

9 Structured Inclusivism about Human Flourishing

A Mengzian Formulation

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During the last few decades, the issue of whether Aristotle subscribes to an exclusive or inclusive conception of *eudaimonia*—“happiness” or “human flourishing”—has been the subject of ongoing scholarly debate. According to exclusivist interpreters, Aristotelian *eudaimonia* consists of just one intrinsic good, usually identified with the exercise of the contemplative intellect in accord with its proper virtue of *sophia* (theoretical wisdom). On the inclusivist reading, by contrast, *eudaimonia* consists of more than one such intrinsic good. Indeed, according to inclusivists, *eudaimonia* is a complete and self-sufficient end because it is a composite end lacking in none of the intrinsic goods that make for a good life. Thus, inclusivists maintain that virtuous actions and other intrinsic goods are valuable for the sake of *eudaimonia* by somehow *composing eudaimonia*.

According to one interpreter, Richard Kraut, it is not only incorrect to attribute inclusivism about *eudaimonia* to Aristotle, but doing so generates further difficulties. For instance, Kraut thinks that if one proposes a *simple inclusivism*, i.e., a view according to which *eudaimonia* is a simple second-order aggregation of first-order intrinsic goods, then one endorses a philosophical non-starter. “[I]f there need be no connection between any one component of happiness and any other,” Kraut writes, “then there is no explanatory value in the statement that some single good is desirable for the sake of the larger whole” (Kraut 1989, 212). In other words, if *eudaimonia* is a mere aggregate of goods, then the alleged parts of *eudaimonia* are not really valuable for the sake of *eudaimonia* after all, for there is no proper *whole* to which they belong.

Kraut, however, recognizes that one might attempt to avoid the problems of simple inclusivism by arguing that *eudaimonia* is not a simple aggregate but, rather, an organized whole containing parts. To motivate such a *structured inclusivism*, Kraut allows, the inclusivist might point out that parts can be valuable for the sake of the wholes that they compose in all sorts of cases. For instance, a heart can be valuable for the sake of the whole of which it is a part, viz., the whole living body. But if one tries to avoid the problems of simple inclusivism by adopting structured inclusivism, then Kraut thinks that one faces a central problem, viz., that it is very hard to see how the relation obtaining between a body and its parts could possibly obtain between *eudaimonia* and its putative parts:

The body is not a mere aggregate of parts, and this allows us to understand how each of them operates for the sake of the unified whole. ... But no one would hold that the many intrinsic goods alleged to be components of happiness (friends, honor, virtues, pleasure, and so on) are related to the larger whole as are parts of the body.

(Kraut 1989, 212n10)

If one combines Kraut’s two charges, one ends up with the conclusion that inclusivism about *eudaimonia* fails. Either the inclusivist is committed to viewing *eudaimonia* as a mere aggregate (in which case one cannot identify *eudaimonia* as a whole for the sake of which various goods are constitutively valuable) or else the inclusivist is committed to the allegedly unpromising view that the components of *eudaimonia* are related to *eudaimonia* in the way that body parts are related to a body.

In this paper, I do not address the interpretive question concerning whether Aristotle is really an inclusivist or exclusivist about *eudaimonia*.¹ Rather, I briefly defend the independent philosophical cogency of inclusivism about human flourishing against Kraut’s worries. As a test case, I examine the conception of human flourishing offered by the early Confucian philosopher Mengzi (Mencius). I do so for three reasons. First, as a thinker, Mengzi (371–281 BCE) was roughly contemporaneous with Aristotle (384–322 BCE), and he occupies a position in Chinese culture roughly analogous to Aristotle. Second, although determining Mengzi’s exact views is difficult (since the *Mengzi*, like a Platonic dialogue, is not a systematic treatise), and although it is important not to read into Mengzi terms and concerns popular from contemporary debates in Aristotle scholarship, Mengzi nevertheless proposes an account of the human good that can be plausibly described as an account of human *flourishing*. Moreover, the *Mengzi*’s account of human flourishing can be described as an inclusive one at that, i.e., an account that construes flourishing, at least to some extent, as a composite. Third, and most importantly, in developing his views, Mengzi explicitly makes the move that Kraut insists that “no one” would make. That is, Mengzi develops a view according to which flourishing is related to its components as a body is related to its parts. In fact, Mengzi often seems to *localize* the parts of one’s flourishing to the parts of one’s body. Hence, although certain forms of structured inclusivism may be open to Kraut’s worries, I argue that by appealing to Mengzi’s account, one can respond to Kraut’s puzzlement about how structured inclusivism could possibly make sense.

Flourishing and Nature in Mengzi: Preliminaries

I begin with some preliminary remarks about Mengzi’s views. First, as I have suggested, Mengzi’s conception of the human good can be reasonably described as a conception of human flourishing. Although Mengzi does not use any particular term that one can readily translate as “flourishing,” Bryan W. Van Norden (2007, 22) argues that the lack of a particular Classical Chinese term for this notion does not preclude Mengzi from having a conception of flourishing. Indeed, as Van Norden points out (2007, 38), the pervasiveness of agricultural, plant, and sprouting metaphors in Mengzi (e.g., at 2A2.16, 2A6.5–7, 6A1, 6A7–9) makes

it entirely natural to attribute a conception of “flourishing” to him. Given these metaphors, one can reasonably say that Mengzi identifies flourishing with the fulfillment and blossoming forth of human nature (*xìng*), where this nature consists in those dispositions that human beings realize when they are nurtured without harm and attain full maturity.²

This general point about “human flourishing” in Mengzi raises a question about what dispositions Mengzi thinks that human nature includes. In reply, Mengzi seems to waffle between more and less restrictive answers. For instance, at one point, Mengzi seems to identify human nature solely with the cognitive-affective dispositions of the heart (*xīn*). According to Mengzi, these dispositions include reflection (*sī*: 6A15.2), i.e., the disposition to fix one’s attention on what is appropriate and to develop one’s virtuous inclinations. They also include the dispositions for the four cardinal Mengzian virtues themselves. Thus, in his more restrictive-sounding moments, Mengzi writes, “A gentleman (*jūnzi*) regards the benevolence (*rén*), righteousness (*yì*), propriety (*lǐ*), and wisdom (*zhì*) that are based in his heart as his nature” (7A21.4).³ Likewise, Mengzi elsewhere insists that without the heart’s guidance, one is “not far from” a beast (6A8.2; cf. 2A6.1, 2A6.4, 4B19.1). Hence, one might think that Mengzi identifies only the dispositions of one’s heart as one’s *human* nature.⁴

The above passages, however, do not necessarily commit Mengzi to a restrictive conception of human nature. Although Mengzi thinks that human beings approximate a bestial condition if the heart’s dispositions are destroyed, it does not follow that human nature necessarily excludes the dispositions that we share with animals. For instance, the above passages are consistent with the less restrictive view that shared dispositions constitute parts of human nature (only) insofar as the heart guides them appropriately. These passages are also consistent with the even less restrictive view that although these shared dispositions are perhaps less *distinctively* human than the dispositions of the heart, they nevertheless remain components of human nature without qualification.

I take Mengzi ultimately to be committed to the expansive view that human nature includes *all* of our innate dispositions.⁵ At 7B24.1, for instance, Mengzi suggests that not only will the dispositions of one’s heart constitute human nature, but so will the dispositions that one shares with animals: “The mouth in relation to flavors, the eyes in relation to sights, the ears in relation to notes, the nose in relation to odors, the four limbs in relation to comfort—these are matters of human nature.” To be sure, Mengzi goes on in this passage to add that a gentleman will not *refer* to these latter dispositions as human nature, but instead will view them as “fated” (*mìng*), i.e., brute conditions of our existence to be accepted as the “decree” of Heaven. Yet the general tenor of 7B24.1 is to undermine any strong dichotomy between the elements of human nature and the characteristics that we possess by fate. For after asserting that a gentleman will not refer to his sensual dispositions as human nature (but instead as fated), Mengzi immediately goes on to insist that the cognitive-affective dispositions of the heart, including the dispositions for virtue, are *also* fated (though he adds that the gentleman will call them nature). If the gentleman will not *refer* to the dispositions of one’s sense organs as (constitutive of) human nature, this could be—as A. C. Graham (1990,

38–39) plausibly suggests—because Mengzi thinks that it is good habit to identify one’s nature only with one’s best dispositions, viz., those of the heart.⁶ (I shall soon say more about Mengzi’s grounds for rank-ordering dispositions.)

So Mengzi offers an *expansive* conception of human nature. And I take it that this expansive conception provides the basis for what I identify as Mengzi’s correspondingly *inclusive* conception of human flourishing. Put concisely, flourishing, for Mengzi, consists in the complete blossoming forth and fulfillment of human nature; but human nature consists in our full range of innate dispositions; hence, our flourishing will consist in the complete blossoming forth and fulfillment of the full range of our innate dispositions.

Thus, to turn to 6A14—a crucial passage in the *Mengzi*, and one on which I focus in what follows—Mengzi says: “People care for each part of themselves. They care for each part, so they nurture each part. There is not an inch of flesh they do not care for, so there is not an inch of flesh that they do not nurture” (6A14.1). To be sure, one might read Mengzi’s claim here as a purely factual report on what human beings tend to care about. As a matter of psychological fact, Mengzi might seem to be saying, human beings *do* tend to care for each part of themselves. Yet if our nature consists of all our dispositions, then all the parts of one’s nature will count as *appropriate* objects of one’s concern. While Mengzi will have more to say about these matters, each part is nevertheless *such as to be* nurtured because each is (ultimately) constitutive of our flourishing.

At this point, even if Mengzi’s view differs from other inclusivist accounts of the human good, it is still fair to identify Mengzi’s view as a form of inclusivism, at least insofar as Mengzi does not identify human flourishing with one narrow “monistic” good or disposition (e.g., the dispositions of the heart alone, or one of the heart’s dispositions in particular).⁷ Yet, to show that his conception of flourishing can escape Kraut’s objections against inclusivism, Mengzi must show that the parts of human nature (and so, the parts of flourishing) form an ordered whole, not merely a simple, second-order aggregate of dispositions. I now examine how Mengzi addresses this issue.

Organizing Principles in Mengzian Flourishing

For Mengzi, human nature—and thus, flourishing—is an organized composite, and it is organized partly on account of its *hierarchical structure*.⁸ To understand this structure, I turn to a passage in which Mengzi ranks the parts of the body:

[I]f we want to examine whether someone is good or not, there is no other way than considering what they choose to nurture. The body has esteemed and lowly parts; it has great and petty parts. One does not harm the great parts for the sake of the petty parts. One does not harm the esteemed parts for the sake of the lowly parts.

(6A14.2)

Just as some parts of the body are greater and more esteemed than others, Mengzi suggests, so too are some parts of one’s nature (and flourishing). In particular, as

one might expect from our earlier discussion, Mengzi thinks that *the heart* (with its dispositions) is one of the greater and more esteemed parts, and that it is dominant in our nature (and flourishing). Hence, to be a good person, Mengzi thinks, one will choose to nurture—one will grant a certain priority to—the heart and its dispositions. At first blush, of course, one might think that a good person need not have a good life. But if flourishing consists in the development of those dispositions constitutive of human nature in a fashion proportionate to their value—i.e., in a fashion that grants due priority to the best dispositions—then one can see how Mengzi can say that the good person will flourish. For the good person, of all people, grants this due priority to developing his best parts.

The thought that certain parts of one's nature are superior to other parts requires spelling out. After all, one might worry that there is no plausible way to rank the value of one's parts: one simply has such-and-such parts and that is all there is to say.⁹ To account for this hierarchy of parts, Mengzi appeals in 6A14 to what I call a *principle of sacrifice*: where *X* and *Y* are both goods, if one would sacrifice *X* instead of *Y* in case of conflict, then *X* is subordinate to *Y*. And if *X* is subordinate to *Y*, then, Mengzi thinks, one has reason to grant priority to *Y* over *X*.¹⁰

Mengzi's acceptance of this principle of sacrifice need not commit Mengzi to the claim that if some *X* is subordinate to some *Y*, one should (ordinarily) cultivate that *Y* at the expense of that *X*. First, although he speaks in a different context (concerning practical choice, not the structure of human nature), Mengzi suggests that while cases of *conflict* might require one to pick some good *Y* at the expense of some good *X*, one should ordinarily (when possible) pick *both* that *X* and that *Y*: "Fish is something I desire; bear's paw [a delicacy] is also something I desire. If I cannot have both, I will forsake fish and select bear's paw" (6A10.1; my emphasis). Second, Mengzi's reference to body parts in 6A14 is revealing, for one typically does *not* face the need to sacrifice (i.e., to "harm") one body part for the sake of another. Deciding whether to sacrifice one's hands for one's kidneys is not a conflict that we usually face. Hence, I take it that Mengzi appeals to our intuitions—or, perhaps, to our inclinations—about which parts we would choose to preserve and to sacrifice in cases of conflict only to support his claims for the existence of a natural hierarchy of parts, not to restrict our flourishing to one of them.

So although Mengzi does think that human nature is hierarchically organized, and although this hierarchy establishes a set of priorities for us—i.e., it suggests that we should focus more on developing some parts of our nature instead of others—it nevertheless is consistent with an inclusive view of flourishing, one according to which one should develop all of one's parts constitutively for the sake of flourishing. Since all are components of our flourishing as a whole, when Mengzi says that the one who nurtures the petty parts becomes a petty person, but the person who nurtures the great parts becomes a great person (6A14.2, 6A15.1), Mengzi is saying only that the better person puts a priority on cultivating the great parts. He is not committed to the stronger view that one should cultivate only the great parts (because these are the sole components of one's flourishing). Thus, Mengzi does not say that people who eat and drink are to be despised, but, rather, only those who are "always" eating and drinking (6A14.5). If such people are to be despised, that is because the excessive effort that they spend on eating and

drinking requires them generally to neglect the cultivation of their higher parts. Their *excessive* attendance to the lowly and petty parts of their nature requires them to "lose what is great" (6A14.6).

Beyond appealing to our intuitions about which parts of our nature we would not sacrifice for the sake of other parts in cases of conflict, Mengzi can explain why certain parts are such as not to be sacrificed, and so why certain parts are superior in the hierarchy. Mengzi's insight, I take it, is that some parts are better (and so, more worthy of being preserved in cases of conflict) because those parts are *more directive*. So, according to what I call Mengzi's *principle of directiveness*, some part *Y* of a whole is better than (or superior to) another part *X* if *Y* plays a more directive role in the functioning and flourishing of the whole than *X* does. For Mengzi, the heart and its dispositions are dominant in human nature (and flourishing) because they provide a certain guidance over one's other parts (and dispositions). Without this guidance, the lower parts are apt to disrupt one's excellence (or greatness), prevent the full development of one's nature, and so, preclude one's full flourishing.¹¹

Responding to Gongduzi, for example, Mengzi says, "It is not the function of the ears and eyes to reflect, and they are misled by things. Things interact with other things and simply lead them along. But the function of the heart is to reflect" (6A15.2). Here, Mengzi indicates that the heart has a certain directive role over such parts as the ears and eyes. Without guidance by the reflecting heart and the heart's virtuous inclinations, the sensual dispositions associated with one's ears and eyes will be exercised in a haphazard way. More specifically, they will be exercised in the pursuit of whatever chance pleasures attract one's attention. Without the heart's reflection, then, one will fulfill the parts of one's nature in a disordered fashion inconsistent with the fullest cultivation of one's human nature. Hence, the heart, in virtue of its directive disposition for reflection, has priority over other parts. Mengzi suggests that the heart's directiveness over the other parts of human nature is visible in the vital harmony of the sage's body. The virtuous dispositions of the heart, Mengzi says, are "clearly manifest in his life and demeanor. They fill his torso and extend through his four limbs. Though he says nothing, his four limbs express them" (7A21.4).

One might worry that our intuitions about which parts of an organized whole should be sacrificed in cases of conflict need not match our assessments of which parts are apt to be most directive. For example, consider the case of an athletic team traveling to compete in a game in another city. If (i) there is an insufficient number of seats on the team bus, but (ii) the members of the team otherwise form a sufficiently unified whole, then one can well imagine a case in which the team might willingly "sacrifice" the most directive member, viz., the coach, and travel to (and compete in) the game without the coach's guidance. If so, do we have a case in which Mengzi's principle of sacrifice conflicts with his principle of directiveness? I do not see that it does. Given that sacrificed body parts are non-replaceable (or generally non-available), Mengzi's principle of sacrifice is best understood as a principle concerning *permanent* (or general), rather than temporary, sacrifice. If one accepts this strong formulation of the principle, it is less clear that the team would sacrifice the coach: for without the coach's *general* direction, the team as a whole is apt to suffer.¹²

Now, on the basis of Mengzi's remarks on the directive role of the heart, one can conjecture that Mengzi thinks that human nature (and flourishing) has another principle of structure beyond simple hierarchical organization (according to the principles of sacrifice and directiveness). It is reasonable to think that Mengzi believes that the components of human nature (and flourishing) constitute a mutually supporting system and are *reciprocally related* as well. Although Mengzi is not explicit about this precise point, the lower parts of human nature—i.e., those having to do with sensual dispositions—apparently subserve the higher parts to the extent that the lower parts are hierarchically subordinate to the higher parts. Yet, as 6A15.2 (on the heart's function for reflection) indicates, the heart's virtuous inclinations in turn regulate and order one's sensual inclinations. Thus, given such reciprocity between higher and lower elements of human nature, Mengzi has additional grounds for thinking that human nature is an ordered whole, and that its parts, in their complete fruition, are constitutively valuable for the sake of flourishing.¹³

Structured Inclusivism and External Goods

In this chapter, I have argued that Mengzi provides us with an account of human flourishing that is capable of meeting Kraut's worries about inclusivism. Mengzi can avoid Kraut's objections because, although Mengzi identifies flourishing with a composite end, viz., with the complete sprouting forth of the full range of dispositions that constitute human nature, Mengzi gives us reason to think that human nature is an ordered whole structured both hierarchically and reciprocally.¹⁴ The picture that I take Mengzi to offer, then, looks like this: the dispositions of the lower parts (i.e., those of the mouth and stomach (6A14.6), ears and eyes (6A15.2)) are subordinate to those of the heart. But the dispositions of the heart, although dominant in flourishing, are not sufficient for flourishing, for these dispositions are subordinate to flourishing as a whole, i.e., to the *complete* development and sprouting forth of one's human nature, which (per 6A14.1) requires one to care for and nurture all of one's parts. So although we go wrong if we grant priority to our petty parts, our flourishing requires that we nevertheless make an essential place in flourishing for the nurture of these parts as well.

In this chapter, I have focused on presenting a *Mengzian* formulation of structured inclusivism about human flourishing. Nevertheless, Mengzi's view, I believe, invites comparison with the view of *eudaimonia* that Henry Richardson (1992) attributes to Aristotle, a view according to which (i) some intrinsic goods are choiceworthy for their own sakes and for the sake of higher ends (e.g., contemplation), and (ii) the higher ends are choiceworthy in turn for the sake of *eudaimonia* as a whole. As Richardson argues, this structure ensures that a hierarchy of ends is maintained, while also ensuring that less final intrinsic goods are included in *eudaimonia* as well. Of course, if Mengzi and Aristotle share similar views about the basic *structure* of flourishing, they have different views about its specific *content*. Whereas Aristotle believes that the intellect plays the dominant—and guiding—role in one's flourishing, Mengzi is willing to grant to sentiment a higher place than Aristotle does. And for those who find Aristotle's intellectualism to be

off-putting, yet find structured inclusivism about human flourishing appealing, Mengzi offers resources for a different, less intellectualist, structured inclusivist picture of the human good.

What is especially interesting in Mengzi's own account is its explicitness in mapping the hierarchy of parts of flourishing directly onto the hierarchy of parts of human nature. In this way, I have suggested, Mengzi is capable of responding directly to Kraut's worries. A contemporary appropriation of Mengzi's views on human flourishing might depart from Mengzi's particular view that *the heart* (as opposed to, say, the brain, or certain of its processing centers) is the seat of our virtuous dispositions. Yet it might still attempt to link various kinds of goods (e.g., sensual pleasure) to dispositions associated with various parts of the human body (e.g., of the ears, the eyes, the mouth, etc.).

But this (close) mapping raises questions about Mengzi's views on the place of so-called "external goods" in flourishing, e.g., items such as wealth, honor, and social position. For Mengzi *does* make a distinction between those things that are "in oneself" (e.g., benevolence, righteousness, etc.) and those that are "external" (e.g., wealth, honor, etc.) (7A3; cf. 6A6.7). Similarly, he distinguishes between "Heavenly honors" (which he identifies with virtues) and "human honors" (which he identifies with lofty political offices, such as duke, High Minister, etc.) (6A16). As it stands, Mengzi observes that we all do desire externals (2B10.6; 5A1.4). But such external goods are not *parts* of one's human nature in the way that, e.g., one's benevolent dispositions are. Mengzi insists that it neither adds to, nor subtracts from, the gentleman's nature if he gains (or loses) great holdings of land or wealth. "This is because what belongs to him is already settled"—viz., his virtuous dispositions (7A21).

For these reasons, one might suspect that Mengzi views externals as what Stoics call "preferred indifferents." On this view, externals are *preferred*, since we in fact desire them; but they are ultimately *indifferent*, since they are external to our virtuous nature, which, by itself, suffices for our flourishing. To be sure, Mengzi suggests that externals can fail to conduce to our flourishing (5A1.4). Indeed, externals can be actual *impediments* to our flourishing (to the extent that they can blind us to our own inadequacies and need for self-improvement) (7A11). Moreover, we often pursue externals in ways that bring shame upon us (4B33.2).

While the status of external goods according to Mengzi requires fuller discussion, I suggest that we should resist the "preferred indifferent" reading. On the contrary, I propose that Mengzi identifies externals as, potentially, *derivative* components of flourishing.¹⁵ First, although externals may not be constituents of our virtuous natural dispositions, externals can still be indispensable constituents of activity that *fully displays or expresses* such dispositions. Thus, externals can be constituent features of virtuous deeds, such as benevolent giving or filial assistance. Second, if Mengzi identified externals as actually preferred, but ultimately flourishing-neutral, it is unclear why he thinks that wise rulers should expend so much energy ensuring that the population possesses them (see, e.g., 1A7.21–22; 7A23). Mengzi indicates that part of the benefit that externals confer consists in their conduciveness to the background security and stability required for the unimpeded performance of virtuous deeds. Hence, only when a father has a stable

livelihood and sufficient means to serve his parents, or to nurture his wife and children, will he “rush toward the good” (1A7.21). If he lacks such means, starvation will put his life and agency at risk, and he will lack “leisure for cultivating ritual and righteousness” (1A7.22). In and by themselves, externals do not constitute flourishing, and they may well be either neutral or even harmful on their own. But when enjoyed within a life of virtuous agency, Mengzi suggests, they do play a secondary part in flourishing.¹⁶

10 The Target of Life in Aristotle and Wang Yangming

Benjamin I. Huff

The eudaimonist approach to ethics proposes to guide our lives by organizing them around the pursuit of one goal: the chief, highest, or ultimate good. Having a clear sense of what makes one’s life as a whole good, we can organize our pursuit of other goals so as to promote this, and not to interfere with it. In Aristotle’s words, “If, like archers, we have a target, are we not more likely to hit the right mark?” (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1094a22).¹ The Greek term *eudaimonia*, from which *eudaimonist* derives, is often translated *happiness*, but in a eudaimonist context, the content of *eudaimonia* is left to be determined by the theory. Hence, for the purposes of this paper, I will treat *eudaimonia* simply as another word for the highest good.

The eudaimonist approach is especially associated with Aristotle, who systematized it. Yet it was present in Plato’s work and served as a standard for Greek, Hellenistic, and Christian philosophical ethics for centuries afterward. It was also a major influence on Enlightenment thinkers such as Hobbes, Kant, and Mill, even when they resisted some features of it. In this paper, then, I will treat eudaimonism as an approach that is as viable today as it has been through history. Aristotle’s work serves as a useful guide but does not answer every question that we may have. In reconstructing a contemporary eudaimonism, Confucian thought also has much to offer.

In formulating our conception of the chief good, we face two fundamental pressures. On the one hand, we want to identify the best possible way for a human being to live. On the other hand, we want to identify the good as something achievable. Aristotle is mindful of these two pressures, but it is not clear how he means to respond to them. In this paper I consider a range of responses available to eudaimonists and argue that the Confucian thinker Wang Yangming offers an appealing strategy. I then argue that a similar strategy is available in an Aristotelian context. Despite working in a different time, place, culture, and philosophical context, Wang raises very similar questions about how to understand the goal of life, or highest good, and he answers them in a theoretically sophisticated way that complements the work of Western eudaimonists.

Measuring the Highest Good

Early in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle raises the question of how the highest good is achieved. He concludes that whatever its cause, it is reasonable that

8 The term “glocal philosophy” might be similar to “rooted global philosophy” coined by Stephen C. Angle (see the “Introduction” to this volume). Huang Yong’s recent research on Confucian virtue ethics exemplifies to some extent such a glocal perspective. See his essay in this volume, as well as Huang Yong 2003, Liu 2011b. In 2011, Huang Yong published three books in Chinese discussing, respectively, ethics, religion, and politics in a glocal age.

7 Confucian Ethics and Virtue Ethics Revisited

- 1 Wong (2001).
- 2 Here I am not going to repeat the argument and exposition in the “first investigation” but will only briefly summarize its conclusions: first, even though deontic concepts are derived from aretaic concepts, both are derived from the original heart-mind, namely, *ren*, *yi*, *li*, and *zhi*; therefore *ren*, *yi*, *li*, and *zhi*, understood as the original heart-mind, are the basis of morality. For this reason, it is not suitable to consider Confucian ethics as virtue ethics. Second, it is true that Confucianism emphasizes making evaluations of one’s ethical character. The evaluation of acts and choices is only important when they contribute to the enhancement (or destruction) of one’s ethical character. Third, it is commonly admitted that Confucian ethics emphasizes virtues, and although most of them are moral virtues, non-moral ones do exist. The former (moral virtues) focus on the perfection of moral character, but not on the happiness of oneself and of others; the latter (non-moral virtues) are required for a holistic life. Neither in the realms of moral virtue nor of non-moral virtue could the problem of “self–other asymmetry” indicated by Michael Slote (1992) be found. Fourth, the concept of interest embedded in the concept of self–other asymmetry, which distinguishes between the systems of principled ethics and virtue ethics, is not applicable in the morality of Confucianism. Based on the above reasons, even though Confucian ethics fulfills Slote’s criteria of virtue ethics in some respects, it is doubtful that essentially it belongs to virtue ethics.
- 3 Van Norden thinks that Confucianism can be categorized as Aristotelian virtue ethics (2007), whereas Slote thinks that it is more accurate to conceive Confucianism as taking a Humean/sentimentalist approach to virtue ethics (2010, ch. 4).
- 4 Wong (2011).
- 5 To follow Bernard Williams’ usage, hereafter I will use “ethical” as the broad term to stand for the considerations that bear on answering the question “what should I do, all things considered?” and “moral” as the narrower term to stand for a special system in which duties and obligations are examined. See Williams (1985), p. 6.
- 6 Van Norden (2007).
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 Van Norden (2007), p. 2.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 33–34.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 249.
- 12 Van Norden does not think that this meaning applies to Confucius and I have argued against this view in Wong (2012).
- 13 Wong (2012).
- 14 Also see Wong (2005), pp. 201–204.
- 15 Van Norden (2007), p. 102.
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 Slote (1992).
- 18 See Wong (2011) for detailed discussion.
- 19 See note 5 and Wong (2011).
- 20 See also “Moral Dilemma: A Confucian Perspective” (in Chinese), and “The Confucian Resolution of Moral Conflict, Revisited” (in Chinese). These two articles are included in Wong (2005).

8 The Impossibility of Perfection

- 1 I want to thank Stephen Angle, P. J. Ivanhoe, and Xiao Yang for helpful suggestions.
- 2 A. D. M. Walker (1993, pp. 44–62) thinks the virtues can’t all be harmonized within a single person, but doesn’t believe that this undercuts the possibility of perfection. Irreconcilable (suitably accompanied) virtues can represent different “styles” of virtue-perfection.
- 3 Of course, and as is well known, feminism also has important moral lessons to teach about the nature of justice, human rights, and proper moral ideals.
- 4 The example might also be thought to count as an instance of moral dilemma, and that may be so. But one shouldn’t in that case assume that *other* moral dilemmas necessarily move us toward Berlin’s conclusions. I have discussed this issue at length in my *The Impossibility of Perfection* (2011, ch. 4).
- 5 I am not here carefully distinguishing between how much one cares about particular individuals and how much one cares about one’s intimates (those to whom one is close) as a group. But I don’t think that is important for present purposes.
- 6 Also see *Analects* 7.15 and the *Xunzi* 19.5, which seems to refer to the relevant passage(s) in the *Analects*.
- 7 I am not saying that harmony or harmoniousness isn’t a positive ethical value, but I am saying that it may not be possible to fully reconcile or harmonize it with other very real ethical values. In other words, even though harmony is valuable, a realistic value system and/or an adequate picture of the ethical universe may (unfortunately) have to be lacking in that value.
- 8 In speaking in this way, I don’t mean to claim that the ethical complexities we have recently unearthed didn’t apply to earlier times, only that we face these complexities more squarely and (self-)consciously than it was possible to do hundreds of years ago. For example, the idea that “emotional work” is as relevant to men as to women may be a new one, but that doesn’t mean that the men of earlier times who evaded such work didn’t lose out by doing so, just as men today do and would. The impossibilities of perfection that I have been speaking of are in some sense perennial ones—and, as I’ve indicated, they are supposed to apply to all possible intelligent beings, not just to humans.

9 Structured Inclusivism about Human Flourishing: A Mengzian Formulation

- 1 I defend an inclusivist reading of Aristotle in Walker 2011. Huff’s essay in this volume offers further discussion of Aristotle’s criteria for flourishing.
- 2 On *xing* in Mengzi, see Graham [(1967) 1990, especially 35; 55]; Bloom [1997]; Van Norden [2007, 214].
- 3 For the *Mengzi*, I use Van Norden’s translation [Mengzi 2008].
- 4 For this restrictive reading of Mengzi on human nature, see, e.g., Yu [2005].
- 5 For similarly expansive readings of Mengzi on human nature, cf. Graham [(1967) 1980, 38–39]; Bloom [1997, 24; 26; 28–29].
- 6 Likewise, as Van Norden [2007, 190] suggests, Mengzi wants to reserve nature to refer to that which we must actively cultivate. We do not need to cultivate sensual appetites, while we do need to cultivate the virtues.
- 7 One might suggest that Mengzi’s account is exclusivist in identifying human flourishing with one overarching good, viz., the completion of human nature. This proposal is not unreasonable, but if we accept it, then I think that Mengzi’s account becomes trivially exclusivist, for such a proposal overlooks the full range of *different* dispositions that Mengzi thinks compose the human good.
- 8 On the “specific structure” of human nature in Mengzi, cf. Ivanhoe [1990, 31–34]. Cf. also Irwin’s proposal [1991, 389] that Aristotelian *eudaimonia* has an internal structure according to the “relative importance” of its components.
- 9 This worry, viz., that it would be arbitrary to propose a hierarchical account of the parts

- of human nature, seems to motivate Zhuangzi's question: "Of the hundred joints, nine openings, six viscera all present and complete, which should I recognize as more kin to me than another?" [Zhuangzi 2001 [1981] trans. Graham, 51].
- 10 For a similar insight about how to rank components of flourishing, see Van Norden's essay in this volume.
 - 11 On the directive role of the heart, cf. Graham [(1967) 1990, 41–42]; Ivanhoe [1990, 33]; Bloom [1997, 28–29].
 - 12 I have benefitted from discussing the athletic case with Brad Cokelet. That Mengzi is concerned with permanent, or general, sacrifice is also suggested by his thought that the "lowly gardener" is one who "abandons" his mahogany tree for his date tree [6A14.3], i.e., who permanently, or generally, sacrifices what is higher for what is lower.
 - 13 If the four dispositions of the heart (and the goods and activities to which these dispositions give rise) are not themselves to form a simple second-order aggregation, then one needs to account for their unity as well. (I thank David Wong for raising this issue.) Here, one might appeal to the role that Mengzi believes that benevolence plays in unifying the heart's dispositions: to possess wisdom, one must possess benevolence; and one must possess these dispositions, in turn, to possess propriety and righteousness [2A7.2–3]. Hence, as Van Norden [2008, 47] notes, Zhu Xi ultimately identifies wisdom, propriety, and righteousness as *manifestations* of benevolence.
 - 14 The *structured* character of Mengzi's account of flourishing is noted as well by Graham [(1967) 1990, 28–29].
 - 15 The account of externals that I attribute to Mengzi invites comparison with a view that Cooper [1985] attributes to Aristotle. For simplicity, I do not discuss Confucius's complex views on externals (as presented, e.g., in *Analects* 1.14, 4.5, 4.9, 4.11, 4.14, 4.16, 7.12, and 8.12). I take Walsh's remarks on Yan Hui's need for moderate resources (in Walsh's essay this volume) to suggest that Confucius might also accept something like the view that I here attribute to Mengzi.
 - 16 I have benefited from an NEH Summer Seminar Fellowship to attend "Traditions into Dialogue: Confucianism and Contemporary Virtue Ethics" (directed by Stephen Angle and Michael Slote in 2008), a post-doctoral fellowship in the Ethics of Virtue at the University of Miami, and a New Faculty Fellowship at Rutgers University, sponsored by the American Council of Learned Societies. I have further benefited from helpful feedback on earlier drafts of this paper by the editors of this volume, Eric Hutton, Benjamin Huff, and David Wong (who commented on this paper for a symposium at the 2009 Pacific APA), and from discussion with participants at the International Conference on Confucianism and Virtue Ethics at Peking University, May 2010.

10 The Target of Life in Aristotle and Wang Yangming

- 1 Aristotle quotations are from Roger Crisp's translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* [2000].
- 2 Some readers [e.g. Heinaman 1988, 43–4; White 1991; and Kenny 1992, 26–7] dispute whether Aristotle endorses this notion of self-sufficiency himself, since he remarks that Plato used an argument of this kind. However, before mentioning Plato, Aristotle has already drawn the conclusion: "This last argument, at least, seems to represent [pleasure] as one good among others," and so not *the* good [1172b27–8]. Further, Aristotle treats this argument as decisive through X.2–3.
- 3 See, e.g. Cicero [2001] III.33, 46–8. Other Stoic analogies suggest a quantum leap.
- 4 The Stoics acknowledged progress toward virtue, as indicated, e.g., in Cicero [2001] III.48. Compare *Analects* 2.4, 16.7.
- 5 This single good may have components, so long as it is clear how they are united, rather than merely forming an aggregate. Matthew Walker's essay in this volume offers an interesting example of how multiple components can contribute to an organically united conception of eudaimonia.

- 6 I use Wang 1963 for translations, substituting Pinyin romanization, and Wang 1983 for Chinese text.
- 7 Compare *Mencius* 4B29, 4B31.
- 8 Wang presents another, analogous model for sagely achievement in I.68, based on quality and quantity of water.
- 9 Bryan Van Norden argues for an expansive conception of excellent or virtuous activity in his essay in this volume.
- 10 For a related, but somewhat different view, see chapter 11 of Nussbaum 1986.
- 11 For helpful comments and discussion I am indebted to Deborah Mower, Sara Rushing, participants at the 2010 International Conference on Confucianism and Virtue Ethics, the editors of this volume, and especially P. J. Ivanhoe and Michael Ing. A Walter Williams Craigie Grant supported my work during summer 2009.

11 Varieties of Moral Luck in Ethical and Political Philosophy for Confucius and Aristotle

- 1 Other versions of Kantian and utilitarian ethics may accept less radical versions of moral luck, but the original versions did not.
- 2 For a discussion of Kant's strong claims about moral luck—insofar as Kant believes that the possibility of morality itself required that every rational agent has pure practical reason, which has full moral *control* and full moral *understanding* at all times—see [Walsh 2012]. My interpretation of Confucius is not a Kantian one, and is at odds with Mou Zongsan's Kantian "moral mind" interpretation of early Confucianism. Mou Zongsan believes that all humans, regardless of moral luck, have an innate "moral mind," a complete and pure moral consciousness that is akin to Kant's pure practical reason. Mou Zongsan's Kantian interpretation is discussed and defended in this volume in the essays of both Lee Ming-huei and Wong Wai-ying. On my interpretation of Confucius, human moral consciousness is not universally innate (it is only arguably innate for the occasional sage), and one's moral consciousness depends on luck for its purity and completeness.
- 3 For example, Jiyuan Yu says, "Indeed, although Confucius acknowledges that fortune affects many aspects of human life, he does not think that it affects one's moral life" [Yu 2007, 190–192]. Yu also argues (contrary to my view) that Aristotle's ethics require more significant luxuries, pleasures, and moral luck than Confucius'. Yu says that for Confucius, there may be some luck in acquiring virtue but *not* in maintaining it, and only *having* virtue is ethically significant (as opposed to *exercising* the virtues one has). I believe that both philosophers require similar, modest forms of moral luck, material good, and ethical pleasures. Cf. [Slingerland 1996, 568–71], [Hall and Ames 1987, 212–15], and [Sim 2007, Ch. 7].
- 4 See [Kenny 1988, 113].
- 5 Cf. Aristotle's *Politics* I.3–4 and *NE* VII, in which Aristotle argues that a natural slave needs to be told what to do in order to act well and develop his or her human capacities.
- 6 See [*Analects* 12.19, 12.22 13.4, 13.6, 13.10, 13.12, 13.13, 14.41; cf. 13.9, 15.33].
- 7 Cf. [13.6, 9.14, 4.13].
- 8 *Mencius* also says that good government mediates against bad luck by providing a *constant livelihood* for the small people to act and live well [*Mencius* 1A3, 1A7, 7A4]. Cf. *Analects* 12.7–9.
- 9 There is evidence that suggests that many would commit atrocities if they lacked a basically good government and situational luck, and many would not have done so if they had a better government. See [Arendt 1963] and [Miller 2009] on the situational variables for moral goodness.
- 10 Confucius believes that sages are *born* better [19.12]. In contrast, Xunzi and Mencius believe that all are born *equal* in nature, but require luck (good teachers and government) for proper ritual training. See [*Mencius* 6A17, 7A.36; *Xunzi* 4.8, 8.11, 4.10, 23.5b].