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The Golden Rule as the Core Value in Confucianism & Christianity: Ethical Similarities and Differences

ROBERT E. ALLINSON

ABSTRACT *One side of this paper is devoted to showing that the Golden Rule, understood as standing for universal love, is centrally characteristic of Confucianism properly understood, rather than graded, familial love. In this respect Confucianism and Christianity are similar. The other side of this paper is devoted to arguing contra 18 centuries of commentators that the negative sentential formulation of the Golden Rule as found in Confucius cannot be converted to an affirmative sentential formulation (as is found in Christianity) without a change in its meaning. In this respect Confucianism and Christianity are different.*

While Confucianism is a broad term with a wide reference, I would like to restrict it in this context to Confucianism as it exists in the primary texts of the *Analects*, *The Great Learning* and the *Doctrine of the Mean* [1]. While Christianity is also a broad term with a wide reference, I will take it to stand for the set of doctrines representing the Judaeo-Christian tradition with a special emphasis on the doctrine of universal love [2]. Within these general limits, I would like to compare the two great traditions by selecting one main principle shared by both which has a strong claim to be the central ethical principle in each. This principle I shall characterise as the Golden Rule, a term which I shall use without prejudice as indicating either the negatively formulated (and not for that reason negative in orientation or value) version of Confucianism and the affirmatively formulated version of Christianity. There are, to be sure, other similarities and differences both uniting and dividing these two traditions. But this central principle, differing only in linguistic formulation, offers us a golden opportunity (excuse the pun), for observing similarities and differences relevant to the area of ethics.

My paper will be divided into two parts. The first part will concern itself with establishing that Confucianism stands for universal rather than graded love; that is, a preferential love for one's family. Without this part of the paper, it might appear that Confucianism and Christianity are not comparable on this fundamental point at all. In order to establish that Confucianism and Christianity share a common ground, I will first make a brief historical comment to suggest why there has been a *perceived* difference between the two traditions. Perceived Confucianism will be distinguished from Confucianism proper. I will then propose three arguments of a textual and a philosophical kind to establish that Confucianism can be fairly regarded as standing for the principle of universal love. The first part of my paper will thus be an attempt to bring forth the similarities that exist between Christianity and Confucianism in the area of ethics.

The second part of my paper will be devoted to attempting to explicate what

differences might exist between Confucianism and Christianity on the basis of the semantic differences that exist in the formulation of the Golden Rule in each tradition. We will explore briefly the implications of the different formulations for the views of human nature in both traditions. We will also explore what possible advantages and disadvantages might lie with each formulation. Finally, we will ask in what way or ways the two traditions may gain from each other. In other words, what is the value of a Confucian-Christian dialogue?

To begin, there are historical reasons for why such a teaching as preferential familial love came to be ascribed to Confucius. While in this brief compass we can by no means do justice to the complexities of this topic, we can take note of two important external early influences and one important internal, textual influence. First, it is mainly the *Book of Filial Piety*—composed in the third century BC—that attributes to Confucius the view that filial piety is the “root of virtue and the source of all teaching (Ch. 1).” [3] It is perhaps because of this that Confucius has been taken to be the champion of filial piety which is, as a matter of fact, rarely mentioned in the *Analects* except in the first two books. Second, the influence of Mo Tzu, who placed a strong emphasis on universal love as opposed to the doctrines of graded love be attributed to his Confucian opponents, played some role in strengthening the thought that graded love was a Confucian doctrine. Third, with respect to internal, textual reasons, we must take note of the fact that filial piety is mentioned in a prominent place in the *Analects*—in I. 2—which may have contributed to the prominence given to it in the perceived tradition. As evidence of how the perceived view of Confucianism as standing for graded love is still influential today, one may take note of the fact that the title of David Wong’s paper, ‘Graded Love versus Universal Love’, given at the Eastern Division meetings of the American Philosophical Association for the panel of the International Society for Chinese Philosophy in December 1986, reflects that Confucianism is still widely regarded as representing graded love over the universal love of Mohism or Christianity.

In what is to follow, I will offer three arguments to attempt to establish that Confucianism stands for universal love and that the notion therefore that it stands for graded love is not apropos of Confucianism proper. The first and least important of my three textual and philosophical arguments is that *some* of the passages which are cited as evidence for the importance or primacy of filial piety for Confucianism, and the consequent justification for the favouritism that is to be shown to family members, can be taken as evidence that such a value as filial piety is considered hypothetical and not categorial in axiological status. To borrow Kant’s distinction, if a value is put forth as a means for the sake of achieving a higher value, then it cannot be taken as the highest value that is being espoused: it is therefore a hypothetical value (in strict Kantian terms it would be a hypothetical imperative). It does not follow that it possesses no value; it only follows that its value is secondary. For example, the saying which is analysed in *The Great Learning*, Book IX. 1, is, “To govern a state one must first bring order into one’s family”. This passage is subject to the interpretation that familial values are hypothetical to the end of bringing order to the state. It would appear from this and other, similar passages from Book IX that filial piety (*in these passages*) is being put forth as a hypothetical value, a value which is valuable because it contributes to the order of the state. It would seem to follow from this that filial piety could not be taken as one’s ultimate value. And it does not follow from these passages that the state would take precedence over the family rather than the family members possessing a privileged status. We would only be justified in drawing this conclusion if

we found textual evidence which declared that the state was the ultimate ethical end-goal of man's development and we do not find such textual evidence. In fact, the ultimate virtue is said to be to illustrate illustrious virtue under heaven (Legge) [4].

The second, and more important argument that I would like to set forth is that filial piety, when it is mentioned in the *Analects*, is not characterised as an exclusive form of love, but rather is designed as an epistemological guide and as an ontological locus for our ethical feelings and values. By an epistemological guide, I mean that statements about filial piety are designed as procedural statements for enabling us to come to know how to find and how to apply our ethical values. By an ontological locus, I mean that such statements also serve the purpose of showing us the origin of our ethical feelings and values. It does not follow from this that the totality of our ethical values consists in or can be reduced to the ways by which we become aware of our ethical values or the ways in which our ethical values arise. In Western terms, to appraise the final cause or the end-goal of our valuation by its chronological or developmental origin is to commit a species of the genetic fallacy. In Oriental terms, we may call this a case of mistaking the seed for the fruit.

In the famous passage in *Analects* I. 2, it is stated that filial piety is the root of a man's character [5]. Two things must be noted about this passage. First of all, it is not attributed to Confucius but is spoken by Yu Tzu. Second, in terms of its content, the root is certainly the origin, but it is not the end-product. If the end-product or goal is something other than filial piety, then what is really being said here is that filial piety is a way in which one learns how to achieve that something else. Filial piety is an epistemological guide to assist one in achieving the goal of being ethical. At the same time, it is the ontological source of goodness, for the way in which one becomes good is by first being good at home. It is both ontological and epistemological: it is the way to become good and it is also the way in which one can know how to become good. But neither ontological nor epistemological starting points can be confused with end-goals.

Of the two functions of filial piety (epistemological guide and ontological source), I would like to concentrate for a moment on the epistemological function. In *Doctrine of the Mean* 20. 5, it is stated that, "Love is the characteristic element of man, and the great exercise of it is in showing affection for relatives". I take this to mean that showing affection for relatives is both a mode of learning about love and a manifestation of love. The love of relatives is not cited here as the exclusive exercise of love, but rather as a powerful example of love and an example with which all of us would be familiar. In Wing-tsit Chan's deft characterisation, this is the beginning of our learning how to be loving, but not the end of it:

While the application of love necessarily starts with parents, such love is by nature contagious, and by the Confucian process of "judging others by what is near in ourselves" all people will eventually be similarly affected. [6]

The third and last argument I would like to set out is the direct or indirect emphasis Confucius himself places upon the Golden Rule as constituting the most basic principle of his teachings. Whenever Confucius is asked about what is the most central or most important principle of his teachings, he does not refer to familial love. What he speaks about most generally is either *shu* or *jen*. We will explore briefly below the relationship between *shu* and *jen*. In any case, there is no qualification placed on either of these notions that they should be applied in a greater degree to one's family members than to outsiders. [7]

We must be careful not to confuse empirical fact with value. We may, as a matter of

empirical fact, love our own family members more than strangers. But this has nothing to do with *jen*. The value of loving our own family members relates to *jen* only as an illustration to us of what love means. It does not follow from the empirical fact that we may love our own family members more than strangers, that we ought to do so. This is to confuse the 'is' with the 'ought'.

No one would question, in the fashionable ethical dilemma cases, that most likely we will show a preference for our own family members over strangers. It is important to realise that such ethical dilemma cases rarely arise in real life. If such a dilemma did arise, we would be confronting our empirical 'is' with our ethical 'ought'. It would not be the case of a conflict between two 'oughts'. Or, to put this in another way, whatever decision we might arrive at would not be the basis for an ethics. The two 'oughts' would be equal. But we probably would not be able to deny the greater strength of empirical feeling that would exist for our own family members.

What is generalisable is that family love can be regarded as the model for the love of our fellow men and for this we may be grateful for the existence of familial love. Most likely, this is the meaning behind the well-known statement in *Analects* XII. 5; "All within the Four Seas are his Brothers". It is valuable to focus on this statement strongly as it shows the extension of familial love to universal love, or to be more precise, it shows the extension of universal love to family love as everyone becomes a member of one's family. This generalisation shows up later in a still more universalised form in the famous *Western Inscription* of Chang Tsai where he declares, "All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions". [8] It is interesting to note that this is Plato's solution for social harmony in the *Republic*, where he devises a scheme for breeding in which no one knows whose children are whose so that whoever one meets might be (and therefore will be treated) as a member of one's family.

When Confucius is asked what is the most central principle of his teachings, he answers not in terms of familial love, but in terms of the Golden Rule. However much he may have valued familial love, he did not value it as the central or the most overriding ethical principle:

Tzu-kung asked, 'Is there a single word which can be a guide to conduct throughout one's life?' The Master said, 'It is perhaps the word "*shu*". Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire. [9]

Again, when asked about what is *jen*, on one occasion Confucius says, 'Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire [10]. Since *jen* is frequently argued to be the most important ethical notion of Confucius and this statement is considered to be a formulation of *jen*, then this statement of the Golden Rule can also be taken as the most important ethical principle of Confucius [11].

In another place, to the Master's remark that there was a single thread binding his way together, Tseng Tzu added the explanation after the Master had left that, "The Way of the Master consists of *chung* and *shu*" [12]. Why *chung* is added here is not completely clear [13]. It is quite clear why *shu* is given as it coheres with the above remark and, in addition, *shu* is defined as an analogy to take what is near at hand as the method of *jen* [14]. *Chung*, despite some arguments for some other meanings, seems to carry the meaning of doing one's best [15]. It is difficult to see what this adds to *shu* since it would appear to be tautologous that whatever your ethical principle were to be, you would attempt to put it into practice according to the best of your efforts. For this reason, XV. 24 seems preferable. The addition of *chung* does not occur in a direct saying of Confucius but in the statement made by Tseng Tzu, after the Master has

left. Since *shu* had been earmarked before as the single word, perhaps this is what the Master had in mind as the single thread. *Chung*, when added on, makes two threads, not one, and makes Confucius' earlier statement about the single thread incomprehensible. It is clear that Confucius did not consider *chung* to be sufficient for *jen* as he says of Tzu-wen that he was *chung* but could not be said to be *jen* [16]. It would be clear from this statement alone that *chung* could not be the single thread. Whereas *shu* could be the single thread in the light of XV. 24; XII. 2; VI. 30 and *Chung Yung* 13.3. It is certainly the single word. In XV. 24, the text, 'Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire' is given immediately after *shu*, as if it were the definition of *shu*. Most likely, it was this fact that gave rise to *shu*'s being translated as 'reciprocity'. This is too ambiguous as in English its meaning is open and not referentially fixed. To explore the relationship between *chung*, *shu* and *jen* further would take us beyond the scope of this paper. It is important to remember that *shu* is considered a sufficient procedure for knowing that how to practise the way of *jen*. And if *jen* is the most important ethical principle, then what need do we have of *chung*? I raise this only as a question, nothing more. What is essential is that whether or not we include *chung*, nowhere in the above formulations of the ethical principle is there an attempt to qualify the principle to make it apply only to family members or to apply to family members in a great degree than to non-family members.

For these three textual and philosophical reasons, I would conclude that Confucianism proper takes the Golden Rule as its central ethical principle. There does not seem to be a great deal of difference between *jen* and *shu* since *shu* seems to be the procedure whereby one practises the way of *jen*. While a little later on we may draw some further distinctions, we may safely say that the Golden Rule represents the central ethical principle for Confucianism.

I think that there is even less of a question regarding the centrality of the Golden Rule for Christianity. In one place, it is considered second only to loving God. When asked what is the greatest commandment of the law, Jesus replied, "Love thy Lord your God with all your soul and with all your mind. That is the greatest commandment. It comes first. The second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. Everything in the Law and prophets hangs on these two commandments" [17]. And again: "And as ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also to them likewise" [18]. The only difference in the way that the Christian Golden Rule is formulated is that it is formulated as an affirmative proposition. It is important to note that the difference is semantic, not axiological. Therefore, the terms 'negative' and 'affirmative' are properly applied, not 'positive' and 'negative'. The word 'positive' is prejudicial as it carries with it an honorific connotation when it is contrasted with the word 'negative'. The only other difference between the two formulations that we can notice is that in one of the Christian formulations love is commanded. In that which follows we can pay special attention to what differences are created by the negative and the affirmative formulations and the commanding rather than the commending of love.

Let us start with the issue of the negative and the affirmative formulations of the Golden Rule. It is of interest that most of the discussions on the differences between the negative and the affirmative formulations concern themselves either with proving why the Christian "positive" version is superior to the Confucian "Silver Rule", or with trying to show that there are no differences between the two formulations since they are both "positive" in effect. For example, Chan "defends" the Confucian tradition against the Western charge that the Confucian doctrine of love is negative. Even for Chan, the term 'negative' is made to refer to the doctrine and not the formulation:

It is often contended in the West that the Confucian doctrine of love is negative because it taught, "Do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you" (XII. 2; XV. 23: *The Doctrine of the Mean*, 13). But the followers of Confucius have never understood it to be negative . . . Commentators on the *Analects* in the last eighteen centuries have never understood the Golden Rule to be negative. In his *Lun-yu cheng-i* (Correct Meanings of the *Analects*) for example, Liu Pao-Nan (1791-1895) made this comment: "Do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you. Then by necessity we must do to others what we want them to do to us." [19]

While Chan is correct in his view that the Confucian *doctrine* of love is not negative, he too quickly reduces the negative *formulation* to the positive formulation in favourably quoting Liu Pao-Nan in this respect. This reduction has the effect of eradicating any possible differences (whether good or bad) between the two formulations. In doing so, he shows that possibly he has been overly influenced by the Western view that the Christian affirmatively formulated proposition is the superior formulation.

In the remainder of my paper, I will attempt to go against eighteen centuries of tradition by arguing that the negative formulation carries with it important implications that are not carried by the affirmative formulation (and vice versa) so that the reduction of the negative formulation to the positive formulation *changes the meaning of the proposition*. Here, I am joined indirectly by Professor Liu Shu-hsien who argues that the formulation of Confucianism is both more detailed than its affirmative counterpart and includes features of self-development not included in the Christian formulation [20].

I have already argued at length elsewhere that the negative formulation is consonant with other basic, implicit Confucian attitudes such as modesty in epistemological matters, humility in ethical matters, naturalism, humanism and the belief in the inherent goodness of human nature. In addition, I have also argued that such a formulation might have had the intent or at the very least the effect of preventing moral harm and promoting moral growth [21]. While I will not repeat all of these arguments here, I would like to focus briefly on this last point before reviewing the preceding ones.

One of the major differences of the negative formulation is that it does not counsel us to take action towards others. In the quotation from Liu Pao-Nan, it is stated that it follows by necessity from the negative formulation (Do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you) that we must do to others what we want them to do to us. But this is not the case. In fact, as I shall argue below, negative formulation is designed especially to prevent this consequence from occurring. That we must do to others what we want them to do to us is only a logical consequence of the affirmative formulation. Let us take a graphic example of how the negative formulation avoids the consequence of taking action towards others which at the same time implicitly shows why it was designed to avoid this consequence. If one were a masochist and enjoyed being hurt by others, it would follow from the affirmative proposition that one should attempt to hurt others in return. But this in no way follows from the negative proposition. In order to make it follow from the negative proposition, one would be forced to contort language grotesquely. One would be forced to say, 'I would not have others not not hurt me and therefore I would not not hurt them in return.' Not only is this linguistically absurd, it would be difficult to understand and thus to carry out. It is obvious that the negative formulation is not well suited to a reciprocity that involves

acting in certain ways towards others. The 'not' is understood normally to refer to refraining from action, not taking action. In this case, the negative formulation carries with it the advantage of preventing more harm [22]. It was George Bernard Shaw in *Man and Superman*, who said "Do not do unto others as you would they do unto you, they might have different tastes".

The case of the negative formulation as promoting moral growth is similar. Let us take the example of safeguarding moral choice. If we take an illustration from modern history, the notion of making the world safe for democracy arises naturally from the background of the affirmative formulation, but would not be a natural deduction from the negative formulation. If I am to avoid harming another, it does not follow that I should attempt to impose a political system on him that I find desirable for myself. It may be simply coincidental that the notion of being the moral policeman or the moral guardian of the world has arisen from the Christian West, but I do not think that it is an accident.

With respect to the other implications to which I have referred (epistemological modesty, ethical humility, naturalism, humanism and the belief in the inherent goodness of human nature), let us take the first two together and the last three together. The negative formulation of the Golden Rule seems to be a manifestation, if not a consequence, of the attitudes which I have coined epistemological modesty and ethical humility [23]. If one does not possess certain knowledge of what the good is for oneself, then, *a fortiori*, one would not know what it is for someone else. When asked what the good is, Confucius, in the manner of Buddha and Socrates, never really gives a precise or comprehensive definition [24]. It would seem that epistemological modesty would extend from the lack of complete and certain self-knowledge to the even greater lack of complete and certain knowledge about others. It is in this spirit, I take it, that Tu Wei-ming writes, "It is only because he [the profound person] cannot be sure of the situations of others in the same way and to the same degree as his own that he is reluctant to pass judgment on them" [25]. It would also follow from Confucius' frequent statements about his love of learning and his need to learn that he did not already know what the good is [26]. In fact, if one is primarily a learner, this reflects an attitude of ethical humility as well, for if one were already perfect, there would be no need to learn. The presence of ethical humility about oneself would also extend to one's attitude towards others. If I lacked a complete and certain knowledge of what the good is (epistemological modesty) and also possessed the awareness that I was not perfectly good (ethical humility), then this would be a further disincentive to consider that I possessed the qualifications to judge what would be good for others. In point of fact, in many cases, when Confucius is asked that *jen* is, he tends to give a slightly different answer to each person. According to Chan, "... to six different pupils who asked about *jen* he gave six different answers, each according to the pupil's temperament, capability or environment (XII. 1, 2, 3, 22; XV. 9; XVII. 6) [27]. We can find a seventh case where Confucius gives two different answers to the same pupil who asks the same question on two separate occasions [28]. In so doing, Confucius seems to display an understanding of the pluralism of the good. What is good for one may not be good for another. And, further, what is good for one on one occasion may not be good for that same individual on another occasion.

Contrariwise, the affirmative formulation would seem to imply both epistemological immodesty and moral *hubris*. Since you know what the good is (how others should act towards you) there is no lack of knowledge here. Since what is good for you is also good for others, this would imply epistemological immodesty in that you were

confident in extending the knowledge that pertained to yourself to others. It would also seem to imply moral *hubris* as well since you felt no moral qualms in the extension of what was good for you to others [29]. It also implies, interestingly enough, a unity in the conception of the good since the same good that is perceived as good for one is generalised as good for all.

Let us take up the cases of humanism, naturalism and the at least implicit belief in the inherent goodness of human nature together. Humanism and naturalism are inextricably intertwined. If one is a naturalist in the sense that one believes that one's human nature, when properly manifested, acts for the good, then there is no need for an ethic that would either be imposed upon human nature extrinsically or would be opposed to it. If one were good by nature, there would be no need for concrete moral injunctions. One would only need to ensure that one's nature would be given an opportunity to express itself in its original character. For example, consider *Doctrine of the Mean*, 20: "Love is the characteristic element of man". If love is the characteristic element of man, then all that is needed is to find a way for man's character to manifest itself. Or, in a more literal translation, humanity is identical to man, or, humanity is nothing more than man himself.

It should be fairly clear from this discussion why the best translation for *jen* is humaneness or humanity rather than benevolence. Benevolence seems to imply some form of moral largesse, an act or acts of goodness which exceed the moral norm. If there can be a benevolent man then there is the possibility that there can also be a malevolent one as well. 'Humanity' simply implies that the trait in question is the proper expression of human nature, nothing more. There is no moral inflation in 'humanity' as seems to be present in 'benevolence'. It can also be seen from this translation of *jen* that there would be no need to command one to be good to others. If love is the characteristic element of man then it is already in his character to be loving. *Jen* is the natural outcome of being human. In fact, the character lends itself to this reading as it is the character for man coupled with the character for two. The implication seems to be that man is other related. To translate *jen* as benevolence carries the risk of associating this property with something that is extrinsic to human nature; something added, something extra. One can be a man and not be benevolent (it might even allow that one could be a man and not be benevolent (it might even allow that one could be a man and be malevolent). Being benevolent is being a man plus. But with *jen*, one cannot be a man and not have humanity. Benevolence carries with it too much of the value of charity. It seems to imply acts that one need not do, but if one does them, it makes one rather special. *Jen* is simply what it means to be a man. There is no concept of excess here.

If human nature is inherently good, a command to be good would be senseless or at least redundant. (In speaking of the profound person, Tu Wei-ming says of him that, "There is no compelling reason why he must dictate rules for them to follow . . . his function is not to command" [30]. Shu-hsien Liu makes it clear what moral harm a command approach may bring when he writes conveying the Confucian ideal of 'Sageliness Within and Kingliness Without', that "it is definitely wrong to force one's way [sic] to others as to create a suffocating effect which is most undesirable." [31]) However, if it were not in one's nature to be good, then it would be useful to be commanded by an extrinsic moral command to be good. The moral rule as a commandment makes sense when we would not be naturally disposed to act in that way. If we are *commanded* to act by the injunction: Do unto others . . . , then the concept of authority or force carried by a command can influence us to act in such a

way even if it goes against our natural impulses. The concept of love as commanded makes sense when it is not natural for men to be loving. It makes no sense to command that which is already natural. Thus, the presentation of love as a commandment fits perfectly well into a scheme where human nature is inherently evil.

If, after the Fall, all men are tainted with the predisposition towards evil, it is far more efficacious to have a command to take action of a beneficial nature towards others than to leave men to their own devices. Otherwise, with an inherently selfish disposition, in the absence of a command to act otherwise, men would be naturally inclined to look after themselves. The negative formulation of Confucius only makes good sense if it is coupled with the basic assumption of the goodness of human nature.

The question can then arise for Confucius, if man's nature is inherently good, why do we even need the negative rule? Why do we need to know what evils to avoid if we are good by nature? If we have a natural disposition to be good, a counsel to avoid evil would also appear to be superfluous. The answer is that while we are naturally good, we have, from our conditioning, been removed from our original natures [32]. In the meantime, if we are not in harmony with our natures, it is better to have a moral rule to follow in order to avoid harming others. We do not need a moral rule to help others; that will be accomplished through finding our way back to our original natures.

For those of us who are not in touch with our natures, and we must include children here since their natures are not yet fully developed, the negative formulation of the Golden Rule is a procedural rule which returns us to our original natures. Confucius outlined four kinds of men. I take it that of these four kinds of men, those who are born with wisdom would have no need for such a procedural rule. There are, however, other types of men. These are not more evil men, but more ignorant ones. For these men, such a procedural rule is a necessity. This is, I take it, the importance of the negative formulation. It is designed to be applied by those who need its guidance, among whom Confucius included himself [33]. There is a difference between Confucius and Rousseau.

Where does all this leave us? It is clear that many of the world's humanitarian advances have come about because of an active intervention in the lives of others. Whether it is because men are removed from their natures or because human beings are more inclined to help their fellows if they are strongly directed to do so. The advantage of the Christian formulation lies in its stronger injunction to redress social evils. At the same time, this leaves it open to its greatest abuses.

The advantage of the Confucian formulation lies in its greater tendency to grant more freedom of expression to those whom one would profess to love. Ironically, the negatively formulated rule of Confucianism possesses a greater application to the modern values of democracy than the affirmatively formulated rule of Christianity. Its disadvantage lies in the area of possibly being a less effective means of social redress. This disadvantage could be offset by coupling it with a stronger emphasis upon the struggle to make men more aware of their innate potential for goodness. But this is a very slow process. It requires a humanistic education such that man's real nature can be helped to emerge. Without such an accompanying education, Confucianism leaves itself open to a risk factor from the ethical point of view. In the absence of a strong injunction to take socially directed actions of a benevolent nature man will not be inclined to redress social ills while removed from his inherently good nature.

From the standpoint of actively intervening in social reforms, we do not need to await a fully humanised, natural impulse to do so. From the Christian point of view, we may do so simply by following the affirmatively formulated injunction. Christian-

ity, then, possesses the advantage of addressing social ills more quickly. It need not wait upon a fully humanised education for a strong social consciousness to emerge. Confucianism, as we have observed above, carries with it the advantage of guarding and facilitating moral growth. Confucianism is a corrective to the tendency to make the world over in our image.

There is no facile solution to this dilemma since both formulations carry with them moral value. What is important, I believe, is the recognition of the importance of the different moral objectives that are favoured by the adoption of each formulation. It is ironic that the Christian West should need to learn from Confucianism the values of being more aware of the need to preserve moral choice. From the Christian West, Confucianism can learn that, on a practical level, its concept of the inherent goodness of human nature is an indirect and slow route to the accomplishment of social good. It is ironic that Christianity can learn more about human rights from Confucianism and Confucianism can learn more about practicality from Christianity!

The lack of awareness of human rights in China has to do with the need to learn more about democracy, which is essentially Greek and not Christian in origin. But the notion of the pluralism of the good is already built into Confucianism and a closer attention to the possible reasons behind the negatively formulated Golden Rule may be a beacon for the further development of the tradition of human rights in China. In short, China can learn from its own traditional roots a tradition which places a high premium upon preserving moral choice. In order to do so, one must be careful to preserve the differences that exist between the negatively and affirmatively formulated versions of the Golden Rule. If we are too anxious to reduce the two formulations to each other, we run the risk of missing the unique contributions each tradition has to make to the other.

China can learn from the Christian West the non-nature based notion that we have a duty or an obligation to help others. While we may believe that this impulse will arise naturally, it seems that it is especially difficult to us to become attuned to our own natures. If nothing else, progress is too slow. We run the risk in the meantime of being too ethically lazy, not socially concerned enough. The notion of a non-nature based ethical duty towards others may be a means of accelerating social change. [34].

The Christian West can take a lesson from Confucianism in respecting each other's rights. Epistemological modesty and ethical humility are values that go hand in hand with humanism. Epistemological immodesty and ethical *hubris* are values that go hand in hand with more active social intervention to bring about social reforms. Each tradition has something to learn from each other. The outcome of a Confucian-Christian dialogue can be a greater awareness of the *different* values for which each tradition stands. It is only in the awareness of the existence of different values that there is a possibility of learning something from each other. If both traditions are seen as the same, then there is nothing to learn from each other. There is a delicate balance to be maintained between preserving moral growth and promoting more active social reform. It is wise, I think, to have these two great traditions, to hold each other in check and maintain this delicate balance.

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NOTES

- [1] By so doing, we are not including, for the purposes of this paper, the philosophy of Hsun Tzu. If we were to do so, it would require a fundamental shift in the paper since Hsun Tzu, while classified as a Confucian, considers human nature to be evil. For a broader treatment of this issue, cf. ROBERT E. ALLINSON, 'An Overview of "The Chinese Mind"', in: ROBERT E. ALLINSON (Ed.) *Understanding the Chinese Mind* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989) pp. 1-25.
- [2] I think this depiction of Christianity is in accord with the popular conception that Christianity is the religion of love.
- [3] Cf. RAYMOND DAWSON, *Confucius* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981) p. 47. Filial piety became such a strong value in Chinese culture that it was listed as the first duty in the collections of commandments known as the Six Edicts of the Shun-chih emperor (1644-1661) and the Sacred Edict of the K'ang-hsi emperor (1661-1722) (p. 48). Contrast this with the Ten Commandments where it is listed as number five (if these are in numerical order of importance). We should probably also consider the influence of Mencius, who argued against Mo that the implication would be that no peculiar affection would be due to one's father (*Mencius* IIIB. 9).
- [4] Cf. also *The Great Learning*, IX. 1, 4, 5, 7. It is curious to note that the Western counterpart of the filial piety injunction in the Chinese tradition is also formulated as a hypothetical imperative: 'Honour thy Father and thy Mother that thy Days may be long upon the earth'. Consider the parallel to the Chinese concept that when the state is in order, there is in turn peace in the world. Cf. TU WEIMING, *Confucian Thought, Selfhood as Creative Transformation* (Albany, NY, State University of New York, 1985) p. 134. His reference is to *The Great Learning*, Ch. 1. The Chinese concept more clearly explains the connection between filial piety and longevity!
- [5] D. C. Lau translates as 'character' what Wing-tsit Chan keeps as *jen*. Cf. *The Analects* (New York, Penguin Books, 1979); and WING-TSIT CHAN, 'The Evolution of the Confucian Concept *Jen*.' *Philosophy East & West*, Vol. IV. No. 4, January 1955, p. 301. Henry Nelson Wieman used to say in class that marriage was the ultimate challenge in one's life.
- [6] *Ibid.*, p. 301.
- [7] It is interesting to reflect that this problem has not arisen for Western thinkers despite the fact that there is a tradition of filial piety and a tradition of universal love. It could be argued that this is because the tradition of filial piety was never quite as strong in the West, but this would only account for the problem arising to a lesser degree not for the problem being non-existent.
- [8] Cf. *Reflections on Things at Hand, The Neo-Confucian Anthology*. Compiled by CHU HSI and LU TZU-CHIEN, translated by WING-TSIT CHAN (New York: 1967) p. 77.
- [9] *Analects*, XV. 24. This passage is of special interest because Confucius chooses *shu* when he is asked for a single word, and not *jen*. Perhaps this is because *shu* is the procedural rule whereby we can become *jen* and thus, of the two notions, is the one we would need the most. It is important to note that here the words are attributed to Confucius himself. Cf. also *Chung Yung*, 13.3. While there is no philological foundation for the following analysis, if we choose to engage in a philosophical interpolation of the roots of language à la Heidegger *vis-à-vis* his analysis of Greek philosophy or Derrida's treatment of language in general, we can derive the following analysis of the character *shu*. With *shu* we find the character for woman on the left hand side of the character for mouth, both of which are above the character for heart-mind. In strict etymology, the woman-mouth character is simply for pronunciation purposes and carries no meaning. (*Shāo-wen-chieh-tzu chu*), (Shanghai; Ku-chi ch'u-tan-she), p. 504. But to indulge in some philosophical interpretation for a moment, we may derive the following. The feminine principle is properly placed on the left and receptive side. The notion of reciprocity is indicated by the free passageway, both incoming and outgoing, from the interpolated character for entrance/exit. However, the feminine principle as receptive fixes this as essentially incoming, not outgoing. In other words, the form of reciprocity that is indicated is a passive reciprocity. The feminine principle stands for the negative or the Yin. Just as the feminine is used to describe Yin, we may use Yin to describe the feminine. The notion becomes that of a non-doing reciprocity, a not doing unto others. The heart-mind fixes the content of the type of not-doing as the not-doing of that which is counter to one's heart, or against what one thinks or feels is good for oneself. Thus, a philosophical philology of *shu* reveals that *shu*, in and of itself, carries the meaning of the negative formulation of the Golden Rule: 'Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you'. While none of this analysis can find support from the standpoint of traditional etymology, on the other hand, we can always consider the possibility of the presence of a meaning structure contained within the choice of an otherwise arbitrary pronunciation symbol. It does not follow from this that every pronunciation

device in every instance carries within it an unconsciously chosen meaning structure, but it equally does not follow that all pronunciation symbols in every instance carry with them no intentional structure whatsoever.

- [10] Here, *shu* is used virtually interchangeably with *jen* as a complete definition of *jen*. Once again, the words are attributed to Confucius himself (*Analects* XII. 2.). It is also of interest to note that the author of *shuo-wen-chieh-tzu chu* (Shu-shen) defines the meaning of *shu* by referring to *jen*, p. 504.
- [11] For example, Shu-hsien Liu writes, "... all evidence points to the fact that it (*jen*) has been regarded as The Virtue in Confucius' system of thought". And, again, "From this evidence it seems that the principle of *jen* is Confucius' ultimate commitment". 'Confucius', in D. BISHOP (Ed.) *Chinese Thought* (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1985) pp. 16-17. I will thus except from this discussion the arguable centrality of *li*.
- [12] *Analects*, IV. 15.
- [13] There have been numerous discussions of the place of *chung* by both Chinese and Western writers alike. Cf. HERBERT FINGARETTE, 'Following the "One Thread" of the *Analects*', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 47, No. 35, Thematic Issue S, September 1979, pp. 373-405 in which *chung* is seen as interpersonal good faith and loyalty. For Fung Yu-lan, *chung* involves extending oneself to include one's fellow men. (Cf., FUNG YU-LAN, *The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1947) p. 17. Fung distinguishes *chung* and *shu* as representing the 'positive' and 'negative' aspects of reversibility. *Chung* describes those things I should do to others because I would like to have them done to me; *shu* describes those things I should not do to others because I would not like them done to me. Cf. FUNG YU-LAN, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, DERK BODDE (New York, Macmillan, 1953) pp. 43-44. While these, like other discussions, seem highly creative, they seem to miss one central point. In Fung's case in particular, there would be a blurring of the specifically negative formulation of the Golden Rule.
- [14] *Analects*, VI. 30. Cf. D. C. Lau's thorough discussion in his introduction to *The Analects*, op. cit., pp. 15-16.
- [15] LAU, D. C. is emphatic about this being the appropriate meaning as he states, "... there is no doubt at all that *chung* means 'doing one's best'". Ibid., p. 16. It is clear that 'doing one's best' is a value for Confucius. But is there a strong enough case to be made for it as one of Confucius' central values?
- [16] *Analects*, V. 19. Again, this is in the words of Confucius. Whereas *shu* is sometimes offered as an equivalent of *jen* directly (XII. 2) and indirectly (XV. 24), *chung* by itself is not considered sufficient to be *jen*.
- [17] Matthew 22: 35-40.
- [18] Luke 6: 31.
- [19] CHAN, 'The Evolution of the Confucian concept *jen*', op. cit., note 5, p. 300, note 5. Cf. also H. G. CREEL, *Confucius, The Man & The Myth* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951) p. 142; and CREEL *Confucius and the Chinese Way* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960) pp. 131-132.
- [20] SHU-HSIEN LIU, 'Confucius', in: BISHOP, op. cit., note 11, p. 20. Cf. my 1986 review, *Journal of Oriental Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 81-82.
- [21] ROBERT E. ALLINSON (1985) 'The Confucian Golden Rule: A Negative Formulation'. *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 12, pp. 305-315. This article has been translated into Chinese in *History and Theory*, No. 3, (CASS) Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Institute of World History, Beijing, September 1988, pp. 92-97.
- [22] Ibid., for a more detailed treatment of the topic.
- [23] It could perhaps be argued the other way around. The negative formulation could have the effect of engendering the attitudes of epistemological modesty and ethical humility. However, even though this may well be true, we have no way of knowing if such attitudes might also have existed before the formulation. This is something like the controversy of which came first, the chicken or the egg. What is important is that the same mentality that would formulate the Golden Rule negatively would be epistemologically modest and ethically humble.
- [24] CHAN, 'The Evolution of the Confucian concept *jen*', op. cit., note 5, p. 299.
- [25] TU WEI-MING, *Centrality and Commonality, an Essay on Chung-Yang*, (Honolulu, HI, The University Press of Hawaii, 1976) p. 49.
- [26] *Analects*, II. 4; VII. 2, 20, 21; XIX. 22. To show how highly he thought of himself in this regard, Confucius said, 'In a hamlet of ten households, there are bound to be those who are my equal in doing their best for others and in being trustworthy in what they say, but they are unlikely to be as eager to learn as I am'. *Analects*, V. 28.
- [27] CHAN, op. cit., note 5, p. 303.

[28] Cf. *Analects*, VI. 22; XII. 22.

[29] There is possible relationship here to the concept of salvation and sin as well. The saved (and knowledgeable one) would then be in a privileged position *vis-à-vis* the sinner. This is unlike the Confucian man of *jen* who, believing in the perfectibility of human nature, for Tu-we-ming, "... never pontificates". TU-WEI-MING, op. cit., note 25, p. 49.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

[31] SHU-HSIEN LIU, 'On the Confucian Ideal of "Sageliness Within and Kingliness Without"', paper presented at the International Symposium on Confucianism and the Modern World, Taipei, November 1987, p. 20.

[32] *Analects*, XVII. 2.

[33] I arrive at this conclusion by the following process of reasoning. Of the four kinds of men (XVI. 9), Confucius must have considered himself to be one who was not born wise but gained knowledge through study (VII. 20, 28). For those who were born wise, there would be no need to have recourse to a procedural rule as to how to become *jen*. Since Confucius did not consider himself to be one who was born wise, he would utilise the Golden Rule. There is one other possibility for the need for the Golden Rule which is that one was born wise but conditioned to be unwise (in Confucian terms, removed by practice). In this case, the Golden Rule can function to bring one back to one's original condition.

[34] It may be objected that the idea of altruism or benevolence is already a part of Confucianism. For example, in *Analects*, XII. 22, Confucius says of *jen*, 'Love your fellow men'. But this is not necessarily meant as a command. If love is essentially man's nature, Confucius might have been saying, 'Act in accordance with your original nature'. For example, in VII. 30, it is said, 'No sooner than I desire it [*jen*], it is there'. That which can be brought into being by desire need not be commanded. If one had to be commanded to love it would seem one's original inclination would be absent or lagging, hence the need for the command. In any event, there is no clear specification that to love one's fellow men would mean to intervene actively for them in terms of what you considered to be good for them. It might mean the avoidance of taking actions which would bring harm to them. Whether the benevolence is construed as harm avoidance or doing good, the crucial point is that the avoidance of harm doing or the active practice of doing good follows from one's own humanity and not from a commandment. It is only if one's own nature is hidden from one (in Confucius' words, removed by practice), that the affirmative formulation of the Golden Rule might prove to be a catalyst to action that otherwise might not be taken.