DAVID B. WONG

RELATIONAL AND AUTONOMOUS SELVES

Introduction

A common misconception about the Chinese moral tradition and about Confucianism in particular is that it privileges the community *over* the individual. Such a mischaracterization usually comes as one-half of a comparison: the modern West, it is said, privileges the individual over the community. This comparative contrast is probably wrong on both ends. The Western end of the contrast does not take into account the diversity of the modern West. The other side of the Atlantic tends not to be nearly so individualistic in its mainstream culture as the U.S.; and this needs to be a point that U.S.-based philosophers should keep in mind as they characterize the modern Western tradition. I say this as a reminder for myself as well as others. However, the Eastern end of the contrast, and the way it is mistaken, is my subject today.

David Hall and Roger Ames have argued that the contrast is wrong because it presupposes that the individual and community are potentially at odds in ways the Chinese tradition does not conceive them to be. The nature of the individual is conceived relationally, they argue, so that it is just plain wrong to have the Chinese separating the individual from the community in the first place, much less subordinating the individual to the community. I think something like this reply is quite right, but also that it is far from clear how to spell out what it means for the individual to be conceived relationally. Trying to spell out what this means so as to make sense of the relevant Confucian texts, I shall argue, leads us to plausible conceptions of the individual's relation to the community—conceptions posing alternatives to the ones that have been prominent in the West, and especially the U.S. I further want to argue that relational conceptions of the individual make possible a plausible conception of individual autonomy—and again a plausible conception posing an alternative to ones prominent in the West.

DAVID B. WONG, professor, Department of Philosophy, Duke University. Specialties: ethical theory, comparative ethics, Chinese philosophy. E-mail: davidbwong@mindspring.com

Journal of Chinese Philosophy 31:4 (December 2004) 419–432
© 2004 Journal of Chinese Philosophy

What Is a Relational Conception of the Individual?

Hall and Ames argue that the Chinese conception of the self is contextual, a "shared consciousness" of one's roles and relationships.[1] Inner and outer selves are inseparable. The self-image is determined by the esteem with which one is regarded in community.

> The interlocking pattern of relationships, where focused and individuated, is the particular person, both psychic and somatic. The "field" that both constitutes and is constituted by these foci is the community.[2]

It is a challenge to explain what could be meant by "both constituting and being constituted by." Fields take on definition through individuals and their relationships and in that sense are constituted by them. However, it is more difficult to say how a field constitutes individuals. As I indicated earlier, Hall and Ames sometimes suggest that the self is determined by the esteem with which one is regarded in community. However, such determination cannot exhaust what the self is, since they speak of the self as having an agency that goes into constituting the field. In any case, it is unclear how the "one" who is regarded in community cannot have an existence independent of being regarded in this or that way. How else could there be a "one" to regard in the first place? If one's self is a shared consciousness of one's roles and relationships, there must be some "one" who takes these roles and stands in these relationships.

Similar questions arise for the way Henry Rosemont, Jr., writes about the Confucian self: "there can be no me in isolation, to be considered abstractly: I am the totality of roles I live in relation to specific others . . . Taken collectively, they weave, for each of us, a unique pattern of personal identity, such that if some of my roles change, the others will of necessity change also, literally making me a different person."[3] If I am simply the sum of my relationships, then who or what is the entity standing in each of these particular relationships?

The Social Conception of the Person

A way out of these difficulties is to take the one who stands in all the self's relationships as a biological organism. We begin life embodied as biological organisms and become persons by entering into relationship with others of our kind. This implies that classical Chinese thinkers held an inherently social conception of the person and seems true in particular of the Confucians. Consider the composition of the

character for *ren*, the most central and most comprehensive of Confucian ethical virtues, variously translated as "humanity," "benevolence," "goodness," or "authoritative [conduct or person]."[4] This word is composed of the radical for person (*ren*) and two (*er*), suggesting people in relationship, or the achievement of personhood in relationship.

In the *Mencius*, the capacities to take on the relevant roles and relationships are ethical in content, and anyone lacking the four innate "beginnings" of goodness—the feelings of compassion, shame, and courtesy and a sense of right and wrong—is said not to be human (2A6). For Mencius, then, being human means possessing those inborn capacities to enter into a network of responsibilities one has toward others and others have toward oneself. Let me call this the *social conception of the person*.

The social conception, however, need only imply that having such relationships is a necessary condition of being a person. Nor need it imply that one's identity as a person comes to nothing more than the sum of one's relationships. Is there another sense in which persons are relational that brings us closer to what Hall and Ames and Rosemont have in mind?

The Developmental Sense of Relationality

Another sense in which persons are relational starts with the fact that we are born helpless and ready for nurture. Whatever we become, we become through the help and hindrance of others. If we are fortunate, we have a teacher who knows what we need as individuals, as illustrated through Confucius' teaching of Zilu and Ran You in 11.22. Zilu asked, "Should one immediately practice what one has heard?" Confucius said, "There are father and elder brother [to be consulted]." Ran You asked the same question, but to him, Confucius said, "One should immediately practice what one has heard." Ran You was retiring and needed urging forward. On the other hand, Zilu had more than one man's energy and needed to be kept back.

Let me call the sense in which persons need the help of others to develop as agents the *developmental* sense of relationality. Such a sense represents an important truth about human beings, but does not show how our identities are intrinsically relational. For the latter to be true, we need not only for our constituting traits to be *developed in* relationship with others but also to be *constituted by* our relationship to others. We need a *constitutive* sense in which personal identity is relational.

Context-Specific Traits as Constituting Personal Identity

An intriguing possibility is that at least many of our constituting traits involve dispositions that are triggered by specific persons in specific social contexts. To say what these traits are, then, we must say which people, and in what context, trigger the relevant dispositions. This is intriguing partly because some anthropologists and psychologists believe there is an East-West difference in the tendency to think of persons in terms of context-specific versus global traits. Westerners, and especially people in the U.S., tend to describe character in terms of global traits that manifest themselves across a wide range of contexts, while Asians tend to think of character in terms of context-specific traits.[5] For example, people might manifest certain traits to family and close friends, such as warmth and generosity, but who manifest very different ones to those with whom they work. Such differences are comparatively more salient to people in Asian societies such as China, Japan, and Korea than they are to people in the U.S. Perhaps, then, other people may be thought to constitute one's identity if these others form part of the context in terms of which one's constituting traits are specified. I am not warm and generous *simplicter* but warm and generous to certain people, and other ways to other people. If warmth and generosity are part of who I am, then so are the people to whom I am warm and generous. Who I am partly depends on the situation I am in and on the company I am keeping.

Such a way of conceiving the relational nature of identity raises the interesting possibility that Asian conceptions of identity more *accurately* reflect people as they are. This would be true if context-specific traits were the rule *across* societies rather than being the rule only within certain Asian societies. Gilbert Harman and John Doris have recently argued that the folk belief in the existence of global character traits (i.e., traits that are not context-specific or at least display themselves across a wide range of contexts) is in fact false, and that we are better off recognizing the existence of traits of a much more local nature.[6] They point to a body of experimental work in psychology purporting to show that behavior is a lot more influenced by situations than is commonly thought.

They cite the Milgram experiment in which the majority of subjects were willing to administer severe and dangerous electric shocks to test the effect of punishment on learning. The situational variable thought to be responsible for the surprising willingness to hurt others is the authority of the experimenter in charge.[7] In the Stanford prison experiment, college students played the roles of guards and prisoners and ended up identifying so completely with their roles that the experiment had to be terminated early. In just six days, the "prison-

ers" were withdrawing and behaving in pathological ways, and some of the "guards" were behaving sadistically.[8] In still another experiment, seminary students were set up to encounter a person slumped in an alleyway, and the experiment was to see what factors influenced a student's decision whether to stop and offer aid. It was found that by far the most influential variable was whether students were in a hurry for the next appointment, rather than the nature of students' commitments to religion or the nature of the tasks in which they were engaged at the time, even if the task was preparing a sermon on the Good Samaritan![9]

Such experiments lead Doris to express skepticism about the viability of virtue ethics. For Doris, many of the situational factors that make a great deal of difference to the manifestation of ethical behavior are factors that from an ethical perspective *ought not* to make the kind of difference they make. A natural reply from the virtue ethicist is that the experiments, rather than providing a reason to be skeptical of the prospects for virtue ethics, instead give us a more realistic idea of the distance between most actual people and virtue ideals.[10] It also gives us a reason to identify and promote more specifically those local environments that help to cultivate and sustain the context-specific traits that *are* ethically desirable.

Though Harman and Doris do not explicitly discuss it, such issues also bear on the existence of individual autonomy, at least in one important sense of this multi-faceted concept. If traits that are relatively invariant across context are much less important for explaining behavior than we thought, then we are much less the authors of our actions than we thought. We are at least much less the *sole* authors of our actions. This is the sort of result, however, that I take it that Hall, Ames, and Rosemont might welcome.

In fact, classical Chinese moral psychology shows a keen awareness of the way that most people are not the sole authors of their actions. However, this observation is usually made in the context of noting how far ordinary people must travel to get to the destination of becoming a nobleperson, a *junzi*. This is most obvious in Xunzi, since he stresses the role of learning and self-cultivation in overcoming natural tendencies to indulge natural sensual desires. Indeed, Xunzi at times stresses the chaotic jumble of motivations by which natural human beings are afflicted, a picture that is congenial to the idea that situation, more than cohesive character traits, better explains behavior.

In the *Mencius* also, the distance from where we begin to where we become a *junzi* is considerable. That this is so in the *Mencius* is not so often recognized because of the text's emphasis on what is given to us at birth in the four "beginnings" of goodness. For example, one

of the beginnings is to respond with compassion when seeing a child about to fall into a well (2A6). But this tendency to respond, which is the basis for the development of the virtue of *ren* (comprehensive virtue, humanity, benevolence), is a beginning precisely because it is manifested erratically in comparison to how it should look when fully developed. King Xuan in 1A7 spares an ox being led to ritual slaughter because he sees in the animal's eyes a look that reminds him of an innocent man being led to execution, but he does not, as Mencius points out, spare his people from suffering. The feeling of shame is the beginning of the virtue of *yi* (righteousness, the trait to doing what is right or fitting to the occasion) and is manifested by a refusal to accept food given with abuse, even when one is hungry, but one would accept something similarly shameful for the sake of beautiful houses or wives and concubines (6A10).

Or consider what is said in 1A7: that only a *shi* (scholar) can have a constant *xin* (mind) without a constant means of support. The people, on the other hand, without constant means, will go astray and fall into excesses, stopping at nothing. The *ren* person in authority, instead of punishing the people, will determine what means of support they should have. It is only when people have sufficient food in good years and escape starvation in the bad that the *ren* person will drive them toward goodness. To punish them for falling afoul of the law when these conditions are not in place is to lay a trap for the people.

Global Traits as a Co-authored Achievement

It seems to me that the *Mencius* is pointing to a context-dependence of our natural traits that is not so different from that which gives rise to Doris' skepticism about virtue ethics. The difference is that the *Mencius* upholds an ideal in which the innate tendencies get developed or "extended" to those contexts in which they should manifest themselves but do not naturally so manifest themselves. Not implausibly, he points to the need for certain kinds of contexts in order for these extensions to take hold. But once having taken hold, they can attain a significant degree of independence from context.

Care must be taken in stating how the *junzi*'s traits are context-independent. The traits of the *junzi* include dispositions to act and to feel in ways that are ethically appropriate to the context, guided by right judgment. This traditionally is taken to be the meaning of the *Analects* 4.10, where Confucius says, "In his dealings with the world the *junzi* is not invariably for or against anything. He is on the side of what is right (*yi*). The virtues of the *junzi* have a built-in relativity to context that tracks the right.[11] As 4.10 implies, relativity-to-context

may itself be a relative notion, depending on how we define the sort of conduct (or attitude) that is to be judged as variant or invariant against context. The *junzi* is not invariably for and against this or that type of action, and the action will accordingly vary from context to context, *except* when the type of action is defined as the right action. *Yi* may also refer to the trait of reliably doing what is right, and it is in an important sense a *global* trait. It is a trait the *junzi* displays across all contexts. Therefore, Confucianism may recognize that most and perhaps nearly all people (depending on one's estimate of how rare a specimen the *junzi* is) are ordinarily not the sole authors of their actions. However, it upholds as an ideal a global trait, even if it is a trait that adjusts with the finest sensitivity to the type of context in order to produce a consistent result—rightness. In a very real sense, the *junzi* is much more the author of his or her own actions as the rest of us are.

Let me point to another chapter in the *Analects*—9.14—as upholding something like this ideal global trait, and then some. In that chapter, it is said that Confucius wanted to go live among the nine barbarian peoples of the east. Someone asked how he could think of doing so, given the meanness or vulgarity (*lou*) of the barbarians. Confucius' reply is to question how there could be meanness among the barbarians once a nobleperson (*junzi*) settles there. It seems that part of the achievement of noblepersons is this ability to retain ethical excellence and exert influence over others wherever they go and with whomever they live.

It seems to me that something like this theme is applied to the virtue of *ren* in 4.2 and 4.2 of the *Analects*. In 4.1 the imagery of finding one's place, one's home, in *ren* is used. How could one be wise and not choose to settle in such a beautiful neighborhood as *ren*? In 4.2, Confucius says that one who is not *ren* cannot remain long in straightened circumstances, nor can he remain long in easy circumstances, implying of course that the *ren* person can remain settled in either kind of circumstance. Finally, there is Confucius' description of the stages of his own life journey, the last stage marked at age 70 by his being able to follow his heart's desire without overstepping the line (*Analects* 2.4).

To summarize our inquiry so far, the social conception of the person and the developmental sense in which we are relational by nature are notable and significant features of the Confucian conception of personhood, but they do not provide the sense in which we are *constituted* by our relationships. When we consider the context-dependence of traits as possessed by most people, perhaps we can say that in a real and significant way, most are constituted by their relationships to others. Many of the traits possessed by the *junzi* also

exhibit this context-dependence, but the central ones, the virtues under their descriptions as virtues, have a global character. In this global conception of the *junzi*'s virtues, the Confucian ideal upholds the ideal of being the sole authors of one's actions, in the sense that one resides in one's ethical excellence through hard and easy circumstances and is able to judge and act in accord with what is right independently of context, even though one's judgment of what is right very much takes context into account. In the *Mencius*, *junzi* are able to have constant hearts in materially adverse circumstances, and in the *Analects junzi* carry their excellence and its power wherever they go. If such persons are autonomous, then we must say that for the Confucians, autonomy is an ethical achievement, a rare one at that, and one that must come about through the right circumstances and the help of others.

Let me now announce some of my own commitments, if they weren't apparent already. The ideal of autonomy that is plausible to attribute to the Confucians is plausible ideal as an ideal. It is plausible from an ethical perspective because it upholds the ideal of a person who on the one hand is sensitive to the difference that circumstances make to what is right and best, and on the other hand, affirms the possibility of reliably judging and acting in accord with the right. It affirms the possibility of global traits where such traits are most desired ethically while correctly affirming what rare achievements such traits can be. To uphold autonomy in this sense is not to value sole authorship of one's actions for its own sake. It is to value it for the sake of reliably doing what is right, for the sake of helping others when such help ought to be given, and for the sake of according respect to others when it ought to be given and in the form it ought to be given.

The Confucian ideal is plausible from a metaphysical perspective because it does not commit us to the existence of ghostly agents who lack causal input from a world that is governed by natural laws and yet somehow are expected to have causal impacts on such a world. I am of course referring to a libertarian conception of free agency that has such a prominent place in Kant's ethics. In contrast to the libertarian conception, the Confucian ideal allows us to place agents squarely within the world of natural laws and the multifarious ways they are demonstrably affected by others and by other features of the environment.[12] The ideal encourages us to understand how Confucian righteousness is co-authored by the agents themselves, by those around them, and by material conditions that affect how much attention they can give to the project of fostering effective moral agency. This, it seems to me, is truly a kind of autonomy worth striving for, rather than the dubious kind of autonomy that is supposed to be pos-

sessed by all regardless of the conditions of their nurture and education, and that in the *Mencius* is rightly characterized as laying a trap for the people.

Harmonizing Self-interest and Interest in Others

Our inquiry into the Chinese self has led us to reject the conception of a self who is conceived apart from others and then subordinated to them. In its place stand selves who are not human apart from social relations, who become selves in relationship to others, and who should strive for a kind of autonomy that does not separate them from others but makes them worthy of others' trust. But how do such relational selves deal with conflicts of interest with others? Are there such conflicts for such selves? If not, is that not implausible? If so, then what is the alternative to subordinating selves to others or prioritizing selves over others?

The alternative is a continual process of balancing and negotiation—harmonization—between the interests of individuals and those of the others to whom the individual is related. The process of negotiation between interests is carried on in the light of the interdependence of individuals and the various communities to which they belong, and also the interdependence of the goods toward which they aim. The interests of individuals may sometimes be accorded less priority if they conflict with, let us say, the good of the family, and this is done in light of the fact that a central part of the individual's good lies in being a member of the family. On the other hand, the good of the family cannot be achieved without consideration of an individual's urgent interests, even as these interests may conflict with those of others in the family. If those interests are urgent and weighty, they must become interests of the family and balanced against the interests with which they conflict. The interests of the individual and those of the community are mutually adjusted in light of the interdependence of their goods.

The story of sage-king Shun's marriage is a dramatic and surprising example of how interests might best be balanced and mutually adjusted. To say that Shun's family teetered on the edge of dysfunction is an understatement. His parents were dead-set against him despite his legendary filiality. When the time came for Shun to marry, he knew that his father would refuse permission if asked. So Shun did not ask. One reason given for this surprising decision, coming from the ultimate filial son, is that the worst way of being a bad son is to provide no heir (4A26). It is the other reason given, however, that I want to highlight. A man and woman living together, it is said in the

Mencius, is the most important of human relationships, and if Shun had set aside that most important of relationships, it would have caused bitterness toward his parents (5A2). The reason it would have caused bitterness, of course, is that one of Shun's most urgent of interests would have been frustrated. Its satisfaction is crucial for the viability of his relationship to his parents. It would have been foolish for Shun simply to have swallowed his bitterness and submitted to what he knew his parents' wishes to be, foolish in terms of his own interests in marriage, and foolish for his relationship to his parents.

Why is this kind of mutual adjustment appropriate? Individuals make up the social "field," to return to Hall and Ames' metaphor. Without them, the field cannot exist. To deny Shun's urgent interests in marriage would have been to weaken a source of the family field. But on the other hand, the family field is partly responsible for Shun's development as an agent and for his emergence as an autonomous agent in the Confucian sense. The individual and the field are mutually supportive, in senses I hope have been clarified and confirmed.

On a social scale larger than that of the family, Mencius' well-field policy for taxing agricultural yield is a good example of the way that family interests are mutually adjusted with those of the state. A plot of land is divided into nine squares: eight families are given their own plot of land to cultivate for their sustenance, and they work the ninth in common as their contribution to the state. The families must work on the common plot first turning to private plots. This not only was a method of taxation, but also a way of limiting what could be taken by the state. Each family has what is theirs alone, but the necessity of working together on the common plot of land fosters a spirit of cooperation for the sake of the larger community.

Questions about the Confucian Autonomous Self

In attempting to explain why it is mischaracterizing the Chinese self to say that it is subordinated to the community, we were led to a relational conception of the self, according to which personal identities are at least partly constituted by context-specific traits. Relational conceptions have been thought to undermine views of the self as "atomic" and "stable." To some extent our investigation here has confirmed this. We are not human without relationship to others, and we develop selves within the matrix of such relationship. On the other hand, the particular relational conception found in early Confucian texts has unexpectedly supported an important form of autonomy that is an ideal global trait and that is consistent with many people having contributed to its making. I have claimed importance and

plausibility for this kind of autonomy and its compatibility with the social and development senses in which selves are relational.

A possible objection is that I am mislabeling the Confucian view of self as an ideal of "autonomy," since the word carries with it associations of a pristine self free of the encumbrances of relationship.[13] I acknowledge the possibility of misunderstanding but think it better to use "autonomy" to describe the Confucian ideal and deal with the possibility by specifying what it means here. It means the possession of context-invariant traits consisting in abilities to feel and act ethically, wherein such traits themselves involve sensitivity to context in the determination of the right feelings and actions. Such traits constitute a genuine and intuitively appealing sense in which we can be the authors of our own actions: that we can consistently feel and act in the right ways, even in contexts that produce failure in many people. The fact that such a meaning of "autonomy" is consistent with the social and developmental senses in which selves are relational indicates the complexity of the strands of meaning that go into the concept. After all, the meaning of it has been an object of contest in the Western tradition. The Kantian, libertarian strand does not constitute the whole of the tradition. Identifying the sense in which the Confucian ideal of the person upholds autonomy helps to highlight the distinctness of the different strands and to retrieve the most plausible ones consistent with a naturalistic view of persons.

A more serious issue, I think, is raised by the situationalist challenge to virtue ethics, but not in the way that it is often presented nowadays. There is an important challenge raised by empirical work on the oftensurprising ways in which the ethical conduct of many people disappears in certain kinds of situations, but the challenge is not to the possibility of the kind of autonomy upheld by Confucianism. The challenge is to the extent to which that ideal can be advocated as a universal ethic.

Both the *Analects* and the *Mencius,* as discussed earlier, show keen awareness of the difficulty of achieving the Confucian character ideal. However, there is an important tension between the recognition of the difficulty of achieving that ideal and something else that is apparent in those texts: the confidence that people will respond to realized virtue. Consider *Analects* 2.3: "The Master said, 'Guide them by edicts, keep them in line with punishments, and the common people will stay out of trouble but will have no sense of shame. Guide them by virtue, keep them in line with the rites, and they will, besides having a sense of shame, reform themselves.' "[14]

In contrast, the legalist Hanfeizi draws our attention to those aspects of human experience that do not support this confidence in humanity. In fact, Hanfeizi was perhaps the first situationist. He

argues that widespread good behavior, never mind the right motivations, is an achievement requiring fortuitous circumstances. He does not dispute that the sage-kings of ancient times were virtuous and ruled over a harmonious and prosperous society. He disputes, however, that their virtue was the primary cause. What about, he asks, those kings in more recent times who were *ren* and *yi*, benevolent and righteous, and who got wiped out for their trouble? Virtue is not the explanation of success or failure. The explanation, argues Hanfeizi, has much more to do with the scarcity of goods in relation to the number of people ("The Five Vermin," chapter 49).[15] Hanfeizi's subsequent emphasis on authority, on clear and consistent law, backed by severe punishment for its violation, is designed not to provide an alternative method of making the people follow the *dao*, but first and foremost to prevent the worst things from happening, the worst forms of chaos, bloodshed and human misery.

I do not endorse the radical form of such a view that simply rejects any place for ethical ideals of character in a public philosophy. I believe a solution that relies solely on authority and law can easily lead to really terrible things if there are not enough people around who have set themselves on the course of self-transformation. It is all very well to say that we should concentrate on putting people in good situations, good social and political structures so that they may act decently, but this leaves unanswered the question of what kind of people can put such structures into place and not abuse them when once in place. With that said, it is difficult in many times, and I count our own time among them, to deny the power of Hanfeizi's skepticism about the attraction of humanity to virtue. Individuals may still strive after these virtues and come close to achieving them, but if we are talking about social change on a fairly large scale, there might indeed be times when we must concentrate on preventing the really terrible things, because we do not know how to move enough people toward any aim higher than that.

DUKE UNIVERSITY
Durham, North Carolina

Endnotes

1. David Hall and Roger Ames, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 26.
2. Hall and Ames, p. 32.
3. Henry Rosemont, "Rights-bearing Individuals and Role-bearing Persons," in Mary I. Bockover, ed., *Rules, Rituals, and Responsibilities: Essays Dedicated to Herbert Fingarette* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court Press, 1991), p. 90.

4. Wing-tsit Chan translates it as "humanity" in his translation of the *Analects*, in *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969); D. C. Lau translates it as "benevolence" in *Confucius: The Analects* (New York: Penguin, 1998); Arthur Waley as "goodness" in *The Analects of Confucius* (New York: Vintage, 1989); and Henry Rosemont, Jr., and Roger Ames as "authoritative conduct" or "authoritative person" in *The Analects of Confucius*: *A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998).
5. See Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1976), for a distinction between "high-context" (where context is seen as very relevant to personal attributes) and "low-context" (where context is not seen as so relevant) societies; also Ara Norenzayan, Incheol Choi, and Robert E. Nisbett, "Cultural Similarities and Differences in Social Inference: Evidence from Behavioral Predictions and Lay Theories of Behavior," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 28 (2002): 109–120, for a study indicating that Koreans are more likely to recognize relevant information about situational factors that influence behavior.
6. Gilbert Harman, "Moral Philosophy Meets Social Psychology: Virtue Ethics and the Fundamental Attribution Error," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 99 (1998–99): 315–331; and "The Nonexistence of Character Traits," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 100 (1999–2000): 223–226; John Doris, *Lack of Character: Personality and Moral Behavior* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
7. Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority* (New York: Harper, 1974).
8. C. Haney, W. C. Banks, and P. Zimbardo, "Interpersonal Dynamics in a Simulated Prison," *International Journal of Criminology and Penology* 1 (1973): 69–97.
9. J. M. Darley, and C. D. Batson, "From Jerusalem to Jericho": A Study of Situational and Dispositional Variables in Helping Behavior," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 27 (1973): 100–108.
10. It is open to Doris to suggest, on the other hand, that the distance makes virtue ethics a psychologically unrealistic ethic. His fair demand of virtue ethicists is to show why the best ethic is one that asks people to emulate a character ideal that may be very distant from the way they actually are. I think there are good answers to this (some of which take us into criticisms of principle-based ethics and the alternative to principle-guided decisions that virtue ethics provides; and others of which involve the argument that the empirical evidence is not as negative about the existence of global traits as Doris thinks), but it takes a longer story than I can tell here.
11. This is to slide over the complications of passages such as *Mencius* 1A7, where King Xuan displays compassion for an ox being led to ritual slaughter but his substitution of a lamb for the ox is approved, since the ritual must go on. This is why, Mencius says, the *junzi* stays out of the kitchen. An implication that might be drawn here is that being a compassionate person might sometimes make it more difficult for one to do what is right (carry out the ritual), but that nevertheless it is better to be compassionate than to avoid the difficulties one's own emotional nature presents. On this reading, some virtues of the *junzi* can come into tension with the virtue of righteousness. Another way of thinking about the King Xuan story, however, is that the king's compassion for the ox was not the wrong attitude for him to have had. It is the right attitude upon having encountered the ox. It is just that it is also right for him to find a way to complete the ritual.
12. I want to stress that the Confucian ideal allows *us* to put agents in this world of causal laws. I do not believe it is correct to attribute a causally deterministic conception of the nature to the Confucians (nor the denial of such a conception), but my point here is that such a conception is indeed a powerful one for *us*, and compatibility with it weighs in favor of an ethical ideal. Thanks to Chung-ying Cheng for prompting me to clarify this point.
13. Thanks to May Sim for raising this possibility.
14. Translation from D. C. Lau, *Confucius: The Analects* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 63.
15. Translation from Burton Watson, *Basic Writings of Mo Tzu, Hsün Tzu, and Han Fei Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), pp. 97–98.

Chinese Glossary

er	二	ren	人
junzi	君子	shi	士
lou	陋	yi	义
ren	仁		