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Fraser, Chris, Dan Robins, and Timothy O'Leary, eds., *Ethics in Early China*

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Bryan Van Norden

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This volume is a festschrift in honor of Chad Hansen. Hansen has long had a small but intensely devoted group of followers, and this anthology is a testament to the editors' respect and affection for him. The essays cover a wide range of topics and often argue in detailed and interesting ways, so I can only make cursory observations about each.

Three of the essays challenge widely accepted views about Confucianism and Mohism. In "Were the Early Confucians Virtuous?" Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., argue against virtue ethics interpretations of Confucianism. Much of their argument consists of pointing out differences between Aristotle and Confucius. However, advocates of a virtue ethics interpretation of Confucianism do not do so out of the misguided belief that Aristotle and Confucius were the same. They do so because they believe that virtue ethics is a family of ethical views that emphasizes the cultivation of dispositions to respond flexibly to complex and fluid situations, and that it is illuminating to explore the similarities *and* differences among members of this genus. In addition, there are unfortunate errors in this essay. Ames and Rosemont mention "the three cardinal virtues first analyzed and discussed at length by Socrates in Plato's *Republic*" (21). But the *Republic* identifies *four* cardinal virtues. And historically informed readers can only cringe at the unqualified claim that "Aristotle was writing largely for and about a warrior aristocracy" (30).

In "Mencius as Consequentialist," Manyul Im argues against views that see Mencius and the Mohists in stark opposition over normative ethics. Im claims they agree that profit (e.g., peace, general prosperity) should be our goal. However, the Mohists believe that gentlemen should consciously aim at producing the most profit, whereas Mencius believes gentleman should aim at being filial, righteous, etc., and that profit will be maximized as an indirect consequence of this. Mencius does sometimes talk as if a society of benevolent and righteous people is worth pursuing because it best achieves goals like the ones the Mohists advocate (see, e.g., 6B4). However, Im admits that filial piety, for example, is intrinsically valuable to Mencius,

Bryan Van Norden (✉)
Philosophy Department, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY 12604, USA
e-mail: brvannorden@vassar.edu

and not only because it is instrumentally useful to producing good consequences (60). Consequentialism is normally committed to the belief that goods can be quantified and choices evaluated in terms of what maximizes those goods. Now, Mencius states that Shun would abdicate and run away with his father to protect him if he committed a murder (*Mencius* 7A35). Would Im say that Shun does so because the *quantity* of filial piety here is greater than the *quantity* of peace and prosperity brought about by Shun's rule as king?

In "Mohism and Motivation," Chris Fraser defends the Mohists against the charge that they have "a thin, crude view of human motivation" that leaves them "without a plausible account of how to lead people to practice their *dào*" (83). Fraser presents an articulate and detailed account of the types of motivations the Mohists appeal to (96–98), and of the kinds of techniques they propose for directing and shaping them (94–96). This is a significant contribution to our understanding of the Mohist view of ethical cultivation. However, it does not address the concern that the Mohists cannot explain how to get humans to give equal weight to the well-being of everyone, whether close relative or total stranger. Fraser's response is that their doctrine of "inclusive care" (*jiān ài* 兼愛) really only advocated "basic moral decency" (86); for example, "society should help provide for the care of orphans" and "impoverished farmers should not be taxed to buy luxuries for despots" (99–100). However, one wonders why anyone bothered to argue against the Mohists if their doctrines were so mild. In addition, as Fraser admits (86), there is considerable textual evidence that "inclusive care" meant something much more radical (e.g., *Mengzi* 3A5).

Three of the essays defend views that, in my opinion, are plausible but perhaps not completely novel. Dan Robins presents a summary of the Daoist conception of the Way in "It Goes Beyond Skill." He correctly states that "dào 道" can refer to "a fixed way of doing something," or something "built into the situations we encounter," or "the way we adapt to the situation at hand, going beyond any dào we have previously mastered" (111). In addition, Robins follows a suggestion given by the author of this review that *Daodejing* 25 is dispositive evidence that "dào" comes to be reified, by an intelligible shift in meaning, so that it refers to "a thing somehow responsible for the course taken by the cosmic dào" (117). (See the contributions by the author of this review and by Robins to "The Dao Debate," last modified 9 November 1996, at *Internet Archive* http://web.archive.org/web/20060104024456/http://sangle.web.wesleyan.edu/dao/).

In "Confucianism and Moral Intuition," William Haines argues that "much early Confucian self-cultivation is intelligible as the application of procedures to extend the range of our affective sensibility, especially in the direction of what is morally important" (225). Borrowing C.S. Peirce's categorization of signs into "icon," "indices," and "symbols," Haines argues that Confucian rituals are primarily icons; for example, "standing beneath someone displays subordination" because such acts "resemble their objects to the mind's eye" (220). Such displays of feeling in ritual are contagious: "One person's sensibility piggybacks on another's" (224). Haines' general conclusion will be familiar to (and accepted by) most scholars of Chinese thought. Functionalists like A.R. Radcliffe-Brown have long argued for the importance of Confucian rituals in expressing and reinforcing socially-important emotions (see his "Religion and Society" in *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, reprint, New York: The Free Press, 1965). In addition, there has been extensive discussion of how Confucians aim to cultivate human emotions (see, for example, the essays by Eric Hutton and David Wong in Liu Xiusheng and

Philip Ivanhoe, eds., *Essays on the Moral Philosophy of Mengzi,* Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2002). However, Haines arrives at similar conclusions by a novel route.

In "Chapter 38 of the *Dàodéjīng* as an Imaginary Genealogy of Morals," Ci Jiwei suggests that this passage can be seen as addressing the question, "is it possible to *become* a *rén* [仁] person if one is not a *rén* person to begin with?" (238). The answer (according to Ci) is that it is not. *Rén* requires that one be "naturally and spontaneously good" (238); the desire to *become rén* would fatally undermine the spontaneity required for the virtue. Ci argues that this insight has been "ignored or rejected" in the Confucian tradition, leading to a "tireless and tiresome" emphasis on moral exhortation and improvement (243). Interestingly, David Nivison addressed quite similar issues in "The Paradox of Virtue," even citing *Dàodéjīng* 38 to make his point (*The Ways of Confucianism*, Chicago: Open Court Press, 1996, 31). Nivison argued that we do, in fact, see in mainstream Confucians a clear effort to address this very paradox. It would be interesting to see what Ci makes of Nivison's proposals.

Two of the essays invite us to see how Chinese thinkers' conceptual categories cut across our own in challenging ways. In "Embodied Virtue, Self-Cultivation, and Ethics," Lisa Raphals cites references in a broad variety of texts to "therapeutic gymnastics, dietetics, breath cultivation, and sexual cultivation" (148). Today, we would not normally categorize these as ethical practices (even in a broad sense). However, Rachels argues that in ancient China these are all aspects of "a '*yǎngshēng* 養生 culture,' which offered and emphasized control over the physiological processes of the body and mind, understood as transformations of *qì*. These transformations were understood as self-cultivation in the coterminous senses of moral excellence, health, and longevity" (150). Her primary claim seems quite plausible and one can only be impressed by the breadth of Raphals' scholarship. However, readers might wish for greater dilation on some points. For example, Raphals quotes Mencius's intriguing comments in passage 2A2: "I am good at nurturing my radiant ('flood-like') *qi*" (146). Then she begins a new section of the essay with a reference to "Mencius's view that virtues arises in part from physical self-cultivation of the *qi*" (146). I was left unsure whether this meant that Raphals wishes to challenge the Neo-Confucian view that 2A2 is about the psychological process of "extension." In addition, I am concerned that Raphals' description of Greek philosophy as "an aggressively dualistic tradition" (144) is too simple for a world of thought that included the physicalist monism of Anaximander, the atomism of Democritus, and the hylomorphism of Aristotle.

In "The Sounds of *Zhèngmíng*: Setting Names Straight in Early Chinese Texts," Jane Geaney argues against common interpretations of *zhèngmíng* 正名 that emphasize written graphs or the correspondence between "words" and "things." Instead, Geaney invites us to conceptualize *míng* as part of the same semantic field as "music, voice, and song [which] are all items that travel on air or wind to penetrate deeply through the body's holes by means of hearing" and thereby shape the auditor's character (128). As evidence, Geaney notes that "*míng*" can mean fame (certainly a matter of word-of-mouth), and is closely associated with "*mìng* 命," to command. In addition, when we remember that *yīn* 音and *shēng* 聲 can refer to either music or voice, we should not be surprised to see that *Analects* 15.11 criticizes the music of Zhèng and glib talkers in the same breath. Music and speech are often evaluated with the same adjectives: there are *xiéyīn* 邪音 (corrupt tones) and *xiéshuō* 邪說 (corrupt explanations) (132). With Geaney's help, we can see why Kongzi's stress on using

"refined pronunciation" (*yǎyán* 雅言) when reciting the *Odes* and *Documents* (7.18) is motivated by something much more deep than pedantic traditionalism.

Philip J. Ivanhoe and Stephen C. Angle both discuss Hansen's earlier essay, "The Normative Impact of Comparative Ethics: Human Rights" (in Kwong-loi Shun and David Wong, eds., *Confucian Ethics,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 72–99). Hansen argued that "Moral Tradition Respect" (MTR) is warranted only if an alternative tradition (a) engages in rational argumentation to support its claims, (b) seems to be "correct" in important ways by our own standards, yet (c) is sufficiently different to qualify as an alternative to our own tradition. Hansen suggested that when MTR occurs, it will stimulate mild skepticism toward one's own tradition, which in turn will lead to a richer moral discourse.

However, Ivanhoe argues, in "Moral Tradition Respect," that Hansen has not adequately explained how much we must agree with an alternative tradition in order for it to meet requirement (b) above. After all, a tradition would have to agree with at least *some* of our moral judgments, or else we could not sensibly count it as a *moral* tradition. But if that is all (b) requires, almost nothing is ruled out. Ivanhoe also suggests that Hansen should drop the dream of someday achieving a comprehensive synthesis of ethical views, in favor of a more pluralistic conception of morality. Finally, Ivanhoe notes that Hansen's view is very similar to that developed in more detail by Alasdair MacIntyre, in that both treat holistic traditions (as opposed to deracinated assertions) as the primary interlocutors in moral discourse (see, e.g., *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

In "Piecemeal Progress: Moral Traditions, Modern Confucianism, and Comparative Philosophy," Angle makes a similar comparison between Hansen and MacIntyre, adding Thomas Metzger as a third figure who recognizes that "[h]olistic interpretation…is vital to the work of comparative ethics" (180). However, Angle stresses that this "is not the only thing that comparative ethicists should do" (180). Specifically, Angle very plausibly suggests that "even while we are conscious of the many entailments among the concepts and values of the tradition, we can resist some of those entailments—we can temporarily disaggregate some of the concepts—in order to explore what happens if we response to old challenges in new ways" (190–191). This will result in a more piecemeal progress in refining our ethical views. Angle also notes that the task of understanding another ethical tradition is perhaps more difficult, and more of an ongoing process, than Hansen assumes. Indeed, Angle chastises Hansen for having "quite a shallow understanding of modern Confucianism" and thus failing "to appreciate its values and arguments" (186–187).

Franklin Perkins critiques what he sees as the underlying Cartesianism of Hansen's views in "No Need for Hemlock." Hansen states that Mencius's view on human nature commits him to either a "strong" position, which "takes the specific form of the Confucian *dào* as already implicit in and defined by human nature," or a "weak" position, which attributes to humans broad "tendencies to feel compassion and shame, to ritualize our interactions, and to make distinctions" (68), but whose specific content would not be innately determined. The problem is that the strong position is empirically implausible, while the weak position would not justify the specific practices of Confucianism as opposed to those of, say, Mohism. However, Mencius denies (on Perkins's reading) the Mohist assumption that it is possible for individuals to accurately judge right and wrong without the assistance of tradition. Perkins insightfully observes that the knee-jerk

rejection of this sort of moderate traditionalism among contemporary Western philosophers is often motivated by uncritical acceptance of the "ultimately bizarre views" of Cartesianism and its descendants (77). (This is something that MacIntyre has noted, and that Hansen, because of his methodological holism, ought to also accept.)

In my opinion, two of the finest essays in the volume are those by David B. Wong and Lee H. Yearley. In his "*Agon* and *Hé:* Contest and Harmony," Wong argues that any successful morality will have to encourage competition in order to "harness the considerable resulting energies for the common good" (212); however, competition reaches its most refined form in contexts provided by social cooperation (e.g., Michael Jordan would be impossible without the NBA). At the same time, harmony untempered by competition risks "the hazards of sliding into an enforced unity that stifles the creative energies of individuals and thereby impoverishes and stultifies the common good" (212). Wong plausibly suggests that there is no one right balance between competition and harmony. With nuanced readings of texts from Nietzsche, Confucius, Homer, and Zhuangzi, Wong beautifully illustrates that "contest and harmony co-exist in both the Greek and Chinese moral traditions" (197), even though each tradition chooses to emphasize one of the two values. Wong's essay is a paradigm of how to *successfully* integrate multidisciplinary work (he unostentatiously cites literature, philosophy, history, and evolutionary theory), and to do comparative work that avoids glib generalizations and will be of interest to other philosophers.

In "Poetic Language: Zhuāngzǐ and Dù Fǔ's Confucian Ideals," Yearley reflects on the literary technique, purpose, and content of a poem by Dù Fǔ. At one level, the poem is a simple narrative in three parts: Dù Fǔ complains about his failure to attain a government position in the capital; he describes the signs of government corruption he sees on the long trip home to his family; he recounts his discovery of a personal tragedy upon arriving home. However, as Yearley notes, Dù Fǔ opens the poem with clear allusions to Zhuāngzǐ, which invite us to read it as both a partial appropriation of and critical dialogue with the latter. Dù Fǔ's poem illustrates what the *Zhuāngzǐ* describes as "goblet language," which follows "neither the usual rules of argumentation nor ordinary rhetorical forms," yet "serves to enable people to represent, and thus keep alive, features that ordinary language cannot" (251). Such language is necessary (for both Dù Fǔ and Zhuāngzǐ) in order to help humans overcome "either truncated perception or full-fledged self-deception," as well as the spiritual "inertia" that leads to a self-justifying "acceptance of the familiar and trivial" (256). However, Dù Fǔ seems to ultimately reject the detachment from human roles found in Zhuāngzǐ. Zhuāngzǐ may have drummed happily on a tub beside his wife's corpse, but Dù Fǔ admits, "I could not suppress a wail of my own" when he discovers that his son had starved in his absence (262 ln. 87). I found Yearley's essay a delightful companion to Wong's: Wong analytically describes value pluralism, while Yearley offers us a "spiritual exercise" (252) for experiencing it.

The last two chapters of this book are, appropriately, by Chad Hansen himself. In "*Dào* as a Naturalistic Focus," Hansen addresses the challenge that naturalism (the view that all that exists is ultimately grounded in the subjects of the natural sciences) cannot account for normativity (the distinctively prescriptive nature of reasons and values). He argues that we can see the consistency between naturalism and normativity if we focus on "ways," rather than on "facts, truths, propositions, events, and actions" (271). As I understand him, Hansen's view is that participation in some

human language games "introduces normative notions…that are autonomous in the sense that they are internal to the game's *dào*. They supervene on, but are not entailed by, underlying [naturalistic] *dào*s" (288). When we offer "attempts to give reasons for how we play the game…we have full-fledged normative reasoning" (289). I had two questions for Hansen. First, the conclusion is ultimately a (familiar) Wittgensteinian defense of normativity, so I was left unsure what the many references to *dào* add to the argument. Second, Hansen asserts that "the upshot of *dào* naturalism is skeptical relativism" (277). Since there is a plurality of language games, relativism might seem to follow. However, what if someone (say Confucius) chose to play a language game whose rules required that there be one correct *dào*?

The Afterword to the volume is Hansen's intellectual autobiography, in which he describes his evolution from a fundamentalist Mormon missionary to someone with a "Panglossian perspective on professional philosophy" (298). (One wonders if the passion underlying Hansen's strident criticisms of Confucianism arises in part from a subconscious identification of it with his own rejected fundamentalist past.) Along the way, Hansen makes brief reference to what he describes as an "epic" experience in which he and some colleagues "theatrically presented Chinese philosophy in drag in Sidney to an audience of, frankly, mostly each other" (299). Hansen has often courted controversy. However, I will allow him to have the last word. Summarizing his career, Hansen states: "as Zhuangzi puts it: 'my life is bounded and knowing is unbounded.' Unable to follow all paths, I choose now from where I have arrived on the trajectory I have already completed" (298).