as “naturalism,” which he defines as “an ancient Chinese philosophical orientation that seeks the source of normativity in the natural realm.”¹⁰ Lee argues that in response to the naturalistic trend of the late Warring States period, Xunzi tried to establish a distinctive human realm, claiming that ethical values are exclusively of human origin.¹¹ Accordingly, in contrast to Mengzi, who conceived of the universe as a moral place, Xunzi separated out the human realm from the universe, assigning moral values only to the human realm, and regarded the natural realm as an amoral place.

According to Robert Eno, there is broad consensus on Xunzi’s notion of *tian*: *tian* refers to a non-purposive, non-normative natural realm.¹² For Xunzi, *tian* lost not only its anthropomorphic dimension, but also its ethical dimension.¹³ The chapter “Treaties on *Tian*” 天論 starts with, 天行有常 不為堯存 不為桀亡 “The course of *tian* has constancy, but it does not exist because of [a sage like] Yao and it does not perish because of [a tyrant like] Jie.”¹⁴ *Tian*’s

¹⁰ Lee Janghee, *Xunzi and Early Chinese Naturalism*, 2. The term “naturalism” employed by Lee is definitely different from the term “naturalism” used in Western philosophy. In Western philosophy, it often means the disenchantment of the world: a philosophical view that advocates a more scientific method and rejects supernatural entities and phenomena.

¹¹ Lee also includes Zhuangzi as one of the major figures of naturalism, who Xunzi actively responded to. On the other hand, Robert Eno, in his study of Xunzi, excludes Mengzi and Mozi from the naturalistic trend. Instead, when Eno discusses the late Warring States naturalism, he includes a broad band of philosophical schools, such as early Daoism, Zou Yan’s 鄒衍 *yinyang* naturalism, divinistic or shamanistic naturalism, and so on. Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 138-143.

¹² According to Robert Eno, it is true that Xunzi introduced the notion of non-normative *tian* in his ethical system, which does not appear either in the *Lunyu* or in the *Mengzi*. However, he argues that though it is innovative, this non-normative aspect of Xunzi’s *tian* has been overemphasized by many commentators. His close examination of the *Xunzi* text reveals that there also exist contradictory images of *tian*: in some parts, *tian* still maintains the normative and ethical significance, and in some parts, *tian* continues the conventional Ru notion as deity, ethical prescript, or fate. Accordingly, Eno concludes that *tian* is not a focus of Xunzi’s ethical system and Xunzi never attempted to construct a consistent theory of *tian*. *Tian*, as a malleable concept, is diversely utilized for the purpose of legitimating ritual forms, ritual study, and ritual society. Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 131-180.

¹³ Traditionally, the term *tian* 天 has a broad range of meaning and usage. But, in the *Xunzi*, *tian* lost one of the major meanings, a moral deity. Instead of the term *tian*, Xunzi seems to pair the term *tian* 天 with the term *di* 地 much more often as a way to emphasize its naturalistic dimension.

¹⁴ *Xunzi* 17.1.

constancy implies its own working manners, but it is irrelevant to human actions or values.¹⁵

Xunzi also famously says, 天不爲人之惡寒也 輟冬 地不爲人之惡遠也 輟廣 “*Tian* does not suspend the winter because men dislike cold weather; Earth does not reduce its breadth because men dislike great distances.”¹⁶ Furthermore, *tian* is not involved in the order or disorder of human society. This depends on the success or failure of the government of the kings: 禹以治桀以亂 “[A sage like] Yu achieved order, while [a tyrant like] Jie brought chaos.”¹⁷

In this way, Xunzi separates the natural realm and the human ethical realm,¹⁸ and each realm has its own pattern to follow and its distinctive role to play.¹⁹ The natural realm gives life to the myriad things, including human beings; and it is the role of humans to establish an orderly society. By fulfilling this role to bring order, human beings successfully participate in the natural realm, forming a triad with *tian* and earth.²⁰ Xunzi says, 天地生君子 君子理天地 君子者天地之參也 “*Tian* and earth give birth to the gentleman, and the gentleman brings order

¹⁵ It is interesting to note that in the *Documents*, where *tian* was recognized as a moral deity, it is always said that *tian* is not constant: for instance, 上帝不常 and 天命靡常. However, in the *Xunzi*, where *tian* lost its ethical characteristic, all of a sudden, *tian* is said to be constant.

¹⁶ *Xunzi* 17.7.

¹⁷ *Xunzi* 17.6. In this respect, Xunzi does not seem to be different from Mengzi, who also emphasizes the virtue of the ruler as the most crucial standard of the order of the state. However, as we have seen, Mengzi’s notion of *tian* also refers to external conditions that directly affect the process of moral economy. Xunzi’s notion of contingency will be discussed soon.

¹⁸ However, the relationship between the natural realm and the human realm is much more complex than it appears. Human beings are indeed a part of the natural realm, and accordingly, the human realm cannot be completely separated from the natural realm. The two realms are distinguished but also interrelated. Robert Eno also argues that Xunzi’s notion of *tian* is often typically Ruist in some passages: *tian* is still portrayed as providing the normative pattern for human beings. This suggests ethical continuity between the two realms. Similarly, Lee Janghee also points out the complicated relationship between the two. He notes, “What Xunzi tries to make clear about the notion of *tian* is not the rigid distinction between value and fact or between nature and culture. Rather his main concern is to clarify *tian*’s role and function so that human beings do not confound their job with that of *tian*.” In a way, Lee seems to share Eno’s opinion on the discursive function of *tian* as a way to legitimate ritual forms. Lee’s point suggests that *tian* somehow works to mark off what is distinctively human. However, Lee and Eno are different in their emphasis: Lee puts much more weight to the autonomous moral capability of human, while Eno emphasizes the continuity between *tian* and human beings. Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 157-163; Lee Janghee, *Xunzi and Early Chinese Naturalism*, 20-24.

¹⁹ 天有常道矣 地有常數矣 君子有常體矣 “*Tian* has its constant way; earth has its constant dimensions; the gentleman has his constant demeanor.” *Xunzi* 17.7.

²⁰ Philip Ivanhoe calls the triad of men, heaven and earth a “happy symmetry,” in which human needs and nature’s bounty maintain a harmonious balance through rituals devised by the sages. Philip Ivanhoe, “A Happy Symmetry: Xunzi’s Ethical Thought,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59, 2 (1991): 309-322.

to *tian* and earth. The gentleman forms a triad with *tian* and earth."²¹

It is through *li* 禮, ritual forms, that human beings bring order to the human world.²² *Li* is the standard or mark by which human beings can live a flourishing life and form a harmonious society.²³ Perfect implementation of *li* is none other than the *order* itself. However, unfortunately, men in the natural state do not possess *li*. To make matters worse, human beings, prior to the establishment of *li*, are bad; more accurately speaking, in the natural state, human beings tend to go bad. This is the so-called "doctrine of the badness of human nature" 性惡說.²⁴ According

²¹ *Xunzi* 9.18. Lee Janghee makes a distinction between the triad of Xunzi and the triad of naturalists: "What separates Xunzi from the naturalists is his emphasis on the way the trinity can be achieved: for Xunzi, the trinity between humans and *tian* and earth can be achieved only by exercising a person's distinctive faculties, not by mimicking the way of *tian*." Lee Janghee, *Xunzi and Early Chinese Naturalism*, 78.

²² A. S. Cua provides a general definition of *li* 禮: "The notion of *li* refers to a normative domain consisting of rites, ceremonies, decorum, courtesy, and civility, which may conveniently be labeled the 'domain of propriety.'" In his study of the changes of the term *li* in a formative period of Chinese intellectual tradition, Yuri Pines distinguishes the two major semantic fields of *li*: as Cua points out, "an entire set of ritual regulations," and a "more abstract mode of social and personal conduct that could serve thinkers analytically as a tool to address the concerns of social order and hierarchy." Yuri Pines also points out; "*Li* plays a pivotal role in Xunzi's thought, one that far overshadows other political and ethical concepts." A. S. Cua, "Dimensions of *Li* (Propriety): Reflections on an Aspect of Hsün Tzu's Ethics," *Philosophy East and West* 29, 4 (1979): 373-394; Yuri Pines, "Disputers of the Li: Breakthroughs in the Concept of Ritual in Preimperial China," *Asia Major Third Series* 13, 1 (2000): 1-41.

²³ For instance, Xunzi says; 凡用血氣志意知慮 由禮則治通 不由禮則勃亂提慢 "If all matters pertaining to temperament, intention, and understanding proceed according to ritual, they will be ordered and successful; if not, they will be perverse, disorderly, dilatory, and negligent." *Xunzi* 17.7. And, he also says, 水行者表深 表不明則陷 治民者表道 表不明則亂 禮者表也 非禮 昏世也 昏世 大亂也 故道無不明 外內異表 隱顯有常 民陷乃去 "When men cross the river, they mark the deep places; but if their markers are not clear, those who come after will drown. He who governs the people marks the Way; but if the markers are not clear, people will fall into disorder. Rituals are the markers. To be without rituals is to blind the world; to blind the world is to produce the great disorder. Therefore, if the Way is made clear in all parts, if the inner and outer have its own markers, and if light and dark have regularity, then the pits which entrap the people can be eliminated." *Xunzi* 17.14.

²⁴ As many scholars have already pointed out, Xunzi did not claim that human nature is essentially bad. According to Philip Ivanhoe, early Chinese thinkers, including Xunzi, did not have a conception of radical evil, meaning knowingly taking a perverse pleasure in doing wrong. The Chinese word "e" 惡, which is generally translated as "bad," is a relative notion to goodness, "lack of goodness." In addition, A. S. Cua argues that Xunzi discusses human nature more as a raw material. Human nature is basic liking and disliking. These basic desires and feelings are morally neutral, without the conception of morality at all. Cua also points out that basic desires include the concern for others. The problem is that the concern for others tends to be partial. Accordingly, it is not that human nature is bad in itself, but it is bad in its tendency. In other words, Mengzi finds in human nature nascent moral inclinations, while Xunzi finds nascent bad tendencies. The excavated "Xing zi ming chu" 性自命出 from Guodian 郭店 seems to support this understanding of Xunzi's view on human nature. Then, the problem is why Xunzi does not say that human nature is neutral, but bad? According to Lee Janghee, it is a calculated rhetorical device to attack Mengzi. Paul Goldin also argues that it is a rhetorical trope designed to distance himself from Mengzi. By claiming that human nature is bad, Xunzi

to Xunzi, human beings are self-seeking creatures and their nature is nothing but basic desires and feelings, and when they are left unrestrained, their desires will grow without restraint in spite of a limited number of goods, resulting in chaos and strife.²⁵ This state of nature is the problem not only for human beings, but also for the natural realm. Philip Ivanhoe points out that in such a situation, nature becomes an object of unregulated human exploitation, and thus, a happy symmetry between human and the natural realm cannot be achieved.²⁶

As a means to prevent this dire situation, the sage kings established *li* 禮. But, in order to fully understand the sage king's invention of *li*, we should know that human being's tendency to satisfy one's own desires is not the only source of disorder and chaos. There is another, but

contends that our source of morality is not derived from the spontaneous natural emotions, but from human exertion. Bryan Van Norden, however, holds a slightly different opinion on this issue. According to Van Norden, Xunzi claimed that human nature is bad because he tried to distinguish himself from Gaozi's voluntarists view. Gaozi claimed that human nature is neutral and it is a simple act of choice that decides whether one will become good or not. However, unlike Gaozi but like Mengzi, Xunzi believes in the gradual growth of morality, and thus he necessarily claimed that human nature is bad. Among the many articles on Xunzi's notion of human nature are, A. S. Cua, "The Conceptual Aspect of Hsün Tzu's Philosophy of Human Nature," *Philosophy East and West* 27, 4 (1977): 373-389; A. S. Cua, "The Quasi-Empirical Aspect of Hsün Tzu's Philosophy of Human Nature," *Philosophy of East and West* 28, 1 (1978): 3-19; Bryan Van Norden, "Mengzi and Xunzi: Two Views of Human Agency," in T. C. Kline III and Philip Ivanhoe, eds., *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000): 103-129; David Wong, "Xunzi on Moral Motivation," in *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*: 135-154; Philip Ivanhoe, "Human Nature and Moral Understanding in the Xunzi," in *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*: 237-249; James Behuniak, "Nivison and the Problem in Xunzi's Ethics," *Philosophy East and West* 50, 1 (2000): 97-110; and Maurizio Scarpari, "The Debate on Human Nature in Early Confucian Literature," *Philosophy East and West* 53, 3 (2003): 329-339. Recently, several interesting studies on the excavated texts in relation to the *Xunzi* have been published. Chen Ning, "The Ideological Background of the Mencian Discussion of Human Nature: A Reexamination," in Alan K. L. Chan, ed., *Mencius: Contexts and Interpretations* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000): 17-41; and Paul Goldin, "Xunzi in the Light of the Guodian Manuscripts," *Early China*, 25 (2000): 113-146.

²⁵ Xunzi's description of the state of nature resembles that of Thomas Hobbes and that of Mozi, but also differ from them. According to Bryan Van Norden, one of the differences between Hobbes and Mozi is the source of chaos: Hobbes locates it in conflicting human desires, whereas Mozi in the absence of unified moral norms. In this regard, Xunzi appears to be closer to Hobbes. According to Philip Ivanhoe, the fundamental difference between Xunzi and Hobbes is the way to escape the state of nature: Xunzi proposed internal reform, believing that we can train ourselves out of the state of nature through *li*, whereas Hobbes proposed external constraint based on the social contract and the absolute authority of monarch. In this regard, Mozi appears to be closer to Hobbes. Paul Goldin's study also includes a comparison between Xunzi and Hobbes. Bryan W. Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism*, 162-166; Philip Ivanhoe, "A Happy Symmetry: Xunzi's Ethical Thought," 309; Paul Goldin, *Rituals of the Way*, 69-73.

²⁶ Philip Ivanhoe, "A Happy Symmetry: Xunzi's Ethical Thought," 309-310. Ivanhoe suggests the possibility of Xunzi's thought as an ecological ethic.

intimately related, source of conflict and strife. That is, each individual makes an *equal claim* to limited resources. Xunzi says, 執位齊而欲惡同 物不能澹 則必爭 爭則必亂,亂則窮矣 “If men are of equal power and position and have the same likes and dislikes, then there will not be enough goods to supply their wants and they will inevitably quarrel. Quarrels must lead to disorder, and disorder to poverty.”²⁷ The source of disorder and conflict is not only the fact that people tend to pursue their own desires, but also the fact that they tend to think themselves equal in position. Xunzi goes on to quote a short phrase from the *Documents*: 維齊非齊 “There is equality only insofar as there is no equality.”²⁸ To put this the other way around, the society will never be in peace and harmony until there is inequality among men.

Consequently, the *li* 禮 of the sage kings seeks to bring order to the society by creating inequality among men. Xunzi defines *li* as follows: 禮者 貴賤有等 長幼有差 貧富輕重 皆有稱者也 “*Li* is to rank between the noble and the lowly and to differentiate between the old and the young, and to match them appropriately with wealth and poverty, insignificance and significance.”²⁹ By making distinction among people, the sage kings were able to make an unequal but stable and sustainable distribution of resources. In this way, Xunzi solves the causes of disorder and strife, both on the societal level and on individual level: through the distinctions established by *li*, people cannot make an equal claim to limited goods, and as a result, each individual will have a restraint on his or her own desires.³⁰

²⁷ Xunzi 9.3.

²⁸ This comes from “Punishments of Lü” 呂刑 of the *Documents*. The original phrase is written to explain the correct use of punishments: punishments and fines for the same crime should be adjusted to the circumstances. Xunzi applies this particular case of the proper use of the punishments to a broader context of how to structure an orderly and just society. For Xunzi, different treatment of each individual according to his or her moral worth is the way to do justice to them.

²⁹ Xunzi 10.3.

³⁰ 禮起於何也 曰 人生而有欲 欲而不得則不能無求 求而無度量分界則不能不爭 爭則亂 亂則窮 先王惡其亂也 故制禮義以分之 以養人之欲 給人之求 “How did *li* arise? I say that people are born with desires, if their desires are not satisfied, then they cannot but to seek. If, in seeking, people have no measure or limits, then they cannot

The important thing to note is the standard of the *li*-distinctions. The standard to determine who is noble and who is lowly is “virtue.” Xunzi says, 德必稱位 “The virtue of person should match his position.”³¹ In his description of the rule of the sage kings:

古者先王分割而等異之也 故使或美或惡 或厚或薄 或佚樂或劬或勞
非特以爲淫泰夸麗之聲 將以明仁之文 通仁之順也

“In the past, the former kings made sharp divisions and graded differences among people. Hence, they made some dress beautifully and others dress shabbily; some live affluently and others live meagerly; some live in ease and enjoyment and others live a life of toil and hardship. They did not do this merely out of reckless extravagance or a boastful fondness for elegance, but rather they did so in order to illuminate the patterns of benevolence and to bring the order of benevolence in completion.”³²

Wealth and honor are not merely the objects of human desires. The sage kings transformed them into a splendid mark of virtue. Through the institution of *li*, the sage kings constructed a necessary connection between one’s virtue and external goods. In other words, they tried to bring about a perfect *moral order* in society: the good flourish and the bad suffer. In Yuri Pine’s words, “Xunzi successfully merged ethical and sociopolitical functions of *li*.”³³ The ultimate purpose of *li* is, therefore, to form an ethical human society out of the nasty and brutish state of nature.³⁴

but contend. Such contention leads to disorder, and disorder leads to poverty. The former kings abhorred such disorder, and thus, established *li* and *yi* to make division, and thereby, nourished people’s desires and satisfy people’s demands.” *Xunzi* 19.1.

³¹ *Xunzi* 10.3. This is what makes Xunzi essentially an ethical thinker, unlike Hobbes.

³² *Xunzi* 10.5.

³³ According to Yuri Pines, this successful combination of political and ethical aspects of *li* exerted a tremendous influence on political culture of imperial China. Yuri Pines, “Disputers of the *Li*,” 38.

³⁴ Of course, Xunzi conceives of *li* as cultural heritage of the sage kings, which consist of various forms of rituals, ceremonies, and decorum. A. S. Cua defines *li* as a general reference to the domain of propriety or the domain of normativity. What I want to emphasize here is that *li* also refers to one of the basic principles

Xunzi's vision of the flourishing, orderly society is, thus, very meritocratic, and bears a profound resemblance to Mozi's moral economy. For Mozi's ideal society was largely constructed by human governance, such as hierarchy, honoring worthies, and the system of rewards and punishments. In Xunzi's view, kings should establish a system of moral economy by doing the following:

無德不貴 無能不官 無功不賞 無罪不罰 朝無幸位 民無幸生 尚賢使能 而等位不遺
 析愿禁悍 而刑罰不過 百姓曉然皆知夫為善於家而取賞於朝也 為不善於幽
 而蒙刑於顯也

"No man of virtue is left unhonored; no man of ability shall be left unemployed; no man of merit shall be left unrewarded; no man of guilt shall be left unpunished. At court, no man attains position by luck; among people, no man gains a living by luck. Honor the worthy and employ the able and assign them to the appropriate position, without anyone overlooked. Sort out the sincere people and forbid brutal behavior. Punishments shall be meted out without excess. The people will then clearly understand that even if they do good things at home, they will be rewarded at court; if they do bad things in secret, they will be punished in public."³⁵

In this perfect society built by the sage kings, the good always prosper and the bad always suffer. There should be no mismatching of one's action and its corresponding outcomes. Xunzi's perfect society is a place where moral economy is in optimum operation: it is the society of a moral order of *li* 禮. What makes Xunzi set apart from his predecessors is that this moral order is completely a human construction.

However, since Xunzi's moral economy of *li* is a human artifact, it has to be perfected,

underlying all forms of rituals, as Yuri Pines points out: that is, the moral order, a necessary connection between moral action and non-moral goods. Therefore, for Xunzi, I think *li* is tantamount to moral order, and thus, his moral economy can be called a moral economy of *li*.

³⁵ Xunzi 9.15.

which means, it is usually imperfect. For example, Mozi's moral economy was, on the one hand, a construction of human governance, but also it was supported by *tian* and spiritual beings for its airtight operation. But, Xunzi's moral economy of *li* had no such supermundane support. It was exclusively of human origin and design. Therefore, it is unavoidable for his system of moral economy to have a certain degree of contingency in its application to the actual world. More importantly, the human ethical realm, even if it is clearly distinguished from the natural world, is basically founded on the natural world and it is in constant interaction with the natural world.³⁶ Accordingly, even if the perfect system of moral economy of *li* is successfully implemented in human society, this does not mean that it is invulnerable to influence from the natural realm.³⁷

Accordingly, like Kongzi and Mengzi, Xunzi could not deny contingent factors and had to find a way to cope with them. Xunzi notes, 仁義德行 常安之術也 然而未必不危也 汙慢突盜 常危之術也 然而未必不安也 "Practicing benevolence, righteousness, and virtuous action is normally the method to assure security, but it does not necessarily mean that it will never involve peril. To behave badly, negligently, and recklessly and to steal is normally the method of constant peril, but it does not necessarily mean that it will never produce security."³⁸ There is a moral order in operation, but virtuous action does not always guarantee expected outcomes. This contingent view is in accord with that of Kongzi and Mengzi. As we have seen, Mengzi

³⁶ As I mentioned, the relationship between the human realm and the natural realm in Xunzi's thought is a complex one. Human beings are distinct from the natural realm, but at the same time, they are necessarily a part of it. According to Robert Eno, there is a kind of meta-natural level, "a level above natural and human dimensions, a level from which the limits of both nature and man can be observed." See Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 152-153.

³⁷ I think that for Xunzi, the imperfection of moral order within the human world is not actually perceived as a pressing problem, because it reflects human error, and thus, is considered within the realm of human control. The most pressing problem for Xunzi is the fact that human beings are a part of the natural realm as well as the human ethical realm. Contingencies derived from the amoral, natural realm are still a serious problem to his ethical system.

³⁸ *Xunzi* 4.10.

attributed contingent factors to *tian*: 莫之爲而爲者天也 “Those things that are done without anything doing it is *tian*.”³⁹ *Tian* refers to contingency, something done without involving human agency.⁴⁰ In an almost identical manner, Xunzi defines *tian*: 不爲而成 不求而得 夫是之謂天職 “Not to act, yet bring to completion, not to seek, yet to obtain – this is the work of *tian*.”⁴¹ This contingent view leads Xunzi to the basically same conclusion as Kongzi and Mengzi: to redirect one’s focus to the proper realm of self-cultivation from external concerns. Xunzi exhorts, 君子敬其在己者 而不慕其在天者 “The gentleman is reverent about what is up to himself, and does not long for what is up to *tian*.”⁴²

However, despite agreeing about the role of *tian*, there is disagreement between Xunzi and Mengzi over the issue of contingency. Mengzi believed in a moral universe, which means for him *tian* is moral, if not a moral deity, but at the same time, he also attributed contingency to *tian*. As a result, *tian* is moral as well as contingent. This confusion of moral and non-moral values was what Xunzi strongly reacted against. Xunzi made a complete distinction between moral and non-moral values, and attributed them to the human realm and the natural realm, respectively. And, his clear division between the two realms paves a way for Xunzi to manage contingent factors more easily than Mengzi. If Mengzi just distinguishes contingent factors from

³⁹ *Mengzi* 5A:6.

⁴⁰ By contingency, I mean that something is done without any involvement with human agency, and therefore, it is considered to be uncontrollable and unpredictable and also it refers to something at odds with the workings of moral order, such as cases like good actions bring out unfavorable results and bad actions bring out success. Consequently, for Mengzi, *tian* is moral as well as contingent.

⁴¹ *Xunzi* 17.2.

⁴² 楚王後車千乘 非知也 君子啜菽飲水 非愚也 是節然也 若夫心意脩 德行厚 知慮明 生於今而志乎古 則是其在我者也 故君子敬其在己者 而不慕其在天者 小人錯其在己者 而慕其在天者 君子敬其在己者 而不慕其在天者 是以日進也 小人錯其在己者 而慕其在天者 是以日退也 “That the king of Chu has a retinue of a thousand chariots is not due to his wisdom. That a gentleman eats pulse and drink water is not due to his stupidity. Both are the accidents of circumstance. To be refined in will and purpose, rich in virtuous action, clear in understanding, and to live in the present but to aspire to the past – these are things up to us. Therefore, the gentleman revere what is up to himself and does not long for what is up to *tian*. The petty man forsakes what is up to himself and longs for what is up to *tian*. Because the gentleman revere what is up to himself and does not long for what is up to *tian*, he progresses day by day. Because the petty man lays aside what is up to himself and longs for what is up to *tian*, he regresses day by day.” *Xunzi* 17.8.

moral order, Xunzi takes this a step further and confines contingent factors to the natural realm so as to secure the ethical values of human society.

The discussion so far concerns how Xunzi and Mengzi understand the world around human beings. For Mengzi, the world is a largely moral but insignificantly contingent place, while for Xunzi, the natural world is an amoral place and the human world is a strictly, though not perfectly, moral place. Nevertheless, their different configurations of the world entailed the basically same conclusion: one needs to focus on one's own moral cultivation.

And yet, there is another important dimension in their discussion of contingency: the way human beings deal with contingency. In Mengzi's case, contingent factors are conceived as "given" from without, whereas cultivation of virtue is considered as within the realm of human control. For instance, illustrious virtues are what King Wen was able to accumulate, but the long tradition of the Shang and the worthies around King Zhou are not what King Wen was able to control. In Mengzi's view, the contingency of external conditions stands opposed to what human can control – moral cultivation. On the other hand, Xunzi takes a very different attitude toward contingency. In brief, for him, external conditions are not necessarily beyond human control and moral cultivation is not necessarily within human control.

To begin with, Xunzi's attitude toward natural disasters reveals his distinctive understanding of contingency. Prior to Xunzi, natural disasters were perceived mostly as punishments or omens indicating bad human actions (as is the case with Mozi, who believed in a moral *tian*) or as adverse conditions (as in Mengzi's contingent view). But, Xunzi never interprets natural disasters as any kind of retribution, because he thinks that *tian* is indifferent to human actions. Further, he does not consider natural disasters merely as adversity given by *tian*. Of course, both Xunzi and Mengzi agree that severe drought and a prolonged rainy season

are not something human agency can make happen or not happen: they are the work of *tian*. However, the way Xunzi reacts to these events is different from the way Mengzi does. For Xunzi, the adversity of natural disasters is not inherent in them, but is essentially dependent on humans. He believes that if people are well prepared for such calamities, they are not indeed calamities at all. Xunzi says:

彊本而節用 則天不能貧 養備而動時 則不能病 脩道而不貳 則天不能禍
故水旱不能使之飢渴 寒暑不能使之疾 祲怪不能使之凶

“If you strengthen the basic (agriculture) and moderate expenditures, *tian* cannot impoverish you. If your nourishment is prepared and your movements accord with the season, then *tian* cannot afflict you with illness. If you conform to the Way and are not of two minds, then *tian* cannot bring about calamity. Accordingly, flood and drought cannot make you hungry and thirsty; cold and heat cannot make you sick; inauspicious and strange events cannot make you miserable.”⁴³

What is important for Xunzi is the point that even during times of flood or drought, what makes man suffer is not *tian*, but eventually, humans themselves.

Of course, Mengzi would completely agree with Xunzi that we should always prepare for bad situations, and Xunzi does not claim that every contingency may be dealt with by human control. Thus, they might not disagree with each other as deeply as I have argued so far. Philip Ivanhoe correctly points out:

In terms of their ethical philosophies, Mengzi’s and Xunzi’s agreement went fairly deep; they do not seem to have disagreed much, if at all, about the character of moral action. That is to say, they did not, when faced with the same

⁴³ Xunzi 17.1.

or similar situation, recommended different course of action as right, as contemporary utilitarians and deontologists often do. Their views of the character of the sage, the fully cultivated person, seem to coincide in every important respect.⁴⁴

Yet they are different from each other in some crucial aspects of their moral system. For instance, the focus of Xunzi remains with humans, whereas the focus of Mengzi extends to *tian*. Xunzi admonishes, 故錯人而思天 則失萬物之情 “Hence, if you set aside what belongs to man and concern with what belongs to *tian*, you will lose the essential nature of the myriad things.”⁴⁵ Another of Xunzi’s claims, 唯聖人爲不求知天 “Only the sage does not seek to understand *tian*,”⁴⁶ is in sharp contrast to Mengzi, whose ethical system insists on “understanding *tian*” 知天 as a primary goal.⁴⁷ Unlike Mengzi, Xunzi conceives of the world thoroughly from the perspective of human beings.

To elaborate Xunzi’s conception of contingency, it might be helpful to use the method of paradox, which Robert Eno observes to be a key term for understanding Xunzi’s thought.⁴⁸ In the introduction, I defined *ming* as a fine line that demarcates what is controllable and what is

⁴⁴ According to Philip Ivanhoe, the main difference between Mengzi and Xunzi is the issue of the character of human nature and the process of moral cultivation. He categorizes Mengzi’s program as a *developmental* model and Xunzi’s as a *reformation* model. Philip Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, 30.

⁴⁵ Xunzi 17.13.

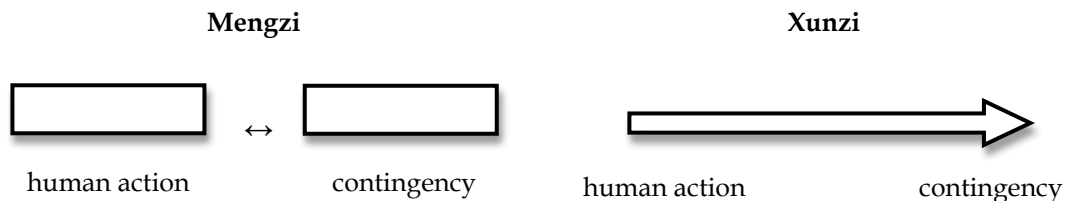
⁴⁶ Xunzi 17.3.

⁴⁷ The first passage of the Mengzi chapter “Exhausting Mind I” 盡心上 describes a parallel task of “understanding *tian*” and “serving *tian*.” 孟子曰 盡其心者 知其性也 知其性 則知天矣 存其心 養其性 所以事天也 Mengzi says, “The person who fully exhausts his mind understands his nature. If he understands his nature, then he understands *tian*. To preserve one’s mind and nurtures one’s nature is the way to serve *tian*.” Mengzi 7A:1.

⁴⁸ According to Eno, there are several levels of paradox involved in the Xunzi. The first two levels are: 1) social differentiation is the root of the social integration; 2) non-natural social forms are the consequences of natural process. Eno also points out the paradox of trinity: man radically departs from nature, and thereby, he becomes equal to nature, forming a trinity with heaven and earth. In other words, the paradox of Xunzi is that human beings are distinct from the natural realm but the most distinctive feature of human beings, “deliberate exertion,” makes humans the most natural for being a human and being a part of the natural realm. In Chapter 4 of his book, Paul Goldin discusses Xunzi’s refutation of the paradoxes of the Dialecticians 辯者. Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 138, 147-149, 163-165; Paul Goldin, *Rituals of the Way*, 83-105.

uncontrollable through human agency. When we think of this division, as Mengzi does, we tend to think it as: some parts of human life [self-cultivation] are controllable, but others [external conditions] are not. However, in my understanding, what Xunzi tries to defy is this fixed distinction between the controllable and the uncontrollable. For Xunzi, “to control” does not mean to control what is already controllable; paradoxically, the true meaning of control is “to control what is uncontrollable or uncontrolled.”⁴⁹

Accordingly, the border between the controllable and the uncontrollable becomes much more malleable for Xunzi. Of course, Xunzi does not think that humans can control everything, such as changing weather.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, as he claims, humans can blunt the impact of such events as flood and drought and make them bearable. Accordingly, for Xunzi, the distinction between what humans can control and what humans cannot control is not just a matter of *tian*, but it is determined by human agency, as expressed in the following diagram.



Mengzi's view is expressed by a dyad of human action and contingency. Humans are in

⁴⁹ I got this insight from Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) on the paradox of forgiveness: to forgive the unforgivable. He claims that if we forgive someone for what is intrinsically forgivable, it is not really worth to forgive. Therefore, what really calls for forgiveness is the unforgivable. According to Derrida, forgiveness always evokes two contradictory conditions of forgiveness and unforgivable. Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (London: Routledge, 2001), 32-51.

⁵⁰ For instance, in the “Treaties on *Tian*” chapter, Xunzi points out the ineffectiveness of ritual for rain. He argues that when you pray for rain and it does rain, it is just a coincidence. According to Xunzi, the function of ritual for rain is not producing rain but formality and embellishment. *Xunzi* 17.11.

constant interaction with external conditions given by *tian*. The final outcomes are a combination of the two factors, the controllable and the uncontrollable. On the other hand, Xunzi's diagram is linear. It is a spectrum, with human action on one end and contingency on the other. For Xunzi, the world is originally an uncontrolled place. It is human beings who determine how much of the world is under their control and how much of the world remains uncontrolled. Unlike Mengzi's two-dimensional world of controllable and uncontrollable, Xunzi's world is one-dimensional, what is controlled and what is not yet controlled. In Xunzi's scheme, there is always a possibility for human efficacy to extend without limits.⁵¹ As Philip Ivanhoe aptly remarks, unlike his rather dim view of human nature, Xunzi holds a tremendously optimistic and positive view of human capability.⁵²

Their different conceptualizations of contingency relate to their different configurations of the world. Mengzi's universe is largely moral but insignificantly contingent.⁵³ Mengzi separates out contingent factors from the moral economy. His admission of the existence of contingency, ironically, enables him to recover a strong confidence in moral economy. Even if there exist unexpected obstacles, he believes virtue will overcome such obstacles to bring favorable outcomes in the end. Understanding this complex relationship of moral values and contingent factors might be what Mengzi meant by "understanding *tian*" 知天.

By contrast, Xunzi contends that the sages do not seek to understand *tian*.⁵⁴ Xunzi tries to construct a perfect system of moral economy in the human realm. In order to achieve this end,

⁵¹ I do not think that Xunzi believed that humans can or should control the whole universe. What humans should do is by constructing a distinctively human society to participate in a harmonious relationship with the natural realm. Nevertheless, I think that Xunzi's conceptualization of contingency reflects more positive reading of human agency than that of Kongzi and Mengzi. And, even if it was not foreseen by Xunzi himself, most parts of the modern world indeed appear to be under human control.

⁵² Philip Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, 35.

⁵³ Likewise, it also can be said that Mengzi's universe is largely contingent but significantly moral. In other words, Mengzi's universe is moral as well as contingent; but what should be noted is that it is significantly moral and insignificantly contingent.

⁵⁴ 唯聖人爲不求知天 Xunzi 17.3.

not only does he separates out contingency from the human realm, but also confines it tightly to the natural realm. Xunzi incessantly emphasizes the distinction between the human realm and the natural realm, and exhorts that we should not be interested beyond what is proper to the human realm.⁵⁵ The clear separation and detachment from contingency is how Xunzi safeguards the domain of moral economy. It is interesting to note that his version of moral economy is much closer to Mozi than his Ru predecessors.

Xunzi's unique conceptualization of contingency has another significant implication for the process of self-cultivation: Xunzi introduced a notion of internal contingency. Xunzi viewed the whole universe as originally an uncontrolled area. The distinctive task of human beings is to place much of this not-yet-controlled universe under human control by imposing a moral order of *li* 禮. This scheme of the controlled and the uncontrolled is not just limited to the external realm; it extends to the inner realm of human mind as well.⁵⁶ In other words, the inner realm of human mind is originally an uncontrolled domain. For Xunzi, human beings, in the natural state, only possess desires and emotions. These basic desires and emotions do not have moral qualities. In addition to the absence of moral qualities, human nature has another distinctive characteristic: "the absence of agency." Xunzi says:

生之所以然者謂之性 性之和所生 精合感應 不事而自然謂之性
性之好惡喜怒哀樂謂之情

⁵⁵ 不為而成 不求而得 夫是之謂天職 如是者 雖深 其人不加慮焉 雖大 不加能焉 雖精 不加察焉 夫是之謂不與天爭職 "Not to act, yet bring to completion, not to seek, yet to obtain — this is the work of *tian*. Thus, although the sage has deep understanding, he does not attempt to exercise it upon the work of *tian*; though he has great talent, he does not attempt to apply it to the work of *tian*; though he has keen perception, he does not attempt to use it on the work of *tian*. Hence it is said that he does not compete with the work of *tian*." Xunzi 17.2.

⁵⁶ Mengzi's scheme of the controllable and the uncontrollable seems to have different implication for the process of self-cultivation. As opposed to external conditions, which are beyond human control, the realm of self-cultivation is naturally rendered as being within human control. Accordingly, Mengzi might not have paid much attention to how the process of self-cultivation actually occurs, but he was more interested in the tension between one's moral actions and contingent factors.

“That which is as it is from the time of birth is called human nature. That which is harmonious from the birth, which is capable of perceiving through the senses and of responding to stimuli, which is without effort and so of itself, is also called human nature. The likes and dislikes, delights and angers, grief and joys of human nature are called emotions.”⁵⁷

Effortlessness and spontaneity is the foremost trait of human nature; basic desires and emotions are essentially something that just occurs. Lee Janghee notes, “The scope of *xing* encompasses all the passively responsive human faculties that are given by *tian*.”⁵⁸ Accordingly, it is plausible to say that *xing* 性, human nature, basically refers to *tian*, the natural realm within human beings. *Xing* and *tian* share the exactly same characteristics: no involvement with human agency and moral values.

Just as human beings construct a human ethical society within the natural realm through a moral order of *li* 禮, it is the task of *xin* 心, human mind, to guide and regulate the desires and emotions of *xing* 性 and eventually transform them into a moral nature. Unlike the passively responsive faculties of desires and emotions, *xin* is the autonomous faculty.⁵⁹ In contrast to *xing*:

心者形之君也而神明之主也 出令而無所受令 自禁也 自使也 自奪也 自取也 自行也 自止也 故口可劫而使墨云 形可劫而誦申 心不可劫而使易意 是之則受 非之則辭
“*Xin* is the lord of the body and the master of the spiritual luminous. It issues commands but does not receive commands. On its own volition it forbids or orders, renounces or accepts, initiates or stops. Thus, the mouth can be forced to be silent or to speak. The body can be forced to crouch down or stretch out. But

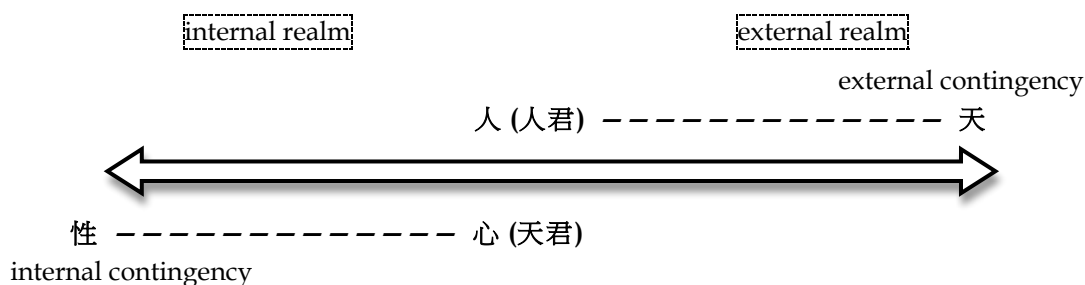
⁵⁷ *Xunzi* 22.1.

⁵⁸ Lee Janghee, *Xunzi and Early Chinese Naturalism*, 26.

⁵⁹ In his study of *Xunzi*, Lee Janghee argues that the key concept of *Xunzi*'s philosophy is his notion of the autonomy of *xin* 心, which has been overshadowed by his provocative claim on human nature. As he separated out the human realm from the natural realm in response to the naturalistic trend of *Mengzi* and *Zhuangzi*, *Xunzi* made a clear distinction between the autonomous of *xin* and the passively responsive faculties of desires and emotions, that is, *xing* (天<->人 = 性<->心). For a detailed study of *xin*, see Lee Janghee, *Xunzi and Early Chinese Naturalism*, 9-56.

xin cannot be forced to change its opinion. If *xin* thinks right, it will accept it; but if it thinks wrong, then it will reject it.”⁶⁰

Xin 心 does not receive orders from without; it only gives orders. Xunzi called *xin* the “*tian lord*” 天君.⁶¹ *Xin*, as the agent of control, takes the lead of moral cultivation. If *xing* 性 refers to *tian* 天, the natural realm of spontaneity and effortlessness within human beings, *xin* 心 refers to *ren* 人, what is distinctively of human, to exercise “deliberate exertion” (*wei* 偽). To redraw Xunzi’s diagram:



⁶⁰ Xunzi 21.9. In addition to the autonomy of *xin*, *xin* has another distinctive feature. As this question implies, *xin* thinks of what is right and what is wrong, and approves and rejects accordingly. This function of *xin*, according to Van Norden’s argument, is what makes Xunzi different from Mengzi. Van Norden argues that the different theories of human nature of Mengzi and Xunzi are due to their different views on human agency: Mengzi held that what we do is determined by what we most *desire*, while Xunzi believes that we can override our desires through what we *approve of*. Bryan Van Norden, “Mengzi and Xunzi: Two Views of Human Agency.”

⁶¹ 心居中虛 以治五官 夫是之謂天君 “*Xin* dwells in the middle of emptiness and governs the five faculties (ears, eyes, nose, mouth, and body), and hence it is called the *tian lord*.” Xunzi 17.4. Michael Puett translates the term *tianjun* 天君 as the “Heavenly ruler,” meaning Heaven-generated, Heaven-given ruler. According to Lee Janghee, Xunzi’s characterization of *xin* as the *tian lord* implies that even if *xin* differs from *xing*, *xin* is also a *tian-given* organ. In other words, the autonomous capacity of *xin* is endowed from *tian*. Accordingly, *xin* exercises what is distinctively of human, “deliberate effort,” but at the same time, it reconnects to the natural realm. I agree with Lee’s point that the term *tian lord* emphasizes the fact that the autonomous faculty of *xin* is naturally given. Human beings are born with the faculty of *xin*. This point can be clearer if we compare the term *tian lord* with the usual sense of lord or king (*renjun* 人君). *Xin* and *kings* plays basically the same role: bringing order. *Xin* guides the natural realm of *xing* and transforms it into a moral nature, and kings construct an ethical human society out of the natural state. However, *xin* is naturally given human faculty, but kings are not. Lee Janghee, *Xunzi and Early Chinese Naturalism*, 41-48; Michael Puett, *The Ambivalence of Creation: Debates Concerning Innovation and Artifice in Early China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 68.

Above, I argued that Xunzi does not believe in a fixed distinction between the controlled and the uncontrolled. In the beginning, everything is uncontrolled: the external realm as well as the inner realm of human mind. Externally, human beings extend their deliberate efforts to construct an orderly society; internally, the faculty of *xin* guides and transforms *xing* to become virtuous. Xunzi's introduction of internal contingency has several significant implications in his discussion of self-cultivation. It enables him to articulate the process of self-cultivation.⁶² It also enables him to develop a more sophisticated version of moral psychology.⁶³ Furthermore, the notion of internal contingency provides, at least, a partial answer to why people fail to cultivate virtue and go bad.⁶⁴

The last point I want to make concerning Xunzi is his attitude toward external goods.

⁶² As I mentioned, in Mengzi's scheme of the controllable and the uncontrollable, self-cultivation tends to be considered within the realm of human control. In addition, Mengzi's doctrine of the goodness of human nature makes his cultivation project as passively following and nurturing moral senses inherent in the human mind. Of course, Mengzi acknowledges the existence of physical desires along with incipient moral senses, but as Lee Janghee observes, he does not clarify the relationship between the two but conflated them within the faculty of *xin*. On the other hand, Xunzi straightens out their relationship as the autonomous faculty of *xin* and the passively responsive faculty of *xing*. Lee Janghee, *Xunzi and Early Chinese Naturalism*, 9-18.

⁶³ Mengzi already had a rudimentary form of moral psychology. He connected the virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom with the inner minds of compassion, shame, yielding, and right and wrong. Furthermore, the excavated *Wuxing* presents a much more elaborate version of moral psychology. In his study of the *Wuxing*, Mark Csikszentmihalyi notes that generally most scholars locate the *Wuxing* between Kongzi and Mengzi, while a few scholars locate between Mengzi and Xunzi. He points out that however, because of a variety of variables, temporal as well as regional, the complex relationship between the *Wuxing*, the *Mengzi*, and the *Xunzi* is hard to pin down. I think the comparison of moral psychologies of the *Wuxing* and the *Xunzi* must be fruitful. For a detailed study of Xunzi's moral psychology, see chapter 4 of Lee Janghee, *Xunzi and Early Naturalism*, 33-56; Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*, 112-113.

⁶⁴ Mengzi's program of self-cultivation is a "developmental model," nourishing the incipient moral senses. On the other hand, Xunzi's "reformation model" does not have the inner source of moral value in human nature. Instead, through deliberate effort, human beings have to generate moral values out of non-moral desires and emotions. I think that Xunzi's reformation model is much more apt in explaining the departure from virtue: first of all, from the beginning, there is nothing one can depart from, and second, the existence of internal contingency easily solves the problem moral failures. As Chan Wing-tsit points out, Xunzi may be the first thinker in Chinese history to answer the question, "why people are going bad?" However, according to Philip Ivanhoe, Mengzi already accounted for the sources of wickedness, such as environment, individual effort, difference in ability, and a natural cycle of the rise and fall. Because of these reasons, people deviate from the Way. However, Ivanhoe points out that in Mengzi's thought, these sources of the wickedness is attributed to *tian*, which is also the source of our innate moral nature. Accordingly, *tian* takes up the rather awkward position as the source of both goodness and wickedness in Mengzi's thought. See Chan Wing-tsit, "The Neo-Confucian Solution of the Problem of Evil," in Wing-tsit Chan and Chengzhi Chen, eds., *Neo-Confucianism, Etc.: Essays* (Hanover, N.H: Oriental Society, 1969): 88-116; Philip Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition: The Thought of Mengzi and Wang Yangming* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001), 59-87.

External goods have intrinsic as well as instrumental values. Kongzi did not deny the intrinsic values of external goods, but he admonished that the way to obtain them should be proper. Furthermore, he placed great significance on the instrumental values of external goods, for he saw that they play important roles in the fulfillment of moral cultivation. For instance, a high political position provides an opportunity to implement an ideal Ru society, and many roles experienced during a normal span of life provide opportunities to acquire diverse moral qualities. Compared to Kongzi, however, Mengzi seems to have a low opinion of external goods. The instrumental values of external goods no longer had strong appeal to Mengzi, because he believed that one's moral perfection has an almost transcendental influence on other people.⁶⁵ So, it is not necessary to become a king or a minister in order to harmonize society. In terms of the intrinsic value of external goods, Mengzi seemed to have an almost negative attitude. To give one example, he warned that ease and comforts accompanied by wealth and honor could be an obstacle in the pursuit of goodness. And, he placed virtues and external goods in a clear relationship of hierarchy – as the position bestowed by *tian* (天爵 *tianjue*) and the position bestowed by man (人爵 *renjue*), respectively.

Unlike Mengzi but very much like Kongzi, Xunzi assigned a positive value to external goods. Furthermore, in Xunzi's ethical system, external goods play an indispensable role: wealth and political position are the outer mark of man's inner virtue (仁之文). Even though early Ru were criticized for being moral hypocrites, who act in a seemingly virtuous way in order to obtain worldly rewards, Xunzi realized that without external goods commensurate with virtue,

⁶⁵ By drawing on the distinction of the cardinal virtues and the theological virtues in the Christian tradition, Mark Csikszentmihalyi hints at the similar two-tier model of human virtues and transcendental virtues in the ethical system of Mengzi. For instance, benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom belong to human virtues, while sagacity (*sheng* 聖) belongs to transcendental virtues. Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*, 162-163.

moral economy cannot sustain itself and the world will fall back to chaos.⁶⁶ Through the institution of *li* 禮, Xunzi tried to establish an accurate linkage between virtue and external goods: good people obtain earthly rewards but bad people do not. As a result, external goods became an indispensable part of moral economy.

In relation to this, Xunzi also admitted man's basic desires for such goods. Despite his claim that human nature is bad, he never attempted to remove these self-seeking desires and emotions completely. Xunzi says, 故雖爲守門 欲不可去 性之具也 雖爲天子 欲不可盡 "Even though one is a gatekeeper, one can not remove desires, because they are the inseparable attributes of human nature. Even though one is the Son of *tian*, one cannot satisfy all his desires."⁶⁷ If we can neither remove our basic desires nor fully satisfy them, the only way to deal with our desires is to control them (節欲): not removing but guiding to the right direction, not lessening but adjusting to a right measure, and thereby ultimately transforming them (化性) into a second moral nature.⁶⁸ On the one hand, Xunzi's positive attitudes toward external goods

⁶⁶ According to Mark Csikszentmihalyi, this problem of moral hypocrisy inspired Mengzi and authors of the *Wuxing* to construct a unique theory of material virtue. Since the accumulation of inner virtues actually transforms the human body, there is little possibility that people cannot recognize the real moral value of others. Instead of the mystical changes of the body and the transcendental power of sages, Xunzi adhered to what he thought to be the distinctively human way: to ensure the perfect conformity between virtue and external goods. Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*.

⁶⁷ Xunzi 22.12

⁶⁸ Kurtis Hagen argues that the term "*huaxing*" 化性 (transforming human nature) does not to change our original selfish desires into something else, but to reform our motivational structure to guide them. Therefore, our original desires will remain and be satisfied even after the successful "*huaxing*." Lee Janghee makes a similar argument that it is not the sense organs themselves but the faculty of *xin* that should be trained. The mainstream view, however, claims that the self-cultivation program of Xunzi purports to reform our human nature and acquire a second moral nature. Philip Ivanhoe compares Xunzi's ethical program with the empiricist view of language acquisition: "According to language empiricists, we begin life without language ... one acquires language purely as a tool in the service of one's basic needs and desires. But, as one is led to see and understand certain features about oneself and the world, instead of using language exclusively in an instrumental fashion, one may come to see it as intrinsically valuable, and as a new source of satisfaction. ... An appreciation of literature is an *acquired taste*. Illiterate people simply cannot understand these beauties; they see no meaning and find no satisfaction in the written word. ... On Xunzi's view, morality is like this, something the uninitiated can only understand in terms of its immediate usefulness in the quest to avoid harm and satisfy their basic desires; they have no innate *taste* for it, no *real* appreciation of it. But, if people acquire enough knowledge about themselves and the world they inhabit, they will discover that there are new sources of profound satisfaction, beyond simply avoiding harm and fulfilling basic desires. ... The culmination of this

seems to be an indirect response to Mengzi's depreciation of such goods, and on the other hand, Xunzi's affirmation of human desires for such goods is a direct response to Mozi's doctrine of frugality, which appears in "Moderation in Use" 節用, "Moderation in Funerals" 節葬, and "Against Music" 非樂.

In conclusion, Xunzi created his own version of moral economy, in response to Mozi's construction of strict moral economy and the inherent problem of Ru's contingent world view. On the one hand, he tried to construct a strict moral economy in the human realm; on the other hand, he confined contingent factors to the natural realm. Xunzi's configuration of the world is much closer to Mozi than Mengzi. Both Xunzi and Mozi clearly separated contingency from moral order. By contrast, even though Mengzi acknowledged the existence of contingency, he allowed an interaction between moral values and contingent factors. In short, the border between the moral and non-moral realms is porous for Mengzi and Kongzi, whereas it is airtight for Xunzi and Mozi.

Nevertheless, Xunzi remained true to the Ru tradition. Unlike Mozi, whose interests were solely on the perfect operation of moral economy, Xunzi put much more importance on the moral transformation of human beings along with the perfect institution of a moral order of *li* 禮.⁶⁹ Xunzi acknowledged a fatal flaw with any purely mechanical conception of the operation of moral economy, saying, 凡人之動也 爲賞慶爲之 則見害傷焉止矣 "It is the way with all men

process is a fundamental change in one's evaluative scheme. It is not that one no longer recognizes the good of avoiding harm or that one no longer takes satisfaction in fulfilling basic desires, but one sees these through a more powerful lens that reveals their true proportion in a larger picture of the good life. ... At this point, the initial tension between what one desires and what is right weakens; one finds additional motivation to do what is right and one comes to see how many of one's basic desires not only can be satisfied but enhanced in a well-lived life. If one succeeds in becoming a sage, one will no longer need to struggle against recalcitrant desires, for one's desires will be in complete accord with what is right." Kurtis Hagen, "Xunzi and the Prudence of *Dao*: Desire as the Motive to Become Good," *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 10, 1 (2011): 53-70; Lee Janghee, *Xunzi and Early Chinese Naturalism*, 46; Philip Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, 34-35.

⁶⁹ However, Mozi is more concerned with making social changes than the cultivation of virtues.

that, if they do something only for the sake of winning rewards and benefits, then the moment they see that undertaking may end unprofitably or in danger, they will abandon it.”⁷⁰ Therefore, even if Xunzi appears to take the perfect construction of the human ethical realm as his prime task, it is actually the moral cultivation of individuals that takes precedence over the institution of the moral order of *li*. In a similar way to Mengzi, Xunzi concludes that when the king sets himself as a moral exemplar, his moral influence will extend to the people so that he does not need to rely on such a system of rewards and punishments.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Xunzi 15.11.

⁷¹ 故械數者 治之流也 非治之原也 君子者 治之原也 官人守數 君子養原 原清則流清 原濁則流濁 故上好禮義 尚賢使能 無貪利之心 則下亦將慕辭讓 致忠信 而謹於臣子矣 如是則雖在小民 不待合符節別契券而信 不待探籌投鈎而公 不待衡石稱縣而平 不待斗斛敦概而噴 故賞不用而民勸 罰不用而民服 “Thus, the instrument of measurement and the modes of calculation is the secondary, not the source of order. The gentleman is the source of order. The officers of government preserve the calculations; the gentleman nurtures the source. If the source is clear, then the outflow will be clear; if the source is muddy, the outflow will be muddy. Therefore, if the superior is fond of rituals and righteousness, he exalts the worthies and employs the able, and he has no mind for avaricious profits, then his subjects will also go to the utmost in offering polite refusals and showing deference, will be loyal and trustworthy in the extreme, and will be attentive to the ministers of government. When this situation obtains, the common people will be trustworthy without tallies and tokens to be joined or contracts and certificates to be divided. They will become objective and impartial without testing with the counting sticks or casting the lots. They will be fair and equal without the steelyard or suspend weight. They will become uniform and equitable without the dipper and bushel, the cups and leveling instrument. Thus, the people are stimulated to action without rewards being given, they are submissive without punishments being used.” Xunzi 12.2.

6. Shun's 舜 Ascension to the Throne

This chapter will focus on the particular event of Shun's ascension to the throne. Earlier, I argued that the early Ru discussion of *ming* 命 centers around the classic question about moral economy, whether good people prosper and bad people suffer in this world. The event of Shun's succession to Yao can be considered as an epitome of moral economy: Shun's moral excellence led him to rise from a humble position to become a king.

Two chapters of the "Canon of Yao" 堯典 and the "Canon of Shun" 舜典 of the *Documents* tell the story of Yao's transmitting his throne to Shun. As the reign of Yao reached the times of peace, Yao started to look for his successor. His ministers recommended several candidates, one of which was his eldest son, Danzhu 丹朱. But, unfortunately, Danzhu was disqualified because of his improper temperament. The last candidate was Shun, recommended by Yao's minister, Si Yue 四岳. According to Si Yue's description, 瞽子 父頑 母嚚 象傲 克諧以孝 烝烝乂 不格姦 "He (Shun) is a son of a blind man. His father was wicked, his stepmother deceitful, and his stepbrother, Xiang, was arrogant. But he was able to live in harmony with them through his filial piety and gradually transformed them so that they did not return to wickedness."¹ However, Shun did not immediately become the successor of Yao. First, Yao married his two daughters to Shun in order to see if he could manage an amicable relationship with two wives. Second, Yao observed for three years how Shun administered and accomplished his tasks. It was after 28 years of regency when Yao passed away that Shun finally took the position of "Son of *tian*" 天子.

¹ "The Canon of Yao" 堯典.

This story of Yao's transmitting his throne to Shun shares with the story of King Wu's 武王 replacement of King Zhou 紂王 a significant point: both stories go against hereditary succession, instead, following moral excellence as the standard of political authority. According to Mark Csikszentmihalyi, these two stories of nonhereditary succession represent the dual modes of political legitimation by moral standard: Shun's story, in the time of peaceful government, and King Wu's story, in the time of violent rule.² As Csikszentmihalyi observes, the difference between the two stories is the intervention of *tian*. The Shun story highlights the role of Yao in recognizing Shun's virtue and successfully transferring his power to Shun. On the other hand, the King Wu story brings the role of moral *tian* to the forefront, while retaining the significance of virtue and merit of King Wen and King Wu. In other words, despite the shared assumption that moral perfection is the standard of political legitimation, the focus of the two stories slightly differs concerning the role of human agency and the role of moral *tian*. This difference, however, entails markedly different conclusions: according to the first story, Shun would not have become a king, if he had not met with the virtuous Yao; according to the second story, Shun's moral excellence would, more or less, ensure kingship.

The doctrine of *tianming*, which became the centerpiece of Ru political and ethical theory, was originally associated with the story of King Wen and King Wu. As the doctrine of *tianming* came to prominence as the norm for dynastic changes and imperial succession, the story of Yao and Shun was subsumed under the powerful rubric of the *tianming* doctrine.³ The integration of the two stories and its subsequent conflation of their different perspectives on the agency of *tian*

² Mark Csikszentmihalyi, "Confucianism," 224.

³ For instance, according to Michael Nylan, the "Canon of Yao" 堯典 and the "Canon of Shun" 舜典 cannot date much earlier than Qin unification. In other words, these chapters are probably later than most of the chapters of Zhou period. In addition, Gu Jiegang's study also suggests that the earlier a sage was, the later he was introduced. For a detailed description of the emergence of the legend of Yao and Shun, see Yuri Pines, "Disputers of Abdication: Zhanguo Egalitarianism and the Sovereign's Power," *T'oung Pao* 91, 4-5 (2005): 243-300; Michael Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics* (New Haven; London: Yale University press, 2001), 133-136.

and human beings gave rise to a number of different understandings of the event of Shun's ascension, especially concerning whether Shun's moral excellence was a sufficient condition for him to succeed the sage king Yao. More broadly, the major concern of Shun's story revolves around the question of to what extent one's moral perfection can ensure favorable external goods. In what follows, I will compare three versions of such accounts on Shun's ascension to the throne: these are from the "Qiong da yi shi" 窮達以時 (Failure and Success Depend on Times), the *Mengzi*, and the *Xunzi*.⁴ I will examine how each text interpret Shun's ascension, why they interpret it in the ways they do, and what ethical implications their interpretations carry.

Before examining each account, I will briefly summarize how the original story of Shun can be interpreted under the *tianming* doctrine, a belief that *tian* elevates a virtuous person to power. According to the *tianming* scheme, it was actually *tian*, not Yao, who transmitted the throne to Shun. Yao may have been a medium of *tianming*, but it was through the agency of

⁴ There are two reasons I choose the excavated text "Qiong da yi shi" instead of the *Lunyu*. First, in the *Lunyu*, there is only a brief mention about Shun's ascension. The first passage of the last book tells us Yao's admonition to Shun, probably on the occasion of succession: 堯曰 咨爾舜 天之曆數在爾躬 允執其中 四海困窮 天祿永終 Yao said, "Oh, Shun! The succession ordained by *tian* has fallen on you. Hold fast to the mean. If the area within the four seas falls into dire straits, *tian*'s benefit will be ended forever." *Lunyu* 20:1. However, this passage is actually a quotation from the *Documents* (a longer passage appears in "The Counsels of the Great Yu" 大禹謨). Consequently, we cannot exactly know what was Kongzi's interpretation on Shun's ascension. Furthermore, according to some scholars, this passage's stylistic and grammatical difference from the rest of the *Lunyu* suggests that it could be included much later. In addition, in terms of understanding the phrase, "*tian zhi li shu*" 天之曆數, in the above passage, traditional commentaries are largely divided into two groups. One group interprets it as the task of making a calendar, which was considered to be one of the most important tasks of king in ancient times. Another group interprets it as the *tian*-ordained imperial succession. Depending on which group we follow, the story of Yao's transfer of power to Shun would have a different implication. Second, even though the author of "Qiong da yi shi" is unknown (some scholars attribute it to Zisi 子思, the grandson of Kongzi and supposedly, a teacher of Mengzi), the text itself is generally located between the time of Kongzi and Mengzi. In addition, I think the main argument of "Qiong da yi shi" clearly represents Kongzi's understanding of moral economy. Of course, it is absurd to think that this short text of "Qiong da yi shi" can shed a full light to Kongzi's complex and nuanced understanding of moral economy, and it is also improbable to think that the ideas of "Qiong da yi shi" are in complete accordance with Kongzi's view as reflected in the *Lunyu*. Nevertheless, I think that the text of "Qiong da yi shi" somehow magnifies Kongzi's notion of contingency and his theory of self-sufficiency of virtue. This aspect provides us with a vantage point for comparison. For a detailed textual study of the "Qiong da yi shi," see Dirk Meyer, *Philosophy on Bamboo: Text and the Production of Meaning in Early China* (Leiden: Brill, 2011): 53-76 and 269-282.

moral *tian* that Shun's virtue brought him to the position of the Son of *tian*.⁵ Accordingly, compared to the original story, in which Yao, a human ruler, played a decisive role, in the *tianming* discourse Shun's becoming a king appears to be more of a necessary consequence of his moral excellence.⁶

The "Qiong da yi shi," an excavated text from Guodian 郭店, however, gives a different account to Shun's story.⁷ It emphasizes the point that Shun would not have become a king, if he had not encountered Yao: 舜耕於歷山 陶埴於河澗 立而為天子 遇堯也 "Shun ploughed at the Mountain Li, and he made pottery at the banks of the Yellow River. The reason he was established and became Son of *tian* was because he encountered Yao."⁸ And, it further clarifies that Shun's encounter with Yao was determined by *tian*: 遇不遇 天也 "To encounter or not, this lies with *tian*."⁹ In a sense, the "Qiong da yi shi" is not at odds with the doctrine of *tianming* because in both cases Shun's ascension was ultimately determined by *tian*. However, the notion of *tian* in the "Qiong da yi shi" is different from the *tianming* doctrine. *Tian* in the *tianming* doctrine serves as a moral judge; as such, it monitors human actions and responds to them appropriately and directly. On the other hand, in the world of the "Qiong da yi shi," *tian* is no longer portrayed as a moral judge. Even if Shun achieved moral perfection, if *tian* did not let

⁵ I think that Yao's admonition to Shun (in *Lunyu* 20:1 and the *Documents*) — "Oh, Shun! The succession ordained by *tian* has fallen on you. Hold fast to the mean. If the area within the four seas falls into dire straits, *tian*'s benefit will be ended forever" — actually reflects this point. See the note above.

⁶ Actually, the doctrine of *tianming* is a little more complicated than this, because when King Wu became the king, the world was governed by a tyrant king, while Shun lived during the peaceful reign of a sage king. Despite this difference, I want to emphasize that the strong belief in moral economy reflected in the *tianming* doctrine: the good prosper. In addition, if Shun's ascension was ultimately determined by a moral *tian*, not by a human agent (for instance, a king might not have been as virtuous as Yao), contingency can be reduced to a considerable extent.

⁷ The "Qiong da yi shi" is written on 15 bamboo slips, which are 26.4 cm long and were originally bound with two straps apart from each other about 9.5 cm. Of 15, two slips (slips 12 and 13) are partially damaged. On average, each slip contains 20 characters. *Guodian Chumu zhujian* 郭店楚墓竹簡, Jingmen shi bowuguan, ed. (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1998).

⁸ Slips 2 and 3.

⁹ Slip 11.

him meet with Yao, he would not have become a king. In the “Qiong da yi shi,” *tian* does not follow the moral order; rather, the workings of *tian* are beyond human understanding.

Consequently, the “Qiong da yi shi” introduces the notion of contingency into the notion of moral *tian*. *Tian* becomes contingent in the sense that man’s moral actions cannot ensure its corresponding response and that man cannot understand the mysterious workings of *tian*. As discussed earlier, this introduction of contingency solves the problem of theodicy involved in the doctrine of *tianming*. The strict moral economy of the *tianming* doctrine cannot adequately come to terms with cases like the suffering of the good and the flourishing of the bad. On the contrary, the notion of contingency gives a coherent explanation to both stories of Shun’s ascension and Kongzi’s political failure. Of these two virtuous men, one became a king by *tian*, but the other did not and this was also by *tian*. As the title of this text explicitly states, one’s failure and success depends on a contingent *tian* 天 and times 時.¹⁰

However, the introduction of contingency is likely to cause the problem of moral decay and moral indifference. As Mozi fiercely criticized, if everything depends on an inscrutable *tian*, there seems to be no apparent reason to cultivate virtue. As a result, the author of “Qiong da yi shi” prepares a way for those who are not favored by *tian*. It asserts that whether or not one is recognized by *tian* or by other worthies, one’s virtue and merits are intact and pleasurable in itself.¹¹

¹⁰ Instead of a position as a moral judge, the “Qiong da yi shi” identifies *tian* with a new term, *shi* 時 (times). According to Dirk Meyer, the terms *tian* 天 and *shi* 時 are interchangeable in the “Qiong da yi shi.” He notes, “This technique of defining newly introduced terms by relating them to well-defined ones by way of reiterating parallel patterns was an established standard in the Warring States period.” Dirk Meyer, *Philosophy on Bamboo*, 58.

¹¹ In his study of the secular and religious traditions of Chinese history writing, Yuri Pines mentions that the problem of theodicy – the injustice of *tian* – was also a troubling question for Sima Qian 司馬遷. But, Sima Qian’s answer was much more practical than the theory of the self-sufficiency of virtue as in the “Qiong da yi shi” and the *Lunyu*. For Sima Qian, a true measure of personal success depends on posterity. Pines remarks, “Indeed, by preserving one’s name for posterity, the historian corrects Heaven’s wrongdoing, providing a sort

動非為達也 故窮而不怨 隱非為名也 故莫之知而不吝 芝蘭生於幽谷
非以無人嗅而不芳 無蒼莖 逾寶山 石不為〔開 非以其〕善負己也

Thus, to act does not necessarily mean to succeed; from this follows that [the worthy] does not harbor resentment even if he fails. He simply hides and does not work to establish his name; from this it follows that he is without regret even if nobody recognizes him. The Zhilan follower grows in dark valleys, just because it cannot be smelled by man does not mean that it is not fragrant. The beautiful jade buried beneath mountain stones lies undiscovered, just because no one knows its goodness does not mean that it lacks confidence in itself.¹²

Regardless of success or failure, one's virtues, like the fragrance of flower and the beauty of jade, remain the same. Even though virtue does not guarantee favorable external goods, virtues are self-sufficient. Therefore, one should cultivate virtue because it is an end in itself and its own reward; and also, one should not pursue goodness for the sake of obtaining other rewards. This leads to the conclusion: 故君子敦於反己 "Therefore, the gentleman does his best to reflect on himself."¹³ To sum, very much like Kongzi, the "Qiong da yi shi" solves the problem of theodicy implicit in the doctrine of *tianming* by introducing the concept of contingency, and at the same time, it proposes a theory of self-sufficient virtue in order to resolve the possible problems that would be caused by the introduction of contingency.

of immortality for those who failed to fulfill their aspirations in life. An after-life in a historical text becomes a compensation for under-appreciation or failure in life." He further adds that this post-mortem justice has its roots in the *Zuozhuan* 左傳. According to Chen Ning's division, this post-mortem justice can be considered as a sub-type of posterity theodicy. Chen Ning categorizes five types of solution to the problem of theodicy in ancient China: teleological theodicy; occasional theodicy; leadership theodicy; imperfection theodicy; and posterity theodicy. When Chen Ning discusses posterity theodicy, however, he has in mind cases in which one's action is materialized in the lives of one's descendents, as in *Mengzi* 1B:14: "If you do good deeds, then amongst your descendants in future generation there will rise one who will become a true king." See Yuri Pines, "Chinese History Writing Between the Sacred and the Secular," in John Lagerwey and Marc Kalinowski, eds., *Early Chinese Religion Part One: Shang through Han (1250 BC- 220 AD)* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009): 315-340; and Chen Ning, "The Problem of Theodicy in Ancient China."

¹² Slips 11-14.

¹³ Slip 15.

Mengzi offers another, much more detailed, account on Shun's ascension. First of all, he agrees with the *tianming* doctrine and the "Qiong da yi shi" that it was *tian*, not Yao, who gave the throne to Shun.

萬章曰 堯以天下與舜 有諸 孟子曰 否 天子不能以天下與人 然則舜有天下也 孰與之
曰 天與之

Wan Zhang said, "Is it true that Yao gave the world to Shun?"

Mengzi said, "No. The Son of *tian* cannot give the world to another person."

[Wan Zhang asked,] "In that case who gave the world to Shun?"

[Mengzi said,] "*Tian* gave it to him."¹⁴

However, the notion of *tian* undergoes a significant change in the *Mengzi*. Wan Zhang continues to question:

天與之者 諄諄然命之乎 曰 否 天不言 以行與事示之而已矣 曰 以行與事示之者
如之何 曰 天子能薦人於天 不能使天與之天下...昔者 堯薦舜於天 而天受之
暴之於民 而民受之 故曰 天不言 以行與事示之而已矣 曰 敢問薦之於天 而天受之
暴之於民 而民受之 如何 曰 使之主祭 而百神享之 是天受之 使之主事 而事治
百姓安之 是民受之也 天與之 人與之 故曰 天子不能以天下與人

[Wan Zhang asked,] "You said *tian* gave the throne to him. Does this mean that *tian* gave him detailed and minute instructions?"

Mengzi replied, "No. *Tian* does not speak but reveals itself through actions and affairs."

Wan Zhang asked, "How could *tian* show its will through action and affairs?"

Mengzi said, "The Son of Heaven can recommend a man to *tian* but he cannot make *tian* give the world to that man. ... In ancient times, Yao recommended Shun to *tian*, and *tian* accepted him. He presented him to the people, and the people accepted him. Therefore, it is said that *tian* does not speak but just shows

¹⁴ *Mengzi* 5A:5.

its will through action and events.”

Wan Zhang said, “What do you mean by that Yao recommended Shun to *tian* and *tian* accepted him, and Yao presented Shun to the people and the people accepted him?”

Mengzi said, “Yao ordered Shun to officiate the sacrifice, and hundreds of spirits enjoyed it. This shows that *tian* accepted him. Yao ordered Shun to manage affairs, and affairs were well managed, and the people felt relieved. This shows that the people accepted him. This is that *tian* and the people gave him the world. Therefore, it is said that the Son of *tian* cannot give the world to another person.”¹⁵

It is true that in the above passage *tian* seems to assume the role of decision maker: *tian* made a final decision after receiving a recommendation from Yao. Furthermore, a ruler’s recommending a candidate to *tian* and the spirits’ enjoying sacrifices seem to reflect a vestigial belief in *tian* as an anthropomorphic deity. However, *tian* does not give a direct order; instead, *tian* reveals its intention through actions and affairs. One of the major sources that one can know of *tian*’s intention is people’s reaction. As Dirk Meyer points out, by employing parallel patterns between “*tian* accepts him” (天受之) and “people accept him” (民受之) and between “*tian* gives him” (天與之) and “people give him” (民與之), Mengzi introduces a new notion into the concept of *tian*: *tian* is identified with the mind of people (*min* 民).¹⁶

At the end of the conversation with Wan Zhang, Mengzi clarifies this point by quoting the “Great Declaration” 太誓 of the *Documents*: 天視自我民視 天聽自我民聽 “*Tian* sees with the eyes of its people; *tian* hears with the ears of its people.”¹⁷ According to Mark Csikszentmihalyi, this passage reveals a two-fold characteristic of *tian*: naturalistic and anthropomorphic.

¹⁵ Mengzi 5A:5.

¹⁶ Dirk Meyer, *Philosophy on Bamboo*, 58

¹⁷ Mengzi 5A:5.

In one sense, this understanding of *tianming* signals the naturalization of the concept of *tian*, because the cause-and-effect character of the relationship between bad rulership and negative social conditions is portrayed as self-evident. At the same time, the idea that *tian* still sees and hears, albeit through the eyes and ears of the people, is also consistent with an anthropomorphic divinity that is an embodiment of the society itself.¹⁸

As Csikszentmihalyi aptly points out, the identification of *tian's* intention and people's response indicates the naturalistic dimension of *tian*. It is obvious that people like the ruler who governs well and dislike the ruler who exercises power cruelly. I also agree with him that in the *Mengzi* the anthropomorphic dimension of *tian* has not completely disappeared. Nevertheless, I think that the most salient and important characteristic of Mengzi's view is the naturalistic notion of *tian*, which clearly distinguishes him from his predecessors. In the *Mengzi*, *tian* is in the process of naturalization from an earlier anthropomorphic *tian*.¹⁹

In this process of naturalization, *tian* does not remain exclusively concerned with moral values, but acknowledges and incorporates non-moral values as well. For instance, the following passage demonstrates the dual attributes of *tian*:

孟子曰 天下有道 小德役大德 小賢役大賢 天下無道 小役大 弱役強 斯二者 天也
順天者存 逆天者亡

¹⁸ Mark Csikszentmihalyi, "Confucianism," 27.

¹⁹ The naturalization of the notion of *tian* can be understood along the lines of the rationalization of moral economy, which I discussed earlier. I argued that by providing a logical and plausible account for moral economy, Mengzi turned his attention from the agency of moral *tian* to the workings of the moral economy itself. In the same vein, the notion of *tian* developed into a self-evident order from an anthropomorphic moral deity.

Mengzi says, “Where there is the Way in the world, those of small virtue serve those of great virtue, and those of small worthiness serve those of great worthiness. When there is no Way in the world, the small serve the big, the weak serve the strong. These two cases are *tian*. Those who follow *tian* will be preserved and those who go against *tian* will be ruined.”²⁰

This passage describes two facets of the world: the world where the normative way prevails and the world where the normative way is lost. According to this passage, *tian* does not exclusively relate to the world run by virtue; it also relates to the world run by physical power.²¹ *Tian* is not solely predicated on the “ethical” way, as many scholars have commonly assumed. *Tian*, for Mengzi, is moral as well as non-moral.²²

This naturalization of the notion of *tian* also provides a quite different interpretation of Shun’s ascension. According to Mengzi, Shun was not picked up as a king solely based on his moral perfection; there were other factors that affected his rise to the throne. Mengzi explains:

舜相堯二十有八載 非人之所能爲也 天也 堯崩 三年之喪畢 舜避堯之子於南河之南
天下諸侯朝覲者 不之堯之子而之舜 訟獄者 不之堯之子而之舜 謳歌者
不謳歌堯之子而謳歌舜 故曰 天也 夫然後之中國 踐天子位焉 而居堯之宮 逼堯之子
是篡也 非天與也

“Shun assisted Yao for 28 years. This is something that man cannot do; this is *tian*. When Yao died and his three-year mourning was finished, Shun withdrew to the south of Nanhe in deference to Yao’s son. But, the feudal lords of the world came

²⁰ Mengzi 4A:7.

²¹ Michael Puett interprets this passage to mean: “One must indeed accord with the wishes of Heaven or be destroyed.” However, I do not agree with him that this passage portrays a capricious Heaven, who sometimes goes against the normative way that it has given to man. In my opinion, this passage simply describes the two dimensions of *tian*, moral and non-moral. What is more, the emphasis of this passage does not lie on the question of whether or not the world should be operated by a normative moral order. Instead, Mengzi seems to stress the suitable way to live in each world. Michel Puett, “Following the Commands of Heaven,” 57.

²² To summarize, in the *Mengzi*, the notion of *tian* expands from a moral deity into a self-evident, naturalistic order of the world, which possesses both moral dimension and non-moral dimension. These dual dimensions of *tian* are connected to my conclusion that the world, for Mengzi, is moral as well as contingent.

to pay homage to Shun, not to Yao's son. The people brought a suit to Shun, not to Yao's son. Ballad singers sang the praise of Shun, not of Yao's son. Therefore, I said that is *tian*. Only then did Shun go to the center of the state and ascended the throne. If he had just moved into Yao's palace and ousted his son, it would have been usurpation, not receiving it from *tian*."²³

Mengzi's main point can be summarized as this: Shun's ascension to the throne was a complex interplay of Shun's moral excellence and other external conditions.²⁴ The external conditions that favored Shun boil down to three: Yao's recommendation (or recognition) of Shun; the 28 years of regency, which was long enough to show and prove Shun's virtue and merit to the

²³ *Mengzi* 5A:5.

²⁴ This rationalistic account of Shun's ascension also explains why non-hereditary succession of Shun turned into a hereditary one after Yu 禹 and why virtuous people like Kongzi, Yi Yin, and the Duke of Zhou did not succeed to the throne. For example, when Wan Zhang asked Mengzi whether hereditary succession relates to the decline of virtue;

孟子曰 否 不然也 天與賢則與賢 天與子則與子 昔者 舜薦禹於天 十有七年 舜崩 三年之喪畢 禹避舜之子於陽城 天下之民從之 若堯崩之後不從堯之子而從舜也 禹薦益於天 七年 禹崩 三年之喪畢 益避禹之子於箕山之陰 朝覲訟獄者不之益而之啓 曰 吾君之子也 謳歌者不謳歌益而謳歌啓 曰 吾君之子也 丹朱之不肖 舜之子亦不肖 舜之相堯 禹之相舜也 歷年多 施澤於民久 啓賢能敬承繼禹之道 益之相禹也 歷年少 施澤於民未久 舜禹益相去久遠 其子之賢不肖 皆天也 非人之所能爲也. ...

Mengzi replied, "No, it is not. If *tian* gives to a worthy man, then it is given to a worthy man. If *tian* gives to the son, then it is given to the son. In ancient times, Shun recommend Yu to *tian* and died seventeen years later. When the mourning period of three years was finished, Yu withdrew to Yang Cheng leaving Shun's son in the possession of throne, but the people followed him. It was like after Yao's death, the people did not follow Yao's son, but followed Shun. Yu recommended Yi to *tian* and he died seven years later. When the mourning period of three years was finished, Yi withdrew to the northern slope of Mount Ji, leaving Yu's son (Qi) in the possession of throne. Those who came to pay homage and those who were engaged in legal suits went to Qi instead of Yi, saying, 'This is the son of our lord.' Ballad singers also sang the praises of Qi instead of Yi, saying 'This is the son of our lord.' Dan Zhu (the son of Yao) was depraved, and the son of Shun was also depraved. For a long period of time, Shun assisted Yao and Yu assisted Shun. Thus, people also enjoyed their bounty for long. Qi was worthy and capable to follow the footsteps of Yu and Yi assisted Yu for only a few years, and thus, the people had not enjoyed his bounty for long. Shun and Yu differed from Yi greatly in the length of time they assisted the king, and their sons differed radically in their moral character. All this was *tian*. This is not what man can do." *Mengzi* 5A:6.

Unlike Shun and Yu, who had enough time to show and prove their leadership, Yi had only seven years. In addition, Yao's son and Shun's son were not virtuous enough to appeal to the mind of people, while Yu's son, Qi, was virtuous and capable. Therefore, after Yu, the throne was transmitted to Qi, the son of ruler.

people; and the incompetence of Yao's son, the strong competitor of Shun in imperial succession. Mengzi calls these external conditions "*tian*," something beyond human control.

However, Shun's ascension was not determined simply by these favorable external conditions. And also, I do not think that these conditions are a volitional action of *tian*. Rather, these external conditions denote a certain state of affairs that do not involve human agency: the contingency of the world. In addition, Mengzi does not lose sight of the other important aspect of the world: moral economy. He adds, 匹夫而有天下者 德必若舜禹 而又有天子薦之者 "A common man who comes to possess the world must have the virtue of a Shun or Yu and also the recommendation of the Son of *tian*."²⁵ This passage clarifies the importance of both Shun's moral quality and contingent factors.

But, what is more significant is that for Mengzi, the world is largely contingent but *significantly* moral. To put this another way, even in a world of contingency, Mengzi believed that one's virtuous action will prevail in the end, albeit not in the near future. Therefore, he advised Duke Wen of Deng to practice good deeds, assuming that even if Duke Wen might not become a king, one of his descendants could become a king.²⁶ Unlike the "*Qiong da yi shi*," Mengzi showed a more positive attitude toward the role of virtue. In the "*Qiong da yi shi*," one's virtue does not play a decisive role in ensuring favorable external goods; even though virtue is considered to be a prerequisite to become a king, its actual outcome is utterly contingent upon the will of an inscrutable *tian*. On the contrary, although Mengzi agreed with the "*Qiong da yi shi*" that one's virtue does not always guarantee favorable goods, he went a step further, making a rationalistic connection between one's moral action and its outcomes. He

²⁵ *Mengzi* 5A:6.

²⁶ *Mengzi* 1B:14.

reestablished a strong confidence in moral economy.²⁷ His strong confidence in moral economy entailed that virtue is not simply self-rewarding and self-sufficient, but it is also the best means to the best ends. As Mengzi started to naturalize and rationalize *tian*, *tian* became something possible to comprehend and thus possible to act upon. He made a firm linkage to *tian*, which had been inscrutable in the “Qiong da yi shi.”

Mengzi’s different attitude toward *tian* and virtue is rendered explicit in his term, *liming* 立命, “to establish *ming*.”²⁸ As known, Kongzi declared that he understood *tianming* (知天命) at the age of fifty.²⁹ According to David Schaberg, Kongzi’s attitude toward *ming* is mainly a matter of knowledge, not a matter of action.³⁰ On the other hand, Mengzi’s attitude is more of action, to establish *ming*: he believed that there is a possible and meaningful way to construct and maneuver one’s life, which is not merely self-sufficient. In Mengzi’s ethical system, the arbitrariness involved with contingent *tian* and its subsequent anxiety seem to be considerably reduced. As he naturalized *tian* and rationalized moral economy, Mengzi’s ethical project moved toward optimism, confidence, and human control, and this process was accelerated by Xunzi.

Xunzi is unique among the early Ru thinkers. According to him, *tian* does not play any role in the change of dynasty and imperial succession: *tian* is amoral. Also, he does not think

²⁷ I argued that Mengzi’s recovery of the belief in moral economy was made possible through his rationalization of moral economy.

²⁸ *Mengzi* 7A:1.

²⁹ Most scholars do not seem to agree on what Kongzi actually understood at fifty. One of the interesting interpretations is Miyazaki Ichisada’s: he interprets Kongzi’s “knowing *tianming*” as “knowing what is unknowable is unknowable.” See Ning Chen, “Confucius’ View of Fate (*ming*),” 332-334.

³⁰ David Schaberg, “Command and the Content of Tradition,” in *The Magnitude of Ming*, 44.

that it is Yao who transmitted the throne to Shun, either. His explanation of Shun's ascension is as follows:³¹

世俗之調說者曰 堯舜擅讓 是不然 天子者 執位至尊 無敵於天下 夫有誰與讓矣
 道德純備 智惠甚明 南面而聽 天下生民之屬 莫不振動從服 以化順之 天下無隱士
 無遺善 同焉者是也 異焉者非也 夫有惡擅天下矣 曰 死而擅之 是又不然 聖王在上
 圖德而定次 量能而授官 皆使民載其事而各得其宜 不能以義制利 不能以偽飾性
 則兼以爲民 聖王已沒 天下無聖 則固莫足以擅天下矣 天下有聖而在後者
 則天下不離 朝不易位 國不更制 天下厭然與鄉無以異也 以堯繼堯 夫又何變之有
 “Persuaders of popular opinion say, ‘Yao and Shun abdicated and yielded their
 thrones.’ This is not true. Consider the Son of *tian*: his position of power and
 authority is the most honorable, having no match in the world. To whom should
 they yield? Since their Way and virtues are pure and complete, since their
 wisdom and intelligence are exceedingly perspicacious, they had only to face

³¹ Concerning the story of Yao and Shun, I focus on the question, to what extent one's virtue guarantee favorable external goods. In other words, I approach the story from the perspective of moral economy: Shun's ascension to the throne from a humble position. However, there is another intriguing study on the same event from a different perspective: Yao's abdication of the throne to a virtuous Shun. Yuri Pines argues that the discussion of abdication vs. hereditary succession was one of the important political debate. By examining three newly excavated texts, “Tang Yu zhi dao” 唐虞之道 (The Way of Tang [Yao] and Yu [Shun]) from Guodian, “Zi Gao” 子羔 and “Rong Cheng shi” 容成氏 from the Shanghai collection of Chu manuscripts, he reconstructed the discussion of the issue of abdication during the Warring States period. According to Pines, the popular opinion that Yao and Shun abdicated in the above passage of the *Xunzi* and Wan Zhang's quotation of people's saying in the *Mengzi* (萬章問曰 人有言 至於禹而德衰 不傳於賢而傳於子 Wan Zhang asked, “People says, ‘By the time of Yu, virtue had declined; hence, he did not transfer the power to the worthy, but to his own son.” *Mengzi* 5A:6) reflect the pro-abdication sentiment of the time (this sentiment is also reflected in the three excavated texts mentioned above). He argues that on the one hand, *Mengzi* tried to moderate this pro-abdication sentiment by modifying the legend as a unique event in the past and to promote hereditary succession as a standard rule; on the other hand, *Xunzi* tried to reject the abdication theory. Interesting as it may be, I do not completely agree with his suggestion concerning *Xunzi*. Pines notes, “Being unable to dismiss the abdication legend altogether, *Xunzi* tries to limit its damaging impact on political mores by undermining the validity of abdication discourse. This discourse, which focused on the Yao-Shun legend, was endangering political stability by encouraging veiled attacks against the principle of the hereditary rule; hence those who circulated it were ‘mean people’ whose ‘empty words’ were at odds with the ‘the great patterns of All under Heaven,’ and whom *Xunzi* evidently detested.” It might be true that *Xunzi* was concerned with the damaging effect of abdication theory. However, in my opinion, it does not necessarily mean that *Xunzi* promoted hereditary rule, either. I think what matters for *Xunzi* is the strict mechanism of virtuous rule; a sage's rule continues by another sage's rule. He seems to argue that this rule of virtue should not be contingent on whether or not a virtuous king abdicates to his throne to the worthy. Yuri Pines, “Disputers of Abdication.” There is another interesting study concerning the Guodian text “Tang Yu zhi dao” by Carine Defoort. Based on *Mengzi*'s framework, she situates the text in the middle position between Mohist and Yangist. See Carine Defoort, “Mohist and Yangist Blood in Confucian Flesh: The Middle Position of the Guodian Text ‘Tang Yu zhi Dao,’” *Bulletin of the Musuem of Far Eastern Antiquities* 76 (2004): 44-70.

south and listen. Every class of people, each and all, would be stirred up and moved to follow after them and submit in order to be transformed and made obedient to them. The whole world had no hidden scholars and there was no unrecognized goodness. What was identical with them would be right, and what was different from them would be wrong. Again, why would they abdicate the whole world? They say, 'At death, they abdicated their thrones.' This is also not true. The sage kings, in occupying the supreme position, fixed the rank by determining the moral worth of the person and filled offices by measuring his capability. They assigned the people their allotted duties so that each received those tasks that best suited them. Those who were unable to control personal cupidity with a sense of propriety or whose natures could not be refined with the application of the conscious effort were in every case made subjects. If the sage kings had already died and there was no other sage in the world, then there was no one of sufficient stature to whom the world would be yielded. Given the situation that there is a sage who can succeed, then the whole world would not leave him, in the court the position does not change, in the state policies do not change, and the whole world is contended, and it is not different from the previous rulership. If a Yao continues after a Yao, what change can be said to have taken place?"³²

According to Xunzi, in a world governed by a sage king, the people are all transformed by king's virtue and the world operates by a perfect moral economy of *li* 禮 so that there is no hidden worthies and no unrecognized good deeds. Consequently, Shun's ascension to the throne is just a natural consequence of the workings of the world ruled by a virtuous king. It is neither a personal choice of a virtuous ruler or a decision of moral *tian*. Furthermore, Xunzi adds that from the perspective of the people, there is no different between the rule by Yao and the rule by Shun, since they are the same sages and they implemented the same benevolent policies. He says, 以堯繼堯 "It is like Yao succeeds Yao."

³² Xunzi 18:5.

Xunzi's account of Shun's story is different both from the "Qiong da yi shi" and from Mengzi. According to the "Qiong da yi shi," a virtuous person's becoming a king is completely contingent on *tian* and the intention of *tian* is unknown to people. On the other hand, Mengzi believed that for a virtuous person to become a king, in addition to his moral excellence, he needs to have other favorable conditions, which he does not have control of. Thus, it is also considerably contingent, even though one's morality plays a relatively significant role in Mengzi's scheme. However, in Xunzi's system, a person's moral perfection seems to guarantee his rise to the throne. Being a good person and being recognized by other people appears to be natural and reasonable. As a result, virtue is not merely self-rewarding and self-sufficient; it is the most positive and definite way to the flourishing life. In this regard, Xunzi shows the most optimistic attitude toward human moral actions among these three accounts.

Nevertheless, as we have seen, Xunzi does not deny the existence of contingency. He says, 君子能爲可貴 不能使人必貴己 能爲可信 不能使人必信己 能爲可用 不能使人必用己 "The gentleman can do what is honorable, but he cannot make others certainly honor him. He can act in a trustworthy way, but he cannot make others certainly trust him. He can act so that he is employable, but he cannot make others certainly employ him."³³ This indicates that Shun's virtue does not guarantee the appreciation of his virtue by other people. Furthermore, as Xunzi explained in the above, the reason why Shun's virtue was recognized by the people is the very fact that the world had been governed by a sage Yao. In other words, if Shun were born in the world of tyrants like King Jie or King Zhou, the situation would have been different.³⁴ In the

³³ *Xunzi* 18:5.

³⁴ Furthermore, a prose in the later chapters of the *Xunzi* expresses the exactly same view of the "Qiong da yi shi": 堯授能 舜遇時 尚賢推德天下治 雖有賢聖 適不遇世孰知之 "Yu resigned in favor of an able man; Shun happened to meet with an opportune time. He (Yao) elevated the worthy and promoted the virtuous so that the world was well-ordered. But even though there is a worthy and a sage, if he does not meet with an opportune age, who will recognize him?" *Xunzi* 25:25. But, Book 25 is considered to be a compilation by Xunzi's students, not directly related to Xunzi in person.

world where the Way does not prevail, the virtuous person may not be recognized: this is the very point that the “Qiong da yi shi” highlights.

Even though Xunzi does not deny the existence of contingent factors in his world, he still held the most positive view on the capacity of human actions. For example, I just mentioned that if Shun were born in the world of King Jie or King Zhou, he would not have become a king because those tyrant kings would not have recognized or appreciated his virtue. However, this does not seem to be the only case in Xunzi’s mind. Ironically, he also points out that the depravity of King Jie and King Zhou would drive the people away from them and toward the virtuous kings like Tang and Wu. Xunzi says:

聖王沒 有執籍者罷不足以縣天下 天下無君 諸侯有能德明威積
海內之民莫不願得以爲君師 然而暴國獨侈 安能誅之 必不傷害無罪之民
誅暴國之君若誅獨夫 若是 則可謂能用天下矣 能用天下之謂王

“When the sage kings died and those who inherited their power and authority were so dissipated that they were incapable of governing the world, there is no real ruler in the world. [In such a time] if among the feudal lords there is one who possesses illustrious virtues and accumulated dignity, none of the people within the seas would not wish to serve him as a ruler. This being so, how could he not execute those who brutalize the state and enjoy luxuries alone? It is certain that he would not inflict injury or do any harm to the innocent people. His execution of the tyrant king will be as simple as the execution of an ordinary man. In such circumstances, it is proper to say he is able to govern the world. If he is able to govern the world, then he is called a king.”³⁵

Accordingly, either in an orderly or disorderly world, Shun’s moral perfection would have led him to ascend the throne. This point attests to Xunzi’s earnest attempt to minimize the effect of

³⁵ Xunzi 18:2.

contingency in the human ethical realm. As discussed earlier, what Xunzi detested most was the confusion of moral and non-moral values. As a result, he made a complete separation between moral and non-moral values, and ascribed them to the human realm and the natural realm, respectively. And, his clear division of the two realms paves a way for Xunzi to manage contingent factors more easily. He removed contingency from the human realm and confined to the natural realm of *tian* 天.

So far, we examined the three different accounts on Shun's ascension to the throne. These accounts provide a significant insight into the impact of moral economy and the role of contingency in the ethical thought of the early Ru tradition. These accounts differ from one another in their ways of understanding the world and the role of virtue in achieving a flourishing human life and a harmonious society.

First, the world of the "Qiong da yi shi" is a contingent place. The workings of the world and *tian* are beyond human comprehension; one's moral action does not guarantee favorable external goods. However, even if virtues do not promise wealth and power, virtues themselves are self-rewarding and self-sufficient, invulnerable to the contingencies of the world. Mengzi, inherited the view of the "Qiong da yi shi." For him, the world is also a contingent place. However, for him, the world is also *significantly* moral. Despite the fact that virtues do not always bring favorable external goods, he strongly believed that virtues are still the powerful and meaningful means to the best ends. By naturalizing *tian* and rationalizing of moral economy, he reconnected and tightened the linkage between virtue and external goods so that he was able to recover the status of virtue as a means to the ends. Xunzi, however, made a complete break with the contingent world view of his predecessors. Instead, he tried to construct a world of strict moral economy in the human realm. In order to do so, he separated

contingent factors from the human realm and confined them in the natural realm. Accordingly, as least in the human realm, a moral order is supposed to work all the time. Among the three, Xunzi's ethical system featured virtue as the most powerful and the most positive means to the best ends.

These three accounts revolve around the several interrelated issues: the issue of moral economy vs. contingency; the role of virtue as a means to an end vs. as an end in itself; the status of external goods in human life; morality as given vs. morality as human artifact; and a flourishing individual life vs. a flourishing human society.

As we have discussed, the strict moral economy of the *tianming* doctrine, attractive and flawless though it may appear, has its own problem. It cannot give an adequate account to the cases like the misery of the good and the prosperity of the bad. The problem of theodicy (i.e., the injustice of *tian*) is the most serious threat to any type of ethical system that purports to employ a strict moral economy.

However, this is not the only problem; moral economy has several inherent problems that need to be dealt with. First, too strong a conviction on moral economy easily runs counter to the authentic nature of virtue. In other words, in a world of strict moral economy, people tend to pursue goodness not for its own rightness, but in expectation of worldly rewards. In this respect, virtues easily slide into a mere means for other ends. Secondly, too strong a conviction on moral economy leads moral agents in the direction of hubris and conceit. For example, the belief in moral economy encourages people to practice good. The thought that "I should do good" possibly develops into "I am doing good." This self-conscious moral action is prone to turn into arrogance, and the satisfaction that naturally arises from such self-awareness is prone to turn into complacency, both of which are obstacle to moral development. In order to prevent

these possible dangers posed by an excessive confidence in moral economy, the sage kings of antiquity promoted the virtue of humility, which constantly evokes anxiety and fear in moral agents that “I might not be good enough,” or “I might have made a mistake.” In the ethical program of the sage kings, an ethics of confidence toward the world was finely balanced with an ethics of uncertainty toward the self.

If these problems are perceived from the perspective of individual moral agents, there is a systematic defect of a strict moral economy. In a world of strict moral economy, it is taken for granted that the poor deserve to be poor and the lowly deserve to be lowly. Accordingly, indifferent or even harsh treatment of the poor and the lowly are readily justified. As a consequence, the seemingly appealing world of moral economy, ironically, becomes an ethically unpleasant and undesirable place. It is Mozi’s doctrine of impartial care 兼愛, a teaching that inspires people to divest of the self-centeredness and treat others as they treat themselves, that can relieve the hard-heartedness and severity involved in moral economy and bring society into a just but not too harsh, strict but also generous place.

Although the sage kings’ teaching of the virtue of humility and Mozi’s doctrine of impartial care provide a partial remedy, there is another perfect antidote to the problems of a strict moral economy. The notion of contingency can solve all the flaws and defects of moral economy at once. First, the notion of contingency denies the necessary connection between one’s moral actions and external goods so that it can give an adequate account to the suffering of the good and the prosperity of the bad as well as the prosperity of the good and the suffering of the bad. The problem of theodicy is easily solved. Or, more strictly speaking, in a world of contingency, the issue of theodicy never comes up from the outset. Second, since the tight linkage between one’s moral action and external goods is loosened or even cut off, in a world of

contingency, it is theoretically impossible for moral agents to practice good as a way to obtain worldly rewards. Therefore, the notion of contingency successfully redirects our attention away from mundane concerns, such as wealth, power, and honor, and toward the pursuit of goodness. Virtues are not merely means to an end, but they are ends in themselves. Third, a systematic problem of moral economy is also alleviated in a world of contingency. Since in a world of contingency one's status in society is not commensurate with the quality of one's moral worth, harsh treatment of the poor and the lowly cannot be legitimated. Lastly, related to the previous point, the notion of contingency has a therapeutic effect on individual moral agents. Since miserable situations are not necessarily a sign of a lack of moral worth, one can be relieved from frustration and anxiety involved in the process of moral cultivation. In addition, the notion of contingency has a morally salutary effect, too. Like miserable situations, favorable situations are not necessarily one's own doing, and so it can evoke the sense of humility in moral agents.

Despite all these advantages, the world of contingency has its own problems, too: moral laxity and moral decay. If one's moral actions are not in *any* way relevant to one's flourishing, on the one hand, people might come to feel that they do not need to strive for goodness, and on the other hand, people might come to believe that they are not responsible for the things that happen to them. As Mozi criticized the Ru notion of *ming*, in better but rare cases, people do not actively seek out opportunities to improve their lives and societies, but instead, easily take satisfaction in their own virtues; and in worse and most cases, people shirk their responsibilities and neglect their duties, ending up in even more miserable and disastrous situations.

In response to these problems with the notion of contingency, Mengzi tried to restore the broken linkage between one's virtue and external goods. However, he did not return to the

strict moral economy of the former sage kings. On the one hand, he still believed that the world is largely a contingent place; but on the other hand, he believed that the world is also significantly a moral place. By distinguishing contingent factors from the workings of moral order, he recovered and reinforced a strong confidence in moral economy. For him, even though virtues are pleasurable and intact as they are, they are still the powerful and meaningful means to the most satisfying life: the virtuous life equipped with favorable external goods.

This process was accelerated in Xunzi's ethical thought. He went a step farther than Mengzi, completely breaking with the early tradition of contingent world view. He not only separated out contingent factors, but also confined them tightly to the natural realm. He tried to protect a necessary connection between virtue and external goods and to make the human realm impervious to any kind of contingency. For Xunzi, at least, in the human realm, virtues should be the most powerful and positive means to the best kind of life and the best kind of society.

These issues of moral economy and contingency are connected with discussions on the role and status of external goods. First of all, external goods are indispensable parts of moral economy. Without matching external goods with one's moral worth, moral economy cannot successfully operate. As Xunzi pointed out, wealth and honor are (or should be) the outer marks of one's virtue.³⁶ Second, external goods are also indispensable parts of a flourishing human life. As Kongzi acknowledged, external goods, such as wealth, honor, health, and family, are in themselves enjoyable. These are inherent parts of a good human life. Third, external goods have instrumental values. For instance, high political position and resources can help one to expand the Way into the lives of others; and a long healthy life and family relationships can

³⁶ However, as I mentioned, according to the theory of material virtue in the "Wuxing" and the *Mengzi*, this is not necessarily so because the accumulation of inner virtue will be reflected in the human body.

help one to acquire a variety of moral qualities that can be obtained only through specific relationships at a certain stage of life. Therefore, the virtuous lives of his disciples are, indeed, superb and admirable, but Yan Yuan's untimely death left Kongzi devastated and Bo Niu's terminal illness left Kongzi dismayed.

On the contrary, Mengzi held a negative approach to external goods. He seemed to worry that the more we appreciate the value of external goods, either intrinsic or instrumental, the more we tend to treat virtue as a means to those goods. Accordingly, he significantly depreciated the value of external goods. Where external goods lose their values, from the outset, there is not much danger that virtues degenerate into a mere instrument to those valueless goods. In sum, he believed that one's moral action will certainly bring favorable goods in the end, but at the same time, he contended that those goods are indeed not worth much. Rather, he warned us that easy and comfortable life equipped with such as wealth and power can be an obstacle to moral pursuits. Furthermore, Mengzi made secure a superiority of virtue to external goods: virtues are the true object of enjoyment and pursuit. Virtues also have a tremendous power in many ways: virtues are the powerful tools for moral transformation of both individual and society; virtues are the best preparation for living in the world of contingency; and virtues are the only way to the true enjoyment of external goods. Consequently, for Mengzi, without virtue, no one can have a truly delightful and satisfying life. His ultimate purpose was the complete moralization of our life.

Another related issue regarding moral economy is where to locate the source of moral order: whether it is natural or human artifact. In the doctrine of *tianming*, moral economy was founded on the notion of moral *tian*: moral order is given by *tian*. Mengzi, however, turned his attention from the agent behind moral economy to moral economy itself. In his ethical system,

moral economy is so of itself; it is the natural and rational operation of the world. Despite the fact that Mengzi made a significant change in the mode of moral economy, he shared with his predecessors the view that moral economy is just *given* to humans. On the other hand, Xunzi abandoned this view, and he made a revolutionary claim that moral economy is distinctively a human construction. It was the sage kings who designed the moral order of *li* 禮 to rescue the human world from a brute state and transform it into an ethical and orderly society. Mozi's view lies in the middle between Mengzi and Xunzi. He believed that moral economy is supported by a moral *tian* and spiritual beings, but at the same time, he insisted, very much like Xunzi, moral economy should be accomplished through diverse institutions of human governance.³⁷

Another interesting point in relation to the discussion of moral economy and contingency is that all the thinkers we examined so far, without exception, showed a belief in moral economy, albeit to a different degree. Even Kongzi, who introduced the notion of contingency into the moral universe, tried to live his life according to his belief in moral economy. The notion of contingency and his voluntary choice to live up to moral order made his ethical system ever more complicated and profound. Similarly, as most thinkers admitted the existence of moral order, nobody completely denied the existence of contingency, either. Even Mozi, who constructed the system of a strict moral economy, admitted that there are non-moral orders that can produce similar results as moral order. Also, Xunzi, who tried to construct a perfect moral order of *li* 禮, simply removed contingency from the human ethical realm, but not from the whole universe. What is more interesting is that these various thinkers

³⁷ What is interesting to note here is that the view that considered moral economy as given is prone to accept contingency, despite our expectation that such a world must be strictly moral. In a similar fashion, the view that moral economy is a human artifact is prone to remove or minimize contingency from the human world, also despite our expectation that such a world must not be perfectly moral. Mozi seemed to try to complement and integrate these views into one, through cooperation between the divine and human realms.

in the Ru tradition, being different in their ways of understanding the world and virtue, reached the same conclusion: "One should cultivate virtue." For Ru, virtuous life is the most satisfying and the most meaningful way of living a human life.³⁸

However, their different ways of thinking about the world and virtue rendered their programs of moral cultivation different from one another. As I discussed before, the self-cultivation program of the former sages is like a cup half-empty. Their strong belief in moral economy was balanced with an ethics of uncertainty, which puts moral agents in a state of constant vigilance and anxiety, feeling that "I am not good enough" or "I might fall behind." This ethics of uncertainty toward the self became the motivation for further development.

Kongzi's ethical system, however, turned this upside down and became a cup half-full. Kongzi's introduction of contingency prevents moral agents from having full confidence in the moral economy of the world. Instead, it turns the focus toward virtues accumulating in the self; Kongzi taught that one's virtues are intact and complete, invulnerable to external contingencies. This confidence in virtue makes moral agents have a positive and optimistic attitude in the process of moral cultivation: they tend to believe "I am making progress," and "Virtues inside me are increasing little by little." This ethics of confidence toward the self also became encouragement for further improvement.

The largely contingent but significantly moral world of Mengzi was an inheritance from both traditions of the former sages and Kongzi. On the one hand, Mengzi followed Kongzi's contingent world view, and at the same time, he tried to recover the sage king's strong belief in moral economy. What is strikingly different from both traditions is that in Mengzi's ethical system, there is no hint of uncertainty or anxiety. His firm conviction in moral economy and the

³⁸ The virtuous life is the most satisfying for Kongzi; it is the most meaningful for Mengzi; and it is distinctively of human for Xunzi. However, these points are not mutually exclusive.

power of virtue led his ethical program to be much more demanding and strict than Kongzi's, and much more positive and optimistic than the sage kings'. Mengzi saw the process of moral cultivation as a cup that should be fully filled.

Xunzi's distinctive contribution to the Ru ethical program is his expansion of the realm of cultivation into the realm of the human mind. Unlike his predecessors, his ethical system is not based on the interplay of an ethics of confidence and an ethics of uncertainty toward the self or the world. For him, the whole universe as well as human mind is the sphere of uncertainty. It is the task of sage kings to transform a part of the natural world into an ethical place; and it is the task of individual human beings to transform their basic nature into a moral nature. In Xunzi's system, the sphere of moral cultivation is no longer considered as controllable, as opposed to the uncontrollable arena of the external world. For Xunzi, one's moral development should start from one's own inner mind.

The last point I want to make is the issues of flourishing human life and flourishing human society. Despite all the differences in their understanding of the world, these thinkers actually lived in the same reality. Most of these thinkers recognized certain operations of moral order, on the one hand, and the existence of contingency, on the other. They just differed from each other in how to arrange moral order and contingent factors in the world. In other words, they lived in the same reality, but viewing this reality from different perspectives.

And, there is another perspective that is noteworthy: the perspective of an individual and the perspective of society as a whole. For instance, in regard to Shun's story, the focus of Kongzi and Mengzi was on the fate of an individual, Shun: how Shun was able to become a king. Their question also implicitly asks why other virtuous people may end up in miserable situations. On the other hand, Xunzi's account on Shun's story does not ask this question. As he

explained, Shun's ascension was the same as Yao's succeeding Yao. Since virtuous rule was continued by virtuous rule, whether it may be Yao, Shun, or Kongzi does not matter insofar as they are sages and implement the same virtuous rule. Xunzi's question is not about why Shun became a king and why Kongzi did not, but about how the human ethical realm runs or should run.³⁹ Consequently, the three accounts deal with the same event of Shun's ascension, but they view it from different angles: while Kongzi and Mengzi from the perspective of a flourishing human life, Xunzi from the perspective of a flourishing human society.⁴⁰

This, however, leads us to question Xunzi. Even though Xunzi appears to be successful in constructing a perfect system of moral economy in the human realm, does his ethical system answer to the fate of individual moral agents living in such a world? I think not. He simply did not ask this question, and so the problem of theodicy remained unsolved in his philosophy. In other words, Xunzi's moral economy works at a societal level, but not at an individual level. This unsolved question had to wait another thousand years for an answer. It was Zhu Xi who, in response to the Buddhist doctrine of *karma*, the most powerful version of moral economy in human history, came up with a solution. Zhu Xi constructed the grandest system of moral economy in Ru history, which works at a societal as well as an individual level and expands even to a cosmic level. Zhu Xi's ethical system laid a moral order upon the whole universe.

³⁹ Yuri Pines also observes that in dealing with the Yao-Shun legend, Xunzi discusses it as a purely theoretical issue, while avoiding a historical discussion. Yuri Pines, "Disputers of Abdication: Zhanguo Egalitarianism and the Sovereign's Power," 291.

⁴⁰ To put it differently, we can consider the ethical thought of Kongzi and Mengzi as virtue ethics, while the ethical thought of Xunzi as virtue politics. For a discussion of possibility of Xunzi's thought as a model of virtue politics, see Eirik Harris, "The Role of Virtue in Xunzi's 荀子 Political Philosophy," *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 12, 1 (2013): 93-110.

■ PART TWO: ZHU XI AND TASAN

In Part One, by presenting an historical reconstruction of the discourse on *ming* 命 (moral economy and contingency), I showed the way that two different ways of thinking about the world were formulated in the early Ru tradition. On the one hand, Kongzi believed that the world is a contingent place, beyond human control and comprehension. On the other hand, Xunzi claimed that it is uniquely a human task to construct a strict moral economy through ritual, *li* 禮.

However, there is another strand of thought regarding the way one can perceive moral economy that becomes essential for understanding Zhu Xi and Tasan's conceptualizations of the world: the contrast between a moral *tian* 天 and a moral order. In Kongzi's view, the world is a domain supported by a moral *tian*. However, the reason that the world often appears to be a contingent place is because humans do not completely understand *tian*'s intention. As an alternative, Mengzi shifted the focus from the agency of a moral *tian* to the rational workings of a moral order. For him, this moral order is always at work, but the reason that the world at times appears not to follow this order is because there exist other external factors that affect its workings.

These two different modes of moral economy reemerged in the discourses of Zhu Xi and Tasan. Zhu Xi inherited and developed Mengzi's version of moral economy. For him, the whole universe necessarily operates according to the cosmic-moral principle of *li* 理 and this *li* is completely comprehensible through human effort of the right kind. Tasan, on the other hand, followed Kongzi's belief in a moral *tian* and revived the ancient deity, Shangdi 上帝. For him,

the whole universe operates according to the plan and will of Shangdi, who is most spiritual and absolutely fair, but the intention of Shangdi is incomprehensible to most human beings.

In Part Two, I will explore these two very different ways of understanding the world, and examine the ways these two different conceptions of the world influenced their discussions regarding the scope of moral responsibility, the goal of self-cultivation, and the status of external goods in human life. In the final chapter, I will pay attention to specific passages in the *Mengzi* concerning the notion of *tianming* 天命, *liming* 立命, and *zhengming* 正命, and I will analyze and compare the commentaries of Zhu Xi and Tansen on those passages. This comparison will shed light on their different visions of a good human life.

7. Zhu Xi's Moral Economy of *Li* 理

Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) is the most influential thinker in East Asian history since the classical period of Kongzi and Mengzi.¹ He is also the leading figure of Neo-Confucianism, the revival of the Ru tradition in reaction against Buddhism and Daoism, which came to dominate the intellectual and spiritual life since the Han dynasty 漢 (206 BCE-220 CE) and reached their high point during the Tang 唐 (618-907).² The Neo-Confucian movement started during the Song dynasty 宋 (960-1279), but many scholars considered Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824), a Tang thinker, as its precursor.³ Han Yu thought that the decline of Tang was due to the Chinese fascination with Buddhism and Daoism, particularly the foreign religion of Buddhism. In his

¹ The major sources for Zhu Xi's life are Huang Kan's 黃榦 (1152-1221) "Biographical Account of Master Zhu" 朱子行狀, his biography in the *Song shi* 宋史, and Wang Maohong's 王懋竑 (1668-1741) "Chronological Biography of Master Zhu" 朱子年譜." But, the last two records are largely based on Huang Kan's.

² Neo-Confucianism is the English translation of the Chinese terms *daoxue* 道學 (The Learning of the Way) and *lixue* 理學 (The Learning of Principle). According to Chen Lai's explanation, the uses of the terms *daoxue* and *lixue* are a bit complicated. The term *daoxue* was first used to refer to the study of the Ru tradition, but later it came to refer to the Cheng-Zhu school of Neo-Confucianism (程朱學 or 程朱理學, Cheng 程 stands for the two Cheng brothers and Zhu 朱 stands for Zhu Xi). On the other hand, the term *lixue* began to be used during the Southern Song, referring to the study of meaning and principle (義理之學). By the Ming dynasty 明 (1368-1644), however, the term *lixue* was used to refer to the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism as well as the Learning of the Mind (心學) of Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139-1192) and Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472-1529). Therefore, the term *lixue*, in a broad sense, include both the Cheng-Zhu school and the Lu-Wang school. But in a narrow sense, due to the emphasis on the primacy of *li* in the Cheng-Zhu school, the term *lixue* specifically refers to the Cheng-Zhu school, in opposition to *xinxue* 心學 of the Lu-Wang school, which gives prominence to the mind over *li*. In this study, Neo-Confucianism is used in a broader sense to include both the Cheng-Zhu and Lu-Wang schools, unless otherwise specified. In Chosŏn Korea, the Cheng-Zhu school was generally known as *xinglixue* 性理學 (The Learning of the Human nature and Principle), since the Cheng-Zhu school identifies human nature with principle. The Cheng-Zhu school was also called Zhu Xi school 朱子學 because of the dominant position of Zhu Xi in Chosŏn intellectual culture. See Chen Lai, *Song Ming Lixue* 宋明理學 (Liaoning: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, 1995), 6-9.

³ However, Peter Bol contends that it is anachronistic to consider Han Yu as a Neo-Confucian. He argues that Han Yu took an intermediate position between early Tang and late Song thinkers. However, Chen Lai emphasizes that we can find links to Neo-Confucianism in Han Yu's thought, such as the criticism of Buddhism, the concept of the transmission of the Way, the elevation of Mengzi's status, the emphasis on the *Great Learning* 大學, and the discussion of human nature. Chen Lai, *Song Ming Lixue*, 17-23. For a detailed study of intellectual backgrounds of Tang and Song dynasty, see Peter Bol, *This Culture of Ours: Intellectual Transitions in T'ang and Sung China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

famous essay, “Yuan Dao” 原道, Han Yu reclaimed the Ru tradition of the former sages, that he considered had been cut off after Mengzi.

It was Zhu Xi of the Southern Song 南宋 (1127-1279) who continued the revived interest in the ancient classics of Ru and opened up a new Ru tradition by synthesizing the various strands of thought from the preceding period, the Northern Song 北宋 (960-1127). The five major Northern Song thinkers who influenced Zhu Xi’s thought were Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011-1077), Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017-1073), Zhang Zai 張載 (1020-1077), and the two Cheng brothers, Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032-1085) and Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107).⁴ By combining the Cheng brothers’ concept of *li* 理, Zhang Zai’s concept of *qi* 氣, and Zhou Dunyi’s concept of *taiji* 太極 (the Great Ultimate), Zhu Xi created the distinctive system of *li* 理 and *qi* 氣 and provided a metaphysical and cosmological basis for Ru teaching. His metaphysics of *li* and *qi* was, externally, a powerful response to Buddhist philosophy and Daoist cosmology, and internally, a complete reshaping of the Ru tradition, organizing rather diverse threads of Ru thought into a cohesive and comprehensive system.

Zhu Xi not only made a tremendous contribution to the philosophical revamping of Ru teachings, but also set up an original and systematic program of self-cultivation. He redefined

⁴ Among these figures, it is generally thought that Zhu Xi followed most closely the Cheng brothers’ view, particularly younger brother, Cheng Yi. As for Shao Yong, even though Zhu Xi’s thought was heavily influenced by Shao’s numerological study of cosmic change, he was excluded in *The Reflections on Things at Hand* 進思錄 (only the remaining four are included), the first anthology of Neo-Confucianism, compiled by Zhu Xi and his friend, Lü Zuqian 呂祖謙 (1137-1181). According to Don Wyatt, there are four major points for which Zhu Xi criticized Shao Yong. First, Shao Yong did not show much interest in the discussion of moral qualities, *ren* 仁 and *yi* 義. His numerology was too Daoistic. Zhu Xi objected to Shao Yong’s reliance on the numerology for foretelling the future. Lastly, for Zhu Xi, Shao Yong’s cyclical theory of history was too mechanistic to allow any room for human influence. In addition, Peter Bol points out that these five figures were not the only intellectuals that influenced Zhu Xi’s thought. Since most studies concerning the Song intellectual tradition have been focused on Zhu Xi and his relationship with the Northern Song masters, the intellectual diversity of the Song period has not given due attention by excluding other important Ru thinkers as well as prominent Buddhists and Daoists. Don Wyatt, “Chu Hsi’s Critique of Shao Yong: One Instance of the Stand against Fatalism,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 45 (1985): 649-666; Peter Bol, *This Culture of Ours*, 27-31.

the aim of Ru study: “to become a sage.” He reorganized the Ru curriculum: sifting the focus from the time-honored, but rather archaic, Five Classics 五經 to the much shorter and more comprehensible Four Books 四書.⁵ In addition to the study of classics, the so-called “pursuing inquiry and study” 道問學, he incorporated another method into the self-cultivation process: “honoring the virtuous nature” 尊德性. This new aspect of self-cultivation is a kind of mind training, calming one’s mind and keeping it away from distractions of emotions and desires. It also relates to Neo-Confucian practice of “quiet-sitting” 靜坐.⁶ In addition, Zhu Xi devoted himself to building a private school system in local societies and to promoting Ru values and

⁵ The Five Classics are the *Book of Poetry* 詩經, the *Book of Documents* 書經, the *Book of Rites* 禮記, the *Book of Changes* 易經, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋. The Four Books are the *Great Learning* 大學, the *Lunyu* 論語, the *Mengzi* 孟子, and the *Doctrine of the Mean* 中庸. However, Zhu Xi was not the first person to stress the importance of these four books. According to Chen Lai, Han Yu and Cheng Yi emphasized the sociopolitical responsibility in the *Great Learning* and Li Ao 李翱 (772-841) emphasized the spiritual dimension in the *Doctrine of the Mean*. However, Daniel Gardner points out that it was Zhu Xi who first conceived of them as a coherent collection and published them together, and that it was also Zhu Xi who explicitly prioritized the Four Books over the Five Classics. Gardner summarizes differences between the Five Classics and the Four Books as follows;

The Five Classics illustrate Confucian morality using concrete examples and lessons from history; set out ideal institutions and methods of governance drawn from the past; describes in detail how one should conduct oneself in life’s various, objective situations; and prescribe at length the ritualistic practices for maintaining a well-ordered society. On the other hand, the Four Books tend to be less historical, descriptive, and concrete; concerned principally with the nature of man, the springs or inner source of his morality, and his relation to the larger cosmos, they are considerably more discursive and abstract than the Five Classics.

In sum, the Five Classics give situational and particular examples, while the Four Books contain more abstract and universal teachings. In addition, the Four Books are identified as the direct utterance of the sages. For such reasons, Zhu Xi believed that the Four Books are a better way to enter the Ru study. Furthermore, according to Michael Kalton, each of the Four Books has a specific contribution to Neo-Confucian ethical system: “The *Mencius* for its doctrine of human nature and mental self-possession; the *Great Learning* for its methods of self-cultivation; the *Doctrine of the Mean* for a psychology and vision of the ultimate dimensions attained by man; and finally the *Analects*, for the words of Confucius himself that must presage and sanction these developments, which could only be seen as a renewed understanding of ancient wisdom.” Chen Lai, *Song Ming Lixue*, 17-27; Michael Kalton, “Ch’ng Tasan’s Philosophy of Man: A Radical Critique of the Neo-Confucian World View,” *Journal of Korean Studies* 3 (1981), 6-7. For a detailed study of Zhu Xi’s program of learning, see Daniel Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage: Selections from the Conversations of Master Chu, Arranged Topically* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 35-56; *The Four Books: The Basic Teachings of the Later Confucian Tradition* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 2008), xiii-xxx.

⁶ For Zhu Xi’s model of self-cultivation program, See Chan Wing-tsit, *Chu Hsi: New Studies* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), 235-254; Philip Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, 43-58.

practices in family life.⁷ A major aim of all his contributions in the educational system was to make the Ru study accessible to everyone.

There is an institutional reason that Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism was so successful and dominant throughout East Asia for such a long period of time. That is, in 1313, Zhu Xi's arrangement of the Four Books was adopted as the basis for civil service examination and his commentaries on the Four Books became the standard interpretation of the classics. Accordingly, the influence of Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism lasted until, or went beyond, 1905 when the examination system was finally abolished in China. Furthermore, in Korea, Neo-Confucianism was established as the state orthodoxy of the newly founded Chosŏn dynasty 朝鮮 (1392-1897), which lasted for more than five centuries. In Japan, Neo-Confucianism also gained state support from the Tokugawa government 德川幕府 (1603-1868).

In the following, I will first outline Zhu Xi's ethical system based on *li-qi* metaphysics, and then examine Zhu Xi's version of moral economy, his treatment of contingency, and the status of external goods in his ethical system.

▪ Zhu Xi's Ethical System of *Li* 理 and *Qi* 氣

As the term *lixue* 理學 (The Learning of Principle) suggests, utmost significance in Neo-Confucian philosophy is placed on *li* 理, usually translated as 'principle' or 'pattern.'⁸ As

⁷ For a detailed study of Zhu Xi's contribution to the educational system, see Chan Wing-tist, *Chu Hsi: Life and Thought* (Hong Kong; New York: The Chinese University Press and St. Martin's Press, 1987), 163-198. For a comprehensive study of Zhu Xi's compilation of the *Family Rituals* 家禮, see Patricia Ebrey, "Chu Hsi's Authorship of the *Family Rituals*" and "The Orthodoxy of Chu Hsi's *Family Rituals*" in her *Confucianism and Family Rituals in Imperial China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991): 102-166.

⁸ In this study, I will either leave *li* 理 untranslated or translate it as principle. However, there has been controversy over how to translate the term *li*. See Allen Wittenborn, "Li Revisited and Other Explorations," *The*

mentioned above, this newly introduced concept of *li* was a Neo-Confucian response to the philosophical challenge of Buddhism. Therefore, in order to understand the notion of *li*, it is better to look at what was the major issue of Buddhists concerning the indigenous tradition of Ru. In this regard, the fifth patriarch of Huayan 華嚴 School, Zongmi's 宗密 (780-841) "Yuan ren lun" 原人論 is a good starting point, because this essay was considered as a response to Han Yu's attack on Buddhism.⁹

In his preface to "Yuan ren lun," Zongmi criticizes Ru teachings and Daoism without making a clear distinction; he calls these two traditions "outer teaching" 外教, as opposed to "inner teaching" 內教, which refers to Buddhism. However, he maintains overall a favorable attitude toward the outer teachings. Zongmi thinks that the moral practices of these two traditions are not at odds with Buddhism and so he tried to incorporate them into it.¹⁰ Nonetheless, Zongmi believes that Ru teaching and Daoism are not on a par with Buddhism, because they do not answer fundamental questions about humans. Zongmi writes:

萬靈蠢蠢皆有其本 萬物芸芸各歸其根 未有無根本而有枝末者也
 況三才中之最靈而無本源乎 且知人者智 自知者明 今我稟得人身而不自知所從來
 曷能知他世所趣乎 曷能知天下古今之人事乎 故數十年中學無常師
 博攷內外以原自身

Bulletin of Sung-Yuan Studies 17 (1981): 32-48; Willard Peterson, "Another Look at Li," *The Bulletin of Sung-Yuan Studies* 18 (1986): 14-29; and Brook Ziporyn, "Form, Principle, Pattern, or Coherence? Li 理 in Chinese Philosophy," *Philosophy Compass* 3, 3 (2008): 401-422.

⁹ Huayan school was one of the two representative schools of Buddhism during the Tang, together with Chan Buddhism 禪宗. Furthermore, Zongmi's essay was, in a broader context, a part of philosophical debate on the relation between *tian* and human beings: Han Yu wrote "Yuan Dao" 原道 and "Yuan Ren" 原人, Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819) wrote "Tian shuo" 天說 and "Tian dui" 天對, and Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772-842) wrote "Tian lun" 天論. There is a complete English translation of Zongmi's "Yuan ren lun." Peter Gregory, *Inquiry into the Origin of Humanity: An Annotated Translations of Tsung-mi's Yüan jen lun with a Modern Commentary* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995).

¹⁰ According to Peter Gregory, Zongmi's attempt to incorporate Ru moral teachings into Buddhism demonstrates his concern over the antinomian implications in radical versions of Chan Buddhism. Peter Gregory, *Inquiry into the Origin of Humanity*, 33.

“The myriad animate beings teeming with activity – all have their origin. The myriad things flourishing in profusion – each returns to its roots. Since there has never been anything that is without a root or origin and yet has branches or an end, how much less could [humanity] the most spiritual among the three powers [of the cosmos] be without an original source? Moreover, one who knows the human is wise, and one who knows himself is illuminated. Now, if I have received a human body and yet do not know of for myself whence I have come, how can I know whether I will go in another life, and how can I understand human affairs of the past and present in the world? For this reason, I have studied for several decades without a constant teacher and have thoroughly examined the inner and outer [teachings] in order to find the origin of myself.”¹¹

According to Zongmi, everything that has branches must have roots; without understanding the roots, one cannot understand where a thing comes from and where it will go to next. Throughout the “Yuan ren lun,” he repeatedly uses terms like “origin” 原, “root” 根, “original source” 本源, “ultimate source” 至源, and so on. Then, what did he mean by ‘origin’? His criticism of Ru teachings and Daoism are highly informative: the outer teachings teach that man receives his body from his parents, and man is produced originally from *qi* 氣.¹² In his view, these teachings did not reach the ultimate origin of human beings. These teachings only deal with things ‘below form’: father, ancestors, and *qi* are all of physical form. These outer teachings only provide us with a provisional and conventional truth. Given Buddha’s teaching that the self and the things in the world are fundamentally an illusion, we cannot find our origin in tangible forms. Accordingly, what Zongmi meant by ‘origin’ is something ‘beyond form,’ the

¹¹ Peter Gregory, *Inquiry into the Origin of Humanity*, 66.

¹² 然今習儒道者 祇知近則乃祖乃父傳體相續受得此身 遠則混沌一氣剖為陰陽之二 二生天地人三 三生萬物 “Now those who study Confucianism and Daoism merely know that, when looked at in proximate terms, they have received this body from their ancestors and fathers having passed on the bodily essence in a continuous series .When looked at in far-reaching terms, the one *qi* of the primordial chaos divided into the dyad of *yin* and *yang*, the two engendered the triad of heaven, earth, and human beings, and the three engendered the myriad things.” Peter Gregory, *Inquiry into the Origin of Humanity*, 69

metaphysical ground for all existence.

In response to this metaphysical question of Buddhism, Zhu Xi advanced the term *li* 理, which is found in Ru classics such as the *Book of Changes* 易經.¹³ *Li* originally referred to ‘veins of jade,’ but Zhu Xi interpreted it as the reason why things are as they are (所以然之故) and the rule which things should conform to (所當然之則).¹⁴ In addition, he asserted that *li* is without physical form (理無形體); *li* is ‘above form’ (形而上).¹⁵ *Li* is the ultimate metaphysical basis and normative standard for all existence. This *li* underlies all things and all affairs in the universe. Nothing exists without *li* and everything is united through *li*. *Li* penetrates the human realm as well as the natural realm. Zhu Xi says, 道理便是天理 “Moral principle is the same as the principle of *tian*.”¹⁶ *Li* is the cosmic-moral principle. This *li* is what makes human beings human:

¹³ As already mentioned, Zhu Xi’s metaphysical system was largely based on the thought of the Northern Song masters. According to Chan Wing-tsit, it was the Cheng brothers who elevated *li* 理 in the position that had been occupied by *tian* 天, but it was Zhu Xi who refined and elaborated their concept of *li* to the fullest. Chan Wing-tsit, *Chu Hsi: New Studies*, 185-187.

¹⁴ 至於天下之物 則必各有所以然之故 與其所當然之則 所謂理也 “As far as things in the universe go, we can be certain that each has a reason why it is as it is and a rule to which it should conform.” *Daxue huowen* 大學或問 15a:3 (Daniel Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage*, 90). Zhu Xi left a tremendous amount of writings, including more than 2000 letters. His writings are preserved in the *Zhuzi wenji* 朱子文集 (Collection of Literary Works of Master Zhu) in 121 chapters. His conversations with his 101 disciples were also preserved in the *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 (The Conversations with Master Zhu, Arranged Topically) in 140 chapters, compiled by Li Jingde 黎靖德 in 1263 and revised and printed in 1270. In this study, I will focus mainly on his *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注 (Collected Commentaries on the Four Books in Chapters and Verses, or just called *Sishu jizhu*) and partially on *Zhuzi yulei*. For *Sishu jizhu*, I will follow the reference number of the original classics. For *Zhuzi yulei*, I will adopt Daniel Gardner’s method: using the page number and line number of the Zhonghua shuju 1986 edition of *Zhuzi yulei*. If there is English translation available, I will note it in the parenthesis. Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類, Li Jingde, ed. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986); *Sishu zhangju jizhu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983). For an extended discussion of the Neo-Confucian development of *yulu* 語錄 genre, see Daniel Gardner, “Modes of Thinking and Modes of Discourse in the Sung: Some Thoughts on the *Yü-lu* (“Recorded Conversations”) Text,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 50, 3 (1991):574-603.

¹⁵ 問 先有理 抑先有氣 曰 理未嘗離乎氣 然理形而上者 氣形而下者 自形而上下言 豈無先後 理無形 氣便粗 有渣滓 Someone asked “Is it whether principle exists first or psychophysical force first?” Zhu replied, “Principle has never been separate from psychophysical force. But principle is above form and psychophysical force is within form. From the point of view of what is above and what is within form, how can there possibly no sequence? Principle has no form, while the psychophysical force is coarse and contains impurities.” *Zhuzi yulei* 3:3 (Daniel Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage*, 91). I will explain the reason I translate *qi* 氣 into psychophysical force later.

¹⁶ *Zhuzi yulei* 156:5 (Daniel Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage*, 125). Gardner translates *daoli* 道理 as moral principle and *tianli* 天理 as heavenly principle. However, since I have tried not to translate *tian* as heaven, I leave it as the principle of *tian*. The principle of *tian* is like the principle of the natural realm, because Zhu Xi here uses *tian* as

that is, moral virtues, particularly benevolence 仁.¹⁷ In Zhu Xi's view, this principle of the human realm is not different from the principle of the natural realm, such as the alterations of day and night and the changes of season. In his metaphysical system of *li*, the natural realm and human realm were seamlessly merged into one.¹⁸ This suggests that on the one hand, Zhu Xi grounded a source of morality in cosmic process, and on the other hand, he imbued the whole universe with moral values.¹⁹

Human beings are endowed with *li* 理. This *li* endowed in the human mind is called *xing* 性 (human nature); it is also called "tian endowed nature" 天命之性 or "original nature" 本然之性/本性. Original nature is identical with the principle of *tian* and it is perfectly good and complete.²⁰ Zhu Xi identified original nature with the cardinal virtues of benevolence 仁, righteousness 義, propriety 禮, and wisdom 智. The reason human beings are able to feel commiseration, shame and dislike, deference and compliance, and right and wrong are because

opposed to *dao*, which refers to the principle of the human realm. (This demarcation is similar to Xunzi's view.) However, Zhu Xi sometimes uses *daoli* for referring to the general principle of both the natural and human realms.

¹⁷ 仁者 人之所以爲人之理也 然仁理也 人物也 "Benevolence is the principle that human beings become humans. But benevolence is principle; and human beings are things." *Mengzi jizhu* 7B:16.

¹⁸ According to Daniel Gardner's study of Zhu Xi's understanding of ghosts and spirits, it is not only that the natural realm and human realm were merged into one. Gardner remarks, "Zhu thoroughly naturalized them (spirits and ghosts) and made them into the forces that explain the activity and transformation of the universe. They are no longer incomprehensible creatures." Gardner, at the same time, rightly points out that this would also have an effect that the natural world was imbued with spirit beings. In other words, Zhu Xi naturalized the spirit world, and at the same time, spiritualized the natural world. Therefore, Gardner argues that the stark demarcation between the natural and spiritual realms that prevails in the West is not applicable to Zhu Xi's thought. For Zhu Xi, the natural and spiritual realms are intermingled and inseparable. Daniel Gardner, "Ghosts and Spirits in the Sung Neo-Confucian World: Chu His on kwei-shen," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115, 4 (1995): 598-611.

¹⁹ However, Philip Ivanhoe reminds us that this idea of interconnectedness between the natural world and the human world was not just coming from Buddhist influence. As early as the Han, Chinese thinkers viewed the world as closely interconnected and mutually responsive to one another. It is under the influence of Buddhist ideas, this close interconnectedness turned into a fundamental unity between the natural realm and the human realm. Philip Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition*, 138.

²⁰ 性只是此理 "Human nature is simply this principle." *Zhuzi yulei* 83:1. 性則純是善底 "Human nature is completely good." *Zhuzi yulei* 83:3 性是實理 仁義禮智皆具 "Human nature is concrete principle. Benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom are all contained therein." *Zhuzi yulei* 83:7 (Daniel Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage*, 97-98).

we have these moral principles already in our mind. Conversely, Zhu Xi claimed that the fact that we have these morally inclined feelings is proof that we have these moral principles in ourselves.

Then, why do humans do bad things and become bad? Zhu Xi believed that it is due to *qi* 氣, psychophysical force.²¹ In addition to *li* 理, what is 'above form,' everything in the universe is comprised of *qi*, what is 'below form' (形而下): psychophysical force gives each thing and each affair its peculiar form and individual characteristics. Unlike *li*, through which all things are interconnected with each other, psychophysical endowments in each individual thing obstruct the awareness of the unity with others and foster self-centeredness. Accordingly, when human beings are born, *li* is combined with *qi*; "original nature," combined with psychophysical force, becomes "physical nature" 氣質之性. In this state, original nature is obscured by *qi* and loses its perfect state of goodness. If original nature is pure water, physical nature is salty or muddy water (*li*=water, *qi*=salt or mud). Furthermore, unfortunately, 氣強理弱 "The influence of *qi* is stronger than *li*."²² This means that humans are, at theoretical level, perfectly good, but in reality, they are not.

There is another question: then, why do certain people become sages and others become bad? This is also due to psychophysical force, *qi* 氣. According to Zhu Xi, whereas the cosmic-moral principle of *li* is equally distributed in all things in the universe, *qi* is not. First, *qi* has different qualities, such as turbidity and clarity, purity and impurity. Second, *qi* is distributed

²¹ The term *qi* 氣 is often translated as "material force." However, Zhu Xi points out that *qi* has two dimensions, *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽: *yang* aspect of *qi* concerns consciousness and movements (知覺運動) and *yin* aspect concerns physical forms (形體), such as bone, flesh, skin, and hair. Therefore, I translate *qi* as "psychophysical force." Daniel Gardner translates it as "psychophysical stuff." 氣之清者為氣 濁者為質 知覺運動 陽之為也 形體 陰之為也 Zhu Xi says, "The clear *qi* becomes *qi*, and the turbid *qi* becomes physical form. Consciousness and movements are the operation of *yang qi* and physical forms are the operation of *yin qi*." *Zhuzi yulei* 37:1.

²² *Zhuzi yulei* 71:3.

differently to each thing. According to Zhu Xi's explanation:

有是理而後有是氣 有是氣則必有是理 但稟氣之清者 爲聖爲賢 如寶珠在清冷水中
稟氣之濁者 爲愚爲不肖 如珠在濁水中 所謂 明明德 者 是就濁水中揩拭此珠也

"Once there exists this principle, there exists this psychophysical force. Once there exists this psychophysical force, there is certain to exist this principle. It's simply that he who receives clear psychophysical force is a sage or worthy. He is like a precious pearl lying in crystal clear water. And who receives turbid psychophysical force is an idiot or degenerate. He is like a pearl lying in turbid water. What is called 'keeping the inborn luminous virtue unobscured,' is the process of reaching into the turbid water and wiping clean this pearl."²³

In other words, some people's physical nature is saltier or murkier than others. This means that individuals are born with varying degrees of moral strength as well as different characteristics. Some are naturally virtuous, and some are naturally wicked. Nevertheless, the way to become a sage is common to everyone: to refine turbid and impure *qi* and to let original nature shine forth. Once one is able to remove selfish desires, one can recover the perfect goodness of original nature and be attune with the principle of *li*.²⁴ This is the sage. And Zhu Xi claimed that this is possible for anyone regardless of their different psychophysical endowments, because all human beings already possess this perfect moral nature in their mind.²⁵

²³ *Zhuzi yulei* 73:4 (Daniel Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage*, 98).

²⁴ Philip Ivanhoe calls Zhu Xi's program as a *recovery* model. Philip Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, 46-49.

²⁵ The reason that non-human animals, even if they also possess the same principle as people, are different from humans is also because they are endowed with different psychophysical force. Human beings are endowed with the most refined and balanced *qi*. However, non-human animals are endowed with so turbid and unbalanced *qi* that they cannot penetrate through principle. Zhu Xi says, 然在人則蔽塞有可通之理 至於禽獸 亦是此性 只被他形體所拘 生得蔽隔之甚 無可通處 "But for human beings, there is principle that can penetrate those obstructed and blocked. As for beasts, even if they also possess this nature, they are so restricted by their physical forms and their endowed psychophysical force is seriously obstructed, and thus, they do not have means to penetrate." *Zhuzi yulei* 58:5.

▪ Zhu Xi's Moral Economy of *Li* 理

The metaphysical concept of *li* 理 explains why things are as they are and guides what they should follow to perfect themselves. But, there is another, less noticeable, dimension in Zhu Xi's notion of *li*: that is, "moral economy." Zhu Xi did not abandon the belief in moral economy shown in the classics. He granted that good people are rewarded and bad people are punished. He believed that benevolent people live long lives, as Kongzi says, and substantiated it by saying, 靜而有常故壽 "They (benevolent people) live long lives because they are tranquil and constant."²⁶ However, his version of moral economy differs from the moral economy of the early thinkers we have discussed so far. There are three distinctive characteristics of Zhu Xi's version of moral economy: the abstraction of external goods; the complete naturalization of moral economy; and the comprehensibility of moral order.

First, in the moral economy of the classic period, whether the connection between virtue and external goods is tight as in Mozi's version or loose as in Kongzi's version, the items of external goods are quite limited and specified such as wealth, power, and health. However, in Zhu Xi's version of moral economy, these external goods became less concrete and more abstract. As society became more complex and diverse, it appeared almost impossible that moral excellence stood as the sole standard of political legitimation, as it did in the ancient period. Even Shun might not have become a king in the society in which Zhu Xi lived. Changes in the recruiting system of governmental posts had an impact on the connection between one's virtue and political position as well. Accordingly, Zhu Xi put a more abstract form of *li* 利, "benefit" or "the state of being beneficial," in place of the specific external goods like wealth, honor, and position.

²⁶ *Lunyu jizhu* 6:23.

For example, on the first passage of the *Mengzi*, where Mengzi admonished King Hui of Liang 梁惠王 for his interests in benefit, Zhu Xi comments, 循天理則不求利而自無不利 “If you accord with the principle of *tian*, then without seeking benefit, you will naturally have nothing that isn’t beneficial.”²⁷ He also says, 利是那義裡面生出來底 “Benefit does indeed emerge from righteousness.”²⁸ Of course, as Carine Defoort demonstrates in her study of the complex concept of *li* 利 in early Chinese texts, the term *li* has a broad semantic range as well as ambiguity in its content, object, quantity, scope, and status.²⁹ Zhu Xi also did not clarify what he means by ‘benefit’ in the above or other statements. What is apparent, however, is that even if Zhu Xi might not have believed that one’s moral actions will ensure wealth, honor, or political position, he did believe that there exists a certain connection between moral values and a more general form of being beneficial or well-being.³⁰

Zhu Xi’s abstraction of external goods has two significant implications. First, Zhu Xi loosens the linkage between virtue and external goods. However, it is noteworthy that the way he loosens the linkage is different from Kongzi’s and Mengzi’s. Whereas Kongzi and Mengzi did so by introducing contingency, which affects the workings of moral order, Zhu Xi seems to have held that the moral order of *li* 理 is impervious to such influence. Instead, he expanded the range of outcomes that are expected from virtue into a much broader concept of benefit. By doing so, he keeps the perfect workings of moral order, and at the same time, he takes a better

²⁷ *Mengzi jizhu* 1A:1.

²⁸ *Zhuzi yulei* 1705:8.

²⁹ Carine Defoort, “The Profit that Does Not Profit: Paradoxes with *Li* in Early Chinese Texts,” *Asia Major* 21, 1 (2008): 153-181. Later, I will discuss more on the issue of *li* 利.

³⁰ However, I do not mean that Zhu Xi denied a connection between moral actions and external goods. The notion of *li* 利 must be inclusive of such goods. For instance, Chen Chun 陳淳 (1159-1223), one of Zhu Xi’s disciples, notes in his *Beixi ziyi* 北溪字義: 如貨財名位爵祿等 此特利之粗者 “Things like goods, wealth, fame, position, titles of nobility, and emoluments are coarse forms of profit.” The abstract concept of *li* 利 probably refers to a more general state of well-being, inclusive of such external goods in its content and scope. Chan Wing-tsit, trans., *Neo-Confucian Terms Explained: The Pei-Hsi tzu-i*, by Ch’en Ch’un (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 135.

position for coping with the problem of theodicy involved in moral economy. Second, Zhu Xi's abstract and amorphous notion of benefit leaves open the question of what constitutes a good human life. In the moral economy of the classical period, where specific external goods are expected from virtue, the conception of the good human life somehow centers around the ordinary, or conventional, concerns on those goods, regardless of whether one ascribes any value to them. However, Zhu Xi's unspecified notion of benefit lessens such a burden and opens up room for a more flexible conception of a good human life. In brief, Zhu Xi continued the belief in moral economy, but he also made a significant change to his version of moral economy and departed from the moral economy of his predecessors in the classical period.

The second characteristics of Zhu Xi's version of moral economy is that very much like Mengzi, Zhu Xi shifted from a focus on an agent behind the phenomena of moral economy but to the workings of moral economy itself. As we have seen, along with the naturalization of *tian* from an earlier anthropomorphic deity, Mengzi rationalized moral economy by providing reasonable and plausible accounts for its workings. Mengzi's version of moral economy is natural and so of itself so that it can sustain itself even without resorting to the moral agency of *tian*. Zhu Xi's notion of *li* 理 is at the summit of this naturalizing process.³¹ A. C. Graham asserts, "The great innovation of the Chengs is the elevation of principle [*li* 理] to the place formerly occupied by heaven [*tian* 天]."³² It was Zhu Xi who completed this paradigm shift by defining

³¹ As Philip Ivanhoe points out, Mengzi's universe is a 'morally charged universe,' which means that his universe is still not a perfect moral realm and there are always contingent factors that directly influence the workings of moral order. On the other hand, Zhu Xi's universe is completely moralized through the principle of *li* 理; the moral order is always in operation. However, the reason why Zhu Xi's universe also does not seem to be a perfect moral realm is because of contingencies of psychophysical force 氣. The difference between Mengzi and Zhu Xi is that Zhu Xi's metaphysics of *li* and *qi* clearly separates out contingent factors and confines them to the individual realm of psychophysical force. Philip Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition*, 13.

³² A. C. Graham, *Two Chinese Philosophers: Ch'eng Ming-tao and Ch'eng Yi-ch'uan* (London: Lund Humphries, 1958), 23.

the relationship between *li* 理 and *tian* 天.³³

According to Chan Wing-tsit, there are three different meanings of *tian* in Zhu Xi's thought: the blue sky, the master 主宰, and principle 理.³⁴ *Tian* as the blue sky refers to the physical sky, and more broadly, the whole natural realm. *Tian* as the master is close to a concept of a being who controls the world, such as Shangdi 上帝 in the ancient classics. In this sense, *tian* undoubtedly has anthropomorphic characteristics. However, Zhu Xi seems to deny *tian*'s anthropomorphic dimension on some occasions. He says, 今說天有箇人在那裏 批判罪惡 固不可 “Certainly, we cannot say that there is a person who resides in *tian* and criticizes and judges the bad.”³⁵ Also, when he was asked about various descriptions of anthropomorphic attributes of Shangdi 上帝 and *tian* in the classics, Zhu Xi replied, 這箇也只是理如此 “It is just so simply according to principle.”³⁶

But, as Chan Wing-tsit points out, the long tradition of an anthropomorphic Shangdi was too strong for Zhu Xi to ignore.³⁷ For that reason, Zhu Xi offers what Charles Stevenson

³³ Hoyt Tillman also argues that it was Kongzi who transformed the amoral anthropomorphic *tian* into a moral entity, and later, it was Zhu Xi who transformed this moral entity into a more rationalistic and naturalistic principle of *li* 理. Hoyt Tillman, “Consciousness of *T'ien* in Chu Hsi's Thought,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 47 (1987): 31-50.

³⁴ 又問經傳中天字 要人自看得分曉 也有說蒼蒼者 也有說主宰者 也有單訓理時 When a pupil asked about the meaning of *tian* in the classics, Zhu Xi replied, “This must be understood by oneself. Some say that *tian* refers to the blue sky and others say that it means the master. And there are times when it simply means principle.” *Zhuzi yulei* 5:14 (Chan Wing-tsit, *Chu Hsi: Life and Thought*, 184). 曰 天固是理 然蒼蒼者亦是天 在上而有主宰者亦是天 各隨他所說 Zhu Xi says, “*Tian* certainly is principle. But the blue sky is also *tian*. [That which is] up there and yet contains the master is also *tian*. Each discusses it following a different aspect.” *Zhuzi yulei* 2039: 12 (Kim Yung Sik, *The Natural Philosophy of Chu Hsi* (1130-1200), 109).

³⁵ *Zhuzi yulei* 5:14.

³⁶ *Zhuzi yulei* 5:6.

³⁷ Chan Wing-tsit, *Chu Hsi: New Studies*, 187-188. On the other hand, Hoyt Tillman argues that this transformation from *tian* 天 to *li* 理, has been overemphasized due to the rationalistic penchant of contemporary scholars. Accordingly, he tries to find a more ancient anthropomorphic aspect in Zhu Xi's notion of *tian*. One of the terms he explores is *tianxin* 天心 (the mind of *tian*), which he claims does not appear in any pre-Qin texts. (Now we have an instance of *tianxin* in the excavated Guodian text, “Chengzhi wenzhi” 成之聞之.) He makes a connection between *tianxin* 天心 and the terms *daoxin* 道心 (the mind of the Way) and *renxin* 人心 (the mind of human). He also takes examples of Zhu Xi's saying, such as 天下有心 “Heaven and earth had consciousness” and 天下無心 “Heaven and earth were without deliberate intention” and calls the

calls a “persuasive definition”: “to give a new descriptive meaning to a familiar word without substantially changing its emotive meaning, and which is used with the conscious or unconscious purpose of changing, by this means, the direction of people’s interests.”³⁸ In other words, Zhu Xi retained the emotive meaning of *tian* as a moral deity but provided another definition of the term: 帝是理爲主 “The lord [Shangdi] works by principle.”³⁹ Even if there is a moral judge who resides in *tian*, it only operates according to principle. This also applies to *tian* as the blue sky. Zhu Xi says:

天之所以爲天者 理而已 天非有此道理 不能爲天 故蒼蒼者卽此道理之天 故曰
其體卽謂之天 其主宰卽謂之帝

“The reason why *tian* becomes *tian* is only the principle. If *tian* does not have this principle, it cannot become *tian*. Therefore, the blue sky is, namely, *tian* of this principle. Thus, it is said, ‘The thing itself is called *tian*; as master, it is called lord.’”⁴⁰

In this way, *tian*’s two meanings of the blue sky and a moral deity are easily subsumed under the grand metaphysical structure of *li* 理; they become different expressions or different dimensions of *li*, principle. As a consequence, Zhu Xi did not completely deny the moral economy of a moral *tian*, but by introducing a new concept of *li* 理, he successfully shifted the focus to the workings of moral economy itself.

consciousness of *tian* 天心 a ‘bound consciousness.’ For him, ‘bound consciousness’ refers to the conformity of *tian* with ethical norms (*dao* 道). In other words, he thinks that ‘bound consciousness’ of *tian* reflects a vestigial image of an early anthropomorphic *tian*. I think that Tillman’s observation about the overemphasis on the rationalistic aspect of Zhu Xi’s thought is quite plausible. Nonetheless, for me, *tian*’s ‘bound consciousness,’ if it always in accord with *dao* 道 or principle, appears to me still very naturalistic. Hoyt Tillman, “Consciousness of *T’ien* in Chu Hsi’s Thought.”

³⁸ Charles Stevenson, “Persuasive Definitions,” *Mind* 47, 187 (1938): 331-350. Carine Defoort, by employing Stevenson’s “Persuasive Definition,” explains how the act of regicide was redefined in the Warring States period. Carine Defoort, “The Profit that Does Not Profit,” 157.

³⁹ *Zhuzi yulei* 5:13.

⁴⁰ *Zhuzi yulei* 621:12.

However, in understanding these two different modes of moral economy, the anthropomorphism of *tian* is actually not the essential issue.⁴¹ In their study of the notion of *tian* in early China, David Hall and Roger Ames claim that the debate over whether *tian* is considered an anthropomorphic deity or a naturalistic force is wrongheaded because *tian* was never represented exclusively as either of the two. Instead, they argue that the notion of *tian* should be discussed in terms of transcendence and immanence. And, in their view, *tian* in early China was unquestionably immanent: not a creative force or principle, but a general designation of the whole world as it emerges of its own accord.⁴² However, I think their discussion of the immanence does not provide an adequate and accurate portrayal of *tian*. As in my discussion of *ming* 命 as a relational concept, *tian* should be understood in relation to humans: examining in what ways *tian* relates to and acts on human beings and what kind of attitude human beings have toward *tian*. I think this question is more significant than delineating the anthropomorphic and naturalistic, or transcendental and immanent natures of *tian*. Particularly, what is at stake in regard to moral economy is the issue of knowledge: whether or not *tian* is comprehensible by human agents.

This relates to the third characteristic of Zhu Xi's version of moral economy: the comprehensibility of *li* 理. But, before getting to Zhu Xi, I will briefly summarize the different views of Kongzi and Mengzi. In Kongzi's view, the world is largely a moral domain supported by a moral *tian*; but it is also a contingent place, where virtue does not always bring expected outcomes. The reason that moral economy often appears to fail is because of the limitations of human comprehension. According to Robert Eno's explanation, *tian* has a teleological plan, and

⁴¹ However, the debates on the notion of Shangdi 上帝 as an anthropomorphic deity and Zhu Xi's notion of *tian* 天 as moral principle were a heatedly-debated issue among Catholic missionaries and Western scholars since the 17th century. The summary of this discussion appears in the section, "Chu Hsi's view on God," of Chan Wing-tsi, "The Study of Chu Hsi in the West," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 35, 4 (1976): 555-577.

⁴² David Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking through Confucius*, 201-204.

in the long term, it will succeed: as Kongzi's political failure could be *tian's* intention to assign him a more important task of spreading Ru teaching throughout the world.⁴³ However, for common people, *tian's* teleological intention or the workings of moral economy of *tian* is beyond their comprehension. On the other hand, in Mengzi's view, the world is also a contingent place; but, by separating out contingent factors from moral order, he regained confidence in moral economy. For him, moral economy is always at work. More importantly, as he changed the mode of moral economy from the belief in the agency of a moral *tian* to the rational workings of moral order, *tian* became something comprehensible and thus possible to act upon. Unlike Kongzi, whose *tian* is beyond the reach of human comprehension, Mengzi believed that at least, the workings of a certain part of the world or *tian* are within the grasp of human understanding.⁴⁴

Zhu Xi inherited Mengzi's version of moral economy and he took this a step further. For him, the whole universe operates according to the cosmic-moral principle of *li* 理. And, he put the understanding of this principle as the primary task of his self-cultivation program: *gewu* 格物, "the investigation of things." Since we are born with the moral principle equipped in our mind and we share the same principle with the myriad things in the universe, Zhu Xi believed that we can comprehend *li* 理. Daniel Gardner succinctly explains the process of this comprehension:

For the mind of man, after all, embraced the myriad manifestations of principle; thus as it confronted things, the mind – if fully attentive, fully concentrated – could through a sort of resonance sense the principle in those things. A natural

⁴³ Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 82-93.

⁴⁴ As I discussed earlier, Kongzi's ethical system was grounded on an ethics of uncertainty toward the world, and at the same time, it was complemented by an ethics of confidence toward the self. On the contrary, Mengzi's ethical system was firmly grounded on an ethics of confidence.

response occurred between principle in one's mind and in the things before that mind. With effort and over time this process would lead to a clearer and clearer understanding of principle. Learning about principle, then, rested on a dialectical relationship: the mind and its principle would make intelligible the things in the world out there and their principle, but the things out there at the same time would help to illuminate the principle contained in the mind.⁴⁵

Through the system of stimuli and resonance and a dialectical relationship between the mind and things, one can have a complete understanding of principle: *zhizhi* 致知, "the extension of knowledge."⁴⁶ Through this knowledge, one is able to live a life fully attuned with *li* 理. As many scholars have noted, Zhu Xi put great emphasis on "knowledge" – while he did not overlook the significance of action.⁴⁷ For Zhu Xi, one *should know* and thereby one *can act*.⁴⁸ And, this comes from his confidence that we *can know* why we are as we are and what we should do to perfect ourselves. For him, *li* is completely comprehensible.

Why then does the world appear not to follow the moral principle of *li* 理? First of all, there is always a discrepancy between the way we are and the way we ought to be. Second, in terms of the moral economy of *li* 理, virtuous actions do not always seem to lead to beneficial states, whatever that means to Zhu Xi. The good still suffer and the bad often flourish. Zhu Xi's answer to this question is again *qi* 氣, psychophysical force:

⁴⁵ Daniel Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage*, 52-53.

⁴⁶ In his commentary to the *Great Learning*, Zhu Xi explains the systematic process of his cultivation program. Particularly, he wrote a chapter on this "investigation of things" 格物 and "extension of knowledge" 致知 and inserted it in the classic, assuming that the relevant chapter had been lost. These two items become the initial stage of his cultivation program.

⁴⁷ 知行常相須。論先後 知爲先 論輕重 行爲重 "Knowledge and action are normally mutually dependent. ... As for their order, knowledge comes first; as for their importance, action is more significant." *Zhuzi yulei* 148:4 (Daniel Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage*, 116). 方其知之而行未及之 則知尚淺 既親歷其域 則知之益明 非前日之意味 "When you know something but you don't act on it, your knowledge of it is still superficial. After you've personally experienced it, your knowledge of it will be much clearer and its significance will be different from what is used to be." *Zhuzi yulei* 148:5 (Daniel Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage*, 116).

⁴⁸ According to Zhu Xi, 不知其理 固不能履其事 "If one does not understand *li*, one cannot truly practice [it] in affairs." *Mengzi jizhu* 7A:1.

履之說。 。 。 然聖人得天地清明中和之氣 宜無所虧欠 而夫子反貧賤 何也
 豈時運使然邪 抑其所稟亦有不足邪 曰 便是稟得來有不足 他那清明
 也只管得做聖賢 卻管不得那富貴 稟得那高底則貴 稟得厚底則富 稟得長底則壽
 貧賤夭者反是 夫子雖得清明者以爲聖人 然稟得那低底 薄底 所以貧賤
 顏子又不如孔子 又稟得那短底 所以又夭

Lüzhi (Liu Di 劉砥) asked, "... But the sages obtain clear, bright, balanced, and harmonious psychophysical force of the world, and naturally there is nothing deficient in them. But Kongzi was rather poor and humble, why was it so? Is it because timing made him so or because there was deficiency in his endowment [of *qi*]?" Zhu Xi said, "There is deficiency in his endowment. His endowment of psychophysical force was clear and bright so that he became a sage, but he did not become wealthy and noble. If one is endowed with lofty *qi*, one becomes noble; if one is endowed with thick *qi*, one becomes wealthy. If one is endowed with long-lasting *qi*, one lives a long life. Poverty, humbleness, and untimely death are the opposite of these. Even though Kongzi obtained clear and bright *qi* and became a sage, he was endowed with lowly and thin *qi* and thus became poor and humble. Yan Hui is also different from Kongzi. He was endowed with short-lived *qi*, and thus he died young."⁴⁹

Zhu Xi believed that the endowment of psychophysical force at the time of birth determines almost all aspects of human life: intelligence and stupidity, wealth and poverty, nobility and humbleness, life span, appearance, temperament as well as moral strength. This unequal distribution of psychophysical force is, however, not the intention of a moral *tian*, but pure contingency of the movements of psychophysical force in the universe.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ *Zhuzi yulei* 79:12.

⁵⁰ 堯舜之氣常清明沖和 何以生丹朱商均 曰 氣偶然如此 如瞽瞍生舜是也 [Wang Defu 王德輔 asked] "The psychophysical force of Yao and Shun was clear, bright, balanced, and harmonious. How could they have sons like Danzhu and Shangjun?" Zhu Xi said, "The psychophysical force made it so by chance. It is like Gusou gave birth to Shun." *Zhuzi yulei* 59:16 Compared to Zhu Xi, Mengzi does not explicate his notion of *ming*. In my view, Mengzi uses *ming* in a broader sense, referring to external conditions of non-moral attributes, such as wealth, honor, life span, and so on. The clear distinction between Zhu Xi and Mengzi is that Mengzi does not

This is exactly the reason that Mozi, more than a thousand years ago, fiercely criticized Ru. Zongmi 宗密, the Buddhist monk, who viewed the moral practices of Ru favorably, could not but denounce this fatalistic view of Ru as being unfair and unjust. Zongmi writes, 又既禍亂反逆皆由天命 則聖人設教 責人不責天 罪物不罪命 是不當也 “Also, since disaster, disorder, rebellion, and mutiny all proceed from *tianming*, the teachings established by the sages are not right in holding human beings and not *tian* responsible and in blaming people and not *ming*.”⁵¹ Both Mozi and Zongmi thought that within this Ru world, where most aspects of human life is determined by pure contingency, nobody can be reasonably held responsible for the way they are and things they do.

Zhu Xi’s response is quite striking, and even more so than Mengzi’s. Mengzi, at least, seems to incorporate a part of Mozi’s criticism and tried to recover moral economy by distinguishing contingent factors. Even if he acknowledged the contingency of the world, he put a tremendous emphasis on individual responsibility: 禍福無不自己求之者 “There is neither good nor bad fortune which man does not bring upon himself.”⁵² Zhu Xi, on the other hand, did not deny the external criticisms. On the contrary, he actively pursued the theoretical justification of the fatalistic Ru notion of *ming* by relying on the concept of psychophysical force. By affirming that different psychophysical endowments in each individual are beyond human control, however, Zhu Xi protected the workings of *li* 理. As Xunzi safeguarded the workings of a strict moral order by completely separating out and confining contingency to the natural realm, Zhu Xi did exactly the same, by confining it within each individual. In other words, for

pay too much attention to unequal moral strength of each individual. Rather, as Irene Bloom argues, Mengzi advocates the egalitarian view of human nature. In this regard, Tansen seems to inherit Mengzi’s position. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁵¹ At the end of Section 1, “Exposing Deluded Attachments” 斥迷執 of his essay, “Yuan ren lun,” Zongmi criticized the Ru doctrine of *tianming*. Peter Gregory, *Inquiry into the Origin of Humanity*, 103-104.

⁵² *Mengzi* 2A:4. A similar theme is also found in *Mengzi* 4A:8.

Zhu Xi, each individual is, indeed, born with different limitations in their psychophysical endowments. However, if we see the world after removing these limitations of *qi* 氣, the world runs perfectly according to *li*. *Li* 理 itself is complete, but it is due to *qi* 氣 that we do not clearly see the perfect workings of principle.⁵³

This complete separation of moral principle of *li* 理 and contingency of *qi* 氣 renders Zhu Xi's universe equally moral and equally contingent. Through this unique configuration of the universe, Zhu Xi questions the validity of the claims made by external critics. Zhu Xi is asking: "Are we fully responsible for who we are and for what we do?" or "Can we praise and blame a sage Shun and a tyrant King Jie on the same plane?" From Zhu Xi's perspective, external critics are doing what Charles Stevenson calls the "fiction of indeterminism." According to Stevenson, our emotional state of mind and the effectiveness of our ethical judgment are closely related. For example, if we have strong feelings of hatred or fear toward King Jie, our ethical judgments become powerful and play better in their preventive and reformatory function. However, once

⁵³ Zongmi criticized the Ru notion of *ming* against the Buddhist doctrine of *karma* 業. The doctrine of *karma* teaches that a good act will lead to a pleasant result for the doer and a bad act to an unpleasant result. This is one of the strictest types of moral economy. In this *karmic* scheme, I am responsible for virtually everything that happened to me. Then, how do Buddhists explain the injustice of misery of the good and prosperity of the bad? In the Indian tradition, however, the problem of theodicy was never a problem because they believed in *samsara*, the endless cycle of life and death. Thus, the seeming injustice of my suffering is due to faults I committed in one of my previous lives, that is, my *karma*. Zongmi says,

謂前生敬慢為因 今感貴賤之果 乃至仁壽殺夭施富慳貧 種種別報不可具述 是以此身 或有無惡自禍 無善自福 不仁而壽 不殺而夭等者 皆是前生滿業已定

"That is to say, when the respect or contempt shown [to others] in a previous existence serves as the cause, it determines the result of one's being honored or demeaned in the present, and so on and so forth to the benevolent being long-lived, the murderous short-lived, the generous wealthy, and the miserly impoverished. The various types of individual retribution [are so diverse that they] could not be fully enumerated. Therefore, in this bodily existence, although there may be cases of those who are without evil and even so suffer disaster, or those who are without virtue and even so enjoy bounty, or who are cruel and yet are long-lived, or who do not kill and yet are short-lived, all have been determined by the particularizing *karma* of a previous lifetime."

Just as Zhu Xi ascribes all the contingent factors to the endowment of psychophysical force, Buddhists ascribe them to *karma* of previous life (as mysterious as the movements of psychophysical force) and safeguarded the strict moral economy of *karmic* process. Peter Gregory, *Inquiry into the Origin of Humanity*, 202-203.

we try to understand King Jie's unfortunate childhood or harmful social settings, our emotional feelings become stultified and our ethical judgments become less convincing. Therefore, Stevenson argues, people tend to invent fictions, "pretending that the actions came, without more remote causal antecedents, from the man we are judging himself."⁵⁴ Zhu Xi seems to make a similar claim that we should divest ourselves of this fiction of indeterminism.⁵⁵ In his view, if we do not take into account various limitations that individuals begin with (albeit through no fault of their own), we cannot *justly* and *fairly* hold them responsible for the way they are and for the things they do.

Consequently, with these unequal endowments of psychophysical force, the proper way to ascribe moral responsibility to each individual is not to consider 'outcome,' but to consider 'process' (or progress). Suppose that we are running a race. In Zhu Xi's scheme, each runner lines up at different starting lines. Shun would be far ahead and King Jie would be far behind. For Zhu Xi, the just way to measure one's moral achievement is not to look at how much further they go compared to other runners, but to look at how much further they go from where they started. Zhu Xi says:

然就人之所稟而言 又有昏明清濁之異 故上知生知之資 是氣清明純粹 而無一毫昏濁
所以生知安行 不待學而能 如堯舜是也 其次則亞於生知 必學而後知 必行而後至
又其次者 資稟既偏 又有所蔽 須是痛加工夫 人一己百 人十己千
然後方能及亞於生知者 及進而不已 則成功一也

"However, there are differences of darkness, brightness, clarity, and turbidity in what people have received in their [psychophysical] endowments. Therefore, the

⁵⁴ Charles Stevenson, "Ethical Judgments and Avoidability," *Mind* 47, 185 (1938), 52-53.

⁵⁵ Nietzsche's *amor fati* (love of fate) also seems to be a type of the divesting of Kant's bootstrapping version of noumenal subject, making oneself on an absolute ontological freedom. However, Nietzsche's *amor fati* and Zhu Xi's conception of *ming* appear to be played out very differently in their systems. For the study of Nietzsche's conception of fatalism and free will, see Robert Solomon, "Nietzsche on Fatalism and Freewill," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 23 (2002): 63-87.

quality of [psychophysical] endowments of the wisest and those born with knowledge is clear, bright, pure, and unadulterated. There is nothing dark and turbid so that they know at birth, act it out comfortably, and they are able without learning. Sages like Yao and Shun are this kind. Next, those who are second to those born with knowledge know through learning and achieve through practicing. As for those who are second to them, their [psychophysical] endowments are imbalanced and obstructed so that they make an extreme effort. [As the *Doctrine of the Mean* says] if another man succeeds by a certain amount of effort, they should make a hundred times the effort; if another man succeeds by making ten times the effort, they should make a thousand times the effort. And then, they will be able to come close to those born knowing it. If they make progress without cease, their achievement will be the same [as that of those born knowing it].”⁵⁶

Zhu Xi is saying that some are born to be sages and some are not. Those who are not should exert themselves to the fullest in order to become a sage. Of course, here, Zhu Xi is not dismissing those born knowing it, or he is not saying that 1000 times more effort of those below are worthier than, or as worthy as, natural talent of sages. Zhu Xi makes a simple claim that for some people, much more effort is required in attaining sagehood than others.

As Chan Wing-tsit points out, one of Zhu Xi’s contributions is to set “becoming a sage” as the goal of Neo-Confucian study, and he provides a metaphysical basis for this aim: all human beings already possess the perfect moral principle in their mind. Sagehood is a reachable goal for all, albeit with varying degrees of effort. However, in several instances, Zhu Xi revealed, if not a doubt, a certain reservation about his own claim. For example, when someone asked if those who lack capacity can comprehend principle, Zhu Xi replied, 若明得盡 豈不可為 所謂克念作聖是也 然極難 “How can it be impossible for such a person to comprehend

⁵⁶ *Zhuzi yulei* 66:3. The *Doctrine of the Mean* says: 人一能之 己百之 人十能之 己千之. *Zhongyong* 20.

principle? This is so called ‘to overcome personal opinion and to become a sage.’ However, this is *extremely difficult*.⁵⁷ For Zhu Xi, theoretically it is possible for all people to become a sage, but, in reality, it is almost impossible for certain people to attain sagehood. Nevertheless, this pessimistic appraisal does not degenerate into fatalistic resignation. This is because the actual aim of Zhu Xi’s ethical program is not to make everyone *a sage*, but to put everyone *on the road to becoming a sage*.

To my knowledge, however, Zhu Xi did not make such an explicit claim.⁵⁸ Furthermore, this does not mean that Zhu Xi did not appreciate the attainment of sagehood or any achievement in its process. Zhu Xi’s self-cultivation program may be likened to how sports games are run today.⁵⁹ For instance, golf tournaments are divided into amateur, junior, regular, or senior leagues, and professional wrestling tournaments have weight classes. Zhu Xi says, 聖賢施教 各因其材 小以成小 大以成大 無棄人也 “When sages and worthies teach, according to the capacity of each individual they make those with a small capacity achieve small things and those with a great capacity achieve great things and have no one left abandoned.”⁶⁰ This is what I mean by saying that Zhu Xi’s actual aim is not on the attainment of sagehood for everyone, but more on keeping everyone on the moral path. Zhu Xi’s ethical system focuses more on a subjective standard than a universal, objective standard, and more on individual progress than on the final attainment of sagehood.

As a result, the most significant quality required for his students is “fixing the will” 立志.⁶¹ This “will” is the determination to become a sage, a strong desire to become Yao and

⁵⁷ *Zhuzi yulei* 75:12.

⁵⁸ In my understanding, the reason Zhu Xi did not make such an explicit claim is because such a claim can slacken the pursuit of the goodness. In Zhu Xi’s view, the actual goal and desire to become a sage and the belief that I can become one are still very important to enable people to keep on the track of the Ru study.

⁵⁹ I thank Philip Ivanhoe for this insightful comparison.

⁶⁰ *Mengzi jizhu* 7A:4.

⁶¹ This is an oblique reference to *Lunyu* 2:4, which describes Kongzi’s own spiritual biography. His pursuit of

Shun.⁶² Zhu Xi made clear that, 爲學在立志 不干氣稟強弱事 “Learning depends upon firmly establishing will and is not related to the strength or weakness of one’s psychophysical endowments.”⁶³ This indicates that the essential point of Neo-Confucian program is not about whether one’s psychophysical endowments are sufficient or lacking for the actual attainment of sagehood, but about whether or not one determines to stay in the process of becoming a sage. In addition, Zhu Xi says, 越見不平正了 越討頭不見要緊 只是看教大底道理分明 偏處自見得 “The more you focus on the unevenness [of the psychophysical force], the less, in your investigation, you will focus on what is important. Just recognize clearly the big moral principle and the imbalance will become apparent of itself.”⁶⁴ He admonishes that too much attention to one’s psychophysical endowments will distract one’s focus. To become a sage depends on one’s will and concentration on the study of moral principle.⁶⁵

To summarize, on the one hand, Zhu Xi affirmed the limitations of imperfect human beings, but on the other hand, through this affirmation, he redirected people’s focus to the normative realm for human beings, the moral principle of *li* 理. For him, “to establish the will to become a sage” and “to concentrate on moral principle” are the core of Neo-Confucian cultivation program.

self-cultivation also started by setting his mind on learning at fifteen: 吾十有五而志于學. Thank for Philip Ivanhoe’s observation on this.

⁶² 只是志不立爾 學者大要立志 纔學 便要做聖人是也 “Fixing the will is of the greatest importance for students. As they study, they should be determined to become sages.” *Zhuzi yulei* 133:14 (Daniel Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage*, 105).

⁶³ *Zhuzi yulei* 134:5 (Daniel Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage*, 106).

⁶⁴ *Zhuzi yulei* 131:9 (Daniel Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage*, 101).

⁶⁵ However, Zhu Xi also points out that the objective estimation of one’s psychophysical endowments can help one’s self-cultivation. 看來吾性既善 何故不能爲聖賢 卻是被這氣稟害 如氣稟偏於剛 則一向剛暴 偏於柔 則一向柔弱之類 人一向推托道氣稟不好 不向前 又不得 一向不察氣稟之害 只昏昏地去 又不得 須知氣稟之害 要力去用功克治 裁其勝而歸於中乃可 “People know that their nature is good, but for some reasons they are unable to become sages and worthies and rather harmed by their endowments of psychophysical force. If their endowments tend to be strong, they continuously become tough and violent. If their endowments tend to be soft, they continuously become weak and frail. If they continuously make an excuse of the badness of psychophysical endowments and do not make progress, this is also wrong. [But also] if they continuously do not examine the harm of psychophysical endowments and only proceed ignorantly, this is also wrong. One should know the harm of psychophysical force and exerts oneself to overcome and control it, cutting the excess and returning to the mean. This is right.” *Zhuzi yulei* 69:8.

In what follows, I will examine the status of external goods in Zhu Xi's ethical system: whether external goods, in any way, contribute to a flourishing human life and a harmonious society, and what kind of role virtue plays in Zhu Xi's notion of a meaningful human life.

First, if Zhu Xi's moral principle of *li* 理 supports a moral economy, even of an abstract form between moral value and benefit, there is the possibility that virtue turns into a mere means to an end. However, in his ethical system, virtue cannot be reduced into a mere means because virtue will bring benefit only if moral agents do not calculate its benefit or merit. Once one is concerned with benefit or loss, Zhu Xi warns, it will certainly bring loss, not benefit.⁶⁶

This is also a criterion to distinguish the gentleman from the petty man. Zhu Xi says:

利是那義裡面生出來底 凡事處制得合宜 利便隨之 所以云 利者義之和
蓋是義便兼得利 若只理會利 卻是從中間半截做下去 遺了上面一截義底
小人只理會後面半截 君子從頭來

"Benefit does indeed emerge from righteousness. In every case where things are managed appropriately, benefit will follow. It is for this reason that [the *Book of Changes*] says, 'Benefit is the harmony of righteousness.' This is because righteousness accompanies benefit. But if you only pay attention to benefit, then you will follow the second half [benefit] and leave out the first part of righteousness. The petty men only pay attention to the second half, while the gentlemen follow the first part."⁶⁷

There is indeed a moral economy at work, but the way to fit in with this moral economy is to completely concentrate on moral principle, without being distracted by benefits, external goods, or anything else. Gentlemen understand this, but petty men always act the other way around.

⁶⁶ 作事若顧利害 其終未有不陷於害者 "If as you do things you are concerned with profit and loss, in the end you are bound to suffer loss." *Zhuzi yulei* 237:8 (Daniel Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage*, 187).

⁶⁷ *Zhuzi yulei* 1705:8. I thank Justin Tiwald for directing me to this passage. I slightly modified his original translation.

This mechanism of moral economy applies to the process of cultivating virtue as well. Zhu Xi says, 爲所當爲而不計其功 則德日積而不自知矣 “If one does what one should do and does not calculate its merit, then virtue will accumulate day by day without realizing it.”⁶⁸ Consequently, virtue becomes the best means insofar as it is the sole ends in itself.

What is more, Zhu Xi advocates that virtue will lead to a beneficial state, but on the other hand, he seems to exclude external goods of our ordinary concern from what he considers as benefit 利. For example, Zhu Xi asserts, 富貴 死生 禍福 貴賤 皆稟之氣而不可移易者 “Wealth and poverty, life and death, fortune and misfortune, noble and humble positions are all [determined by] psychophysical endowments and cannot be changed.”⁶⁹ No matter how Kongzi lived a virtuous and admirable life, he was poor and humble because of his psychophysical endowments.⁷⁰ Accordingly, in Zhu Xi’s universe, the contingency of external goods is completely fixed at birth and it is irrespective of one’s moral worth and moral growth. Therefore, it is not because our virtue does not always guarantee favorable external goods as Kongzi and Mengzi claimed, but because it is no avail that we should direct our attention completely on moral pursuit. If the Stoics, as Martha Nussbaum quotes, “builds an impregnable wall around the self, fortifying it against all possible assaults of fortune,” Zhu Xi builds an

⁶⁸ *Lunyu zizhu* 12:21.

⁶⁹ *Zhuzi yulei* 79:1. The second character *gui* 貴 must be *pin* 貧.

⁷⁰ However, I think that this is a kind of Zhu Xi’s rhetorical skill to refocus people’s attention completely on the moral domain of *li*, because it appears that he sometimes do admit that the fixed lot of one’s endowments can be improved. For instance, he admitted the existence of immortals 神仙 and saying: 他也只是養得分外壽考 然終久亦散了 “They (immortals) enjoyed additional life span to their [original] endowments only through [Daosit] cultivation, but they also dispersed in the end.” *Zhuzi yulei* 44:8. Also, Zhu Xi says, 死生有命 當初稟得氣時便定了 便是天地造化 只有許多氣 能保之亦可延 且如我與人俱有十分 俱已用出二分 我才用出二分便收回 及收回二分時 那人已用出四分了 所以我便能少延 此即老氏作福意 老氏惟見此理 一向自私其身 “Life and death are a matter of *ming*. The endowments of psychophysical force are fixed from the beginning. That is the operation of the universe. There is only such psychophysical force, but one can preserve and extend it. Suppose both someone and I have 10 but we have already spent 2. [But] in my case, as soon as I spent two, I regained it. When I regained 2, he has already spent 4 and thus I can extend it a little more. This is the way Laozi obtained good fortune. Laozi understood this principle, but he only used it for himself.” *Zhuzi yulei* 43:8

invincible wall not around the self, but around fortune and locks it up in psychophysical endowments.⁷¹

In relation to this, there is a more fundamental reason that virtue does not turn into a mere means in Zhu Xi's moral economy of *li* 理. Like Mengzi, Zhu Xi depreciates the values of external goods. For him, such goods as political position, wealth, and even longevity, do not seem to have any significant worth, either intrinsically or instrumentally. For instance, in *Mengzi* 7A:3:

孟子曰 求則得之 舍則失之 是求有益於得也 求在我者也 求之有道 得之有命 是求無益於得也 求在外者也。

Mengzi says, "Seek and you will get it; let go you will lose it. In this case, seeking is beneficial to getting [because] the things sought for is within oneself. There is a proper way to seek and whether you get it or not depends on *ming*. In this case, seeking is not beneficial to getting [because] the things sought for are outside oneself."⁷²

According to Mengzi, there are two kinds of seeking: the pursuit of what is within oneself and the pursuit of what is outside oneself. Zhu Xi commented that the former refers to the cardinal virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom, that are contained in human nature, and the latter refers to external goods, such as wealth, honor, profit and success. External goods are not worthy of pursuit because they are external to ourselves, so they cannot add any genuine value to us; but, virtues are worthy of pursuit for the exact opposite reason. In addition, the pursuit of virtue is guaranteed, whereas the pursuit of external goods is not.

⁷¹ This quotation is from Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* 82.5. Martha Nussbaum, "The Stoics on the Extirpation of the Passions," *A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science* 20, 2 (1987), 168.

⁷² *Mengzi* 7A:3.

Consequently, it is obvious for Zhu Xi which one we should aspire to.⁷³ Moreover, external goods often distract our mind from the pursuit of moral principle. Zhu Xi, thus, admonishes, 切須去了外慕之心 “Get rid of the mind that longs for external goods!”⁷⁴

In addition to the worthlessness of external goods and their harmful effect on the pursuit of moral way, Zhu Xi does not appear to cherish the intrinsic values of external goods, either. In the *Lunyu*, Kongzi extolled the virtue of Shun and Yu: 巍巍乎 舜禹之有天下也而不與焉 “How lofty! Shun and Yu possessed the world but they did not care.” However, there is a controversy over how to interpret the phrase “they did not care” 不與焉. According to Wang Chong 王充 (27-c. 97), this phrase refers to the ruling through effortless action (無為而治) as seen in *Lunyu* 15:5: Shun employed the worthies and the able, and entrusted them with governance.⁷⁵ And, He Yan 何晏 (c.193-249) interpreted it as: 言己不與求天下而得之 “This is saying that they [Shun and Yu] did not involve themselves in seeking and obtaining the world.”⁷⁶ In other words, the moral perfection of Shun and Yu naturally led them to ascend the

⁷³ A similar subject appears in the *Zhuzi yulei*. 義理身心所自有 失而不知所以復之 富貴身外之物 求之惟恐不得 縱使得之 於身心無分毫之益 況不可必得乎 若義理 求則得之 能不喪其所有 可以為聖為賢 利害甚明 人心之公 每為私欲所蔽 所以更放不下 但常常以此兩端體察 若見得時 自須猛省 急擺脫出來 “Moral principle is what the body and mind naturally possess. Yet when you lose it, you don’t know how to recover it. Wealth and position are things external to the body. Yet you seek them, fearing only that you will not get them. Even supposing you did get them, they wouldn’t do your body or mind the slightest bit of good; moreover, you can’t be certain of getting them. Now if you were to seek moral principle, you’d get it; and, if you were capable of not losing what you had, you’d become a sage or a worthy. What’s beneficial and what’s harmful are extremely clear then. As for the impartiality of the human mind, it is always obscured by selfish desire. Thus you mustn’t let go of it [the mind] but must always be vigilant about these two things [the beneficial and the harmful]. Once you come to understand them, you are sure to reflect seriously on the one and anxiously rid yourself of the other.” *Zhuzi yulei* 225:14 (Daniel Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage*, 183).

⁷⁴ *Zhuzi yulei* 147:5 (Daniel Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage*, 114).

⁷⁵ According to Wang Chong, 舜承安繼治 任賢使能 恭己無為而天下治 故孔子曰 巍巍乎 舜禹之有天下也 而不與焉 “Shun inherited the stable and well-governed state [from Yao], appointed the worthies and employed the able, humbled himself and governed the world without deliberate action. Therefore, Kongzi said the following phrase.” *Lunheng* 論衡, “Yuzeng” 語增 chapter. In addition, *Lunyu* 15:5 says; 無為而治者 其舜也與 夫何為哉 恭己正難面而已矣 “Ruling through effortless action, is this not Shun! For what did he do? Humbling himself, he faced due south and nothing more.” For different interpretations of *Lunyu* 15:5 by He Yan and Zhu Xi, see Daniel Gardner, *Zhu Xi’s Reading of the Analects: Canon, Commentary, and the Classical Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 122.

⁷⁶ *Lunyu jijie* 論語集解 8:18.

throne, but they never intended to obtain kingship. On the other hand, Zhu Xi interprets this phrase to mean that Shun and Yu did not take pleasure in being in the position of king.⁷⁷ According to his view, Shun and Yu ruled the world as a king, but it was more of an obligatory choice. They never pursued a political career as Kongzi did. All these points demonstrate that Zhu Xi considered external goods worthless or even harmful, and at most, indifferent or unavoidable. Consequently, as I pointed out earlier in relation to Mengzi, where external goods do not have much value, from the outset, there is not much danger that virtue would be reduced to a mere tool to those valueless goods.

Zhu Xi's negative attitude toward external goods directly relates to the way he understands the universe. He perceives the universe through a series of dualisms: the metaphysical ground of *li* 理 vs. the psychophysical basis of *qi* 氣; the principle of *tian* 天理 vs. human desires 人欲; the mind of the Way 道心 vs. the mind of human 人心; impartiality 公 vs. partiality 私; good 善 vs. bad 惡; righteousness 義 vs. profit 利; virtue and external goods, and so on. As A. C. Graham points out, Zhu Xi's conceptualization of *li* and *qi* was so powerful and successful in Chinese history because it can explain both the goodness of human nature and the badness of human actions, the universality of human nature and the particularity of individuals.⁷⁸ Virtually all aspects of the universe and human life can be explained away in Zhu Xi's metaphysics of *li* and *qi*.

What is more significant, however, is the fact that this dualism is not a balanced one. The dyads in Zhu Xi's dualism cannot coexist harmoniously; as one realm expands, the other realm shrinks. Zhu Xi says, 人之一心 天理存 則人欲亡 人欲勝 則天理滅 未有天理人欲夾雜者 "As for

⁷⁷ According to Zhu Xi, 不與猶言不相關 言其不以位為樂也 "'Not care' is the same as 'not relate to.' This means he does not take pleasure in political position." *Lunyu jizhu* 8:18.

⁷⁸ A. C. Graham, "What Was New in the Ch'eng-Chu Theory of Human Nature?" in Chan Wing-tsit ed., *Chi Hsi and Neo-Confucianism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983): 138-57.

the mind of man, if the principle of *tian* is preserved, human desire will disappear. But should human desire prevail, the principle of *tian* will be blotted out. Never do the principle of *tian* and human desire mingle with each other.”⁷⁹ As a result, in order to live a life in accord with *li*, one should completely eliminate human desires stemming from the self-centeredness of *qi*. The Neo-Confucian motto, 遏人欲而存天理 “Suppress human desire and preserve the principle of *tian*,” sums this up. This is why I would rather call Zhu Xi’s world view a “dualistic monism.” Even if he explains the universe through the dualism of *li* and *qi*, he ultimately advocates the world perfectly attuned to *li*.⁸⁰ As such, Zhu Xi’s ethical system demands the complete dominion of *li* over *qi*, the principle of *tian* over human desire, virtue over mundane concerns, and this induced a strong tendency toward moral asceticism in the followers of Neo-Confucian school.⁸¹

Zhu Xi’s negative attitude toward external goods is also reflected in his concern with the civil service examination. The internal and external aims of Ru teachings are: 內聖外王 “sagely within and kingly without,” which implies that the personal self-cultivation and the ordering of society are inseparably complementary, yet also charged with mutual tension.⁸² In the classical period, a political career was perceived as the main gate to implement the Way in society and to

⁷⁹ *Zhuzi yulei* 224:4 (Daniel Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage*, 181).

⁸⁰ Zhu Xi often asserts that *li* cannot exist without *qi* and *qi* cannot exist without *li*. 天下未有無理之氣 亦未有無氣之理 *Zhuzi yulei* 2:5. Furthermore, in terms of the mind of Way 道心 and the human mind 人心, Zhu Xi emphasizes that these are not two entities, but simply the two different modes of one mind.

⁸¹ However, Zhu Xi does not advocate the complete extinction of human desire. According to Kwong-loi Shun, what Zhu Xi opposes is “desires come from the individual that go beyond the basic desires that all human beings share.” This means that Zhu Xi admits the basic desires of human being, such as the desire for food when hungry and for clothing when cold. However, I think that more strictly speaking, what Zhu Xi opposes is any desire that does not accord with *li*. In other words, even for the basic desire, if it tends to promote only selfishness, it should be restrained. Kwong-loi Shun, “Zhu Xi’s Moral Psychology,” in John Makeham, ed., *Dao Companion to Neo-Confucian Philosophy* (Dordrecht; New York: Springer, 2010), 183.

⁸² According to Benjamin Schwartz, there are three types of polarities within the Ru tradition which have an enduring importance throughout Chinese history: self-cultivation and the ordering of society; the inner realm and outer realm; and knowledge and action. These polarities are complementary but also charged with tension between. See Benjamin Schwartz, “Some Polarities in Confucian Thought,” in David Nivison and Arthur Wright, eds., *Confucianism in Action* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959): 50-62.

complete one's self-realization. However, as Daniel Gardner points out, since the decline of Tang, the continuous failures of political reform, a fierce factionalism in court, and the increasing number of examination candidates for a limited number of official positions shifted the interests of literati from realizing an ideal sociopolitical order to achieving individual cultivation. Literati started to realize that without a strong moral foundation, any political and social reforms are bound to fail. As a result, literati considered inner moral cultivation as a means of transforming a society, and this emphasis on inner cultivation enabled literati to keep their status without taking office.⁸³ This inward shift continued with Zhu Xi. Zhu Xi's life itself reveals this change. Zhu Xi himself did not cherish a political career. Even though he passed the civil service examination at the age of 19, it was only 9 years in total that he actually held official posts because he repeatedly declined imperial appointments.⁸⁴

Moreover, his concern with the civil service examination was consistent with his criticism of the social trend of people preparing for the examination only as a means to secure worldly success, thereby neglecting the study of moral principle. He says, 非是科舉累人 自是人累科舉 "It is not that the examinations are a trouble to man; it is that men become troubled by the examinations."⁸⁵ In other words, he did not negate the value of civil service examination *per se*, but warned that the study for examination easily intrudes upon and

⁸³ Daniel Gardner also points out that the shift from the Five Classics to the Four Books represents an inward shift, because the Four Books are more directly concerned with the issue of inner realm of human morality. Daniel Gardner, *The Four Books*, xiii-xxx. And, for a more detailed study on Zhu Xi's view on morality and politics, see Youngmin Kim, "Cosmogony as Political Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West* 58, 1 (2008): 108-125.

⁸⁴ According to Chan Wing-tsit, Zhu Xi obtained a scholarly degree 進士 at the age of 19 and his initial appointment was as prefect of Tong'an 同安, which he served for three years (1153-1156), and it was the longest period of public service in his political career. In addition, he attended at court as a lecturer-in-waiting, but no more than forty-six days. He was offered imperial appointments more than 20 times, but he declined repeatedly. Instead, he preferred to serve as a temple guardianship, a sinecure position which involved no duty or temple residence. Consequently, he was always very poor. Chan suggest that his printing business must have been largely a response to his poverty, even though it made a great contribution to the promotion of Neo-Confucian studies. Chan Wing-tsit, *Chu Hsi: New Studies*, 61-89.

⁸⁵ *Zhuzi yulei* 246:14 (Daniel Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage*, 194).

interferes with the true learning. Accordingly, as with his other series of dualism, he made a clear distinction between the pursuit of civil service examination and the pursuit of true learning, and gave priority to the latter:

義理人心之所同然 人去講求 卻易爲力 舉業乃分外事 倒是難做 可惜
舉業壞了多少人

“Moral principle is something that all human minds share; if people seek to learn, it is rather easy to strive for it. Preparing for the examinations is something external to oneself; by contrast, it is difficult to do. What a pity that preparing for the examinations has ruined so many people.”⁸⁶

In his scheme, the early notion of political career as a necessary part of Ru program lost much of its appeal. In Zhu Xi’s Neo-Confucian program, the ordering of society (外王) is achievable through moral cultivation of individuals: the ordering of society was perceived as the natural consequence of inner moral cultivation (內聖).⁸⁷

This emphasis on the internal moral cultivation was a product of Zhu Xi’s distinctive version of moral economy. Similar to Xunzi, he separated out and confined contingencies to the realm of psychophysical force, *qi* 氣, and thereby, safeguarded the perfect workings of the moral principle of *li* 理. And similar to Mengzi, he believed that the workings of moral principle is comprehensible to human beings, and through this knowledge of *li*, one can live a life in accordance with *li*. However, despite his strong belief in the moral principle of *li*, the world in

⁸⁶ *Zhuzi yulei* 243:10 (Daniel Gardner, *Learning to be a Sage*, 191).

⁸⁷ Zhu Xi’s commentary on *Lunyu* 15:5 also makes this point. Unlike He Yan, who interpreted Shun’s ruling through effortless action as governing by employing the worthies and talented, Zhu Xi interpreted that Shun’s illustrious virtue will naturally transform the people without him being involved with any actual government. According to Daniel Gardner, Zhu Xi echoed He Yan’s view in his commentary, but he went beyond him, explicitly giving deep moral significance of the power of an inner virtue. Daniel Gardner, *Zhu Xi’s Reading of the Analects*, 122.

which Zhu Xi lived was not so different from most other worlds: it was also a contingent place. But, unlike any other thinkers, he embraced contingency as a necessary part of his ethical system. In his view, without affirming contingent factors, we cannot justly and fairly hold individuals morally responsible for who they are and for what they do. He deeply believed that the world is an unjust place, but that it is only by affirming this injustice that we may truly seek for fairness. This is his daring response to the external criticism of Ru's fatalistic notion of *ming*.

Furthermore, with his distinctive way of understanding the world, he shifted the focus of his ethical program from 'outcome' to 'process.' What he actually aimed at is not to make everyone a sage, but to make sure that everyone is on the Way (道) to sagehood. He believed that as long as one stays on this path, one is living a morally meaningful and satisfactory life, regardless of whether one reaches the final destination. For him, nothing is as worthwhile as pursuing the moral way of *li*. This absolute primacy of *li*, however, turned all other issues of human life, such as human desires and external goods, into valueless or even harmful matters. This tendency led to moral asceticism and an inward shift in the followers of Neo-Confucian school, and this became a serious problem for Ru thinkers in the Qing and in the late Chosŏn, as well as in the Tokugawa period. In the next chapter, I will explore one of the later Ru thinkers of Chosŏn Korea and how he responded to the inherent problems of Zhu Xi's ethical system.

8. Tasan's Moral Economy of Sangje 上帝

Chŏng Yagyong 丁若鏞 (1762-1836), also known by his pen name, Tasan 茶山 (Tea Mountain), is one of the most prominent Ru thinkers of the Chosŏn dynasty 朝鮮 (1392-1897), along with Yi Hwang 李滉 (1501-1570) and Yi I 李珣 (1536-1584).¹ He lived in the late Chosŏn period, when the sophistication and complexity of Neo-Confucian philosophy reached its peak through the Four-Seven Debate 四端七情論 and the Horak Debate 湖洛論爭 and the orthodoxy of Zhu Xi's philosophy was complete, in part due to the Ritual Controversies 禮訟論爭 of 1659 and 1674.²

¹ In this study, for the romanization of Korean language, I will follow the McCune-Reischauer system. (According to the Revised Romanization system, Chŏng Yagyong is romanized as Jeong Yakyong and Tasan as Dasan.) For Chinese characters, I will follow Korean pronunciation, but when necessary, I will add Chinese pronunciation for the first appearance of each term. Tasan 茶山 (Tea Mountain) is the name of place where Chŏng spent more than half of his 18 years of exile in Kangjin 康津, in south Chŏlla Province (1801-1818). So, he is often called Chŏng Tasan. Yi Hwang is known by his pen name, T'oegye 退溪 (he was also called "the Zhu Xi of Korea" 海東朱子) and Yi I's pen name is Yulgok 栗谷. However, unlike T'oegye and Yulgok, Tasan did not enjoy scholarly prominence during his own time. According to Don Baker, most of his writings were written during his exile and were circulated only among his immediate family members. It was almost a century after his death that he came to be recognized as a harbinger of Korean modernity. Don Baker, "Finding God in the Classics: The Theistic Confucianism of Dasan Jeong Yagyong," *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 7, 1 (2013): 41-55.

² The Four-Seven Debate is one of the most significant Korean contributions to the refinement of Zhu Xi's philosophy. This debate deals with the implicit conflict in Zhu Xi's ethical system: the conflict between the Mengzian view of the goodness of human nature based on Four Beginnings 四端 and the view of neutral human feelings of Seven Feelings 七情 in the *Doctrine of the Mean* (moral goodness vs. moral neutrality). For English translation and detailed studies of this debate, see Michael Kalton, *The Four-Seven Debate: An Annotated Translation of the Most Famous Controversy in Korean Neo-Confucian Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); Edward Chung, *The Korean Neo-Confucianism of Yi T'oegye and Yi Yulgok: A Reappraisal of "Four-Seven Thesis" and Its Practical Implications for Self-Cultivation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); Youn Sa-soon, "T'oegye's View of Human Nature as Fundamentally Good," *Korea Journal*, 25, 7 (1985): 4-15; Tu Wei-ming, "Yi T'oegye's Perception of Human Nature: A Preliminary Inquiry into the Four-Seven Debate in Korean Neo-Confucianism," in Wm. Theodore de Bary and JaHyun Kim Haboush, eds., *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985): 261-281; and Julia Ching, "Yi Yulgok on the 'Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions,'" in *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea*: 303-322. The Horak Debate is the controversy centered on whether or not the nature of man and the nature of things are identical (人物性同異論). For discussions on the Horak Debate, see Choi Young-jin, "The Horak Debate in Eighteenth-Century Joseon," *Korea Journal*, 51, 1 (2011): 5-13; Lee Kyungku, "The Horak Debate from the Reign of King Sukjong to King Sunjo," *Korea Journal*, 51, 1 (2011): 14-41; and Hong Jung Geun, "Is the Morality of Human Beings Superior to the Morality of Non-Human Beings?: Debate over Human versus Animal Nature in the

Tasan is also renowned as a leading figure of the so-called School of Practical Learning (*sirhakp'a* 實學派), an intellectual trend of his time which paid more attention to practical solutions for concrete issues, such as institutional reform and technological development, than to pedantic discussions of Neo-Confucian metaphysical questions. Even though Mark Setton correctly points out the shortcomings of this popular categorization of Practical Learning, regardless of its validity, Tasan's writings and achievements demonstrate his enormous enthusiasm for practicality, not only in the areas of political, economic, and social reforms, but also in the area of developing self-cultivation program.³

Tasan was born in Mahyön village 馬峴里, Kyönggi 京畿 Province (east of Seoul), in the 38th year of King Yöngjo's reign 英祖 (1694-1776).⁴ He came from a prestigious family of the Southerners' faction (Namin 南人), which was affiliated with Yi Hwang's Yöngnam School 嶺南學派.⁵ His mother, Madam Yun 尹 (1730-1770), was a descendant of Yun Söndo 尹善道

Joseon Period," *Korea Journal*, 51, 1 (2011): 72-96. For a brief overview of the Ritual Controversy, see Mark Setton, *Chöng Yagyong: Korea's Challenge to Orthodox Neo-Confucianism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997): 32-39. For a detailed study of the Ritual Controversy and its political and intellectual implications, see JaHyun Kim Haboush, "Constructing the Center: The Ritual Controversy and the Search for a New Identity in Seventeenth-Century Korea," in JaHyun Kim Haboush and Martina Deuchler, eds., *Culture and the State in Late Chosön Korea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999): 46-90.

³ The School of Practical Learning is a retrospective classification, with a strong tendency to read the thought of some late-Chosön thinkers as indigenous source of political and economic modernization of Korea. In his study of Tasan, Mark Setton explains in detail the inadequacy of the categorization of Practical Learning in understanding Tasan's thought as well as the general intellectual landscape of the late Chosön. Instead, he provides an alternative framework based on historical contextualization of Tasan's thought, particularly taking into consideration the relationship between intellectual orientations and factional associations prior to Tasan. Mark Setton, *Chöng Yagyong*, 1-51.

⁴ The two major sources for Tasan's life are "Epitaph Written by Its Subject" Chach'an myojimyöng 自撰墓誌銘, written by Tasan on his 60th birthday, and "Chronological Biography Master Sa'am [Tasan]" 俟巖先生年譜, written by his great-great-grandson, Chöng Kyuyöng 丁奎英 in 1921. There are two versions of Tasan's "Epitaph Written by Its Subject": a short version to be placed in his tomb (壙中本) and a long version for his collection (集中本). In Mark Setton's book, there is a chapter on Tasan's life and major works based on these two sources. Mark Setton, *Chöng Yagyong*, 53-66.

⁵ The followers of Yi Hwang are known as the Yöngnam School (Kyöngsang province) because Yöngnam was Yi Hwang's home province. The school is also called Churip'a 主理派 (The School of the Primacy of Principle). This school is connected to the Easterners' 東人 faction, later subdivided into the Southerners 南人 and Northerners 北人. On the other hand, the followers of Yi I are known as the Kiho School 畿湖學派 (Kyönggi province) because of its regional association and also called Chukip'a 主氣派 (The School of the

(1587-1671), a leading figure among the Southerners and a distinguished poet. Yun Sōndo's great-grandson, Yun Tusō 尹斗緒 (1668-1715), a renowned scholar-painter, was Tasan's great-grandfather.⁶ His family also had a close association with the family of Yi Ik 李穡 (1681-1763), another major intellectual figure of the late Chosŏn.⁷

Tasan entered the Sōnggyun'gwan 成均館 (The National Confucian Academy) at the age of 21 (1783). His incisive and objective scholarship soon attracted the attention of King Chōngjo 正祖 (1752-1800). But, it was not until the age of 27 (1789) that he finally passed the higher level of the civil service examination and started his political career. Under the auspices of King Chōngjo, he was appointed to various important governmental posts. Despite frequent interference by followers of the Old Doctrine (Noron 老論), the opponents of Tasan's Southerners' faction, he engaged in an active political career until King Chōngjo's death in 1800, at which point his political life ended for good.

In the following year (1801), Tasan and his two brothers were imprisoned for their associations with Catholicism.⁸ His third eldest brother was put to death and his second eldest brother was sent into exile.⁹ Tasan was also exiled to Kangjin 康津, in south Chōlla 全羅

Primacy of Psychophysical force). This school is linked with the Westerners' 西人 faction, later subdivided into the Old Doctrine 老論 and Young Doctrine 少論 factions.

⁶ Yun Sōndo's pen name is Kosan 孤山. Yun Tusō's pen name is Kongjae 恭齋 and he is famous for his self-portrait.

⁷ Yi Ik's pen name is Sōngho 星湖. He is also considered as a leading figure of Practical Learning. His major work, *Sōngho sasŏl* 星湖僊說 (Trivial Expositions of Sōngho), displays his encyclopedic scholarship, including topics such as astrology, geography, history, institutions, military, customs, literature, and so on. For a brief review of intellectual relationships between Yi Ik and Tasan, see Mark Setton, *Chōng Yagyong*, 46-51.

⁸ This refers to the second Catholic persecution in Chosŏn (Shinyu Persecution 辛酉迫害), ordered by the Queen Dowager Chōngsun 貞純王后 (1745-1805).

⁹ Tasan had four brothers. The eldest brother, Chōng Yakhyŏn 丁若鉉 (1751-1821), is the son of the first wife of his father, Madam Nam 南. The second eldest brother, Chōng Yakchŏn 丁若銓 (1758-1816), the third eldest brother, Chōng Yakchong (1760-1801), and Tasan are the sons of the second wife, Madam Yun 尹. His youngest brother, Chōng Yakhwang 丁若鏡, was the son of the third wife, Madam Kim 金. In addition, Yi Sōnghun 李承薰 (1756-1801), the first Korean Catholic convert (baptized in Beijing in 1784), was Tasan's

Province, where he remained for 18 years (1801-1818). However, in his letter of resignation written in 1797, Tasan confessed his earlier interest in Western Learning 西學 and Catholicism, but he claimed that he lost his interest since 1791 because he realized that Catholicism is as senseless and dangerous as Buddhism and Daoism.¹⁰

In 1818, he returned to his hometown, Mahyŏn, and lived there until his death in 1836. There were a few attempts to appoint him to an official post, but they were all unsuccessful due to strong opposition from the Old Doctrine faction. However, during the 35 years after he left office, Tasan left a tremendous amount of writings. He wrote extensive commentaries on the Ru classics, treatises on government reforms, writings on miscellaneous topics, lots of poetry, epitaphs, letters, and so on.¹¹ His writings are collected in *Yŏyudang chŏnsŏ* 與猶堂全書 (The Collected Works of Yŏyudang) in 154 chapters.¹²

brother-in-law, the husband of his older sister, the only daughter of Madam Yun. And, it was Yi Pyŏk 李蘄 (1754-1786), Chŏng Yakhyŏn's brother-in-law, who introduced Catholicism to the family of Tasan.

¹⁰ This letter of resignation is called "Pyŏnbang sa Tongbusŏngji so" 辨謗辭同副承旨疏. In 1791, there was the first Catholic persecution (Sinhae Persecution 辛亥迫害). It was instigated by Yun Chich'ung 尹持忠 (1759-1791), who refused to erect an ancestral tablet for his mother's funeral and burned all the ancestral tablets in his possession. Since Yun lived in Chinsan 珍山 in north Chŏlla Province, this persecution is also called "Chinsan incident." Yun was Tasan's cousin of the mother's line. For a detailed study of the relationship between Neo-Confucianism and Catholicism in Chosŏn, see Don Baker, "A Different Thread: Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy, and Catholicism in a Confucian World," in *Culture and the State in Late Chosŏn Korea*, 199-230.

¹¹ Tasan's writings are largely divided into two groups: one, on individual self-cultivation (內聖), and the other, on the ordering of society (外王). His studies on Ru classics belong to the first, and his three major works, *Kyŏngse yup'yo* 經世遺表 (Treatise on Government), *Mongmin simsŏ* 牧民心書 (Reflections on fostering the people), and *Hŏmhŏm simsŏ* 欽欽新書 (New Treatise on the Legal System) belong to the latter. In his longer version of "Epitaph Written By Its Subject," Tasan describes his study as follows; 六經四書 以之修己 一表二書 以之爲天下國家 所以備本末也 "By means of the Six Classics and the Four Books one cultivates oneself, and by means of the one *p'yo* [經世遺表] and the two *sŏ* [牧民心書, 欽欽新書], one governs the world, state, and family. Thereby, one can perfect from the root to the branches." There is a short summary of Tasan's works and their date in the appendix of Mark Setton's book. Mark Setton, *Chŏng Yagyong*, 145-147.

¹² *Yŏyudang* 與猶堂 is the house name of Tasan. *Yŏyu* 與猶 came from *Laozi* 15, particularly the Heshang gong version 河上公: 與兮若冬涉川 猶兮若畏四鄰 "Hesitant was he! Like someone crossing a river in winter; Undecided was he! As though in fear of his neighbors on all four sides." Tasan took the first characters of each phrase into *Yŏyu* 與猶. The first character in the Wang Bi version 王弼 (226-249) and the Guodian version 郭店 is 豫, while in the Heshang gong version and the Mawangdui version 馬王堆 is 與. The translation of this Laozi passage is from Robert Henricks, *Lao-Tzu: Te-Tao Ching: A New Translation Based on the Recently Discovered Mawang-tui Text* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), 66.

The most significant characteristic of Tasan's thought is, as the title of Mark Setton's book clearly states, his challenge to the political, intellectual, and moral orthodoxy of Zhu Xi's philosophy. By the second-half of the Chosŏn dynasty, the inward-looking orientation and the tendency toward moral asceticism of Korean Neo-Confucian thought intensified to a great extent. Sophisticated discussions on the philosophical issues concerning *i* 理 and *ki* 氣, human nature and human emotions, etc. drove the attention of literati away from practical issues of political, economic, social problems. Moreover, the ensuing conflicts in such debates were aligned with factional associations, resulting in a series of bloody literati purges and factional strife.¹³ In addition, Zhu Xi's advocacy of the unitary principle of *i* 理 gave rise to the unprecedented emphasis on correct ritual forms, and this led to the eruption of the two celebrated controversies over the mourning ritual of the royal family. Despite his deep admiration for Zhu Xi, Tasan believed that in order to properly cope with the problems of his day, he should depart from the Buddhist-tainted Neo-Confucian orthodoxy and restore the original teachings of Kongzi and Mengzi.

The trenchant criticisms of Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian philosophy were not only shared by Tasan and his contemporary Chosŏn literati, but also prevalent among scholars of Qing China and Tokugawa Japan. The Evidential Learning (*kaozhengxue* 考證學) of the Qing and the Ancient Learning (*kogaku* 古學) of the Tokugawa were in part reactions against the Neo-Confucian tradition from their respective angles.¹⁴ What makes Tasan distinctive among his East Asian

¹³ For a detailed study of literati purges (*sahwa* 士禍), see Edward Wagner, *The Literati Purges: Political Conflict in Early Yi Korea* (Cambridge, Mass.: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1974).

¹⁴ Compared to the scholarship of the Qing and the Tokugawa, Mark Setton uses the term "Classical Learning" for Tasan's study. Classical Learning is a translation of *susahak* 洙泗學; *susa* is the name of the two rivers where Kongzi was born and lived. Accordingly, the Classical Learning is used in contrast to the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism. The term *susahak* was originally used by Yi Ik and Tasan adopted it for describing his own scholarship. For a brief comparison between the scholarship of the Qing and the Tokugawa and Tasan, see Mark Setton, *Chŏng Yagyong*, 123-138.

contemporaries is his unique position in the 18th century intellectual milieu. He stands at a crossroad where regionally and historically diverse traditions intersected: the classical Ru tradition, Neo-Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Catholicism, as well as scholarship from the Qing and the Tokugawa and from his Chosŏn predecessors.

In what follows, I will explore the ethical system of Tasan. In the first section, I will outline Tasan's deconstruction of Zhu Xi's metaphysical system of *i* 理 and *ki* 氣 and his own reconstruction of a philosophical foundation based on *sin* 神 (spirits) and *hyŏng* 形 (physical form). I will outline three major issues concerning Tasan's criticisms of Zhu Xi's ethical system: morality as naturally given vs. as distinctively human; morality as a virtue completely formed in mind vs. a virtue achieved through actions; and a nonegalitarian view vs. an egalitarian view of the moral worth of human nature. In the second section, I will investigate Tasan's version of moral economy. His new foundation of *sin* 神 and *hyŏng* 形 restored the position of an earlier, anthropomorphic *ch'ŏn* 天 from Zhu Xi's moral principle of *i* 理, and took a step further elevating the ancient deity, Sangje 上帝 (ch. Shangdi, the Lord on High), to the highest position. Accordingly, Tasan's moral economy was not rooted in the moral principle of *i* 理, but in Sangje, the most spiritual being in the universe. I will examine Tasan's moral economy of Sangje, his treatment of contingency, the role of Sangje in his self-cultivation program, and the changing status of external goods in his ethical system.

▪ **Tasan's Deconstruction of Zhu Xi's Ethical System of *i* 理 and *ki* 氣**

According to Tasan, despite the systematic method and well-organized curriculum of the Neo-Confucian cultivation program, the reason people fail to attain sagehood inheres in the

system of Neo-Confucian philosophy itself. The most significant feature of all is the Neo-Confucian conception of *i* 理.¹⁵ In response to Buddhist challenges, Zhu Xi, drawing on earlier Neo-Confucian thinkers, provided a metaphysical ground for all existence: *i* 理 underlies all things and affairs of the universe, merging the natural realm and the human realm into one system. In Zhu Xi's scheme, human beings and non-human animals share the same principle of *i* 理. For example, the hierarchy within groups of bees and ants is considered no different from the relationship between ruler and subjects of human society, and most animals' basic affection toward their offspring is considered much the same as that between parents and child in human families. It is only due to the obstruction of their turbid *ki* 氣 that animals cannot let the principle of *i* 理 shine through as much as human beings, who are endowed with the most refined and clear *ki*. Also, it is only human beings who can remove the obstruction of *ki* and recover the perfect principle of *i*. In other words, for Zhu Xi, the seeming difference between human beings and non-human animals is explained as difference in degree, not in kind. There is no clear demarcation between the natural and human realms. Through the metaphysical framework of *i*, the natural world is moralized as much as the morality of human beings is naturalized.

However, in Tasan's view, Zhu Xi's metaphysical structure of *i* was heavily influenced

¹⁵ According to Tasan, 案今人欲成聖而不能者 厥有三端 一認天爲理 一認仁爲生物之理 三認庸爲平常 “I think there are three reasons why people at present cannot achieve sagehood even though they desire to do so. One is that they think *ch'ün* is principle, another is that they think benevolence is the principle of living things, and the third is that they consider the *Mean* to be normality.” *Taehak kang* 大學講義 (Lectures on the *Great Learning*) 40a:3. (Mark Setton, *Ch'ung Yagyong*, 68.) As Mark Setton points out, the two of the three reasons directly relate to the concept of *i*. In this study, I will focus mainly on Tasan's commentaries on the *Lunyu* and *Mengzi*: *Non-kog-mju* 論語古今註 (Old and New Commentaries on the *Lunyu*) and *Maengja yo* 孟子要義 (Essential Meaning of the *Mengzi*). For these works, I will follow the reference number of the original classics and add the chapter number of each book, page number and line number of the Ky'ngin munhwasa 1970 edition of *Y'yudang ch'ns* 與猶堂全書 in parenthesis. (Since all of his works on the Ru classics are in Book 2, I will not add a book number for these works. Otherwise, I will add a book number in Roman numerals.) The translation of Tasan's writings is mostly mine, but if there is English translation available, I will add it in parenthesis. *Ch'ung Yagyong*, *Y'yudang ch'ns* 與猶堂全書 (Seoul: Ky'ngin munhwasa, 1970.)

by Buddhist ideas. He could not accept that man's moral principle is shared with plants and animals. The seemingly moral actions of non-human animals, such as the filiality of apes and the loyalty of bees, cannot be commensurate with moral actions of human beings. He remarks:

且人之於善惡 皆能自作 以其能自主張也 禽獸之於善惡 不能自作
以其為不得不然也

"Moreover, as for the good and bad of human beings, these all are things they can do autonomously. Their ability is something within their control. As for the good and bad of birds and beasts, these are not the result of autonomous action. They cannot be other than as they are."¹⁶

Tasan points out the fundamental distinction between the actions of non-human animals and humans: he considers *autonomy* as an essential characteristic of morality. According to him, the seeming filiality of apes and loyalty of bees do not have any moral worth because they are programmed to act in such a way. Therefore, unlike Zhu Xi, Tasan believed that humans and non-human animals are characteristically different in kind, not in degree. In his view, each thing has its own distinct principle to live by: dogs are to guard houses and chase birds, cows are to carry loads and chew grass; cows cannot be made to do what humans do and humans cannot be made to do what dogs do.¹⁷

¹⁶ *Maengja yo* 6A:3 (2:19a:9).

¹⁷ According to Tasan, 然臣獨以為本然之性 原各不同 人則樂善恥惡 修身向道 其本然也 犬則守夜吠盜 食穢躡禽 其本然也 牛則服軛任重 食芻齧觸 其本然也 各受天命 不能移易 牛不能強為人之所為 人不能強為犬之所為 非以其形體不同 不能相通也 乃其所賦之理 原自不同。若其本同 何若是不相通也 人物之不能同性也 審矣 "I think the original nature of each thing is not the same. Humans enjoy good and are ashamed of bad, cultivate themselves and aspire to the Way. This is their original nature. Dogs keep watch at night and bark at thieves, eat dirty things and chase birds. This is their original nature. Cows come under a yoke and carry loads, eat grass and chew their cud. This is their original nature. Each thing receives [its own] *ch'ing* and cannot change it. Cows cannot be forced to do what humans do, and humans cannot be forced to do what dogs do. It is not because of differences in their physical form and structure that they cannot do what the other does. It is because their endowed principle is originally different from each other... If their nature were originally the same [as Neo-Confucians claimed], how come they do not do what the other does? It is obvious that the nature

In this respect, Tasan follows Xunzi, who emphasized the clear demarcation between the natural realm and the human ethical realm, and his hierarchical division of things in the universe.¹⁸

荀子曰水火有氣而無生 草木有生而無知 禽獸有知而無義 人有氣有生有知有義
蓋其受性之品 凡有四等 而人與禽獸最相近 。 。 。所異者惟是一箇道心
而道心爲物 無形無質 至微至忽 若于是從而去之 則禽獸而已 將何以自別乎

“Xunzi said, ‘Water and fire have *ki* but no life. Grass and trees have life but no intelligence. Birds and beasts have intelligence but no sense of righteousness. Men have life, intelligence, and a sense of righteousness.’ In general, there are four grades in the quality of endowed nature. Human beings and birds and beasts are the closest. ... What makes them different is only the mind of Way [i.e., the moral mind of human beings]. The mind of Way is without form and without substance, extremely fine and extremely subtle. If one departs from this, he is the same as birds and beasts, and that’s it. By what means can he distinguish himself [from birds and beasts]?”¹⁹

What distinguishes humans from other creatures is their possession of morality. Without it, man is no different from animals. Tasan highlights that this is the original teaching of Mengzi in

of human beings and animals cannot be the same.” *Maengja yo* 6A:3 (2:20a:1). This discussion of human nature and the nature of non-human animals was the primary concern of the Horak Debate. Tasan follows Horon 湖論, the position that argues for the moral superiority of human beings. However, unlike Horon, Tasan did not develop his argument based on the metaphysics of *i* and *ki*, and the original nature and the physical nature.

¹⁸ Ch’oe Chintŏk also makes a similar observation. He argues that the purpose of Tasan’s demarcation between the natural realm (material realm) and the trans-natural realm (immaterial realm) is, in its essence, the same as Xunzi’s distinction between the natural and human ethical realms. The difference is Tasan’s notion of Sangje, and he elevates the morality of humans to a much higher position than Xunzi. I agree with Ch’oe’s observation. However, in a sense, it seems to me that Tasan goes back to the naturalistic view of Mengzi, the view that considers morality as given. If Xunzi holds that morality is completely a human construction, Tasan still finds morality grounded in the realm beyond human beings. For instance, Xunzi’s moral economy is a construction of human governance, whereas Tasan’s moral economy is operated by a moral deity, Sangje. Ch’oe Chintŏk, “Tasanhak ㄱi Sangje kwisinnon kwa kŏ in’ganhak chŏk ㄱimi” 다산학의 상제귀신관과 그 인간학적 의미 (Tasan’s theory of Sangje and Spiritual beings and its humanistic meanings), *Ch’orhak sasang* 33 (2009): 35-68.

¹⁹ *Maengja yo* 4B:19 (1:59a:1). The quotation is from *Xunzi* 9.19.

2A:6: 無惻隱之心 非人也 “Without the mind of commiseration, one is not human.”²⁰ On this ground, he criticized Song and Yuan Neo-Confucians for misrepresenting Mengzi’s teaching by muddling the distinction between human beings and non-human animals and downgrading the uniquely human property of morality to the level of animals.

Accordingly, Tasan thought that Zhu Xi’s conception of *i* 理 cannot provide an adequate account for man’s distinctive position in the universe. So, in order to return to the Mengzian view, as Michael Kalton puts it, he *extricated* man from Zhu Xi’s universe by *unraveling* the system of *i* 理 and *ki* 氣.²¹ Instead of *i-ki* metaphysics, Tasan divides the universe in terms of material and immaterial constituents.²² And thus, human beings are no longer composed of *i* and *ki*: but, he says, 人者妙合神形而混然爲一者也 “Human beings are a marvelous combination of spirit and physical form (body) that becomes completely one.”²³ *Hyǒng* 形, bodily part, is given by parents and in common with other creatures, while, *sin* 神, spiritual part, is endowed

²⁰ According to Han Hyŏngjo, Zhu Xi’s philosophy’s conflicts with that of the ancient Ru and its own ambiguities caused fierce controversies among Neo-Confucians of Chosŏn, such as the Four-Seven Debate. Han argues that Yi Hwang’s position in the Four-Seven debate, which emphasized the self-generative *i* 理, was his attempt to reconcile the gap between Zhu Xi and Mengzi. Edward Chung also makes a similar point that Yi Hwang’s more dynamic and creative interpretation of *i* underscores a generative power inherent in human nature, and his view came closer to Mengzi’s positive view of the goodness of human nature. On the other hand, Yi I’s emphasis on the Seven natural feelings over the Four Beginnings is rather a return to non-dualistic scheme of Zhu Xi’s system. To summarize Han’s argument, Yi Hwang’s Four-Seven thesis is a reaction against Zhu Xi’s departure from the Mengzian view, and Yi I’s Four-Seven thesis is a reaction against Yi Hwang’s seeming departure from the Cheng-Zhu tradition. However, Han points out, unlike Yi Hwang and Yi I, who tried to modify Zhu Xi’s metaphysical system, Tasan, instead of revising Zhu Xi’s system, chose to completely deconstruct the metaphysics of *i* and *ki*. For a detailed study of this issue, see chapter 4 of Han Hyŏngjo, *Chu Hŏiesŏ Chŏng Yak-yongŏro* 주자에서 정약용으로 (From Zhu Xi to Chŏng Yakyong) (Seoul: Segyesa, 1996); Edward Chung, *The Korean Neo-Confucianism of Yi T’oegyŏ and Yi Yulgok*, 128-144.

²¹ Michael Kalton aptly points out, “Tasan is not only returning to the ancient classics, but doing so in the context of a dialogue with the fully developed system of Neo-Confucian thought,” and if I add, in the context of a dialogue with a newly introduced tradition of Catholicism. Michael Kalton, “Chŏng Tasan’s Philosophy of Man: A Radical Critique of the Neo-Confucian World View,” *The Journal of Korean Studies* 3 (1981): 3-38.

²² However, Tasan did not completely reject the concepts of *i* and *ki*. According to Yoo Taegun, Tasan viewed *i* 理 as an attribute of movement of *ki* 氣 and did not think *i* as the ultimate source of the universe. For instance, he did not deny a certain regularity found in the natural realm, as expounded in the *Book of Changes*. For him, *i* 理 is the empirical rule that accounts for regularity in things and affairs of the universe. The problem, however, is that according to Tasan, such a rule is not enough to explain the workings of the ethical realm of human beings. For the study of Tasan’s metaphysical position, see Yoo Taegun, “Metaphysical Grounds of Tasan Thought,” *Korea Journal* 34, 1 (1994): 5-19.

²³ *Nonŏ kogŏmju* 17:2 and 17:3 (9:17a:7).

from Sangje 上帝 and only shared only with other human beings.²⁴ The moral mind, to like good and dislike bad, comes from this spiritual part and becomes the exclusive property of human beings.

Tasan's deconstruction of Zhu Xi's *i-ki* metaphysics and his own foundation of *sin* 神-*hyōng* 形 result in a very different understanding of human nature and self-cultivation from Zhu Xi's. In Zhu Xi's ethical system, human nature 性 is identified with *i* 理, the moral principle. Original nature 本然之性 is none other than fully formed virtues (心德). But, due to the obscuration and distortion of psychophysical force, *ki* 氣, the perfect moral principle does not fully function. The way to become a sage is to eliminate self-centered desires arising from *ki* and comply with the perfect moral principle of *i*.

However, in Tasan's ethical system, which denies such position of *i* 理, human nature is no longer the perfect virtue. Instead, Tasan claims, 性者本心之好惡也 "Human nature is the likes and dislikes of the original mind."²⁵ Human nature is, for him, inclinations, proclivities, and tastes (*kiho* 嗜好). Furthermore, since humans are composed of both a spiritual part and a physical part, human nature has two types of inclinations, respectively. Moral nature (道義之性)

²⁴ Many scholars seem to agree that Tasan's thought, including his novel understanding of human beings, was influenced by Matteo Ricci's (1552-1610) *Tianzhu shiyi* 天主實義 (The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven). Michael Kalton remarks, "Matteo Ricci's influence is clear in the way Tasan introduces the common western spirit-matter distinction to explicate a uniquely human moral dimension." However, Kalton further argues that in developing his own thought, Tasan took a different route from that of Ricci. Ricci underscored the differentiation between spirit and body, relating them as eternal and perishing and substantiating the doctrine of immortal soul. On the contrary, Tasan emphasized the miraculous combination between spirit and body. For him, Mengzi's flood-like *ki* 浩然之氣 (or radiantly bright *qi* in Mark Csikszentmihalyi's translation) is the very example of the wondrous combination of spirit and body, the physical manifestation of morality. Furthermore, Tasan did not advocate the immorality of spirit. Michael Kalton, "Chōng Tasan and Mencius: Towards a Contemporary East-West Interface," *Tasanhak* 5 (2004): 7-53. For a discussion of Mengzi's *haoran zhi qi* 浩然之氣, see Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*, 152-157.

²⁵ *Non* ㉑ *kog* ㉒ *mju* 17:2/17:3 (9:9a:8). Tasan combines the two passages of the *Lunyu*, 17:2 (子曰 性相近也 習相遠也) and 17:3 (子曰 唯上知與下愚不移), and calls it the "Chapter on the Closeness of Men's Human Nature" 性相近章. Tasan's view on human nature is fully explained in his commentary on this chapter.

is composed of moral inclinations to like good and dislike bad, and physical nature (氣質之性) is sensual inclinations, such as appetites and sexual desire.²⁶



<Tasan's Structure of Human Nature>

According to Mark Setton, moral and physical natures are not ontologically different. They are the same affective inclinations, but the objects of the inclinations are different.²⁷ Nonetheless, it is the moral nature that sets men apart from other creatures.²⁸

Tasan's interpretation of human nature as inclinations has significant implications for his cultivation program. Unlike Zhu Xi, who believed that human beings are born with perfect virtues, Tasan did not believe that virtues exist *a priori* in human mind. He believed that virtues are acquired *a posteriori* through moral conduct. He says:

²⁶ Tasan is using the term, physical nature 氣質之性, differently from Zhu Xi. For Zhu Xi, the physical nature is the combination of the original nature with psychophysical force, but for Tasan it only refers to sensual desires of human beings.

²⁷ Mark Setton points out another interesting dimension of human nature. There are two kinds of inclinations, which cut across both moral and physical natures: one is an aesthetic appreciation of pleasurable things, and the other is an inclination for necessary and beneficial things for life and growth. For example, deer's liking of the plains belongs to the first and rice's liking of water to the second. And in terms of moral nature, people's enjoying good reputation belongs to the first and people's practicing of goodness to the second. He concludes that by drawing this parallel between the moral and physical inclinations, Tasan suggested that they are not ontologically different, but they are the same kind of affective inclinations. Mark Setton, *Ch'ing Yagyong*, 78-80.

²⁸ Tasan says, 然人之所以爲人者 以其好德而恥惡 此天命也 此本性也 "But, the reason why human beings are human beings is because they are fond of good and ashamed of bad. This is *ch'ingmyng*. This is the original nature." *Nonkogmju* 17:2/17:3 (9:17b:1).

仁義禮智之名 成於行事之後 故愛人而後謂之仁 愛人之先 仁之名未立也。 。 。
 豈有仁義禮智四顆 磊磊落落 如桃仁杏仁 伏於人心之中者乎。 。 。 仁義禮智
 知以爲本心之全德 則人之職業 但當向壁觀心。 。 。 斯豈先聖之所務乎
 知事父孝爲仁 則溫清滌滌 便當朝夕著力

“The titles of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom are obtained after one practices them in affairs. Therefore, only after one loves others can one be called benevolent. Before one loves others the title of benevolence is not yet established. ... How could it be that each of the four kernels of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom lie hidden in human mind like a peach pit or an apricot pit? If a person thinks that benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom are the complete virtue of the original mind, then his task is only facing the wall and examining his own mind. ... How could this be what the former sages strived for? If one understands that to care for one’s parents filially is benevolence, then one should endeavor day and night in keeping [them] warm and cool and serving [them] with foods.”²⁹

Mark Setton remarks that Tasan formulated “moral activism” on the ground that virtue could only exist as a result of moral conduct.³⁰ In this regard, Tasan criticized Neo-Confucian’s emphasis on inner-directed spiritual cultivation and quiet-sitting (靜坐), and underscored the importance of outer-directed program of self-cultivation. In the same vein, what is important for Tasan is not human nature *per se*, but the active practice of goodness: that is, it is not one’s affection toward parents but one’s actual caring for them based on that feeling that is at the center of his ethical program. He makes this point clear in the following passage:

性善與人善不同 性善者謂天賦之性 好德而恥惡。 。 。 人善者率此善性 正心修身
 畢竟行義而成仁 以全其德者也

“There is a difference between saying human nature is good and saying a person is good. To say that human nature is good is to refer to the *ch’ōn*-endowed nature:

²⁹ *Maengja yo* □ *i* 2A:6 (1:22a:6).

³⁰ Mark Setton, *Ch* □ *ng Yagyong*, 7.

it is being fond of virtue and ashamed of bad. ... To say that a person is good is to refer to following this good human nature to correct one's mind and cultivate one's person, so that in the end one behaves with righteousness and achieves benevolence, thereby completing one's virtue."³¹

According to Michael Kalton, Tasan removed human nature from the metaphysical realm and returned it to more dynamic psycho-biological sphere as in the *Mengzi*.³² However, this does not mean that Zhu Xi disregarded moral psychology; but, quite the contrary, his ethical system for the most part is about examining and training the mind. More strictly speaking, the fundamental difference between Zhu Xi and Tasan lies in how they conceived of the human mind and its structure. In this respect, Han Hyōngjo makes a keen observation. In his comparison of the relationship between the original nature 本然之性 and the physical nature 氣質之性 of Zhu Xi and Yi Hwang, he describes Zhu Xi as offering a *vertical-monistic* model and Yi Hwang as presenting a *horizontal-dualistic* model. In Zhu Xi's model, original nature lies at the bottom and physical nature on the top, and the moral principle of *i* 理 is manifested only through physical nature. On the other hand, Yi Hwang put them side by side, and his horizontal model is much closer to Mengzi's understanding of human nature, composed of greater part (大體) and smaller part (小體). Han argues that even though Tasan's system was not based on *i-ki* metaphysics, he basically agreed with Yi Hwang: structurally, he also

³¹ Non □ kog □ mju 17:2/17:3 (9:17b:8). The moral activism of Tasan seems to be also greatly influenced by Matteo Ricci. Ricci wrote, 性之善 為良善 德之善 為習善 夫良善者 天主原化性命之德 而我無功焉 我所謂功 止在自習積德之善也 "The goodness of human nature is 'innate goodness,' whereas the goodness of virtue is 'acquired goodness.' 'Innate goodness' is the virtue originally bestowed on man by the Lord of Heaven, and man can claim no merit for that. The merit I am speaking of here is limited to the goodness of that virtue which man himself accumulates through his own effort." Douglas Lancashire and Peter Hu Kuo-chen, trans., Matteo Ricci, *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985), 357.

³² Michael Kalton, "Ch □ ng Tasan's Philosophy of Man," 26.

juxtaposed moral nature 道義之性 and physical nature 氣質之性.³³ A diagram of their structures of human mind might look like this:



Tasan's horizontal model of the human mind changed the status of moral agents. In his view, human beings are suspended between moral and physical inclinations, and the human mind is an arena of constant struggle between contradictory values. But, it is also the human mind that can resolve this inner struggle by deliberating on conflicting inclinations and deciding which course to follow. This deliberative faculty of mind is what Tasan called *kwŏnhyŏng* 權衡, to balance and weigh.³⁴ According to Michael Kalton, this notion of internal struggle and the faculty of deliberation was quite new to the Ru tradition.³⁵ Previously, morality was viewed as a matter of conforming to a normative pattern and immorality as violation of or deviation from the norm.³⁶ Kalton states:

³³ Han Hyŏngjo, *Chu Hŏiesŏ Chŏng Yak-yongŏro*, 159-172.

³⁴ For the insightful discussion of the meaning of *quan* 權 in the *Mengzi*, see Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*, 118-124.

³⁵ However, as the structural proximity between Mengzi's conception of human mind and Tasan's suggests, it would be more proper to say that Tasan articulated and elaborated the notion of internal struggle and moral autonomy embedded in Mengzi's thought.

³⁶ In his study of Mengzi and Wang Yangming, Philip Ivanhoe also points out the absence of the notion of radical evil (doing bad for its own sake, taking a perverse pleasure in doing wrong) in Mengzi's thought. He notes, "For Mengzi, wickedness was defined exclusively in terms of failures on the part of human beings to accord with the Way." See Philip Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition*, 59-60.

What this means is that in Tansen's thought the concept of freedom emerges as the central and distinctive characteristic of man. In the long tradition that had viewed morality primarily as a matter of conforming to a normative pattern etched in the nature of the universe, there had been no need to focus attention upon freedom as such, as a fact reflected in the absence of expressions such as "free will" in the vocabulary of classical Chinese.³⁷

In Tansen's thought, morality is not about compliance with the moral principle of *i* 理, but about the choice between moral inclinations and physical inclinations. The agent's moral choice, what Mark Setton calls the notion of "moral autonomy," came to the fore.³⁸ As a result of his structure of human mind and his conception of moral autonomy, his moral agents became much more active (but also precarious) than Zhu Xi's, replacing the dominant position of the moral principle of *i*. He also transformed the function of mind from the seat of virtue into an active faculty of decision-making. What is more, all these changes have a direct bearing on the conception and practice of moral responsibility, issues over which Zhu Xi directly confronted the external criticism of Ru's fatalistic notion of *ming*.

As we have seen, one of the essential features of morality for Tansen is "autonomy." The filiality of apes and the loyalty of bees do not count as moral actions in his account, because they are done as they are programmed. On the contrary, the reason why man's affectionate caring for parents is taken to be morally worthy is that it always contains a possibility to act otherwise. Tansen thinks that this very fact, the condition of ambivalence and man's capacity to choose, enable us to be held morally responsible for what we do. He writes:

³⁷ Michael Kalton, "Cheng Tansen's Philosophy of Man," 29.

³⁸ In my view, Mark Setton's term, "moral autonomy," is a better description of Tansen's ethical position than a heavily loaded term of "free will." However, Setton does not distinguish these two terms. Mark Setton, *Cheng Yagyong*, 83-85.

但不得不善 人則無功 於是又賦之以可善可惡之權 聽其自主 欲向善則聽
欲趨惡則聽 此功罪之所以起也 天既賦之以好德恥惡之性 而若其行善行惡 令可游移
任其所為 此其神權妙旨之凜然可畏者也 何則好德恥惡 既分明矣 自此以往
其向善汝功也 其趨惡汝罪也 不可畏乎 禽獸之性 本不能好德恥惡 故善不為功
惡不為罪 斯大驗也 苟使人性不得不善 如雌之不得不孝 如蜂之不得不忠
如元央之不得不烈 天下其復有善人乎

“But if humans cannot but do good, then there is no merit. Therefore, [*ch'ōn*]
further endows us with the power either to be good or to be bad. Following our
own autonomy, we can want either to follow goodness or to pursue badness.
This is the reason why merit and fault arise. Although *ch'ōn* has endowed us with
a nature that is fond of virtue and ashamed of bad, in terms of practicing good or
bad, it lets us oscillate between them and leaves it up to us what we do. This is
why its [*ch'ōn's*] spiritual power and profound intention is awe-inspiring and
formidable. Why? The difference between being fond of virtue and ashamed of
bad is clear. From this, to follow goodness is your merit, and to pursue badness is
your own doing. How could one not be in awe? [In contrast] the nature of birds
and beasts renders them incapable of being fond of virtue and ashamed of bad,
and thus, their goodness is not to their merit and their badness not their doing.
This is a definitive proof. Suppose *ch'ōn* made human nature such that there was
no choice but to do good, like apes cannot but be filial, like bees cannot but be
loyal, and like mandarin ducks cannot but be faithful to their partners. Could
there then ever be a good person in the world?”³⁹

His point is that if we are naturally compelled to follow virtue, there is nothing praiseworthy about our moral actions. Accordingly, even though we exalt the fidelity of mandarin ducks as a generic symbol of virtue, we do not praise and admire a single duck for its fidelity as we praise our children's even trivial good actions.⁴⁰ Unlike mandarin ducks, we stand at a fork and which branch of the road to follow is wholly up to our own choice. Tasan's configuration of the dual

³⁹ *Non* □ *kog* □ *mju* 17:2/17:3 (9:12a:4).

⁴⁰ The “*Guanju*”關雎 of the *Book of Poetry* is an example of this case. However, the reason why we applaud the seeming moral actions of non-human animals could be the very fact that they do not oscillate as humans do. Their steadfastness might be unachievable even by the most sagacious man of the world.

natures and his conception of moral autonomy call attention to the responsibility of moral agent.

Furthermore, his asymmetric layout of the dual natures makes the burden of an individual agent much heavier. For example, according to his account, moral nature is weak, but physical nature is strong; and thus, 從善如登 從惡如崩 “Following goodness is difficult like climbing a mountain, but pursuing badness is easy like the collapse [of a wall].”⁴¹ Exactly for this reason, we hold sages in high esteem because they achieve what most of us find hard to accomplish. Tasaan asks, 苟其行之也至易 何謂之仁 “If their (sages’) behavior was extremely easy, why would we call it benevolent?”⁴² The difficulty of practicing goodness makes our appreciation of morality deep and our responsibility of morality heavy.

Tasaan’s emphasis on moral responsibility comes into conflict with Zhu Xi’s somewhat limited conception of it. As seen, Zhu Xi relieved the moral pressure of individuals to a considerable extent by his conception of *ki* 氣. Due to differences in psychophysical endowments, each person is born with different moral strength: some are born to be virtuous, like the sages of Yao and Shun, and some are born to be sulky and recalcitrant, like Kings Jie and Zhou. I argued that for Zhu Xi, without taking into consideration this bare fact of unequal starting points, we cannot justly and fairly hold people responsible for the way they are and the things they do. In fact, Zhu Xi directly confronted the long-held criticism of Ru notions of *myōng* 命 and injustice of *ch’ōn* 天.

However, from Tasaan’s perspective, Zhu Xi’s *ki*-based solution was unsuccessful and even dangerous. As the primacy of Zhu Xi’s notion of *i* 理 produced various problems, his nonegalitarian view of human nature based on the concept of *ki* 氣 also has serious defects. For

⁴¹ This analogy repeats in several places of Tasaan’s writing: e.g., *Non* □ *kog* □ *mju* 17:2/17:3 (9:12a:11, 9:17a: 11), *Maengja yo* □ *i* 3A:1 (1:33b:3), etc.

⁴² *Non* □ *kog* □ *mju* 17:2/17:3 (9:17b:13).

example, Tasan gives a different interpretation on Kongzi's classification of men according to their acquisition of knowledge. Unlike Zhu Zi, he argues that Kongzi's classification was not about the difference in their psychophysical endowments, but about the results of men's effort:

孔子曰 生而知之者上也 學而知之者次也 困而學之又其次也 困而不學 民斯為下矣
Kongzi says, "Those born with knowledge are the highest (上知). Next come those who know through learning (學知). Next again come those who learn with difficulty (困知). Those who have difficulty but do not learn are the lowest among the people (下愚)."⁴³

子曰 唯上知與下愚不移

Kongzi says, "It is only the wisest and the stupidest who do not change."⁴⁴

Zhu Xi commented on the above passages, respectively, saying:

言人之氣質不同 大約有此四等

"He (Kongzi) means that generally there are four grades in the difference of people's psychophysical endowments."⁴⁵

相近之中 又有美惡一定 而非習之所能移者

"Even within the closeness of men's human nature, there is also a fixed level of goodness and badness, and it is not that one's practice can change it."⁴⁶

Tasan's comments are as follows:

⁴³ *Lunyu* 16:9. The terms, *shangzhi* 上知 (the wisest) and *xiayu* 下愚 (the stupidest) appear in *Lunyu* 17:3.

⁴⁴ *Lunyu* 17:3.

⁴⁵ *Lunyu jizhu* 16:9.

⁴⁶ *Lunyu jizhu* 17:3.

案生知者上也 困而不學者下也 然而後知者 使其不學則亦將困也 困而能學者 使有蒙養則不待困也 困而不學者 使其發憤 亦與知也 困而不學 故歸於下愚 若其氣質本是下等 豈可罪乎 孔子論其成效 故分為四等 朱子以氣質言 而亦分四等 恐不然也 若於相近之中 細剖其等 又何但十百層而已

“According to the claim that those born with knowledge are the highest and those do not learn even with difficulty are the lowest, if those who know afterward do not learn, then they will also have difficulty. If those who can learn with difficulty are educated from childhood, they will not have difficulty. If those who do not learn even with difficulty pour forth their frustration, they will also know. Because they do not learn even with difficulty, they belong to the stupidest. If their psychophysical endowments are originally the lowest grade, how could it be their faults? Kongzi discussed the effect of one’s effort, and divided this into four grades. [But] Master Zhu (Zhu Xi) talked about psychophysical endowments, and he divided these into four grads. I fear that this is not how things are. If we were to divide in detail the grade of people around us, why would it be limited to only ten or a hundred levels?”⁴⁷

孔子之言 蓋云 堯 舜 桀 紂 性皆相近 習於善人 則為善 習於惡人 則為惡 惟智明者 雖與惡人相習 不為所移 愚暗者 雖與善人相習 不為所移也

“The words of Kongzi generally mean that human nature of Yao, Shun, King Jie, and King Zhou are all similar to each other. If one practices with a good person, one becomes good; if one practices with a bad person, one becomes bad. It is only those whose wisdom is bright that may practice together with a bad person without changing. It is those whose stupidity is particularly deep that may practice together with a good person without changing.”⁴⁸

Tasan admits that there are natural differences among people in their ability to acquire knowledge. However, his point is that Kongzi’s emphasis was not on these natural differences as Zhu Xi claimed, but on the differences between people’s efforts. According to his account, even the wisest will encounter difficulty if he does not learn; and even the stupidest will obtain

⁴⁷ *Non* □ *kog* □ *mju* 16:9 (8:41a:2).

⁴⁸ *Maengja yo* □ *i* 6A:6 (2:22a:5). The commentary on the *Lunyu* 17:2/17:3 also appears in *Maengja yo* □ *i*.

knowledge if he strives for it. He illustrates this with the examples of Kongzi and King Jie. Even though we revered Kongzi as the wisest (上知), he described himself as 下學而上達 “In my learning, I started from below and reached high above.”⁴⁹ As a matter of fact, it took him his entire life to achieve the level of sage.⁵⁰ In a similar fashion, it was not that King Zhou was born as a wicked man, but that he became depraved under the influence of his even more wicked wife, Daji 妲己. Consequently, Tasan contends that when Kongzi said that the stupidest (下愚) do not change, it does not mean that they are unable to become virtuous due to the heavy obstruction of their turbid *ki*: rather, it means, 下愚不移者 不移於善也 “They do not move toward goodness [even under favorable circumstances].”⁵¹ On the contrary, as for the wisest, they do not fall into badness under any circumstances. In other words, King Zhou is the stupidest of all, not because he was born that way, but because he chose to live such a depraved life. Kongzi is the wisest of all, not because he was born that way, but because he was determined to live such a virtuous and admirable life.

However, if we follow Zhu Xi’s psychophysical account of different moral strengths, Tasan thought, we cannot blame King Jie and King Zhou for their depravity and cannot praise Yao and Shun for their illustrious virtue. Zhu Xi’s account of *ki* was not a proper response to external critics, but rather it confirmed the fatalistic view that they criticized.⁵² Thus, Tasan strongly held that Zhu Xi’s account of psychophysical endowment should be abandoned.

⁴⁹ *Lunyu* 14:35.

⁵⁰ This refers to Kongzi’s autobiographical account in *Lunyu* 2:4, in which he says, 七十而從心所欲 不踰矩 “At the age of seventy, I followed my heart’s desire without overstepping the line.”

⁵¹ *Non* □ *kog* □ *mju* 17:2/17:3 (9:9b:10).

⁵² According to Tasan, 先儒每以氣質清濁 爲善惡之本 恐不無差舛也 苟以氣質之故 善惡以分 則堯舜自善 吾不足慕 桀紂自惡 吾不足戒 惟所受氣質 有幸不幸耳 “The former Ru (Neo-Confucians) always considered the clarity and turbidity of psychophysical endowments as the origin of good and bad. Perhaps, this is not without error. If goodness and badness is divided by psychophysical endowments, the natural goodness of Yao and Shun is not enough for me to admire, and the natural badness of Kings Jie and Zhou is not enough for me to be cautious about. There are only fortunes and misfortunes in receiving psychophysical endowment.” *Non* □

In a similar vein, Tasan also fiercely criticized Han Yu's 韓愈 theory of three grades of human nature (性三品說), one precursor of Zhu Xi's nonegalitarian view.⁵³ As Mozi 墨子 had objected that the doctrine of *ming* was fabricated by tyrant kings in order to shirk their responsibilities for the fall of their states, Tasan claimed that the stories Han Yu quoted to vindicate his theory were all false stories made up by busybodies.⁵⁴ He also warned of the detrimental influences of the nonegalitarian view of human nature in the following passage:

此其說有足以毒天下而禍萬世 不但為洪水猛獸而已 生而聰慧者 將自傲自聖
不懼其陷於罪惡 生而魯鈍者 將自暴自棄 不思其勉於遷改 今之學者 以聖為天
決意自畫 皆此說禍之也

"This theory [of Han Yu] is enough to poison the entire world and have disastrous effect for generations; it is much worse than a flood or savage beasts. Those born brilliant and wise are going to become arrogant and consider themselves as sages and will not fear of falling into badness. Those born stupid and dull will do violence to themselves and give up on themselves and will not think of exerting themselves to becoming good and correcting faults. Scholars of

kog□mju 17:2/17:3 (9:12b:1).

⁵³ According to Chen Lai, from the Han dynasty to the Tang, the most prevalent view on human nature was the theory of three grades of human nature, a subtype of the theory of human nature having good and bad. Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (c. 179-c. 104 B.C.E.), Wang Chong 王充 (27-c. 97), Xun Yue 荀悅 (148-209), Han Yu, and Li Ao 李翱 (772-ca. 841) all advocated this theory, dividing man into three groups in terms of different moral strength of human nature. Chen notes that it was Zhu Xi that by using his metaphysics of *li* and *qi*, elaborated and articulated this theory of three grades. However, in examining the ideological background of Mengzi's theory of human nature, Chen Ning argues that Mengzi advocated an egalitarian view of human nature in reaction against Mohist's inegalitarian conception of human nature. Indeed, Mengzi emphasized the similarities between the sages and ordinary people. Irene Bloom also notes that Mengzi's focus on common human nature is one of the most important characteristics of Mengzi's thought. Chen Lai, *Zhu Xi zhenxue yanjiu* 朱熹哲學研究 (Beijing, Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1987), 180-181; Chen Ning, "The Ideological Background of the Mencian Discussion of Human Nature: A Reexamination," in Alan K. L. Chan, ed., *Mencius: Contexts and Interpretations* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000): 17-41; and Irene Bloom, "Mencian Arguments on Human Nature (*Jen-hsing*)," *Philosophy East and West* 44, 1 (1994), 31.

⁵⁴ Han Yu's theory of human nature appears in his "Yuan Xing" 原性. In this essay, he quotes three cases from the *Guoyu* 國語 and *Zuozhuan* 左傳: the stories of Shuyu 叔魚, Yang Siwo 楊食我, and Yue Jiao 越椒. When they were born, a member of their family predicted by their appearance and voice that they would have disastrous endings and things turned out as predicted.

today take the sage to be bestowed by *ch'ŏn* and resolutely draw a line. All of these are the disastrous effects of this theory."⁵⁵

Tasan makes a strong claim that the nonegalitarian view of human nature based on *ki* was much more dangerous than a flood or wild animals: it leads the wise to fall into hubris and the stupid to give up on the pursuit of goodness. In addition to Zhu Xi's conception of *i* 理, his conception of *ki* 氣 was another reason why people did not attain sagehood in his time.

On the contrary, Tasan argues that there is no difference at all among people in terms of their nature: he says, 性相近 只是一等而已 "Men are close to one another by nature, and there is only one grade, and that's all."⁵⁶ For him, human nature is not fully formed virtue, but inclinations to be fond of good and ashamed of bad. This moral inclination is common to all humans and it makes human beings human, setting them apart from other creatures.⁵⁷ Tasan writes:

何謂好惡 乳哺之兒 聞讚譽而示悅 孩提之童 受罵詈而懷恥 知善之可貴也
故聞讚譽而示悅 知惡之可愧也 故受罵詈而懷恥也 盜者惡人也
不知者美之爲廉士則樂 淫者惡人也 不知者譽之爲貞女則樂 何則好德恥惡 根於天性
雖桎喪無餘 而猶有所不泯故也 孟子之謂性善 豈有差乎
"What do we mean by likes and dislikes? If a still-nursing baby is praised, he shows he is pleased. If a child carried in the arms is scolded, he is ashamed. They know that goodness is admirable so show they are pleased when praised. They know that badness is shameful so that they are ashamed when scolded. A thief is

⁵⁵ *Maengja yo* 6A:6 (2:22a:13). The terms, *zibao* 自暴 and *ziqu* 自棄, appears in *Mengzi* 4A:10. Mengzi says, 言非禮義 謂之自暴也 吾身不能居仁由義 謂之自棄也 "In his words, to slander propriety and righteousness is called doing violence to oneself; to say I cannot abide by benevolence and follow righteousness is called giving up on oneself."

⁵⁶ *Non* 17:2/17:3 (9:11a:5).

⁵⁷ Tasan says, 好德恥惡之性 聖凡皆同 "Human nature, to be fond of virtue and ashamed of bad, is all the same between sages and common people." *Non* 17:2/17:3 (9:9a:8).

a bad person, but when someone who does not know him praises him as a man of integrity, he is delighted. A lewd woman is a bad person, but when someone does not know her praises her as a woman of chastity, she is delighted. Why is this so? To be fond of virtue and ashamed of bad originates from *ch'ōn* [endowed] nature. Even if these are fettered and lost completely, there is still that which does not perish. What Mengzi said about human nature being good, how could there be any mistake?"⁵⁸

Whether it be a baby, child, thief, barbarian, or sage, all human beings share the same moral inclinations. Accordingly, Tasan even remarks that Kongzi's statement about the "closeness of human nature" 性相近 is not adequate.⁵⁹ He might have been fully satisfied if Kongzi had stated that human nature is the same among people 性相同.

Nevertheless, he does not deny differences between individuals in areas other than morality. Humans are composed of a spiritual part and a physical part: the spiritual part is connected with moral nature 道義之性, which is shared among all human beings, but the physical part relates to the particularity of individuals, such as intelligence, temperament, and physical appearance. However, he makes it clear that differences in the latter category have nothing to do with the moral strength of individuals. He writes:

氣質能使人慧鈍 不能使人善惡 有如是矣 孟子謂堯舜與人同 誠以舜之所以為舜 在乎孝友 不在乎璿璣玉衡 。 。 。 則孟子謂人皆可以為堯舜 豈一毫過情之言哉 氣質之於善惡 其不相關如此 則氣質之說 雖廢之可也

"Psychophysical disposition can make men wise or dull, but it cannot make men good or bad. It is like this. Mengzi said that Yao and Shun are the same as other

⁵⁸ *Non□ kog□ mju* 17:2/17:3 (9:11b:13).

⁵⁹ According to Tasan, 堯舜桀紂 其惻隱羞惡之性 毫髮不差 不可但以相近論也 "Between Yao, Shun, Kings Jie and Zhou, there is no slightest difference in their human nature to have a mind of commiseration and a mind of shame and dislike. It cannot merely be discussed by the closeness of human nature." *Non□ kog□ mju* 17:2/17:3 (9:13a:7).

people. Truly, the reason why Shun became a sage is because of his filial and brotherly actions, not because of his jade-and-pearl-adorned celestial globe. ... Mengzi said that all human beings can become a sage like Yao and Shun. How could his words have missed the truth even in the slightest? Since psychophysical disposition does not have anything to do with good and bad, even if we abandon the theory of psychophysical disposition, it will be okay!"⁶⁰

He claims that all human beings are morally equal in the beginning, and their individual characteristics, such as their intellectual and physical differences, do not have any place in moral discourse.

What should be noted here is that for Zhu Xi, there is no clear distinction between moral and non-moral domains, as he unites the natural world and the human world. A person's intelligence is taken to be closely related to moral worth. By contrast, Tasan separates out the moral domain from the non-moral, as he clearly distinguishes the uniqueness of human beings from the natural world. He confines the contingent aspects of each individual to the non-moral domain so that he is able to guarantee the equal status of moral agents, at least at the beginning. It is also interesting to note that as Zhu Xi emphasizes the unity between the natural and human realms, the particularity of each individual looms large. On the other hand, as Tasan puts much more emphasis on the uniqueness of human beings among all creatures, the commonality of human beings matters much more.

⁶⁰ *Non* □ *kog* □ *mju* 17:2/17:3 (9:12b:11). The jade-and-pearl adorned celestial globe (璿璣玉衡) was an apparatus for celestial observations used by Shun. It appears in the "Canon of Shun" 舜典 of the *Documents*. Tasan seems to use this as the symbol of Shun's intellectual ability to govern the people, compared to Shun's moral excellence. See also page 9 of https://docs.google.com/a/berkeley.edu/viewer?a=v&q=cache:X3rVSWR_ErkJ:www.dartmouth.edu/~earlychina/docs/earlychinajournal/ec6_2_cullen.pdf+astronomy+璿璣玉衡&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEEShEqVkJ8x8c6zM_Hi4f-AW34TZQRK9EVEWEIH7ERR0he1u_kpEft05RLtsqT-bfsbIBnGPNt_Axez6T3aXEkDNRPHuaKd6TPdDbRRBiP2cABqLCJbMOvvcQwJvtcQsKITWKINfL&sig=AHIEtbTelyIoknBfpDPjI3QmU5-an6EQgA

In conclusion, Tazan's challenge to Zhu Xi's conception of *i* 理, *ki* 氣, and human nature has a significant implication for his conception of moral responsibility. In Zhu Xi's system, each individual stands at a different starting point. He believed that the proper way to measure one's moral improvement is to look at how far they go from where they started. He emphasized a subjective standard of moral development, and his program eased the moral pressure on individuals in their pursuit of sagehood. One of the most meaningful contributions of Zhu Xi, in my view, was to refocus of the aim of Ru study: not so much to make certain people sages, but to make all people step forward *on the road to becoming a sage*.

However, in Tazan's view, Zhu Xi's system is not merely mistaken, but considerably harmful in some respects. According to Tazan, human beings are not born virtuous, but born with the desire to be virtuous. The goodness and badness of people is not embedded in human nature, but acquired through how they act in real life: 善惡之判 恒在教與不教之後 恐不可先別其類也 "The judgment of good and bad is always made after teaching or not teaching. I fear that one cannot make distinctions about different kinds [of students] beforehand."⁶¹ In addition, in his view, Zhu Xi's limited conception of moral responsibility either makes people find excuses to be lax in their moral pursuits or leads them to fall into the swamp of hubris. Tazan thought that Zhu Xi's nonegalitarian view of human nature based on psychophysical endowments eroded too much of man's moral responsibility.

Furthermore, according to Tazan, as we share the same moral inclinations, we share the common moral standard for moral development. This is why we praise a certain group of people as sages and blame others as depraved and wicked. Consequently, Tazan gives prominence to this objective standard rather than Zhu Xi's subjective one: how far I go along

⁶¹ *Non* □ *kog* □ *mju* 15:39 (8:25b:6).

this common road is more important than how far I go from where I started. Tasan had a firm belief that not only are we meant to be on this road, but also we are meant to complete this moral journey and arrive at the final destination of sagehood.

So far we have discussed Tasan's challenge to Zhu Xi's system. Surprisingly, every point made by Tasan is in conflict with Zhu Xi's view. This is also the case in regard to their views on moral economy and their particular way of understanding the world, which will be investigated in the next section.

▪ Tasan's Moral Economy of Sangje 上帝

In this section, I will examine Tasan's view on moral economy, his treatment of contingency, the role of Sangje 上帝 in the process of self-cultivation, and the status of external goods in his ethical system.

Like other Ru thinkers, Tasan believed that good people prosper and bad people suffer, and his emphasis on moral responsibility has a close relation with the workings of the moral economy. However, Tasan's moral economy is completely different from Zhu Xi's moral economy, which is based on the principle of *i* 理. In Tasan's view, *i*, the naturalistic order or pattern, which had no hint of spirituality, cannot be the master of the universe. Instead, he reintroduces the anthropomorphic deity, Sangje, from the ancient Ru classics.

鑄案天之主宰爲上帝 其謂之天者 猶國君之稱國 不敢斥言之意也 彼蒼蒼有形之天 在吾人不過爲屋宇帡幪 其品級不過與土地水火 平爲一等 豈吾人性道之本乎 太極圖上一圓圈 不見六經 是有靈之物乎 抑無知之物乎 將空空蕩蕩 不可思議乎 凡天下無靈之物 不能爲主宰 故一家之長 昏愚不慧 則家中萬事不理 一縣之長

昏愚不慧 則縣中萬事不理 況以空蕩蕩之太虛一理 爲天地萬物主宰根本 天地間事 其有濟乎

“I think that the master of *ch'ōn* (the whole universe) is Sangje. Its being called *ch'ōn* is like the ruler of a state being called state. It means one does not dare to speak [its name] directly. That blue and tangible *ch'ōn* (sky) is for us nothing more than a house or a shelter. It is on the same level or status as soil, earth, water, and fire. How could it be the foundation of our human nature and the Way? As for the *Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate*, its uppermost circle does not appear in the Six classics. Is it a thing with spirituality or a thing without intelligence? Is it empty and vast and not capable of thinking? In general, things in the world that are without spirituality cannot be masters. Therefore, when the head of a household is dull, stupid, and not wise, all the affairs of the household are not well-governed; when the head of a county is dull, stupid, and not wise, all the affairs of the county are not well-governed. Even more so [in the case of the universe] if we regard the empty and vast Supreme Void and the one principle of *i* 理 as the origin and the master of the whole universe and the myriad things, how can all the affairs in the universe be saved [from disorder]!”⁶²

Whereas Zhu Xi subsumed the two meanings of *ch'ōn* 天, the master and the blue sky, under the principle of *i* 理, Tasan highlights the role of *ch'ōn* as the master and subsumes it under the deity, Sangje. As he discussed above, *ch'ōn* 天 is just the humble appellation of Sangje. In his system, instead of the impersonal principle of *i* 理, Sangje, the most spiritual being of all, masters all things and affairs of the universe.⁶³ Consequently, Tasan's moral economy is the moral

⁶² *Maengja yo* □ *i* 7A:1 (2:38b:4, Michael Kalton, “Chōng Tasan's Philosophy of Man,” 24). In the same passage, Tasan also says, 夫理者何物 理無愛憎 理無喜怒 空空漠漠 無名無體 而謂吾人稟於此而受性 亦難乎其爲道矣 “What kind of thing is *i*? *I* has neither affection nor hatred. *I* has neither joy nor anger. It is empty and boundless. It is without name and without physical form. If [some] say that we receive our nature from it, it is also difficult for it to be the Way.” (2:38b:1) For a more detailed discussion of Tasan's Sangje and Zhu Xi's principle, see Michael Kalton, “Chōng Tasan's Philosophy of Man,” 18-25.

⁶³ According to Tasan, 上帝者何 是於天地神人之外 造化天地神人萬物之類 而宰制安養之者也 “What is Sangje? It exists beyond the whole universe, spirits, and human beings; it creates and harmonizes the universe, spirits, human beings, and a variety of the myriad things; and it governs, controls, secures, and raises them.” *Ch'unch'u kojing* 春秋考徵 (Evidential analysis of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*), 4:24a:2. According to Tasan, 臣謂天地鬼神 昭布森列 而其至尊至大者 上帝是已 “I think that ghosts and spirits spread out brightly and

economy of Sangje. From some perspectives this might be seen as a restoration of the ethical system before Mengzi, the time when the rationalization of moral economy and the naturalization of *ch'ŏn* took place. He returned his focus away from the workings of moral economy to the agent behind it, and he reinstated the anthropomorphic *ch'ŏn* 天 and Sangje 上帝 to the highest position, that had been occupied by the principle of *i* 理 in Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian philosophy.

Tasan's conception of Sangje is, in every respect, different from Zhu Xi's notion of *i* 理. Unlike *i*, which has no clear sense of agency, Sangje is an active agent of moral judge. Unlike *i*, which has no intent, Sangje is an intentional entity. Unlike *i*, which is comprehensible by human beings, the intention of Sangje is incomprehensible to most of us. In the following, I will examine these three characteristics of Sangje in comparison with Zhu Xi's notion of *i*. In the process, the characteristics of Tasan's version of moral economy will become clear.

First, Sangje is a moral judge. According to Tasan:

賦於心性 使之向善違惡 固天命也 日監在茲 以之福善禍淫 亦天命也

"[For *ch'ŏn*] to endow [human beings] with a mind and nature that inclines us to follow good and avoid bad is truly *ch'ŏnmyŏng* (the mandate of *ch'ŏn*). Everyday [for *ch'ŏn*] to observe us here and to bring good fortune to the good and bring disaster to the dissolute accordingly is also the mandate of *ch'ŏn*."⁶⁴

Sangje is the source of our moral inclinations. Through the inborn feelings of liking good and disliking bad, we know what Sangje wants from us and what it commands us. And, Sangje

gather densely, but the most honorable and the greatest of all is only Sangje." *Chungyong kang* 中庸講義補 (Supplement to Lectures on the *Mean*), 23a:4.

⁶⁴ *Non* 16:8 (8:39a:10).

examines our doings and rewards the good and punishes the bad. This is the basic structure of moral economy seen in the ancient classics of the *Documents* and the *Poetry*. On the contrary, Zhu Xi developed Mengzi's rationalization of moral economy and completely departed from this earlier version, denying or downgrading the existence of agent behind moral order:

今說天有箇人在那裏 批判罪惡 固不可 “Certainly, we cannot say that there is a person who resides in *ch'ōn* and criticizes and judges the bad.”⁶⁵ He believed that the prosperity of good and the hardship of bad are just the operation of the moral principle of *i*.

Second, Sangje is an intentional being. For example, Tasan explains that the reason why the worthy and wise encounter various obstacles is because of Sangje, whose intention is to train and improve their virtue.⁶⁶ Furthermore, with respect to the appearance of sages, Tasan says:

生而知之者 天欲爲斯民 開物成務 特出神聖之人也

“Those born with knowledge are people of [high] spirituality and sagemess who *ch'ōn* specially brings into the world in order to make them thoroughly understand things and accomplish affairs on behalf of people.”⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *Zhuzi yulei* 5:14.

⁶⁶ According to Tasan, 而賢知之人 所遇多奇險者 天以是鍛鍊其德 使之有所增益也 大舜號泣于田間 文王拘囚乎羑里 伯奇見放 屈原流竄 皆以其有德慧之故 遭此疾疾也 “The reason that the worthy and the wise encounter many strange events and hardships is because *ch'ōn* is training their virtues to improve them. The Great Shun's wailing in the field, King Wen's imprisonment in Youli, Bo Qi's banishment, and Qu Yuan's exile were all for the reason that they have virtue and wisdom and so they encountered these miseries.” *Maengja yo□i* 7A:18 (2:42a:8). A similar theme also appears in *Mengzi* 6B:15. In describing his own miserable situation, Tasan also resorts to this belief: 儉人既張 天用玉汝 斂而藏之 將用矯矯然遐舉 “As a group of flatters are already expanded, *ch'ōn* considers me like a jade, withdraws and hides me. It is going to use [me] very highly.” “Epitaph Written By Its Subject” 自撰墓誌銘, I:16:2b:6.

⁶⁷ *Non□ kog□mju* 16.9 (8:40b:1). The phrase, *kaiwu chengwu* 開物成務, appears in the “Appended Statements I” 繫辭上 of the *Book of Changes* (This chapter is also called “Great Treaties” 大傳): 子曰 夫易 何為者也 夫易開物成務 冒天下之道 如斯而已者也 Kongzi says, “What is that the *Yi* does? The *Yi* thoroughly understands the things [of the universe] and accomplishes the task [of men], embraces the Way [of all things] of the universe, and nothing more.”

For him, sages are people specially selected by Sangje and Sangje has a definite purpose to bring order to the world. In contrast, for Zhu Xi, the appearance of sages is merely a chance occurrence, caused by the movement of psychophysical force; and there is no intention of *ch'ōn* or Sangje behind it.⁶⁸

Thirdly, however, the intention of Sangje is incomprehensible. Even if Sangje is extremely just and impartial in moral judgment, the fact that certain people are chosen to be sages seems to suggest otherwise.⁶⁹ Likewise, how about the cases of those born deaf, mute, blind, or fool? Tasan's answer is that *ch'ōn* does not favor or disfavor people: 是其氣質有不齊而亦天之所以運其微權也。 。 。 。 其微旨未可盡究 “This is the unevenness of psychophysical disposition and also the way *ch'ōn* exercises its subtle power. ... [But] its subtle intention cannot yet be known completely.”⁷⁰ In other words, Sangje treats people equally, as it endows people with the same moral inclinations. The reason that some are born with knowledge, some are born with difficulty, and some encounter various hardships is Sangje's mysterious intention, which cannot be understood in full by most humans. This ultimate incomprehensibility of Sangje is in stark contrast with Zhu Xi's emphasis on the comprehensibility of *i* 理. Zhu Xi believed that we *can know* why we are as we are and what we should do to perfect ourselves so that we *can act* safely and securely according to the moral principle of *i*. On the other hand,

⁶⁸ 又問 如此則天地生聖賢 又只是偶然 不是有意矣 曰 天地那裏說我特地要生箇聖賢出來 也只是氣數到那裏恰相湊著 所以生出聖賢 及至生出 則若天之有意焉耳 [Liu Di 劉砥] also asked, “If it is like this, then the *tian* and *di*'s giving birth to the sages and the worthy is only accidental, but not intentional.” [Zhu Xi] replied, “What on earth does *tian* and *di* ever say to me that it especially gives birth to the sages and the worthy? It is only that the movements of psychophysical force arrives somewhere and gathers together and rightly manifests, and thereby gives birth to the sages and the worthy. At the time when [the sages and the worthy] are born, it just appears to be like the intention of *tian*.” *Zhuzi yulei* 80:5.

⁶⁹ However, unlike the Christian tradition, in which God's call is commensurate with individual happiness, Shangdi's choice of sages does not appear to be so: Shangdi's choice is made in order to bring harmony to the world rather than bring happiness to particular individuals.

⁷⁰ *Non* □ *kog* □ *mju* 17:2/17:3 (9:15b:12). In this passage, Tasan seems to partially agree with Zhu Xi's conception of unequal distribution of psychophysical force. However, for Zhu Xi, it is pure contingency of the movement of psychophysical force, whereas Tasan adds to it the intention of Sangje.

Tasan's ethical system does not seem to be based on this kind of confidence: we *cannot know* the intention of Sangje, but we *should act* according to our moral inclinations. If Zhu Xi's system is an ethics of certainty and confidence, Tasan's system is an ethics of uncertainty and faith.⁷¹

Tasan's moral economy of Sangje, who is a moral judge but whose full intention is opaque, is explained in his commentary on *Lunyu* 16:8. Tasan considers the three things that Kongzi was in awe of – the mandate of *ch'ŏn* 天命, great men 大人, and the words of the sages 聖人之言 – as the different manifestations of moral economy. For him, the mandate of *ch'ŏn* reveals the principle of moral economy; the king takes charge of the system of rewards and punishments; and the sages admonish in light of auspiciousness or inauspiciousness.⁷² The distinction between the moral economy of Sangje and the moral economy of human king is that Sangje's system is much less immediate and much more obscure than king's system of rewards and punishments.⁷³ This is why petty men do not understand and thus have no trust in the

⁷¹ In his discussion of Zhu Xi's rearrangement of the *Great Learning*, Mark Setton argues that Zhu Xi's addition of the two chapters of commentary on the "Investigation of Things" 格物 and "Extension of Knowledge" 致知 suggests that Zhu Xi highlighted cognitive aspects of moral cultivation. However, Tasan criticized Zhu Xi's modification of the classic and used the old version of text, excluding Zhu Xi's two additions of "Investigation of Things" and "Extension of Knowledge." Instead, Tasan's cultivation program starts with "Sincerity of the Will" 誠意. Unlike Zhu Xi, who emphasized cognitive aspects, Setton argues that Zhu Xi's program highlights affective capacities of moral inclinations. Adding to this, I think Tasan's program is not only based on liking and disliking of moral values, but also on feelings of fear in front of Sangje, which will be discussed later. Mark Setton, *Ch'ŏng Yagyong*, 95-51.

⁷² 天道昭禍福之理 人主操刑賞之權 聖人著祥殃之戒 此君子之三畏也 *Non'ŏ kog'mju* 16.8 (8:39b:6).

⁷³ Tasan substantiates this view with a quotation from "A Discourse on the Suburban Sacrifice" 郊語, Chapter 65 of *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋繁露:

春秋繁露曰 孔子曰君子有三畏 畏天命畏大人畏聖人之言 彼豈無傷害於人 如孔子徒畏之哉 以此見天之不可不畏敬 猶主上之不可不謹事 不謹事主 其禍來至顯 不畏敬天 其殃來至闇 闇者不見其端 若自然也 故曰堂堂如天殃 言必立校 然而無聲 潛而無形也 由是觀之 天殃與上罰所以別者 闇與顯耳 不然其來逮人 殆無以異 孔子同之 具言可畏也 天地神明之心 與人事成敗之真 固莫之能見 惟聖人能見之 聖人者 見人之所不見者也 故聖人之言 亦可畏也
In the *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals*, Kongzi says, 'The gentlemen have three things of which they are in awe: they are in awe of *ch'ŏnmyŏng* (the mandate of *ch'ŏn*), in awe of great men, and in awe of the words of the sages.' If these (three) never do any harm to people, how could someone like Kongzi be merely in awe of them? From this, I know that we cannot but respect *ch'ŏn* in awe and reverence in the same way that we cannot but serve a king cautiously. If we do not serve a king cautiously, disaster will follow in a clear and evident way; if we do not respect *ch'ŏn* in awe and reverence, calamity will follow in a dark and mysterious way. The term,

workings of moral economy of Sangje.⁷⁴ It is only the sages who understand it and believe that the good will be certainly rewarded and the bad will be certainly punished, no matter how long it takes and no matter in what form it appears. Therefore, the sages admonish people with the teaching of the auspiciousness of good and the inauspiciousness of bad.⁷⁵ In short, Tasan believed in moral economy, but Sangje's subtle intention, or teleological plan, is only comprehensible to the sages; for most people, however, the world is still felt to be a contingent place.

Another distinctive feature of Tasan's moral economy is that it penetrates into the internal realm of human mind. Sangje is not only observing men's behavior, but it resides within the human mind and monitors each and every moment of the mind's movements. This is quite new to the Ru tradition. Of course, Mengzi, and particularly Xunzi, brought the inner realm of human mind into the self-cultivation process, and the primary task of Zhu Xi's cultivation program was the rectification of the mind, monitoring incipient phase of mental

am 闇 (ch. *an*), means that one cannot perceive the beginning, as in the case when something is so-of-itself. Therefore, [one says], 'it is the calamity of *ch'□n*,' and the words are surely established, [but the calamity itself] is just so without sound and hidden without physical form. Looked at in this way, the difference between the calamity of *ch'□n* and the punishment of king is simply the difference between being obscure and being evident. Nevertheless, in coming to and reaching people, there is almost no difference, and so Kongzi considered them the same and said that they are all to be held in awe. The spiritually luminous mind of *ch'□n* and the reality of success and failure of human affairs are truly invisible [to common people], but only visible to the sages. The sages are the ones who can see what other people do not see. Therefore, the words of the sages are also to be held in awe.

This appears in *Non□ kog□mju* 16:8 (8:40a:4).

⁷⁴ Tasan says, 天命隱微若自然 故小人不知 “*Ch'□nmy□ng* is obscure, subtle, and so-of-itself, and thus petty men do not understand,” and also says, 聖人之言 祥殃之戒 必久而後驗 故小人侮之 “The words of the sages that admonish auspiciousness and inauspiciousness can be substantiated only after a long time, and thus petty men disrespect them.” *Non□ kog□mju* 16:8 (8:39a:4, 6).

⁷⁵ According to Tasan, 周易 專觀悔吝 悔者能改過也 吝者不改過也 悔則終吉 吝則終凶 聖人之戒也 “The *Book of Changes* is only observing ‘*hoe'* (ch. *hui*) and ‘*rin'* (ch. *lin*). ‘*Hoe'* is to be able to correct one's faults; ‘*rin'* is not to correct one's faults. If one regrets [and corrects one's faults], this is after all auspicious; if one is stingy about [correcting one's faults], this is after all inauspicious. This is the admonishment of sages.” *Simgy□ng mirh□m* 心經密驗 (Personal Examination of the *Classic of the Mind*), 32a:9.

activity, calming unruly emotions, and suppressing self-centered desires.⁷⁶ However, until Tasan, it had not been clearly stated that one's mental activity is counted in the system of moral economy. Previously, when virtue was believed to bring favorable outcomes, virtue was more or less considered as a mixture of virtuous dispositions and virtuous actions. Yet, Tasan's conception of Sangje puts each and every movement of human mind under close scrutiny so as to reward and punish not only men's actions but also men's mind.

This inner-inspection of Sangje has two significant implications for Tasan's ethical system. First, this mitigates the problem of contingency involved in the moral economy of Sangje. In Tasan's system, our good action will certainly bring favorable outcomes, but we are not sure at what point and in which form Sangje will reward us. Tasan's world is still a contingent place for most of us. Nevertheless, Tasan admonishes that we should pursue goodness, not only because virtues are self-sufficient, but also because Sangje is watching us.⁷⁷ The fact that Sangje is observing every moment of our thoughts and actions redirects our attention to the very beginning of our moral pursuit. Second, the internal inspection of Sangje complements Tasan's outward-looking program of self-cultivation. As we have seen, he emphasized the acquisition of virtue through actions in actual affairs. However, his emphasis on moral activism could easily ignore the importance of the inner dimensions of the mind. Tasan's teaching on the internal reverence toward Sangje balances his outer-directed moral activism.

⁷⁶ There is an interesting study on the relationship between Zhu Xi's self-cultivation program and divination practice. Joseph Adler, "Chu Hsi and Divination," in Smith, Kidder Jr., Peter K. Bol, Joseph A. Adler, and Don J. Wyatt, *Sung Dynasty Uses of the I Ching* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990):169-205.

⁷⁷ For example, in Kongzi's system, his introduction of contingency redirected people's attention from the expected outcomes to one's own pursuit of goodness. Since we are not sure that our good actions will bring favorable outcomes, we had better focus on our own moral development; at least, our virtues are intact and complete. Unlike contingencies of external goods, our virtue is reliable source. Furthermore, for Kongzi, it is our voluntary choice to live up to moral order in the world of contingency. However, Tasan strengthens our voluntary decision by his powerful doctrine of Sangje.

Then, how does this internal reverence toward Sangje take place? Sangje is the most spiritual being and human beings' spiritual part is connected with Sangje.⁷⁸ At the time of birth, Sangje endows us with a moral nature, but Sangje also resides within the human mind, offering constant commands and maintaining observation throughout one's life.⁷⁹ Tasan says:

天於賦生之初 有此命 又於生居之日 時時刻刻 續有此命 天不能諄諄然命之
非不能也 天之喉舌 寄在道心 道心之所徹告 皇天之所命戒也 人所不聞 而已獨諦聽
莫詳莫嚴 如詔如誨 奚但諄諄已乎

"As soon as *ch'ŏn* endows men with life, there is this *myŏng* (the mandate of *ch'ŏn*); and also while we live, every moment there is constantly this *myŏng*. *Ch'ŏn* is unable to command with detailed and minute words. It is not that it is unable to do so, but that the throat and tongue of *ch'ŏn* resides in the mind of the Way. The warnings of the mind of the Way are August *ch'ŏn*'s commands and prohibitions. Even though others do not hear, I alone carefully hear them; there is nothing more detailed and nothing more austere, and it is like admonishment and like instruction. How could it be merely commanding with detailed and minute words?"⁸⁰

The command of Sangje (the mandate of *ch'ŏn* 天命) is nothing but our moral nature and the mind of the Way (道心 the moral mind). Suppose, a person is about to steal another's purse, but at that moment, he would hesitate to do so even though only to the slightest degree because of his moral inclinations to be ashamed of bad. This is "the command of Sangje" in Tasan's account, or the "conscience" in our modern term. Tasan argues that if we listen carefully to the

⁷⁸ According to Tasan, 天之靈明 直通人心 無隱不察 無微不燭 "The spiritual luminosity of *ch'ŏn* directly penetrates into human mind: [therefore] even if hidden [in the mind], nothing is not examined [by *ch'ŏn*] and even if trivial [in the mind], nothing is not illuminated [by *ch'ŏn*]." *Chungyong chajam* 中庸自箴 (Admonitions on the Mean), 5b:4.

⁷⁹ Sung Taeyong points out that men's formless and mysterious spirit is the same kind as Sangje's, so that the two directly respond to each other. Sung Taeyong, "The Heavenly God without Revelation in Tasan's Philosophy," *Tasanhak* 5 (2004): 87-126.

⁸⁰ *Chungyong chajam* 中庸自箴, 3b:8.

guidance of our moral mind and do good, it becomes auspicious. But, most of people do not understand this. The disbelief in Sangje and Sangje's inherence in the human mind is another reason why Tasan thought people of his time do not become sages.⁸¹

Many scholars argue that Tasan's conception of Sangje plays a moral function, which means that Sangje exists primarily for inspiring or motivating humans to be good and to do good.⁸² In this respect, Tasan's Sangje is often contrasted with the Catholic God.⁸³ For instance, some scholars claim that Sangje does not directly intervene in human affairs; Sangje is not a divine judge; there is no revelation from Sangje; and Sangje is not an object of sacrifice and prayer.⁸⁴ However, as I discussed, Sangje is an entity with a strong intention and does intervene in human affairs; the appearance of sages is one of the examples. Furthermore, Sangje is definitely a moral judge; comprehending Sangje's obscure system of rewards and punishments is a critical mark of sage. And, surely, there is no revelation of Sangje's words in written form, but our moral inclinations and moral mind are the direct revelation of Sangje. In addition, there is ample evidence of sacrifice toward Sangje and *ch'ŏn* 天 at the state level, if not on the

⁸¹ In criticizing Neo-Confucian conception of *i* 理, Tasan says, 終身學道 而不可與人堯舜之域 皆於鬼神之說 有所不明故也 "The reason why people are learning the Way for their whole life but unable to participate the realm of Yao and Shun is because they are not clear about the theory of ghosts and spirits." *Chungyong kang* 中庸講義補, 21a:7. This reminds us of Mozi's notion of ghosts and spirits, directly involving in rewarding and punishing human beings. Mozi also claimed that one of the reason for the disorder of society is the loss of belief in the existence of ghosts and spirits, more strictly speaking, their retributive power.

⁸² For this issue, see page 48 of Ch'oe Chint'ak, "Tasanhak 齊 Sangje kwisinnon kwa k' in' ganhak ch'ok imi," 48. This tendency among contemporary Confucian scholars to deemphasize Tasan's notion of an anthropomorphic deity, Sangje, I think, reflects the assumption that what makes the Ru tradition distinctive from other religious tradition is its highly rational system of morality.

⁸³ Tasan's notion of Sangje is often related to the Catholic God in part because of his early involvement with Catholicism. However, according to Don Baker, Tasan's belief in Sangje was not necessarily only a matter of Catholic influence or of the ancient Ru tradition. He points out that even before Catholicism entered Chosŏn, indigenous Ru scholars like Yun Hyu 隱鑑 (1617-1680) already mentioned the ancient people's belief in Sangje. Don Baker, "Finding God in the Classics," 50. For a brief outline of Yun Hyu's conception of Sangje, see Mark Setton, *Ch'ng Yagyong*, 28-29.

⁸⁴ Sung Taeyong, "The Heavenly God without Revelation in Tasan's Philosophy," 230; Don Baker, "Was Tasan Ch'ng Yagyong a Religious Man?" paper presented at *Roundtable Conference on Religious Dimensions of Korean Confucianism* in University of Wisconsin-Madison, in 2007.

individual level.⁸⁵

Nevertheless, it is true that Tasan's Sangje is different from the Catholic God as well as Sangje in the ancient Ru classics.⁸⁶ For instance, Michael Kalton points out that in western thought, doctrines of a personal God, spiritual soul, and free will often directly relate to the supremacy of the will of God, and require the total submission or obedience to God. On the other hand, Kalton notes, "In Tasan's view, there is no hint of moving in a direction that focuses on the transcendent will of God."⁸⁷ In other words, for Tasan, humans themselves are the subject of their own decision-making. These comparisons with the Catholic God indicate that Tasan's Sangje is less transcendental than the Catholic God and that Tasan's system puts less emphasis on the aspect of belief. Human beings seem to stand at the center of Tasan's religious practice of Sangje.

On the other hand, scholars like Sung Taeyong take a middle ground between the questions of whether Tasan's conception of Sangje was morally necessary or an aspect of his actual belief. Sung's conclusion is that "Tasan developed his theory based on his belief stressing the requesting aspect of Shangdi."⁸⁸ I agree with him on the intermediary position. For without the existence of Sangje, Tasan's ethical system cannot sustain itself. A comparison with Mozi's notion of spiritual beings can shed light on this issue. I argued that in the chapter, "Explaining

⁸⁵ See Chong Sunu, "Tasan e issi Ch'on kwa Sangje" 다산에 있어서의 천과 상제 (Ch'on and Sangje for Tasan), *Tasanhak* 9 (2006): 5-39. This is an insightful and illuminating study on Tasan's notion of Sangje. According to Chong Sunu, the notion of *ch'on* in the Chosŏn period cannot be simply understood in philosophical and intellectual terms, because it is a politically charged term. For instance, the right to sacrifice to *ch'on* was monopolized by Chinese emperors, and thus, the access to *ch'on* by the kings of Chosŏn was always intermediated by the Chinese emperor. However, by restoring the ancient deity, Sangje, which had been less tainted by the political discourse of the Han and Neo-Confucian metaphysics of the Song, Tasan enabled the direct access to *ch'on* not only by the kings, but by each individual, made it possible to have more independent discourse on *ch'on* in Chosŏn society.

⁸⁶ According to Don Baker, Tasan's notion of Sangje is much more anthropomorphic than Sangje in the ancient classics: e.g., Tasan's description of Sangje as the master of the universe does not appear in the ancient classics. Don Baker, "Was Tasan Chong Yagyong a Religious Man?"

⁸⁷ Michael Kalton, "Chong Tasan and Mencius," 40-48.

⁸⁸ Sung Taeyong, "The Heavenly God without Revelation in Tasan's Philosophy," 126.

Ghosts” 明鬼, what matters most for Mozi was not to prove the mere existence of ghosts and spirits, but to instill the belief in their retributive power in people’s mind. To put it differently, Mozi’s spiritual beings are giving supernatural assistance for the workings of moral economy; but, without such support, his system can continue to work, albeit less effectively. In this sense, it is proper to say that Mozi’s notion of spiritual beings is practically required for moral reasons. However, Tasan’s Sangje is dissimilar from Mozi’s spiritual beings. Without the belief in Sangje, as the master of the universe, as a moral judge, as a source of our moral nature, and as an innate inspector of our mind, Tasan’s system would be hard-pressed to continue to operate. Therefore, I agree with Sung that Tasan believed in Sangje and that Sangje was morally significant because Sangje is none other than a *moral deity*.⁸⁹ Sangje is the embodiment of morality.

However, as Ch’oe Chintök correctly observes, Tasan’s Sangje is not the god of love, trust, forgive, or hope, but the *fearsome* god.⁹⁰ Sangje, who dwells in our mind and monitors our thoughts and actions, elicits feelings of alertness (*kye* 戒), caution (*sin* 慎), fear (*kong* 恐), and dread (*ku* 懼) from moral agents. He compares this state of mind with the cases like:

暮行墟墓者 不期恐而自恐 知其有魅魍也 夜行山林者 不期懼而自懼 知其有虎豹也
君子處暗室之中 戰戰栗栗 不敢爲惡 知其有上帝臨女也 今以命性道教
悉歸之於一理 則理本無知 亦無威能 何所戒而慎之 何所恐而懼之乎

“A person who passes by a graveyard at dusk unexpectedly feels fear; this is because he knows that there are mischievous spirits. A person who walks in the mountains at night unexpectedly feels dread; this is because he knows that there are tigers and leopards. A gentleman who stays in the middle of a dark room [alone] trembles with fear and does not dare to do bad things; because he knows that Sangje is just before him. [However] now, people ascribe all of *myöng*,

⁸⁹ According to Don Baker, one of the reasons that Tasan must have believed in Sangje is that Tasan took those passages concerning Sangje in the ancient classics literally rather than metaphorically. Don Baker, “Finding God in the Classics,” 51.

⁹⁰ Ch’oe Chintök, “Tasanhak□i Sangje kwisinnon kwa k□ in’ganhak ch□k □imi,” 64-65.

human nature, the Way, and teaching to one principle of *i*. But *i* is originally without intelligence and also without mighty power. What is there to be alert to and be cautious about? What is there to fear and to dread?"⁹¹

These feelings of fear and dread are not a kind of fear that one might disappoint Sangje, as Donald Baker describes it.⁹² Sangje is a moral judge presiding over the universe and rewards and punishes as the rulers do. If we do believe in Sangje's inherence in our mind, we will know that any of our thoughts and actions cannot escape from his system of moral economy, even if we do not know when and in what form we will be repayed. The feelings of fear before Sangje are a kind of fear that one should not transgress the command of Sangje and that Sangje can do harm to me as mischievous spirits and tigers can. This state of mind is the primary force to guide people toward good and away from wickedness.⁹³

More precisely speaking, Tasan's ethics of fear is mainly a bulwark against the moral frailty of humans. Man's moral nature enjoys good reputation and takes pleasure in virtuous conduct. Virtues themselves are rewarding and fulfilling: this is why humans can keep pursuing a virtuous life until death. However, moral inclinations are always much weaker than man's self-centered physical desires.⁹⁴ As a result, the constant commands and inspection of

⁹¹ *Chungyong chajam*, 5a:5. Shangdi's inner-inspection of the human mind directly relates to Tasan's emphasis on *shendu* 慎獨, "being cautious in solitude." He clarifies, 原來慎獨云者 謂致慎乎己所獨知之事 非謂致慎乎己所獨處之地也 "Originally, 'to be cautious in solitude' means to be extremely cautious about things that one knows alone (such as one's own thought). It does not mean to be extremely cautious in the place when one stays alone." *Simgyong mirhōm* 心經密驗, 30a:9.

⁹² Don Baker, "Was Tasan Chōng Yagyong a Religious Man?"

⁹³ Tasan's ethics of fear shares a considerable similarity with the ethics of uncertainty of the sage kings in the *Documents*. I argued that the strong belief in moral economy and the virtue of humility are the two wings of the ethical system of the sage kings. The sage king's ethical program was based on the belief in moral economy, but on the other hand it urges moral agent to practice good by creating anxiety and apprehension that "I might fall behind." The difference between Tasan's and the sage king's system is that: the ethics of uncertainty of the sage kings is directed toward the self, moral agents: I am the source of my fear and apprehension. On the other hand, the ethics of uncertainty of Tasan is directed toward Sangje: Sangje is the source of my fear and apprehension.

⁹⁴ In his discussion of the role of desire, Mark Setton argues that as a reaction against Zhu Xi's dualism of the

Sangje restrains us from taking the wrong path. Tasan writes:

鹿之性好山林 雉之性惡馴養 雖不幸而墮於馴養 顧其心終以山林為好 一見山林
油然有感羨之心 此之謂性也 天於賦生之初 予之以此性 使之率而行之 以達其道
若無此性 人雖欲作塵刹之善 畢世不能作矣 天既賦之以此性 故又能時時刻刻
提醒膺啓 每遇作惡 一邊發慾 一邊沮止 明沮止者 卽本性所受之天命也

“The nature of deer is to like mountains and the nature of pheasants is to not like to be tamed and trained. Even though they unfortunately may end up being domesticated, in terms of their minds, they like mountains after all. As soon as they see mountains, they have a spontaneous yearning [for them]. This is called nature. As soon as *ch'ōn* gives life, it endows [men] with this nature, makes [men] to follow it and practice it, and thereby achieve the Way. If there were not this nature, even though people desired to do an infinite amount of good, they would not capable of doing good their entire life. [However] *ch'ōn* already endows us with this nature, and so it also reminds us and guides us each and every moment. Whenever we encounter a chance to go bad, our mind arouses a desire [to do bad] on the one hand and stops it on the other hand. It is obvious that stopping it is our original nature received as the mandate of *ch'ōn*.”⁹⁵

According to this passage, there seems to be two dimensions of the mandate of *ch'ōn* 天命: one is moral inclinations endowed at the time of birth, and the other is the moral mind constantly operating throughout life.⁹⁶ These two mandates of *ch'ōn* 天命 are essentially the same, but they

principle of *tian* and human desire, Dai Zhen 戴震 (1724-1777) affirmed the positive role of desires as the impetus for righteousness. However, Tasan, even if he completely departed from Zhu Xi in terms of metaphysical questions, he still shared with Zhu Xi on the view of suppressing selfish desires. Accordingly, Setton remarks, “Tasan retained a certain asceticism,” and “his position lay somewhere between Cheng-Zhu learning and the view of most of its Qing critiques.” I think that Setton is right. In Zhu Xi’s system, moral desires do not play a major role; the primary task of moral agent is suppressing selfish desires. In Tasan’s system, however, moral desires play a significant role, but it has quite limited function because it is weaker than other physical desires. Mark Setton, *Chōng Yagyong*, 87-89.

⁹⁵ *Maengja yo* 3A:1 (1:34b:8).

⁹⁶ Of course, moral inclinations (the moral nature 性) and the moral mind (道心) are not different each from the other. I just differentiate the two terms to emphasize the temporal distinction as Tasan intended: moral inclinations as a more general inclination embedded in human mind and the moral mind as a time-specific command of Sangje.

are distinguished with reference to temporal import. The former concerns a general directionality of the long-term program; our moral nature disposes us toward good, and thus we can keep going on our moral journey. The latter concerns our thoughts and actions in real time; Sangje, through our moral mind, constantly commands us, inspects us, and will reward and punish us accordingly. This twofold layout of the mandate of *ch'ŏn* demonstrates how meticulously and deeply Tasan's Sangje permeates human beings and human life. Through his new program of self-cultivation based on the belief of Sangje, Tasan really and truly wanted to make "sagehood" an achievable goal.

Lastly, I will discuss Tasan's attitude toward external goods. The moral economy of the classical period was predicated on a necessary connection between virtue and external goods. And, whether or not this connection is tight as in Mozi's system or loose as in Kongzi's, the items of external goods expected through virtue were quite specific: political position, wealth, health, and so on. By the time of Zhu Xi, as society became more complicated and diversified, this connection between virtue and specific external goods was hard to maintain. Accordingly, Zhu Xi transformed these concrete items into a more abstract form of *i* 利, benefit or well-being, including favorable external goods. Tasan was also well aware that the traditional moral economy is no longer pertinent to his time. In his explanation of the meaning and usage of the word, gentleman (*kunja* 君子), he denotes this change:

古者在位者 必善人 故貴曰君子 賤曰小人 後世未必然 故善曰君子 惡曰小人

"In ancient times, a person in political position was necessarily a good person. Therefore, a noble person is called a gentleman, and a lowly person is called a petty man. In later times, this is not necessarily so. Therefore, a good person is called a gentleman, and a bad person is called a petty man."⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Non □ kog □ mju 4:16 (2:20b:12), in the subcommentary.

古惟有德者得在位。故後世雖無位。凡有德者稱君子

“In ancient times, only a virtuous person was able to be in political position. In later times, a virtuous person even without position is generally called a gentleman.”⁹⁸

According to Tasan, a gentleman was originally a designation for a person in political position. In ancient times, the person in position was sure to be equipped with virtue so that the word, gentleman, was also used as a reference to a virtuous person. In other words, there was a necessary connection between virtue and political position. However, in later times, as this connection started to break down, only the second meaning remained: a gentleman refers to a virtuous person and a petty man to an immoral person.

However, the moral economy that Tasan is discussing in the above passages is unlikely to be the moral economy of Sangje. In other words, Tasan does not mean that Sangje used to reward the virtuous with an appropriate position, but no longer does in his time. The first reason is that, as I discussed above, Sangje’s system of rewards and punishments is beyond our comprehension. Most of us cannot know in what form Sangje will repay us. Consequently, the necessary connection between virtue and political position in the above discussion seems to refer to the moral economy of the king, human governance. Tasan likely means that in ancient times, when societies were much simpler, a sage ruler was able to employ the virtuous and the worthy to appropriate positions.

Another more implicit reason that I think Tasan considers a connection between virtue and political position in ancient times as human governance is his denial of the linkage between

⁹⁸ *Non* □ *kog* □ *mju* 1:1 (1:8a:12).

virtue and longevity. Kongzi said, 仁者壽 “Benevolent people live long lives,” and Zhu Xi substantiated, 靜而有常故壽 “Benevolent people live long lives because they are tranquil and constant.”⁹⁹ However, Tasan completely disagrees: 此醫家之養生方也 豈所以論道乎 “This (to live a long life) is the method physicians use to nourish life. How could this be a way to discuss the Way?” Instead, he provides a different interpretation for Kongzi’s phrase: for him, *in* 仁 simply means ‘benevolence’ and *su* 壽 means ‘long time.’ To combine these, this phrase 仁者壽 describes a trait of benevolence: the virtue of benevolence is long-lasting.¹⁰⁰ Tasan’s denial of the connection between virtue and longevity is striking and revolutionary because it was a long-held assumption for many Ru thinkers. Consequently, the moral economy Tasan is discussing above is not the kind of moral economy held by most Ru thinkers, except for Xunzi. As Xunzi believed that moral economy is a construction of the sages, Tasan would have said, “The belief that virtue will naturally bring one to live a long life is nonsense.”

Furthermore, a disconnection of the link between virtue and external goods has even more significant implications. We have seen that in his understanding of human beings, Tasan draws a clear line between the moral domain and non-moral domain, and attributes all contingent factors concerning the particularity of individuals, such as intelligence, temperament, and appearance, to the non-moral domain. By doing so, he is able to claim that all human beings are equal in moral terms, at least in the beginning. However, as shown in the above, he does not merely make a distinction but severs the linkage that has long held between the two:

⁹⁹ *Lunyu* and *Lunyu jizhu* 6:23.

¹⁰⁰ According to Tasan, 壽之爲言久也 知者遭喪 不能常樂 仁者短命 不能皆壽 行仁非諫丹之類也 仁之爲道 可久可長 不動其身 而天下化之 其氣象久遠 故曰仁者壽 “The meaning of *su* 壽 is ‘long time.’ If the wise encounters funeral, they cannot be delighted as usual. If the benevolent have a short life, they cannot altogether live long life. The practice of benevolence is not of the same kind as the [Daoists’] refinement of cinnabar. The way of benevolence can be long-lasting and, without moving oneself, the whole world is transformed [by it]. Since its atmosphere is long-lasting, [Kongzi] said this phrase, *in ja su* 仁者壽.” *Non□ kog□mju* 6:23 (3:14b:9).

one's virtue does not have much to do with one's position in society, one's condition of health, or wealth.

This severance of the two realms renders Tasan's world an even more contingent place. First of all, despite the fact that he acknowledges the moral economy of Sangje, we just do not know how Sangje will repay our virtue. Secondly, in Tasan's system, virtue does not guarantee favorable outcomes.¹⁰¹ It is interesting to note that in the world of contingency, external goods tend to have a more positive status. Like Kongzi, Tasan hold a positive view toward external goods. It is because in a contingent world, one's virtue cannot guarantee favorable external goods and, as a consequence, there is less danger that virtue turns into a mere means. On the contrary, the stricter the moral economy becomes, the more negative the status of external goods becomes. It is because when there is a tight connection between virtue and external goods, the risk of virtues turning into mere instruments also increases. Mengzi and Zhu Xi belong to this group: both of them tried to construct a strict moral economy by separating out contingencies and both of them substantially decreased the appreciation of external goods, either of intrinsic or instrumental value.¹⁰²

Zhu Xi's negative view on external goods showed a tendency toward moral asceticism. Zhu Xi's life itself demonstrates this. He did not much appreciate a political career. Even though he passed the civil service examination at an early age, he tried to keep away from an active political life. In addition, he was very critical of the social trends of his time, taking civil service examinations as a gate to worldly success. He also did not live an affluent life. Tasan's life

¹⁰¹ I think Tasan's world is even more contingent than Kongzi's world. In Tasan's world, virtue does not guarantee favorable outcomes. On the other hand, in Kongzi's, virtue is supposed to bring good outcomes but not necessarily so: i. e., virtue does *not always* guarantee favorable outcomes.

¹⁰² If Tasan's world is much more contingent than Kongzi's, Zhu Xi's world is much less contingent than Mengzi's. For Mengzi distinguished contingent factors from moral economy but he did not confine them as Zhu Xi did.

shows a contrasting picture. Even though he passed the civil service examination later than Zhu Xi, once he launched his political career, he was actively involved in official life under the royal patronage. Unfortunately, after 12 years of governmental service, he was exiled and remained out of office until his death, a period that amounts to almost 35 years. Nevertheless, his yearning for a return to political life seems not to have completely disappeared.

Unlike Zhu Xi, Tasan did not hold such a negative or unenthusiastic attitude toward political position. This is shown not only in his life, but also in his writings. For example, he writes:

君子學道 非爲仕也 然君子未嘗不欲仕 若以志於祿者 皆以爲非 則全德者少矣

“A gentleman’s learning of the Way is not to become a governmental official.

However, there has never been a case of a gentleman who does not desire to be an official. If we criticize those who intend to have a governmental salary altogether, there will be only a few who perfected their virtue.”¹⁰³

In other words, Tasan thinks that the way of becoming a sage and the way of being an official do not interfere with each other. There is another interesting example. With respect to Kongzi’s famous distinction in the *Lunyu* 14:24, Tasan presents a unique interpretation:

子曰 古之學者爲己 今之學者爲人

Kongzi says, “In ancient times, those who learned did so for themselves; [but] nowadays, those who learn do so for others.”¹⁰⁴

The Cheng brothers commented on the above passage saying:

¹⁰³ *Non* □ *kog* □ *mju* 8:12 (4:5b:3).

¹⁰⁴ *Lunyu* 14:24.

程子曰爲己 欲得之於己也 爲人 欲見知於人也

The Chengs said, “*For oneself* means to want to obtain [virtue] within oneself. *For others* means to want to be recognized by others.”¹⁰⁵

Tasan’s interpretation is as follows:

案躬蹈善行則我進德也 口述善言則人聞道也 爲己者益於己也 爲人者益於人也
若見知於人則雖不益我 亦不益人 何得曰爲人乎 君子之道 人不知而不愠
不見是而无悶 固有斯義 然君子疾沒世而名不稱焉 令聞令名 豈亦君子之所惡哉
子曰不患人之不己知 求爲可知 求爲可知則見知於人 非君子之所惡也

“I think that if I practice good personally, I make progress toward virtue. If I speak good words, other people will hear about the Way. *For oneself* means to benefit oneself. *For others* means to benefit others. If to be recognized by others is not beneficial to myself or others, how can it be said to be ‘for others’? The Way of the gentleman is that even if others do not recognize him, he is not angry; even if others do not think him right, he is not depressed. This is truly what is meant [in his passage]. However, a gentleman hates that he dies without his name being praised. How could a gentleman dislike having a good reputation? Kongzi said, ‘Don’t worry that others do not recognize you,’ and ‘Seek to be worthy of recognition.’ If one seeks to be worthy of recognition, then one will be recognized by others. This is not something gentleman dislikes.”¹⁰⁶

Kongzi was admonishing his contemporaries by comparing them with ancient people. The

¹⁰⁵ Chengzi 程子 (Masters Cheng) refers to the two Cheng brothers. This comment is found in Zhu Xi’s *Lunyu jizhu* 14:24. Zhu Xi followed the Cheng’s view. In his commentary, he writes: 程子曰 古之學者爲己 其終至於成物 今之學者爲人 其終至於喪己 愚按 聖賢論學者用心得失之際 其說多矣 然未有如此言之切而要者 於此明辨而日省之 則庶乎其不昧於所從矣 “The Chengs said, ‘In ancient times, those who learned did so for themselves and only at the end reached to achieve things. Nowadays, those who learn do so for others and finally reached to lose themselves.’ I think: there are many words that the sages and worthies discussed gains and losses of the way that students use their mind. However, I have never seen something precise and essential like this. Therefore, if one is clear about this and daily reflects on this, probably one will not be confused about what one should follow.”

¹⁰⁶ Non □ kog □ mju 14:24 (7:37b:5). The two quotations of Kongzi in the passage are respectively from *Lunyu* 1:6 (or 14:30) and *Lunyu* 4:14.

Chengs' commentary also reflects this distinction: the study of Ru should be focused on improving oneself as ancient people did, but should not be disturbed by vain desires to impress others as later generations do. In the Chengs' view, there are not two distinct types of study, but there is only one, the study of the Way; but it is differentiated by the attitude of students. On the other hand, Tسان makes a more literal translation: the study for oneself is to study for the benefit of oneself, and the study for others is to study for the benefit of others.¹⁰⁷ Tسان's distinction differs from the Chengs': he differentiates the study by its effect (or probably its content), not by the attitude of students. The Chengs somehow depreciate the value of being recognized by others; they think getting a good reputation is just a natural consequence of one's own moral pursuit. Of course, Tسان would completely agree with the Chengs that one should not study for gaining fame. Nevertheless, if we follow Tسان's commentary, the Chengs' negative view of fame is significantly reduced. For Tسان, to improve and benefit others is as important as improving and benefitting oneself. Therefore, Tسان says, 孔子未嘗不欲見知於人也 "At no time did Kongzi not want to be recognized by others."¹⁰⁸ In Tسان's view, being recognized by others means being employed in political position, and being employed in political position means to benefit others in a broader scope and in a more practical way. Unlike the Chengs and Zhu Xi, Tسان believed that study 'for oneself' and study 'for others' can be pursued harmoniously.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ In discussing Tسان's approach in interpreting the Ru classics, Don Baker also points out Tسان's preference for a literal interpretation. Don Baker, "Finding God in the Classics," 44-46.

¹⁰⁸ *Non* □ *kog* □ *mju* 14:24 (7:37b:11).

¹⁰⁹ Of course, Zhu Xi did not think that the study of the Way and the study for civil service examination necessarily interfered with each other. As we have seen, he admonished his students that the study for examination can be pursued insofar as it does not disturb their study of the true Way. Nevertheless, his view on these two types of study is different from Tسان's more balanced view. For example, in his comparison of Zhu Xi and Tسان on the self-cultivation process in the *Great Learning*, Mark Setton presents a similar view. According to Setton, it is implicit that Zhu Xi conceived of the eight items in the *Great Learning* as cause-effect relations. Once one's inner cultivation was completed, one's household, state, and the whole world would naturally become harmonized. This is also the reason why Zhu Xi greatly emphasized the inner self-cultivation of each individual. On the other hand, Tسان refuted Zhu Xi's causal and temporal relationship between the

Moreover, political position is not the only external good to which Tasan ascribes positive value. As political position has significant instrumental value for the Ru program, Tasan acknowledges the intrinsic value of wealth for individual life.¹¹⁰ He thinks that too strict a teaching of moral asceticism leads those aspiring to the Way to find themselves only in impoverished conditions. To give an example:

子曰 回也其庶乎 屢空

Kongzi says, “Hui (Yan Hui)! He was close enough [to the Way]. He was often in dire poverty.”¹¹¹

Zhu Xi’s commentary on this is:

不以貧窶動心而求富 故屢至於空匱也 言其近道 又能安貧也

“[Yan Hui] did not move his mind to seek for wealth because of poverty.

Therefore, he was often in dire poverty. Kongzi was saying that he was close to the Way, and also he was able to be content in poverty.”¹¹²

Tasan offers a different interpretation:

屢空者 夫子病回之言 非譽之也。 。 。 若以屢空為善 則是顏子之庶乎近道

歸重乎屢空一節 夫君子之道 不離乎富貴 若必以朝不食夕不食 為近道之表準

則凡學道者餓矣

“To be often in dire poverty is that Kongzi faulted him (Yan Hui) for, not what he

process of self-cultivation. Tasan thought that the items in the *Great Learning* are interdependent and can be pursued spontaneously. In other words, for Tasan, “establishing harmony in the household” 齊家, “governing the state” 治國, and “bringing peace to the world” 平天下 are also the actual grounds to practice self-cultivation and attain virtues, “cultivating the self” 修身. Accordingly, Setton argues that for Tasan, the *Great Learning* was not generally intended to be the learning for adults as Zhu Xi claimed, but it was specifically intended as a textbook for the education of the sons of the ruling elite. Mark Setton, *Chung Yagyong*, 109-110.

¹¹⁰ Tasan also adds a much more positive value to longevity. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

¹¹¹ *Lunyu* 11:19.

¹¹² *Lunyu jizhu* 11:19.

praised him for... If we consider being often in dire poverty as good, then the significance of the phrase that Yan Hui was close to the Way will be given to the next phrase, 'to be often in dire poverty.' The Way of a gentleman needs not be separated from wealth and honor. If we take not eating in the morning and not eating at night as the necessary standard of being close to the Way, then those who learn the Way generally will be starved."¹¹³

Unlike Zhu Xi, who considered Kongzi's words as a compliment to Yan Hui, Tسان interprets it as the only minor shortcoming Kongzi found in him. Accordingly, Zhu Xi's commentary ascribes affirmative value to poverty, putting an impoverished life over an affluent one. On the other hand, Tسان thinks that one's virtuous way of life does not have much to do with poverty or wealth, and noble status or lowly status.¹¹⁴ Since there is no clear connection between virtue and wealth, it is unnecessary for us to take a negative view toward wealth and honor. If Zhu Xi might admire a virtuous person in poverty over a virtuous person in affluence, Tسان personally would choose to live the life of the latter. However, despite the apparent difference in their attitudes toward external goods, they fully agree that the cultivation of virtue enables us to be unaffected by the contingencies of external goods, what Mengzi called "the state of unmoved mind" 不動心. For both of them, virtues are indeed the best means to live in the world of contingency.

Tسان's moral economy of Sangie not only differs from Zhu Xi's moral economy of *li* 理, but also departs from the moral economy that has been held by most Ru thinkers we have discussed so far. For he actually denies a necessary connection between virtue and external goods. Accordingly, his universe appears to be the most contingent place of all. Nonetheless, he

¹¹³ *Non* □ *kog* □ *mju* 11:19 (5:36a:9).

¹¹⁴ I interpreted the sentence 夫君子之道 不離乎富貴 in this way: The Way of a gentleman should be separated from the discussion of wealth/poverty and nobility/lowliness.

did not abandon the belief that Sangje will reward the good and punished the bad, and his belief in Sangje as a moral judge occupies a significant portion of his ethical system. Furthermore, his belief in Sangje's inherence in the human mind and inner-inspection is a revolutionary way of supporting the workings of moral economy.

I think that there are two main areas, which have not caught the eyes of most Ru scholars yet but which Tazan took issue with Zhu Xi over. One is the area of moral responsibility. As I argued, Tazan was very critical of Zhu Xi's conception of a limited scope of moral responsibility. In a way reminiscent of the manner in which Mozi criticized the Ru's notion of *ming* 命 in his chapters, "Against Fate" 非命, Tazan strongly criticized Zhu Xi's nonegalitarian view of human nature. He thinks that Zhu Xi eroded too much moral responsibility from individuals. Through his conception of moral autonomy, Tazan accorded a new power to moral agents, and this becomes a firm foundation for attributing to each individual a complete moral responsibility for the way they are and for the things they do. In this respect, I think Tazan's ethical program is much stricter than Zhu Xi's, and this point also relates to the second area: that is, the goal of the Ru self-cultivation program. I argued that one of Zhu Xi's important contributions to the Ru tradition is that he redefines the goal of Ru study based on his limited version of moral responsibility. His actual aim is not to make a certain group of people sages, but to attract everyone to follow the road to become a sage and make everyone stay on that road. For him, the process of becoming a sage is as important as becoming a sage. However, from the perspective of Tazan, Zhu Xi's redefinition of the goal of Ru study to focus on the process actually made people slacken in their moral pursuits or easily give up on their moral journey. Tazan's various efforts in constructing his own ethical system aims to make "sagehood" a realizable goal: so, he reorients the goal of Ru study.

9. Zhu Xi and Tasan

In the introduction, I pointed out that the two meanings of *ming* 命 seen in a variety of paired concepts – moral imperative/fate; prescriptive/descriptive; internal/external; controllable/uncontrollable; arbitrary/providential – are not completely separate, but they are closely related to each other like two sides of the same coin. Accordingly, I argued *ming* 命 is more than a simple term, but a complex concept, relating to the whole of reality: *ming* 命 is a fine line that divides the world into two realms. Particularly, in the Ru tradition, the world is viewed in moral terms: morally relevant and morally irrelevant (moral economy vs. contingency). The study of *ming* discourse leads us to understand how each thinker conceives of the world, arranging the two realms in their own way.

In this last chapter, I will compare Zhu Xi and Tasan focusing on their conceptions of *tianming* 天命, *liming* 立命, and *zhengming* 正命, terms that appear originally in *Mengzi* 7A:1, 7A:2, and 7B:24.¹ In what follows, I will first lay out each thinker's conception of these terms and then compare their views. This comparison will then turn to the specific question I raised in the introduction: why do these two thinkers have different interpretations on the hypothetical deaths of King Wen and Kongzi? More generally, this comparison will render their differences as described in the previous two chapters more clearly: their different ways of thinking about the world and coping with contingency, and their different conceptions of self-cultivation program and good human life.

¹ In this comparison, I will follow mostly Chinese pronunciation for Chinese characters for convenience, but when necessary I will use Korean pronunciation.

▪ **Zhu Xi's notion of *tianming* 天命, *liming* 立命, and *zhengming* 正命**

Ming 命, in simplest terms, refers to “command”; and thus, *tianming* 天命 refers to the command of *tian*.² Since human beings are constituted of *li* 理 and *qi* 氣, Zhu Xi believed that the command of *tian* also relates to both *li* and *qi*: accordingly, there are “*ming* in terms of *li*” and “*ming* in terms of *qi*.”³ The following passage summarizes Zhu Xi's view on *ming*:

命謂天之付與 所謂天令之謂命也 然命有兩般 有以氣言者 厚薄清濁之稟不同也 如所謂道之將行將廢 命也 得之不得曰有命 是也 有以理言者 天道流行 付而在人 則爲仁義禮智之性 如所謂五十而知天命 天命之謂性 是也 二者皆天所付與 故皆曰命

“*Ming* refers to what *tian* bestows [on men]. It is like when we say ‘*tian* gives an order.’ But, there are two modes of *ming*. In terms of *qi*, it refers to different endowments of thick and thin, clear and turbid psychophysical force. The examples of this type of *ming* are: ‘Whether the Way is to be practiced or not is a matter of *ming*’ and ‘Whether to obtain [office] or not depends on *ming*.’ In terms of *li*, it refers to the operation of the Way of *tian* and in the case of what is endowed in man, this is the nature of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom. The examples of this type of *ming* are: ‘At fifty, I understood *tianming*’ and ‘What *tian* commands is called nature.’ The two modes of *ming* are all bestowed by *tian*, and thus it is called *ming*.”⁴

² As *tian* is identified with the cosmic-moral principle of *li* 理, Zhu Xi's usage of “command” is figurative rather than literal.

³ However, Zhu Xi qualifies that these are not two different kinds of command, but two modes of the command of *tian*: 是有兩般命 卻不是有兩箇命 有兼氣血說底 有全說理底 “There are two modes in *ming*. Rather, it is not that there are two [different] *ming*. It can be said in combination with psychophysical force, [or] it can be said solely in relation to principle.” *Zhuzi yulei*, 1464:8.

⁴ *Zhuzi yulei*, 1463:7 (Chan Wing-tsit, *Chu Hsi: New Studies*, 214). Like many contemporary scholars, Zhu Xi divides *ming* into two: moral imperative vs. contingency. The first quotation, ‘whether the Way is to be practiced or not is a matter of *ming*,’ comes from *Lunyu* 14:36, the second quotation from *Mengzi* 5A:8, the third quotation from the famous *Lunyu* 2:4, and the fourth quotation is the very first sentence of the *Doctrine of the Mean* 中庸.

“*Ming* in terms of *li*” is called the original command (本然之命).⁵ This is actually the same as what Zhu Xi calls the original nature (本然之性), the prefect moral principle of *li* inherent in the human mind.⁶ *Tian* commands us to follow the cardinal virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom. The original command is a moral command. On the other hand, “*ming* in terms of *qi*” is called the command of psychophysical endowment (氣稟之命), which accounts for the particularity of individuals in areas such as moral strength, intelligence, temperament, appearance, together with wealth, health, honor, and so on. However, there is another aspect of “*ming* in terms of *qi*,” which is called the command of one’s given lot (命分之命).⁷ This accounts for contingent events people encounter in the course of life: for instance, Shun’s having a wicked person as his father and Kongzi’s not meeting with a worthy ruler. Consequently, “*ming* in terms of *qi*” determines almost all aspects of human life: innate qualities of who we are and external conditions of what we encounter. These two belong to the same category because they are all caused by contingent movements of psychophysical force.⁸ And, Zhu Xi sometimes uses

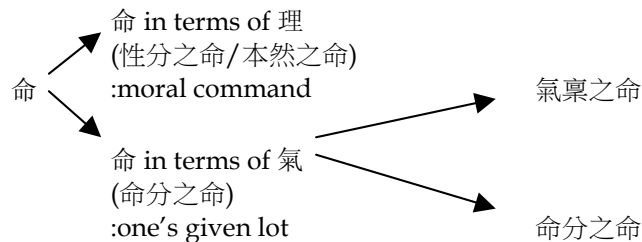
⁵ Zhu Xi also called this “the command of one’s given nature” 性分之命.

⁶ In Zhu Xi’s system, *li* 理, *tian* 天, *xing* 性, and *ming* 命 actually refer to the same thing. He says, 理者天之體 命者理之用 性是人之所受 情是性之用 “*Li* is the substance of *tian*, *ming* is the function of *li*, *xing* is what man receives [from *tian*], and *qing* is the function of *xing*.” *Zhuzi yulei* 82:8. Accordingly, these terms do not refer to discrete entities, but refer to different aspects of the same thing. Zhu Xi also says, 蓋以理言之謂之天 自人言之謂之命 其實則一而已 “Spoken from the point of view of *li*, it is *tian*; spoken from the point of view of men, it is *ming*. In reality, they are only one.” *Mengzi jizhu* 5A:6. *Ming* and *tian* are the same thing; *ming* stresses the aspect of *tian* in relation to men. As a result, the original command and the original nature refer to the same thing: it is only that the former highlights that this command is coming from *tian*, while the latter stresses that this command inheres in the human mind.

⁷ It is hard to translate the two *ming*s in 命分之命. The second *ming* refers to “command” and the first one probably refers to “fate” or “allotment.” Zhu Xi uses the word “*mingfen*” 命分 in contrast to “*xingfen*” 性分, the allocation in nature. Furthermore, Zhu Xi sometimes uses *mingfen* 命分 in a broader sense, referring to both innate qualities and external conditions. Zhu Xi says, 性分是以理言之 命分是兼氣言之 命分有多寡厚薄之不同 若性分則又都一般 此理 聖愚賢否皆同 “The allocation in nature is spoken of in terms of *li*, and the allocation in lot is spoken of in combination with *qi*. In the allocation in lot, there are differences of amount and thickness of psychophysical forces. In the case of the allocation in nature, it is the same for all, [as] this *li* is the same for all whether it be a sage, fool, worthy, or not.” *Zhuzi yulei* 77:4.

⁸ When someone asked about wise people recognizing a worthy person, Zhu Xi says, 須從橫渠說 晏嬰之智 而不知仲尼 豈非命歟 然此命字 恐作兩般看 若作所稟之命 則是嬰稟得智之淺者 若作命分之命 則晏子偶然蔽於此 遂不識夫子 此是作兩般看 “We should follow Zhang Zai’s account, ‘That someone with Yan Ying’s wisdom did not recognize Kongzi, how couldn’t this be other than *ming*!’ However, I fear that this word ‘*ming*’ is viewed in two modes. If it is the *ming* of [psychophysical] endowments, it is because Yan Ying’s endowed wisdom was

the term, the command of one's given lot (命分之命), to mean embracing both innate qualities and external conditions.



These two aspects of *ming*, the moral command and the command of one's given lot, share the same attribute: they are commanded by *tian* and no one can avoid or change them as they please. Yet, there are also differences between the two: the moral command is a common task for all human beings, whereas the latter is distributed unequally to individuals. A more important difference is, however, that the moral command is something one should fulfill throughout life, whereas the latter is given as a fixed lot. Zhu Xi often emphasizes this point: 富貴 死生 禍福 貴賤 皆稟之氣而不可移易者 “Wealth and honor, life and death, misfortune and fortune, being noble and lowly, are all [determined by] psychophysical endowments and cannot be changed.”⁹

These two modes of *ming* equally apply to Mengzi's teaching of *liming* 立命. Mengzi said, 夭壽不貳 修身以俟之 所以立命也 “When to die young or to live a long life does not cause one to

shallow. If it is the *ming* of one's given lot, it is because Yan Ying happened to be blocked by this so that he did not recognize Kongzi after all. This is [the way *ming* is] viewed in two modes.” *Zhuzi yulei* 1466:7. Zhu Xi explains Yan Ying's not recognizing Kongzi (or Kongzi's not being recognized by Yan Ying) from two perspectives: the lack of inner quality of Yan Ying and the unfortunate external condition. However, whichever may have been the case, it does not matter much for Zhu Xi since both cases are in its essence the same, beyond Yan Ying's control (and also Kongzi's control).

⁹ *Zhuzi yulei* 79:1.

be of two minds. To cultivate oneself and wait for what is to come is the way to establish *ming*.”¹⁰ Zhu Xi comments on this passage, saying: 立命 調全其天之所付 不以人爲害之 “To establish *ming* is to complete what *tian* bestows [on us] and not to harm it with human concerns.”¹¹ For Zhu Xi, to establish *ming* is to carry out both modes of *ming* that *tian* has commanded for us. On the one hand, one should fulfill the moral command by recovering one’s innate virtues and living according to them. This corresponds to “cultivation of the self” 修身 in Mengzi’s passage above. On the other hand, one should also preserve the command of one’s given lot by not attempting to change it. For instance, trying to live longer or become wealthier beyond one’s fixed lot are all considered as artificial attempts. This corresponds to “the possibility that one may die young or live long should not cause one to be of two minds” 夭壽不貳 in Mengzi’s passage.¹²

What is significant to note here is that the way to carry out the two modes of *ming*, the moral command and the command of one’s given lot, is not different: both can be accomplished through following the moral way. Given Zhu Xi’s assertion that these two are not two separate commands but just two different aspects of the command of *tian*, it naturally follows that there is only one way to accomplish it.¹³ In Zhu Xi’s view, therefore, not attempting any human manipulation amounts to following the normative principle of *li* 理. In other words, for him, there are only two options: either to conform to *li* or deviate from *li*. Those who conform to *li* do not much care about their given lot, and the life of such people is like this:

¹⁰ Mengzi 7A:1.

¹¹ Mengzi jizhu 7A:1 (Chan Wing-tsit, *Chu Hsi: New Studies*, 217).

¹² Zhu Xi interprets this phrase: 不以夭壽貳其心 “Do not allow the brevity or longevity of one’s life span to cause one to be of two minds,” and also 不以生死為吾心之悅戚也 “Do not let life and death determine my mind’s joy or sorrow.” Mengzi jizhu 7A:1 and Zhuzi yulei 1428:15, respectively. So, Zhu Xi thinks that regardless of the consequence for one’s life span, one should concentrate on the moral way.

¹³ See note no. 3 above.

自家有百年在世 百年之中 須事事教是當 自家有一日在世 一日之內
也須教事事是當始得

“If one has a life span of a hundred years, in these hundred years one must do everything right. If one has a life span of one day, within that one day, one must do everything right.”¹⁴

Regardless of one’s lot, one should concentrate on the moral way: this is the way to complete the command of *tian*, *liming* 立命.

Zhu Xi believed that this way of life brings people what Mengzi called *zhengming* 正命.

孟子曰 莫非命也 順受其正 是故知命者不立乎巖牆之下 盡其道而死者 正命也
桎梏死者 非正命也

Mengzi says, “Nothing happens that is not due to *ming*, [but] one [should] accept willingly only what is correct. Therefore, one who understands *ming* does not stand under a wall in danger of collapsing. To die in the course of fulfilling the Way is a correct *ming*, but to die in fetters is not a correct *ming*.”¹⁵

Zhu Xi’s interpretation of this passage is that the good or bad fortune of individuals is already determined by *tian* (*tianming*), but correct *ming* is to accept only what was originally ordained by *tian*. To accept what was originally ordained by *tian* is to follow the Way completely, without any interference of human manipulation. If one does not follow the Way and deviates from it, one cannot receive correct *ming*, which means one will have a worse outcome than what was originally ordained. For example, “dying under a collapsing wall” and “dying in fetters” are cases of incorrect *ming*. For Zhu Xi considers that to be a result of putting oneself in a clearly dangerous situation or committing a crime are human interruptions, deviations from the

¹⁴ *Zhuzi yulei* 1429:5 (Chan Wing-tsit, *Chu Hsi: New Studies*, 217).

¹⁵ *Mengzi* 7A:2.

normative principle of *li*. Therefore, dying under a collapsing wall and dying in fetters are results incurred by human folly and not by *tian*: these are incorrect *ming* to Zhu Xi.¹⁶ By contrast, even if King Wen had died at Youli and Kongzi had been killed by Huan Tui, these would be correct *ming* because King Wen and Kongzi were arduously following the Way.¹⁷ Zhu Xi says, 有罪而被罷者 非正命 無罪而被罷者 是正命也 “To be dismissed for committing a crime is not a correct *ming*; to be dismissed without committing any crime is a correct *ming*.”¹⁸ For Zhu Xi, whatever happened to good people is correct *ming*.

In conclusion, for Zhu Xi, anybody will receive correct *ming*, as long as they cultivate

¹⁶ The complexity of Zhu Xi's position is apparent from the following passage. Zhu Xi says, 盡其道而死者 順理而吉者也 桎梏死者 逆理而凶者也 以非義而死者 固所自取 是亦前定 蓋其所稟之惡氣有以致之也 “To die in the course of fulfilling the Way is to comply with *li* and receive fortune; to die in fetters is to transgress *li* and suffer disaster. Those who die due to unrighteousness truly incur [misfortune] by themselves. [However] this is also predetermined. Generally, it occurs due to their bad psychophysical endowments.” *Zhuzi yulei* 1434:3. On the one hand, Zhu Xi maintains that dying in fetter is caused by human misconduct; but on the other hand, he believes that human misconduct is ultimately due to bad psychophysical endowments. As I argued, by doing so, he relieves moral pressure of individual agents, but from the perspective of *Tasan*, he eroded too much of moral responsibility. Obviously, there is a certain ambiguity involved in Zhu Xi's conception of psychophysical endowments; the border between human agency and psychophysical endowments seems to be more porous than Zhu Xi claimed to be.

¹⁷ 使文王死於羑里 孔子死於桓魋 卻是[正]命 *Zhuzi yulei* 1434:6. Actually, in the original passage, it does not say “correct *ming*” but just “*ming*.” However, when *Tasan* quotes this passage, he inserted *zheng* 正 in front of *ming*. If we consider all related passages on *ming* and *zhengming* in Zhu Xi's writings, it is logically proper to read this passage as meaning “correct *ming*.”

¹⁸ *Zhuzi yulei* 1435:2. However, Zhu Xi also points out that even if it is correct *ming* from the perspective of Kongzi, it is not correct *ming* from the perspective of *tian*. For example, he writes, 若是惠迪吉 從逆凶 自天觀之 也得其正命 自人得之 也得其正命 若惠迪而不吉 則自天觀之 卻是失其正命 如孔孟之聖賢而不見用於世 而聖賢亦莫不順受其正 這是於聖賢分上已得其正命 若就天觀之 彼以順感 而此以逆應 則是天自失其正命 “If according with the right [*li*] brings good fortune and following what is opposed to it brings bad fortune, from the perspective of *tian*, this is obtaining correct *ming*, and from the perspective of men, this is also obtaining correct *ming*. If according with the right does not bring good fortune, from the perspective of *tian*, this is rather losing correct *ming*. For example, some sages and worthies like Kongzi and Mengzi were not employed in the world, but as sages and worthies they all willingly received correct *ming*. This then is their ‘*fen*’ (role). The former already obtained their correct *ming*, and so accommodate themselves to the perspective of *tian*. They (sages and worthies) follow and respond, but this (*tian*) reacted contrarily. This is *tian* itself causing the loss of correct *ming*.” *Zhuzi yulei* 1434:12. Consequently, Zhu Xi is saying that anyone who follows the principle of *li* will receive correct *ming*, but from the perspective of *tian*, it could be either the case of correct *ming* (the moral economy is at work) or the case of incorrect *ming* (the moral economy fails). One of the possible reasons for the failure of moral economy is explained by the failure of human governance. According to Daniel Gardner, Zhu Xi thinks that through the principle of influence and resonance, in times of disorder and improper government, the movement of *qi* becomes upside down and unbalanced, unfortunate bad *qi* becomes prevalent. In other words, movements of *qi* are not completely contingent, but are also affected by human performances. Daniel Gardner, “Ghosts and Spirits in the Sung Neo-Confucian World,” 603.

virtue and stay on the road to becoming a sage. In Zhu Xi's view, even though we cannot decide whether we live a long and healthy life, become rich, or obtain a high position, we can decide, at least, between correct *ming* and incorrect *ming*.

▪ **Tasan's notion of *tianming* 天命, *liming* 立命, and *zhengming* 正命**

Like Zhu Xi, Tasan interprets *tianming* as the command of *tian*, i.e., the command of Shangdi. At the time of birth, we receive from Shangdi a moral nature, to like good and dislike bad, and this inheres in our minds, continually commanding us throughout our lives to pursue good and avoid bad. This moral nature and moral mind is the command of Shangdi. This is quite similar to what Zhu Xi calls the original command (本然之性).

However, as Zhu Xi discerned another aspect of *tianming*, Tasan distinguishes a different kind of the command of Shangdi. He says, 日監在茲 以之福善禍淫 亦天命也 “[Shangdi] observes us everyday and brings good fortune to the good and disaster to the dissolute, and this is also *tianming*,” and also says, 死生禍福榮辱 亦有命 “In life and death, misfortune and fortune, honor and disgrace, there is also *ming*.”¹⁹ Shangdi does not only give us moral command, but also determines most of the important, non-moral, areas of human life. Yet, Shangdi is not a frivolous god, but a moral judge. Shangdi is believed to reward the good and punish the bad. The problem is that the form in which Shangdi repays us for good or bad is indiscernible to most of us. As I discussed, Tasan severed the classical connection between virtue and external goods. Furthermore, as an intentional being, Shangdi sometimes brings hardship to good

¹⁹ *Non* □ *kog* □ *mju* 16:8 (8:39a:10) and 20:3 (10:38a:12). Tasan also distinguishes, 天命有賦性之命 有得位之命 “In *ch'* □ *nmy* □ *ng*, there are the command bestowed in human nature and the command in obtaining position.” *Sigy* □ *ng Kang* □ *i* 詩經講義 (Lectures on the *Books of Odes*) 3:15b:7.

people as a way to train and heighten their virtue. In other words, this aspect of Shangdi's command in the non-moral realms of human life appears to be utterly contingent, and this is similar to the command of one's given lot (命分之命) in Zhu Xi's system.

However, these two commands, the command in the non-moral realms (Tasan) and the command of one's given lot (Zhu Xi), have crucial differences in their ways of dealing with contingency. First, for Tasan, many parts of human life are controlled by Shangdi, who is just, ever observant, and with noble intentions, unlike the indifferent and purely mechanical movements of psychophysical force. Second, this aspect of Shangdi's command is neither predetermined nor unalterable, whereas psychophysical endowments at birth are less likely to change during life. Thirdly, at least, our moral nature given by Shangdi is unaffected by contingency. For Tasan, human beings are born with the exact same moral inclinations. Even though these moral inclinations are not fully formed virtues, they will never perish, either. Conversely, Zhu Xi believed that due to unequal obstruction of psychophysical endowments, each individual is born with different moral strength. Concerning *Mengzi* 7B:24, Zhu Xi comments:

愚按 所稟者厚而清 則其仁之於父子也至 義之於君臣也盡 禮之於賓主也恭
智之於賢否也哲 聖人之於天道也 無不吻合而純亦不已焉 薄而濁 則反是
是皆所謂命也

"As I see it, if what one is endowed with is thick and clear, the benevolence between father and son will be at the highest level; the righteousness between ruler and subject will be complete; the propriety between guest and host will be respectful; the wisdom between worthy and unworthy will be bright; as for the Way of *tian*, sages are completely in accord with it and so the singleness [of their

virtue] does not stop. [In contrast, if one's psychophysical endowments are] thin and turbid, the opposite state will obtain. All of these are the so-called *ming*."²⁰

Tasan strongly objects to Zhu Xi's reading:

鑄案。 。 。 人於父子 孰不欲盡仁 而大舜遇瞽瞍 人於君臣 孰不欲盡義
而比干遇商受 孰不好禮 而不得處擯相之位 則不能行賓主之禮 孰不好智
而不得處百揆之任 則不能用賢者之才 聖人之於天道 豈不欲公諸天下 而不得其位
則孔子緘口而不言 是皆有命也

"In my view, ... between father and son, who would not want to fulfill benevolence? However, the Great Shun had Gusou [as his father]. Between ruler and subject, who would not want to fulfill righteousness? However, Bigan had King Zhou [as his king]. Who would not like propriety, but if one is not in the position of host, one cannot practice rituals between guest and host. Who would not like wisdom, but if one is not in the position of supervising governance, one cannot employ the talent of the worthy. How could it be that sages do not want to spread the Way of *tian* in the world? [But] if they do not obtain the position, they close their mouth and cannot speak like Kongzi. These are all up to *ming*."²¹

Tasan's ironic question, "Who would not want to fulfill benevolence?" rebuts Zhu Xi's view about uneven moral strength among people. For Tasan, Shangdi treats people equally, infusing the same moral inclinations in all. In other words, whereas for Zhu Xi, the command of one's given lot affects one's initial moral strength, Shangdi's command in the non-moral realm does not. Tasan, however, agrees with Zhu Xi that there are external conditions people do not have control of. Whether one encounters conducive or adverse conditions for moral pursuit is utterly up to the incomprehensible actions of Shangdi.

²⁰ *Mengzi jizhu* 7B:24. The phrase, 純亦不已焉, appears in the *Doctrine of the Mean* 26: the word, *chun* 純, refers to the virtue of King Wen (文王之德之純, and this is from the *Book of Odes*).

²¹ *Maengja yoyi* 7B:24 (2:50b:11).

With respect to Mengzi's teaching of *liming* 立命, Zhu Xi sees both aspects of *ming*, the moral command and the command of one's given lot, as things that one should accomplish together. Yet, in Tazan's view, one should only establish the moral command.²² In a strict sense, for Tazan, things like fortune/misfortune, wealth, and honor, etc. are not given as one's predetermined lot, as Zhu Xi claimed. Rather, these aspects of life could be given as parts of Shangdi's rewards and punishments, or as conditions for moral improvement, or even something else. Therefore, he says, 惟君子立命之法 不問殀壽 俛焉日有孳孳 常修以俟之 "The gentleman's way to establish *ming* is that regardless of dying young or living long, he everyday exerts himself industriously, cultivates himself constantly, and waits for what is to come."²³ No matter how Shangdi treats us, we should follow our moral nature, practice it in actual affairs, and attain virtue: this is the command of Shangdi that one should accomplish.

Surprisingly enough, the views of the two later writers on Mengzi's *liming* 立命 turn out to be exactly identical: "pursue goodness, no matter what." The difference between them just lies in how they come to terms with contingency: the movement of psychophysical force or the incomprehensible nature of Shangdi. This leads them to have different attitude toward contingency: for Zhu Xi, we *know* that certain parts of our lives are already determined and so we should concentrate on our moral pursuit, whereas for Tazan, we do *not know* how Shangdi will treat us and so we should concentrate on our moral pursuits.

Their difference becomes more apparent in their understandings of Mengzi's notion of *zhengming* 正命. Whereas Zhu Xi interpreted it as "correct *ming*," Tazan's interpretation is as

²² Tazan's interpretation of *liming* 立命 is the same as Zhu Xi's, to accomplish the command of *tian*: the difference lies in its content, what to accomplish. According to Tazan, 立者廢之反 委君命於草莽者 謂之廢命 立命者不廢所受之天命也 "Establishing is the opposite of abolishing. To throw away the command of ruler to the wasteland is called to abolish *ming*. To establish *ming* is not to abolish what one receives as *tianming*." *Maengja yo* 7A:1 (2:38a:2).

²³ *Maengja yo* 7A:1 (2:38a:1).

follows: 自生至死曰道 盡其道而死者 謂盡其天年而死也 “From birth to death is called the way. To complete the way and die means to complete one’s natural life span and die.”²⁴ Unlike Zhu Xi, who thought each person is born with a different life span, Tasan thinks that basically people are born in similar conditions. For instance, no one lives much longer than 100 years; the average life span of human beings is the same. If one completes this natural life span, this is *zhengming*; if one does not, this is *teming* 特命, exceptional *ming*. Accordingly, *zhengming* refers to a standard, average, and normal *ming* in Tasan’s view. Therefore, either “dying under a collapsing wall,” “dying in fetters,” “Yan Yuan’s untimely death,” “Bigan’s unjust death,” or “Kongzi’s counterfactual death,” all of these are not normal *ming*, but exceptional or abnormal *ming*.

The more significant point, however, is that one’s morality does not play any significant role in relation to normal *ming* or exceptional *ming*. Whereas Zhu Xi thinks that cases like “dying under a collapsing wall” and “dying in fetters” are obviously incurred by human folly, Tasan thinks they are purely a matter of *ming*. He explains:

同立巖牆之下 而一壓一免者有之 同犯桎梏之罪 而一誅一脫者有之 莫非命也
有正命焉 有特命焉 故君子慎之

“Even if two people stand together under a wall in danger of collapsing, there are cases where one is crushed to death and the other escapes death. Even if two people committed a crime together and as a result were put in fetters, there are cases where one is put to death and the other is spared. Nothing happens that is not due to *ming*. [But] there are normal *ming* and exceptional *ming*. Therefore, the gentleman is attentive to this.”²⁵

²⁴ *Maengja yo* 7A:2 (2:89a:11). In this passage, Tasan also takes a literal meaning of *dao* 道: path, road, and way. Therefore, I do not capitalize it.

²⁵ *Maengja yo* 7A:2 (2:39b:4).

Although committing a crime is definitely man's fault, whether or not he dies because of his crime is not necessarily determined by his wrongdoing, but is rather contingent. For Tسان, one's virtue neither guarantees good outcomes nor determines one's *ming*. It is absolutely up to the incomprehensible Shangdi, who has a special plan for the world: a deity 造化天地神人萬物之類 而宰制安養之者也 "who creates and harmonizes the universe, spirits, human beings and a variety of the myriad things, governs, controls, secures, and raises them."²⁶ Whatever Shangdi's decisions and intentions may be, one should prudently and arduously cultivate one's moral inclinations and do one's best to attain virtue. This is the command of Shangdi that is given to us all.

▪ Zhu Xi vs. Tسان on Good Life

To summarize their different conceptions of *tianming* 天命, *liming* 立命, and *zhengming* 正命, in Zhu Xi's thought, there are two modes in the command of *tian*: the moral command and the command of one's given lot. We should accomplish both: recovering our original nature and not harming our given lot. However, the way to accomplish these ends is one: to comply with the moral principle of *li* 理. As far as we live in line with the moral way, we are receiving our correct *ming* whether misfortune befalls us or abundant wealth showers upon us. In Tسان's thought, similarly, the commands of Shangdi are of two kinds: the moral command and the command in non-moral realm. However, what we should fulfill is only the moral command: to follow our moral inclinations and put them into action. Then, Shangdi will repay us with rewards, despite the fact that most of us do not comprehend Shangdi's intention. Nevertheless, the moral nature of our minds and the teachings of sages tell us about the ultimate moral

²⁶ *Ch'unch'u kojing* 春秋考徵 4:24a:2.

concern and justice of Shangdi. Even if we cannot ensure a normal *ming*, we should pursue the moral command and do our best to attain virtue.

This comparison of these three terms in Zhu Xi and Tansen's thought shows that their ultimate goal is nonetheless the same, the pursuit of goodness. They only differ concerning how they conceive of the way to achieve this goal. On the one hand, Zhu Xi's ethical system is an ethics of confidence. He secures the moral realm by separating out all the contingent factors and confining them to the influence and realm of *qi* 氣. Behind this world of psychophysical force, the world is operated perfectly according to the cosmic-moral principle of *li* 理. If only we can remove the obstruction of *qi*, we can see clearly this *li*, both within and without, and thus we can live in line with *li*. In Zhu Xi's view, we can know how to act and thereby we can take appropriate action.

Tansen's ethical system, on the other hand, is based on an ethics of faith.²⁷ His universe is operated not by impersonal *li*, but by the most spiritual being of all and the master of the universe, Shangdi. Shangdi infuses human beings with distinctive moral inclinations, constantly commands us, and observes our thoughts and actions in real time. However, the world

²⁷ However, the difference between Zhu Xi's confidence about knowable *li* and Tansen's faith in the unknowable Shangdi might not appear as distinct as I claim. To give a contrasting example, let's look at their views on certain natural phenomena, such as thunder and lightning. Zhu Xi's comment on *Lunyu* 10:25, 迅雷風烈必變 "When there was a sudden clap of thunder or a violent wind, he (Kongzi) certainly changed countenance," is: 必變者所以敬天之怒 "The reason he certainly changed countenance was because he was in awe the rage of *tian*." *Lunyu jizhu* 10:25. Zhu Xi takes these natural phenomena as *tian*'s response to men's misconduct. For instance, he also thinks that sometimes the reason people are hit by thunderbolts and die is because their bad behavior instigates bad *qi*. As Daniel Gardner points out, through the principle of influence and response, Zhu Xi makes sense of phenomena of the spiritual world, he also gives a plausible account to natural phenomena. By contrast, following Wang Chong's interpretation that thunder and winds are conducive to the growth and development of myriad creatures, Tansen does not consider these as the result of the rage of *tian*. But, he adds, 人物遇之有時乎罹殃此君子所以恐懼也 雷者固天之所以懼吾民者也 "When people encounter [thunder], they at times suffer misfortune. Therefore, a gentleman is afraid of it. Thunder is truly a way that *tian* makes people feel fear." *Non□ kog□ mju* 10:25 (5:16a:9). Even though Tansen does not believe that there is any connection between men's moral behavior and natural phenomena, he considers it as a means used by *tian* to warn and admonish people. In conclusion, Tansen and Zhu Xi agree on that we should be reverent and careful in regard to natural phenomena, but the way to reach this same attitude is clearly different from one another. See Daniel Gardner, "Ghosts and Spirits in the Sung Neo-Confucian World," 600-603.

operated by Shangdi at least appears to be contingent, because most of us cannot comprehend Shangdi's deep intentions. It is only the sages who understand these and admonish us with their teachings, the auspiciousness of the good and inauspiciousness of the bad. In Tazan's view, even if the world appears to be an utterly contingent place, we should believe in Shangdi's inherence in our minds, follow our moral nature, listen to our moral mind, and fulfill the commands of Shangdi.

At first glance, Zhu Xi's conception of psychophysical endowments appears too fatalistic and too pessimistic: we are born unequal in terms of intelligence, health, wealth, etc., and we cannot fundamentally change these facts about our lives. Instead of refuting the external criticism of Ru's fatalistic notion of *ming*, Zhu Xi directly confronted these external critics by providing a theoretical justification of *ming*. His active embrace of contingencies of the world reduces the moral pressure on each individual agent. Even if I fail to become as virtuous as the sages, this is not entirely my fault; we simply started from different beginnings. Zhu Xi believes this offers a just and fair way to hold individuals responsible for who they become. Furthermore, his acknowledgement of contingency enables him to pave the way for insulating and confining contingent factors from the workings of moral principle of *li*. His claim that most parts of human life are predetermined and unchangeable leads us to set aside those areas from our interest, focusing our attention solely on moral pursuits. Consequently, Zhu Xi's fatalistic notion of *qi* 氣 and *ming* 命 is, counter-intuitively, an active and powerful attack on contingency. He imprisoned all the contingent factors of the world within the invincible wall described and constituted by *qi*.²⁸

²⁸ However, Zhu Xi was well aware of the danger that his conception of psychophysical endowments is too close to a tragic fatalism, as the external critics assailed. For instance, on *Lunyu* 9:1, describing Kongzi's reticence on the issues of *ming* 命, *li* 利 and *ren* 仁, Zhu Xi explained to his disciple, Xingfu 行夫 (Cai Yu 蔡與), saying 罕言命者 凡吉凶禍福皆是命 若儘言命 恐人皆委之於命 而人事廢矣 所以罕言 "The reason that Kongzi

By contrast, Tasan's deconstruction of Zhu Xi's metaphysics of *li* and *qi* breaks down this wall of *qi* to release contingencies from their confinement. In addition, the incomprehensibility of Shangdi takes this a step further, turning the world into an utterly contingent place. Whereas Zhu Xi believes that humans can decide at least between correct *ming* and incorrect *ming*, in Tasan's system, humans cannot do much to ensure a normal *ming*. It is up to Shangdi whether one receives a normal *ming* by completing one's life span or an exceptional *ming* by being cut off in the middle. Accordingly, even though Tasan vehemently criticizes Zhu Xi's conception of psychophysical endowments as being too fatalistic, his world appears potentially as tragic as, or even more tragic than Zhu Xi's world. Nonetheless, Tasan firmly believes that our moral nature is impervious to such contingencies of the world. We, human beings, start along the same line – the same moral inclinations – and we are supposed to finish the moral journey of life – becoming a sage. Unlike Zhu Xi's notion of limited scope of moral responsibility, in Tasan's scheme, each individual is wholly responsible for who they are and what they do, at least in moral terms. Success and failure to become a sage lies within one's own hands, but are not the results of psychophysical endowments.²⁹

Their differences, so far, concern their respective ways to manage the contingency of the world. Zhu Xi confines it within the wall of purely mechanical movements of *qi*, while Tasan

seldom talked about *ming* is that fortune and misfortune, blessing and disaster are all matters of *ming*. If he had talked about *ming* a great deal, I fear that people would leave everything to *ming* and human affairs would be abandoned. This is why he seldom talked about *ming*." *Zhuzi yulei* 948:7 (Chan Wing-tsit, *Chu Hsi: New Studies*, 217). Accordingly, on the one hand, Zhu Xi made a clear demarcation between the moral principle of *li* and the contingencies of *qi*, and at the same time, he tried to maintain a delicate balance between the two.

²⁹ Of course, for the cases like Yan Yuan's untimely death, we cannot hold him responsible for not reaching the destination. Accordingly, I think that despite Tasan's belief in the ultimate justice of Shangdi, his system does not completely solve the problem of theodicy, because he does not believe in afterlife as in the Christian tradition or the endless cycle of life and death in the Buddhist tradition. The only way to solve this problem of theodicy seems to be the theory of self-sufficiency of virtue that Kongzi espoused. Tasan's interpretation of human nature as inclination also fits well with this theory: man's virtuous actions indeed bring pleasure. However, Tasan was not explicit on this issue.

attributes it to the incomprehensible moral deity, Shangdi.³⁰ The most distinctive difference between them is that in Zhu Xi's view, contingent movements of *qi* affect an individual's moral strength, whereas Tazan strongly objects to this and claims that one's moral nature is impervious to contingency and nothing can completely stamp out our moral nature. By defending this view, Tazan tried to recover the fullest extent of moral responsibility, which he thought had been severely damaged by Zhu Xi.

There is another significant area in which they part from each other: their conceptions of the good human life. As discussed, Zhu Xi believes that the original human nature consists of fully formed virtues. Human beings are, therefore, innately all sages. Thus, he says, 雖達而爲堯舜在上 亦不是加添些子 若窮而爲孔孟在下 亦不是減少些子 "Even if one succeeds and gains a high position like Yao and Shun, nothing has been added to this (*tian* endowed original nature); even if one is impoverished and stuck in a low position like Kongzi and Mengzi, nothing has been diminished in this."³¹ Since the perfect virtues are already given from the beginning, we can neither increase nor decrease them. It is just a matter of recovering them. On the other hand, Tazan believes that we are born with desires to be good, but these desires are not virtues yet. His moral activism emphasizes that it is our task to develop our moral inclinations, put them into actions, and thereby attain virtues. Virtues are acquired *a posteriori*. Tazan says, 分定者 正是自家心中 秤量義理 自定其分也 "The way that one's lot is determined is just that one balances and weighs righteous principle in one's mind and decides one's lot all by oneself."³² Therefore, how far we develop our virtues completely depends on how we perform in actual life.

³⁰ However, Tazan also acknowledges a certain pattern of principle working in the natural realm.

³¹ *Zhuzi yulei* 1443:10. This is Zhu Xi's comments on *Mengzi* 7A:21.

³² *Maengja yo* □i 7A:21 (2:42b:7).

Their different understandings of human nature play a central role in their conceptions of the good human life. Since Zhu Xi believes that we already possess the perfect principle of *li* in ourselves, we can have access to *li* at any moment and thereby live according to it, even if momentarily. As Zhu Xi's notion of *zhengming* 正命 tells us, as far as we live in line with *li*, we are having a good, worthy life, no matter how long we live and whatever we encounter during the course of our lives.³³ On the other hand, in Tansen's view, this seems impossible, because our moral nature is not comprised of perfect virtues. Virtues are something to be acquired through strenuous efforts. We can only understand as much as we have advanced in our moral journey. Tansen says:

孔顏樂處 臣以爲人未到孔顏地位 不能享其樂味 自不能知所樂何事 然樂其道
樂其善 樂其仁義 無往而不樂也

"With respect to what Kongzi and Yan Yuan took pleasure in, I think, if one does not reach the level of Kongzi and Yan Yuan, one cannot enjoy their pleasure and cannot know what they took pleasure in. However, if one takes pleasure in the Way, goodness, benevolence, and righteousness, wherever one goes, one will experience pleasure."³⁴

In his view, until we reach the final destination, we can never fully understand what it is like to live the life of sage. Even if he adds that we can take pleasure in living virtuously and savor our

³³ For a survey of early Chinese conceptions of happiness, see Philip Ivanhoe, "Happiness in Early Chinese Thought." In this article, Ivanhoe investigates the conceptions of happiness in early Ru and Daoist traditions, focusing on Kongzi and Zhuangzi. He notes that both of traditions agree on that happiness lies in following the Way 道, enabling one to shed a narrow and every self-centered conception of selfhood. He adds; "On the one hand, a life in harmony with the Dao offers a sense of being free from a range of common human concerns, fears, and anxieties; on the other hand, it produces a sense of being part of something more grand and significant than any individual project or pleasure could possibly be."

³⁴ *Non* □ *taech'aek* 論語對策 (10:41a:4). *Non* □ *taech'aek* is a short writing that collects Tansen's answers to King Chongjo's questions on some passages in *Non* □ in 1791, when Tansen was 29 years old. It is attached at the end of *Non* □ *kogmju*, following its chapter number.

moral journey, for him, time and effort are necessary to fully develop one's virtue.³⁵ This is another reason that Tسان believes Zhu Xi's cultivation program failed to produce sages.³⁶ He argues that Zhu Xi misinterpreted the term *yong* 庸 in the title of the *Book of the Mean* 中庸 as "steadfast principle." Instead, Tسان claims that the term *yong* means "the capacity to last long" 能久. The capacity to persevere in the moral journey is one of the essential features of Tسان's cultivation program. Therefore, it is no wonder that his conception of *zhengming* is different from Zhu Xi's: a normal *ming*, to complete one's natural life span. If Zhu Xi tries to view longevity with equanimity, Tسان accepts it as a blessing. Therefore, much like Kongzi, for Tسان, Yan Yuan and Bigan's virtuous lives are admirable, but their untimely deaths are also deeply regrettable.³⁷

If we compare their cultivation programs with exercise, Zhu Xi's program is more like swimming and Tسان's like climbing. For Tسان, we start our moral journey from the bottom of a mountain, aiming at getting to its top. While we are climbing, we enjoy climbing itself as well

³⁵ Of course, Zhu Xi also agrees that it takes time for us to remove our self-centered desires and be completely in compliance with *li*. Nonetheless, it is possible according to his ethical system that we can access to the perfect principle of *li* at any moment. In addition, Zhu Xi's teaching on sudden enlightenment is discussed later in the note.

³⁶ Tسان points out three main reasons that people do not attain sagehood in his time; 案今人欲成聖而不能者厥有三端 一認天爲理 一認仁爲生物之理 三認庸爲平常 "I think there are three reasons why people at present cannot achieve sagehood even though they desire to do so. One is that they think *ch'ün* is principle, another is that they think benevolence is the principle of living things, and the third is that they consider the *Mean* to be normality." *Taehak kang-i* 40a:3 (Mark Setton, *Chung Yagyong*, 68). As Mark Setton points out, the two reasons are involved with *li*. The third reason concerns Zhu Xi's interpretation on the term *yong* 庸 of the title of the *Book of the Mean*. Zhu Xi glosses it as "normal and constant" 平常. According to Daniel Gardner, for Zhu Xi, *yong* 庸 refers to "steadfast principle," and the title of the book can be rendered as "maintaining perfect balance in each and every set of circumstances and thus keeping to steadfast principle at all times." Consequently, all three reasons involves *li*. Tسان, however, takes the word *yong* to mean "the capacity to last long" 能久: in pursuing goodness, one should make constant efforts for a long time and then one can obtain virtue. Tسان's interpretation of the title of the book is as follows: 中者 至善也 庸者 能久也 至善而能久 則中庸也 "Zhong refers to the ultimate goodness; *yong* refers to the capacity to persevere. [Thus] the title of *Zhongyong* means to practice the ultimate goodness for a long time." *Simgyong mirhōm* 心經密驗, 38b:7. Daniel Gardner, *The Four Books: The Basic Teachings of the Later Confucian Tradition* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 2008): 107-109.

³⁷ Of course, it does not mean that Zhu Xi was not sorry for those unfortunate deaths. But compared to Tسان, Zhu Xi tried to maintain an indifferent attitude toward the unfortunate aspects of their life and to focus on their admirable way of living. Philip Ivanhoe points out that Zhu Xi and the Chengs seemed to feel more regret that Yan Hui died before attaining sagehood than that he died.

as the scenery along the mountain path. However, unless we reach the top, we cannot have a full sense of accomplishment and cannot enjoy the spectacular views opened up only from the summit. Those who conquer Mt. Virtue are sages. On the other hand, for Zhu Xi, we are all under the sea of psychophysical force, *qi*. But, once we are able to relax our body and float on the surface, we can keep our head above the water and breathe the perfect, fresh air of the principle of *li*. As a beginner, however, we cannot keep our head above for long and submerge into the water again. Nevertheless, we have a taste of *li* and know that the perfect principle of *li* is always there above the water, and we can taste it again at any moment if we try hard. If we keep practicing long enough, one day we will be able to swim freely, keeping our head above the sea of *qi* and breathing the pure and refreshing *li*.³⁸ Then, we become an expert swimmer, a sage.

Of course, it is not that Tazan does not value the process of climbing to the top, nor that Zhu Xi is not aiming to be an expert swimmer. However, while swimming and climbing are both exercise, they require different talents, skills, attributes from those who practice them; the

³⁸ In describing Zhu Xi's process of comprehending the principle of *li*, Michael Kalton uses the phrase, a "sudden breakthrough" or "Confucian enlightenment," and introduces Zhu Xi's own words: 至於用力之久而一旦豁然貫通焉 則眾物之表裏精粗無不到 而吾心之全體大用無不明矣 此謂物格 此謂知之至也 "After making a vigorous effort for a long time, one day with sudden penetration he will totally comprehend. Then in all things, the external and internal, the fine and the coarse, will be totally apprehended, and the mind in its integral substance and great functioning will have perfect intelligence. This is what is called the investigation of things; this is what is called the extension of knowledge." *Daxue jizhu* 5. Daniel Gardner, however, in explaining Zhu Xi's commentaries, differentiates between true goodness and this state of enlightenment. In commenting on *Lunyu* 45, Gardner notes, "Achieving true goodness is not the same as achieving a state of total and perpetual enlightenment. Rather, true goodness must, in a sense, be achieved over and over and over again. That is, in each and every encounter in life, a person must will to true goodness, treating others genuinely empathetically, as he would wish to be treated himself. If in any particular encounter, he gives up this will and does not extend himself perfectly appropriately, for that moment at least, he is no longer truly good." In other words, Gardner draws attention to the significance of action in Zhu Xi's system. As I pointed out in the example above, in order to become an expert swimmer, one needs to put constant and arduous effort. However, Zhu Xi's emphasis on the comprehension of *li* is indeed at odds with Tazan's ethical view. For Tazan, Shangdi is not the object of human comprehension. Sages are those who come near to Shangdi, but they do not claim that they completely understand Shangdi's intention. Similarly, nobody can claim that he or she has conquered this mountain of virtue: Mt. Virtue must be open-ended in Tazan's view. Michael Kalton, "Chong Tazan's Philosophy of Man," 14; Daniel Gardner, *The Four Books*, 28.

ethical programs of Tazan and Zhu Xi are alike in that both aim at cultivating people's virtue, but they appreciate and emphasize different aspects and values. In Zhu Xi's program, the focus is more on the process, while in Tazan's, it is on the outcome. In my view, while Zhu Xi wants to put all people onto the path to sagehood, Tazan wants to make sure some people complete their journey and actually become sages. However, this is primarily a matter of focus. Their ultimate goal is indeed the same: to assure the existence of sages. In this respect, they both remain true to the Ru tradition.

■ CONCLUSION: HANDLING FATE AND THE GOOD HUMAN LIFE

This study of the Ru discourse on *ming* 命 – moral economy and contingency – teaches us a shared truth among Ru teachings concerning the pursuit of virtue. These various Ru thinkers agree that virtue is in itself rewarding and also virtue is the best means to favorable ends. For them, virtuous living is the most satisfying and the best possible way to live in the world of contingency.

However, these Ru thinkers vary in the ways they recommend to cope with contingency, and their different conceptions of the world lead them to differ in the emphasis they place upon the two roles of virtue: as a *means* and as an *end*. For example, Mengzi and Zhu Xi, as well as Xunzi, tried to separate out contingent factors from the workings of moral economy and to tighten the necessary connection between virtue and favorable consequences. In this scheme, the dimension of virtue as a means is highlighted. In contrast, in the ethical systems of Kongzi and Tansen, where such a linkage is less prominent, the dimension of virtue as an end in itself looms large. Throughout Ru history, the role of virtue has oscillated between these two poles, seeking the optimal balance.

These issues concerning the conception of the world and the role of virtue are directly connected with their attitudes toward external goods. Curiously, in a strict moral economy, there is a tendency to depreciate or be indifferent to favorable goods of mundane value, dampening human expectations for such goods. On the other hand, in a contingent world view, since the fulfillment of such expectations is not guaranteed, external goods enjoy a much more hospitable position. Accordingly, despite their advocacy of the theory of self-sufficient virtue, the good human life envisioned by Kongzi and Tansen is a virtuous life, endowed with power,

wealth, health, family, friends, etc., in which regard they are very much like Aristotle. And also, despite their strong belief in virtue as the best means, for Mengzi and Zhu Xi, the good life is a virtuous life but it does not have much to do with external goods, in which regard they are very much like the Stoics. Consequently, compared to Kongzi and Tansen, the latter two thinkers were able to remain relatively calm and unperturbed when unfortunate incidents happened to good people.

In spite of similarities to their Ru predecessors, Zhu Xi and Tansen came to realize that the classical connection between virtue and external goods was no longer sustainable in their societies. As a consequence, they needed to make a profound change in this classical linkage. First, Zhu Xi substituted specific items or examples of external goods with the more abstract and comprehensive notion of *li* 利, “benefit” or “well-being,” thereby loosening the tightness of the classical connection, to a certain extent. Tansen went a step further and made the radical claim that there is no necessary connection between virtue and external goods. For example, he denied the long-held belief that virtuous people enjoy longevity, and he also argued, if there is any connection between virtue and power or wealth, this is something ensured through the system of human governance. For Tansen, the moral economy of Shangdi 上帝 is inconspicuous and incomprehensible to most humans.

Even though both Zhu Xi and Tansen did not abandon the belief in moral economy, their understandings of the world are markedly different from each other. Zhu Xi’s world operates necessarily according to knowable, cosmic-moral principle, *li* 理; Tansen’s world is contingent and depends upon an incomprehensible, moral deity, Shangdi 上帝. Accordingly, Zhu Xi’s ethical system is founded on an ethics of confidence: we can know this *li* and thereby we can act in accordance with it. On the other hand, Tansen’s ethical system is founded on an ethics of faith:

we believe that Shangdi is the ultimate source of our moral nature and Shangdi is always watching us and commanding us within our minds.

These two very different understandings of the world are also central to their conceptualizations of moral responsibility. By distinguishing and confining contingencies to the realm of psychophysical force, *qi* 氣, Zhu Xi sought to reformulate the Ru notion of *ming*. His candid admission and active embrace of contingent factors in the world enabled him, on the one hand, to envisage a perfectly moralized universe, operating according to the cosmic-moral principle of *li*, and, on the other hand, to make individuals shoulder a limited amount of responsibility. He thought that individuals are born with different moral strength and ability, and thus we cannot hold people responsible for who they are and what they do in a just and proper way, without taking this into consideration. However, from Tansen's perspective, Zhu Xi's limited notion of moral responsibility relieves the individual of too much responsibility, making people unappreciative of the achievement of sages and less resolute in their moral pursuits. To the contrary, Tansen claimed that, at least in the moral domain, individuals are born with the same moral inclinations, and thus, they are wholly responsible for the way they are and for the things they do. Tansen placed a heavy burden on human beings: whether or not one succeeds in attaining sagehood is entirely in one's own hands.

These different conceptions of moral responsibility have significant implications for the formulations of their respective programs of self-cultivation. Zhu Xi's program pays more attention to the *process*, focusing on how far each individual has improved in his or her moral pursuit. On the other hand, Tansen's program pays more attention to the *outcome* or the final destination, highlighting the fact that our moral journey should be completed. If we compare them to Kongzi and Mengzi, Zhu Xi's is closer to Kongzi's program of a cup half-full, "We are

making progress"; and Tسان's is more like Mengzi's program, which can be seen in terms of a cup that should be fully filled.¹ If Kongzi and Zhu Xi's programs purport to attract all people to the path to sagehood, Mengzi and Tسان's programs aim at the actual attainment of sagehood even if only for some people. It is noteworthy that in terms of their understandings of the world, Zhu Xi's moral economy of *li* 理 inherited Mengzi's rationalized version and Tسان's moral economy of Shangdi 上帝 is in line with Kongzi's contingent world view; but, the affinities of their self-cultivation programs turned out the other way around.

The discourse on *ming* interrelates with many issues: the conception of the world, the treatment of contingency, the role of virtue, the status of external goods, the vision of the good human life, the discussion of moral responsibility, the formation of a self-cultivation program, and so on. Accordingly, the study of the discourse on *ming* opens new doors into issues that have not been adequately appreciated or studied, and also opens new windows for issues that can be viewed in a different light. Furthermore, the discourse on *ming* is closely connected to other domains of Ru discourse that have been passionately discussed in both pre-modern and modern scholarship: e.g., discussions of the notion of *tian*, debates on human nature, the source of morality, and so on. This study tries to bring together the discourse on *ming* and other domains of Ru discourse, and tries to provide a more comprehensive picture of the Ru tradition. This helps us better understand the implications of *ming* for the ethical system of Ru and also helps us frame and interpret other domains of Ru discourse in a more meaningful way.

In addition, the study on the discourse on *ming* can be expanded outside the Ru tradition. In her study of the role of luck in ancient Greek culture, Martha Nussbaum treats

¹ However, my conclusion that Zhu Xi's program is more like Kongzi's positive program somewhat contradicts our common perception of the rigorousness of Zhu Xi's self-cultivation program, for example concerning the predominant power of *li* over individuals and the exactness of correct ritual form, which was criticized by later thinkers. The gap between these two views should be studied further.

Greek tragedy and its relationship with Greek philosophy. She notes that for the ancient Greeks, there was no stark demarcation between literature and philosophy and both literature and philosophy dealt with the same sorts of problems in human life.² I think this approach is applicable to the Chinese context as well. Many scholars point out that sacrifice and divination were the two main pillars of the Shang and Zhou religious systems.³ The Ru tradition probably developed from sacrificial practices, which took the proper action of participants in sacrifice as the barometer of its efficacy, while considering divination practices as its competitors. According to Mark Lewis's observation, during the Han dynasty, there was a tension between philosophical traditions and specialist traditions surrounding divination practice.⁴ Accordingly, we can treat the Ru tradition and the divination tradition not as disparate traditions, but as rivals dealing with the same problem, but employing different approaches and methods.⁵ In other words, the two traditions can be viewed as different ways of dealing with *ming*-type events, different ways of coming to terms with contingency.

Furthermore, this approach will provide a useful background for understanding Zhu Xi's incorporation of divination practice into his ethical program and Tansen's attempt to separate the tradition of the *Book of Changes* 易經 and Yi divination from the practice of moral cultivation.⁶ Briefly put, Zhu Xi considered the *Changes* as a revelation to former sages of the

² Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*.

³ For the discussion of sacrifice and divination, see Joseph Adler, "Divination and Sacrifice in Song Neo-Confucianism," in Jeffrey L. Richey, ed., *Teaching Confucianism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008): 55-82.

⁴ Mark Lewis, "The Natural Philosophy of Writing," in his *Writing and Authority in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999): 241-286.

⁵ Mark Csikszentmihalyi's study of embodied ethics in early China is one of the primary examples of the attempt to engage Ru virtue discourse with other traditions. He examines the dynamic interaction between Ru virtue discourse and technical disciplines outside virtue discourse, such as physiognomy and medicine. Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*.

⁶ For the study of Zhu Xi's attitude toward divination, see Joseph Adler, "Chu Hsi and Divination," in Smith, Kidder Jr., et al., *Sung Dynasty Uses of the I Ching* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990): 169-205. For the comprehensive discussion on Tansen's study of the *Book of Changes*, see Kim Young-woo, *Chong Tansen-i Yuhak Sasang Yon'gu* (A Study on Chong Yagyong's Yixue 易學), Ph.D diss. Seoul National University, 2000.

cosmic-moral principle of *li* 理, which can help man's moral cultivation; Tasan regarded the *Changes* as a human device invented by sages, not as a moral guide but as a practical guide for human governance. Therefore, the study of their discussions of the *Changes* and *Yi* divination practice can show how their *ming* discourse is connected to, or translated into this other area of discourse.

This historical reconstruction and comparative study of *ming* discourse questions the common assumption that the Ru tradition is primarily a system of ethical philosophy that has a unified and coherent system centering on notions like the four cardinal virtues and human nature. I hope to show the diverse and multiple trends of thought found within the Ru tradition and to illustrate how they played themselves out in the history of the Ru. As this study shows, in response to Buddhist challenges, Zhu Xi constructed his unique system of moral economy of *li* 理, developing Mengzi's rationalization of moral economy and naturalization of *tian* 天. Yet, his confinement of contingency to the realm of psychophysical force 氣 comes close to Xunzi's confinement of contingency to the natural realm 天. On the other hand, in reaction against Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism and in response to the powerful influence of Catholicism, Tasan revived an ancient deity, Shangdi 上帝, reinforcing Kongzi's contingent world view. But, his emphasis on the uniqueness of human moral values also reminds us of Xunzi's clear demarcation between the human ethical realm and the amoral natural realm. Furthermore, Tasan's notion of the inner-inspection of Shangdi curiously resembles Mozi's emphasis on the omniscience and retributive power of spiritual beings. Consequently, the Ru tradition is not a static and unified system; but it is a dynamic tradition, actively responding to its own problems and interacting with traditions outside the Ru throughout the course of history and across different cultural texts. I try to treat these various thinkers as equal participants in conversations on the same or

similar issues, using a similar language, trying to engage with one another in a more direct and robust way.

The study of *ming* discourse will also put us in a better position when comparing the Ru tradition with other cultures, since the notion of contingency is present in all cultures and appears under various names such as *moira*, *fortuna*, *karma*, fate, fortune, and destiny.⁷ Therefore, the analysis of this one specific issue that is shared by other cultures can serve as a clear starting point for greater and more detailed comparison.

Moreover, as contingency is present in every traditional culture, it is also not absent in the modern world. However, our scientific, rationalistic culture tends to regard notions like fate and fatalism to be superstitious and mysterious. It is true that we live in a world where many parts of human life that used be beyond our control have become much more manageable through human agency. When we leave home in the morning, we can carry an umbrella with unprecedented confidence in the need for it, because we are kindly informed by a forecaster that it is going to rain in the afternoon with a specific percentage of chance. The remarkable development of technologies supports us with a fairly stable and secure supply of food, water, electricity, etc., throughout the years. The life we are enjoying here and now far exceeds the imagination of the sages of ancient China in terms of its abundance and apparent stability.

Nevertheless, this does not suggest that we are living in a far more certain and predictable world than the ancient sages lived. In a sense, we are living in a world as uncertain as, or even more uncertain than a primitive world. In his survey of a history of happiness in

⁷ A number of studies to compare the notion of fate in early China and ancient Greek has been conducted by Lisa Raphals. See Lisa Raphals, "Fatalism, Fate, and Stratagem in China and Greece," in Steven Shankman and Stephen W. Durrant, eds., *Early China/Ancient Greece: Thinking through Comparisons* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002): 207-234; "Fate, Fortune, Chance, and Luck in Chinese and Greek: A Comparative Semantic History," *Philosophy East and West* 53, 4 (2003): 537-574; and "Languages of Fate: Semantic Fields in Chinese and Greek," in Christopher Lupke, ed., *The Magnitude of Ming: Command, Allotment, and Fate in Chinese Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005): 70-106.

Western culture, Darrin McMahon recounts the tragedy of development witnessed by Rousseau: “Presenting us with ever-greater possibilities and ever-expanding needs, modern commercial societies multiplied human desires, which ranged steadily ahead of our ability to fulfill them, creating envy and dissatisfaction in their wake.”⁸ In other words, as we expand our control over the world, paradoxically, we become more vulnerable to other aspects of life: satisfying our expanding sets of desires leads us to depend more and more on contingent supplies of the things needed to find fulfillment. As I noted in the introduction, we, human beings, are living in a world, which presents us with a constant tension between what can and cannot be controlled through human agency. This predicament seems to be the universal and inescapable attribute of the human condition.

Therefore, I believe that the teachings of Ru thinkers can still be instructive and enlightening in the present: the way they maneuvered their lives through the predicament we still have, the pursuit of virtue. Of course, we also admire virtuous people and most of us appreciate being virtuous. However, virtue no longer plays as significant and essential a role as it played in the lives of Ru. We try to live a successful life, establishing a happy family, thriving in our job, accumulating a fair amount of wealth, maintaining a healthy life through wholesome diet and regular check-ups. Plus, if we are good people, this is even better. In other words, virtue is still valued as a constituent of a good human life; but, it has become *a* component, a supplementary ingredient, to our conception of good life. For Ru thinkers, virtue was the very foundation of a good human life; it was only the role of external goods that they disagreed about. In our age, the relationship between virtue and external goods is reversed: our mundane concern for power, wealth, health, etc. has become the basis of our conception of the good life. I

⁸ Darrin McMahon, “The Pursuit of Happiness in History,” in *Oxford Handbook of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 258. But for his comprehensive study of a history of happiness, see Darrin M. *Happiness: A History*.

think we should straighten out this relationship and heed the teachings of Ru thinkers: as Kongzi admonishes, without virtue, external goods are insubstantial and unreliable like “passing clouds,” and as Mengzi teaches, without virtue, nothing is truly delightful and enjoyable. I think it is worth noting the wisdom of these Ru thinkers, as long as we live in a world of contingency and want to successfully handle our fate, which unavoidably leads us to the pursuit of virtue.⁹

⁹ In light of my concluding remarks, the following questions suggest themselves: “what does it exactly mean to pursue virtue and live virtuously?” and “can the way that Ru thinkers thought of living virtuously still be adapted to our modern life?” Such questions need to be answered and this would be a demanding and difficult task. If, however, we reorient our life based on the pursuit of virtue and start to ask these questions, we have, I believe, taken the first step toward living virtuously.

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